

Sandra Henkle

History of Wyoming
Interviewing Mr. William Gibbs

November 11, 1983

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This Sandra Henkle interviewing Mr. William Gibbs at 1305 Main Reliance, Wyoming. We are sitting in Mr. Gibbs living room where it is a very cozy atmosphere.

Mr. Gibbs was born in Cumberlyn, Wyoming in November 21, 1906. There was a midwife in the attendance of his birth there was also a doctor. Mr. Gibbs's family lived in Superior in 1912, then moved back to Cumberlyn for 1 year in 1917. Then they moved to Reliance in 1918 and have lived there ever since. Mr. Gibbs family arridgeinated from Scotland and Wailes. His grandparents were born in Albany, Wyoming.

Mr. Gibbs came to Reliance 3 weeks before school was out. All he did was read books and watched train cars. In those days coal came from the mine from the tipple on an endless rope one mile from the tipple mine. Each coal car is 100 foot apart if one went off the track it caused a big reck. Some of the houses had bells in them to sound to stop the cars so for three weeks all Mr. Gibbs did was read books and watched the cars. If you sounded the bell because of a derailment you got a big box of chocolate, so in three weeks he had quite a lot of chocolate. He also trapped gophers to pass the three weeks by.

His mother and all his brothers and sisters came from Cumberlyn on a train. His father hired a man to pick them up from the train station in a car. The car was called a HAL 12 that was the only time he saw a car like that it was a big seven passenager car. That was the first automoble he saw in Reliance. The miners walked to work because it was not that far to walk. Reliance's street was named Main Street because it is the only street in town.

There was no indoor plumbing all the plumbing was outside until the 1930's. The water supply came from every third house were there was a hydrent. the baths were taken in the kitchen in front of the big pot belly stove door open. Mr. Gibbs has not lived at this address all of his life. He has lived at three different addresses with is parents. Since he married Mrs. Gibbs this is the third address. the houses in the mining camps were made of wood with lawns and gardens. In fact at one time they gave prizes for the best yard and gardens. In spite of everything they took great pride in fixing up their yards to get first prize. Some people got the prize several years in a roll. A lot of them were foreign. They knew different and some times better ways an growing things.

The chineese in the early days had their own

settlement. There was a few among the white people but most of the minority groups stayed together. In a mining camp there is usually a company store. They had different ways on paying for supplies they had charge accounts, coupons that you signed for and it was deducted of your pay. They also used a metal called script for money that they could draw from the company stores office and would be charged toward your working time. The biggest town was Rock Springs which was 8 miles away.

There was only one bar, but there was never any burlesque shows. All the entertainment was usually local. Bands such Bobby Burns doings, traveling orchistras, cummunity council furnished the entertainments, dinners, contests and square dances. There was hardly any violence, they didn't even need a sheriff. There was a community church that LDS organization the Cathlic people mostly went to the town of Rock Springs for services.

The worst situation Reliance was ever in was a flash flood. Were they stored the rail road cars along the ditch well the water was so high it moved the cars they also stored the timber there it was all washed a way.

There was never any major illnesses in Reliance, but in Supeior were he use to live the diphtheria scarlet fever epidemic hit. Mr. Gibbs lost a brother in 1916 to this illness. There was a local doctor who had a office and a waiting room dispencery, and a small examining room. He had charge of all the miners, he also took care of all accident victims and any sicknesses that occured. Some of the remedies one Doctor Joanne Ferrra had a bunch of bumalobs made up of white powder for infection that was the most effective thing Mr. Gibbs saw. He also used dressing soaked in solution which drewed the infection out. Before antibiodics came in there was burning sulfer which was always on top of the stoves. They used sulfer and molasses for spring tonic, for a cold pinex a mixture of honey and pine tar.

There was even a union hall it was located were the little store sits today. The local union number was number 905. The outside of the union hall has not changed much the inside use to be one long hall. For the holidays such as christmas they would decorate christmas trees, sing carols and a Santa Clause came around every year. He would stop at each house and deliver goodies to each home. They also celebrated New Year's a lot. There was a lot of Scotch people here. At that time they did what is called First Footen, they went to each home from midnight on. If they stopped at your home you gave them ginger breads and something to drink, if they stopped at your home it was supposed to bring good luck for that year. They were a very loyal community when it came to funerals the whole town

went. There was only one undertakers parlor called Rogans undertakern parlor. Most burials are in the Mountain View cemetery. Mr. Gibbs grandfather was buried there in 1906.

Mr. Gibbs can not remember any black families living in Reliance, they lived in Dianse and came to school in Reiliance. There was many orientals living here there was more japanese then there was chineese. They were very friendly Mr. Gibbs says they were the finest people in the world. At one time they ran all three boarding houses in Reliance. The only indians he can remember ever being in Reliance was a pitcher on the baseball team named Chief White Tree.

Some of the games they played were kick the can, run sheepy run, hide-and-seeek, lonely Peg, and one game they played with a broom stick you take about 4" off the end of a broom stick and sharpened both ends, and use use the rest of the stick as the bat. Then you hit the little end and swing it as far as you can knock it. It was worth as many points as how far you hit it. It was interesting how they used to go out over hills and everything. They use to go out and cook potatoes and eggs with out any problem.

Mr. Gibbs went to school in Supieror grades 1 through 5, in Cumberlyn grade 6 and in Reliance 7 through 8. he went to Rock Springs to go to high school. The attitude in the schools was very good. On one occusian in the 7th grade one of the local boys aunt was the teacher and he got in some trouble, so she called him to the front of the room and made him hold out his hand and whacked him with a big heavy ruler. All he did was grined at her, so she whacked him again and again all he did was grin she was very mad by the way he acted. Some of the ways they use to get out of school earlyis there was a big pot belly stove they would melt their crayons. They also put garlic on the stove that would let them out for at least a couple of hours until the hour was a little better. They would also go along the track and pick up the beat pulp which he said was a terrific smell that's how they got out of school. There was anly three rooms and eight grades. They read a lot of books.

The kid were taught to take part at home. Mr. Gibbs job was to bring in the coal and wood. he always brought it in before he went to bed. If there was no wood and coal his dad would make him get out of bed to bring it in. Every child was expected to do his share of the work such as washing the dishes and clothes. The first washing machine was a hand opperated one. He had to push the handle back and forth until his dad rigid up an electric moter to push the handle. For birthday presents were mostly clothes and always a cake. Everybody bought different article of clothing such as shirts, socks and pants. On the disciplining the parents didn't believe in just in talking

to you if you had a whoopen coming to you you usually got it. The father of the family saw to the spankings. They were very strict in those days. If you were arrested that brought disgrace to the family. One time Mr. Gibbs had just bought a Ford roadster. Some of his friends got together and was heading to town to watch a baseball game. On their way to town on the road by pump house number 6 he passed a guy. When he got back home that same car was sitting in front of his house. His dad called him in and this man said, "if you don't value you life you should value the life of others." His dad gave him the choice of either getting ride of the car or finding a new place to board, since he liked were he lived he sold the car. One other time Mr. Gibbs got in trouble was in the hay barn which use to stand across from my house at 1460 Main Reliance. All the kids would go and play in it making tunnels. The door was locked, but they use to pull the bottom of the door open to get in. The parents would always send Mr. Gibb's dad over to run them out of the hay barn. Mr. Gibbs was always the last one out. There was a big platform in front of the door. Mr. Gibbs was always the last one out and his dad would plant his boot to his back side so he would land off the platform. The parents were very strick they expected obeidence, there was a lot of love but at the same time you have to tow the mark.

Mr. Gibbs ment his wife in 1932 the first date the went on was on New Years Eve at the Wyoming theater. Back then the moves only cost a dime to get in. There use to be a small place were you could get a hamburger and a bowel of chili for a quarter this place use to be were Fanelli's musice store is today.

Mr. Gibbs parents use to go on vacations to Salt Lake City were they went to his grandmothers place. When the kids got older their father would take them fishing and camping. There were a lot of dances they use to go to all the dances at Green River, Whiten, Dianse, Reliance and Supeiror. Nobody took anybody to a dance they just went along for a good time everybody danced with everybody. After dancing they went out and ate, there was not much drinking done at the dances.

Mr. Gibbs married Darhl Granely in 1932 they were married in the Salt Lake Temple. They were married on May 6 1932. Mr. Gibbs was 25 and Mrs. Gibbs was 23 years old. Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs have five children one boy and four girls. Mrs. Gibbs had one child born in the house, the others were born in the hospital. The Gibbs have 23 grand children.

Mr. Gibbs first job was for the company at the tipple. He greased coal cars. From there he worked through all the jobs, even in the car repair shop down to weigh men. He was a mine office manager until the mine shut down. As the mine

office manager he was in charge of the payroll, materials, rent, coal, and shipping. Mr. Gibbs started at the tipple at \$4.44 as a mine clerk. Monthly wages was about \$50 to \$60 dollars a month. When Mr. Gibbs was married he was earning \$4.76 a day. There was some weeks he only worked two days, so he was living on \$15 dollars a week. The company deducted expenses such as, lights, rent, and coal. Holidays back then you didn't work them you didn't get paid for them.

Mr. Gibbs belonged to the local union #905 United Mine Workers of America. If you didn't belong to a union you didn't work. In 1920's there was a lot of liquore brought in. Mr. Gibbs thinks men drank heavier during the prohibition then when they could but it out straight. A lot of people think some deaths were caused by bad liquore.

Mr. Gibbs is retired now but he has a hobby of growing plants. He has a green house on the side of his house. He has a lot of different kinds of plants growing in it. Mr. Gibbs is very happy with his family and his life.