

Idaho Panhandle Oral History Project  
Interview with Alice Carnie  
October 25, 1979  
Mica, Idaho  
Interviewed by David Barton  
Questionnaire Information

AC = Alice Carnie  
DB = David Barton

Tape 18; Side 1

AC: 1890 my father and then my mother came. Her sister lived on this farm right across the road. She never met him but she met him after she came here. They were married in 1892.

DB: Where did your mother come from?

AC: She came from Pennsylvania. My father, from Ohio.

DB: What part of Ohio?

AC: North Fairfield.

DB: What had your mother and father done when they were living in Ohio and Pennsylvania, respectively?

AC: Well, they were only twenty. And they had, they had worked for my grandfather, I think. He ran a newspaper office there in North Fairfield.

DB: Did your grandparents come, at all to North Idaho?

AC: Yea. My grandfather and my step-grandmother. They came after my parents did, though.

DB: When did they move here?

AC: That was the little house I showed you, that was on a hill. It was a house that they built for them.

DB: Is any of that left now?

AC: He, he. Well, it's kind of divided up. It's part of a granery and part of a barn. The top they put on it as a top for the barn. But it isn't as it was, at all.

DB: Is that the building there?

AC: No. Not the...no, you can't see it. No, it's the wood barn. The barn that we had, my son built. This yellow barn.

DB: And, have you lived here ever since, since you were born here?

AC: I lived here until...well, I went away to college in 1922. Then in 1925, my husband and I got married. And we worked here then. Not very much til 1943 when we bought the farm from my father, when they were ready to retire, and got a house in Coeur d'Alene.

DB: How big was the farm at that time?

AC: It was 181 acres.

DB: 181 acres. What did your father do for a living?

AC: Sold logs, apples and...

DB: Where would the apples be sold to?

AC: To Spokane Fruit Growers Association. And then they would be shipped East.

DB: How were they shipped?  
AC: By train.  
DB: By train. Where was the terminal for that?  
AC: In Spokane.  
DB: So, he would transport the apples to Spokane?  
AC: Hm-hm.  
DB: Was that by wagon?  
AC: I suppose. There were a lot of them that went together though. They may gone together hauling them over there too. They may have gone by train. I'm not sure about that. There was a train that came in here then. Of course, my father came on the train. He didn't come on a prairie schooner like some of them did. He came on a train.  
DB: And where was the...do you remember where he got off the train, did it stop at Coeur d'Alene?  
AC: Yes.  
DB: Where was the railroad line up here, you said it was at one of the creek bottoms?  
AC: You have to go down the...on down the road a ways. It's about two or three miles down that. None of it marked any more, that you can see. And, my brother-in-law worked on that railroad line. He was an engineer on it.  
DB: What was his name?  
AC: Ike Whitenet.  
DB: Ike what? OK. What did your mother do?  
AC: She was a homemaker, I guess you'd call her. She did have many...people, women in those days weren't employed doing much else outside the home.  
DB: And, you say she was a post mistress too?  
AC: Yes.  
DB: What was involved in that?  
AC: Well, they made...they sold stamps, money orders, and sorted mail. I still have the old distribution box, down in my cellar. I've been thinking of giving it to the museum, but I don't have any way to haul it in.  
DB: How big is it?  
AC: Oh, it's...well, I can show it to you if you want. I suppose it would just about fit along there, I think.  
DB: Yea, why don't we take a look at it later. What years was she postmistress here?  
AC: 1899 to 1936. And then discontinued and the mail was brought by, by car. It was horses those days, there weren't any car.  
DB: How did she go about getting the post office set up here?  
AC: I don't remember.  
DB: Was it here in the house?  
AC: I'll show you. It is where my laundry room is now.  
DB: Was there a special outside entrance for people to come in into the post office?  
AC: In the back. Way we came in. And then customers did go into the house.

DB: About how many people would that have serviced here, in those years?

AC: I suppose 450.

DB: I see. And they were spread out over the country, I take it?

AC: Yea.

DB: Are there any landmarks around here? In this area, are there any historical sites, or anything, that you can remember?

AC: Personally, I can't think of any. On the other side of Coeur d'Alene I think you know about the old...the...Cataldo Mission.

DB: Hm-hm. Yea. We've been down there. Well, when you were growing up as a youngster how close was your closest neighbor?

AC: About a mile and...about a mile over that way, probably. Maybe half a mile, the closest neighbor.

DB: And, do you remember what your neighbors' names were?

AC: Yea. Fitsimmons, George Fitsimmons, was a pioneer here.

DB: And how about the person who was a mile away?

AC: Well, there was the Reeds, Jud Reed.

DB: And, were they both homesteaders?

AC: Yes. Fitsimmons came a little after my people did. They came by prairie schooner, though, from Iowa.

DB: What was the route that they took, do you remember?

AC: Can't remember.

DB: Yea. Other than your grandparents, were there any relatives that lived near by?

AC: No. Well, I shouldn't say that either, there's my aunt that lived over across the road, my mother's sister.

DB: When did she move out?

AC: She died there in 1914, I think it was. And, her husband sold the farm, afterward.

DB: How was this community named Mica Flat? Oh was it called Mica?

AC: It was called Mica, to begin with. On account of the shiny metal, mineral.

DB: Is that quite predominant around here? Where do you find it?

AC: Well, there was what they called an old mine around here. They were mining for silver. They didn't get enough to make it pay. But they found a lot of this mica.

DB: Where was that located at, the mine?

AC: It's just behind...just a short distance...about a quarter mile up that a way. More East, than North.

DB: Do you remember, is it on a creek bottom?

AC: No it's up on a hill.

DB: OK. Is there a name for it?

AC: No, but there is water. There was water running out of the mine. So, I think there was a natural spring in the mine.

DB: Is there a name for that hill, that you know off?

AC: Rich Hill.  
DB: Rich Hill.  
AC: Hm-hm. They called it Rich Hill because they thought that there were minerals in it, see.  
DB: Well, this Fitsimmons and my dad were two of 'em. I can't remember who the others were.  
DB: Were they doing hard-pick mining up there, or was it placer mining, or...?  
AC: Picking.  
DB: Picking. Did they have any type of rail cars or any kind of small cars?  
AC: Yes. They had a little car that led back into the mine.  
DB: How much time did they spend on the mine?  
AC: Oh, I think they worked there several...I suppose they worked there mostly in the Wintertime when they weren't farming, because they were busy with their logging and their farming, and all that.  
DB: So, do you remember approximately what years they worked at that? Was it when you were growing up?  
AC: In early 1900s I would say.  
DB: In early 1900s. Where was the closest settlement to Mica?  
AC: Meadowbrook, I think.  
DB: How far north is that?  
AC: Oh, that's...that's...where you came out just before you started up the hill. And it goes on in that direction. Up through the gulch, down that way. And then down this way it would be, ah...Worley is about the closest. Worley is that way. I can't remember what they did call that, in those days.  
DB: How did Mica get its name, I mean, was it because of the post office? I don't mean because of the rocks, but did they make a community here because of the post office?  
AC: Yes. The post office.  
DB: And that was the closest post office to Coeur d'Alene?  
AC: Yes.  
DB: That was the next one.  
AC: And Rockford Bay, I suppose Rockford Bay and Belgrove, were the next communities I think.  
DB: When Mica was flourishing as a community, how many people would have lived here?  
AC: I wouldn't know.  
DB: Were there more houses around then there are now?  
AC: No, there are more now than there were then.  
DB: So, it was very spread out?  
AC: It was. Then it went on down, what they call Kid Island too. Down that way to the lake. It was spread though. There is another pioneer, that lives down the lake, Louie Anderson. His parents homesteaded on the lake.  
DB: Does he still live there now?  
AC: Yes. He's never married; he lives there all alone now. But he does have relatives living near 'im.

DB: And, he lives in Kid Island.  
AC: Kid Island.  
DB: Near Kid Island.  
AC: Valhalla's the name of...there's Kid Island and there is Valhalla that way. And they call...His father was Albin Anderson, he homesteaded there. And they called it Valhalla, which is Swedish for home of the gods. A beautiful place.  
DB: Have you ever heard, were there ever any Indian sites around here, where the Indians used to live?  
AC: We know the Indians did used to live here, because when they dug a pond down here, they found some Indian artifacts, down here, as they were digging. But never did any Indians live here since my father came.  
DB: When was the pond dug, do you remember?  
AC: It would be in the early 1900s too.  
DB: Is that on your property here?  
AC: It's on my sons now. It's right down that way, just a little ways.  
DB: So it would be north...or south...  
AC: South-west.  
DB: ...west of the house. Well, this property was homesteaded in the 1890s, right?  
AC: Right.  
DB: Did your father, or mother ever talk about what was involved in homesteading, what they did to set up a homestead?  
AC: They had to pay a \$10 fee for filing. That is what the 181 acres cost them. Of course, they had to live on it for a...I forget the number of years, I am not sure. I think it was at least three years though. To prove up on it.  
DB: Where would they file for the fee?  
AC: I suppose at the courthouse in Coeur d'Alene.  
DB: At the courthouse.  
AC: I have the old homestead filing. Would you like to see it?  
DB: Yea, a little later. That'd be nice. And, was that a common size farm, 181 acres?  
AC: 160 mostly, but somehow it did not come out even. Usually it was 160 acres for a homestead.  
DB: And, how many of those acres were planted, over the first few years, in crops?  
AC: It wouldn't be very many because it took a lot...everything was covered with timber.  
DB: What kind of improvements did a homesteader have to make on his property?  
AC: Well, I suppose he had to build a house...and then be clearing the land.  
DB: Was there a time limit that they had to build the house? During a certain period.  
AC: I think they had to have...well, of course you had to have a house to have a place to live. I know my uncle was

planning to homestead another piece of ground, north of here. But then he decided not to, because he said he wasn't going to live over there by himself for three years, to prove up on it. You had to live on it for three years. He just joined in with my father on this one.

DB: How many men did it take to run a farm of 160 acres?  
AC: Well, two of them did it.  
DB: Two of them did it.  
AC: I don't know how they did it. They worked long hours. And, they didn't have chain saws and all these things to cut the lumber...they all did it with a cross cut saw. I don't know where there is a picture of them sawing the trees, but I know they had to use their old cross cut saw.

DB: Back then, what was the first house like--did you see it?  
AC: I never saw it because it was burned down about nine years before I was born.  
DB: Did they ever describe what it looked like?  
AC: It was just a little log cabin, I think. It was a one or two room log cabin.  
DB: And where was it located at?  
AC: It was...oh, it was down this way. It was right here where that shed is, hay shed.  
DB: So, it is a little bit south-east of the house now.  
AC: Yes.  
DB: And, when was this house built?  
AC: 1896.  
DB: 1896? And the years, other than the years that you went to college, you lived in this house?  
AC: No. After a while...I told you after I got married I didn't live here.  
DB: Aha.  
AC: That'd be until '43.  
DB: Where did you live in '43?  
AC: We rented a farm down at the foot of south Mica hill. Rented from the MacCrays. We lived there for eight or nine years, before we bought this one. Then my father, I know he paid \$10 for it. When he sold the whole farm to us, he said he wanted us to have it. He was offered 10,000, at the time for it. And he said, he'd sell it to us for 6,000, because he wanted us to have it. So, we paid only 6,000, at that time, for 181 acres. That was in 1943. And now they are selling it, oh, \$1,000 an acre. Or more. A thousand dollars an acre with no improvements on it, no house, no nothing. No water.

DB: How big was the original house; was it this main portion here?  
AC: It went as far as the door that goes in the back there. It was the main portion here.  
DB: How many rooms are downstairs then?  
AC: Now or then?  
DB: Then.

AC: Oh, they'd be just the kitchen, the hutch, now the dining room. Two rooms upstairs.

DB: What were the use of the two rooms upstairs?

AC: Bedrooms.

DB: Both bedrooms?

AC: Hm-hm.

DB: How about downstairs what was the...?

AC: Kitchen, combined dining room, living room.

DB: Has the house always faced in this direction, has it ever been moved?

AC: Yes. It's never been moved.

DB: From the photograph you have on the wall, dated 1909, it appears the addition was there in 1909, so that...

AC: Yes it must have been early 1909.

DB: Must have been built in 1909.

AC: Yes. As I say, I can't remember when it wasn't built. I think around, probably by the time I was born in 1905, something like that.

DB: Why did they put the new addition on?

AC: Oh, they thought they needed more room, the family was growing. There was four of us children.

DB: Has the house always been sided, since you can remember?

AC: Yes it's sided. It was sided. It shows it as being sided up there. One thing about that maple tree out there, it was one my father brought in, a sapling when he came from Ohio. He brought two of them. It shows them here. See, it shows this one. Over here it shows two of 'em. But the one on this side died. That one had lived. That was part of their 1890.

DB: What kind of logs were used for the log part of the building, do you remember?

AC: Well, they hewed the logs but I don't know what kind of timber they were.

DB: Might have been some kind of pine. And, it was built in 1896, you say?

AC: Yes.

DB: And, did your father build it?

AC: Yes. And my uncle, the two of them built it together.

DB: Did he ever say that it was similar to any houses that he had built in Ohio?

AC: Oh, I think it was, because I was back there once...went to Northfield. There houses there looked something like this.

DB: It looked pretty similar?

AC: Of course, the neighbors all helped each other then, in building. I wouldn't say that they did it themselves, because I know when these Fitsimmons came in, they came in about 1900 and, they used to have, what they called, a house raising. And, all the neighbors would go in and help them put up a house. So, I imagine some of the neighbors helped with it too. But they didn't hire any help, I am sure.

DB: And, when you were born, how many people lived in the house, at that time?

AC: That would be seven of us. My mother, father and uncle, and we four kids.

DB: Did you have a name for this style of house, this type of house?

AC: Could been, but I don't know.

DB: Was this a large house compared to some of the other houses that were built in the area? Or was it typical?

AC: Well, some of 'em...the early cabins were smaller of course, but when they got around to build a house it was bigger. I know that the Fitsimmons had a little log cabin at first, too, and then they had a nice big house. Which you can't see today, but it is right over there.

DB: Was your yard about the same size it was then when you were a child?

AC: Well, there was no fence around, back then it was just open.

DB: Did you have any other kind of trees other than the two maple trees? I mean in the yard.

AC: No.

DB: Did you grow flowers back then?

AC: Yes. My mother always wanted flowers, and then to get water for 'em she...if you washed your hands you went and put the wash water on the flowers. You see, you had flower boxes then, she didn't plant them outside, but there were flower boxes around the windows. And, yes, she always had flowers.

DB: When was this screened-in porch built?

AC: 1973.

DB: 1973. Back when you were a youngster, how was the house heated?

AC: Wood.

DB: Wood. Was there a stove?

AC: There was wood stoves.

DB: You say stoves, where were they located at, both of them?

AC: Living room, kitchen, I guess.

DB: Were there ever any other families that lived here, other than the Carnie family?

AC: No, my parents were Barnums.

DB: Barnums.

AC: Hm-hm. Like the circus men Barnum.

DB: Barnum? OK. And, if you were to say, back when you were growing up, was the most important room in the house, would you think? I know it is a general question.

AC: Probably the kitchen, probably. Because we ate in the kitchen, spent a lot of time in the kitchen. There was a big pantry in the kitchen, it came out this way from...this is a closed-in porch now, but all of this...about this far was the pantry then.

DB: What would you store in the pantry?

AC: Oh there was a work keeper in there with...they had all the flour and sugar and those kind of things, you know. So, it left more room in the kitchen for, using as a dining area.

DB: Was there a fireplace in this house?

AC: No, they never had a fireplace.

DB: So you used the stove. Was...where was the stove located in the kitchen?

AC: Well, if you want to come in...and I'll show you what the...

DB: OK. It's in the same place.

AC: It's the same place where I have a stove.  
(Break in tape)

DB: Was there ever an ice box here, when you were a youngster?

AC: Yes. Yes there was an ice box.

DB: Where was that located at?

AC: We had an ice house too. The, the...I'm trying to think where they ice box was, I think it was in the...on the porch, probably. But, in the winter they would cut ice off the pond down here. And, they had this ice house that had...they'd get saw dust and put, in the bottom and all around the ice to preserve it. It, it would last until, oh, the middle of the summer. The ice would last.

DB: What kind of furniture did you have in the kitchen, when you were growing up?

AC: Oh, there was an old...what do you call it...it was...it had drawers in it. No, that would be in the pantry. There wouldn't be much in the kitchen except tables and chairs. Most of the...cabinet I guess they called it. Kitchen cabinet.

DB: Did you buy your furniture from craftsmen, back in those days, or did you get 'em from stores in Coeur d'Alene, or something like that?

AC: I wouldn't know.

DB: Was anything ever mail-ordered, do you remember?

AC: I don't remember.

DB: What was the parlor like, or living room?

AC: Had an old pump organ in one part of it, and a center table in the middle, and an Alladin lamp. In the early days there was just the, common kerosene lamp, but this Alladin lamp with a mantle light'd give a better light. And, we thought it was something when we could have an Alladin lamp. Of course, no radio or television. For evenings, we'd all lie around the table on the floor and my mother would read to us.

DB: What kind of things would she read?

AC: Oh, different. Different kinds of stories. And, my dad would read sometimes. They took turns reading.

DB: What kind of decorations did you have on the wall?

AC: Pictures. We always had pictures.

DB: Was anyone in the family a photographer?

AC: My grandfather. He's the one who took all these pictures, here in black and white. He took all of them.

DB: Did he have a camera as far back as you remember?  
AC: Hm-hm. His brother George Barnum was a professional photographer in Chicago. My grandfather didn't do it professionally, but he had his camera and his tripod, and everything. Took all these pictures that are up there.  
DB: What kind of floor coverings did you have?  
AC: Rag rugs, mostly. We saved the old clothes; we cut them up in strips and...  
DB: Did your mother make those?  
AC: Hm-hm.  
DB: About when did those stop being used, or when did people stop making them? Or do they still make them?  
AC: I suppose they still make them, but I haven't seen any in use for a long time.  
DB: What were the bedrooms like?  
AC: He-he. I remember the one above the kitchen was papered with newspapers. He-he-he. Later it was covered with paper but they bought a paper that...it was interesting, I used to keep the newspapers because I would love to read those old newspapers. But they got awful yellow, of course, they...  
DB: What were the beds like?  
AC: Well, springs and mattresses, nothing expensive. I do have an old bed out in this upstairs bedroom. Top and bottom were just, rods you know. It was just very plain.  
DB: Were there closets in this house, when you...?  
AC: Yes. Yes, there were closets.  
DB: Where were they located?  
AC: Each bedroom had a closet.  
DB: Were there rooms that were used more in the Winter than in the Summer?  
AC: No, I don't think so. Probably the living room was used more in the Winter because it would be darker in the Winter.  
DB: How did you keep the living room warm?  
AC: Wood heat.  
DB: Wood heating?  
AC: Still have that wood heater down in the utility room, I didn't but I use it in there...I don't have...the only house...I don't have electric heat in so I put a fire in there.  
DB: When you were a young girl, what kind of outbuildings did you have?  
AC: That one right up there. You can see that red outhouse, it's still there.  
DB: And, was there ever a smokehouse?  
AC: Yes.  
DB: Where was that located at?  
AC: Well, that was just across the walk, up across this way from there. Where the garage is.  
DB: Was it frame or log?  
AC: It was frame.

DB: And what kind of meats did you smoke in there?  
AC: Oh, hams, mostly. And pork. Fish some.  
DB: What was the barn used for?  
AC: They had cattle and horses.  
DB: Do you remember how many head of each?  
AC: I think, there were about four horses.  
DB: Were they work horses?  
AC: Yes. Work horses. They never had any riding horses, they were all work horses. You'd see them working up there; you'd see them hauling that barrel of water. They hauled the logs, of course. The horses hauled the logs. Horses did the...it's amazing how they could have all of this done. Their orchard, never had a weed in it and they had to all work there. The horses.  
DB: How about cows, how many cows did they have?  
AC: Must have been about a dozen cows.  
DB: How many dairy cows, how many beef?  
AC: They were all dairy, I think. They had a cream separator. There was a bowl for the cream separator over there. It's one my daughter-in-law painted up for me.

(END OF TAPE 18; Side 1)