

Teaching in Princeton, Illinois High School
an Oral History

Donnabell Fry, Interviewee
Of Princeton, Illinois

Interview Date: June 26, 1975

Oral History Tape Number: TC OH 26 FRY
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NARRATOR: Miss Donnabell Fry

INTERVIEWER: Lex Poppans

NUMBER OF TAPES: 1

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Narrators home, 449 Thompson, Princeton, ILL.

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 26, 1975

I: This is Lex Poppans interviewing Miss Donnabel Fry at her home at 449 Thompson, Princeton, Ill. The date is July 26, 1975.

I: When were you born?

N: I was born in 1904.

I: Any special date?

(laughter)

N: December 6, 1904. A little tiny town, Iriquois. _____

I: When did you move here?

N: To Princeton? I came here in the fall of 1923.

I: Was there any special reason why you moved here?

N: Well, yes, I had known some Princeton People before I came up here.

_____ students in _____ Illinios. And I had applied for this job in the spring, but I had been turned down. I had _____ experience _____ i asked for more money. And then the girl that _____ had become _____ the girl to that applied with me came on the job and later in the summer she was married and since they did not hire married teachers at that time, Mr. Schaffer, our principle at that time _____

I: How many years have you lived here?

N: _____ I came fresh and green out of collage and lived here ever since.

I: Did you have any sisters or brothers?

N: I have one sister.

I: Where does she live?

N: She lives _____ Beach, Florida, _____ that's my

only family.

I: Where's your family originally from?

N: Well, we're from _____ East central Illinois, over around Iriquois County. My ancestors date back to IRIQUOIS County. In 1832 they came here from Virginia.

I: Did the family from Virginia come from any or major land?

N: Our ancestry here came from Switzerland. And we think, we're not for sure, we think that his parents had been in prison for religion purposes-- from persecuttén and he went, we think, to Holland and the followed _____ came into Pennsylvania and took his land there and later he went down to Virginia and bought a thousand acres of Fairfas land.

_____ Fairfas had a grant from the King of England and he could sell the _____ Shenedoah Valley _____

I: Have there--what was the county like---when you first came here?

N: You mean Bureau County?

I: Bureau County.

N: What was it like?-----I don't thin that Bureau County has changed to much through the years _____ you have _____ the cars weren't driving quite so fast and you didn't have sound movies. We had silent movies. Princeton is still the trading center, I think, of the county _____ Industrial, yes. In those days there was almost a mandate that no industry into Princeton. And little by little the Chanber of Commerce began investi- gating _____ what they considered good industry _____ and so _____ but _____

I: What did you mean by good industry?

N: Well, bringing in people who would be an advantage to the county. Citizens _____

I: What did you do for a living when you first came here?

N: I taught.

I: What did you teach?

N: I came here to teach music, but _____ but because of the situation of the days, this was just about the time of the depression _____ teachers were having to teach just almost anything. So I came here I had to get used to the area, of course, _____

I: What changes accured in the hight school while you taught here?

N; Well, I think, there are changes of methods of teaching, and changes in the compleation with in the school and conditions in the town, conditions of teachers and I think back on those early days, we had no teachers aides. We had had an education, of course, that was mandatory at that time, but there were no teachers who came in to help us. There were no visual means available there were no _____ nothing of that sort. We had no student teachers coming in to help us. We were definitely on our own. And every teacher was required to have certain outside jobs. We _____ the games for an example, for additional pay _____ differnt things like that for additional pay. And it was rather expected that the teachers would take part in the communitie's activities. Now-a-days there is now way _____ conditions of teachers.

_____ starting teachers

I: _____ I started at 1850 which was a high salary to start at that time and I was able to start at that high salary only because I was somewhat experénced. I had a gee club in Urbana high school and on that basis of that _____. I might mention in connection that I didn't get that job, when I first applied because it went to a teacher who had no experience. She would come for less. She would come for something like _____ but through the summer she was married

and, of course, in those days married teachers--married women were not hired as teachers and so I was called instead. The the --let's see--oh, I might mention also that the qualifications for teaching were not so high in some ways, although in our school we always had teachers quite well qualified. In fact, our school has been one of, I think, five or six in the state that were used by the University of Illinois for research work _____

_____ our plans and teachers qualify but when I say not well-qualified, I mean teaching other things that you were not expecting to when you got out of school first. And I think another big difficulty there to of parent-teacher attitudes. Parents in those days rather resented the schools taking on discipline. They felt that should be done in the home. Little by little that attitude shifted so that schools _____ feel discipline should be done in the school and all teaching even ~~in~~ ordinary manners and such should be done in the school. And yet they began reasoning that _____ the school _____ doing too much. The whole manner of discipline has changed very, very much.

I: Were there many changes in the curriculum while you worked there? At the high school?

N: Well, yes, I think so. I've mentioned our school, when I first came here and I think perhaps even more so in early times, was rather an academic minded school. We did have courses in manual training in those days _____ but they were not a strong _____ school as they are today. The school was more concerned with, well there wasn't all this collage oriented school and was always concerned with foreign languages, _____ more higher math, good science courses. The fact _____ students from, oh, Walnut, and different schools around the country because they could get science courses _____. We've always

had very high degree of students going to collage. _____ and a type of school. I THINK, Now, that expecially with foreign languages, there is a shift there. I don't know whether it's from _____ standpoint or whether it's no much students or requesting languages or what. But the language I noticed or falling out of the picture. Unfortunately.

I: What did you teach?

N: Well, I came here to teach music. But during the depression, music teachers were loosing their heads all around here. La Salle, Kewanee, shutting down departments and our principle at that time asked me if I would come and teach English. If I could _____ and so I started teaching Junior English. _____ do to well. (laughs) _____ but not many of _____ so I did work into more and more of teaching English and finally I did retire from _____ I did retire _____.

I: Did you enjoy teaching Junior English?

N: Very much. I think the reason Mr. Schaffer asked me to teach it, I always enjoyed reading and it was just a matter of a year or two _____ students, you know, but I had enough background I could call on _____.

I: Did you teach any other couresses besides English?

N: No othere than what I mentioned earlier _____ and _____ there came a time when the orchestra fel out of the picture, and I had just the _____ music. They even cut out the _____ music here.

I: Where did you go to school for your teachers degree?

N: Do you want me to tell you about the entire _____?
Well, I had had my music work _____ University of Illnois, and majored in Piano and had a degree then which would qualify me to teach in the school,

collage _____ but again about that time it was
the depression _____ and so there were not enough jobs avail-
able _____ work for about a year and a half. Then I began to
work at _____ high school _____ but I had to
go back to school, in order to get another degree _____ in music education
to teach in the high school. But that degree was made up almost entirely
of educational courses. Some of those courses were general education _____
_____ but the courses in the methods of teaching _____
_____.

I: How many years did you go to school?

N: _____ You mean in collage?

I: In collage.

N: Well, I had six actual years, I think, but see -----I lived on
campus. I lived in Champaign in my high school year on. And so I was always
teaching--I was always teaching piano lessons on campus, _____
courses as well. _____ summer and winter for many years I was
_____. I think, I came out _____ I think I came
out _____ 40 hours of music _____.

I: Were there many other women in school with you?

N: You mean _____?

I: Yes. Going _____ P.H. degree.

N: Yes _____. I was in the _____ school.

_____ fell school. _____ smallest
school on the campus, but our other courses, the large courses were on the
campus so we would be going to school _____

In music school, I think, there were more girls in courses. Of course, the
University of Illinois was always know for having many, many more ment then
women. _____.

I: Was the teachers salary enough to get by with then?

N: Well, when I look bak now I wonder how we did it. I bought a fur coat and I bought a car. I don't know how I did it. (Laughs) but _____
_____ had an apartment. We got along _____
I did do--I ~~tried~~ to work every summer on my summer vacation _____
and I did-oh- lots of typing, things like that. _____ there
I had a choir jof so I wasn't _____ and I was on of
the better paid teachers.

I: You already answered my next question. Did you live by yourself?

N: Oh-no-not when I came here. To _____
I bought this home, well, I moved into this home _____ 1939 and
I bought it in 1948 but to indicate something that _____
family on that salary, I was paying about \$30 a month reat.

I: _____

N: _____ and I had a Gord _____ my first
car was a Ford _____ I think paid about \$600 for a brand
new Ford. _____

I: What changes have you seen in teaching? Since you began.

N: Well, I answered that _____.

I: Have you traveled widely?

N: Well, some people would call it widely but I have been very, very
forunate. Yes.

I: Where did you go?

N: Well, let's see, I've been to Europe and to the Orient, Hawaaii, Mexico,
Canada, and around the world _____

I: How did you go on most of these trips? Was it by plain or ship _____?

N: The first to trips to Europe we went on ship but then, of course the
trip around the world was by ship but _____

I: I suppose the planes have changed greatly since when you first started travelling.

N: Well, they have gotten bigger and noisier and _____

I: More expensive.

N: And more expensive. Having movies on the planes and so forth that kind of thing, you know, but I hadn't _____
airport _____

I: Were there any major faults on the airplane or the ship?

N: Major faults?

I: Like a storm or forced landing or ---

N: Well, no, we were very fortunate with the exception our trip on the Chinese Cargo Cruiser. Which was extremely well-stabilized ship. But it was--we got into the Capetown Rollars in a hurricane and that was _____

I: What are the Capetown Rollars?

N: Well, as I understand, anytime that you have two bodies of water coming together as they are in Capetown, The Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. you have great turbulence and they call the turbulence there, the Capetown Rollars.

I: Did you enjoy the trip?

N: Oh, immensely. _____. I don't know _____
we had, I think, it was 6-8 days _____ four days _____
or something like that. See, I have to think, _____

I: How long did it take for your oriental trip?

N: Well, that was-----we were in the Orient on the trip around the world and that was almost five months.

I: Quite a long time.

N: Yes it was. _____ Now I _____ probably not it was-
we went- we sailed May 5th from _____ and we got back _____
23rd, I think something like that _____.

I: On your trips to Europe, how long did those take?

N: Well, varying times. First we went the usual grand tour, you know.

A day here and a day there. The whole thing was kind of a frustration _____
_____. I look back on it and realized the whole thing _____
_____ course and then my next trip to Europe _____
about 2 weeks and that was a trip _____ a friend and I arranged
before hand _____ In _____ and we planned
that -----to suit ourselves and really got _____ and then
the last trip we went _____ we went to Greece
and Italy _____. Add then last fall I had a trip
to Portugal and Spain.

I: On your first-your Europe trip, did you go to Switzerland?

N: _____, I think, strangely enough, I ~~was~~ been in every
corner of Switzerland but I _____

I: Earlier in this interview, you said that your-one of your great
ancesters _____ parents were in jail, did you try to?

N: I didn't even go _____. We were right in that section
apparently. As I look back on it now they came from a little town near
Lake Zurich and we stayed in Zurich when I traveled on the very first trip/
We traveled from _____ to _____. Took us right down _____
_____ over there and then another trip that I had _____
we were in _____. We stayed in Zurich and _____
along the Rhine river into _____ and over into Austria. So
those two times especially I've been right in the section and didn't even
know it.

I: Which trip-did you ever go to Holland on any of those trips?

N: I have been in very little of Holland. I haven't been in -----

but the very first trip we took we sailed from the _____ over across
to _____ and came on down through Holland and Belgium _____
I've seen that much of it _____ have you
been there?

I: No I haven't. Quite interesting.

N: O yes.

I: We have traveled in the Orient. Never in Europe _____
Mom and Dad _____ I have never been _____

N: _____ Just go over there and browse around on your
own. I think, that would be, if I were a boy that's what I would love to do/

I: Did you enjoy _____ Holland _____ or did you know
that your ancestors came from Switzerland?

N: I discovered this only about three years ago. My Ancestry, because,

Well, in order to do that I had to start looking back and I found--I had
access to a book that had the whole story clear down to my mother's name
and her two children. All the way from _____ and only
in reading that I became aware of any interest in _____.
I thought sure that my interest _____

I: Well, I thank you very much for the interview.

N: You're welcome.

I: I found it quite interesting.

N: Thank you You've been very tolerant.

I: Thank you.

Beverly Mann
Transcriptionist

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PLACE Princeton, Ill.

DATE 6/26/75

Donnabelle Fry
(Interviewee)

Lex Poppins
(for Starved Rock Library System)


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PLACE 449 E. Thompson

Princeton, Ill.

DATE 13 July, 1976

 Donnabella Fry

(Interviewee)

(for SRLS)

INTERVIEWER'S NOTES AND WORD LIST

Instructions to the Interviewer:

To assist the transcriptionist, please identify:

1. Passages which may be difficult to understand because of outside noise, other people in the room, problems with the tape recorder, etc.
2. Passages which are confidential and therefore should not be typed.
3. Passages which need to be treated in a special way.

Please list words or phrases which might be difficult to understand, all proper names, and unfamiliar terms. If there is more than one tape, note where the second and succeeding ones begin.

TAPE NO. _____

1. Noise in background - mot in room
2. Introduction - my name is Jackie Duffield and I'm interviewing Miss Donnell Perry...
3. 449 Thompson St. Brunston, Ill.
4. Indiana
5. Wagoner County, Wagoner
6. Watsela
7. Champaign, Ill.
8. University of Illinois
9. Glee Club
10. YWCA
11. Western Foundation
12. Camp Fire
13. Depression
14. Galesburg
15. Homeward
16. Knox
17. Athletic Association

(Continue on Reverse)

18. Secretary of the Farm Management Department
19. Princeton
20. English
21. Wurdul Fox
22. Richard Widmark
23. Optomology
24. American Association for the University
25. O.A.R.
26. Audubon Society
27. Friends and Council
28. Mrs. Schaefer
29. Miss Mary Utah
30. Princeton
31. New England
32. Europe
33. Hawaii
34. South America
35. Mexico
36. Canada
37. Italy
38. Switzerland
39. Memoranda
40. Europe
41. O.A.R.
42. A.U.W.
43. Audubon Society
44. Telephone Runging
45. Putnam County
46. Mrs. Dyke
47. Mendota, La Salle, Honica
48. Dwight
49. Keweenaw
50. Rockies
51. Salt Lake City
52. Grand Tetons
53. Yellowstone
54. Colorado
55. Grand Canyon
56. A.F.S.

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NARRATOR'S NAME	TAPE NO	TIME	SUBJECTS
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004 to 008			Background
008 to 009			College
023 to 047			Career-teaching
043 to 050			Students
051 to 051			Changes (methods & building)
058 to 063			Extra activities
065 to 071			Person who helped
072 to 082			Princeton - changes
082 to 089			Children's attitudes
089 to 100			Travels
100 to 106			Education (here - other places)

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26.

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170 to 180 31. Changes she would like to see

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INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

Donna Belle Fry..... Memoir
(narrator's name)

Interviewer's observations about the interview setting, physical description of the narrator, comments on narrator's veracity and accuracy, and candid assessment of the historical value of the memoir.

Note: Use parentheses () to enclose any words, phrases or sentences that should be regarded as confidential.

The interview was at Donna Belle Fry's home. It was a pleasant setting and she cooperated very well. She was nice and polite. As far as I know all her statements are accurate. Since she taught for about forty years and has had so many tapes she was a very interesting person to talk to.

13 July 1976.....
(date)

Jackie Duffield.....
(interviewer's name)