

Tina Amanda Olson Oral Interview
December 6, 1978

Interviewer: This interview is with Tina Olson, age 79, of rural Barnesville, Minnesota. Taped December 6th, 1978 at her home. When did your ancestors come to America, Ms. Olson?

Tina Olson: In 1866.

Interviewer: And that was your grandparents?

Tina Olson: Grandpa Ole Holt came with his brood of children. He had two sons and a daughter that had come to America before he did, but he couldn't come until he got the chance to sell his property in Norway. He had to have that money to pay their passage. But the others had came earlier, those young people. They came, and they worked, earned and saved money and sent some of what they earned back to Grandpa Holt. So when Grandpa Holt got his property sold in Norway, then he came over with the rest of the family. All together, he had 11 children.

Interviewer: Where did they land?

Tina Olson: They landed at New York. Then from there, they came by train to... Worked their way by train and by bus to Freeborn County in Southern Minnesota.

Interviewer: Did he ever tell you any stories about Ellis Island, where they landed, or New York City at that time?

Tina Olson: His daughter... No, his oldest son that came over ahead of him was married, and when they landed in New York, their two year old boy died. So that boy was buried in New York City. That's the first one that we knew of out of our relatives that we buried here in the United States.

Interviewer: Yeah, that would have been on Castle Garden in 1866.

Tina Olson: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Rather than Ellis Island.

Tina Olson: Yeah. Yeah. It was very bad.

Interviewer: You had some ancestors who had landed in Canada?

Tina Olson: Yes, the oldest daughter, Oliana, she and her husband to be... They weren't married yet, but then she was with a group of people. The people all landed up in Canada, and they worked their way up in Canada and finally came down. They ended up at Wheaton, Minnesota. There she married that one, [Nafsa 00:02:57], that became

her husband. From there, they drove with two oxen. That was their wedding trip. They drove all the way with those two oxen from Wheaton and came to see their folks out here after they had come up to Pelican.

Interviewer: When did they first come up to Clay County or Wilkin County?

Tina Olson: Mother and them were living down in Freeborn County. It must have been part of two years because in that first year, they just barely got the dugouts made by when fall or winter set in. Then the next summer, Mrs. Ole Olson took sick and the baby. She was an infant when they came, but she was over a year, not two years. Both she and the baby died from typhoid fever. From what they could tell after that, it was impure water that took their life.

Interviewer: So your grandfather was left with how many children with him?

Tina Olson: He had eight children.

Interviewer: That's quite a number to be on your own with.

Tina Olson: Yeah. And the oldest girl was... I think she was 16.

Interviewer: Do you know why they came up to this area?

Tina Olson: Yes. They left Norway because of... The big part of his family were boys. He, like many of the other people that lived in Norway, didn't want their boys to go into conscription. That was government controlled. When the boys got to a certain age, they had to go into service for the country. Some of these Holt boys then, see, they got married, and when they get married, that was an excuse. They didn't have to take that draft or be drafted.

Interviewer: Were there other settlers that were in this area already that they'd followed?

Tina Olson: Yes. There were several of them that they moved from Norway. One was another brother that was going to come over, and that brother had money enough. So he offered to pay the passage for one more of the Holts. I called them Olson, didn't I? Olson, Holt. They were going to pay the passage for that one boy with the idea that that boy would pay for his ticket after he got a chance to work here, and he did. He was a good husky boy. He paid for his ticket, and he sent money back. So by the time that Dad came, that boy was sort of stationed at Pelican at that time. He had come up and worked around in the territory, worked in the woods and things like that. So he knew what was what before Dad got here.

Interviewer: They kept close contact with the homeland when they were first here then?

Tina Olson: Well, not too often. I never heard the folks say that they heard very often from the folks back there. They were just glad that they were in America from my understanding.

Interviewer: Did the original letters written back... Did that play an important part in your grandfather coming to America?

Tina Olson: Yes it did from what I understood.

Interviewer: The America letters that were sent back, who were those written to?

Tina Olson: Oh those were written to the oldest boy. The one that got married and came over. They mentioned Arne, and that was that second oldest boy that worked and sent money back. So both of these that are mentioned in the letters here are boys that came over before Grandpa did. They sent money back, and then Grandpa finally did get to go. As the one letter here specifies and talks about that, "Ole Holt plans on taking his family and go to... The letters here verify that.

Interviewer: They always reported favorable conditions in America and encouraged the others to come?

Tina Olson: Yes, but after they have lived then in Freeborn County, and they came up to the homestead, they homesteaded in through there, lived in through there for some years. By that time then, the oldest daughter that was with them, she married a [Resoff 00:07:58]. They farmed and went down to a homestead to the north of Pelican. Arne and three of the other boys were old enough now to go and take homesteads here in the United States. So some took on homesteads west of Pelican and others went up to Grafton and took homesteads. It got to be so that all the boys, as they got older, got ahold of land, everyone of them. Ole, himself, just stayed by that homestead that he picked out there in Norwegian Grove Township, where he knew some of the people that had homesteaded before he got there.

Interviewer: What did they have to do to get land then?

Tina Olson: They had to be a certain age, and then they had to work the land and put in a certain amount of field and live certain number of months per year or out of the time as debt. When the time when they didn't have to be on the land, Dad worked on the Red River Valley on boats, the Red River up north here. He worked in handling shipping, grain and so on, on those flat boats.

Interviewer: Do you know where they would ship that to?

Tina Olson: It was floated down towards the cities [inaudible 00:09:25]. Others went and worked on... There was a flour mill that was started up north at Fergus Falls. That's where everybody took their wheat there to be ground and that had to be [inaudible 00:09:43], so somebody got jobs doing that, going back and forth with oxen, bring back flour.

Interviewer: Did they become citizens right away?

Tina Olson: Yes they did. Dad's folks came about the same time as mother's. Dad was older, so he didn't have any trouble getting citizenship papers. He got that. It was my

father's [inaudible 00:10:09]. Some of mother's brothers were younger, and they had to wait for some time.

Interviewer: Do you know if they had a hard time adapting to the English language?

Tina Olson: No.

Interviewer: Did they speak any English at all when they first came?

Tina Olson: Yes, I think Dad worked could. See, he came and he worked here and there, so he got more accustomed to the other language more so than the women did. I never heard Dad say that they had any trouble with any business or anything because he didn't understand the language.

Interviewer: They spoke Norwegian in this area, though?

Tina Olson: Oh yes, they spoke Norwegian. It was of course the name of the home and it wasn't until the schools came out that they... Then everybody seemed to switch. By that time, they were accustomed to a lot of the English language any way brought in through here.

Interviewer: How long did you speak English in your home as a main language?

Tina Olson: Oh, I don't know when we changed actually. It must have been as long as we had Norwegian services. That seemed to make them stay more to the Norwegian. After we turned and switched and got English services, and then our parochial school became English, then our Norwegian seemed to leave.

Interviewer: Norwegian was spoken in the church, though, for...

Tina Olson: Oh yes, until... That would be... I was confirmed when I was 14. Oh, it'd be 18 or 19... No, 1899. It'd be 1906 or so, or something like that, that they changed, and it became more English. By that time, we had English and Dutch and Swede and Scotch people in our neighborhood, and we went to school together. After that, it didn't bother us.

Interviewer: What can you tell me about your church here that was started?

Tina Olson: When the folks came up from Pelican to Norwegian Grove, there was a lot of trees there. The people were so used to going to church in Norway, they didn't think of going, starting a community without having a church. So all those that knew each other from Norway, they went together and made a suggestion that each family bring a log for each boy they had that would become a member of the church. Some said that even the girls had their logs brought. All that was donated, so they built a log house. It was called the Immanuel Church.

Then they had Reverend [Rossott 00:13:32], who had started that church here in Rothsay. He came out and took charge of this new church, this log church. After

mother and dad came out here and homesteaded here, they carried their first daughter to North Immanuel Church, a trip of 10 miles, walking, carrying the baby to get baptized.

Interviewer: Was there a church built closer then?

Tina Olson: Yes, then years later, folks out into further west then, they wanted a church closer by, so then they got together. My dad and mother's brothers and another sister, they all moved together... because they were all farming out into this area. They started the Little Bethany Church.

Interviewer: Which still exists?

Tina Olson: Which still exists and is two miles from our home here.

Interviewer: About when was that built?

Tina Olson: That would be about 1880 or it can be before that because [Emma 00:14:55] was baptized 18... About 1840 maybe, but that's more [inaudible 00:15:15] because [inaudible 00:15:16] memorable. They were based in Bethany. Must have been around 1840.

Interviewer: Have you went to Bethany all your life then?

Tina Olson: Yes, we've been members of Bethany the longest.

Interviewer: What do you remember about some of the early pastors in that church? Were they Norwegian also?

Tina Olson: Yes. No, all we ever had... Since it became... Until we used English. Then the nationality didn't make any difference. So then we had had German and Scotch, but the Norwegian was common then at that time when we... Like I said, that changed. [inaudible 00:16:01].

Interviewer: Was there a lot of social activity centered around the church?

Tina Olson: There were ladies' aides, the nurse girl aide, but there was nothing special for the men that I can remember at any time except when it was a holiday and they served a full dinner. Then the whole family was included. But otherwise, it seems like the church work was left to the women.

Interviewer: How about weddings and things like that, were they conducted in Norwegian at the church for a long time?

Tina Olson: Yes. They would be in Norwegian. Mother and her younger sister were married in a double wedding. The day before the wedding, the boys went to Olaf Lake, and they shot a deer. They had that venison for their wedding dinner. The wedding was held by Reverend Rossott at the little log church, Immanuel Church there in Norwegian

Grove.

- Interviewer: About what percentage of Scandinavian people were in this area at that early times?
- Tina Olson: I think there were... On this side of Pelican, I think you could say 80% anyway. There were not very many others. They seemed to go a little bit further west, more towards [Bowlus 00:17:50] and Breckenridge.
- Interviewer: Was there any rivalry between Norwegians and other ethnic groups that you know of?
- Tina Olson: No, we didn't have any. I can't remember hearing of any that I know of. I don't think Mother ever spoke of any rivalry.
- Interviewer: How about Scandinavian newspapers? Did you receive any in your home?
- Tina Olson: Yes, Dad used to have a paper. Then if Dad didn't have one, then another family might have some. The paper would travel from farmhouse to farmhouse. They'd all get a chance to read the news from Norway. It was common.
- Interviewer: Did you ever read any of those yourself?
- Tina Olson: Yes, I did. We never kept any of them.
- Interviewer: Which one was that, do you remember?
- Tina Olson: [Norwegian 00:18:49] and [Nortmann 00:18:51]. That's a Norseman or Norsemen I suppose it's called in English. Those were the papers that [crosstalk 00:19:03].
- Interviewer: What type of information did they have in them?
- Tina Olson: They would be writing about the families in Norway and what Norway was doing and how the world was going and so on. That was common, just like you would if you had a paper from here. Everyday events would come in there. Of course, in there would be something regarding their folks back in Norway.
- Interviewer: Do you remember any special Scandinavian foods you used to eat quite often?
- Tina Olson: Yes. Let's see. When Grandma Holt died, oldest sister [Maya 00:19:46] had to become chief cook, but Grandpa Holt was good at helping. They lived in Norwegian Grove Township and one neighbor lady, a Mrs. [Karnes, Ruth 00:19:58], was a very good cook. She helped Maya to make all different types of milk foods. Milk was so cheap at that time, and when they had a cow, it got to be so [inaudible 00:20:17]. When they were here, the first thing they bought was a cow. [inaudible 00:20:22] used to save all the milk. They used it in all different types of mash, soups, cheese. Cheeses of all kinds.

Interviewer: Those were all homemade cheeses?

Tina Olson: All homemade. [inaudible 00:20:37]. Oh yes, quite a bit. We still have some [inaudible 00:20:44] here that we grew on the place here when mother and them moved out. We still have it for seasoning. We don't make that cheese anymore.

Interviewer: How about Christmas around here? Was that always kind of Scandinavian also?

Tina Olson: Yes. Our Christmas in our family was. They all came home here. Dad thought to it, "We've got a big enough house, so even though the children... As the children grew up and the families got larger, they were all welcome to come home for Christmas. They all brought something. It got to be always butchered a hog so we all had pork for Christmas. With that, we had to have lefse made out of potatoes. It was flat bread. That was made out of flour. It was a crispy bread that was very good.

Then there were some cheeses also. Like I said, milk was used for many things, all kinds of cream mash, milk mash, rice mash and so on. Then when they butchered... Especially when they butchered a pig, they saved the blood and made what you call blood sausage. Klub you just call it in Norwegian. That was very good with pork. And the best potatoes.

Interviewer: Did World War I have a very big effect on this area?

Tina Olson: Yes, it did because at that time then, the oldest boys out of every... All of the boys came in that age were... They could expect to have to go into service. Some volunteered, and some waited for a draft. My two oldest brothers went. The third brother got to be old enough, but he got exempted because he was going to stay home here and help Dad on the farm. Then my fourth brother passed the examination, but then the war ended before he had to go into service. That was the general run of almost every family around here. If they had boys that age, [inaudible 00:23:10]. They had to take part.

Interviewer: Do you remember the war yourself?

Tina Olson: I remember it just enough to remember it was my first year of teaching. I had taught six months in another school, and then I got into this one. I went to my Uncle Arne's school. Before I went there, my brothers went in the service that summer, in between my first teaching and my second term. Then when they went, there got to be so we had what we called house gatherings for every boy that went. Every family had it. As each boy went into service, there was always a family gathering. The boy was given some money for passage or whatever it was that he needed.

Then when the war didn't last too long, my second year of teaching was in Uncle Arne's district. It was all planned ahead of time. The war ended. If they really signed the Armistice papers, everybody was going to just celebrate. I was in the school house, and I heard the church bells start ringing. They rang from North Immanuel. They rang from Bethany. You could hear it there at the school. So I told them to

ring the school bell. They rang the school bell, and we sang My Country, 'Tis of Thee. Then I dismissed school and let them all go home. Didn't ask any school board, but permission on... There was no demand of any makeup day for it. It was just celebrating that day.

Interviewer: What school was that that you taught at?

Tina Olson: 201 in [inaudible 00:24:57] County. That's the one district that part of the Holt family lived in.

Interviewer: Was that a school that Norwegian was spoken at?

Tina Olson: Oh yes. They had spoken Norwegian in that school much longer than our district here, where we live, in District 19. The reason for that is they were all Norwegian out there. Some or another, I suppose, the teachers or maybe the teachers were Norwegian. They just got by with just Norwegian.

Interviewer: Did you speak Norwegian? Were you taught at that school?

Tina Olson: That dialect that they have, that some of the Norwegians had. It was [inaudible 00:25:44] different than the Norwegian that we spoke.

Interviewer: Oh does it?

Tina Olson: Yeah.

Interviewer: When you were teaching at 201, were you teaching in Norwegian?

Tina Olson: No, I taught all English.

Interviewer: But there were a lot of Norwegians in the school?

Tina Olson: Everyone was Norwegian that came to school.

Interviewer: What reason do you suppose that it was being taught in English at that time? Was there just an attempt to Americanize the settlers?

Tina Olson: I don't know why. I don't think you could get books. I never saw a Norwegian arithmetic or reader. Yes, I saw an ABC book in Norwegian, but not any reader for any other middle grades or anything. But a reason for English was I suppose that the government wanted us all to use the English language.

Interviewer: Do you think that World War I tended to make immigrants more patriotic and become more Americanized?

Tina Olson: Well, I suppose so. They got a different outlook at life. A war teaches us something regardless a good war or bad war. We learn from it. Of course a lot of more inventions and things developed.

Interviewer: Do you remember any bond sales or Red Cross drives in the war?

Tina Olson: Oh yes, in my first year, when I taught... I taught six months that year. I had to buy a bond. Dad was on the board to go around and get bonds. I bought a \$25 bond, and I still have it in the locker back. I never used it.

Interviewer: How about the Red Cross drives?

Tina Olson: Red Cross drives were wonderful. The ladies in this territory here did wonderful work. My aunts knitting sweaters, caps and gloves and stockings. Young and old spent their whole social gathering with their knitting on the table. You could run short of yarn or wool to knit and get it from Pelican and get it from Fergus. It seemed like that they used up so much and for a long time after even the war was over, there was the demand for it, so they kept [inaudible 00:28:23].

Interviewer: You talked about when you were teaching. Could you tell me something about what education you had to have at that time to teach?

Tina Olson: Well, I didn't have much. I finished the eighth grade here, in the country. Then we went to Barnesville to go to high school. I worked for my room and board and took in high school one year. Then I got a notice that if we could go to Teachers College one summer session and take a teachers' test that we might get a permit to teach, and that's just what I did. I went to summer school after one year of high school and took a test. I got my permit to teach, and that permit lasted me for just that one next year. I taught on that permit.

But then in order to continue teaching, I went back and took in another summer school, the whole summer, and earned more credits, and then I got a little better permit. So I didn't have to go back. I taught two years and so on. I kept on working, and I taught. I never missed a day or a year of school. I kept on until I got my degree.

Interviewer: That was in Moorhead?

Tina Olson: That was in Moorhead Teachers College.

Interviewer: How many years did you teach all together?

Tina Olson: I taught 47 years in three counties, Otter Tail, Wilkin and Clay.

Interviewer: Was most of that in country schools?

Tina Olson: All but the last 10 years. By that time, so many of the country schools had been consolidated or joined in with the city. Of course, the bus transportation was pretty good and that became [inaudible 00:30:14]. The country schools were closing.

Interviewer: Did you kind of hate to see them close?

Tina Olson: I did. I hated to see them close. I thought the younger grades wouldn't be able to take all that driving in cold. Roads were not the best yet.

Interviewer: How many students did you usually have at a time in a country school?

Tina Olson: I had [inaudible 00:30:45] my first year. I had as many as 42 at one time and all grades.

Interviewer: That was all taught in one room?

Tina Olson: Yeah, one-room schoolhouse. District 19 had an extra room for a library and so on, but I taught in grades. [inaudible 00:31:12] by the third, fourth and fifth grade all throughout.

Interviewer: What school was that at?

Tina Olson: Most of it was at the Riverside School, Riverside District. It's over not far from Concordia. There I had children from doctors, lawyers, dentists, professors [inaudible 00:31:35] school and all such. I had wonderful children. The folks there had taken their children along on trips so they were so much better to [inaudible 00:31:45] books [inaudible 00:31:45]. They could understand what they read so much better from all the travels that they'd had. The environment had been so much better for them.

Interviewer: You retired from teaching then in what year?

Tina Olson: 1965, I retired.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy your years as a teacher?

Tina Olson: Yes, I did. Some would say, "Why don't you quit teaching and do this and that?" [inaudible 00:32:15] taught driving. I drove for many, many years in the country, in the country roads [inaudible 00:32:20]. But I love children, and I like to see them make progress. It was just a wonderful thing at the time. When we used to have state board examinations from... I felt, "Well, if I can get my children to pass those state board examinations, then my teaching must be all right." I did. I had wonderful results from pupils answering the state board tests that had presented. [inaudible 00:32:48].

Interviewer: Do you remember when you were in school yourself, attending school, did you have to walk to school?

Tina Olson: Yes. We had half a mile here to walk. Dad [inaudible 00:33:01] took district land... The homestead is on what they call a tree plain and so we had planted trees for a half a mile distance along the edge of the one quarter. When it stormed in the wintertime, then Dad always said, "Well, you just stay by the trees. Stay inside the trees, and you'll never get lost."

Interviewer: What was your school like?

Tina Olson: We always had nine month school at home here. That was the only one district that had such a thing. We had many children coming in from other districts to go to school here because we had so much more school, a longer term, especially for spring and fall. Winter terms or schooling was not so good for some because the roads were bad.

Interviewer: Was religion taught in your school at all?

Tina Olson: Not during the school period, but the school house was used for village's instruction, and some of the English and the Scotch people that came, they didn't have any church. You'd see that they could understand services. They had pastors come out from Barnesville, and they had services in District 19 on Sundays. That was almost every Sunday.

Interviewer: Do you remember some of your early teachers?

Tina Olson: Yes.

Interviewer: Did they speak Norwegian in the school at that time?

Tina Olson: No. We were lucky. Those that they got, the teachers, were some of those people that had moved in, and they'd had some school. We had [Hayes, Cloustone 00:34:44]. Boys and girls when Cloustone taught here. Then we had Young... There were people from... that we were lucky. It seemed like our people... I think the reason for it was too that we'd put some English men on the school board, and they too wanted it to be English so that they wouldn't have that trouble with speaking.

[Walter Peak 00:35:10] was the fellow that had to do with ordering books. At that time, every family had to buy their own books, whether it be geography, arithmetic or history, didn't make any difference. There was one man in the district that had charge of ordering that from the book companies and that was Walter Peak here. We would have to go to his house and order. In order to get a book for the next year, you had to go and order.

They wouldn't order unless you ordered. You had to share books. Many children came to school and their folks had no money and it got to be we were sharing a reader whether another person ordered it and they [inaudible 00:35:55] another person... State finally made a regulation that the school itself should order direct from book companies not have to go through-

Interviewer: Then were the books paid for by the school district?

Tina Olson: Mm-hmm (affirmative), then the school paid for it.

Interviewer: How did the early teachers get paid? Was it by the government or would people in the area pay for the teacher?

Tina Olson: Now, that depends on the district. If the district wanted to, they had a chance to... They had two chances. If you had nine months school and what they call a full-fledged teacher, so she had papers to teach, then that district drew a large amount of money each month from the state. If you didn't... If you hired a girl that didn't have full papers, they lost money. It was prorated according to how many children you had and what the credentials the teacher had. Like I said, we had nine months here. There were a lot of the schools around here that had only six months a year and they lost a lot of money in that way.

Interviewer: You were mentioning something about when the grasshoppers were through the area here.

Tina Olson: Yes, that was when mother was small. There was a real bad year of grasshoppers. They came. They thought a storm was coming. It was getting cloudy. Mother talked about it several times how awful it was. Grasshoppers came so thick, like the blackbirds sometimes swarm in in bunches. There the grasshoppers came. Big swarms of them came. They landed down on whatever it was that had... This table. They would strip the grain down so there'd just be stubble left. There was nothing they could do about it.

Interviewer: And your mother had a job then?

Tina Olson: Yes, mother worked for one family before she was married. She worked for one family quite a while. One job she had was to watch their root field. If she could see a swarm of blackbirds come along, she had to go out there and pound on some tin or on metal of some kind and scare them away. Then she'd go back into the house again and help with some housework.

Interviewer: So grasshoppers and blackbirds were both quite attracted to crops?

Tina Olson: Yes. Yes, they were.

Interviewer: Do you know about how many years the grasshoppers plague lasted?

Tina Olson: That wasn't too long. The worst one was that one year when it just took everything they had. It has never been as bad since.

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed in farming since then?

Tina Olson: Oh my.

Interviewer: I suppose there's so many it's hard to mention anything. What type of machinery would your father use on the farm?

Tina Olson: He had that walking plow. [inaudible 00:39:11] plow. [inaudible 00:39:12] at the

time. You had to walk behind it pulled by two horses. Some people used one horse. Then finally it got to be so he had a sulky, where you got a ride on the plow, but all the dragging around... It drags [inaudible 00:39:29] to make the ground more even, not so lumpy. You had to walk behind that. Finally, they made some kind of two-wheeled car, passing behind it. The driver got a chance to ride behind, but he got all the dirt there was.

Interviewer: Do you remember getting the first tractor on the farm here?

Tina Olson: Yes. We had gang plows and they of course [inaudible 00:39:59]. You'd have three layers and four layers on them. Then shortly after that, we started getting tractors. That was something to see. Horses were just scared to death of that tractor out in the field, and so they had quite a time handling the two different kinds of rigs in the one field.

Interviewer: What did the first tractors look like?

Tina Olson: I can't really describe it. There wasn't much to it. Big wheels in the back and a tank for fuel. Oh no.

Interviewer: Would all the... Oh, excuse me.

Tina Olson: I was going to say I remember one time our land out west here had a hill of slopes down to the slew. We had so much wheat that year. The crop was good. The boys were busy. Sometimes I think it seemed like they were going to get it shocked and everything. Anyway, I was going to drive the tractor in front of the binder. Going down that hill, I stopped the tractor and I said, "I'm afraid I'm going to tip over going down the hill." My brother was sitting on the binder. His [inaudible 00:41:27]. He says, "No, you won't. You just go straight." I don't think I've ever been as scared in my life in any time as I was going down that hill with that tractor. I had the feeling we were going to tip over, but it went all right.

Interviewer: So you used to pitch in and help on the farm too?

Tina Olson: Oh yes, we had to help them drive, and we did a lot of shocking. The girls did a lot of that, but that was better when they didn't make the bundles so big. Then shocking wasn't so bad.

Interviewer: At thrashing time, would all the neighbors come and help on each farm?

Tina Olson: Of course, to begin with. When you had a field, you had to keep your bundle. You had to stack your own grain. I know when the war was on, World War I, we had 55 large grain stacks of wheat. 55 stacks, oh my, that was a job. My sister and I, we had to help because the two boys were in service. Two oldest ones were gone. My brother [Johnlon 00:42:28] was the one with Dad and Dad wasn't feeling too good at that time. He [inaudible 00:42:37] every stack. He stacked every one when we hauled in the bundles.

Interviewer: Do you remember were the years awful hard here during the Depression?

Tina Olson: Yes. At that time, we had been raising quite a bit of potatoes. Then all that drought came and Mother then said, "We've got to raise potatoes." That had been our money crop for quite some time then instead of just all wheat. We planted potatoes. It got so dry they didn't even sprout. When they worked the field up later on, all the seed was there in the ground just dried up.

Interviewer: How many years was it that it was that dry here?

Tina Olson: Oh about three years, I think, it was dry. They had to just all the old spots. It was no use using the hills.

Interviewer: During years of the Depression when crops were better, did you have a hard time selling them?

Tina Olson: No, I don't think Dad ever had any trouble. He never [inaudible 00:43:57]. We had that big granary area. It was big. Then we had other big oat bins to put into the barn on two sides of the barn upstairs. He roomed all the feed and everything that he needed. He didn't have to sell any of it. The granary was for the wheat and barley.

Interviewer: Were you teaching during the Depression?

Tina Olson: Yes. I started teaching in 1917.

Interviewer: Did you notice any changes in the kids during the Depression?

Tina Olson: Oh yes. They'd come to school without over shoes and maybe shoes that they'd had all summer. I can just see one little boy come to school, and it had snowed that morning. Here, he came to school and he had stockings on the heel was worn out of. He was so cold when he came in that honestly... Well, we had to put the kids up by the heating system and thaw them out.

Interviewer: How did the coming of World War II affect the people here in Prairie View Township?

Tina Olson: There were not so many right at that age [inaudible 00:45:24] through here. It didn't seem like it affected us quite as much. I had several nephews that went. They were just getting into that age now then. I had one boy that was in service and he landed in enemy grounds. Airplane was shot [inaudible 00:45:54], so he landed on an enemy grounds. He claims that he was saved. Catholic nuns over in France had saved his life because he wouldn't have made it otherwise. They had some kind of oil that they put on to where he was burned. After he got back to our country here, he had to have skin grafting and eyebrows and eyelids and hands grafted many places and finger nails even.

Interviewer: Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

Tina Olson: Yes. That was quite a day also. That shocked the people. It was a different feeling entirely. You're wondering why Japan had to do that. Some or another, I don't think the people knew that any conspiracy was going on.

Interviewer: Do you think people were expecting the war to come to America sooner or later or were the people really isolationists?

Tina Olson: I don't know. Dad always said, "Oh, there'll always be wars somewhere. The people can't live together." He said, "[inaudible 00:47:19] more wars." Of course it's true.

Interviewer: What was the sentiment in this area? Did people generally favor going to war or were they pretty strongly opposed to it?

Tina Olson: When I think of the boys that were in service in World War I, they were mostly drafts that took the boys, not so many volunteers. Then when it got to be the Second World War, if the boy had gone to school, then he volunteered. He could pick and get into a certain branch of the service that he wanted. I think there was a difference then.

Interviewer: Do you remember any anti-German sentiments in this area during the war?

Tina Olson: No, I don't think so. Nothing that strikes me that it's worth remembering.

Interviewer: At the time, did you know that there were German POWs in Clay County or didn't people really know that?

Tina Olson: No. We didn't know.

Interviewer: Did you have victory celebrations at the end of World War II also?

Tina Olson: Not as much as with World War I because it seemed like the boys were all over and their time coming home was not so much at one time. It was staggered.

Interviewer: What do you remember of the home front during World War II? Do you remember the iron drives and Red Cross drives and bond sales in that period?

Tina Olson: Yes. That was quite a thing. Some people didn't want to give anything. They felt like they'd given a boy. They shouldn't be asked to give anymore. That was [inaudible 00:49:14], but no [inaudible 00:49:14]. There's territories here, [inaudible 00:49:19].

Interviewer: At the time the war ended, how did you feel towards Russia then, the people in this area?

Tina Olson: It was just a feeling you don't have anything to do with Russians, whether they were good or bad. It didn't make any difference. Just because they were Russians, the feeling was such, to not to have anything really to do. I think some of that still

[inaudible 00:49:49].

Interviewer: You're the secretary of the Prairie View Township pioneer club.

Tina Olson: Yes.

Interviewer: What is the name of that again?

Tina Olson: Daughters of Prairie View Pioneers.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little bit about that organization?

Tina Olson: There were just a few of us got together one day and just had a nice visit. Then the one girl, she was a teacher... had been a teacher. She said, "Why don't we start a meeting of the daughters, of the people around into here? We could get together and we'll keep in touch with how things were going with everybody?" We were six, I think, at that one first meeting.

Interviewer: When was the first meeting held?

Tina Olson: 1942.

Interviewer: And the organization's still going today?

Tina Olson: Yes. That's still going today. We had as many as between 50 and 60 that came for a while, but now it's down to... We had 13 last summer.

Interviewer: What type of things do you still discuss at your meetings?

Tina Olson: We always discuss what becomes of this family and that family, family histories and especially regarding the veterans and who's in service today, what they're doing about service. That seems to be the big thing.

Interviewer: Do you have just one annual meeting now every year?

Tina Olson: One meeting a year.

Interviewer: Speaking of family histories, you've done an awful lot of research on your family history too?

Tina Olson: Yes.

Interviewer: Have you had real good luck doing that?

Tina Olson: Yes. We know quite well. I have some here. I don't think there's [inaudible 00:52:15] here. Maybe there's some things I could mention on here regarding our family. Mother and Dad had 16 children. They all grew up healthy. All lived until they're 65 or more and able to work. Life wasn't always easy here, but then by

taking part, everybody doing a certain chore that they had for each day. Whether they'd be girls or boys, [inaudible 00:52:56] some chores had to be done.

By getting more and more utensils to work with... It seemed like in a pioneer home, there's always a spinning wheel, coffee grinder, wheat crackers and hand churn, large iron kettles that were used for making their soap and all such. We had all of those things. Knitting of course was common. All of us, when we went to school, we had wool stockings, wool caps, wool mittens that were always homemade.

Interviewer: Was your clothes generally all homemade also?

Tina Olson: Yes. My third older sister took up dressmaking by going to care taking from a lady in Barnesville that had some schooling in it. She got the job so she sewed for the whole neighborhood out here. She'd go to a farm, and if they had three, four girls, my sister would stay there maybe a week or 10 days and sew. She'd sew for all of them. She got to where she sewed the boys' shirts or trousers just as well as the ladies dresses. She did that all her life. She died at 83.

Interviewer: How long have you been working on your family history?

Tina Olson: Well, I got interested in the family history with this Pioneer Daughter unit and then a quilting party contacted me. They wanted to get as many of the family histories into the county book as we had collected in our Pioneer Daughters. Then I added some more regarding our own family to that. That's in the Wilkin County book. I have that book, but it's down at the neighbors' right now.

Interviewer: So have a lot of the families around this area done family history?

Tina Olson: Yes. Yes, they have. We have some real good ones too. [inaudible 00:55:14].

Interviewer: Is there anything you'd like to mention in closing?

Tina Olson: I'm living here in the home place yet, but the boards on the outside of the house are getting to where they're so porous. The weather seems to be coming in. We'll have to be moving out some of these days. The home place is sold now so George has part of it and Robert has the other part.

Interviewer: Because they're both brothers of yours?

Tina Olson: They're brothers.

Interviewer: [crosstalk 00:55:56].

Tina Olson: George and Robert. Our home farm is still kept like when Father and them got it.

Interviewer: Do you think it will stay in the family for another generation then?

Tina Olson: Yes, it won't be sold [inaudible 00:56:13]. As far as as we know, there's no plans of

any selling.

Interviewer: Do you know about when this house was built?

Tina Olson: Yes, it was in 1902.

Interviewer: 1902? What did they live on here before the house was built?

Tina Olson: When the folks first came out here, they had a log house put up. That had two rooms downstairs and an attic. The attic had curtains to divide it off into two rooms. After a while, they divided it into three for the children to sleep in. Then that log house was built up here on the same hill as this house is standing. As the family grew in number, Dad and Mother had six girls before they had any boys. Then when the boy came, then they built a new house down below the hill and into the trees to get away from some of this hard wind.

Then the family still kept on growing until they had 16. Then they decided they needed a larger house. Then my dad said, "Even though they leave home, we want a place that they could come back to even though they were grown up and [inaudible 00:57:42]." Then they built this house that we're living in now out here on the hill.

Interviewer: What became of the old log house?

Tina Olson: The old log house, they used it for a granary for years and then finally it was dismantled. The other house was used for a chicken house and the upstairs of that house was sort of a grain bin. We put the feed for the chickens and that stuff up in there.

Interviewer: Anything else you want to mention?

Tina Olson: We used to have a coal stove, the main heating in this house. That went of course night and day. It was wonderful. Then finally oil came in and since then we've had two oil burners. It's piped in so we don't have to carry the oil in or anything. That's piped in and that's what we use for fuel here now. In closing, I'll just say I'm glad I had the experience I had living here and being with a big family, sisters and brothers. They're all healthy and all enjoyed getting together.

Interviewer: That's really remarkable that out of 16 children they all lived to be 65 years old. So many families weren't that fortunate.

Tina Olson: That's right. The oldest one living now out of the folks now is 93 going to be 94 next spring.

Interviewer: Where is she right now?

Tina Olson: She's at a home, [Broens 00:59:38] Home at Fergus Falls. She's arthritic so... but she's up out of bed every day and sits in a wheelchair.

Interviewer: I thank you very much for sharing your experiences with us. I've enjoyed talking to you very much.

Tina Olson: I'm glad to have... I don't know how much good experiences I could tell you. [inaudible 00:59:58]. I've never given any life history before [inaudible 01:00:03]. I think our family was a good sample of what they had to go through.

Interviewer: Pioneering wasn't an easy experience.

Tina Olson: No, but as long as you're well, you can take it. If you're a healthy body, work doesn't hurt anyone.

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much.