

**Reminiscences from a 91 year old woman**  
*an Oral History*

Rosa Foster, Interviewee  
Of Toluca, Illinois

Interview Date: August 22, 1975

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NARRATOR: Rosa L Foster

TAPE # : 1

DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 22, 1975

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: 414 N. Chestnut, Toluca, Ill.

INTERVIEWER: Myna Swanson

FOR: Starved Rock Library System

I: I'm interviewing Mrs. Rosa Foster of Toluca, Ill. she was 91 years old in February of 1975. She is the daughter of Joacb Hattan and Mary Jael Short.

(pause)

N: The family drove to Pattonsburg in a carriage to the Christian church and I enjoyed that very much. Was baptize in Crow Creek near the church when I was 13 years old. I was organist at church for several years.

(Pause)

Enrolled \_\_\_\_\_ to school --in Eureka Coorage in 1902 and took a teachers Course. And I returned home and my mother being ill, I cared for her instead of teaching.

(pause)

N: When I was around 10 or 11 yearsold. the miners were in Toluca at that time. They composed most of the population of Toluca and on the Fourth of July they had a picnic out there by Cap Caponi's Tavern now and they had seats to sit on and music all afternoon and they danced all the time through the hot afternoon. And they had flags going and trees from the timber set out for shade andI thought the flags flying was real patriotic for people who hadn't been in this country any longer that they had.

(pause)

And later on they--miners what on strike and they all had large families and they were suffering for food and clothing and they used to walk out to our house which is aobut 6 miles and even farther, beg people for something to eat and help them buy some clothes and things.

(pause)

I: You remember where these miners bought their food and their clothing?

N: There was a what they called the Great Western Store here. Was the main store that was to buy the clothing. Then the grocery stores, I just don't remember the name of them right now, There was another dry goods store by the name of Zimmerman. People were running. And the shoe store across the street from the Great Western Store. Wegoda's shoe store. Across the street from the Great Western Store.

(pause)

N: Seemed to be some nice black people in Toluca at that time. And their church was right over here, a little ways from where I live. And my great-uncle took me to the dedication and they had a real nice service. I remember. That's about all I remember about them at that time.

I: Were some of those colored people buried here in Toluca?

N: I don't remember about that. (pause) (tape shuts off) There are one or two of the colored people buried out here a little ways from town

(pause)

I: Did you have money when you were young and growing up or what did you do for fun?

N: Well, my father was a farmer. he lived on his father's farm.

I: What did you do for fun?

N: We had parties. Lots of parties. Just around people's houses and then there would be church socials and in the winter we would take a big crowd in the bob sled somewhere and singing schools and spelling schools and all that and it was so different from now-a-days. You didn't have to have money to go these places. It was all just free. (laughs) and for the music at our parties, Ike Davis played a harmonica and then my brother's ic played and that was the music we had at our parties instead of violins and things.

I: Did you ever learn to play the harmonica?

N: I just picked up a little, when my brother would lay his down. I could play a few little things., is all.

(Plays harmonica)

N: Can you tell what that is?

(Plays harmonica) (laughs)

I: Very good. (pause) You play the harmonica today. Do you want to tell us when you play that is?

N: I mean I play it at nights when I can't sleep. (laughs) O.K. (pause) I play the harmonica at nights when I have trouble going to sleep and it kind of rests my nerves so I can go to sleep and I only play by ear a few little peices to get my nerves down. (laughs) (pause) That's about it, I guess.

(tape shuts off) \_\_\_\_\_ and he had a young man with him from school and we got to talking over what we did, you know, going on sleigh rides or bob sleds, they were. We did ---usually furnishe the team and the sled, my brother and I, cause Dad had lots of horses so it was real nice to go a few miles in that to a church social maybe, a party or somthing. I enjoyed I very much.

I: What's the name of this brother your speaking of and how old was he?

N: He's Floyd Hatten and he is 93 years old now and we were great pals when we were young because I didn't have any sisters and he took me everywhere with him when we were growing up. He was awful nice brother. (pause)

I: Is this all the brothers----did you have other brothers and sisters?

N: Two younger brothers and one older, but my sister died in infancey. She would have been older than I was. So I never had a sister.

END OF TAPE

Beverly Black  
Transcriptionist

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PLACE Toluca, Illinois

DATE August 20, 1975

Rosa L. Foster

(Interviewee)

Myra Swanson  
(for Starved Rock Library System)