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Description: 3277 Helen Higgins, interviewed by Julia "Alice" Smith, November 29, 1996, location unknown. Helen talks about life on the family farm in Bangor, Maine; her education in a Bangor schoolhouse; transportation to school; apple orchard and farming; farm chores for children; childhood winter activities; pets; clothing; her wedding; farm chores for women; water and hot water; childbirth and child rearing; haying; barn; gardening; food preservation; canning; ice harvesting; dairy products; sewing; 4-H; the Grange; fairs; Church; social life and activities; shopping and commerce in Bangor; the danger of kerosene. Also included: Family Life in Rural Main up to World War II Questionnaire; photocopy of Helen Higgins's obituary from her death on August 10, 2001.

Text: 26 pp. transcript; 2 pp. questionnaire, 1 pp. copy of newspaper obit (CF folder)

Recording: mfc_na3277_c2409_01, mfc_na3277_c2409_02 56 minutes

Photo: P08797 (Helen Higgins, sitting in a chair at a table.)

Related Collections

& Accessions

Restrictions none, photocopy of release form

Formats Included Master = cassette tape

Notes

Accessioned by

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Use Tracker 4

To transcriber

Previous name(s)

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Helen Higgins Interview
11/29/96
by Alice Smith

Transcribed by Jeremy Neill, June 1998

Transcription Note: This transcript follows the guidelines of Sandy Ives' *The Tape Recorded Interview*. The two speakers tend to trail off, and to talk over each other. Mrs. Higgins is a little hard of hearing, and the questions were frequently repeated to her, these repetitions have been omitted.

A: Alice Smith
H: Helen Higgins

A: November 29, 1996, this is my tape #1. First of all where you had mentioned that you've lived on a farm as a child, and then as, when you were married. Let's look at what farm life was like when you were a child. Where were you at that time? Where was the farm that you were on?

H: Ducendangle (?), and might be interesting to say that then we went into plowing with the Abby's.

A: Oh yes, and what kind of a farm was it that you were growing up on?

H: Oh just a general farm.

A: Were you the, did you have siblings? Did you have brothers and sisters?

H: I never had any sister, but I had three brothers, two older and one younger.

A: So you were the third child in the family.

H: I was the only girl and I was a tomgirl, tomboy.

A: Had to be in self defense.

H: Whatever the boys did, I did. No matter whether it was walk the ridgepole over the barn, or whatever, climb a tree. (*Laughter*)

A: What kind of, as you were a small child, what kind of things did you do? You've already said you followed the boys. 015

H: We made our own good times, course we lived at the end of the road, so all of the neighbors gathered there, and neighbor's children. And many, many a time when my father'd get his chores done he'd come out and play croquet with us and do this, and then we'd go in the house and my mother would always, I don't know how she did it, she'd always have some little treat ready for us, and we had an old piano, and we'd gather around that piano and sing and have the best times,

just us (*Laughter*).

A: All it took, isn't it? Did you do special things when there were holidays with this group of young people?

H: We always did in school, on the holiday, we always had a program and the parents were invited in.

A: What school did you go to when you were a young child?

H: I went to the, now you're acquainted with Bangor?

A: Oh yes.

H: It was on the corner of the Griffin road and the Provo road. One room schoolhouse.

A: About how many kids were in the school when you were there?

H: Well, it went anywhere from seventeen to nineteen or twenty.

A: All grades?

H: All grades. We had the special teachers came in once a week, and that was for music and for penmanship. 032

A: Do you remember the name of the penmanship program? Do you remember the Palmer system that they used then?

H: Seems though her name was Wood.

A: And did you learn to make the circles and the straight lines?

H: Ayup.

A: That was typical.

H: We changed during that time somewhere we changed, course we had been upright, rigid, and they changed to the slant, and mine, my goodness you could hardly read it. (*Laughter*)

A: Mine's like that today. When you, in the one room school, could you describe it a little bit, tell what it was like, if you were telling a young child today what it was like when you went to school?

H: When I went to school? Well, I've talked to children.

A: I thought you had.

H: One of my granddaughters has arranged the first one, and then it went from that, different ones, different teachers wanted me to come in, and I enjoyed every minute of it. I get, it's awful funny some of it, I know they had, a teacher had a class that had questions on it, that they thought they might like to ask me, and here I set in my chair and they set down on the floor. So one of the questions was what was my name? And a little boy asked it, he said "what was your name, anyway?"

A: Which was very important.

H: Well I said "My name is Helen Agar(?) Higgins," and I says "I was named for my father's sister and my mother's sister." And the little boy says "Boy, that was neat, wasn't it?" (*Laughter*)

A: What did you tell them about a day in your school?

H: Well I started in by sayin' we walked to school, we had no school buses, and I said if it was stormy was the only time that we didn't walk, and if it was stormy usually the hired man carried us to school.

A: And how did he carry you? How did he get you there?

H: Horse and Buggy, that was the old days.

A: Did you pick up some of the neighbor children as you-?

H: Yes, yes we usually did.

A: And when you got there, what did you, could you kind of take us through a day when you were in the one room school.

H: A school day? Well, I don't, the schoolhouse only, well we called it the town(?)side, the side we went in, had the woodshed that we went into first, and then we went from that into our school house. And it was so maybe it was not as long as this room but as wide, and it was heated with what we called a pot-bellied stove, laid down on its side, took cordwood sticks, and it was heated. 067

A: So the room would probably be twenty, twenty-some feet.

H: Something like that, but we had good times.

A: Do you remember anything about of how the teacher managed keeping you all at work?

H: Well we had what we called our busy work, that we could play with or whatever, until it was time for us to have our class. When we had our class we went down front, and sat on the seats

down in front.

A: Who tended the fire?

H: The teacher.

A: The teacher did it all, none of the big boys then?

H: Teacher usually did, I suppose somebody must have started it and had it warm when she got there. When she was there she was the one that kept it going.

A: What did you do for a water supply? Your drinking water?

H: We had a well, a drill well.

A: Great, well let's go from school, what did you do as you got a little older and could take on chores, what did you do, what did you have for your chores on the farm? 080

H: At home? Well, my father had quite a large orchard, in fact he was born and brought up in Winterport and had a big orchard there, and so it was my brother Earnest and I every morning had to go into that orchard and pick up all the windfalls, because the cows run in it afterwards, and my father always says we'd feel terrible if one of those cows got one of them in their throat, choked to death. So he said "You be very careful, you pick every one up." And that was our chore every morning.

A: What did you do with them, with the windfalls?

H: Oh he ground 'em up and made (*unclear*) 089 and that made vinegar. (*Laughter*)

A: Self-sufficient.

H: Nothing went to waste, that's for sure.

A: And of course they were in good condition by picking them up every day, they didn't get any rotted ones or anything. What did you have for household chores, did you have things you had to do in the house?

H: The household chores?

A: Did your mother have special things you had to do?

H: I had to wash dishes, and I stood on a box that deep just to reach the sink. And I vowed if I ever grow up and get married and have a daughter she never will wash dishes alone. (*Laughter*)

A: Did you follow through on that?

H: That's right, and we were great pals cause we did everything together, we washed dishes and took care of them, we made the beds together.

A: The boys did this with you?

H: Ayep. 100

A: Great, now you said you had one younger brother, did you have to help take care of him, or were you enough older to?

H: The younger one?

A: Yeah, did you help care for him, take care of him?

H: Sorry, I had to help take care of him.

A: You didn't like that.

H: I didn't like it. I tell you in the first place he was a brat, he was six years younger, and my mother told me later on in years that she didn't want him.

A: Oh how sad.

H: And for that reason, she felt that he should have more attention, and so if he said "I want this," no matter who had it he got it.

A: That's not too different from what happens today. When you mention the dishwashing, did you have a special day of the week that you did laundry?

H: Usually.

A: What did that involve, as you were growing up?

H: Well we had a copper boiler that we heated, boil full of water to have hot water, and my mother had a stand, a wooden part came up that had the wringer on it, 'twas a hand wringer, and that was up above the tubs and then the water was put into one of them in the hot water and we scrubbed 'em and we scrubbed good. And I think I've got the scrubber out in the shed now (*laughter*). 119

A: Wonderful, now did you have water in the kitchen, did you have piped in water, or did you have it from the well.

H: No we had a system, in the cellar, and that was a pump to the sink.

A: So you used that for washing and you used it for dishwashing.

H: For drinking water we had to go across the dooryard to a well, drilled well, to get our drinking water.

A: Had it in a bucket in the kitchen?

H: Ayuh.

A: Probably did the same thing at the school too didn't you.

H: Yes.

A: The dipper?

H: Same thing, yep.

A: OK, with the laundry, course you hung them out, hung the clothes outdoors, did you hang them on your porch or outside?

H: Well of course we had quite sizeable washings, and we had clotheslines, we had to go out and hang them. And then when they were dry we had to go out and bring them in and fold 'em up.

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A: So that was a part of your work, what did you do for play, you mentioned croquet, did you have specific other things that you did for play, for fun in between having chores?

H: Well we had that croquet set, and we played croquet a lot.

A: What did you do in the winter for play?

H: Well in the wintertime we didn't do much of anything I guess.

A: Did you go sliding or sledding?

H: Oh yes, we had another thing that we had my brother next older than I, we had a neighbor that raised sheep, and when they, when a sheep would have twins, chances were at least one of them, she wouldn't own, and that neighbor would give that one to my brother and me, and we would take it home, and before we got done with it, we had a little sled, had pills(?) in it, and we used to harness that little thing up, and it would take us for rides.

A: What a wonderful memory.

H: Well as I've said you many time to children (*unclear*), I says we didn't have too much, but we never thought we were poor.

A: Well nobody else had more than you did they?

H: Now these kids have got to have so much, to keep them happy I guess.

A: Did you have other pets?

H: Well we always had a dog or two. I know we had one special dog, her name was Topsy, and she was very special to us.

A: Did she have, was she a pet that you had in the house or did she stay outside?

H: Well she was privileged to come in the house if she behaved herself.

A: She knew the rules. On your interview sheet you mentioned poultry, now was that on the farm you were growing up on as a child, or was that when you were adult?

H: Well we did as a child and then later on also.

A: Now did you kids have responsibility for the hens and then the chickens, or did your mother do that?

H: Well after they got to be a certain age, why then my brother took care of them, that was his chore, in the morning. He was to see that they were fed and watered.

A: Who gathered the eggs, do you remember doing that?

H: Well I really don't know. 166

A: They got collected somehow.

H: I have to tell you a funny thing, a child asked me, he says "How did you ever, how did you ever train those hens to lay those eggs in those little boxes." (*Laughter*) They didn't know much about farms.

A: Do you in living on the farm as a child , do you remember anything about how you dressed, what you wore for clothing?

H: Well my clothes, my must have made over, my mother was a seamstress, very fortunately(?) 175 and she could take almost anything and make a nice looking garment out of it.

A: Shoes, did that, do you remember anything about your shoes, your footwear, wintertime, anything of that sort? Nothing stood out.

H: About the only thing that I can, my brother who was next older than I, he we also learned pieces to speak on special days, and he always wanted to have a piece to learn, but when it come time to speak it he couldn't. He couldn't get up and speak it so I did it. I spoke my own and I spoke his.

A: You were his understudy. Oh that's wonderful. Well let's move on from growing up on the farm, I assume that you lived there until you were married, you lived on the home farm until you married Mr. Higgins?

H: Well I, no we didn't. When my folks sold the farm and moved to Kenduskeag, I was working in Bangor, so I had to board through the week, and I went home Saturday noon, I took the electric cars to Kenduskeag. And if my folks were there to pick me up I Ok but if it wasn't I just hoofed it home. It was a mile, a little more than a mile.

A: You'd done a lot of that.

H: And that didn't bother me, you know.

A: Did you, while you were working, were you contributing part of your income to the family or was it your money at that point, did you pay your mother something towards expenses?

H: Well, if we were staying at home, we did it in. The boys and I.

A: And then you met Mr. Higgins apparently, can you tell me anything about your wedding?

H: My wedding?

A: You're about to make a step now from the farm.

H: I had a very small home wedding, and my husband's sister was the maid of honor, and my brother was the best man.

A: Do you remember what you wore?

H: I remember it was a white dress, one that my mother had made for me, and some way or other she fixed up some kind of a veil, so that I was traditional bridish. (*Laughter*)

A: Did you take a wedding trip?

H: No, no.

A: Well now did you move?

H: Well you can call it a trip that it took a trip from Kenduskeag to Levant (*laughter*).

A: Now did you go right to the farm that you and your husband were going to be living on at that time, right from your wedding to the farm.

H: Yep.

A: So he was all established with a farm.

H: Yep.

A: So you started out as a bride, and became mistress of your own home, what kind of farming were you doing there?

H: Just general farming, we had a herd of Purebred Jerseys for stock.

A: How many did you have traditionally?

H: All told because we always raised the heckers(?) (*May mean heifers, but speaks with a distinctive k sound*) To go into herd and we had probably twenty-five or thirty all told.

A: That's a good size herd to milk.

H: It was a good many to take care of.

A: All the milking by hand, they did it all by hand, that took some time.

H: When I was about ten years old I wanted to learn to milk, so I did, and pretty soon my mother said what strength Helen has I can use her in the house, got to be so that Helen did the milking and they weren't my peel(?) 238 that much longer. She says "I think that what strength she's got I can use her in the house." So that was the end of my milking.

A: You aren't sorry are you?

H: No, I wasn't sorry.

A: You don't have very big hands, it must have been quite a stress on them. When you started out and you took over your home of course, were your housekeeping experiences very much like in the farm you had left?

H: Yes, very much so.

A: You'd learned to cook from your mother.

H: I'd learned to from my mother.

A: So you were ready to go on with cooking?

H: Yep. I never could equal her cooking, she made biscuits that melted in your mouth.

A: My husband says that about my biscuits too.

H: It wasn't because I didn't try.

A: But you developed your own qualities, they grew tall and thick. Describe it, tell me about your kitchen, what did you have in your kitchen to work with when you started?

H: The kitchen?

A: Yes, what did you have for equipment? What kind of a stove?

H: It wasn't very much, I know how happy I was when I got linoleum on the floor, it was a rough wood floor before that.

A: Miserable to wash, wasn't it?

H: You could wash it and it still didn't look good, so I was really thrilled when I got linoleum on my kitchen floor. And then I had a linoleum art square in the dining room.

A: Could you tell about that art square, because I don't think a lot of people know what an art square was? 267

H: Well, its a sort of a rug, and it I always kept mine in the dining room under the dining room table.

A: Did it have a border around it?

H: Usually.

A: A colored border in a pattern.

H: Ayuh, a colored border.

A: But it was linoleum. In your kitchen what kind of stove did you have, do you remember?

H: Just an old woodstove, best kind.

A: Black iron?

H: Black, had the warm and close it up over it (*both talking, garbled*).

A: You learned to test the oven, how did you test when it was hot enough for biscuits?

H: Open my door and put your hand in (*laughter*).

A: In the farm you moved to, did you have water in the house?

H: No, they had a system, the same, and that was pumped in the kitchen. And I'd been married

quite a long while when my brother next older than me gave me a hot water tank. Boy, what more could I ask for, hot water right there.

A: Did you continue using your kitchen as your bathroom? I know today's children can't possibly understand that farm people were able to keep clean without today's bathrooms and so forth.

H: Did you use it to what?

A: Did you use your kitchen as your bathroom, did you use a tub in the, a laundry tub?

H: We brought in one of the wash tubs, set it in front of the kitchen oven door, that's where we took our baths.

A: But I think this is hard for young people to understand.

H: Well young people that are starting in where their parents left off have everything.

A: But they don't, they haven't realized that you could keep clean and you could, you had good standards, even if you didn't have the same facilities.

H: But that hating to dust has stayed with me all of my years, and even now, I do almost anything rather than dust a room (*laughter*).

A: So that wasn't something you loved to do from childhood.

H: That's right, that's right.

A: But dust is the same no matter what generation you're in. You had children?

H: Do I?

A: Yes, how many children do you have? 314

H: Well I had five, but I lost our older boy.

A: Did you have them at home, or did you go to a hospital?

H: Sure, we always had 'em in our home.

A: Who helped you, who came, you had to have somebody?

H: Well usually it was a neighbor girl would come in and help.

A: Did you have someone with you during your actual delivery, did you have a-?

H: Well my husband was always there. I've always told him I couldn't have had my children if he hadn't been there and held my hand (*laughter*).

A: And your children grew up there on the farm too then.

H: Yes, I had three boys and a girl, one girl.

A: Same pattern that you grew up in, let's see what else you had checked off on your sheet, oh haying, that was one of the things you had expressed you were experienced with. Did you help at haying time?

H: Did I help? I guess I did.

A: Could you tell a little bit about what the process was?

H: Well of course in the beginning it was raked up with what they called a dump rake, dumped in bricks so long and then they made stacks of it and then they drove the wagon along and the men on the ground pitched them on, and we had a man on the rack that built the load, and I drove the horses. (*Laughter*)

A: Did you help with the raking also?

H: Yes.

A: Did your children ever help with making, building the load, did you ever have them-?

H: Everybody helped.

A: When you are all working in the field, what about dinner, was it something that cooked by itself?**351**

H: Well, I sometimes I wondered how I ever managed to, but I remember racing into the garden and picking some peas, and racing back and getting them shelled out, ready to cook, and things like that.

A: You shared some of the field tasks as well as keeping the house.

H: Yes, and my house was sadly neglected, as I said so one time there was no corners they was always rounded (*laughter*).
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A: This is the second side of my tape #1, talking with Helen Higgins. We were talking about the haying and getting it in and everybody working, then in the barn itself, could you talk a little bit about the barn, what it was like inside, did the children play in it?

H: The barn? Well our barn, the center floor was raised, and the place where the stock was was down lower, and on the other side, the far end of it was where the horses were stabled, and that was lower. We had to bring 'em out, bring them up this little ramp.

A: What about the hay storage, that was up in the loft?

H: Yep.

A: Did the children, your children or when you were a child either one, was the barn a place they played or did any?

H: Did they what?

A: Did the children play in the barn, could you remember playing in the barn?

H: We had a big swing in the door, which they could use when the door was open, and then we stepped down these two or three steps, and my husband had a horse and saddle which he rode a lot. In fact he did most of his courtin' that way (*laughter*). My mother made me a khaki cloth(?) You know what that was, split skirt to ride.

A: Your haying was your biggest summer project, and a garden?

H: Oh yes we had a big garden.

A: Who tended the garden?

H: Well, usually my husband planted the garden.

A: Who did the weeding? 414

H: That's a dirty word (*laughter*). Course I had to weed.

A: The produce, did you do a lot of canning?

H: Absolutely. And then when I got my freezer I did canning and freezing, and I still got a freezer right over there. That's only a nine-foot one but its chuck full.

A: I think those habits never die, did you make jellies, jams.

H: Yes.

A: Did you or the children harvest berries like field strawberries, blackberries, blueberries.

H: We always, my father always took us if it was a day when we couldn't hay, we, he took a pail and we each had our little cup, and we went off across the pasture to where the railroad went

across, and was always berries, either raspberries or strawberries, whichever was in season on there. But we picked, and came back with his pail full, which my mother canned and made jellies.

A: You had said before, you didn't waste anything.

H: There was nothing, nothing ever went to waste on the farm.

A: But there was a lot of creative use of it too. In the summer you had the haying, you had the garden, you had poultry, what did you do for refrigeration? 434

H: Well I had in my kitchen was a, we called it an ice refrigerator, it had a box on the top that a cake of ice would go into, melt and run down, and you were supposed to empty the bucket underneath, before it run over but seldom did. When it run over we realized it needed to be emptied.

A: And you got your kitchen floor washed anyway. Did your husband and family harvest their own ice, did they cut ice in the winter?

H: Oh yes (*phone rings in background*) we kept ice right down on the stream down here. (*Break*) 443

A: We were talking about the ice cutting, you said they cut it right down in Kenduskeag stream?

H: Well when you came out Union Street, you turned and came down on the hill, that little stream right there is where we cut our.

A: Did he do it by himself, did he have neighbors help him?

H: Oh neighbors helped, yes.

A: Where did you store the ice?

H: In an ice shed out back, with sawdust between the layers and on the sides to make it keep.

A: Where did you get your sawdust, do you remember?

H: Well there was a sawmill up above here, and we always had a load hauled in ready for the ice.

A: Whose responsibility was it to get the ice out in the summer and into the icebox? Did anybody particular do that?

H: Well I guess usually it was my husband that did it, I know I didn't.

A: Well you had to be there to mop the floor (*laughter*). Did you have a cellar floor that you also kept things cool, with a dirt floor?

H: It was a dirt floor, then eventually we had it cemented over.

A: But cool enough to keep a lot of things there too. And you kept all your canning in the cellar, shelves and so on?

H: Ayuh.

A: Did you store apples, potatoes and root vegetables in the cellar?

H: That's right.

A: Did you have an orchard on the second farm? 460

H: Not a big orchard, just a few. One thing that we children particularly liked we did have a big pear tree, and the pears off of that were so good.

A: And your mother canned those?

H: Yes she canned them and she just canned them as pears, she spiced 'em, and did lots of different things.

A: Did you have a crabapple tree?

H: Sure did.

A: Did she used to preserve those as spices?

H: We made crabapple jelly, and course they were small like that, and my mother had a recipe that she spiced it, oh it was so good.

A: Left the stems right on.

H: Ayuh, left the stems on.

A: They were really not a pickle, they were halfway between a pickle and a sweet.

H: Course now I couldn't eat anything like that, anything that's pickled is off my list, I'm on a low sodium diet.

A: But there's a lot of good things you can have just the same.

H: Well I see sometimes people, and my husband was the same way, before he tasted anything he took the salt shaker.

A: That was such a habit wasn't it?

H: And I'd say why don't you taste that first?

A: Cause you'd gone to the effort of cooking it. You mentioned on your survey sheet that you also had dairy products, did you have a milk room or a dairy room?

H: Yes. 480

A: Did you have a separator, did you separate milk?

H: Yes we had a separator.

A: What did you do with the skim milk?

H: Sold it to the pigs (*laughter*).

A: Well it was one of the components of your pigs' food, did you raise a lot of pigs or just for family use?

H: Well we usually had one that had pigs, and we'd keep one of her litter and sell the others.

A: So it brought in a little extra to help pay for the feed. Now did you make your own butter, did your mother, did she make butter?

H: She did, but I when I was up doing on the farm I bought my butter.

A: In making the butter, did you sell your cream, since you didn't make butter yourself?

H: Yes.

A: You sold the cream to a dairy (*background noise, someone entering house, conversation*) 493

A: We had a small interruption here and we'll return to where we just talked about the ice harvesting and managing with food preservation, did you do sewing in the family, did you grow up, were you doing sewing for your children?

H: Oh yes, I did it, when I first moved over here, I did a lot for other people, I started in with shortening the coats for a lady who just lived down the road a little bit, and I had a son-in-law that was in the service, and he said he would put a ticket up on the, in there that I would do repair work and sewing, but he never had to, just from shortening that coat I got more work than I could do.

A: So you actually had a little private income, in addition to, that must have made you feel independent didn't it?

H: Well, it was nice to have, but I was honest and when I reported my income I reported that. I

was brought up by parents that believed that honesty was the best policy.

A: That's still a good policy.

H: It is, it is.

A: Now did you teach your daughter to sew?

H: Oh absolutely.

A: Now by the time your children were growing up, had 4-H come into this neighborhood.

H: Oh yes, my girls belonged to 4-H.

A: Did you say, when we were on the phone I think you mentioned your husband led a 4-H club.

H: Yes, he was leader of a 4-H, boy's 4-H club, and they always gathered at our place.

A: That was your tradition wasn't it? What kind of projects did the boys carry in their 4-H work?

H: Usually raisin' heifer, they had one girl that belonged to it, and she had her heifer that she raised.

A: So she was a little bit ahead of her time, wasn't she, beginning of women's lib? What other kinds of social activities were there, both when you were growing up and after you began living on the farm, you had 4-H, what else was in the community?

H: Well, they had the grange of course, that was the big-

A: And did you both belong to the grange?

H: Yeah, and I still do, I don't go too much, because that's evening work, and I don't know, it seems harder for me to get out in the evening too much.⁵³²

A: Well what about the grange, today a great many people don't even know what the grange is.

H: The grange is having hard work to keep going.

A: Changing culture, changing society, but at the time you were a member, what did the grange provide for the community. Could you describe what it really was about?

H: Well they, we used to have our meetings and studied different things you know and bring up different things we felt would be a benefit in the community, and things like that.

A: Related to farms, farm life. Did your grange experience include grange fairs, did you have a

fair?

H: Oh yes.

A: What did you do at the fair, what did you have to do with it?

H: Well, I don't know.

A: Did you exhibit?

H: Oh yes.

A: Could you say what you exhibited?

H: Well our handiwork and things of that sort.

A: Did you exhibit your canning, any cooking? They did those things too.

H: Ayuh.

A: Handiwork, you said you sewed, did you do embroidery, knitting, crocheting, all of those?

H: Yep.

A: Where did you find time?

H: Well, there never was a minute that my hands were idle. If I had something in the oven that I had got to watch, I was very apt to sit over there where he is, where I could be sure and remember, and I had something in my hands working on it, and there while I was waiting.

A: And you handed that on to your daughter I hope?

H: Well, she is a good deal, very much like me.

A: Were there any other social events, what about church?

H: Oh yes, I belong and attend the church at Levant very regularly.

A: And you brought your children up in the church school, Sunday school.

H: Yep, yep.

A: Were there any events at church, other than the regular services?

H: Well, every so often they had what they called a fellowship luncheon, and we all took

something, and set down after church and had our dinner, lunch whatever you wanted to call it.
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A: Did you ever have things like box socials, pie socials?

H: Oh sure.

A: Could you describe a box supper? Because today's generations don't know what that's like.

H: Well, I will describe one that my husband took our hired man for a ride. He had told this hired man that there was a certain box he wanted, and he told him "you're not gonna have it because I'm gonna have it." So the minute that that box came up, course my husband was in the bid for it. Well that was the cue to the hired man so he bid on it, and they run that box clear sky high (*laughter*) and the hired man cussed my husband "you did that to me, you did that to me."

A: Did he let the hired man get it finally?

H: Oh yes, he didn't want it.

A: And of course this would be like an auction wasn't it, the boxes were auctioned.

H: Yes that's right.

A: This usually the church got the money, was it a church box social or the grange?

H: That was at the grange, but the church doesn't have boxes, no.

A: Well what about the boxes themselves, could you describe how you prepared a box?

H: Well we usually took a shoebox, and lots of tissue paper and different colors of tissue paper and made it all up fancy.

A: And then what did you put inside it?

H: Well sandwiches and cookies.

A: A good meal.

H: Stuff that was good to eat.

A: So whoever bought your box got to sit with you and eat is that right?

H: We were supposed to sit with them and eat, yes.

A: A lot of what your husband did went on I think. (*Laughter*) Now did you have pie socials?

H: Not very often, once in a great while, but not very often.

A: Because essentially they were much the same idea, auctioning pies.

H: The same idea, auction 'em off, yep.597

A: Did you have anything to do with the farm bureau?

H: Yes, it was connected with the farm bureau.

A: And the extension?

H: And the extension, ayuh.

A: Did you do anything with the county fairs or anything that you went to or participated in?

H: Well, my husband did one year, he exhibited at the county fair.

A: But you didn't go that far with exhibiting.

H: No, not usually.

A: Did you, were there social gatherings at the homes, with families?

H: We had awful good times, we used to go for around here, we always celebrated everyone's birthday, if they had a birthday we always went there, and sometimes we'd work for an hour maybe picking over beans or tacking a quilt or doing something that that party wanted, and then we played cards. 613

A: What kind of card games did you play if you remember?

H: Usually sixty-three or eighty-three.

A: OK, did you ever play whist or bid whist.

H: I used to a little but not too much.

A: Sixty-three was a very popular game. What did you have for treats, what was a, like today we'd call it snacks or refreshments, what kind of things?

H: Well, I usually had maybe a little dish of salted peanuts or unsalted peanuts or whatever, that set on the table while you was playing cards, and of course if you take one you've got to have some more (*laughter*), if I just didn't take that first one, I was alright.

A: Now what about the children, did they have parties too, did you have parties for the children as

they were growing up?

H: They used to have their parties.

A: What did they do at their parties?

H: Well they played games usually mostly.

A: Did they do things, did they pop corn?

H: Yep.

A: Did you raise your own pop corn?

H: We always popped corn and strung it to decorate the Christmas tree.

A: Did you raise your own popcorn?

H: Yep.

A: What about, did they ever have taffy poles, did you ever do that sort of thing, making molasses taffy?

H: Well, way way back I can remember a cousin of mine that had a taffy pole.

A: That was kind of fun too, very hot stuff to handle.

H: My mother had two nieces when she was married, I've always said that my father was very brave to marry a woman that already had two girls, their mother had died of slow consumption at my mother's house, and the father of the girls didn't want them. So my mother brought them up, and when they got old enough so they could work and earn, he came and wanted them. One of the girls went with him, they lived in Boston. The other one says "No, I'm not goin' to leave auntie, she has taken care of us all these years, and I'm stayin with auntie." So she did until she-

A: Like a sister for you then.

H: Yes she was.

A: That was quite common wasn't it to take in a family member, they didn't bother with adopting or anything, just brought them up. 660

H: I never could understand why he didn't want his children.

A: Well perhaps he couldn't cope.

H: Course it was good to me, because we were very,very close.

A: A pretty responsible thing for your mother to have done. Are there any other things about the farm where you were involved, did you have any women's group where just the women got together?

H: We had in the church a group that used to get together and they used to make aprons to sell, and as I say tack quilts and things like that.

A: So you could socialize and talk, share, good and bad if necessary, gossip a little maybe?

H: Well we might have a little (*laughter*).

A: Are there any other things that you are remembering about farm life as a woman that we haven't touched on, anything that you'd like to share?

H: Well it's a very busy life, has to be.

A: You were working with no electricity, so what did you use for lights?

H: We used kerosene, and every day the wicks had to be cut and the chimneys had to be cleaned.

A: And the lamps and lanterns filled. Whose job did that become? Who had the responsibility in the family for doing that?

H: Well, usually I did in our home.

A: As the mother; when you were growing up did your mother do it, or did that get assigned to you?

H: I don't remember. Probably, I learned how to do it at some point so probably she did it.

A: Where did you shop when you had to have things that you didn't raise on the farm?

H: In Bangor.

A: You were right near the city, so you could shop rather easily.

H: We were ten miles out of Bangor, that was our shopping center.

A: But how often did you actually go shopping?

H: Oh, we didn't shop very often.

A: You were very self-sufficient. When you went on a typical shopping expedition, what did you

shop for?

H: Course there was, towels was one thing, washcloths, and things of that sort that we couldn't make.

A: And of course you bought your kerosene, did you buy it by the big can?

H: We bought a five gallon can of kerosene.

A: Cause that had to be used for the lanterns for the barn.

H: The lanterns for the barn and the lamps for the house.

A: When you started a wood fire, did you do that awful thing of pouring kerosene on the wood to start it quickly?

H: I'm afraid I have (*laughter*).

A: Nobody mentions that, but that was a risky thing. 725

H: Had to be awful careful.

A: Those were challenges. Well we've covered a lot of ground, do you have any other things that you particularly would like to share that I haven't asked you?

H: Well I think we've covered things pretty well.

A: Well, I don't, I was checking to see if you had mentioned that you didn't really bring in much of any other income except you said you did your custom sewing. But nobody on the farm went out to work as a part of the farm income. Well this has been delightful, this has just been a wonderful experience going back with you.

H: Well I've enjoyed it, I can honestly say I did dread it a little bit because I didn't know what I was in for.

A: Well thank you so very very much for this, this is a generous gift of yourself.

H: Well I've enjoyed it too, I really have.
(*Tape ends*) 746