

Dr. David L. Crowder Oral History Project

Charles Orrin Douglass –The Depression in Idaho

By Charles Orrin Douglas

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Box 1 Folder 32

Oral Interview conducted by Jim Douglass

Transcribed by Victor Ukorebi May 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

I am Jim Douglass. Today is March 31, 1974. I am going to interview Charles Orin Douglass. The general topic will be the Depression.

Jim Douglas (JD): Mr. Douglass, where were you born?

Charles Orrin Douglas (COD): Smithfield, Utah.

JD: Where were your parents born?

COD: My mother was born in Chicago, and Dad was born in Smithfield.

JD: What is your occupation?

COD: Farming, musician.

JD: How old were you at the time of the Depression?

COD: About twenty-five.

JD: Where were you living at the time of the Depression?

COD: Cache in Teton Valley.

JD: What were some of the jobs you worked for?

COD: Worked on the section, for the railroad, the government on different projects on the water line in the valley here.

JD: What was the pay you received for your services?

COD: Twenty dollars a month.

JD: What were some of the things in which you bought and what did you pay for them?

COD: Well, we never bought much of anything, I'll tell you, because we didn't have nothing to buy it with. We bought our flour and our groceries, and we got that mostly from selling cream. We'd ship it to Salt Lake, then probably wait a week to get our pay, and ten gallon of cream would bring us about five or six dollars.

JD: When you sold something, what other things did you sell that you got paid for? What about grain?

COD: We sold about maybe three hundred bushes, and we had to pay about two bits a sack for the sacks; and when it was all figured out, we got 75¢ a hundred.

JD: What did it seem that you raised everything that you had?

COD: Garden, we raised our garden-potatoes, pigs, chickens.

JD: You had your own milk cow? You said something about selling cows. What did you get for them?

COD: Well, I sold two cows, sold two milk cows to the government, and I got \$12 for one, \$13 for the other.

JD: Then you said something about they would buy the calves?

COD: They bought the calves, young calves, oh, probably four months old, and they would give \$14 a head, and then shoot them. You could do whatever you wanted to do with them.

JD: Did you have a car?

COD: We had a Model T, 26 Model, and we drove it up until the Depression started, and then we parked it for about a year on the count of not having any tires. Finally we sent to Montgomery for some old tires and put them on it, and after that we had a car pretty much of the time. Most of the travel was done with a team and what they called a Hoover Wagon. It was a rubber tires with a box on, and that is the way we went to town and everywhere we went. Most everybody had one.

JD: Did you buy any land during the depression?

COD: Yes, I bought a hundred acres. I went to the county clerk about buying a piece of ground come up for tax deed. I wanted to rent it, and he said why don't you buy it. He said you rustle me up \$25, and you've bought a ranch, the ranch consisted of one hundred acres, farming ground, so I worked every crock and hoack in the world to get \$25, and I bought the ranch. It had been advertised for sale of taxes, and nobody would bid on it, so I got it and still own it today. It is raised in valuation from about \$600 when I paid for it to about \$500 an acre. This place that I bought, when I bought it, the taxes were \$12 a year, and now the taxes were \$200 and some cents.

JD: How did you compare to the other people around here?

COD: Well, we made a living and that was all, and you couldn't borrow no money. Banks eventually went busted, and what money people had in the banks, them that was lucky to have any money in the bank, lost it and that was the sum and substance of the whole thing.

(Transcript breaks off at this point)