

Interview with John Dahlman
Evanston, Wyoming
October 19, 1991
Interviewer: Marc Crompton

MC: Where were you born John?

JD: I was born in Almy, Wyoming and lived at the Dahlman place.

MC: Was there a mid-wife?

JD: Yes, I believe it was Miss Salomela.

MC: What was your first recollection of Almy?

JD: Going to school at the old three room school house.

MC: Did you have books and paper like now a days?

JD: We started out writing on slate then we went to books and paper. In the eighth grade I went to Clark school in Evanston.

MC: Where did your Dad work?

JD: He worked at the #3 coal mine until it closed. I quit my freshman year of high school and went to work for my dad.

MC: What was the form of transportation?

JD: Used horses and buggies for transportation.

MC: What kind of stores were there?

JD: There was a general store, a post office, and a few saloons.

MC: Did people hunt all year round?

JD: Yes, people hunted year round without many laws stopping them.

MC: What did you do for fun as a kid?

JD: A bunch of us used to go fishing with our stick fishing poles down on the Bear River and sometimes end up swimming.

MC: Did your Dad ever trap?

JD: Yes, he did.

MC: How many family members were there in your family?

JD: I come from a family of nine and I was the sixth one.

MC: Did you live anywhere else as a kid?

JD: I lived in Cumberland for a couple of years till 1911. Then moved back to Almy.

MC: How long did the mines stay open?

JD: Most of them were closed. My Dad and his brother Ed and I worked a little mine for some time. I worked there until 1942. Then I went to work for the highway department.

MC: Did you ever go down in a mine?

JD: The mine went down on a slope and then there was another opening called the air vent. It had large fans blowing air into the mines and circulate back up the slope by the direction of the big tarps.

MC: Was it pretty dark down in there?

JD: When we worked we had carbide lights that we wore. If you didn't have a light, yeah, it was dark.

MC: Was it hard working down there?

JD: Yes, in the Almy mine they had all hand tools. We had a hand drill and a Johnson and Thompson machine. We would start in next to the roof the about 2 feet down we would cut back in 6 or 8 feet and put dynamite and then shoot it. Each time we would have to lay track out of the new hole. Then we would load the cart and the horses would take it up to the top by a pulley system.

MC: Was there any problem with poison gas?

JD: Yeah, the #4 mine was gassy every morning. Before we could go in there the State Inspector would go through it and see if the air was circulating. The year I left they went to a closed light with battery.

MC: Did they ever take canaries down in the mines?

JD: No, they never did take canaries down in the mine.

MC: You started working in the mines in 1934?

JD: Yeah, I started in the later part of October and worked until April.

MC: Where did you go after the mines?

JD: I went to work for the Wyoming Highway Department.

MC: What were the roads like back then?

JD: They were mostly dirt and some of the good ones were graveled.

MC: What kind of machinery did the highway department have?

JD: They had small road graders. When I worked there I had a little Austin Weston. They had graders with tracks on them.

MC: What was it like going through the depression?

JD: It was very hard. We lived on county road. We would get together on the weekends and have a pot luck dinner and send someone out for a jug of beer. You had to watch your pocket book and make due with what you had.

MC: What did you do for work?

JD: Worked on some of the ranches in the hay fields.

MC: Was there a lot of people who didn't make it through the

depression?

JD: I think we all made it. There where several families that left here. The Church was helping some of them out.

MC: When did you retire from the highway department?

JD: In 1976.

MC: Was Evanston a big town ?

JD: No it wasn't until the oil boom. Almy was a small town along side of Evanston.

MC: When did the mines shut down ?

JD: They closed about 1947. My brother,dad,and a friend ran a pony mine.

MC: What else do you remember about Almy?

JD: Down on Moon Way there use to be a dance hall then there was the old boarding house and the company stables. Next to it there was a big hall turned into a school house. They didn't have electricity for the mines so they had fire men for the boilers,the water was pumped from the river. Also there was a depot and a bunk house.

MC: Did the trains just go to the mines and not past them.

JD: Yeah,they went to the #8 mine then came back to the main track.

MC: Was Almy road the main traveling road?

JD: Yes but it was called the lower road. Also they had an upper road that went to the mines.

MC: Was there many people that lived in Almy?

JD: Yes there were quit a few.

MC: What was the first automobile you remember?

JD: One of the Model T's.

MC: So you were in the period when they changed from horse and buggies to cars?

JD: Yeah, I remember Herbert Warberton having a motor cycle.

MC: How did the people react to the automobile?

JD: Some dealt with it and others didn't. Most the people put there cars up on blocks in the winter.

MC: Did they have any way to plow the roads?

JD: No they didn't in the early days, only the state highway. The winter of 1936 was bad. In the spring they had to open the roads with big cats.

MC: How did the ranchers put up their hay?

JD: When I worked for Simses they had a bunch of horses that pulled mowers, rakes, and a couple of push rakes.

MC: Did you ever use a beaver slid stacker?

JD: NO, we used the jig and swing stacker and I also used the push rake.

MC: So how did the push rake work?

JD: The rake was in the middle and the horses where on the out side.

MC: Did they have any farm equipment as far as tractors?

JD: When I was working for Simses they had a sunky plow with four horses. I operated a disc and plow. Then later on they cam out with the tractor.

MC: What was the first tractors?

JD: Some had tracks, and some where steam powered.

MC: So what else did you do for fun?

JD: The people use to go to the church for dances and meals.

MC: Was there a certain age you had to be to be able to hunt?

JD: I suppose there was but I don't remember. We all had 22's.

MC: What were the ranches like?

JD: Some where large operations and others where small.

MC: Was there any land being bought?

JD: It was all settled and there wasn't much land being bought.

MC: Was there any bad winters around here?

JD: There was a bad winter in 1928. Dad had to go out on skies to the Burns and feed the horses. Some had already died.

MC: Did they use horses and slays back then?

JD: Yeah,they used to feed with them. You would pitch the hay on the slay with a pitch fork then go and feed it off.

MC: Was the hay ever frozen?

JD: When you first opened up the stack it was frozen in some places and you had to take axes and cut it.

MC: So you did a lot of haying during the summers?

JD: Yeah.

MC: Was there anything else you did?

JD: Ya,I did some fencing and helped shear sheep.

MC: How did the ranchers get their cattle to market?

JD: They took them to the stock yards then shipped them out by train.

MC: Was there more cows then sheep?

JD: They were about equal.

MC: What was the main road?

JD: U.S. Highway 30. It was only two lanes. IN 1934 it was paved to Fort Bridger.

MC: What do you remember about the 20's. Was there proabition?

JD: There was proabition and a lot of moonshining done on the side.

MC: Do you remember any flapper girls?

JD: I remember them a little bit.

MC: What was the economy like back then?

JD: It was a lot lower than today. In 1939 I worked down at the round house for 30 cents an hour. Then I went to work for a ty company till March. Then I went and helped Simses with the sheep.

MC: How much money did you get a month for herding sheep?

JD: I got \$40 plus room and board.

MC: So has Evanston been a good place to live?

JD: Its been a good place to live except when the boom cam.

MC: What was bigger Almy or Evanston?

JD: At one time Almy was bigger than Evanston. There was a general store and a couple of saloons. One was on the Crompton Ranch where you live know, and the other at the #6 mine.

MC: Did you have to make your trips count going into Evanston?

JD: Yes the parents went on the weekends.

MC: What did you keep your food in?

JD: We put the stuff in barrels in the ice house.

MC: Did they do any smoking?

JD: Yes.

MC: Was the brewery a place to get ice and beer?

JD: Yes.

MC: What stores were around here?

JD: Blyth and Fargos which was an all around store, and the Beam and Cashin which was a tack store.

MC: Do you remember any Chinese?

JD: Yeah, China Mary.

MC: Did you ever trap?

JD: Yeah, a little bit.

MC: Thank you John.