

DEAN : They continued with the . . . the coal didn't play out until the demand for it played out. They kept burning coal or whatever, some of them actually had oil, wood burned oil.

BURROUGHS: Coal oil?

DEAN : No, it was a distillate or something like that in heaters that worked very well and there was still coal, you could buy coal here because there was so many people in the country that didn't have gas, they didn't have butane at that time.

BURROUGHS: Mr. Willis Slaten was in the coal business, was he the only dealer?

DEAN : Yes Ma'am at that time. He handled coal when it went to everybody in town.

BURROUGHS: How much was it a ton?

DEAN : I really don't know. I paid for a number of tons of it but I. . .

BURROUGHS: But you don't recall?

DEAN : Don't recall the price.

BURROUGHS: About what year was this? When the coal burning was more prevalent?

DEAN : The coal burning was from the beginning of the time we came here, and long before, I imagine. Until, I think the gas came in the late twenties, I should know the date, but I just can't recall right now.

BURROUGHS: So there was a least twenty years of coal serving as the chief fuel?

DEAN : More I would say. The last coal that I can recall receiving by rail was Mr. Slaten would order, would make special orders for the consolidated schools that had some sort of central heat, I believe. And there was a special coal that was for that use and we got carloads of that for several years after the gasline came to Portales, that was the last coal that I recall handling here.

BURROUGHS: So then the schools had to convert to gas?

DEAN : They did, yes, Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: And the ranches began to do that also. That's an interesting side-light on life in Portales, because many people living now, my children, for instance have never seen a coal stove. And they don't know anything about picking out the ashes or loading up the coal stoves, to start it. How did you ignite the coal?

DEAN : There was always kindling to start the fire with or maybe a little coal oil, but it took a lot of coal to heat that depot, three big stoves. I carried my part of it.

BURROUGHS: I imagine you have.

DEAN : It took just about as much time to carry out the ashes as it did carrying the coal.

BURROUGHS: What did you do with the ashes?

DEAN : They blew away, actually, but we had a place we would take them to, but they were never hauled off.

BURROUGHS: Made cinders?

DEAN : That's right. They just blew away.

BURROUGHS: Scattered on the ground.

DEAN : Yes, Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Were many cattle shipped out of here?

DEAN : Yes, Ma'am in the early days, Portales, I believe was considered one of the largest cattle shipping points. And they came from, they were trailed in here from all directions, I guess. But after I went to work, there was still a lot of cattle shipped in the seasons, usually in the Fall, and there's been times there would be, I couldn't say what the largest, but I know that around these pens out there, there were more than a thousand maybe a little less than two thousand, would be penned or held out there on the prairie.

BURROUGHS: Where was that retaining lot? In relation to Portales.

DEAN : At Yerba.

BURROUGHS: Oh, Yerba was the present location. . .

DEAN : The present location of the Roger Pattison's pens.

BURROUGHS: Oh, I see. So they just kept the cattle there until they could be shipped?

DEAN : They would try to have the cars on hand, and spotted when the cattle came in and they went right to work loading, usually, and sometimes they would move the cars down by hand or sometimes, if it was a big shipment, a trainload, the engine would be there to spot the cars and move loads away from the chutes.

BURROUGHS: How much a head did the cattle bring?

DEAN : Bring?

BURROUGHS: Yes. Was that a time of good pricing?

DEAN : Part of it was. In 1917 the stock, cattle was pretty high. Of course in the early twenties they went down.

BURROUGHS: Why did that? What happened to the market?

DEAN : I really don't. . .

BURROUGHS: Was it the end of the world war that created the. . .

DEAN : That was the big thing, another thing we had a drought here, and the big movement of cattle, just the entire herd from a ranch would be shipped back to Kansas and Nebraska.

BURROUGHS: The entire herd?

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: They just closed them out?

DEAN : Yes, they shipped them up there for pasture, but I don't know that any of those cattle ever came back to New Mexico, they went up there and were pastured that summer. . .

BURROUGHS: That was rather disastrous, what did the ranchers do?

DEAN : It was pretty bad for some of them I'm sure, a lot of them eventually got back into the business just a little at a time, I would imagine.

BURROUGHS: Just had to start over then?

DEAN : Yes, Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Can you tell me something about the political trend of the state, after the first world war?

DEAN : After the first world war?

BURROUGHS: Yes, about 1918, was the state predominately Republican or Democratic?

DEAN : At that time we were mostly Republican and it stayed that way until. . .

BURROUGHS: You mean in the late twenties, was that correct?

DEAN : That's correct.

BURROUGHS: This state came in with a Republican appointed Governor, because the President was Republican, that was Roosevelt.

DEAN : That's right, Theodore Roosevelt. And the first elected Governor, I really believe was a Democrat, it was McDonald.

BURROUGHS: McDonald, after 1912.

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: That changed the general trend.

DEAN : Yes, Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Well, tell me something about this band concert that you mentioned in the political speakings, I think that's interesting.

DEAN : It was a town band that would make different places, where there was any place with a political speaking, they would usually round up the band. They had been to Fort Sumner on one or two occasions or maybe more, and Floyd, Rogers, and Dora, and they would usually have political speakers there and. . .

BURROUGHS: Did you have a good crowd?

DEAN : Good crowd for those days. Yes, Ma'am. Some of the speakers was Senator Bratton (?), who earlier was the district judge of this district, and he was one of my favorites, but there was a Carl McGee (?), who was the editor of the Albuquerque Tribune, that also made those, and he was pretty firey, And he called names and dates. . .

BURROUGHS: He was a former Will Harrison then?

DEAN : He sure was.

BURROUGHS: Mrs. Dean you have been sitting there so quiet most of the morning, can you tell me when you came to New Mexico?

MRS. DEAN: In 1907.

BURROUGHS: Who were your parents?

MRS. DEAN: Well, my mother was Mrs. Maude Smith, my father passed away when I was quite young. My father was living in Matador, Texas. And that's where we came to Roswell, and then From Roswell we came to Portales.

BURROUGHS: Now who is we, besides you and your mother?

MRS. DEAN: I have two sisters and a brother.

BURROUGHS: Will you name them?

MRS. DEAN: Irene Bayless and Leta Smith of Portales, and C. Roy Smith of Clovis.

BURROUGHS: And your full name is what?

MRS. DEAN: Erma Bell Smith Dean.

BURROUGHS: Did all of the family come by wagon or train?

MRS. DEAN: Oh, no we came by train.

BURROUGHS: How long did you live there in Roswell now?

MRS. DEAN: Just a very short time. My father took sick there and my grandparents lived here.

BURROUGHS: Who were they?

MRS. DEAN: I. G. Trimble.

BURROUGHS: Where had they come from? Were they homesteaders?

MRS. DEAN: Yes, they homesteaded out here. They came from Matador and around that part of the country. But they were living here, and when my mother was left a widow, why, we were sent here to my grandparents while she took a business course.

BURROUGHS: I see, where did she study?

MRS. DEAN: In Bowie, Texas.

BURROUGHS: What did she do then to make a living for the family?

MRS. DEAN: Abstract business and later on the insurance business was added to it, but we had the Portales Abstract Company for years, and years and years.

BURROUGHS: Was she the one that founded that?

MRS. DEAN: Yes, she was the one that founded the Portales Abstract Company.

BURROUGHS: I expect there are a lot of early day deeds and recordings still in your mother's handwriting.

MRS. DEAN: Oh, yes. She was a notary public and I guess about 1917 or 18, I went in the office with her and worked until we sold the business to Smith/Wright (?) in 1940.

BURROUGHS: Now when or where had you gone to school in the meantime?

MRS. DEAN: I did all of my schooling right here in Portales.

BURROUGHS: Right in Portales at the same stone building that Clifford attended?

MRS. DEAN: Yes, that's right.

BURROUGHS: When did you graduate?

MRS. DEAN: I graduated in 1916.

BURROUGHS: So you were about the same time that he graduated? After you graduated, what did you do next? Did you help there with your mother?

MRS. DEAN: Yes, I imagine just in a few months after I graduated I went in to the office with her.

BURROUGHS: What were your duties, particularly? How did you. . .

MRS. DEAN: In the abstract business?

BURROUGHS: Yes, what did you do?

MRS. DEAN: Well, checking the records at the court house, typing.

BURROUGHS: You had a typing course in high school then?

MRS. DEAN: No, I got my typing right there in the office.

BURROUGHS: Hunt and peck?

MRS. DEAN: Well, yes.

BURROUGHS: Not many women typed then, did you know that?

MRS. DEAN: Well, of course they were all typing in those days in the court house.

BURROUGHS: I see.

MRS. DEAN: Everything in the county clerks office was typed out and all of the deeds and records of that kind were typed.

BURROUGHS: Was a course offered in high school?

MRS. DEAN: Well, not then.

BURROUGHS: Not then. So they had to learn elsewhere? Can you tell me anything particularly about the abstract business times of a special rush on filing and the things that would be. . .

MRS. DEAN: It would be when we would have a little oil play. . .

BURROUGHS: When did that begin?

DEAN : Early twenties.

MRS. DEAN: In the early twenties.

BURROUGHS: Who were the first oil companies to come in here?

MRS. DEAN: The amaerada (Sp?). There was so many of them back in those days, I don't, you know Gulf and all of those. The men from these companies that would come in here would lease up the land. And back in the early days they had to have abstracts of all this land that was leased.

BURROUGHS: But, there was no actual drilling at that time was there?

MRS. DEAN: Well, when was that first oil well, the New Mexico Oil Company?

DEAN : 1920

MRS. DEAN: About 1920 we had our first well drilled.

DEAN : South of town.

MRS. DEAN: South of town.

BURROUGHS: Was that a good producer?

MRS. DEAN: They packed it, we don't know. But that New Mexico Oil Company was the one that drilled that well, and then just off and on there were other companies that would drill around different parts of the country.

BURROUGHS: Do you know whether there was very much activity on the H bar Ranch, as oil?

MRS. DEAN: No, I don't think so, not then, not in the early days.

BURROUGHS: Did you notice that there was 1912 in last Sundays paper, about a well that was projected. Mr. Louis Smith, at the Floyd reunion, Saturday told me that his uncle had been the one to go down and make his first drilling. Can you describe, Mr. Dean, something about the well and the result of that drilling?

DEAN : The well was located just west of the present country club, and it was up on the higher grounds. And I recall many years ago being by there any number of times, the big heavy casing that was still in the well, and the water was standing right up to about the top of the casing, it sometimes would flow over just a little bit, but not much.

BURROUGHS: That was an artesian well in effect then?

DEAN : Well, it was, yes, Ma'am. The nearest we ever had to it I guess.

BURROUGHS: But, no oil?

DEAN : No oil that I ever heard of.

BURROUGHS: Mrs. Dean can you add anything to that?

MRS. DEAN: I don't think of anything else.

BURROUGHS: When did the oil activity really begin here in Portales? And in this county?

DEAN : The leasing started way back. . .

MRS. DEAN: The leasing started way back there in the early twenties.

BURROUGHS: But we didn't get any oil, really oil income until about the 1940's, did we?

MRS. DEAN: I think that's right. The county was pretty well leased up two or three different times before they started really drilling.

BURROUGHS: Is that because the oil companies liked to just cap their wells and hold it for further production?

MRS. DEAN: I think so.

BURROUGHS: Mrs. Dean, since your mother began this abstract company, can you tell me where she got her first record, before this was a county?

MRS. DEAN: From Roswell, Chaves County, from the part of the county that was cut off from Chaves County, into Roosevelt County.

BURROUGHS: When was that cut off made?

MRS. DEAN: About 1917 or 18. But she took help and went down and transcribed all the records.

BURROUGHS: But we were not a part of Chaves County at that time, were we? Weren't we incorporated as a county in about 1903, here?

MRS. DEAN: Part of Roosevelt County was cut off from Chaves County.

BURROUGHS: I know that, but I meant you don't know the date that it happened?

MRS. DEAN: No, I don't.

BURROUGHS: And she began her records. . .

MRS. DEAN: See that was before I started working in the abstract office, and I know that she did try to have all those records transcribed, but they were either typed or handwritten.

BURROUGHS: And then how long did your mother continue this business?

MRS. DEAN: Until 1940.

SIDE 2

BURROUGHS: This is Mrs. Burroughs, I am visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Dean, on August 7, 1972. We were discussing the abstract business since Mrs. Dean had worked with her mother, Mrs. Maude Smith, who established the first abstract company in Portales.

Mrs. Dean can you remember the other companies, there are several here, can you name them?

MRS. DEAN: Jim Booth has the Lee/Carter Abstract business now. And then the B.F. Cooks have an abstract business, and the Grahams. . .

BURROUGHS: Is that R.W. Graham?

MRS. DEAN: Well, it's over there on the corner, Graham Abstract Company.
And then Smith/Wright.

BURROUGHS: Smith/Wright, so that actually is about four?

MRS. DEAN: Yes.

BURROUGHS: Did they handle insurance as well?

MRS. DEAN: I don't know, Smith/Wright handles insurance business, and so
do the Booth's.

BURROUGHS: Yes.

MRS. DEAN: But now whether Cook and Graham do or not, I don't know.

BURROUGHS: Now Mrs. Cook, I think sold her business after B.F.'s death, is
that right?

MRS. DEAN: I don't know, I thought they still had it.

BURROUGHS: Yes, You were right it was B.F. Cook and Jesse his wife that
ran it, and when B.F. died they have continued this business. . . .

MRS. DEAN: Yes, they have. Now B.A. was probably in with them.

BURROUGHS: He was in the Home Federal after that was established.

MRS. DEAN: That's right, he was in the Home Federal.

BURROUGHS: But didn't he also serve as county clerk here. . . .

MRS. DEAN: Yes, he was county clerk at one time.

BURROUGHS: Would you say that the abstract business is a pretty steady
business straight along through the years.

MRS. DEAN: It has been. Because every time there was a piece of land sold
or you know, they have to have abstracts.

BURROUGHS: It that true every place, Mrs. Dean?

MRS. DEAN: Yes, as far as I know, in New Mexico. I think they have a different system in Texas, that they, it isn't an abstract, it's a title.

BURROUGHS: A title company?

MRS. DEAN: A title company.

BURROUGHS: Since this is fairly new country, and has just been settled more or less since 1900 with much change of hands of land, do you think that later on, when business and industry are more established, that we will have quite so much transaction on land? Will it settle down or will it continue. . .

MRS. DEAN: I think that it will continue to change hands, because that's been the history of it, you know, the farms, so many of the farms now, you know, they have turned them into ranches and they owned so much land that I think there will still be a continual change over it.

BURROUGHS: Do you mean that the smaller homestead plots are now being absorbed by larger ranches and farming interests?

MRS. DEAN: That's what we have heard anyway. Where Mr. Dean's folks homesteaded, part of that is in the Horney (Sp?) Ranch, and then the Abg Ribble Ranch. . . So it's. . .

BURROUGHS: It is a complete reversal of trend, then, the large ranches, in the early days, were broken up for homestead, or rather the land holdings and waterholes and now it is going back into larger holdings. Mr. Dean what is your comment on this?

DEAN : The farmers taken me back just right now, much of that land has been plowed out within the last ten years, at least. At one time all of that ranch country, and is now in broom corn and feed.

BURROUGHS: Can you describe the way the country looks now as in contrast to the old homestead times?

DEAN : In the early days, when I lived there rather, there was landmarks that you could go by. But, now, since it's plowed out, the places where there were houses and barns and corrals, it's all just cultivation, and you can't even identify the place

that you're on. But it just goes for miles that there is just nothing as far as you can see but fields. And it seems like they usually have good crops in there on that dry land.

BURROUGHS: Now that's due to mechanized farming, isn't it?

DEAN : Yes, Ma'am. There was just tractors in droves down there. You drive through there and see when they are plowing, they were, I guess. . .

BURROUGHS: You mean that they, one farmer would operate a whole fleet of tractors?

DEAN : I'm not sure just, I did notice this, that the same make of tractors were in several fields there, I really don't know who the land belongs to myself.

BURROUGHS: Well it's certainly different from the old times, isn't it?

DEAN : It is, when you went out and plowed a sixty acre field with a lister and four mules. In one round or two you can go across 160 or more and plow more, with just a round or two, than you could plow in a day with a team.

BURROUGHS: That put it on the large scale farming, didn't it?

DEAN : Sure has.

BURROUGHS: Do either of you recall any other incidents in your life, any anecdotes, any other stories of early day Roosevelt County and Portales?

MRS. DEAN: I don't, think of anything else.

BURROUGHS: You have been most generous with your time and certainly have made an addition to the oral history program of Eastern New Mexico Library. Are there any restrictions you would make on the things that you have said in this recording?

DEAN : Not any restrictions that I could think of.

BURROUGHS: Mrs. Dean?

MRS. DEAN: No, I don't think of any.

BURROUGHS: Thank you so much this has been a real contribution and an entirely different slant on the business life of Roosevelt County and Portales.