

April 18, 1957
Maskell

MRS. IVER O. BIRKLEY

My name is Mrs. Iver Birkley. My maiden name was Hannah Vatteng. I was born in Norway in 1875. My parents were Iver and Martha. My father was a farmer. I was seventeen years old when I came here. I came all alone. I had an uncle in South Dakota, just a little ways out of Vermillion. He sent my ticket and I came to him. He was a farmer. I didn't know much about America when I came. There was a group of children that came at the same time, but we went to different places. We packed a big trunk. We brought such things as spinning wheel, rolling pin--one of those that we make the lefslet^{sa} and flathrod^{with} with--our clothing, etc. We landed in Canada. We came out by train. I didn't speak English, I guess we ^{managed} managed by motions, My first ~~of~~ impression of United states was that I didn't like it. When I came to Vermillion, my uncle wasn't there to meet me, and one of the neighbors was in with a big lumber wagon with three boxes and a high spring seat on it. He had hauled hogs in the wagon in the morning. I had to climb up on that to get a ride out to my uncles. I thought that was some America. I was scared to sit up there. The country was ^{not} near as pretty as Norway. No trees, it looked like quite a wilderness. My uncle had a nice home. I stayed in South Dakota for about six years. I worked for the same family in Vermillion for four years. Then I got married and moved to Nebraska. My husband was a harness maker. He had a shop in Newcastle with his brother in law. He had a sister and some relatives living in Vermillion. Then we moved down to Newcastle when we were married. We lived there ten years. He built a house there that summer before we were married, so we moved in our own home. We ~~had~~ had a framed house. Then we moved on a farm just a little ways, about a mile east of Maskell. We bought a farm there and lost it.

The family that I came to work for had three little girls and they had some of those first readers, and I got a hold of them and they loved to help me learn it. He gave me plain stories to read. I got by very nicely. I liked to read. It was harder to learn to read, I think, than it was to learn to speak.

I learned when I stayed at my uncles. He wanted me to go to school, but I felt so out of place with the little folks. I had gone to school in Norway. I had plenty of school there, I never missed a day.

When I worked out for these people, I got \$2.50 a week.

When we lived on this farm at Maskell, I knew something about a farm, my uncle was on a farm. We like ~~the place~~ the farm. We loved the place. We worked hard for fifteen years to make a go of it, but we lost it, in the thirties. Any time we were to live our life over, we would go on the farm. We enjoyed it. I think that it is wonderful. We had six children, **Four** girls and two boys. Some of them live around here. We have a daughter in Iowa and a boy in Loveland, Colo, other wise they all live around here.

I don't think that I was here at the time of the tornado in Maskell.

My husband came to this country with his mother and one of his younger sisters and the rest of the family was here. She had two boys and a girl here before. They also came to Vermillion. She was a widow woman. They were very poor too, at the time they came over, but she had very good children and they helped her so much. She lived till she was 92 years old. She made her home with the children.

We spoke Norwegian quite a bit in our home after my husband and I were married. The four ~~children~~ oldest children were confirmed in Norwegian. They went to parochial school. The two younger ones couldn't make anything out of it. Orville, our oldest boy, I had to sit down and explain the lesson to him. He read it in Norwegian, but he couldn't understand it.

We cooked some Norwegian food, but not so much. ~~I don't think either.~~ Christmas time we used to cook it. We still have Christmas for the family here on Christmas eve. We have out ^{the} lukéfisk and ^{for} levetet, roast and everything.

I don't have any of the clothing that I brought over from Norway. I still correspond regularly with ^r ~~them~~ ^{relatives in Norway.} I had two nephews that were here. They were my sister's boys. They made their home with us, but they worked out.

We had three weddings. We were married in 1900 the first time. Then when we had been married 25 years, the whole congregation surprised us and had a church wedding for us. When we were married 50 years, we had our golden wedding. That was very beautiful, too. We have had all the weddings, now that we need. I belonged ~~to~~ the lutheran church in Vermillion. I was very busy there, with the choir and the league work. After we came here why we tried to do all and the best we could. The children all took active part while ~~we~~ ^{they} were home. We belong to Zion. Our family was good singers all of them. The older children used to give cantatas *in Hartington and Wynona* in older times. They would go to all those places and practice. My husband after he was through working in the field, working and walking after the plow, he would come home and feed the horses and then hitch up again and then take the girls to choir practice. We used to sing Norwegian songs, I still sing them about the house, myself. I enjoy it. I like music.