

Providence City Oral History Project
AUDIO TAPE LOG

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Interviewee(s): Adola Barkle
Interviewer: Rachel Gianni

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General description: This is a word for word transcription of an interview conducted by Rachel Gianni with Adola Barkle about her memories of Providence, Utah. Adola Barkle lives at 73 West 100 South in Providence, Utah.

(Log #), Interview question, contents

Side A, Tape 1 of 1

(000) What is your birthday, and where were you born? Who were your parents and what did they do?

I was born in Providence. My birthday is December 25th, 1920. My father was a farmer and his name was Newel Mathews. My mother was Retta Chugg Mathews. She was a housewife.

(009) What was Providence like as a town when you were growing up?

It was interesting. I remember back to four or five years old. I remember being able to go out in the streets. At that particular time, there weren't a lot of sidewalks in Providence. We happened to have one that was crumbling that went past our home so we could ride a wagon or anything that we could find to go up and down the street.

In the summer, the irrigation ditch would run down past our home. Everywhere there was spearmint. It would get two or three feet high by the time the summer was over. There were no lawn mowers that would cut out there. There was just the push mower that was difficult even to cut the grass. All the ditch banks, if you were short, you didn't see out into the road all the time. There were a lot of snakes that lived in the spearmint. Sometimes you'd walk down the sidewalk and there'd be this big fat snake. We learned to live with snakes early on if you wanted to go out into the grass.

(036) What sort of games did you play as a child?

Hopscotch, Jump the Rope. At night they played Run Sheep Run, Kick the Can. As I look back now, parents were not too worried about someone stepping on their yard because they did it all the time. At night, you could hide anywhere within a block of the game.

There didn't seem to be any problem with moving around in the day time or the nighttime. As a six year old you were safe if you could find your way home. We usually did because in the daytime we bummed around a lot. We hiked up to the hills and picked violets and buttercups and roamed across private property.

(053) What were some of your chores as a child?

My father was a farmer, so at any early age we pulled weeds mainly. I was well acquainted with red roots. They were terrible. I wish I had more red roots and less of these other type of weeds that we have now. We didn't have the same type of weeds. We pulled the red roots. They called it pig weed too because pigs loved red roots.

(065) There were no paved roads when I was young, so in the winter people got around with horse and a sleigh. It made it nice if you owned a horse and a sleigh. The vast majority of people were farmers, and if they weren't they at least had a cow and a pig and some chickens. Those sleighs were flat. The sides on them were about 12 to 16 inches high and you would just sit in on the bottom of it. It wasn't big. It was easy to get around. There were people who knew how to make the runners. They were sturdy because a lot of young people in the winter would get their sleighs going. The center of Providence, where the stores were, was slippery. Sometimes they would have sleigh loads of different groups. They would get out and try to push the others over.

(093) I realized we didn't have any juvenile delinquents. They were called "hoodlums." There was very little of law enforcement. If something really bad came up, members of the city took care of it. I remember some night, some man coming to our door and telling my father to get his coat and come with him. I don't remember the man's name anymore, but I can still remember the look on his face. He was kind of white with anger. This group got together and cuffed and beat up this man. I remember maybe a couple of months later, this man came to my father and told him that he was innocent of what he had been accused of. He was a local man. My father said, "I'll never go and do anything like that again." It didn't matter who came to the door. He felt bad that he had been involved in it at all.

(119) We had road ruts. By the time spring came and it started to melt where they had gone all the time, there would be icy ruts in the road that were maybe seven or eight inches deep and about that wide. When it would thaw, the water ran down there. I recall the kids walking in the ruts and the water. They didn't work on the ruts. There were very few cars and they weren't built like they are now. I remember someone going up this rutty road in their car and they wanted to make a right turn and go up on the Bench. The ruts broke the wooden wheel and took the tire off.

(135) We didn't have a car, not until the late '30s. The first one was just a real old one that my father's cousin wanted to get rid of. It didn't run long because it was really old. Then they bought a fairly new one. The memories I have of the cars at that time, there were no defrosters, and if there was, they didn't defrost much so you had a little circle that you rubbed the ice off the windshield. Fortunately there weren't many cars so you made it.

(150) I remember one winter when there was a very heavy snow. Ordinarily they had a triangular shaped, 15 feet from the front to the back, and they pulled that with horses and that pulled the snow enough off so that one group could get down. This particular winter it snowed and snowed and snowed. It was like in the late '30s. They got someone with a grader and they came and they pushed the snow. Where they pushed it out, people couldn't get in so they pushed it to the center of the road. There was maybe a ten feet high and about ten feet at the bottom, pile of snow right in the middle of the road and you drove on either side, whichever direction you were going. The kids walked on the top of that. It froze. It was really a nice when everyone was walking on top of the snow, ten feet off of the ground. I think they called it a Ludlow and it was a wagon that didn't carry a lot. It was mostly to put people or groceries. If you went to Logan you would drive that over.

(178) What did you do for medical care?

The doctor came to the home to deliver the babies. They talked about "Dr. Quick." My parents at this particular time lived on the South Bench. They called him and it took time for him to get there. The baby was born by the time he got there. I remember my father saying, "and he still charged five dollars."

The first doctor I saw was when I got a small pox vaccination. I was five. My mother took my younger brother and myself to Logan on the train and we went to Dr. S.M. Budge and he vaccinated us. I didn't see another doctor till I was married and expecting our first child.

We had a neighbor that was pretty sharp. I remember my brother being kicked by a horse in the elbow. He was about ten. He quick crawled under the hay rack so he didn't get kicked again and when it got safe, he came home. His elbow was huge. I remember she came and she looked at it and she said, "It's OK, it's not broken." Her name was Carly Campbell. Caroline was her name but they called her Carly. If we had any problems, we called her.

People neighbored then. They would drop in every week or two just to say hello. There were very few telephones.

(219) What sort of community get-togethers do you remember?

There was the Pavilion. They would put on little dramas and they had dances. When I was six, they used to bring in silent movies. It was Hoop Gibson. We had benches. You couldn't see, so people on the back rows usually sat up on the back of the bench. If somebody sat up too straight, the whole bench tipped backwards. I was caught in a couple of those accidents and I thought that was really bad. They had dances. They had a furnace that belched dirty smoke. You always hoped someone who knew what they were doing was firing up the furnace. It could be a dirty mess.

We had bazaars. Each ward had a bazaar. It was a three day bazaar. You brought in produce if you wanted to donate. This was to donate money for the ward. My uncle started those. It took a long time to die out. He was Hazen Matthews. He happened to be the bishop at that time. It seemed like it was well supported in those first days. We came down from the school at noon. We didn't have school lunches. For ten cents we could get lunch. The women of the ward had to cook the lunch. That was fun to go down there and have a cooked lunch. They sold whatever was donated. Some

people were really generous with what they donated. The wards put it on to support the ward. I don't know how much they made. It was a getting together of the ward.

People were proud then if they thought they didn't look like they thought they should. You didn't go to church. I only remember of two men who were to Sunday school. Both of those men had sons who were bishops. All those years, those were the two adults, other than the ones who worked in the Sunday school. Very poor attendance.

(275) What was the Old Rock Church like?

When they'd get a new bishop, the church would get changed around. The first audience was on the west side of the church and the pulpit was on the east side. Somebody didn't like that and they changed it and the pulpit was on the west side. We liked that because the door that went in, if you were late, everybody saw you were late. When they put the pulpit down on the west end, you could sneak in behind the people. That made it a little nicer. When I was nine, we moved across the street, so we were in a different ward. I didn't live in the First Ward until I got old. I've been in and out of the First Ward. I've lived in the same house, but I've been in and out of the First Ward three different times. You have to remember the number.

(299) The hoodlums, there was a lot of trickery. Nobody had cars. I remember they would have what they called "chickeries." If you didn't have dogs to let you know someone was on your property, most everyone did have dogs on their property, that's mainly what the dogs were for, police action. Our dogs were kind of like police dogs because they would bark and let you know if anything was going on. I never did find out who they were, they were really quiet. They came and they took half the chickens of one family. They just killed them and cooked them and had a chickery. About four days later they came and got the other half. Nobody ever found out. Nobody ever told on anybody. You didn't dare.

If you had a party, we always had ice cream because everyone always had milk and cream. You always had a freezer that you made ice cream for this party. Most of the time, if anyone knew there was a party, they stole the ice cream. That was quite a challenge to keep the ice cream. Most people would leave the freezer in a ditch where it could be seen. You got your freezer back. You just knew that was one of the facts of life of living in Providence.

(340) There were very few radios and even fewer refrigerators. Some homes had furnaces. Not many, very few. There was no television or computers. You cooked your food fresh every meal. If you had a family, you didn't have to worry about keeping anything. There was hardly anything on the dishes to scrape. We didn't really have big pans like you do now that you could cook and overload. We had the food to cook, but not the pans to cook it in.

(358) I remember the Model T's. The first ones that I saw, it was a challenge to start them because you had to crank them. Sometimes the crank would catch and slip back and hit you in the arm. There were such few cars that if we heard one coming, we had to go out and see who it was. There were such few cars that you knew who it was by the car that went by.

(377) I remember when I was about five, one of the most popular songs was, "Ice creamy, you scream, we all scream for ice cream. Rah, rah, rah." I think the kids sang it for a couple of years until we got worn out and then sang something else. That's one that stayed with me. We loved ice cream, so we were glad to get a song.

(386) If you had one room and you had a big kitchen, you kept that warm. You kept the cook stove going to heat the room. We played cards. We took our bath by the kitchen stove.

Our house had a bathroom, but my grandfather didn't believe in putting toilets in the house. He didn't want to hear that flush. In my old age, I realize that the property they lived on was high clay. It wouldn't have drained. I suspect that was the reason he didn't finish the bathroom.

Our house was cold. If it was zero outside, it was zero in the bedrooms. We had a blanket that you put on the bed. It went from the head of the bed down to the bottom. It made a U-turn and it came back up again. That was more than you could dry, so our blanket stayed from November till March, till it got warm enough to wash and dry it outside. We'd go to bed and put our head under the covers. We also took what they called flat irons. They were on the stove and you'd wrap them in paper and a towel and take them to bed. That warmed up the bed a little.

(426) We went swimming in the irrigation canal. We'd take items up there to float. It was nearly two blocks from our house where we dared to sneak through the backyard of someone's place to launch. About three blocks south, the man that lived there had the canal in the street. They had cleaned it out and they put a backer in there. They had water that was maybe three or four feet. I never got to swim in it. You had to be invited; you couldn't just crash the party. I did see a lot of kids that were in that neighborhood. I don't know how we got away with it. Evidently, after the water filled up, the same amount went over.

(457) My sister was in California and working for our aunt down there. She had a hotel. They were high-styled down there. When she came back, no one wore slacks. Most of the older women had skirts with an apron. Everyone had an apron because you carried eggs in it and vegetables. You didn't have a basket. You just had your full apron. You could use it for whatever you needed to do. She came home with what they called "day pajamas." It was a one-piece outfit and it had buttons on one shoulder so you could get into them. I remember my younger sister that was just younger than her was a seamstress, so she immediately cut a pattern off it and made her some and was flouncing around. That caught hold. There were a couple of people who wanted the pattern, but they weren't going to let it out. There were a lot of good seamstresses and they simply made up their own. They all looked alike. It was the first of the pant revolution in Providence. She came back in 1930 and made them out of fabric like you'd use for a dress, percale. Quite often a floral. Many people were very upset when that came through.

(501) On Halloween, quite often they would tip outdoor toilets over. You'd go out and your toilet was laying on the ground. Tomatoes were flying everywhere. It wasn't safe

to be out. One Halloween, the day after we went to school, there was this rock wagon, and they're really a heavily built wagon. It was up on the roof of the school. We had a high roof on the school. It was two stories and the ceilings were high up in the building. The principal was very angry. It didn't take long and he had four or five men to put the wagon down. I thought it was these old guys getting back at the principal, they graduated ten years ago. We had a class reunion for the eighth grade. It was maybe forty years after we graduated. One of the kids told about them putting the wagon up there. They took the whole thing apart and pulled it up piece by piece. I know who did it. I don't dare to tell. The main one died about ten years ago, the one that helped make it possible. I had no idea there were kids like that in my grade. They seemed pretty calm, and I was amazed at the ones that did it.

(564) Can you tell me about your memories of the pea vinery?

We used to go there and play there a lot because it had steps you could run up and down, and a second floor in it. It was open. We grew beans for canning and we went down there fairly often for bean picking time. We took our beans down in bags and had them weighed and graded. You got a 1, 2, or 3. If you got a 3, that meant you had a lot of big ones. We tried to pick a 2, mediums. I remember the vinery running and a lot of farms that raised peas. It was kind of clunky sounding, all these cups. Maybe it was a 3 or 4 metal cup on the chain that went up the belt. I never did see it get the peas out of the pods. I don't really know how it crushed the peas.

(608) What was the railroad like?

It was great. We rode to school on the railroad. Kids would tear it up, the hoodlums. There's pictures in the Providence books. There's still trains similar. You got off or on on both ends. Sometimes we'd try and stay on and sneak to Logan and we didn't pay. Sometimes the conductor would come back and squeeze a dime out of us. One time my friend stayed on and went over and she had a quarter and he took it and he didn't give her any change. A whole quarter was like five dollars. We walked to Logan all the time. The train went through the fields, so we walked across. We'd go to a movie. Nobody ever bothered us. No one in those days stopped to talk to you, paid any attention to you. They didn't want to be accused of anything. It was a totally different society.

(661) What businesses do you remember in Providence?

Theurer's store was there all the time. They had a little bit of everything, almost. When you went in, you didn't go shopping. You just went up to the counter and whoever waited on you would go get what you needed, what you wanted. You didn't really shop like you do now. There were no bags. They had a big roll of paper and a spool of cord string. Whatever you bought was put on a chunk of paper and rolled up with string. Sometimes it would be pretty nice paper. We kept the string and we kept the paper. It wasn't available like it is now. It was kind of a premium.

Then there was Watkins. Watkins had a smaller store. It was nice and they had a soda fountain. You could go in and get root beer soda or a banana split, maybe some special candies and some groceries.

End of interview. There is nothing on Side B.