

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

Ezra Stucki - Life Experiences

By Ezra Stucki

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Box 2 Folder 43

Oral Interview conducted by Lenore Mefford

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

LM: I'm Lenore Mefford. Today is March 21, 1974. I'm going to interview Brother Stucki. The general topic will be the Depression in the Idaho area. Brother Stucki, where were you born?

ES: Paris, Idaho.

LM: And what year?

ES: 1895.

LM: And how long have you lived in this area, right here?

ES: I've lived in Rexburg since 1927.

LM: What was your occupation?

ES: I was a superintendent of schools and school teacher.

LM: During the depression, did you work for Ricks College?

ES: No, no I worked for the school district, Rexburg school district, during the depression.

LM: As a person, how did the depression affect the school? Can you think of any way it affected the school?

ES: Funds were short, of course, and it was difficult to raise the money to pay the teachers. I happened to work in a district where the warrants were always honored, so our pay was given to us at the close of each month and the, the school warrants were always accepted by the bank. There were some school districts, however, where the school warrants were not accepted; and if they were, they were discounted quite heavily so the teachers were penalized because of not having the money to redeem the warrants.

LM: Were you ever paid like in goods, like food, or were you always just paid in money?

ES: Always in money.

LM: The agriculture area around here how was it? Do you know how it was affected by the depression?

ES: Of course, they had a difficult time. The farmers had difficulty in paying their taxes and often times their taxes were, went delinquent. As a result of that, the school funds were short. That's, that was the reason the teachers were, were affected by so much by the depression was because the school districts were not able to redeem their warrants, because of not having the taxes paid. Another difficulty was there was so many, so many teachers and so few jobs, and salaries were very low. In some of the area, it, in this immediate area, teachers were getting as little as \$750 a school year.

LM: They make more than that a month.

ES: That's right. They, the school year then, too, in many, many instances was only seven or eight months.

LM: Did you have a lot of kids that didn't come to school because they stayed at home and worked, or they got jobs working in other places, working instead of going to school?

ES: I don't remember that. During the depression, there were not many jobs. You see, the jobs were so scarce that that didn't cause a problem. So we didn't have a difficulty so far as attendance was concerned. The difficulty was not having money to meet the obligations that the people had, and that the school districts had.

LM: Was it hard to buy like food and other, like clothes and stuff like that?

ES: I don't recall any difficulty in securing what we needed and what we wanted.

LM: Did you have to go on the stamp thing, you know, where there were coupons where they gave you so much, and you could get your shoes, and stuff from that? Did you have to go on that or wasn't that effective in the depression?

ES: That was during the war years, where they had their shoe stamps and gas stamps and things of that sort, but that was during the war years. That was later and the time of the Second World War.

LM: Did you have any problems with gas during the depression, or did they have cars?

ES: Oh yes, we had cars. I don't recall any difficulty of getting gas. Gas was always available; and of course, very cheaper then it is now. The, the roads were poor during that time. That was one difficulty; and then during those years, people didn't use their cars very much during the wintertime. The roads were not cleaned off. The snow was not cleared out of the roads very much during the wintertime. I remember we had school buses that we used during the fall and spring, but during the wintertime, we often had to resort to teams and sleighs to bring the boys and girls in.

LM: How exciting! How did, so then there was plenty of stuff, but there just wasn't money to buy it?

ES: That's as I remember it.

LM: Because of the crash in the stock market?

ES: There was plenty of material, but people didn't have any money. You see, the banks were all closed at one time, and people had difficulty because of lack of credit and lack of money, and that was the big difficulty that I remember. 'Course I was fortunate in having a good job. I was the Superintendent of Schools during that time and had a fairly good job in the consideration of

those times, but not very good job considering the salaries that people get nowadays, but anyway we had sufficient to live. We had sufficient money. That wasn't a problem with us at that time, and the teachers in our district were fairly well paid, I think. However, we had reduced salaries in 1933 and '4 and '5. Salaries were reduced each year. Then beginning in 1935, they began, they were increased again and restored back to the amounts which they had been before the reduction, but for those two or three or four years during the, the depth of the depression, salaries were reduced. Teachers' salaries were reduced quite substantially each year.

LM: As superintendent of the schools, what schools were you in charge of?

ES: During that time the Rexburg schools. Rexburg schools was then formed a independent class A district. There were only a few of these in the state of Idaho, but that included the high school in Rexburg and two elementary schools. We didn't have a junior high school as such, but some of the boys and girls liked to call the 7th and 8th grade a junior high.

LM: Did you have lots of kids in your school?

ES: The enrollment was a fairly large. During those years as I remember, we had, oh, between 1,700 and 2,000 enrolled in the schools, in the Rexburg schools.