INTERVIEW

of

Dorothy Higginson

by

Dean Huwe

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Dear Friend:

I hope this letter finds you in good health and happy spirits.

The History Department of Western Wyoming College wishes to thank you for your personal contribution to our growing historical knowledge of this region. Your interview will help future scholars and students appreciate the richness of Wyoming's heritage. Thanks for helping us to become better historians and patriots.

Peace,

Carolyn Andrew
Student Historian

Chris Plant
Instructor of History and Government

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Dorothy Higginson

Dorothy Higginson was born on January 20, 1918. She was born the second of two children. She has an older brother Ira. She was born to the parents of Birzilla and Norris Austin. Her mother died soon after her birth on February 14, 1918. Her parents were married on December 5, 1908. They met in Cody when her father was doing some work up in that area.

They were traveling through this area on their way to Idaho when they stopped north of Green River to do the wash in the river. Before the wash was done one of the horses had died. They then went up the river a ways to the John Mann ranch, where he informed them that that area was open for homesteading. The couple went back to Green River and filed for a hundred and sixty acre homestead.

The homestead was built fifteen miles up the Green River. The house that was built was an adobe house sixteen by twenty feet. Some of the logs used in the house were from an old ferry that had lodged on a bar just down the river from the ranch. The barn was sod with a willow and dirt roof, also there was a corral built from cottonwood willows. The barn and house didn’t look like much but it served the purpose. Onto the side of the house was built a walk in cellar. It was dug into the side of the mountain and was attached onto the house. There was also a water wheel built for irrigation of the fields and crops. The
plowing for the crops was hard work and done with a four horse team.

Dorothy's dad retired from the homestead in 1946 and turned the ranch over to Dorothy and Ira. Ira still raises cattle and alfalfa, and it is one of the few original homesteads on the North Green River.

On the ranch there wasn't a whole lot to do for entertainment. Dorothy and her brother usually made up their own games, and they were some kind of ranch game. They played with marbles or corn cobbs and made little barns out of match boxes. In the summer they played ranch outside and in the winter they played ranch inside. For family entertainment their father used to read to them. As they grew older that was the chief source of entertainment after they learned how to read. They did have a radio and it was one of the first ones up in their immediate area. They couldn't pick up the stations to strongly so they had to wear headphones when they listened to it. The only stations that would come in were from Denver and sometimes Omaha.

They only came to town once a week to pick up supplies and sell vegetables. The vegetables and hay that they grew out on the ranch that were left over were put into what they called pits. Since there was no refrigeration, vegetables were hard to come by. When they did get to town they were usually in pretty bad shape from a long journey. When the stores needed some vegetables they would bring some into town
and sell them. That was how they first started to make a living on the homestead. They grew turnips, carrots, radishes, corn, peas and onions. When they brought vegetables into town during the winter they would have to heat bricks in the oven first and put them in with the vegetables to keep them from freezing. It was a three hour ride one way to town with a wagon and team.

When they got to town they usually ate first and then went shopping. They would eat at the Shanghi resturant. It was located right across the street from where the liquor bank is today. Also there was another resturant right there and it was called the Y Bing, and it stood where the liquor bank now presently stands. Both of the two resturants were run by the Chinese. The stores they went to were right up the street. The Mercantile was right up the street and it was being run by the Tallfarrells. There was also another store right across the street from that and it was called the Christensens Store. The owners of the two stores used to give her and her brother candy when they came in.

School was held in the Masonic Temple. Dorothy started school in 1924. When they went to school they had to board with other families because of the long distance back to the ranch. They only went back to the ranch once every two weeks. After starting school there was an epidemic of the whooping cough going around. Dorothy and her brother Ira both cough the whooping cough and had to drop out of school.
until after the holiday season. When they went back the lady who they had been living with had lost her son and did not feel like taking in boarders. Their father got their books and continued to teach them at home for the remainder of the year.

In high school Dorothy went to the Lincoln High School. The main sports were football and basketball. Mr. Huey was the football coach at the time and Dorothy remembers him being real mean. He used to tell the boys "if someone falls down in front of ya, just run 'em over with your cleats.

She never attended churches unless she was attending school. Then she just went with the people she was living with at the time. Her and her family never attended a church when living on the ranch because of the distance to town.

The town when Dorothy was going to high school was only about twenty five hundred people and run mainly by the railroad. She also met her future husband when still in high school. Francis Higginson got his homestead approved and lived just up the river from theirs. He had a pickup and one day her dad wanted him to haul some calves he had up the river to another ranch for him. So he came down and stayed the night with them the night before and they were able to get aquainted on that day while playing cards and talking. Even after meeting they still didn't start going together for another year. Dorothy also boarded with his
parents some while going to high school. When they got married the wedding was not a formal wedding. The couple just went down to the justice of the peace which is where Edith Sanada's beauty Salon used to be, and that is where the old city hall was at the time. The justice of the peace said the right words and they were married. After they were married they just went back to their homestead for the honeymoon. The couple were married on June 15, 1937 and lived on the homestead for two years moving to Green River in 1939. Their homestead was a dry homestead meaning they had to water everything from a well. This made it very hard to make a living so they moved to town.

Francis, Dorothy's husband worked for many different jobs around town, one even being the fire department, before going to work for the railroad in which he worked many years.

The biggest changes in the town that she remembers was just after World War Two. There was a big building boom and houses started to go up rather fast. That is when houses were first built on the south side of the river. The social events that happened in town were mostly dances and some local bands. Dances were held at the pavilion. The pavilion and swimming pool were built at about the same time. The pool was where the Evers ball field is now. Both of them together at the time only cost around twenty five thousand dollars. Before the pavilion was built, there was an open
air pavilion on the other end of the island for dances, concerts and whatnot. Although there was a place for concerts she doesn't remember anybody famous ever coming here and performing. Also there was ice skating at the island during the winter. It was there while she was in high school. Also the railroad had somewhat of a pavilion for concerts and dances that the railroad put on. It was located where the old crossing was for the public to cross the tracks.

Dorothy and her husband never got involved in any social clubs, and her husband used to say that the Eagles Club was nothing more than an excuse to buy your beer on Sunday. Dorothy held down some odd jobs on top of her husbands income. She mostly did domestic work such as cleaning houses. When the Tasty Freeze came to town she worked there for a while also. The Tasty Freeze was located in the same building that the Burger a Go Go is located in now.