

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

Lorraine Wesley and Ruth Hertzig  
Daniels- Experiences of the  
Depression

By Lorraine Wesley and Ruth Hertzig Daniels

Spring 1984

Box 1 Folder 27

Oral Interview conducted by Mikel Walker

Transcribed by Sarah McCoristin    January 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

This is an oral history. I am Mikel Walker. Today, March 30, 1976, I am going to interview Loraine Wesley and Ruth Hertzig Daniels. The general topic will be life during the depression.

Mikel Walker: Mr. and Mrs. Daniels, where were you born? Mr. Daniels?

Loraine Wesley Daniels: Independence, Madison County.

MW: Mrs. Daniels?

Ruth Herzig Daniels: I was born in Rexburg, Madison County.

MW: How long have you lived in Rexburg.

LD: Practically all of my life.

RD: The same here.

MW: where were you parents born, Mr. Daniels?

LD: My father was born in Logan, Utah, of Swiss parents; and my mother was born in a little town outside of Berlin, Germany.

MW: What was your occupation during the Depression, Mr. Daniels?

LD: I was living on a farm. I had no occupation really, I wasn't married.

MW: Mrs. Daniels?

RD: I was living on a farm just outside of Rexburg, during that time.

MW: Maybe both together could you kind of give us an idea how life was during the Depression, say through your childhood while you were living on these farms?

LW: I guess the Depression didn't hit us quite no where as near as hard as it did several people. We were living on a farm where we grew most of our vegetables and our meat, milk, chickens, such as that. Although with the flour situation, to buy fifty pounds of flour you had to take a substitute which was mostly composed of Barley flour. To have a loaf of white bread made was almost like the best cake. We used Barley flour so much in bread and cakes, and such as that.

RD: Well, we didn't have quite as hard of a time. We were living on a big ranch. The owner of the ranch had access to more abundant things than most of the farmers around the country had. So I really didn't feel the pinch of the Depression as much as the majority of the farmers around the country.

MW: OK. How was the other farmers around the area? How was their livestock situation, the feeding for the livestock and such?

LW: Livestock was very cheap. Course, feed wasn't so high except at one time. Hwy was fifty dollars a ton. Cattle were selling for about twenty dollars for a right nice animal up to about nine hundred to a thousand pounds. Hogs were two, I believe it was even two and a half. Two and a half was top price and it seemed like it was down to as low as two and a quarter. Father sold five early spring calves which were mostly all dern. Sold five of them late in the fall for forty-five dollars to pay his taxes with. Wages at that time, as I remember, were a dollar to a dollar and a half a day, that was from nine to ten hours in the fields working very hard. By the month, as I remember, was fifteen dollars a month and board. For thinning beets, it was seven dollars an acre. Hoeing, as I remember, was two and a half to three dollars an acre.

MW: Mrs. Daniels, did this person you lived with, this county employee, did he seem to suffer wage wise?

RD: No, I don't think you would call it suffering. He had a herd of cattle and he had about five bands of sheep besides being the county accessor. So I really don't think he suffered money wise or any other wise. But he was a marvelous man. He was willing to share with anybody that came that needed it.

MW: OK. Did the crop seem to be down or was it about normal?

LD: Crops in those days especially here in the valley, we never did have a crop failure and, as I remember, crops were fairly good. Course, nearly all farming, I guess all farming as I remember, was with horses. So it don't' seem like they farmed as many acres. Well, they didn't' tin those days, they just couldn't do it with the horses.

The time we were married, 1933, was I guess that was the second Depression we were going through. We had a hundred and fifty dollars when we got married, which was I think pretty good at that time, but you couldn't get a job. So my wife and myself went out and thinned beets. Finally the PWA got started pretty good and I got on there and worked for a while as a car salesman, and a grease monkey as you might call them. As I remember, which was a good wage at that time, I got sixty dollars a month, but I had to pay it for rent, thirty dollars. So that left thirty dollars for me and my wife to live on. But we cinched through alright. Never went hungry.

RD: We also had a baby at that time. We had two children.

LD: Ya, and we also had two children, but we survived. Through managing and watching our pennies, we got by all right.

MW: OK, what was the price of grain during the Depression?

LW: As I remember, barley was thirty-five cents a hundred, and wheat was seventy cents. I believe that's all.

OK, thank you very much. This tape will be placed in the library at Ricks College for use by future researchers. Thank you very much.