

Amy B. Hudson (1889-1985)
Interviewer: Jeanne T. (Ewer) Temple (1920-2004)

Tape 19

Feb. 22, 1983 and I'm interviewing Miss Amy Hudson who is 94 years old. Amy, when is your birthday?

July 26, 1889.

Where were you born?

At Shepherd, Michigan

Was your father in business there?

Yes. He was in the lumber business.

How many were in your family?

6.

6 children?

No. 4 children and mother and father.

What were the children's names?

Edna, was the oldest; George, the second; Amy, the third; and Jennie, the fourth.

Why did he come down here to Duplain Township?

They was looking for a place where they could send us to school easier than where we were. It was more complicated up there and so they wanted to get down here where it was nearer the schoolhouse and nearer a little settlement where they could get their groceries and mail.

They bought the farm then. We know it yet as the Hudson farm. We still call it the Hudson farm yet.

Yes, formerly the Richards farm.

That's where the school got the name, wasn't it?

Yes. That's where they got the name. We all started to school when we was five years old.

You were telling me this morning, you remembered a couple of teachers. What were the teachers' names you remembered?

There was Norton and the Moore(?) girls from over by Elsie. The teachers always boarded and roomed at my mother's in the winter time and mostly in the summer, when there was school, they were always with us.

Do you remember anything about the books that you might of used when you were a little girl or the subjects? You had reading and arithmetic, spelling--

And writing.

I bet you had history and geography too, didn't you?

Yes we did. We had history and geography.

Did you ever have a spell down at your school?

Yes. We did but I never took part in it.

Weren't you a very good speller?

No. I wasn't.

Thinking about how you lived in those days, of course, you had horses and a buggy, didn't you?

Yes. They had horses and a buggy.

Did your father milk cows?

Yes, but mostly my mother did the milking.

Did she make butter?

Yes.

And sell it?

Yes.

Did you have chickens?

Yes. We had chickens and we took our eggs and butter to St. Johns every week to sell it.

Did your mother make bread?

Yes she did. She made bread and she made pancakes because we had lots of maple syrup. My father peddled it in St. Johns and all around the country to get rid of it. We had so much maple syrup that he had to get around and dispose of it.

You don't remember what he got a gallon, do you? It probably was pretty cheap wasn't it?

Yes. It was, I think probably 75¢.

Do you remember any of the other children that went to the Richards School?

Yes: Park Avery, Pearl Avery, Hattie Gates, Jud[son] Gates, Charlie Birmingham, the Doyens; Glenn Doyen, Clare Richards. He lived across the way. Did I mention the Averys?

Yes. Your house was close to the school, wasn't it?

Yes, very close.

Did you carry your lunch or did you kids in your family come back home for lunch?

Sometimes we took our lunch but lots of times we went across the field and went home for our lunch.

What did she put in your lunch pail? Do you remember?

She put in sandwiches and apples and tomatoes if it was tomato time. For baked goods, she would bake cake and put cake in. Sometimes we had pieces of pie.

What did your family do in the evening? Did you do some things for fun?

Played games. I would play checkers and we played mostly dominos, mostly games.

Did you girls help on the farm? Did you have chores to do and you had to help with the haying and like that?

No, just my mother. My father didn't do much—oh, some of the chores--but he was so busy with the farm work. We always had a hired man.

And he lived with you?

Yes.

You went to the Richards School and after the eighth grade, where did you go to high school?

Ovid.

Ovid High School?

Yes.

And did you go four years?

We went three years there and then the rest we finished up in the Ovid School (sic). Mr. Plunket was our superintendent.

Do you remember any of your high school classmates?

Yes. Grace Morris, Mable Acre, Edna Gamble, Minnie Neil, Park Avery.

He went to Ovid too to high school?

Yes, and Jud Gates went all his years in high school; Hattie Gates, the Doyen boys.

When did you decide you wanted to be a nurse?

My last year in high school I decided. I went to Ann Arbor, made application, passed the examination. As soon as I finished high school I went to Ann Arbor.

Do you remember how much it cost? Was it quite expensive for your dad?

Well, not so much because we got our board and room and lived right there and we got one month's vacation but it wasn't expensive.

You girls really were working for your board and room in a way, weren't you, when you were there?

Yes.

Didn't you have to do cleaning?

No.

No not at all?

No.

How long did you go to Ann Arbor, how many years?

Three years.

Then you were a registered nurse, weren't you?

At that time they were building the new hospital in St. Johns and the new hospital at Owosso but they didn't get them finished before I left for Youngstown, Ohio.

When you were in nurse's training, you had to work with the children and you had to work when the babies were being delivered and you had to work in surgery, didn't you? You had to do everything.

My work was clinic work mostly. Our section was in the Carnegie office district and they gave us a room for the clinics. We had to pay for our board and room there.

This was at Youngstown?

Yes.

And that was the great steel mills at Youngstown?

Yes. It was.

What kind of people did you see there? I mean, were you seeing children or their mothers or the working people in the clinic?

For the clinic, it was all children and babies. We weighed the babies and the doctors examined them. We had one doctor all the time and sometimes we had two doctors. Carnegie let us have one big room for the people to gather in for their children and then we had one room for the doctors examining the children and the babies.

It wasn't like a hospital that was doing surgery or delivering babies?

No.

It was a clinic?

It was just examining them.

Was this free for those people?

Yes.

It was under the Carnegie Foundation paying for it.

Yes.

How many years were you there?

37.

Did you retire from there or did you go somewhere else?

I retired from there. 37 ½ years.

After you retired you came back to Ovid?

Yes.

I know the house where you lived. In fact, there is a picture right there, isn't it, of your house?

Yes.

It's a beautiful house, just beautiful. Then when you came back to Ovid you and your sister Jennie lived together, didn't you for awhile?

Yes. My mother was still living then. She died while we was in Youngstown.

I wanted to talk just about Jenny for a little bit because I know my mother went to school to your sister, Jennie, up at the Little Brick [School]. Did she then keep on teaching until she retired or not?

No. We retired the same day, June 6, 19--. Anyway, we retired the same day. There was only two years difference in our ages.

Where was she teaching when she retired? Do you remember?

Youngstown.

She was at Youngstown too?

Yes.

You went together, sort of?

She went first and she heard there was going to be a vacancy of the Visiting Nurse Association so she told me to write and put in an application, so I did. I was accepted and stayed on. We had an apartment there and then we decided to keep our mother there as much as we could. Till the last five or six years she was there all the time and passed away there.

I didn't realize that Jennie was in Youngstown teaching.

She went when she retired from Frankfort, Michigan. She went back to St. Johns a year. She didn't like it at all. She didn't like Mr. [Frank] Buck nor she didn't like the teachers she taught with. So she went back to Kalamazoo where she graduated in the first place. A lot of her friends were down in Ohio so she was tempted to take a position in Ohio and that's what she did. Then she heard about this opening for the visiting nurses so she told me to apply for it and I got it right away.

That made it really nice, didn't it? You know, Mr. Buck was still teaching in St. Johns when I went to high school. He was getting along in years. I'm sure that he was getting close to 70 but I had him for three years of Latin and way back, when you're talking about your sister, I think he was superintendent. She taught under him, I'll bet anything, because Mr. Buck used to be superintendent.

I know that he probably was. Anyway, she didn't like him so she thought the best thing to do was to move on. She had a lot of friends in Ohio so she was anxious to go to Ohio. They kept writing to her and telling her how much more salary they got down there.

Why did you decide to come back to Ovid?

Because of our property here. My mother had the farm which she bought years ago and a house. Then we had what was a barn. It was made over into a house so we had all this property here. Somebody had to look after it. Now my niece, Mary Myers, looks after it for me because there isn't anybody else.

You are the last one then of your family?

Yes. Well, of our immediate family, but there is George Myers. He is Edna's son and George Hudson is George Hudson, Sr.'s boy. They're my nephews but Mary seems closer and she looks after things for me.

Where does George Hudson live?

He lives in Oakridge, Tennessee.

He's quite a ways off, isn't he?

Yes.

Now Mary Myers still teaching, isn't she?

Yes. She is teaching in Detroit or near Detroit.

Is she going to retire soon?

I don't know. I've never heard her say whether she expects to retire or not.

She will probably come back to Ovid to live, won't she?

I don't know. That's what puzzles me. She's got a home here. I'm leaving this home here to her and the other house to George Hudson. I don't know what they expect to do.

If we think back now to when you were living out by the [Rochester] Colony, did you go to either of the two churches there? Did you ever go down there to church?

The Disciple Church.

They tore that one down and built a new one.

Yes. They built a new one and Rev. Cook was the minister there, for quite awhile.

Did you ever know Rev. Fisher?

Yes.

Where we live, right now in the Colony, was right beside Mr. Fisher and we got to know him real well too.

Oh, yes.

Knew him real well. He was a real fine man. I suppose then you went by horse and buggy or by horse and sleigh when you went to church.

Yes, we did, horse and buggy or horse and cutter. There was a Rev. Scott there. Did I mention him?

No.

Rev. Scott that was there and his family. We thought a lot of them. I went there to church and Sunday school until I went to Ann Arbor.

Then did you know some of the Ash family?

Yes.

You see, the house that I was born in was right across from where Grandma Ash lived and Russell Ash and Ethel. You know, the Ash family. Our house was right across from there where I was born. So we were kind of on the west side of the Hudson farm there where my grandpa lived and my dad lived. Do you remember the church having dinners or socials?

Yes. My mother had her share of them. She always enjoyed doing it. We had maple sugar socials and chicken pie dinners.

Did they ever have oyster suppers?

Yes, we did. I don't think they have those things anymore.

I don't think they do either.

People enjoyed them.

You know, with a horse you couldn't go very far away and you went to church for social activities, to see your friends, and to catch up on what the neighbors were doing. Did you sing in the choir ever?

No.

When you think back, do you think your nurse's training was really hard work?

No. I enjoyed it.

What kind of uniforms did you wear?

In St. Johns, when I worked there, I wore a white uniform but in Youngstown, Ohio, in the summer we wore light gray, white collar and cuffs, and in the winter we wore dark blue, and a dark blue coat with a red flannel lining and a tan cap.

Was this furnished by the Carnegie Association, the Carnegie Clinic, did they furnish your uniforms?

They bought them. We bought them from them.

Going back before you went to Youngstown you wore a white uniform. Of course, it would of been a quite long skirt wasn't it?

[end of side one]

Amy, now tell me about your father. What was his full name?

His name was Henry E. Hudson. (1850-1917)

Where was he born?

Milford, Michigan.

Do you remember the year?

No, I don't.

Where is he buried?

He is buried in Ovid, Michigan.

What year did he die?

I can't think when it was.

In the 1920's, maybe in there?

Let me think. It was just before Jennie went to St. Johns to teach one year, but I can't remember.

Maybe, when we get going on, it will come back to you. Who was your mother?

My mother was Sophia Hudson.

What was her maiden name?

Sophia Brandt.

Where was she born?

She was born in Shiawassee County near Perry.

I know there is a little town of Brant over in Saginaw County named Brant.

She was from Perry. Her name was Sophia (Brandt) Hudson. (1857-1957)

Do you remember anything about the year she was born or died?

When she was born? No, I don't. Her father and mother came here from Germany. She had three brothers and one sister and my uncle who was a professor, he graduated from Valparaiso. One brother married and lived up at Shepherd and the other brother lived alone. He didn't have any profession and my mother's sister married Henry Hallot?. That was all of them, one sister and three brothers.

You spoke of one brother being a professor. What did he teach?

He was superintendent of schools.

Where?

Wayne and one of those places downriver. I can't think of which it was.

Did you see these uncles and your aunt when you were growing up? Did the families go back and forth some?

Yes. My uncle and my aunt, the one that was the school superintendent, they were out to our place pretty near every summer. Finally he resigned and went to California to live. Then we didn't see anything of him.

Did they come by train?

Yes, the only way they had for getting around.

I've heard my mother say you could get a train to Shepardville or you could go to Shepardville and buy a ticket and go somewhere and you can't do that anymore. The trains don't take passengers.

No.

So they could come by train, couldn't they?

Yes.

I wanted you to tell me a little bit more about your days when you were a student at University of Michigan at the nursing school.

I went there. I took the train to go down there.

From Ovid, you got on at Ovid, didn't you?

Yes, went to Durand and changed trains there and took the Ann Arbor [train] to Ann Arbor. My mother cautioned me [to] be careful who I rode in the taxi with from the station to the hospital. I went to the hospital directly and they took my trunk.

Oh, you packed a trunk?

Yes, because you were going to be gone for a year; and then we had a month's vacation; and then back again for another year; and then a month's vacation; and then back again for the third year. You never got away from there only on your vacation. The girls were from all over. There was quite a few from Canada and then there was one from Flint, one from Howell.

Were there any from Owosso or St. Johns that were close to you?

No. There were Jackson--

Did you girls stay and live right in the hospital?

Yes.

They had like a dormitory?

Yes. On the second and third floors of the children's home is where we lived. When we went out, we had to have all kinds of permission.

Oh my, very strict!

Very strict. Then we ate our meals in the hospital too. The men students--I suppose many of them were interns or studying medicine--they waited table. We all ate in the dining room. Each class had a table of its own. Another table was the supervisors. For probation time we wore stripped dresses and I think we wore white collar and cuffs. The first six months was the probation that we were on and then after the probation, I think we wore a blue dress and a kerchief.

Yes, something on your head.

Yes, a cap.

What kind of shoes were your shoes just black?

High top.

Black or white?

Black.

Probably laced up.

Yes.

Black stockings

Yes. Laced or buttoned, I don't know which.

How did you get your laundry done? Did you have to do your own personal laundry?

No. They did our laundry except our kerchiefs. The lady across from the hospital did our kerchiefs. those. And they had a cute little point in the back. They were real pretty. After we graduated we had the white uniforms.

You didn't get the white till after graduation or could you wear white your third year?

No, not until after graduation.

Did you have a graduation ceremony when they gave you your caps, they call it?

Yes. Governor Osborn spoke to us for the commencement exercises.

Do you remember how many were in your class?

I think there was about 18.

That finished?

Yes.

Probably some dropped out, did they along the way, didn't finish?

Well, most of us stuck it out. In the winter we used to go sleigh riding or coasting down the front of the hospital building. We'd go down the hill and turn to the north and we had to awful careful because there was a ravine there and several different trains went through there, Ann Arbor. We had to be awful careful. There was wire fence between the road and where the trains went through. We had to be awful careful because, if we got hurt there, we got severe punishment.

What kind of punishment? How would they punish you? You were young ladies.

If we were doing things we shouldn't, they would send us home.

And you didn't want that to happen.

No.

I suppose they could take away your privileges of going out in the evening. They could confine you to the building if they wanted to, couldn't they, for punishment?

Yes.

Did some of the young doctors go down sledding with the girls?

Oh yes, they did, and some of the other students from around the campus. We went over to the campus for part of our classes and wore-- I'm sure our uniforms were gray—and white cuffs that come up to here and a row of buttons up the back. They were like collar buttons, you know.

When you were there you had to learn the work in different departments like surgery and the pediatrics work. You girls had to work in each department, didn't you and learn?

Yes. We spent so much time on each department till we covered the whole-- the children's ward. I got in there because I had had scarlet fever at home and [if] someone came in and they had scarlet fever, it made them short of nurses and so they called me over from the mental hospital. See, we spent so much time at each one. We started in the women's medical; from there we went to men's medical; from there we went to women's surgery; then to men's surgery; and then to the mental place. These were daytimes and then we covered them at night too. We had most of our classes there at the hospital but otherwise we went over at the campus.

You probably had tests that you had to write every so often. You had a test on what you had learned, hadn't you?

Yes.

You were given grades on what you did?

Yes.

I suppose that, if your grades started slipping, your supervisors would be concerned that you were studying and that you were working.

Yes. Oh, and so much time in the diet kitchen-- . That was medical men's and women's; and surgery, both men's and women's; and the diet kitchen; and mental illnesses. See, they have a mental hospital there. We put in so much time at each one of them. That covers the three years.

And then toward the end of your second or third year, did you girls have to work night shifts?

Yes.

You had to get used to working a night shift.

Yes. We worked night shifts.

As I would remember from what I've read, been told, most ladies had their babies at home back then.

We had a maternity hospital.

Oh, you did?

Yes.

Some ladies went there to have their babies?

Oh yes. I was thinking about the twelve months. For three years we had men's medical and women's medical, men's surgical, women surgical, children's hospital, and the diet kitchen, and--

The mental hospital you spoke about.

Part of the time, see, we had to change off and do night duty.

After you graduated, what was the first job that you remember?

I came home and did private duty.

Did that pay quite well?

Yes. It paid better than-- The head nurses in Ann Arbor were only getting about \$50 a month and their board and room and my first application for a job was a children's hospital over on Lake Michigan somewhere. I was called in the office. I thought about it that I wouldn't make any more than I would doing private duty and so I came home and done private duty for a while.

As you lived at home and went wherever they wanted to have you come in and be a private nurse and you took care--

For Doctor Campbell ... and Doctor Scott in St. Johns and Doctor Bell. I worked for him. The doctor at Henderson called me and there was a doctor in Laingsburg but I've forgotten his name. And all around the country.

When you went into a home to take care of a sick person, you did some of the cooking, didn't you?

No.

The reason I asked you because you said that at the university you had to go it to the diet kitchen to learn about proper diet for people.

For patients, like the diabetics.

But when you went into a person's home you didn't intend to do any cooking.

No.

They had to have somebody else?

Yes, at Kaltrider's, I had two patients there.

Was that over towards St. Johns?

Yes. I was trying to think what they had. I can't remember what the trouble was. I think it was typhoid.

They had it in those days.

Yes. They had typhoid and I had a lot of flu patients and typhoid—I'm sure there was typhoid-- and then maternity cases.

Do you remember some of the worst experiences you ever got into, some of the really troublesome ones?

Henderson--I had a family there of flu patients and the little boy was a problem to take care because you'd do one thing and he would want something else. I was trying to think what that doctor's name was—Dr. Sowle(?).

But you were making your headquarters with your folks?

Yes.

With your mother and father, you said that your dad then, around World War I, wasn't very well.

No.

What was his problem? Was it his heart?

Yes, 'cause he had a viral heart disease.

Do you remember anything particularly about World War I? Anybody you know have to go overseas?

I can't think of anybody. I know there was a plenty of them but I can't think of their names.

Your brother didn't have to go?

No.

He was older wasn't he?

Yes.

This is getting just exactly what I wanted you to tell me, Amy, about your nursing experience. Then you stayed home until your father died?

Yes.

Was that about the time that Jennie told you there was a chance for work in Youngstown, right after your dad died some time in there?

She went right after my father died. She resigned at Frankfort. She was teaching at Frankfort and she resigned and put her application in St. Johns and she taught there one year. She didn't like it because all of her friends were down in Ohio and Indiana and around there and they kept calling her. "Why do you stay there when you got so much more money down in Ohio?" So she went down there. She went back to Kalamazoo. She graduated from Kalamazoo and she went back there and put in an application and she signed up with them and then she decided that she didn't want to go there so she went to Youngstown, Ohio. I don't know how she allowed her friends...there.

We were talking about your going to Youngstown. What I was going to ask you before we do-- that when you would go into a family to take care of them, when you were doing private duty nursing, do you remember what you would earn a week, how much would you get paid?

\$25.

A week. Then when you get to Youngstown, was the pay better?

Oh yes. I was paid \$125 a month.

Yes. That would be good wages.

Yes, and I know my sister got a lot better than she had here because the girls kept writing to her and telling her how much better the salary was there. So I think I got about \$125.

And I know you told me that when you were at Youngstown all the nurses had blue uniforms, was it? You wore blue?

[Recording ends.]