



Douglas County History Research Center Oral Histories

Oral History Interview with

Dorothy Roerig

Conducted on March 17, 1992, recorded in Denver, Colorado.

1992.005

[Interview conducted] by

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Douglas County History Research Center
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SUMMARY: Dorothy Roerig's grandparents on her mother's side were Ann and James Powell. Her paternal grandfather was a stone mason from Scotland who helped build Iliff School, the Brown Palace, Trinity Church and the Cheesman Dam. Mrs. Roerig's father's family stayed at a cabin in Nighthawk for five years while her grandfather was working on Cheesman Dam, and summered there every year after that. The family went to Westcreek or Buffalo Creek for supplies.

Her mother came to the USA when she was eight years old, her father when he was eighteen. They were married when her mother was seventeen. Mr. Macdonald [Roerig's father] was in the wholesale woolen business for fifty years. Mrs. Roerig stayed in Nighthawk with her parents every summer. The interview documents life in Nighthawk. Mrs. Roerig's mother baked eighteen loaves of bread a week, washed clothes in the river, cooked in a copper boiler over an open fire and kept food in a food

safe built in the side of a hill. Mrs. Roerig got water from a spring about a block from the cabin, she read Elsie Densmore books for girls while she waited for the bucket to fill.

Mrs. Roerig's memories of Nighthawk include the trip from Denver through Waterton Canyon and Buffalo to Leadville. They took the narrow gauge railway along the north fork, and then the stage coach from South Platte to Nighthawk. Mr. Buzbee ran the stage at first, but died in a blizzard. The stage was then taken over by Mr. Bellew; the tape includes an interesting story about Mr. Bellew burning down the hotel in South Platte and running to Canyon City where he died.

Other topics on the tape include a discussion of Two Forks Dam; the Denver Water Board; the Nighthawk Sawmill; railroad ties and fence posts; old logging roads; gold mining; Twin Cedars, and Deckers Resort.

Note: The transcript of this oral history is as accurate as possible. All text in brackets is not part of the oral history. It has been added for clarification purposes.

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**JOHANNA HARDEN:** -- Here with Dorothy Roerig in Denver, Colorado on March 17, 1992 and I am in Dorothy's house. The interviewer is Johanna Harden from the Douglas Public Library District, Technical Services. Dorothy, thank you for letting me come today, this is a pleasure. You've already told me a few stories while we looked at your scrapbook, but just for the record you were born in 1905.

**DOROTHY ROERIG:** Right.

**HARDEN:** And the month.

**ROERIG:** April, April 13. I'll be 87.

**HARDEN:** In Denver?

**ROERIG:** I was born in Denver in 1905.

**HARDEN:** Were your parents born in Colorado as well?

**ROERIG:** No, my father was born in Inverness, Scotland. Came here when he was eighteen. Mother was born in Sheffield, England and she came with her family when she was eight years old to Denver.

**HARDEN:** What were your parents, ah, your mother's maiden name, her first name and maiden name?

**ROERIG:** My mother's name was Ellen Powell, P-O-W-E-L-L, and my grandparents were Anna and James Powell. And my grandfather was the one that worked at the Cheesman.

**HARDEN:** It was your mother's father that was --

**ROERIG:** Yes. My father's family never came over --

**HARDEN:** Okay, and when did they -- did they come to the United States together? Did they marry?

**ROERIG:** No, mother was eight years old and my father was eighteen when he came, and he came a couple of years before mother's family came. But, ah, my grandfather, when he came was, ah, coming from England. He was a master stone mason and he was unloading -- I'm backtracking a little bit there, my mother's folks came first. My father came later because my grandfather was the master stone mason building Iliff School of Theology out on the University of Denver Campus and my dad's first job when he came to Denver was unloading the stone blocks for the building of Iliff School and that's how he met my grandfather and being both from Britain, why my grandfather took him home and he met my mother. She was only seventeen when they were married. So --

**HARDEN:** So they both were working with the stone, as stone masons at the time.

**ROERIG:** Well, my dad, that was his first job, but he soon went into the -- wholesale woolen business. He had his own J. C. Macdonald wholesale woolen business and Macdonald is spelled M-A-C, small D-O-N-A-L-D. *[laughter]*

**HARDEN:** How long was that business here in Denver?

**ROERIG:** Let's see, first he worked -- dad worked for -- I think maybe he was working for -- he must have had the business for at least fifty years.

**HARDEN:** And beautiful materials, they don't make them like that anymore, do they?

**ROERIG:** The tailors used to come and get the woolens. And I know I had -- of course that's transgressing from what we are trying to get --

**HARDEN:** No, but it fills the blanks.

**ROERIG:** But my Dad when back to Scotland to help his one brother that was left. He was one of ten children. Close up the family estate and I went with him for three months and -- I had the fun to me it was enlightening to see the sheep in the field, then being sheared and the wool being washed, and carded, and threaded and then woven into a piece of material and buying a piece of material -- what I had seen there and having a skirt made out of it. [*laughter*] So you see, that was fascinating.

**HARDEN:** Yes, I would, I would share --

**ROERIG:** You can fit England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, area-wise, into the state of Colorado. But in the three months that we were there, I drove the automobile over ten thousand miles from John O'Groats which is the highest point north to Landsend south. I didn't get over to Ireland but England, Scotland and Wales, I covered pretty much.

**HARDEN:** It sounds like it. When you father was working at I, your grandfather was working at the Iliff School of Theology, after that job was over, then --

**ROERIG:** He built, well he built, ah -- he was a builder on the Brown Palace Hotel, Trinity Methodist Church. In fact I've got quite a story about Trinity Methodist Church when he was there. And, ah, I believe, I'm not sure about Central Presbyterian, but those were all stone buildings. But I know the Brown Palace and Trinity Methodist Church.

**HARDEN:** To have the designation as a master stone mason, he had to apprentice his years before --

**ROERIG:** Well he worked, you see, in England before he came here as a stone mason and he brought that knowledge with him. Which then they gave him a permit to be here and because of his experience it was something new here, they didn't have that kind of people here. So he really was a teacher, ah, teaching the others how to do it.

**HARDEN:** And it is definitely a craft and a skill.

**ROERIG:** Right.

**HARDEN:** Many of the building materials for these and other buildings in the area came from Douglas County, from the Rhyolite quarries.

**ROERIG:** That's right.

**HARDEN:** Did he ever go down to see the quarries or did he just work with the finished stone when it was delivered?

**ROERIG:** He just worked with the finished stone, as far as I know. He didn't live very long. Ah, he died when I was only about -- oh, nine years old, I think. So my grandfather didn't live very long.

**HARDEN:** But he contributed a great deal, though, in his work by training other people, I'm sure.

**ROERIG:** Right, right. And he worked the full five years up at Cheesman -- out there. Ed Maloney was the chief engineer and, ah -- Geddes and Seeries were the contractors.

**HARDEN:** And did you grandmother and grandfather move up to Cheesman for that--

**ROERIG:** They lived at Cheesman all that time and that's why my father suggested that mother take my older brother, eight years older, and my sister, ten years older than myself. I wasn't even born then, in 1903. And she said "I will go if you'll put a roof over my head but I will not go in a tent". And that's when dad bought the one-room cabin in 1903 at Nighthawk.

**HARDEN:** Was that a new cabin or was that --

**ROERIG:** Oh no, no they had, see they had established, I think it was in 1897, I think the town of Nighthawk. They had 107 people living there at the town of Nighthawk at one time and they had two newspapers, the dance hall, and of course the saloon, the hotel, the grocery store, the sawmill, all those things were there.

**HARDEN:** To travel to the work on the reservoir which was about five or seven miles, or maybe further?

**ROERIG:** Oh, it was further than that, ah -- if they went up to visit her parents it would be, let's see, five miles to Deckers and, it would be maybe about twenty-five miles, they'd have to go up to Cheesman, from Nighthawk.

**HARDEN:** So, he had to travel that each day as --

**ROERIG:** Oh no, grandfather lived at Cheesman, right at Cheesman where they were building the dam. It was only if my mother and my brother and sister went to visit, they were the only ones that traveled.

**HARDEN:** I see.

**ROERIG:** No my grandfather and grandmother lived the whole year around for five years right at Cheesman.

**HARDEN:** Right at Cheesman. It was a community of workers then.

**ROERIG:** Right, right.

**HARDEN:** Is any of those buildings left or?

**ROERIG:** Well, not that is such. The superintendent, ah, that has charge of Cheesman right now, he has a lovely home right on the lake, ah, shore and that. As far as the worker's huts and different things like that, there is nothing of that left, that I know of, so --

**HARDEN:** That dam is quite a construction job.

**ROERIG:** Right.

**HARDEN:** It is an unusual one because of its arch and all, and since your grandfather died before you could hear his stories, did you hear stories of its building from other people in the community?

**ROERIG:** Well, of course, I got it from my grandmother, lived until she was about 72 or 75. So I got a lot of stories from my grandmother and from my mother.

**HARDEN:** What did your grandmother remember about it?

**ROERIG:** Well, some of these things that I've been telling about. The hardships, about how they used to go over to West Creek to get their grocery supplies, and Mr. Greene who his son still has the old Greene store over at Buffalo, uh -- They used to go to Buffalo for supplies and, in fact, they had to go over on to the north fork of the Platte River over to Argyle, that was where the Geddes and Seeries had their headquarters and their shop to repair machinery in it. But that's where they cut most of the stone and then they would put them on dreys and on four and six-horse teams would drag the dreys with those heavy blocks of stone from Argyle clear up over the mountain up to Cheesman as they were building.

**HARDEN:** It's a lot of horsepower, animal power involved in that.

**ROERIG:** Right, right. Yes.

**HARDEN:** And Argyle is gone now, I know Buffalo is still a little community over there.

**ROERIG:** Yeah, and but Argyle still has, ah, there several buildings still there at Argyle. The old machine shop is still there and the main Geedes and Seerie house is still there.

**HARDEN:** I didn't know that.

**ROERIG:** Because I had friends, ah, my sister-in-law's brother married, ah, into the second or third generation of Geedes/Seeries family. And they used to go up there all the time in the summertime, use it as a summer cabin, so I've been there myself.

*[laughter]*

**HARDEN:** Did the train come on the North Fork of the Platte?

**ROERIG:** The train came from Denver and came on up through Waterton and followed up the river South Platte and then on up to Buffalo and then on, clear on up to Leadville.

**HARDEN:** It was following the North Fork at that time.

**ROERIG:** Yes, ah, followed the North Fork.

**HARDEN:** And then if you wanted to take the train into Denver you had to meet it down at South Platte.

**ROERIG:** We had to go down to South Platte, five miles down.

**HARDEN:** And then when you were traveling back and forth, that was how you would come, and it was a narrow gauge, wasn't it?

**ROERIG:** Yes, it was a narrow gauge and one of the things that I got a big, ah, thrill out of as a small child, ah, riding the train was the hawker, if you know what the hawker is?

**HARDEN:** No, tell me.

**ROERIG:** Where the fellow has the tray hung around his neck and he'd go through the train and his spiel was "Popcorn, crispolatts [*sp?*], chewing gum, popcorn, chewing gum, popcorn, crispolatts [*sp?*], chewing gum" and he'd go through the whole train like that. And I used to just love to see him when he had this tray hung around his neck with his wares on, in front of him. And he was called a hawker.

**HARDEN:** Okay.

**ROERIG:** [*laughter*] And we used to have ride the train and then we'd have to take, in the early days, that's probably what I have here. Then we would have to take the horse stage from South Platte up to Nighthawk which was a distance of five miles. And, at first, Mr. Buzbee, Mr. and Mrs. Buzbee had it, they were dear old souls. And, ah, I used to have the front because I was the littlest, I'd get to sit next to Mr. Buzbee with my dad in the front seat and Mr. Buzbee give me the tail-end of the reins as he was driving. Of course I thought I was driving the horses, you know, that was fun. But he was so good. But he came to a tragic end, ah, he was coming back from Deckers or West Creek in Deckers back to South Platte where they had their home and -- was a terrific blizzard and a sharp corner which is quite near the river there he, ah -- The team ran off the road and they, tipped into the river and, of course, he was soaked to the skin. And in this blizzard he was trying to get home but about three quarters of a mile upriver from the town of Nighthawk, ah, was what we called Campbell's flat. They used to run cattle in those days. The ranchers could run cattle, and they had an open cattle shed, and ah, it, ah, he managed to get that far and he thought he couldn't make it any more and, ah -- He left the stage some place and, ah, he had the two horses and he went in there. If he

could of only got a half to three quarters of a mile further he could had gotten to where Keith Kendall and his mother were, living. But the next morning they found him frozen to death.

**HARDEN:** That's sad.

**ROERIG:** And that's the tragic end to Mr. Buzbee. Anyway, then we had another exciting ah, thing, was the next party. Some of my things [*moves*] The next person as I remember it that took over the, the stage route after Mr. and Mrs. Buzbee, after Mr. Buzbee died, and Mrs. Buzbee naturally moved out. Was a man by the name of Bellew, don't ask me how to spell his name, but I know his name was Bellew and he was quite a cantankerous fellow. He wasn't a kind old soul and that but, anyway -- As I understand it, he had a, married about a fifteen or sixteen year old girl and he would be drunk so much of the time that he just beat up on her, kick her, spit at her, and yell at her, and all the rest of it. So one time when he took, what we called the fish train on Saturdays, ah -- The narrow gauge had a fish train come up as far as Buffalo, Grant or Buffalo, there, and so it came through about two o'clock in the afternoon and he was taking a load of fisherman up to Deckers and so the girl went down to South Platte Hotel and to Mrs. Walbrecht [*sp?*] who was the owner of the hotel, was also the station master, mistress or whatever you want to call her. And, ah, she was so beaten up and that Mrs. Walbrecht [*sp?*] gave her a ticket and put her on the train, when it went back into Denver. And when Bellew came back after he'd made the trip up to Deckers and back and he was pretty well loaded, ah, with booze, and that I imagine. And he found his wife was gone, so naturally he came down and he accused Mrs. Walbrecht [*sp?*], and she said yes she had gone, sent her to Denver. And, so what did Mr. Bellew do? But he set the hotel on fire and shot Mrs. Walbrecht [*sp?*] in numerous places, I can always remember her hand, she was shot right here over her ring finger, and her fingers were always like that afterwards. She managed to come through. Mr. Walbrecht [*sp?*] managed to hide behind the bar and so he didn't get shot. But the hotel burned down and Mr. Bellew came through and he took one of the horses and was riding horseback and, ah, he didn't stay on the highway from South Platte up to Deckers, went over the mountain side. Well it was the next morning, and of course we'd seen this big thing, and Mr. Moore who was the postmaster at Nighthawk, he said well that has to be the hotel on fire, that's the only thing that's that big to make that much smoke. And, ah, but anyway my sister had some girlfriends up with her and they were out hiking and, of course, little sis had to tag along, and we were over on Pine Creek and Mr. Bellew came down off the mountain side and on his riding horseback and rode across Pine Creek and went on up Knottinghead and started on south again. You see he was staying clear

of the roads. But as I understand it, he finally got almost to Cañon City and all the officers of all the counties, ah, in between were trying to find him, and he got almost to, down towards Cañon City and he came into a fenced area. And it came to a triangle like this and he was cornered. And either he, I never did understand and I never knew for sure whether he killed himself or the officers killed him. Anyway that was the end of Mr. Bellew.

**HARDEN:** About what year was this?

**ROERIG:** Well I imagine that must have been about maybe about [190]7, [190]8, [190]9, [19]10, somewhere along in there, so, that was the end of Mr. Bellew and then shortly after that then we got our first automobile stages. Mr. & Mrs. Newell came in and brought automobiles with them. And ah --

**HARDEN:** Were they like a Stanley Steamer type car or?

**ROERIG:** No, they were just a ordinary car. A seven seater, you know how they used to have the little jump seats.

**HARDEN:** Yes.

**ROERIG:** In the seven passenger car. And then later their older son, their only son. They had a son, Ray, and a daughter, Lucille, and Ray and my older brother, Alan, used to play together and get together every once in a while and -- I would yack with Lucille a little bit and -- But Ray Newell later took over after his mother and dad died or gave up the stage. Ray Newell took up the stage and then when he went into the war, during the war he was injured, and he always had to walk with a cane after that. But he built a home up at what is now known as the subdivision of Scraggy View and he died just about a year and a half ago. He was 92, I believe, Raymond was.

**HARDEN:** He had a long life.

**ROERIG:** Pardon?

**HARDEN:** He had a long life.

**ROERIG:** Yes he did. But he spent most of it up there on the mountainside.

**HARDEN:** On the mountain.

**ROERIG:** Many a time he'd say to me, "Dorothy, you and I are about the oldest ones up here." [*chuckles*]

**HARDEN:** After the coming of the automobiles where individuals owned them more, then the automobile stage dwindled away --

**ROERIG:** Well, it just passed out because, you see, the train was taken off too.

**HARDEN:** When did?

**ROERIG:** They finally, I do not know the year they took the train off. But they said that they no longer had the freight they used to, ah, have so much hay. Hay that they transported on it and then they put in Highway 285, I think it is, from up like to Bailey and so the truckers came through and that did away with your railroad. So they abandoned the railroad then.

**HARDEN:** Maybe around the end of the [19]20's?

**ROERIG:** I imagine so.

**HARDEN:** That's too bad, to.

**ROERIG:** Yeah, it is. I said if somebody had been farsighted enough and had picked up that little old narrow gauge that ran from Denver, so they built it, they didn't run it all the way, they could of, ah, made as good if not bested the little train down from Durango up, down there --

**HARDEN:** I think you're right.

**ROERIG:** Because that canyon was so beautiful, and I know that even like myself, anybody that would come, the first thing I'd do was to take them for a ride on that canyon, if they had kept the train going. But, those are things that are passed and gone now.

**HARDEN:** The canyon, ah, brings up to mind, the Denver Water Board's plans to -- to dam the canyon.

**ROERIG:** Oh yes -- dam it. Well they have a temporary one down at Strontia Springs and that is a mile and a half down the river from South Platte. Now South Platte is where the two, the North Fork and the South Fork come together and Strontia Springs is about a mile and a half down after the two rivers come together, and they have a temporary bridge, I mean dam, in there now. That's where they wanted to build the Two Forks Dam.

**HARDEN:** Which?

**ROERIG:** And if they did build the Two Forks Dam on the South Fork it would have backed up twenty-one miles, which would be up a mile above Deckers.

**HARDEN:** Yes.

**ROERIG:** We would all be under water. At my place at Nighthawk, ah, we would have been under 628 feet of water, something like that. So -- so we don't know, of course, right now, we thought we were doing pretty good on the, ah -- Stimey, when they, the EPA, Mr. Riley [*clears throat*] excuse me, vetoed it. But the fact that Douglas County and Jefferson County, Adams County and Arapahoe County, they are all getting so many more people and they came in and said Denver if you will still fight we will go in and we'll pay twenty percent of the cost of -- Now that would have meant Denver only had to pay twenty percent instead of the whole amount. And so, but when Mr. Riley vetoed it, Denver said "Well, I guess that's it". But the other counties said "Well look, we still need water, so we're going to", and at the present time I understand that they are threatening to sue the EPA, as to that veto.

**HARDEN:** It is a controversial decision but

**ROERIG:** Pardon?

**HARDEN:** It is a controversial decision.

**ROERIG:** Right.

**HARDEN:** It affects so many of our lives.

**ROERIG:** That's right.

**HARDEN:** But to lose the canyon is a great sadness for me.

**ROERIG:** Oh, terrible. Now the woman that came in and, ah, inspected for the EPA, just before Mr. Riley made his decision, she said, "Oh", she said "It would be criminal to dam this beautiful canyon up". So, that's the way the world bounces.

**HARDEN:** Well, we'll still keep watching that.

**ROERIG:** Right.

**HARDEN:** Ah, I know there are other alternatives and conserving water always is one way to do it. But you have seen the progression of the Denver Water Board from your grandfather's working on a dam to, I understand, the Denver Water Board owns a great deal of the canyon, as private property.

**ROERIG:** In fact, from South Platte to Deckers, they own almost all the places where people have had to give up their homes. There are very few of us that still have our own places. Now at Nighthawk, itself, ah -- we, ah, those of us that have our own cabin. Now my, ah -- deed or whatever you want to say -- my property I'm suppose to have, ah, three lots which is a quarter of an acre of ground around my place. But, all, and the other cabins own the ground their cabin is on but all around us has been sold to the water board. And, so, ah, we don't own the property, ah, around us like we used to.

**HARDEN:** The people --

**ROERIG:** Because the water board has bought up clear from South Platte up to Deckers and anybody that tries to sell their property it's next to impossible to sell to a, ah, a private person, a private party, because they don't want to, they can't buck the water board. So the water board owns now, like just south, just immediately south of where my cabin is there at Nighthawk they --

*END OF SIDE A*

*BEGIN SIDE B*

**ROERIG:** -- that, ah, several of the cabins that are in what is known as Lower Nighthawk, ah, the people, families passed away and that, nobody would buy them. So

the water board owns several of the cabins over there in Lower Nighthawk, and as I say around where my cabin is right in the old township of Nighthawk ah, all the property is owned by the water board. The only thing is where our cabins are set in the middle of our property and then we just have a little bit, as I say three lots or a quarter of an acre, around the property is all that we have now.

**HARDEN:** So the future is uncertain, still?

**ROERIG:** Definitely, definitely.

**HARDEN:** Nighthawk, can you tell me a little bit about the history of Nighthawk. It had ah, it was a promotional town put together by a developer, so to speak?

**ROERIG:** Well, as I understand it, of course, there is a, ah -- historical marker down in front that was put up by Money, the Colorado historian, he was instrumental in having it and there's a great big historical marker, down right at the gate on Nighthawk. And, ah, it tells about the 107 people and that and, but it was a regular township but what it was they had the sawmill down there at Pine Creek and the river road and, ah, [*clears throat*] then, excuse me, they had a lot of people were cutting fence posts and railroad ties as a living like this Mr. Kendall was doing. And the road that comes in our gate at Nighthawk up past our cabin and goes on up way on up to Knottinghead was the old logging road that, ah, they used to bring the logs down to the sawmill down there. And that, there were quite a few, well they were just people like in any town, the dancehall fella, well he made good there. And then they had the post office and the hotel, till it burned down. And, incidentally, it was quite a thing and we've all, I still have a little coffee can about six inches in diameter that has holes poked in the top of it in which we keep our matches because we understand that what caused the fire that burned the hotel down was that either mice or rats or chipmunks got in and nibbled the matches and it set the place on fire. That's what burned the hotel down.

**HARDEN:** And it was never rebuilt?

**ROERIG:** No, it was never rebuilt. By that time, ah, people had moved out, there was no, they tried gold mining. Now we had several places you could see where they had dug into the mountain side and one just south between, ah, my place and where I call this Lower Nighthawk. There was, for quite some time, there was a good sized mine entrance and we had, we youngsters, there was quite a few of us, in the cabins up there. Ah, had fun because there was still the little old track with the little mine car on it and it

went back in and the track and the mine car would go back into the hillside about 125 feet, maybe, and of course it was sort of on a slant, and we kids used to get on the mine car and ride back until it bumped into the mountain.

**HARDEN:** You didn't play in an old mine shaft?

**ROERIG:** What?

**HARDEN:** You played in an old mine shaft!

**ROERIG:** Yeah, but of course every once in while we would hear a crackle or something in some of the timbers would be falling down and why they didn't fall down on us. And another thing we did until our mothers stopped us, and, ah, that was in that old dance hall, it was beginning to kind of slide down the hill there, but there was an old stage coach in there and we would get in the, and pull the stage coach up to the front because it was on a maybe a twenty degree angle slanting down because the floor was following the hillside, now it had lost its foundation. And [*chuckles*] we'd get in and then we'd pull that wooden brake against the wheel and hold it until the boys got in, then we pulled it and then we'd all ride back until it hit the back end of the thing and why the roof didn't come down on top of our heads I do not know. The way that thing would hit so hard. Until our mothers found out about it, then we couldn't play there anymore. So that's when we went over and played in the mine car.

**HARDEN:** And then your mother found out about that I'm sure too.

**ROERIG:** And another thing that we had a lot of fun about doing was down at, what was later known as Twin Cedars, or what Mr. Martin who had been Mr. Don Simeth's uncle. Don Simeth and his wife, Jane, ran Twin Cedars. But, ah, anyway, there was no bridge to get across the river from South Platte clear up to what was known as Upshield[*sp?*] or the Sugar Creek where the Sugar Creek road came down, which was a distance of about seventeen or eighteen miles. And, there used to be a pretty high flow in the river that the fellows even with waders on could not get across the river very -- So Mr. Martin put a swinging bridge across at his place there and that would be about a quarter, three quarters of a mile down river from my cabin at Nighthawk. And, ah, so he put this swinging bridge in which made it wonderful because the fellows could get on the other side of the river and do some fishing. And, but we kids discovered that if we would go across. Oh what he did was, they took the two cables and then hung wire down and then put two by four's across them and made a floor board. Well we kids

would go across and get in the middle of the river and hang onto the cable and look down at the water going, we were looking, we were facing up stream. Of course the water was going down, but it gave you the sensation that you were moving rapidly up the river. And we used to just love that. Mr. Martin would see us out there and boy would he holler at us, "Get the blab-blab-blab out of there". And then, so we thought well how are we going to have that fun. So we devised this, that -- one of the adults to go with us. Why we would go down, and we were supposedly going across the bridge to climb the mountains on the other side which we did quite frequently but we still had the fun of stopping in the middle and feeling ourselves riding up the river so Mr. Martin, as long as there was an adult with us, we didn't get yelled at. So we learned that, how to do that.

**HARDEN:** What was Twin Cedars, was it a resort?

**ROERIG:** Pardon?

**HARDEN:** Was Twin Cedars a resort?

**ROERIG:** Well, ah -- they had several cabins for rent, Twin Cedars did. Now when Mr. Martin had it, he just had a few rooms built onto his place and he'd give board and room to the fisherman over the weekend. But when Twin Cedars took it over the main lodge they had, well, they had soft drinks and beer and they had a little grocery store. And, but they served breakfast, lunch, sandwiches and things, never a big dinner but just ah sandwiches and that. But they had several cabins for rent. They built several cabins around. They ran it and they did very well for a long time. Of course, there again, came the water board, bought it up, tore it down. So there's nothing left.

**HARDEN:** Didn't save anything of it?

**ROERIG:** There's nothing left of it now, tore all the buildings down. Well, in fact, there was one time and there was this fellow that was, well, I can't say, I forget what his name is right now. But anyway he was living down near South Platte and the little old lady that was living in the back end of the hotel there. Why she said, I heard her myself, because she came up to Twin Cedars to have a sandwich and I was down there and she said, "I can't understand why Mr.". Oh dear I wish I could think of his name because it is very prominent and he supposedly is in Douglas County Jail right now [*laughter*]. But anyway she said I can't understand why he goes down to Texas and California and down to the Mexican border so much and when he comes back he always has the back

end of that truck just loaded with bushel basket after bushel basket of onions. And of course we all knew what was there. He was bringing dope back, ah, and they, I understand that onions is one of the hardest things for a dog to sniff out, the dope. And, so, he'd always bring back these, bushel basket after bushel basket of onions. And so there was one fellow, the Colorado, ah like the FBI put a fellow on and he was suppose to be working and he admitted that he drove to California and he drove down in Texas and brought back this and that, and I wish I could remember the man's name that's responsible for -- But anyway down towards South Platte he built a big what the natives called a barracks and he was, had machinery in there that would take this dope that he was bringing back and make it into this, ah, oh, different things that are on the dope market nowadays. And, but when Mrs. Simeth had to give up the Twin Cedar Lodge itself, the Douglas County Sheriff's Department took over the main lodge. There is still one, two, three, four, five, about four or five cabins still there. But anyway the sheriff's department took over just the main lodge and had it as a deputy sheriff's headquarters during the summer months - May through October. Well that was a little bit too close, to have the law that close to where this fellow was manufacturing all this dope. So one night, ah, after the sheriffs had left, which was in October, the sheriffs were no longer in residence, he went up and set all the places on fire and burned them all down.

**HARDEN:** So they are lost as well now?

**ROERIG:** Yes, right, right.

**HARDEN:** It sounds like the canyon is a, because of its isolation, seems to draw certain kind of people to its area that want to avoid, ah, being observed.

**ROERIG:** Right, right, and yet on the other hand you couldn't find a more wonderful -- group of people that would do, do everything. Now, in my particular case, now that I am handicapped, after Mrs. Simeth had to give up, she used to call me every day because I was up there alone, most of the other cabins just came up weekends and, but Mrs. Flassic [*sp?*] took over and she lived four and a half miles up the river at Scraggy View, what is known as Scraggy View. And I had to call her every morning between seven and 7:30, in the morning to let her know I was okay. Which I appreciated, no end, being there alone. Although I could still drive my car and that, but still you never know being handicapped the way I am and that. So one night we had a severe electrical storm and it took out the phone. I could not call Mrs. Flassic [*sp?*], she could not call me and I was suppose to do that between seven and 7:30. At quarter to eight, just fifteen

minutes after the deadline, I heard a knock at the door. "Mrs. Roerig, Douglas County Sheriff", said "Mrs. Flassic sent me down here to see if you are okay". Now you don't get that kind of service very often. And you certainly don't get that kind of service here in Denver.

**HARDEN:** No, you don't.

**ROERIG:** And other times when she couldn't get me and she had no means of transportation, she'd send some of the neighbors down, and make sure I was okay. Now if you don't think I appreciated that --

**HARDEN:** Of course.

**ROERIG:** I tell you it touches the heart.

**HARDEN:** It's true, there's a small community of people that have been there for a number of years --

**ROERIG:** That's right. But that morning the "Mrs. Roerig, Sheriff's Department" laughter. Less than fifteen minutes after my deadline, see. But when it came and I hadn't called her and she couldn't get me, get the sheriff. *[laughter]*

**HARDEN:** Good. Did there, during prohibition, were there operations in the canyon that the local residents knew about?

**ROERIG:** Not that, ah, were knowledgeable to most of us. There could have been and there more than likely, were. But they were very much on the q.t., and we didn't know too much about them --

**HARDEN:** Not being a regular customer you would have no need to know about that, right?

**ROERIG:** No. That's right, that's like one of my school teacher friends was trying to find me one time and I told her she went to the wrong places cause she stopped in at the bar at Trumbull and she stopped in some place else and they said I don't know where and yet you can't go so many places that everybody doesn't know who I am and where I am. And I said you just went to the wrong, the wrong place. *[laughter]* She

stopped at Sprucewood which was very definitely at one time. Oh that was a haven for motorcyclist and, ah, the bar, oh me, heaven help us. *[laughter]*

**HARDEN:** Yes. There was a, Nighthawk was, was a town put together, there was no industry that drew those people together, it was more of a resort area.

**ROERIG:** No, ah, excuse me, when I say no, if, ah, there were, they were hunting for gold, they were mining.

**HARDEN:** The mining was a reason.

**ROERIG:** And, then they were doing this uh -- logging.

**HARDEN:** And the logging.

**ROERIG:** And that, so they did have those two industries, ah, that the people that lived there were interested in. And as I said, they even had two newspapers, so, ah, they had that.

**HARDEN:** And then the other little towns that were down the river on the Douglas County side, were they pretty much the same type of?

**ROERIG:** Well now Deckers, of course, was Trumbull was, ah, they had their store. And, of course, that's where our fire department is now. And, but they have turned down, as I understand, they've given up, there again, the water board bought it and there wasn't anybody that would do anything so they took it away and somebody made a cabin out of it. They moved it to another place. That used to be the bar and the restaurant at Trumbull. And Deckers, of course, has always been sort of a, ah, a resort where they rented cabins and I know there is one little cabin across the river that they always called the honeymoon cabin. Several of my friends said that's where they went up and spent their honeymoon. And then, too, we were talking about, ah, during prohibition so forth and so on, they used to tell the story and I think maybe and I think -- I don't know, I think I have it in there. That the cowboys used to come into Deckers on ah, like on a Friday or Saturday night and they said they never knew where, whether the bar was going to be in Deckers on Douglas County or across the river in Jefferson County, because it depends if they'd been over searching Douglas County why then they moved everything over to Doug, ah to Jefferson County. And then Jefferson County, they'd move it back over to Douglas. So they said the cowboys'd come in and

they'd stand there, well where do we go, which side of the river do we go tonight to get our booze.

**HARDEN:** Ah, they must have tied on a couple of good ones to have that kind of reputation. When you went up for the summertime, did you stay the entire three months or would you come back and forth to Denver?

**ROERIG:** Stayed to whole time.

**HARDEN:** The whole time.

**ROERIG:** We'd go up, my brother -- as I said, you could see from the pictures too, I was little, and, we'd go up the Saturday morning, take the train up, ah, Saturday morning after the kids got out the first Friday in June from school, my brother and sister. We'd come down Labor day and go to school the next day. [*laughter*]

**HARDEN:** And did you father come, and visit back and for --

**ROERIG:** He'd come up, yes, he'd come up weekends and sometimes he'd come up on Wednesday nights and bring some extra food. And we had, in those days we didn't have electricity and we, ah, so we had what we called a dug-out into the mountainside and it was nice in there.

**HARDEN:** Nice cellar.

**ROERIG:** And we had taken a big box and had left the corners in it and then just put screen wire around it and made what we called a safe and we put our things that were open, like butter and different things like that in the safe. But, from the rafters we'd hang a whole ham, a side of bacon, and then, I said this to somebody the other day and they said what in the world was that. We had a big crock that stood about this big that maybe we put down four or five dozen eggs in water glass that would preserve the eggs so we always, and as I said we had a whole ham, side of bacon. Go out and pick up wood, poor mother baked eighteen loaves bread a week.

**HARDEN:** Oh my. On a wood stove.

**ROERIG:** On a wood stove, right. And to do our washing we would take it down because there was a nice pebbly beach right along side of the river and, ah, we'd build,

make quite a family -- takin' all the things down, but, to the water, we could dip the water out of the river into the wash tub or into the wash bin and, ah, so boiler, I meant. But anyway we'd build a fire and put this copper boiler on it, fill it with water to boil the clothes. And then we had the wash tub with the old fashioned wash board. We'd help mother with the washing, of course we kids were playing all the time the clothes were boiling and different things. We'd have maybe a picnic lunch down there and while we still had a fire we, ah, toast a wiener or something like that, which was fun, just added to it. And then when it was through then we carry all back the other side and hang it up on the clothes lines to dry.

**HARDEN:** That's so different from our wash days today. We forget how much effort it took.

**ROERIG:** Well that's what my nieces, my nephew's wives will say to me, "Aunt Dottie, how in the world can you stand and do so and so and so and so?" I said "Listen". I said "When I used to have to walk, maybe the sum of a whole block and carry a bucket full of water" cause I'd sit there and let the spring drip, drip, drip into it and I, ah, had the whole series of Elsie Dinsmore's books for girls and that. So, anyway I would take a book and maybe read a couple of chapters while the bucket was filling then I'd have to lug it back. And then if you wanted water you had a dipper, and you dipped the water where ever you wanted it to go. So --

**HARDEN:** So the spring was about a block from the cabin?

**ROERIG:** Uh-huh.

**HARDEN:** And did other people use the spring, or was that on your property?

**ROERIG:** Well, the one we used, at that time we were about the only one that used it. But the one to the south, to the north of us there were three or four people, used that one. But then they got the idea of cementing it up and dipping their buckets in and we didn't think that was such a good idea because you didn't know how clean the buckets were. *[laughter]*

**HARDEN:** True, that's very true.

**ROERIG:** So, we figured that, puttin' the bucket down and letting the water drip into it was much better. And oh, I could, ah, quite a few books I read while I sat over there waiting for that water pail to fill up.

**HARDEN:** Are the springs still there?

**ROERIG:** Pardon?

**HARDEN:** Are the springs still there?

**ROERIG:** Oh yes, I'm still using it, of course now I have it piped into the house. But there is a pump over there and, ah, electricity runs the pump. And, of course, we have our refrigeration and television, radio, you name it, we've got it all. Telephones and everything else. So we are quite modernized now. But, no -- right now my nephew's wife bought me groceries yesterday. Ah, every two weeks they bring my groceries, and they say "Well Aunt Dotty I don't understand how you could go that long and not", and I said "Now listen, when you've lived up in the mountains like that and there was no store that you could go to, two or three times a week". I said you had to plan ahead of what you wanted and that, and I said so it's no chore for me. But, many a time when a gal has married one of my nephews or something they can't understand it. *[laughter]*

**HARDEN:** You, ah, *[tape is stopped, restarted]*. We just paused for a few minutes and Dorothy told me about a forest fire they thought was close by. Dorothy could you re-tell that for us because that is a reminder of the fires that we recently experienced in other states?

**ROERIG:** Well this happened, I can't. I'm sorry I cannot remember the date, but I was maybe about five or six years old and my sister had a friend and my brother had a friend with us and, ah, the smoke was so thick that we could hardly breath and our eyes watered and our noses ran and we asked Mr. Moore, the postmaster, what we should do. And he said, oh, he said, it must be, he says with it being that dense it has to be close but evidently it's just the smoke so far, but if we see the fire coming, he says we'll all go down and stand in the middle of the river. That's best the thing we can possibly do. But, anyway, we discovered that it was the smoke that was coming from a tremendous forest fire clear from Oregon and had blown the smoke down so it was just the smoke that we encountered. But it scared us.

**HARDEN:** Certainly, well in recent years there was a fire in Utah, one in California that we got the smoke from, that was --

**ROERIG:** Well, just last summer, ah, the lightening started a fire back up on, what we call Knottinghead, maybe less than a mile and a half away from my cabin up on the mountainside. And the wind was blowing down river way, down this way and I was quite concerned about it. And the sheriff, both the sheriff and the forest ranger came by and called to me and said, "Dorothy, if we come by and are using our siren, get out of there as fast as you can move". But, fortunately, they put six men on and they got it out. And that, but I kept calling to find out how about the forest fire, how about the forest fire. [*laughter*]

**HARDEN:** Well it is something we always have to keep in mind because it moves so fast and when you are in the canyon the winds will, are often stronger.

**ROERIG:** Well, at the same time, that was a grands-, a daughter and her husband of some friends and have the cabin just up the hill from me, were here were on vacation from Michigan, and so anyway they were quite concerned and they were to leave the next day, so they packed their car that night in case they had to pull out. And they said Dorothy what in the world was the first thing. If you had to go what in the world would you take? I said "The first thing I would take is that black suitcase" and that's where this is ending.

*END OF TAPE*