

[Mrs. Will H. Berger]

[Personal narrative Dakota City?] [?] - 241 - DAK DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

DATE November 21, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 24

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. [Will H. Berger?] Dakota City, Nebraska [RFD?]
2. Date and time of interview November 21, 1938 8:30 PM
3. Place of interview At her home near Dakota City
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Mrs. George W. Bates, Dakota City
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

Mrs. Beulah McCutchan, 123 E 22nd St. South Sioux City, Nebraska

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The description of Mrs. Berger's home is the same as that of Mr. Berger's house, [viz.?]: a very nice farm home, the house, white, and the outbuildings are very nicely kept up. The rooms are large and airy. C15 - 2/27/41 - Nebraska

FORM B Personal history of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

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date November 21, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 24

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Will H. Berger, Dakota City RFD

1. Ancestry Father Lars o'Chander Mother Anna Peterson o'Chander
2. Place and date of birth born in Dakota County 1874
3. Family Four boys and three girls
4. Place lived in, with dates Dakota County all her life
5. Education, with dates better than an Eighth Grade education and some Normal training, also music
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
Housewife and music,
7. Special skills and interests
Good housewife, homemaker, mother and neighbor and interested in community and civic work
8. Community and religious activities Had been member of Lutheran Church but later joined Methodist Church in Dakota City
9. Description of informant. Is short, rather stout, blue eyes and rather yellow blond hair; certainly does not look to be more than 55 years of age; very pleasant and glad to be of assistance in any way
10. Other points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 South Sioux

DATE November 21[?], 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 24

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Will H. Berger, Dakota City [RFD?]

My folks came to the United States from Sweden in 1866; landed in New York, then came to Omaha. When they got to Omaha they had \$5.00 in American money, no job, and couldn't speak a word of English.

Mother got a job washing for about a month. Then they both got work on the new Union Pacific railroad from Omaha to Laramie City. Father worked on the road and mother cooked and washed for twenty-two men, for nine months; when they got back to Omaha they had \$900.00 saved up.

Then they bought a horse and buggy and started to hunt for a home. They went to Joplin Missouri and were there a couple of weeks. There were such large snakes there that mother was scared to death of them and wouldn't stay. They came back to Omaha, and then came across the country to Lincoln, and from Lincoln to Dakota County, in 1868. There were only two or three white settlers in that neighborhood at that time. One of them was Jesse Wigle; he was the one who would place people on homesteads that weren't taken. They settled on a homestead on Wigle Creek and lived there and saw all the hardships. The first year they were on their homestead they built themselves a one-room frame house, tar paper on the outside; built a sod barn; had one horse and bought themselves a cow.

The next spring father and mother were away working and Mrs. J. W. Davis stayed to look after the baby. While they were gone a prairie fire came, but they had plowed up around the house and barn and weren't damaged. The next day a snow storm came up; they

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had a cellar under the house and took the horse and cow down cellar and kept them from freezing. The next year they had the grasshoppers, but stayed on the homestead until mother died, in 1900.

When mother died my folks had 720 acres of land paid for; they had homesteaded 160 and bought the rest. Their homestead cost then \$90.00 but they bought 80 acres belonging to an uncle and paid [?] \$250.00 for that. Bought another quarter section and paid about \$800.00 for that; the last quarter they paid \$1,600 for. It was all in one piece, on the reservation; had 2 1/2 miles on the Winnebago reservation line. Father went back to the old country in 1901 and died there in 1921.

My folks raised lots of cattle and I used to ride a horse and take care of the cattle in the pasture. We had about 200 head, and sometimes about 100 calves.

Father cut hay for the Ashfords and the o'Connors. He used to cut 300 tons of hay with a scythe. Mother would walk 3 1/2 miles to Homer with ten dozen eggs in a basket and would trade them for groceries; they went through storms and prairie fires about the same as Mr. Berger's folks. The first grist mill in our neighborhood was run by Sam Combs. The first wheat father sold for \$1.00 a bushel; they came to the granary and got it; that was in 1878 or 1879.

I went to the Wigle School; finished the eighth grade and took ten weeks training course in the school at Homer. It was the school that was started by the United Brethern Church at Homer but was later moved to Wayne and is now known as the Wayne State Teachers College. I had a certificate to teach but had to stay at home and help mother. I have taught music lessons. The Catholic cemetery west of Homer is on part of the land that belonged to our homestead.

When my mother was a young girl in Sweden she had a very fine voice. Jennie Lind had been given a musical education and was then known as the "Swedish Nightingale". She came to the church mother attended and wanted all the girls of such an age to sing for her.

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Mother was among them, and Jennie Lind wanted to raise mother and educate here her in music but her father wouldn't give his consent, which, of course, was the wrong thing to do.

We had steel knives and forks and spoons when I was a little girl and I remember we used to take a common brick and use that to scour our steel knives and forks and spoons with. I remember once I melted a bar of yellow soap and about half a scouring brick, shaved off fine, and used that to scour our pans.

We girls used to like to crochet and if one would come to School Friday with a new crochet pattern we all had it by Monday.

I went to the Wigle Creek School but one summer they didn't have summer school and I walked 3 1/2 miles to the Shull district to school that summer. They generally had three months school in the summer and three months in the winter. We would go barefooted until we got quite close to the school house, when we would clean off our feet and put on our shoes; then when school was out we would take off our shoes when we got a ways from the school, and walk home barefooted, to save our shoes.

Once, when I was about sixteen I was crossing the ferry at Covington to go to Sioux City; was holding my pony by her bridle and she shook her head and almost threw me over the railing of the ferry boat. Joe Giesler was running the ferry at that time and caught me and saved me from being thrown in the river.

I remember a few verses that were written in my autograph album but will try to look it up and let you copy some of them the next time you come out. Here, though are a few: "Young men are like Scotch snuff; Take a pinch and that's enough." "Roses are red, violets blue, Pinks are pretty, and so are you." My father wrote this one in my album: "Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, Make the mighty ocean [?] And the pleasant land. Little deeds of kindness, Little words of love, Make the earth an Eden, Like the Heaven above."

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We used to play “Last Man Out.”