

ELSIE FERN (WARD) BOTTUM

27 April 1892 – 16 September 1988

Interview by Jeanne Temple; August 22, 1984

Transcribed by Myrna A. (Ward) Van Epps, July 2004

From time to time, interview notes and photographs at hand are referred to. Details in brackets were added by transcriber.

Side 1

I'm Jeanne Temple, and I'm going to interview Elsie Bottum today, August 22, 1984, in her home [308 E. Cass Street] in St. Johns [Michigan]. Now Elsie, will you tell me your whole name?

My name was Elsie Fern Ward.

And you married?

John Ralph Bottum.

Who was always called "Ralph?"

Yes.

What were your parent's names?

My father was Herman Ward. His father was John Ward. My mother was Mary West. Her parents were named "West."

What was her mother's first name?

Eliza [Elizabeth Kimball] West.

What was her father's name?

Samuel West.

Were you an only child?

No. I had two older sisters and two younger brothers.

What were their names?

My older sisters' names were Harriet, called "Hattie," and Nina. My brothers' names were Robert and J. Lawrence--John Lawrence.

Robert and J. Lawrence I have heard of. Who did the girls, your sisters, marry?

My older one, Harriet, called Hattie, married Fred Lamphere. My sister, Nina, married Murdo Bancroft. He was a sister [She means brother.] to Jesse Bancroft who lived here in St. Johns, and they had another brother, A. D. Bancroft—just those three; but I'm relation to another string of the Bancroft family.

OK, we'll get into that later because we have Bancrofts in the Colony [Rochester Colony, Greenbush Twp.]. Where did your parents live when you were born?

They lived in a log house on Colony Road—West Colony Road [south side of road just west of Anderson Road, section 34, Essex Twp., Clinton Co., Michigan].

For my purposes, I'll say west of the Greenwood corner. You and I know where that is. Maybe nobody else does. You said in a log house. Do you remember the log house?

Just vaguely. I was only two or three--. They didn't tear the house down right away. Then they built this house.

Then they built a big frame house, quite formal in those days—a front room, a dining room, a parlor--

Yes.

What are your earliest memories when you were a little girl, even before school?

I remember when my brothers were born. My brother, Lawrence, was about seven years younger than I; and my brother, Robert, was a year and a half younger than that.

I remember when they were born.

Quite excited?

Not too!

That brings up a point. Your mother had her babies at home, didn't she?

Oh, yes.

And the neighbor lady would come in?

Yes.

Did the doctor come?

I don't know. My daughters were born at home too.

I was born at home too. Sometimes they would send for a doctor whether he got there on time or not?

I don't remember about that.

Don't you think mostly that there was some neighbor lady who was quite skilled--?

I think I was sent to the neighbor's house to stay, overnight maybe.

Your father farmed. You had cows, horses, sheep, pigs, chickens?

Yes. Turkeys too!

Did you mother make butter?

Yes.

And made her own bread?

Yes.

Did you butcher in the fall? Do you remember butchering then?

Yes, I remember that. We never could have any of the fresh meat 'til we had eaten up all the livers, when they butchered. The liver had to be eaten first, and my father hated liver.

Why did he stick to that rule?

I don't know. Another thing he hated was onions. He didn't even grow them in his garden.

So you grew up without eating many onions. Did he do all of his farm work alone?

No, he always had a hired man.

Who lived with you probably?

Yes.

What about a hired girl for your mother?

Yes, she had a hired girl.

Most of the time?

A good deal of the time.

--that lived with you there. What year would we be talking about that they built the new house?

What year were you born?

1892

If they built it two years later, three years?

I think they built it two years later.

About 1894, so by then they used kerosene lamps for lighting. They weren't using candles.

Oh, yes.

Did they have a fireplace in the house?

No.

I ask you that for a particular reason. I'll tell you about later. Your older sisters were going to school.

Yes, we went to country school.

What was the name of the school?

Hammond.

How old were you when you started?

Well, I think about five.

How far did you have to walk?

A mile.

I know some country children would be older than five because their parents hated to see them go on such a long walk, but you had two big sisters to take you, didn't you? It does make a difference. Do you remember your first day at school?

No, not particularly.

You liked it then?

Oh, yes.

Do you remember your first teacher?

No, I don't think I do.

Do you remember any of your teachers?

Oh, yes. The one I remember most was Isabel Findlay when I was in the 8th grade, and she also taught the 9th grade. At one time, my father's cousin's son, was our teacher—Myron Ward.

That name sounds familiar to me. Did he go to school here in St. Johns?

Yes, I think so. His folks lived out north and east of town.

Towards the Greenbush area?

Yes, not so far out as Greenbush.

I taught country school for a number of years too, you know, and we didn't have hot lunches. Everybody had to carry their dinner pail. Do you remember what mother put in yours?

My sister, Nina,--she was nine years older--she always put up my lunch and combed my hair.

Was your mother almost, wasn't she, big sister?

Yes, and always did my sewing.

Did you wear your hair long?

Yes.

In braids or curls?

Braids.

We should have a picture here with your braids.

My daughter has my baby pictures. I don't think I have any here.

Do you remember anything that you did at school for fun?

We used to play games outdoors, fox and geese and those kind of games, and ball games when I got older.

The boys and girls played together, didn't they?

Yes.

And then, when you were through with country school, did you go into high school?

No, I didn't.

What did you do?

Just worked, helped my mother at home.

Did you help in the fields some?

No. I just drove the horses to unload the hay into the barn. That's the only thing I ever did outdoors.

You never milked?

No, I never learned to milk.

Well, I didn't either, but if your father always had a hired man, then of course--. Do you recall what your family did in the evenings? Did you have some games or anything that you enjoyed together?

Almost every night my father would pop some corn, and we'd sit around the table in the living room and read. I don't remember just what we read. [Clock chimes 4 o'clock.]

The Youth's Companion was very popular at one time.

Yes, I remember when we used to take that.

They would have a continued story. My father saved some that he had, and even when I was in my teens, I loved to get those out and read those. Those stories were so interesting.

Yes, they were--continued stories.

I remember one about some boys wanting to cut down a bee tree and get the honey, and all the problems they had with that bee tree. I'd like to have you think back on any stories that your father or mother told them about their lives. Seems to me as though I've heard some about your father.

I remember more stories about my grandparents than I do about my father--. My grandmother, my father's mother [Harriet Dart], when she was a young woman in [Torquay, Devonshire] England, she was nursemaid to two small German boys. Their names were Herman and Frederick. When she had her first child, my father, she named him Herman Frederick after those two little German boys.

The Sunday before she left England, the minister's text was "Is there no balm in Gilead? Are there no physicians there?" It's found in Jeremiah, the 8th chapter and the 22nd

verse. Of course, he didn't have any idea that his text would be remembered. That was about 1850.

Why did she come here?

I don't know exactly. She and her sister [Elizabeth with their parents Thomas and Mary (Kimber) Dart and siblings, William K., Ann, and Jane] came [to Monroe Co., NY]. While they were here they met the two Ward brothers, William Ward and John Ward, so that the two sisters married the two brothers.

Oh, so there's a line, really, of double cousins.

Yes.

You're really closely related to some of those people.

Yes, the Parrs in St. Johns. This is her sister, Betsy Ward, and this is my grandfather's brother, William Ward.

Was this taken somewhere on Colony Road?

I don't know where it was taken. This is a reproduction of a smaller one which I've seen.

That's a very, very good picture. OK, go ahead and talk some more about your grandmother or grandfather. You said you remembered more about stories that had told.

They were married in New York, the two couples, Harriet Dart and her sister, "Betsy" Elizabeth; and the two brothers, William and John Ward. They met in the United States and they were in married in 1853; and they walked seven miles from Riga to Churchville and that afternoon the two couples left for Michigan.

You don't know if they came by train?

I don't know how they came. No. [They came by train.]

Because sometimes they took the Erie Canal to Buffalo and then came by the--

I wish I had asked.

Of course, that's a little later, but that's how some of the Colony folks came. They took the boat from Buffalo to Detroit and then they came on. Then they came pretty much directly to the farm out there.

Yes.

Do you think they men had acquired the land beforehand?

No, they bought that afterwards. They spent the winter on the farm of Joel Wolcott, and in the spring they bought land just next west of the Wolcotts and built their houses.

Built their log houses?

Yes.

How many children did your grandmother have?

She had three: Harriet (Dart) Ward and John Ward had my father, Herman Ward, and his brother, Frank Ward, and a little boy that died--his name was Silas--at three.

Talking about the little boy's death, I know there is quite an interesting old cemetery out there on Colony Road too, on the south side, isn't there?

Yes. It's the Prairie Cemetery.

Is that where some of the family are buried or not?

My grandfather was buried there first, and when I was a little girl, they moved him to the Lowe Cemetery. That's where my grandmother is buried. She died in 1911.

It seems as though that Roma Hamer told me that there was some story about some of your family way back being born the day of one of those terrible fires in Michigan.

My father was born in 1856. A neighbor volunteered to go to St. Johns for the doctor. It was so dark that he had to carry a lantern at four o'clock. They called it the "smoky fall." Folks slept on the floor, because it's not so smoky on the floor.

Smokes rises. There's more oxygen at the floor level.

That was my father's birth.

That was on West Colony Road then too, wasn't it?

Yes, October 20th.

Then he, as a little boy, went to the same school you did, or not?

I suppose so. I don't know.

You've never heard him say as to whether—because in that time a school district, some of them would be one size one year and one size another, and they'd go this way wherever there were children. It took a few years before they got the boundaries fixed.

I don't remember about his school days.

But he was born during one of those big forest fire episodes.

1856.

Of course, he didn't remember. He was just told that, wasn't he? As a baby, he wouldn't remember.

Of course.

We were talking about what you did at home. Mother made all your clothes?

Yes. My sister, when she got old enough to sew, she made all my clothes.

Do you remember when they first got a sewing machine or did they have one that you always remembered?

I don't remember about that.

They had a sewing machine that you remembered to do the long seams with—

Yes.

In some of the stories I have read, a cobbler would come around to a house and make the family shoes. But now, you probably came into town sometimes to get shoes for the family.

My father used to repair our soles. He had an iron on a standard, different sizes, that he used to repair our shoes.

Were there any churches nearby?

We went to the Lowe Church. It was two miles and a half.

That wasn't too far then, was it? It is quite an old church, I know from its history.

Yes, it's been repaired.

Oh yes, most of the churches have too. Now, as you were growing up, did the young people have some special parties and things when they got together for their fun?

Oh, yes. My sisters, both of them, had their own crowd they went with.

What did they do for fun? Do you remember as a little girl, 'cause you probably wanted to go with them?

No, I don't remember about that. I remember when I was old enough to go to these parties. We used to have sleigh ride parties, go to different houses.

Did anyone make maple syrup or maple sugar, 'cause sometimes they used to have sugar parties. I know.

We had those at the church. When my brothers got old enough, they used to make sugar. My mother used to boil it down in a boiler on the stove.

So did mine.

--make maple syrup.

So, you had a wood stand on your farm.

Yes, we had wood and a creek.

All those things that were fun for kids when they were growing up, weren't they? Probably a lot of your social things, I mean, if you were going with a crowd of young people, many times you were going to church for something.

There were always young folks at the church. All of our activities were around the church.

I remember my mother telling me that after she and dad were married, he left for France very shortly, and he would write back and ask her if they had been over to Greenbush. The young folks from the Colony would go to Greenbush and back. He missed that. He was all alone off there in war but their activities were centered around the church, what they could do. Where did you meet your husband?

At church. We didn't go to the same school.

Where did he go to school?

He went to the Lowe School across the road from the church.

I know where that is. He was just far enough away from your district.

Yes.

Were you about the same age?

Yes. I was 4 months older.

Did you have to get your parents' permission when you went with him.

No.

Did they approve of him?

Oh yes, they approved of him.

They probably knew his family through church.

Oh yes, if course.

Did you say he was an only child or not?

No. This is his brother, Don Hollis, and then a younger brother Lawrence Clark Bottum.

He was younger than Ralph and his brother Don.

Is he alive?

No. He and his wife both died about two years ago. I don't remember just what year it was.

He lived quite a number of years then. I was thinking you were going to say that he died young.

No, just two or three years ago and they died just a few weeks apart.

Where did they live?

St. Louis.

St. Louis, Michigan. Don has been at Marquette, Michigan.

Yes.

Apparently, your husband elected to stay home on the farm and be a farmer.

Yes.

When were you married?

Oct. 29, 1913.

Almost Halloween, but not quite. Where were you married?

In our own new home.

In your own new home!

His folks built--the summer before we were married--they built us a new house and a new barn, and we were married in our own home.

Had your family and friends come there for the wedding?

No, we had a very small wedding. My father and mother and my grandmother West and his father and mother and the minister and his wife.

Do you remember the minister's name?

Yes. George Plews.

That's real interesting. I know of one other person that I can think of in my living memory that was married in her home. I mean where they stayed that first night, but it hadn't be built for her like yours [which] was a brand new home built for you and Ralph and no one else.

Just west of the Lowe Cemetery, first place.

Do you remember what you wore?

Yes. It was a brown silk, golden brown, and trimmed with cream- color lace and a high neck.

Did you carry flowers? I don't know what they did in those days.

No. We just went there and were married. We didn't have anything to eat. We didn't even have coffee or anything. Then we left on our honeymoon.

Where did you go on your honeymoon?

We went to Lansing for a few nights and then we went to my cousin's somewhere near Lansing, and then we went to Tecumseh. My uncle and aunt [probably Emma Jane (West) and Edson Clifford Brown] lived at Tecumseh, and my cousin [probably Bonnie Adell (Brown) Bielenberg] was my age.

Did you go by train?

We went by the electric.

Interurban.

Yes.

Then you eventually came back and you started in where you had left off with your mother, at taking care of a house?

Yes.

Did Ralph have cows? Milked?

Yes. He had livestock and the next summer after we were married, the lightning struck our barn and killed one of our horses.

Because you farmed entirely by horses, that meant a great deal to lose a horse. You almost immediately had to find another one. You can't do much with one horse. You have to have a team. Did you have a hired man sometime?

Yes, we had a hired man summers.

To help with the haying and cultivating and like that. Nowadays and maybe before you left the farm, you did a lot of canning.

Oh yes.

Now we have freezers. I just put corn in the freezer. Back then neither you nor my mother would have had a freezer, but did you do a lot of canning?

Yes. I used to pick berries and strawberries from the neighbors. I picked them and they would give me half.

Pick on shares.

Yes.

Did you have hens?

Yes, we had chickens, and a garden—two gardens. We raised our own potatoes, enough for a year and sweet corn.

Did your husband sell his milk, because by then they were picking up milk in some places?

At first we sold the milk. We had a cream separator and I made butter.

Did you sell butter? Did you have enough that you would sell? Because I know that too, years ago in the old-fashioned stores, a farm lady could bring in her eggs and butter and trade for groceries and then pay a little difference in cash, if necessary. A lot of people did that. That was a way of life.

Yes, that's what we did.

Did you do sewing? By then, were you into sewing?

Oh, yes. I've always sewed until the last few years.

How many children did you and Ralph have?

Two. Edith was the oldest, born 1914, October 1st; and Laura was born November 2nd, 1915-- 13 months' difference.

You were busy for awhile then, weren't you?

Yes.

I remember Laura because she was a friend of Geraldine Ash's and would come home with Gerry from high school, and I was enough younger that I was never in high school with them, but I can remember because they would always come over to see my mother. Edith, I don't remember quite as well because—well, maybe she came some with the Ash girls, I don't know. I know they did some. Then they too went to the Hammond School?

No, they went to the Lowe School.

Oh, that's right, because you were living over closer.

Just west of the school.

When you think back [to] World War I--when the United States finally joined—declared war on Germany, now Ralph was just a little bit too old to have to think about going, wasn't he?

Yes. He had to register, but being a farmer, he didn't.

He had two little girls too, or didn't they count that too much in those days?

I don't remember.

In looking through here, his, brother was in service, wasn't he?

Yes, 1918, I think. I'm not sure. We could look it up.

I just was looking. He was telling about being in France. Now he's a little younger than my father. My father was in too, but dad was older when he was married maybe. How old were you when you were married?

Twenty-one.
And Ralph was?

Twenty-one.
My father was twenty-five just before he got married. Of course, he didn't have any children. He was on the farm but that didn't seem to make any difference at all. They had 130 acres on that farm and he was drafted and went. It's a long time ago. I don't know how they judged. I don't know. We had 120 acres.

Side 2

[What do you remember about World War I?]

Well, I don't think I remember too much about it. I remember more about the Second World War, I guess, if I would take time to think about it.

The reason I asked was, mother never said very much about it, but lately we've come across some recipes or some material that said, for instance, you couldn't have all the white flour you wanted. If you went into town to get white flour, you had to buy so much whole wheat or rye or something. They really cut back on flour for some reason or other.

Of course, at that time we had our own wheat ground—took it to the mill and had it ground, so we had wheat on hand.

So it didn't affect you particularly. As the girls were growing up, when did you get electricity in your house? Do you remember?

We had our own plant, but I can't tell you the year. It had batteries and an engine. Sometimes they called them a Delco plant.

I think that was it.

Was it when the girls were quite little?

No, when they were about high school age, I guess.

Then, did you get some appliances?

We had a refrigerator—our first refrigerator.

I think that's what most people in our neighborhood that had those home electric plants, that's one of the first things they wanted was refrigeration because it was so hard to keep food in the summer. I remember us kids had to go down cellar for everything. We didn't have one even. Tried to keep it cool in the cellar. It was cool and that's all. It wasn't cold. You couldn't set Jell-O and the milk would get sour so quickly, and meat was impossible to keep. But then, about in the late 30's was when the electric lines started going through the country.

Yes, I don't recall the year.

I wouldn't want to guess. I know when we got it at home was 1938, just after I graduated--not before—just after I graduated from high school. The girls then went to country school to the eighth grade and then went into high school?

Yes.

How did they get in?

The first year Edith wasn't old enough to drive a car and so we took her every morning, took them. They were always in the same grade. They did everything together, music lessons, everything.

You started them together?

Edith started a few months before Laura. We took them and went after them. Then in the spring we bought a car for them to drive after Edith had had her birthday. Then they had a car to drive.

Were there other youngsters in the neighborhood that rode with them too? That's what we used to do.

Yes. It was a coupe.

The other people paid a little bit towards gasoline or something?

No, I think they just rode along with us. Maurice Gove and his sister, Margaret Gove, were the same age as our girls.

And they rode in with you?

Yes.

Did you begin to see changes on the farm?

Oh yes. We had a tractor, of course.

Did that mean you didn't have to have a hired man as much?

No, we always had a hired man in the summer.

Did you have hired help much yourself?

No.

You did the housework and the laundry and everything by yourself?

Everything.

Before you had electricity, did you ever have a washing machine with a motor in it?

Yes, I did, after a few years, one that my brother, Robert, gave me. It wasn't a new one.

It had a motor you could start up that turned the agitator and washed for you, is that right?

I kind of forget about that.

I wondered, because I was thinking about with my mother, in 1927, I think it was, in the fall, they got a Maytag washer with a motor. It had a gasoline motor. Some of the farmers would have gasoline pumps to pump water for the stock, you know.

I don't think this one that my brother gave me--as I recall, you agitated yourself.

I've seen those too. You had a thing on them that you worked by hand.

I think that was it.

When you got electricity, did you get a washing machine finally?

I don't remember about that. Oct. 29th this year, it will be 71 years since we were married. I didn't keep a diary, so I can't tell you.

You said you remembered more about World War II. Why?

Well, I don't know.

Did you know some of the young men that were going?

Well, his brother, Don Hollis Bottum--he was in France. They would have been at the front in a short time when the armistice was [signed].

That would be World War I though, wouldn't it?

Was it?

That would be World War I, because he talks about Camp Custer. That's where my dad was. He [Don] said, "I received greetings and notice to report on May 28, 1918." He would have been quite young. He's only eighty-three now. He would have been little more than eighteen hardly.

He's more than eighty-three. He's four years younger than I am.

Oh, I see. Well then he's more my father's age, isn't he? That's about when my dad went.

He's about eighty-nine.

Well, I'll never know whether he knew my father or if my father knew him probably. World War II came along. It was the people of my generation really that fought that. You were still on the farm?

Yes, We moved to St. Johns at Christmastime 1943.

Right in the middle of the war.

We lived on the farm 30 years.

What happened to the farm then?

We sold it.

To anybody you know?

I don't recollect the name, but they only kept it a year or two and then they sold it to Wayne and Bea Cook, Diane Cook's [mother].

Bea taught country school for a long time. I was probably in your house because I went over there for a meeting. So I was in your house because we had a teachers' meeting over there.

Bea still lives there, I guess.

No. She's in a nursing home over—

What's happened to the farm? Do you know?

Their son, Douglas, built a house, just west of the original house. I suppose he tends the farming.

How old did that make you when you moved into St. Johns?

I was born in 1892 and we moved to town in 1943.
You were about fifty-three [51] years old when you moved to town. So Ralph was ready to retire?
Yes, we sold the farm.
Did you buy this house?
No, we went to live with Ralph's father. His mother died in '41 or '42. Dad lived alone there almost 2 years and then we moved in with him.
Where was that?
500 W Baldwin.
Not this house.
No.
How long did you live with him?
He died in 1951.
That was 8 years.
The 6th of August, just past, it was 19 years that we have lived here.
So you didn't want to live in the house that his father owned. You bought a different one?
Yes, we continued to live there until Ralph got sick and I knew he couldn't drive the car much longer. So I looked around for a house that would be closer to downtown, mostly closer to church, so that I could walk. Soon, a year or so, we sold the car. I don't drive a car. I don't have a car.
Way back, when you and Ralph were married in 1913, did he have a car?
No. We didn't have a car for two or three years. I don't remember for sure.
Do you remember what kind it was when you got it? Any idea what he drove?
No, I don't know.
Did you drive?
Yes.
That's good, because some ladies didn't. He taught you to drive or you learned or something.
I sort of learned by myself.
They used to talk about going out in the hay field and just driving. I don't know if that's what you did or not. What year did Ralph pass away?
He died 1969. He had a heat stroke in 1961, so it was 15 years ago that he died.
Talking about Ralph, did he go into St. Johns to school?
Yes. He graduated from high school. The high school was the Central School. He graduated in 1911.
Did he have cousins by the name of Bottum? Who else am I thinking--? Was there a Glenn?
Glenn's father was Ralph's cousin.
What was his name?
Robert, and then he had a cousin, Charley. He had two other cousins, another family, Ernest and Clarence Bottum.
Did they generally live out in that area? Weren't a lot of Bottums in that township, around the Lowe Church, the Lowe School?
Yes, that's where they lived.
Are any of them left out there now?
Yes. Clarence's son, E. J. and his son, Jon Bottum, live on the farm that Clarence Bottum owned.
Has that been in the family quite awhile, this farm that Clarence's --? So the Bottum name is still out there, the Bottum family and so on--?
Yes
When you were living here, did your husband work downtown?
Yes. At first he worked at F. C. Mason Company. Our daughter, Laura, married Bob Gay. Bob Gay's father at one time was manager of F. C. Mason. Later, Ralph worked at Clark & Hulse's [men's clothing store in St. Johns], worked for Harry Hulse. During the war he worked in Lansing at the factory.
At Oldsmobile do you think, Motor Wheel, Fisher Body?

I can't think. They made wings for airplanes. For awhile I worked there too in the cafeteria. Before that I worked in Owosso at Redmond's [factory].

My mother did too, during the war.

And I had sinus trouble so bad that I had to quit there. We had our trailer over at Lansing. We stayed in the trailer during the week and came back to St. Johns weekends. Where did you have your trailer parked? Do you remember? Did they have a place for war workers to park?

Seems as though it was a trailer park. I don't know.

Probably was. Was it close enough that you took the bus or did you have to drive?

We drove back and forth, but we stayed in the trailer during the week, just came home weekends.

That was while his father was still alive? Yes, it would have been because you said he died in 1951. He was well enough to be left alone part of the time?

Yes. He was only sick three weeks and up to that time—we had a cottage at Lake Missaukee—and he used to stay alone. He was only sick three weeks.

That was a blessing probably.

Yes.

After the war, you came back here and then he worked at F. C. Mason and then he worked for Clark and Hulse. That's where I remember seeing him in there. After Mr. Hulse died and the store changed, then he didn't work for the new people, did he?

No. 1945 we went to the lake, and he built our cottage at the lake. We used to go and stay a week or two weeks at a time.

Did you both enjoy fishing and being on the water?

I didn't.

Did your husband?

Well, he did some. Mostly, he was busy building the cottage. Then afterwards, he built his brother's cottage at Houghten Lake.

The brother?

Lawrence Clark.

Ralph was a pretty good carpenter?

Yes.

How many grandchildren do you have?

We had two daughters; three granddaughters; six great-granddaughters; and two great-great-grandchildren.

The great-great ones aren't very old yet, are they?

The youngest one is 5. She's going to kindergarten this year.

The girls are not in Michigan any more?

Yes, Edith married Neal McDiarmid. They live at Crystal.

Then, they're here most of the time.

They come down almost every week.

Do they go south in the winter?

Not any more. I think they went for about eight years, Texas.

Laura, you said, lives in San Diego. That's a permanent home for her almost.

Yes. She was here in June. Her daughter and husband live in Arizona and they just left my place this Tuesday morning.

That's nice. They come to see you.

Yes.

So you do see your family pretty often.

Yes.

What are the things you like to do best now?

You'll laugh. Eat and sleep.

But you're so tiny!

Well, I have unusually good health.

I think you do.

I don't take medicine.

You have an unusually good mind.

I remember dates. My mind isn't so good with names. I can't remember names.

But your dates are pretty good, aren't they?

Yes. I can remember dates better.

I wonder, was history a good subject for you? You could remember the dates when you were in school?

Yes, I liked history.

What was your worst subject?

Numbers. Math.

Did you do the bookkeeping for the family?

No. Ralph always took care of everything—all the bills and everything.

But you've had to learn to do some of that, haven't you?

Yes, and I was too old. I never had any experience.

It makes it hard when you have to learn all of a sudden that way. Are there any things now that you would like to tell me that I've forgotten to ask about—interesting things that I probably forgot?

I enjoyed going to Church—after eating and sleeping. I belong to a group. We play Canasta once in two weeks. I had my first broken bone last October. I broke my wrist.

That was my first broken bone.

So, the doctors haven't made much off you, have they?

No.

You do belong to the Clinton Co. Historical Society too.

Yes. My great-granddaughter [granddaughter, Diane (McDiarmid) Bancroft] was killed in an automobile accident twenty-four years ago Monday, the 20th of August.

That happened right at Gunnisonville, didn't it?

Near Clark Road.

I remember that now that you talk about it.

She left three children. One was three, and one was two, and the baby was 14 months old. That was Chris.

Edith's daughter Diane was killed and left these three children.

Yes. The youngest one, Chris, died two years ago in January. He was cleaning his car in the closed garage and died.

From the fumes of something?

Yes, carbon monoxide.

Was that up at Crystal?

No. He was living with his sister over on Oak Street. She came home and found him in the garage.

You've had some tragedies then in your life history too, haven't you? I remember now when that young mother was killed with that accident on that corner. And that was Edith's daughter, wasn't it?

Her oldest daughter.

And that was her only [daughter]?

No, Edith had a younger daughter [Maureen].

Oh, Laura had just one [Sally (Gay) Federspiel].

Yes.

Girls kind of seem to run in your end of the family. I notice this boy here that we're talking about though. There's still some--

He has children. I don't know him.

Do you have a Bottum reunion? Do they ever get together any more?

No. Not any more.

What about any of these other Wards or anything else? Do they get together?

My mother's family used to get together, but that's been given up now.

I find that is true in my husband's family. When I was first married, my, they had a Temple reunion, and they had a Harmon reunion, and as the older generation of first cousins—it seemed

to be them—when they were finally passed away, that when it got down to the 2nd, 3rd, 4th layers, they see each other, but they don't have the interest in a reunion that the older people just had that every year and went every year and took their children; but the 2nd and 3rd generations do not seem to be interested at all.

There were seventeen of us older cousins, and now there are just two of us left: myself and my cousin who lives in the state of New York with her son.

She's a cousin in which line?

My mother's family, West [Bonnie Bielenberg].

You see a lot of reunions every summer. For a lot of people those finally die out, and we don't seem to-- I've been trying to get some of my cousins of my generation together, and I tried to get some of them last Sunday, but I didn't have a very good turnout because they're all too busy. Are you a good fortune teller?

No.

I was going to ask you what you thought about the presidential race, if you thought it's gonna anywhere?

I don't know. I don't like what either one of them say about the other.

I think--a lady of your age--you've lived through too many of those that make promises and never--. You can remember politics way back.

Yes. I remember when women first began to vote. I never was interested in politics myself.

I don't know that I am particularly, except once and awhile then there comes a law or there comes something that either I can do or I can't do; then you finally get into--. I think mostly on the local level--roads, for instance, or schools, where my interests mostly lie, and that sort of thing. But as far as national politics, I'll be glad when this fall is over and things get back to normal and you can open up the paper or the television without--

I get so tired of all the conventions and I get so tired of what each party says about the other. They each try to think of the meanest, dirtiest--

They poke around and find the dirt, even if you have a fairly good person, they just have to just dig and dig and dig 'til they find something that will be--

Seems as though there ought to be some other way of electing a president, rather than the one that spends the most money.

Before I quit here, I notice you have crocheted rugs on the floor. Aren't those crocheted? Do you do them?

Yes. I used to make them and sell them, used to have a customer. I made crocheted rugs for 50 years. One year I made 10.

Do you remember what you got for them? I'm curious.

At first \$2.50. I taught Jan Separic that has the [antique] shop to make rugs. She gets good prices. Another thing I used to do, I worked at baby sitting for more than 20 years. I used to get fifty cents an hour. Now they get, I don't know, \$1.50.

Clock chimes 5 o'clock.

Or more! Well, it's been real interesting to talk to you, Elsie. I think we could go on and talk about a lot of things. Now that we got going, I think of more and more things I'd like to ask you. I'm glad I got some of this West and Bottum history to share with someone.

My grandmother there, I don't know if you would be interested. There are the dates. Harriet Dart 1829-1911; John Ward 1824-1869. Sons, Herman Ward 1856-, Frank, and Silas. Frank & Silas were brothers of Herman, but Silas died when he was very little. Harriet married John.

After John Ward died, then she married Elder Charles Smith.

Did she have any Smith children?

No.

This name, Dart, is interesting because wasn't that old Mr. Parr's name, Dart Parr?

Yes. His mother was my father's double cousin.

Oh, this is where sisters married brothers, so you're related to all the Parrs in town.
Darts of Mason are some relatives. I don't know what. [No. They are not related.]