

IDA LUCILLE (DAVIS) WILLISTON
Graduate of Clinton County Normal, St. Johns, Michigan

Interviewed by Catherine Rumbaugh, May 30, 1988
On the Occasion of
The County Normal School Exhibit at the Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum

Transcribed by Myrna A. Van Epps, July 2004
Tape #037, Side 1 Acquisition #2004-23-D

Words in brackets were inserted by the transcriber.

This is Catherine Rumbaugh, May 30, 1988, and we have a visitor at the Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum who was a student at the Clinton County Normal School. Will you give us your name, please?
Ida Williston, formerly Ida Davis.

Where do you live?

I live in Flint, Michigan. I've been there for over 50 years.

You were a resident of St. Johns?

Greenbush Township, but drove horse and buggy into St. Johns to attend high school.

You were a Davis?

Yes. I lived north of St. Johns.

Were you any relationship to Florence Dexter?

No. I'm related to Mildred Davis who also graduated from the County Normal in 1921.

And you graduated when?

'24. She graduated in '21 or '22, I've forgotten which it is.

What were your parents' names?

My father and mother were Ernest and Myra Davis of Greenbush Township.

Do you know your mother's maiden name?

Sitts. Myra Sitts, daughter of Edward and Ida Sitts who moved into St. Johns in about 1915 on South Ottawa Street.

How do you spell their last name?

S-I-T-T-S.

You said you attended high school in St. Johns?

Yes.

At what school?

At Central High School.

Tell me about what you did when you went to high school. You lived with you grandmother and grandfather?

I drove horse and buggy or else rode with a cousin in. We had to be to school by nine o'clock. We parked our horse and buggies in a horse barn on Railroad Street and then walked up to Central; carry our lunch; and then we would get out of school at four o'clock, I believe it was. And we had to go back to the horse barn, get our horse and buggy and go four miles to home. So that it was oftentimes dark by the time we got home. In the wintertime, usually I stayed with my grandparents during January, February, and part of March because I only had about a two-, three-block walk.

You were a member of the Class of 1924 of Clinton Co. Normal School. We're interested in hearing a little bit about that.

I drove horse and buggy back and forth every day except for about a week or so. My mother had a stroke and I stayed home to care for her. Then I returned back to school and drove horse and buggy back and forth and did all that was asked of me and graduated in June of 1924 and started my first year of teaching in the Boak School [district #5, section 7, Bengal Twp.], which is near Fowler, in September of that year, 1924.

How many students did you have?

Approximately 30, with all grades present. Many of the students were almost as large or as large as I was at that time.

Do you know the age of the oldest one?

There were two who were 15, but they quit school when they were 16, which is about the same time I became 20.

You didn't have a kindergarten, did you?

Well, you had to have a little initiation first two, three months because children had to learn-- pictures, verses, little stories, and so forth, and so it was very simple as compared to what kindergarten gets today.

Was it called it "kindergarten" or was that the way you taught first grade?

That's the way you started the first grade. Mattie Smith was the superintendent. She was very able-bodied in managing that job.

How many were in your class?

The year I started teaching there were approximately 30 with half of them in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade.

I meant, how many were in your County Normal class?

Oh, I don't remember. I think there were 25-26.

You told me a little different story than I've heard before. You said your classes were not in the school building itself. Would you tell us about that?

They were temporary buildings. I don't know how long the temporary buildings lasted, but they were there for awhile. We attended the temporary buildings—one for the girls in the County Normal or boys, if there had been boys in them then; and then there were one or two buildings for children--I think, one building for children--and we took our turn, when the time came, to teach groups of those children that were selected from the Central High between 1st and 8th grade.

Do you know when those temporary buildings were put there?

I don't remember, but it was before—

Were they there while you were in high school?

I can't remember.

Probably they were there because the school had become crowded.

Yes. They used the basement. Finally, the basement was used for gym classes. Then they outgrew that and so the gym classes were discontinued. There was no gym taught when I was in the 11th and 12th grade; and cooking classes and sewing classes had been discontinued because of cramped conditions. Although I didn't participate in any of those classes, because I got my lessons at home in cooking and so forth.

It's very possible then that those buildings were built for County Normal while you were in high school prior to 1924.

They could have been. In those days I don't think anyone planned for sure what they were going to do when they graduated from high school like they do today because money was very limited.

I think they thought in terms of high school only.

Yes, because not many went on. Of course, in my high school class there were about fifty some that graduated, but not near all of them went on to college or further training, shall we say.

Tell me a little about when you were teaching in this practice grade, what you would have been doing.

It was not so difficult because I think all of the girls had attended rural schools. Therefore, to have a mixed grade and have children of various ages and sizes in one room was a common thing; and we just learned how to deal with children and present the teaching material to them that they could grasp for their grade and age.

Do you know of any children that always lived in town and then went on to be teachers? Did they have difficulty?

They didn't go to County Normal.

Oh! They didn't? County Normal wasn't given to them?

They could have but that wasn't for them.

Because of choice?

Because of their personal choice, because that was just for country kids. At that time there was a great deal of difference. The city kids were mostly business people's kids that went on to high school. The country kids that came in were, most of them, a little lower class. Maybe I shouldn't feel that way. I didn't feel any pressure, as far as that was concerned, but that is the way it was termed many times. There was no way for country kids to get into high school at that time unless they came in and moved or boarded with a family during the school year or [did] as I did. I drove horse buggy back and forth. That was the means of transportation.

But you couldn't go to County Normal without a high school diploma.

Yes. You could. With two years of high school you could go in, because the Hettler girls—I don't know whether you're familiar with the Hettler twins. Their picture was in the paper just a short time ago showing that they were involved in senior activities of some type and they went through two years of high school and then into County Normal. More or less, Mattie Smith made the decision.

She, basically then, just took rural youngsters to train for rural school teachers?

It's possible because—

There was a need for rural teachers. Is that right?

Yes, and not many girls were too interested in going into teaching, and especially in a rural school. No, they wouldn't. They went away. Now, Helen Hart, which is Dr. Eugene Hart's daughter—She graduated the same time I did from high school. She had the opportunity of going to four years of college in Ohio, Oberlin College, I believe. This was the difference.

My mother grew up in Elsie and when she graduated many of her friends and herself, they went to Mt. Pleasant Normal to school and she stayed for two years and had a life certificate when she got through.

I went back in 1927, '28, and '29, and then from September to March 1930 and got enough credits to get my two-year life certificate, which was something that few young people did at that time. When I went back to teaching in 1950, it was my two-year life certificate that I was dependent upon.

Let's return to the Boak School. Where was that located?

One mile east and one mile north of Fowler.

Did you, by any chance, room and board with any of the families?

Yes, that was the only way. You weren't able to buy a car. At that time teachers transporting themselves back and forth each day was not really an acceptable thing. Although I did start—my mother died in November of that year—about the middle of March, first of April, my father needed me. I wanted the school and so I drove back and forth to school. I had to get me a pair of rubber boots because I couldn't get through the last mile. So, take off my shoes and put on my rubber boots and walk into the building.

When you were rooming with these families, did you live the whole school year with one family or did you change?

Yes, I did. It's the way I met my husband, because he was in his last year of high school and I stayed there from September until the first of April because by that time my mother had died. My father needed me so bad because there were young children at home, so that I started driving my father's car back and forth to school at that time. It was difficult for him, but it was difficult for me too. Then the second year I went over to Rochester Colony [district #1, section 30, Duplain Twp.] and bought my own car and drove back and forth every day.

You bought a car at Rochester Colony?

When I started teaching at Rochester Colony.

Oh, you were teaching at Rochester Colony? What year was that?

I have to stop and think. '25 and '26, '26-'27, '27-'28.

You know, they still have the old school house there?

Yes, we drove by it today because we were on our way to the Eureka Cemetery where my parents are buried.

They have restored it somewhat. There was a fire, but they still managed to put it back together again and it has some history there.

The Methodist Church is just as close now as it was then? The Church of Christ, of course, was—

--an older building

was on the north side of the road and ...? down from there, south side

An old country church. I can remember that. You probably remember the former pastor there, Rev. Fisher.

In 1927 I started living in the Fisher home, from usually Sunday night or Monday morning until Friday night because my father had married by that time. So I stayed in the Fisher home at that time. So I knew the Fisher family, Rev. Fisher. He was the minister that married us.

He was a very much-loved minister, wasn't he?

Yes, everybody loved him.

Yes, they did. He had a lot of weddings in his home too. Were you ever a witness?

No. I would be gone Saturdays and Sundays and in the daytime.

When you were teaching in the Colony, how big of a school was that?

Not as large, or the most part, 23, 25 to 30. It would vary. Some years more [students] than other years.

How many years were you there?

Three years.

But you were driving back and forth to Greenbush Township.

Yes, which was not such a long drive as it was over to the Boak School.

When you said, you bought a car, what kind of a car was it?

An "Overland." I guess maybe it was the cheapest car I could find because I didn't have any money to start with.

Was it a used one?

No. It was new.

And that was a 1920--?

It was in '25.

A '24 or '25 car. I'm sort of rambling on. You've said so many interesting things here [that] I've picked up. I'm not sticking to County Normal or anything, am I?

I guess County Normal was the base of it all because if I hadn't of gotten teaching, what would I have done? I don't know.

All together, how many years did you teach?

I have a total of 26 and 6/10 now. That's what the state ... said , but I did twenty years of teaching at the Bengle School System which is—

Is that where you went from the Colony?

No. I didn't start there until 1950, which was after I had had five children. My husband had been ill, and I went back to teaching. Teachers were very badly needed at that time, and our schools ranged in size anywheres from 35 up to 45 or 50 children in a room.

You went to the Bengle School?

Bengle, B-e-n-g-l-e.

Where is that located? It's not in Clinton County, is it?

It's in Genesee Co. right at the edge of the city limits in Grand Blanc.

When you were teaching at the Colony, for three years, were you married at that point?

Afterwards, I taught one year at the Lowe School [district #3, section #23, Essex Twp.] which was '28-'29, I taught at the Lowe School and then I went to get my life certificate in '29, September 29 until March 1930. I got my two-year life certificate from Central Michigan.

Did you teach any other school before you had your family?

Yes, I did. Out in Bath, I spent from the first Monday after New Years of 1935 until May out there doing substituting in that one school.

Did the substitute teaching keep you busy most of the year or was it rather scarce?

It was just a school where the teacher had been let out at Christmastime and I took over right after New Years and finished the year out, so there was just me. Mattie Smith made her trips out to see us there as well as everywhere else in the county.

Did she visit all rural school teachers to check up on them?

Oh, yes. Her plan was to go at least twice or three times a year or more if it was necessary. If there were problems, she went more. She drove; she got there. She stayed very active. She was a very good boss because she wasn't afraid to tell you what was wrong if there was something wrong with what you were doing. She wasn't afraid to tell you and she told you in a way that you could accept it and change.

Did she do all of this under her authority as a teacher in the County Normal or did she hold some other office?

She didn't teach in the County Normal. She just sort of bossed it--more or less helped to select the people that could go to County Normal. If there were some that she didn't feel would be worthwhile, they didn't get in.

So you were all hand picked.

I would think so. I never heard her say it but then I would think so.

We've sort of gathered that. I was wondering if became like a county superintendent or something.

Yes, she did--the whole Clinton County. She visited every school in the county. If the teacher was having trouble, she tried to help them. If they weren't able to accept it or adjust to it, then they made other provisions. This happened just a few times, not many.

Do you know how many years she continued that?

I don't know. She was county [school] commissioner a long, long time. She knew my family, my father and his family. She knew my uncle and his family. They lived on the south side of St. Johns. We lived on the north side of St. Johns. She knew everybody in between.

Everybody has a good word for her, I know that.

She was very strict, but yet she had a way that it was cooperative.

I know you're thinking of having to leave right away. Is there something else you would like to add that we haven't discussed? Can you name any of the people you knew in the Colony?

Jeannie Anderson. Her father was secretary.

What other names can you recall?

Mr. Pearl and his family. There was Carl Wilson. He lived east of the Colony. The Hox(sp?) family--both of them--lived west of the Colony.

Did you know Jeanne Temple?

Yes.

Did you know the Ewers (sp?)?

No. Jeanne Temple's father-in-law was the treasurer of the school and he wrote the checks. There was a Rosekrans family that lived in the area, very nice family.

Well, you have your granddaughter and daughter with you. May we have your name? What is your name? You're the granddaughter.

Lisa Naggee(sp?)

You live in Flint too?

No. Grand Rapids.

The mother?

Myrna Naggie(sp?). I live in Durand.

You have brought your mother to the museum. We thank you for coming and I certainly appreciate this tape.

I only have the one picture of the County Normal. Would you be interested in that picture?

We certainly would, yes. Not all of those pictures belong to the museum. They were loaned here. I'm hoping people will give some to us because the museum has about three of those that belong to the museum. The rest of those, they want them back, of course. We don't have many pictures of the County Normal.

After that write-up was in the paper, I came across my picture with the first school children I had at the Boak School back in 1924.

That would be interesting because of the county school too. I certainly thank you.

I thank you. I didn't expect to run into this.

FRANK BISHOP
Graduate of Clinton County Normal, St. Johns, Michigan

Interviewed by Catherine Rumbaugh, May 18, 1988
On the Occasion of
The County Normal School Exhibit at the Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum

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Words in brackets were inserted by the transcriber.

This is Wednesday, May 18, [1988] at the Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum of the Clinton Co. Historical Society, St. Johns, Michigan. We have visiting our Clinton County Normal School exhibit, Mr. Frank Bishop. He was one of the graduates and has many memories of the event. Mr. Bishop, what year did you graduate from County Normal? You have to look, huh? Aren't you in this class? You weren't with [Ford] Ceasar?

Class of 1931. The teacher was Miss Martha McArthur and I can't recall the name of the critic teacher right now.

I don't know as we have a picture of them there.

The teachers are not in that picture. I well remember the boys there. There is Martin Lerg, myself, and Maurice Jumper, and a lad by the name of Sleight, and a --

There's a lady in there that was married to a doctor in Elsie.
Louise Wilbur.

Married Dr. Bennett.

David Myers is on the end there. I think they have all passed away but maybe David is still alive. I don't know.

They all went to one-room schools to teach?

Well, teaching jobs were pretty hard to get, but the ones that taught went to one-room schoolhouses. I was selected to teach the Cramer School [Dist. #5, Sect. 14, Bingham Twp.] on account of the boys out there had caused a lot of trouble with the woman teacher the year before and there were only, I think, 45 pupils in the school.

All eight grades?

All eight grades, and when I walked into the schoolhouse the first morning, there were 52 pupils there and the school board had hired me, as a man teacher, to straighten out the discipline. Over the blackboard, I don't know who put the "thrashing" material there, but there was a rubber hoses, a razor strap, and a hickory rod.

Oh, my!

The boys took special note of that, but there was (sic) 18 big boys and several large girls. They all liked to play ball. So, I think about the third day that I was there, we constructed a baseball diamond, and lo and behold, the school board donated some chicken wire. We had a backstop and we had two baseball teams. I never had to do a bit of janitor work. The boys were there before I was in the morning and they would do the janitor work up a hurry so I could come out and play ball with them. I never removed the material above the blackboard, but once. I straightened a couple of them out and it wasn't very serious at that.

You won their love and respect helping with a baseball diamond.

Yes. So when I left there after two years and a half. I was a conservation officer for 40 years.

Tell me where the school was located.

The school was located two miles east of Owosso and a mile to the south. I think it's gone now. So when I retired from the conservation officer's job in 1973, these pupils, most of them came to my retirement. It was quite a reunion.

Tell me where you live.

I live in Owosso now, my wife and I. She is from Fowler-Westphalia area.

Did you meet her when you were going to County Normal?

No. We met afterwards. She's from the Deutch country over around Westphalia and Fowler—been a very good wife and a very good cook.

You're healthy, so I guess we know that.

There is a picture of Miss Martha McArther and the class of 1927.

Let's see, you graduated in '31. Let's see if in 1930 they mention--. She's not in that group either.

Things slip, you know, off your mind.

In '38 they had Gladys O'Burn and Ann Henratta, I guess. Did you ever attend any of the County Normal Day at Mt. Pleasant where all these students from County Normals throughout the state went up there?

No, we went to Kalamazoo, Western Michigan, that year. Yes. Miss McArthur had us well trained for the occasion because she had been there around the place so many times. Just as soon as the preliminary speeches were made, we sat down to dinner. All at once she pointed her finger at me--and this was all made up--we got up and we cheered the Clinton County Normal class. We got off four or five cheers before the rest of the normal classes got the floor. It was comical, you know. It was quite an occasion because there were county normals from over the state [that] were there.

Did Mt. Pleasant do it also or did it change after that?

I can't remember, but I know that year we went to Western Michigan.

Evidently, you got some musical programs and everything that day? We have, like a concert was given at County Normal Day here at Mt. Pleasant. Did you have you have real important people give speeches and they entertained you, so to speak, or was it very educational or social?

I think it was more social than anything else, but I do know that there were two speakers on the program and it seems like one of them was a woman. I can't recall only being in the big hall there and the dining room mostly. I guess that's what we all looked forward to.

Tell me, when you were attending County Normal, did you have to board and room with someone here in town?

There were three of us boys got together. We stayed with Mrs. Pasch. I think it was on—
What's this street?

Cass.

I think it was on that street, farther to the east in the east part of town. We had two rooms there and we paid her \$2 a week for the room and cooking privileges.

You got your own meals.

She was a wonderful woman. She put up with quite a lot because we used to sing and carry on, you know. She was a real nice woman.

You were about what age, 17? 18?

18.

Did County Normal begin the first day of school like the rest of the pupils or did it start a little later or what?

No. I think we were the same [schedule] because we had classes in the old schoolhouse.

Old Central School.

We had some pupils that had to have more attention than others, and we had the regular class, and we had some that were, you might say, they were more intelligent. We got a taste of teaching each class. Madro was the critics teacher. Amelia Madro. She was a wonderful woman. She was about 30-35 years old and she was a [brief defect in tape]. She was from a town in northwest lower peninsula. I can't think now what---. I ran across some of her relation later on in life and we all just admired her so. She was such a good teacher. She was about 30 years old. The kids used to have parties. I said "kids." We did, and she used to come and sort of blended right in with us. She kept us straight and we had a good time too.

They called her a "critic teacher." This was what she actually did, but the word critic is enough to scare anyone half to death.

No, each one of us had a book called, *The Course of Study, Syllabus*. Things had to be taught a certain way and then she would teach us more modern ways of that time and tell us when to apply it. That's what they meant by "critic," teaching us the finer points.

I think they could have chosen a better word.

Probably so. Amelia was a wonderful teacher. We had two wonderful teachers there at that time. Each one of had to have this Palmer Method certificate [penmanship course]. I don't know how I ever did it, but I had a teacher's certificate for the Palmer Method.

I find it very unique that you had to send all of these exercises into the company and the company awarded you the certificate.

We had to look just like that too. I couldn't do it today if I had to, but it improved my writing so—of course I have arthritis now—and I'm so glad that I learned to write this method because I can write with my arm now and it's very good.

The fingers don't move, but the arm does.

This bird book is outstanding also. You'll never find a better one than that.

I understand many people still use them.

Oh yes. I have mine.

They say it's the best bird book there was.

Reed's Bird Guide. Orthography is a strange subject nowadays.

Tell us the meaning of it. We have people that want to know what it means.

It means the sound of words and sound of groups of words. That's what it means, actually, and learning to read by sounds.

Today we call it "phonics?" Is that in the place of phonics?
Right, phonics. We had that in phonics class.

Did they teach you singing?

They tried. A little tale hangs onto this scene. We had a singing class and this David Myers-- he had a real deep voice and he could get way down deep, you know. He was always doing it, and he'd be singing something else and nobody could really tell that he was joking or carrying on because he was a pretty good boy in school, but he'd do that. So we all conspired one day and all at once we quit singing. Davy was caught way down deep.

So he got caught.

But Miss McArthur, she was such a good sport about such things.

Some of these earlier classes you didn't see very many boys in attendance.

No, hardly ever.

You had five in you class. Did many drop out before they graduated?

I think one person dropped out of that class but I can't tell you who it was now.

Well, that's a pretty good record then, isn't it?

They were pretty good students.

Tell me, were you taught many crafts? Here we have a scrapbook showing some knots and some artwork. Were you given any instruction in that?

I can't remember a bit of that.

Your plan book for winter, spring, and fall, were they part of the curriculum for teachers?

No. We had *The Course of Study, Syllabus*, that was issued by the State of Michigan. We followed that. I still have mine.

We have on display here a double desk. It came out of the Marshall School [section #17, district #10, Greenbush Township]. It's dated 1886, isn't it? Now, we have some initials carved in it. They appear to be your name, but I don't know as we can blame that onto you.

No. I didn't go to school there, but all the rest of the Bishops did. That Ephner Bishop, he has his initials carved on that desk and that seemed to be the thing to do in those days.

Did they ever punish them for doing things like that?

No, they never got punished for that, but there wasn't a country schoolhouse around but what had initials carved in the desk. I saw some more there too, but I couldn't tell---

Incidentally, my father went to that same school.

Did He? What was his name?

His name was Clarence Bishop. Ephner Bishop went to school there and the Marshall family. Of course, it's named after the Marshall family. Schuyler Marshall went to school there. Local folks here know about Schuyler Marshall. He developed into quite a prominent man and [was] well thought of. He and my father graduated the same day from the Marshall School. The reason they graduated the same day was that the teacher picked out a boy that was raising heck, and she had a hickory rod, and she was about to use it on him when my father grabbed her hands and told her she wasn't going to beat that little boy. Schuyler said, "I'll say you're not." and he took the rod away from her and broke it. And they both graduated the next morning.

She got them out in a hurry! How much sooner than the rest of them?
Quite a lot sooner.

Was this school named after Schuyler's father or grandfather?

I can't tell you whether it would be his grandfather or not. It was out north of town where Orbie Cleland used to live and Orbie's wife, Eleanor, was a Marshall. Nellie Marshall, I think, was born there too, I believe.

Tell me what Mr. [Schuyler] Marshall's business was that he became so prominent.

He was the editor of the paper, I think at one time at Lapeer. At least he worked at Lapeer and he edited the paper at Mason, and of course edited the *Clinton County Republican-News* for many years. He was quite a prominent man.

We seem to have made a habit of newspaper publishers coming from Lapeer. That's where Ink White came from.

That's right. Several others that were attached to Detroit papers came from Lapeer.

It must have been a good training ground over there. Were you lucky enough in your school to have had a well and a pump in the yard or did you have to carry your water further?

We had a good well where I taught school. Where I went to school, the well was broken most of the time, because they'd let it freeze and we had to carry water from the neighbors to drink. We had a pail like that and a dipper. I wrote quite piece on it once about my first day at school and the equipment that we had. I still have it someplace. It's a nice story. They always wondered why everybody got the mumps or everybody got the colds and so forth at the same time. That was the cause of it, right there.

All from the dipper.

I can remember the flu epidemic of 1918. Some people in our neighborhood died. I can't remember just who it was now. I know I had an uncle that died and I know that another man by the name of Sterrick died of the Spanish influenza.

It took a lot of lives back then. Let me ask you about your eighth grade examination when you finished rural school. We have a set of them here on exhibit. One of them came in an envelope with a flag on the envelope. Were these tests given in your school or did you have to go somewhere else for them?

Right in the old courthouse here, we wrote these—7th grade examinations and the 8th grade examinations. My pupils from the Cramer School wrote, I believe, in the same place right up to 1932 anyway. I don't know what happened after that. We had to write the examinations up here.

Was it in the courtroom itself?

Yes, in the courtroom. I don't know how they did it. I can't remember, but I can remember a lot of the kids that were there, and then we had to await the results. We didn't have to go to school after we took the examination. The rest of the kids had to go to school, but we didn't. It was, I guess, presumed that we'd passed.

Back then that was as much of a test for the teacher as it was for the students, wasn't it? If you didn't pass it, she was more or less blamed.

The County Normal, it taught us how to teach, but it taught us how to teach certain subjects. It was a great review of the 8th grade. That's just what it was. Of course, all the teachers spent all of their time, mostly if they could, with the 8th graders. But my 8th graders—I used to buy guides to study and so forth for them. They just about educated themselves. They record still stands. There weren't any dummies, I'll tell you that.

They were taught how to read.

One of the boys stood the highest in the county.

That would be quite a feather in the teacher's cap.

I was real proud of him. Even the school board was proud of him.

When you were teaching in a one-room country school, where did you live? Did you board with some of the families?

I stayed at home. I drove an automobile. I bought a 1929 second-hand Ford and I would start to school about half an hour early or a little earlier to get there on time to open up the schoolhouse. As I told you, the boys was always there. They'd be there whether we played ball or not. If it was raining, they was awfully disappointed. I never had any bad trouble. At one time I looked at the ceiling back in the corner where the big boys sat. The ceiling was covered with paper wads. So I cleaned them all down. I told the boys, I said, "I don't want to see any more up there." Well, they had these big geography books. They'd get down behind them and they'd chew up a paper wad real soft and put it on the ruler and ---. It went along about a week and here was paper wads all over again. At that time the little folks, their classes ended at the last recess. Some of them had to stay 'til their big brothers and sisters could take them home. So I had to find something for them to do. I had stacks of *Saturday Evening Posts* for them to cut pictures out of. They kept themselves busy. After I found this last bunch of paper wads on the ceiling—this can be attested to by several of the boys that are still there—I got up just before school let out. I said, "The following boys will remain in their seats. We have work to do." They knew something was coming but they didn't know what. After all the rest of the kids got out, I took about 10 copies of the *Saturday Evening Post* and put them on a chair. I made them all get around. I said, "Now, when you get those *Saturday Evening Posts* all chewed up into paper wads, you can go home, so get to chewing." In about half an hour, they was spitting dust, I'll tell you. They hadn't got one done yet. I relented and let them go home, but there was never any more paper wads. Two of the Ballinger boys can attest to that yet.

That's about the best kind of punishment, isn't it?

It sure cooked their goose.

I presume Central School, when you were in County Normal, had a central heating system and all in the 1930's. We have a photograph here of one of the rooms in 1902 where they have a stove in each room. You certainly had central heating back then.

We had a furnace, as I recollect, and the old library was in the basement. They just threw those books all over and discarded them, you know. It was such a shame. There was such a lot of old, old books.

Your school probably had a bell in the belfry, didn't they, to call them to school?

Yes. It rang at 8:30 and it rang at 9:00. At 9 o'clock we stood up—we were in our seats-- and saluted the flag which was over the blackboard. Then we said the Pledge of Allegiance and the first verse of *America*, and sometimes we sang the national anthem that we had learned verbatim. Most generally, it was the first verse of *America*. I still think we should do that.

They need an opening, don't they?

They surely do, and some of the schools of course, like the Wildcat School-- I'm talking about the Wildcat School [section #17, district #10, Ovid Township]. It was up near McMaster's Corners.

That was on Maple Rapids road.

It would be off from Maple Rapids road. They had Sunday School there regular.

You mean on Sunday? So schools were used as churches and vice versa.

You find a lot of instances where they were used as churches. My mother went to Sunday School at that particular school. So I guess it didn't hurt anybody, and I think it did a lot of good. It's just too bad that it had to cease.

When we've been giving our little programs for school groups, I've been telling them that the free school or common school is only 150 years old which it will be in 1989. That was when Horace Mann decided that there should be a school for everyone. Of course, we talk about what kind of schools they had before and we have a lot of them from the Catholic schools, so they're familiar with religion schools and things like this. When you really come down to think about it, our free school, common school--we call it the public school today--isn't all that old, is it? It's come a long ways. Maybe it's traveled too far in some directions.

They miss a lot of things. Of course, they have a lot of things that we didn't have. A lot of the schools nowadays, they learn to use their hands. It's all right, but we had reading and writing, and that's a sample of it up there, that Palmer Method, and arithmetic. Writing nowadays—I have seen handwriting in the graduation high school there in Owosso [sic]. You can't read it. The spelling is horrible.

Did you ever use an abacus?

No, we didn't have those.

I'm trying to find out how to operate that. That belonged to my grandfather.

They were mostly an object of curiosity, but there was a lot of people that used them too.

I think some of the oriental countries can use them faster than we use our computers. We certainly thank you Mr. Bishop. You got something else to add?

No. I just thought that I would come over when I got the chance and I didn't expect to come over, but I went to the doctor this morning and he said that I could ride and drive. I had an operation in March and I had to be real careful, but I'm coming over, I think, to the meeting tomorrow night too. I think there's a meeting tomorrow night.

Yes, there is. It's on the marsh [Chandler's Marsh].

I don't want Adele [Jones] to know it. She called me. She wanted me to be there so badly.

I think I gave her your address.

I hadn't got this release yet. I went to the doctor today and he said, "Don't bother to come back for a year unless you have trouble."

Well, good! We'll see you tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Bishop. This is Catherine Rumbaugh, Director of the Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum, St. Johns.