

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Clarence Greathouse

August 23, 1972

Portales, New Mexico

Conducted by

Mrs. Jean Burroughs

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Eastern New Mexico University Oral History Program

Tape #11-12

- Burroughs : This is Mrs. John Burroughs. This evening is August 24, 1972. There is a real family gathering here in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Greathouse, their mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Greathouse and their youngest son, Ross. I am going to ask Mr. Clarence Greathouse something about his father, and the circumstances of his coming to Roosevelt County. Can you tell me how your father came to Roosevelt County, first?
- Greathouse : He came here and stayed out there at Mr. Stinnett's, out west.
- Burroughs : Which Stinnett was that?
- Greathouse : That old gentleman's gone.
- Burroughs : That was the father of the present Stinnett family. How did he get here to Roosevelt...
- Greathouse : On the train.
- Burroughs : Oh, he came after 1898 then, didn't he?

Greathouse : He came in 1906.

Burroughs : Did his family come with him?

Greathouse : No.

Burroughs : What did he come for specifically?

Greathouse : Oh, I don't know, he had some sort of disease in the fifth nerve. Somebody told him to go to that dry county and get well.

Burroughs : Where did he come from?

Greathouse : Ohio.

Burroughs : Was he a young man then?

Greathouse : No, he was sixty, I guess.

Burroughs : If that was your father, when did you come into the picture in Roosevelt County?

Greathouse : I came in 1907.

Burroughs : Oh, you came right after him? Can you tell me something of that circumstance? How you got here?

Greathouse : We all came down on the train.

Burroughs : Who is "we"?

Greathouse : My sister, Catherine, Catherine...

Burroughs : Were you married at that time?

Greathouse : No.

Burroughs : Mrs. Greathouse, were you a Roosevelt County girl?

Mrs. Greathouse : I was five years old when we came out here from Texas.

Burroughs : What was that year?

Mrs. Greathouse : 1906.

Burroughs : So, you were here when Mr. Greathouse came. But you were

very young.

- Mrs. Greathouse : I was five years old.
- Burroughs : How old were you when you came in 1907?
- Greathouse : I was twenty-one.
- Burroughs : Well, there is quite an age span there, isn't there?
- Greathouse : Yes, a little bit.
- Burroughs : Mr. Greathouse, will you tell me where you came to in Roosevelt County?
- Greathouse : Portales.
- Burroughs : To the town?
- Greathouse : And we went in a wagon out to the claim.
- Burroughs : Well, can you mention something about that? Where did you get your wagon, if you were on the train when you came?
- Greathouse : We bought the team and wagon after we got here.
- Burroughs : Now that was your dad?
- Greathouse : Yes.
- Burroughs : Now I am talking about you. You weren't with him that first trip. When you came, how did you get out to the claim?
- Greathouse : We went in his wagon.
- Burroughs : He met you then?
- Greathouse : Yes.
- Burroughs : Can you tell me something about the town of Portales in 1906 and '7?
- Greathouse : We had a saloon on every corner.
- Burroughs : What happened to those saloons? There aren't any in the county now.

Greathouse : They finally got to where they couldn't sell whiskey.

Burroughs : I see. What were the business houses in Portales, the year you came, do you recall?

Greathouse : Some of them were just upright boards with a strip over it.

Burroughs : Was Sledge Hardware in business then?

Greathouse : Yes. I think so.

Burroughs : Can you recall any of the grocery stores, or banks?

Greathouse : The First National Bank...

Burroughs : Was here then?

Greathouse : Yes.

Burroughs : Would you like to tell who else came with you in 1907?

Greathouse : My sister.

Burroughs : Just your sister?

Greathouse : Just her.

Burroughs : And your mother and dad were already here? Did your dad's health improve with this dry country?

Greathouse : Yes.

Burroughs : Tell me something about your home down on the claim near Elida. What kind of house did you have? Jack, did you want to add something to that?

Greathouse, J. : Well, it was west of Floyd. ~~It was my mother that was north of Elida.~~

Burroughs : I see. So your claim was west of Floyd. What kind of house did they have?

Greathouse : We had a little old shack, 12' x 14'.

Burroughs : Did your dad build that?

- Greathouse : Yes. We had four shacks. Four shacks in the center of the section. We all filed on a quarter, each one.
- Burroughs : I see. Four shacks? There was a different house in each corner of the section? Why didn't you join that house and make it bigger?
- Greathouse : I had one house.
- Greathouse, J. : See, I believe that the homestead act required the person to live on their individual quarter.
- Burroughs : I see.
- Greathouse, J. : So this family in their manner of living on individual quarters... And they were all neighbors in the quarter of the center of the section. Each one did live on their individual respective quarter of land, to make legal...
- Burroughs : Make it legal under the homestead act. So you ate in one shack and slept in the other, is that right?
- Greathouse : Each one had a shack. We had four shacks.
- Burroughs : Where did you get your lumber for that...
- Greathouse : Portales.
- Burroughs : It was not a dugout, it was actually a shack built up? How did you locate your place? Now was there some method that the government had?
- Greathouse : No, my daddy came down here and got me and he knew where the quarter was that I was going to file on.
- Burroughs : Yes, but I believe that your son was telling me something about a locater that helped the homestead people when they came...
- Greathouse : W.L. Dunlap.

Burroughs : He was?

Greathouse : Yes.

Greathouse, J. : Did he receive a fee from the government to show people these claims?

Greathouse : No, he took it from your pocket.

Burroughs : You had to pay him?

Greathouse : Yes.

Burroughs : How much was that?

Greathouse : Oh, I don't know how much you paid him but you paid sixteen dollars to file on the quarter.

Burroughs : Each individual who filed had to pay the government?

Greathouse : Each one had to pay sixteen dollars.

Greathouse, J. : I believe that would be called a filling fee. In the terms of the homestead act.

Burroughs : Can you relate any experience in getting started in getting the water? What source of water did you have?

Greathouse : We hauled water from... Old man down there about three miles... We hauled water for a while, then we dug a well.

Burroughs : Was it hand dug well, or a drilled well?

Greathouse : We drilled it. With table tools.

Burroughs : Was it fairly shallow?

Greathouse : Eighty feet.

Burroughs : Well, that was a fairly deep well. Did you have good pressure on the well?

Greathouse : Not much water, just a little.

Burroughs : How did you manage to water your stock and take care of your

home needs on this little water?

Greathouse : We didn't have much stuff.

Burroughs : And you were a dry land farmer then?

Greathouse : Yes.

Burroughs : You mentioned once that one member of your family had a water witch help locate a well, can you relate that, Jack?

Greathouse, J. : Yes, this was my grandfather B.W. Kinsolving who homesteaded in 1906 north of Elida. When he filed, he hired, I forget what the fellow's name was, he called him old man Butt's. He must have been Mr. Butts, to witch for a well for the sum of three dollars, and this fellow used a bear grass stick and ran around like he was in a trance, according to my grandfather. And he finally, he said, "There's water here!"

Burroughs : Did they really strike it where he said?

Greathouse, J. : Well, yes, they found good water.

Burroughs : Mr. Greathouse, you didn't use a water witch then, you just dug down.

Greathouse : I didn't believe in that water witch. (All laugh) We had a well machine and dug for everybody. And where we got most of the trouble is where they witched, that's where we had trouble.

Burroughs : So they thought that he gave you a bum steer, as the expression goes. I'd like to establish now, since you've mentioned your grandfather Kinsolving, was that your mother's parents, I mean on your mother's side?

Greathouse, J. : Yes, B.W. Kinsolving was born in Meridian, Texas, married

Flora Love Greer, who was born in Plano, Texas. My grandparents came to New Mexico in a covered wagon. Now my mother might relate more details on that than I would be able to.

- Burroughs : Because you came, didn't you Mrs. Greathouse? You were in that wagon?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Yes, I was five years old.
- Burroughs : What do you remember of that trip?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Well, I remember coming in that covered wagon and we came to Elida.
- Burroughs : How many days did it take you to come from...
- Mrs. Greathouse : Well, I don't remember. But I know daddy went back to Elida and got lumber, and we had the first little house down there when there was all of them dug outs. But we built a house... we built a little two story house and had lightning rods around it.
- Burroughs : We don't have much lightning... So you came from the part of Texas where they did have lightning storms?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Yes, down east of Denton, Crum (? Texas.)
- Burroughs : Now who else was in your family that made this trip?
- Mrs. Greathouse : My brother, he was eighteen months older than me.
- Burroughs : What was his name?
- Mrs. Greathouse : C.W. Kinsolving. He lives at Crossroads now.
- Burroughs : So your parents were the Kinsolvings who came here, and you just related that.
- Mrs. Greathouse : And mother was ninety years old the second of August. She's still living.
- Burroughs : Now wasn't she at this family reunion that the Greathouse clan had recently in the City Park in the Memorial Building?

- Mrs. Greathouse : No, my mother wasn't, she didn't come to that.
- Greathouse, J. : No, Mrs. Kinsolving wasn't able to attend this Greathouse get together we had.
- Burroughs : Now before we proceed to some more of your experiences, I'd like for Mr. Greathouse to comment on the relationship of the Kinsolving family of this county with other Kinsolvings in the state of New Mexico.
- Greathouse, J. : Let's see, what is the name of the Episcopalian minister that you were acquainted with, Mrs. Burroughs?
- Burroughs : He lives in Santa Fe and I'm not sure of his initials, I believe it's C.J.
- Mrs. Greathouse : I believe it is.
- Greathouse, J. : Charles James or something like that.
- Mrs. Greathouse : I believe it's C.J.
- Burroughs : He has been...
- Greathouse, J. : I'm not sure of the relationship, it's either a second or third cousin...
- Mrs. Greathouse : Yes, second or third cousin.
- Greathouse, J. : ... To my grandfather Kinsolving. And incidentally, from the back of the Kinsolving line there were three or four of these Kinsolving fellows in the Episcopalian Church, whatever the titles would be. What title...
- Burroughs : Bishop. Yes, for the Church of Holy Faith in Santa Fe and has been for some time.
- Greathouse, J. : Wyeth Kinsolving was a writer of prose and poetry, I believe, and he was also in the Episcopalian Ministry.

- Burroughs : Well now, did the Kinsolvings all come from Texas?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Well, just mother and daddy and I...
- Burroughs : Yes, but I meant all of this branch, did they come from Texas?
- Mrs. Greathouse : I don't believe they did.
- Greathouse, J. : Well, we're not sure of this Charles of C.J. in Santa Fe. The ones that came from Texas were my immediate grandparents and their children.
- Burroughs : I see, well the fact that your father came from Ohio is interesting because he is the first person I've talked to who has come from that far away. Most everybody came from Texas, a few from Oklahoma and some from Missouri, But your family came from Ohio, and also they came originally for health reasons rather than homestead reasons, which makes this a little different. Can you tell me anything of your schooling down there on the homestead, Mrs. Greathouse?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Yes, we went ot four different schools.
- Burroughs : Why was that?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Well, they just taught three months and we were kind of in the center there, and we went to Hawkeye, and Kentucky Valley, and Pleasant Ridge and one more over in Chaves County. We went to four schools there.
- Burroughs : So that each school was...
- Mrs. Greathouse : School of different kinds.
- Burroughs : Each school was held a certain length of time. Did the same teacher...

- Mrs. Greathouse : No, it was different teachers.
- Burroughs : Was that for tax reasons or to make it easier for children to attend? Did the same group of children rotate to school?
- Mrs. Greathouse : No, not all of them. But where we lived, we could. We went horseback and rode four miles and walked part of the time. No, about four miles, three was the closest.
- Burroughs : Located centrally you could attend school all of the time. If you were too far away, then you just attended a few months?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Yes, each one was held three months a year. Three months school time.
- Burroughs : When did you start the first grade, about what year?
- Mrs. Greathouse : It was about the year 1906. I was five.
- Burroughs : So you probably started then in 1907 or '8.
- Mrs. Greathouse : Seven or eight, eight I expect.
- Burroughs : How did the high school and the upper grades manage?
- Mrs. Greathouse : We didn't have them.
- Burroughs : So how far did...
- Mrs. Greathouse : Eighth grade.
- Burroughs : Up to the eighth grade.
- Mrs. Greathouse : And included the eighth grade.
- Burroughs : And that's all the schooling that the county then provided for?
- Mrs. Greathouse : Yes.
- Burroughs : Was this county funds or did each homesteader chip in to pay?
- Mrs. Greathouse : It was county funds, I think.
- Burroughs : You were a grown man, though, before you came, so you got all of your schooling in Ohio, didn't you?

- Greathouse : Yes.
- Burroughs : Did you have any more relatives come out to New Mexico after you and your dad filed on a homestead?
- Greathouse : Charlie had already been out here and Katherine, she was with me, and they both filed. Daddy filed, four places.
- Burroughs : There are so many Greathouse relatives now and the different branches of the family. Did they all originate from this original father who came from Ohio?
- Greathouse : No.
- Burroughs : Where did they come from then?
- Greathouse : I couldn't tell you.
- Burroughs : Jack, do you have a comment?
- Greathouse, J. : You are probably referring to this Greathouse get-together that we have annually, and that's not a family get-together but it is a Greathouse name get-together. The Greathouses you hear of in this Greathouse reunion came from two or three different sources. The Frank Greathouse's down towards Rogers. This family tree goes back into the Arkansas country, and so even though we are related and the relation is about six generations back, we all claim kin. But the Isaac R. Greathouse family, my grandfather, with his ten or eleven children, is his immediate family. My mother and father and Betty and I are the only ones remaining in Roosevelt County now. The others are scattered in Oregon. My uncle, Charlie Greathouse, he wrote the book that was published recently, Ranch Life in the Old West. He lives in Grant Pass, Oregon, now. And I have

an aunt living in Oregon, and uncle living in Colorado, and of course, most of the other brothers and sisters of my father are deceased.

- Burroughs : But, most of the people, who up until recent times, were down in the Floyd area, is that right? You were, Mrs. Greathouse?
- Mrs. Greathouse : North of Elida.
- Burroughs : North of Elida. And Mr. Greathouse?
- Greathouse : Floyd.
- Burroughs : How long did you live down there before you moved up to Portales?
- Greathouse : I don't know.
- Burroughs : Quite a while, I guess. Now, Jack where did you begin your schooling?
- Greathouse, J. : In Clovis. I was born in Clovis and my parents did leave the ranch in 1921 or '22 and went to California for a year, and then moved back to Clovis. I started my schooling in the Clovis public schools and then we moved back to Floyd on this original homestead claim and land, and some other land my dad had purchased.
- Burroughs : What date was that, do you remember?
- Greathouse, J. : 1935 that we moved from Clovis to Floyd again. So my parents were away from this Floyd area for a few years.
- Burroughs : Mrs. Jack Greathouse, Betty, were you a Roosevelt County girl?
- Greathouse, B. : Yes, Ma'am. My father, my grandfather, Mr. L.A. Toliver, filed on a claim west of Floyd in 1906, coming here from Texas. And my father was two years old at the time when he

came to New Mexico, and he was raised there at Floyd and received his schooling there. And my father is deceased now, but my uncle, Mack Toliver still lives here in Portales. But I am a native of Roosevelt County. And my mother came to Roosevelt County in 1927, I believe, from Texas, for just a little while. Then her folks moved back over to Texas-- then she married my father while she was here. Her name was Welch, not any relation to the Welch's around here. My father was in the first class to graduate at Floyd after it was consolidated in 1923. I think there was about four in the class: Pete Jones, Myrtle Howard, Louis Smith, and my dad. There were four that graduated in 1923--first graduating class after it had been consolidated. Dad used to ride two and a half miles on a mule, and he said the mule was so stubborn that it would take him to school and he would balk on him half way there, so he would just get off and walk the rest of the way. And in the evening he would come back by and pick up the mule, and he would still be standing there, so he was a stubborn mule. But dad did receive his education at Floyd and went on to college and was a school teacher for many years at Floyd.

Burroughs : That was L.A. Toliver?

Greathouse, B. : No, that was A.T. Toliver, that was my dad. My grandfather was L.A. But my dad's name was A. Tolis Toliver, and he taught for about fifteen years, I guess, at Floyd, then moved to Causey and