Voices from the Past

Teachers and Places Taught

By Blanche Hendricks

September 25, 1982

Tape # 45

Oral interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by Theophilus E. Tandoh

November 2004

Brigham Young University-Idaho
The project of oral history of the Upper Snake River Valley, the primary subject is teachers and the places where they taught in Madison County. It’s my opportunity this 25th day of September, on a Saturday morning, 1982, to interview Sister Blanche Hendricks.

HF: Sister Hendricks would you state your full name that would include your maiden name and when and where you were born?

BH: I was born on December the 8th 1904, at Tetonia, Idaho, to Sidney Elvey Hans and Martha Elizabeth Hubert Hans. And my father was a forest ranger up there and that is how we came to live there. We lived in a little log building. And when I was about five I guess, we moved then Kilgore; he was transferred to Kilgore, Idaho, as a forest ranger there. And we then again had a log cabin house and I remember getting there, it was raining and the rain poured in this home of ours which was leaking in the two rooms which we had. And mother started the store in this building. It was the first store in Kilgore, Idaho. And there I and my older brother and a younger brother and Sister Martha live over Parker, Idaho, now, began our life there at Kilgore and I was there until I was about ten. Then father gave up the forest ranger business and we moved to Salt Lake. And there I went to school and I remember how hard it was because I hadn’t had some of the things in the country school like they had in the city school such as music and some of those things.

HF: Sister Hendricks, just review briefly your formal education which enabled you to start teaching.

BEH: Well, the reason I got my job here was when the folks moved from Salt Lake and to Idaho. And I came then to Idaho to live with them. And there was a teacher then at that time. In fact in 1923 I guess it was that this Edner Thompson who was teaching at Canyon Creeks passed away during a Thanksgiving holiday. So they sent immediately to Ricks College to see if they could send them a teacher. And in those days all we had to have was a high school education and so I had that and they asked me if I would take this school.

HF: Had you gotten your high school, completed your high school education at Ricks?

BH: No, I graduated from Salt Lake and had started school at Ricks the following winter in 1923. And so I had my degree, and was able to teach up there.

HF: Now you were a single woman at this time.

BH: Yes, I was only about seventeen when I went up there to take that school. And I had a student there that was older than I was. But we got along real well, I had fourteen students. It was a nice school and the children were cooperative and aided a great deal and we enjoyed it.

HF: Was it a two room school?
BH: No, it was only one; I had from grade one to grade eight.

HF: And you were the only teacher?

BH: And I was the only one out there.

HF: And who employed you?

BH: Well, it was some trustees, there was Morass Lanemaker was one of the trustees and I think he lived here in Rexburg when he passed away, he and his mother. And there was Mr. Harriman and anyway it was done by this board of trustees. And of course they said, well we have a little young flapper up here to teach the school. And I imagine she might last a day or two. But I survived and I was invited back to next year but I didn’t take it. I came down to the valley then.

HF: Now at that point I am going to ask you to tell me a little about the description of the school. It was located at Canyon Creek, the building was only east side of the Canyon wasn’t it?

BH: Yes, I think that building is still standing and I think most people know all about it. Because on the way to the Green Canyon Springs, you have to pass down in that Canyon.

HF: Did you live right at the school?

BH: No, I boarded about, well quite a ways from there first. But then the snow began to get deep and so about the only way I had to get in to school was walking and so I will hang onto the fence in order not be blown off the road or something. And sometime, I know we had to wear a veil over my face in order to make it and it was quite a change for a girl that had been in Salt Lake all the time.

HF: Tremendous. How did you get along with those big brossers? Some of those big boys?

BH: Well, we got along fine. I tried to make friends of them and they were especially nice to me. The only one time I remember, I noticed them crowding together and enjoying themselves or laughing and talking and in recess and when I came in little later at noon with my bell in my hand. One of them picked up the waist paper basket and put it on my head and all the papers came tumbling down on me. But…and of course immediately told them to get to their seats and get busy and then I saw how disappointed they looked and everything seems so gloomy. And I found out they were having a surprise party on me but I wasn’t used to those kind. But we got along fine and had a nice time.

HF: What was your salary per month?
BH: I received a hundred dollars. And it was only; no it wasn’t a full eight months school at that time.

HF: So hundred dollars a month is what you received?

BH: Yes.

HF: And do you recall what subjects were available in Utah?

BH: Well, we had most of the subjects and it was from the first grade on to the eighth. I think I had students in most of the grades.

HF: And all in one room.

BH: Yes, and I would have the oldest students help some of the younger ones with reading problem that they had and we got along really well I thought.

HF: Ok. Where did you teach? Where was your second assignment to teach?

BH: From there I came to Hibbard. Hibbard needed a teacher at that time. And my cousin who taught up at Breezy Point which was about Canyon Creeks away, she was my friend and companion through that winter. Well, she had a job down in the valley and so she advised me to come down because she knew the people in Hibbard. And that is where I got acquainted with my husband. That year in that week.

HF: Now that would have been in the fall of ’24, 1924.

BH: ’24.

HF: And what class did you teach or which grades did you teach there at Hibbard?

BH: I had the third, fourth, and fifth grades. Three in one room.

HF: You recall who your employer was that winter? Who would actually, was it the trustees?

BH: Yes the trustees.

HF: Of that district?

BH: Of that district hired us. And I don’t remember just who they were. I know Robert Priest was one of them but the other two I don’t recall.

HF: Was the district given a number at that time?

BH: It may have been but I don’t remember.
HF: You don’t remember but it was at Herbert?

BH: Yes.

HF: What can you tell me about the school itself, physical structures?

BH: They have a nice school. It hadn’t been built too long before. And do you remember Elmer when it was built?

Elmer Hendricks: It was about ’22 or ’3. And the present building is there.

HF: Was it a log building Elmer? This is her husband.

EH: No, it’s a brick building, new in the Tetonia area. It is a building that still stands there and regarded as being used at the present time. They’ve added to it some in the last few years. But it is the same that stands there.

HF: And it is still used today.

EH: Yes.

HF: Now at that time, was it just a two room maybe?

BH: No, it was a four room school.

EH: Gymnasium hall.

HF: I see, well that must have been a nice school.

BH: It was a quite a change from what we had up at Canyon Creek

HF: Now the second, the third place for Utah, incidentally how many years did you teach there at the Hibbard school?

BH: Well, I taught two and then we were married and I didn’t teach, well I did go back when Anthony and Greg Romney were there. Greg Romney was teaching the upper grade there and she had her family, started having her family and so they came back for me to go and finish her work, which I did. And then I laid off for a while when my family came along. And went back again when the war was on, because I couldn’t get to choose and they came over for me to go to Plano to teach and be principal over there.

HF: Was that the Edmonds?

BF: Yes, well it was Plano had a school later on.
HF: And it was a district school, elementary school?

BH: Yes.

HF: I see. Who employed you at that time?

BH: Well, it was Joe Pamsly, he was one of the trustees and I think he was one that came over for me.

HF: Who taught with you with those years?

BH: Genevieve Surrey. That is Leroy Surrey’s wife from Hibbard and she took the lower grade, the first four lower grades and I took from the fifth to the eighth and we taught for that year over there. And we were only going to have to teach for six weeks, they said the men will be out on the field and they would be able to put them to taking the school when the war was over. But it went on ‘til next year which we took and then they want me back at Hibbard again and so I went back and kept teaching at Hibbard again.

HF: So how many years actually did you teach at Plano?

BH: Well, I taught two years at Plano.

HF: Right during the war or after the war?

BH: Yes.

HF: Then you went back again to Hibbard where you had been?

BH: And I taught there for about two years whilst I was there. But then Mr. George Cartmore was superintending the schools and he came and wants me to come in to Rexburg which I did then and taught then in Rexburg from then on.

HF: What date would that have been? What years would that have been?

BH: Well, I probably would have to look that up.

HF: Now who was the superintendent of the school before Mr. Cartmore?

BH: I think it was Limon was and Willis Nelson, they…, I think when I was out in Plano and then it was Nelson I know was superintendent in here for quite some time.

HF: Now Brother Stucki was before those fellows, wasn’t he?

BH: I think he was.
HF: Now, when you commenced to teach here in Rexburg upon the invitation and employment of the school district, which school were you assigned to in Rexburg?

BH: Oh, I went into the Washington school.

HF: To the Washington school and what grade?

BH: I had the fourth grade here.

HF: Did you find this somewhat different from what it was out in Hibbard?

BH: Well, of course here I only had one grade. There I had two sometimes three grades and I enjoyed it. And here the boys and girls wherever I have been seem to me to have been real cooperative and we’ve enjoyed putting on plays. I try to make school work enjoyable to them because I felt like they did better especially the history part. We would put on plays at Louis and Clark coming into Idaho and…and the boys and girls now when they meet me, they tell me how they enjoyed those little plays which we did.

HF: Taught dancing?

BH: Yes, and then I taught that they should all be able to put their arm on a boy and be able to do likewise with the boy without being frightened so badly and so we’d have little mixers in our dancing and they enjoyed them although some of them for sometime act like they didn’t.

HF: Social dancing?

BH: Yes, they were more socially and mixing of the group and the Washington school, we would put them on up in the old auditorium and it was plenty of room and plenty of fun. And then when they brought the upper grades up to Hibbard from in town here that one year. Where they’d have more available room I taught dancing to them and we had a good time and I am sure they did too and we didn’t use any of our time from our studies. We, we’d sometimes even do it the… likewise fit it in somewhere or didn’t feel it, it took from our other school work.

HF: Who was the principle those years at the Washington elementary school?

BH: Well, Mark Peterson was, not Mark Peterson but Mark Anderson was for a while and then when we transferred to the Kennedy school when they built that new building, why Mr. Robert Peterson took over and then there was Gilbert Loss.

HF: He took over as the what?

BH: He became principal at the Kennedy.

HF: Oh, at the Kennedy. Mark continued to stay there in Washington.
BH: Yes, I think Mark was still there.

HF: And Robert Peterson became the principal at the new school at Kennedy.

BH: And then Gilbert McKinley was principal down there too while I was there.

HF: At the Kennedy school?

BH: Yes, and I think Bob Peterson went up to be the junior high principal.

HF: At that time.

BH: We had Mr. Daring from Sugar City was principal too down there at Kennedy school.

HF: Now I suppose being the newest there at Kennedy, it was also equipped with the finest and the latest facilities was it not?

BH: Yes it was. We had everything we felt like that we needed. Of course it wasn’t like they are in our days but at the same time it was ample for us then and we were really happy and thrilled about it.

HF: Now was this the last place you taught, was it Kennedy?

BH: Yes.

HF: You finished your teaching career at Kennedy?

BH: I finished there in 1970 and…

HF: And how many years have that made that you taught?

BH: That made thirty-one years of teaching from the time I started up to Canyon Creek.

HF: And you had a few years out of that where you were having your family?

BH: Yes.

HF: But thirty-one years, it covered a thirty-one year span. I see, but as you look back over your teaching career, Sister Hendricks, are there any amusing experiences that you would like to mention, any disciplinary problems that you had with the youngsters? How would you like to respond to that question?

BH: Of course when I started there at Hibbard, I sometimes the boys would come in slides in the winter, snow was deep and we had cold winters like we do here now. But
anyway I remember one of the big boys, he walked in my rooms and through the windows opened every window in the room. He had opened as I walked in there it was so cold and I asked the boys and girls that it was after school, who did it. And they told me and I knew he was lots bigger than I was. But when I name in the hall, I said why were all those windows opened for, you go put them down, I couldn’t even pull them down they were up so high. And he has it for quite a while but I looked him straight in the eye and he knew I meant what I said. So pretty soon he walked in and pulled them down and it was but as hard to get them open again as it was just to pull them down that first time he slammed them down so hard but I didn’t let it bother me very much whether the size of them because I felt it in me that when I want them to do something, they did it. But they were pretty good kids but I don’t know. I enjoyed and took the funny side of it if I could and they seem pretty good and I know I had one or two that liked to play basketball, can see them on some of the teams now and they liked it so well that they would take their ball as they thought I wasn’t watching as they bounce it and back up in their basketball. But there is some of their stars now playing ball so I won’t mention their names.

HF: What were some of the academic problems that you were challenged with, say for example boys and girls not being able to read even though they were in the seventh or eighth grade? How did you handle and how did you try to cope with that situation?

BH: Well, you would always have good readers and poor readers it seems like. And so I let those who could read real well sometimes take and listen to some of the ones that were having problems and read over their lessons while we were doing some of the other work. And that way I knew that they had to do their lessons.

HF: Do you feel sometimes that the methods of teaching today go counter your philosophy?

BH: Well, I can’t say that they do, I think they are trying in their way to give the best they can, the same as we did with what we had we use the best method we could think of. I know one time the students, this is when I first taught that first year, challenged me to a game of arithmetic are to having a race with one of my students who the was an expert at math, and I was a little frightened because I knew that she just seemed to have the quality of being able to grasp the answers to numbers so quickly and I thought, now if I make a mistake, they are all going to laugh about it. And if I don’t accept the challenge, they think I am afraid of her, which I was. But anyways they wrote a lot of list of numbers on the board and had a race to see who can add them the fastest and I am sure the good Lord was with them because I beat her and got the correct answer and I’ve always been for it because I think it left quite an impression with the students.

HF: I’ve noted down through my years of observation that it seems like in the early schools, the rural schools they stressed spelling quite a lot.

BH: We had several spelling matches, and spelling B’s and some of the fun things we did. And I think I become better spellers than we are today because I think that isn’t stressed
quite enough. And I think maybe we are all more or less inclined to feel or well, I will get someone to do my typing and it doesn’t make much difference and I will hire one of the professors. I am not so concerned about whether I spell or write as well as they use to remember with the penmanship how we use to make the little circles all across the board and get our arms in motion. And he said because I can hire me a typist for so much, I forget all about that.

HF: But learning how to read phonetically, learning how to be a good penman and how to spell. These were stressed a lot weren’t they in those days?

BH: They were, they really were and I think it tells right now you can see some of those old timers did a lot of that, you can tell the difference. They have more movement to their arms and can really do some beautiful work because of it.

HF: Now is there one male teacher and one female teacher that you look back upon as being a great inspiration to you in your teaching or maybe in your formative years of preparing to teach? Can you select one of each who has been an inspiration to you?

BH: Well, that’s sort of difficult too, because I know that there have been some mighty faithful teachers and I know and I thought of Edna Whilewright although she is passed away, that she dedicated a lot of her time and was real faithful and all those teachers that I taught along with I felt the same way about them. Mrs. Genevieve Surrey, she spent a lot of her own time at home and working with different students. And I don’t know and I hate to point one out because I felt like every teacher I worked and I know Bob Person certainly handled his students none of them got away from him and that for sure. And he was pal with them and I think that is one thing you have to be and not let them get away from you. And I don’t know of course getting my schooling in Salt Lake have and I was under Brother Havre B. Mar and for some of my classes.

HF: He became the governor didn’t he?

BH: Yes, and I always admire him and appreciate him and I remember he came up here years after I’ve graduated and three of them when he remembered me and knew me. And I think that is one thing a teacher should do is try to remember some of the students that they’ve had.

HF: Do you wait to find out one or two students that have gone on of whom you are so proud and that fact that you were once a teacher of it?

BH: We were not thinking carefully over these things for so many years so I made a recall that I am proud of all of them that have gone forward. And right now, yes.

HF: The Larson’s showed up.

BH: The Larson’s children, I am proud of them because there were so many of them…
HF: Kip Larson.

BH: Kip Larson and I think I had nearly all of them and they were all over fine caliber, wanting to do their best and never causing any trouble. Then I know that, there is…, well I have to think about it because they are all about the same.

EH: I think she has established a real reputation in the life for these students because many of them wherever we go young folks are one of your students, do you remember me? Some of them are…make you think for a while or they mention their names and she can recall some of their interests and things that she enjoyed in school and I’ve been a president and member wherever we go she is meeting someone or clear across the street, hello Mrs. Hendricks.

HF: Isn’t that fun? I think that is really super. Well, I want to thank for your comments and contribution that you make as a matter today.