

ORAL HISTORY OF JOHN DAHLMAN

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HISTORY OF WYOMING

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Almy, Wyoming, a small populated town outside of Evanston "was a good place to live", says John Dahlman who now lives in Evanston, Wyoming. John was born November 13, 1907 in Almy, the sixth child out of nine to Lauri and Anna Dahlman. There was a midwife and her name was Mrs. Salamela. The house that John was born in was a log structure. They heated and cooked on a stove. There was no electricity and the bathroom was outside. He had chores to do just like other kids back then. They moved to Cumberland for a couple of years and then back to Almy in 1911.

Almy Road as known today was then called the Lower Road and also the Upper Road that went to the mines. "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," state John.

The town of Almy had a general store, post office, and a few saloons. "One of the saloons was at the Crompton Ranch where you live now and the other one was at Number Six Mine." Quite a few people lived in Almy, it was bigger than Evanston at one time. Horses were the only means of transportation. There were a few people with cars, but they were only driven in the summer and put up on blocks in the winter until spring. When asked if John's family had to make their trips count into Evanston he said, "Yes. The parents went on the weekends and we put the stuff in barrels in the ice house". The Blyth and Fargo, an all around store, and the Beemin Cashin, a tack store, were stores he remembered. He remembered the first automobile and also remembered Herbert

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Warberton having a motorcycle. As far as maintenance or snow removal, did they have any way to plow the roads? John answered. "No they didn't. In the early days in the Winter of 1936 it was bad and they had to open the roads with big cats. So John said, "I was in the period that changed from horse and buggies to cars".

When John was a little boy he would go fishing with the other kids with stick fishing poles and would sometimes end up swimming. He would also go hunting. Back in those days a person could hunt year around and not get in trouble with the law enforcement.

John went to school by a horse-pulled sled in the winter and the rest of the time in buggies. He went to a three-room school house. There the students used slates to write on and then later books and paper. In the eighth grade he went to Clark School in Evanston. He quit school his freshman year and went to work for his Dad and brother, Ed, where he helped dig and load carts. They ran a pony mine, a little mine.

John said when asked about the twenties, "There was prohibition and a lot of moonshining was done on the side". He remembered the flapper girls a little bit. What was the economy like back then? "It was a lot lower than today." "In 1928 my Dad had to go out on skies to the Burns and feed the horses. Some had already died " replied John. Then in September of 1934, John married Augusta Ellen Peterson and they had a daughter, Carole and one son, John Larry.



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When asked about the depression John said, "It was very hard. We lived on County Road. We would get together on the weekends, have pot luck dinners and send someone out for a jug of beer. We would go to the church for dances and meals. You had to watch your pocket book and make due with what you had". John said he worked on ranches in the hay fields. " Several families left here and the church helped some of them out" John said.

"In 1939 I worked down at the round house for 30 cents an hour. Then I went to work for a tie company til March. Then I went and helped Sims with the sheep. I got \$40 plus room and board for herding sheep," explained John.

When John worked for the Sim's Ranch they had a bunch of horses that pulled mowers, rakes, and a couple of push rakes. John said, "The rake was in the middle and the horses were on the outside. We used the jig and swing stacker and I also used the push rake. When I was working for Sims they had a sunky plow with four horses. I operated a disc and plow. Then later on they came out with the tractor". Some new tractors had tracks and some were steam powered. Did they use horses and slays back then? "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. When you first opened up the stack it was frozen in places and you had to take axes and cut it. " said John. He also did some fencing and helped shear sheep. How did the ranchers get their cattle to market? John said, "They took them to the stock yards then shipped them out by

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train." John stated that some of the ranches were large operations and others were small. There was very little land being bought. The land was all settled.

John started working again in the coal mines the latter part of October, 1934, until 1942. "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. When we worked we had carbide lights that we wore. If you didn't have a light, yeah, it was dark", expressed John.

Was it hard working down there? "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 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" said John.

Was there any problem with poison gas? "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. They didn't have electricity for the mines so they had firemen for the boilers. The water was pumped from the river", informed John. He stated the trains went to the #8 mine and back to the main track.

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After the mines John went to work for the Wyoming Highway Department in 1942. John retired from the Wyoming Highway Department in 1976. During the early years on the highway department, the roads were mostly dirt and some were graveled. Highway US 30 was two lanes and was paved in 1934 from Evanston to Ft. Bridger. The machinery was small road graders with tracks. "When I worked there I had a little Austin Weston", replied John.

Was Evanston a big town? "No, it wasn't until the oil boom," he said. So has Evanston been a good place to live? "It's been a good place to live except when the boom came," responded John.