Interview conducted by Belle Grimsley; Recorded on Marantz 660 Digital Recorder; Transcribed by Bill Smith

Track 3

Belle: My name is Belle Grimsley. I am doing the interviewing for the Flint Hills program today. I am interviewing Ken and Shirley McClintock, from Council Grove. This is Sunday, April 15, 2007. It is three o’clock and we are in the Terwilliger House, which is Council Grove, at the western edge. This is part of the Flint Hills Ranching Oral History Project. The first person is … will you tell me your name?

Shirley: My name is Shirley McClintock.

Belle: What year were you born, Shirley?

Shirley: I was born February 28, 1942.

Belle: Where were you born?

Shirley: I was born in Bedford, Iowa.

Belle: And our other subject is…

Ken: I am Ken McClintock, Kenneth McClintock, and I was born in 1943, here in Council Grove, Kansas.

Belle: So you have lived here your entire life.

Ken: Yes.

Belle: OK, where do live now, Shirley?

Shirley: I live in Council Grove, and have since 1973.

Belle: Since 1973… Ok, and how about you, Ken?

Ken: I’ve lived here my whole life-time. In fact, all eight of my great-grandparents lived in this county before 1900. They came in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. So we have been here ever since.

Belle: Alright. [Pause] Shirley, what occupation have you pursued throughout the years?
Shirley: I was a schoolteacher, in Dodge City, Kansas, a special reading teacher, and then moved here in 1973. I was a special reading teacher here, in the outlying schools, which were rural students. Then, I quit teaching to raise our two sons. Then, I went back to substitute teaching for a few years. And then I worked at the Hays House for a brief time, and the Cottage House, for about four years. Then, I helped my husband in his law office, and then, since 1994, I have been working on the project here at Maple Camp. So, this has occupied my whole being since 1994, this project right here.

Belle: What is the project? Can you expand a little bit on the Maple Camp project?

Shirley: Yes. First of all, it was in danger, in 1994, of being demolished. The stone house that we are in, the Terwilliger home, was in danger of being bull-dozed down. Then, there were going to be more trailer houses moved in here and it was going to be another kind of business that would not have been historic. So, without any backing or support from anybody, except the good Lord, I took on to save this property. It was in terrible condition, very dilapidated, trash all over, weeds growing everywhere. A pretty sorry sight, and everybody thought I was crazy to do this, but I just stepped out in faith. I had tried to get someone else to do the project, but no one would. So, it was either do it or watch it go down. I couldn’t in my heart watch it go down, so I tried to gather together enough money to satisfy the owners for a down payment. There were the two trailer houses on the property that had a little bit of rent coming in. I got a couple of commitments each month - maybe three commitments - that we could barely scratch by. The owners were willing to go the loan for a ten percent interest so I managed to prevent it from being destroyed. Then I did shows at the theater that included people in the whole area, surrounding towns, for talent in the shows. We did multi-media shows where we did slides of stars of different decades. We did, first of all, the 1950s, we did a Christmas show,

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Shirley: the 20s, the teens, the 1970s, different decades; I did eight shows total, two a year, for four years. The last one I did was 1998. These shows were done to raise funds for this project. And then, we received some estates for a few donations, and crippled by, and then, finally, a lady by the name of Hazel Torgeson left us her estate and that helped us get this project on its feet. And because she was a school teacher all her life, and had taught school all her life, in her honor we moved in a country school. We had started this search for a country school just one week after a gentleman from White City… I’m trying to think of his name… he had just finished research on country schools in Morris County. And his project had been donated to the Historical Society just one week before I started this search. So here was all the information on the country schools in our county and one by one we searched them out. And, they were either out in the country in such bad condition and there wasn’t much we could do with them, or, if they were in good condition, people that had them didn’t want to part with them. So, we were kind of down to the end of things, and there was this one near the Chase County - Morris County line,
just barely into Morris County, that looked pretty bad in the picture, but we went to look
at it. It didn’t look very good, but inside it was full of junk and storage. It was on
Mashed-O Ranch. They had stored things in it, everything from fertilizer to old doors and
windows. It was just full of stuff. Rat fill stuff was about four inches thick on every
window sill. There were overstuffed chairs in there that they were having lots of fun with.
Coons had been in there having lots of fun. So, it was in pretty bad shape, it looked like.
But when we stomped our feet on the floor, it was pretty solid. And, we were kind of
amazed that it was in the solid condition it was because, the doors of that school closed in
1945-1946. That was the last school year, and that was quite a while. And, one of the
teachers, former teachers… let’s see… remember her name?

Ken: Minnie Wilkerson?

Shirley: No, no… anyway, she had a farm not far from this, lived on a farm, her husband
was a farmer. She was the teacher in this school, Field School…

Ken: Fern Greer.

Shirley: … ya, Mrs. Greer, Fern Greer. We interviewed her. She had kept Mashed-O
Ranch from moving the school off, or destroying it, anyway she would get after them to
take care of the school. That is kind of what saved it all these years. Who ever owned it,
she kind of looked after it! She was in the rest home, and no longer able to look after it. It
was starting to go downhill fast. So, we caught it just in time. So, the rain had just started
coming into it pretty badly in one corner – a lot of damage in one corner. But anyway, we
were able to move the school to Council Grove on the Maple Camp site, where we are
now, where the Terwilliger House is. The school… we made a foundation, so we were
able to preserve the school. Due to that, we have gone on a search for the history of the
school. It was actually built in the late 70s, early 80s, the original Field School. Then, in
about 1901, they had decided they needed a new school, so by 1902 they thought the old
school was too small, too drafty or something, and wasn’t suitable anymore. So they built
this one in 1902. They built it just west of the original school. You can see the original
site, when you go down the road west from highway 177, there’s a turn there. There’s a
huge bend, this road goes west just where that bend is. There’s kind of a hay shelter on
the east side of 177 and this road on the west side. You’ll come to the site, and there is a
few trees…

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Shirley: …you can see where the original school was, and then you go down the road,
and there’s a corner, and right on that corner is where this school was built. And, it could
be the fencing is still there and you could still possibly see where the foundation was,
unless they plowed it over. Anyway, we saved that school building, and hopefully its
history. We interviewed some of the teachers and students. They are now deceased. So,
we caught them just in time. They had some kind of vivid memories. It’s interesting that
they had such vivid memories during World War II of Herington Air Base personnel flying their practice missions over the top of it. And they remember those bombers flying over the top of that school all throughout the war. They said it was an exact time, every day that it happened. And then it closed at the end of the war. Interestingly enough, we placed it right between the 40s cabin that we have, which was built for Herington Air Base personnel here on Maple Camp. We have a 1940s … ’43 cabin that was built for Herington Air Base personnel – because they couldn’t house all of them on the air base…so they… found housing for them in other places, and this was one of the places. There’d been three or four cabins but only one survives. And then, on the other side, interestingly enough is the Atkinson log house, which we saved. The Atkinson family were farmers, near Latimer. And, they had come here, the original Atkinsons had come here, in 1857 and 8, and built the house in ’58, the log house. It is a two story house, and… the family donated it to Historic Preservation Corporation, which is the owner of Maple Camp and everything here – Terwilliger Home and all those structures. We have six structures here, this log house being one of them. We enclosed it in a barn because there were barns around this Terwilliger Home. The log house has no windows or doors or roof, but … or chinking in the logs. The logs were a mixture of lumber. It would be a typical log house for a farmer in the Flint Hills. There were thirteen in the family, but they housed many other people as they came out west. The Atkinsons allowed many other people who were coming out to settle in that area, on Clark’s Creek, near Latimer, to live with them until they could build their log house. So log houses were a lot of the original structures. They were crude. Some of them especially that were built during the time of the 1856 era, east of here, were built very fast because the South was moving in, the North was moving in and they were building these cabins very fast in order to establish Kansas as either a North or a South state. And then, because there was not a lot of law and order here at that time, the Southerners would burn the Northerner’s cabins, and kill all the men and boys that were old enough to fight; and then the other side would turn around and do it to them. They were doing it, North and South both, doing this. So it was pretty hard to do any farming or anything during that period of time, until Governor Robinson and some men went together, Sam Wood being one of them, and they formed a militia. And this allowed people to do a little bit of farming at that point because that provided some law and order. And then I researched Lucy Goddard Hill. This gets into her period of time. She came here in 1856, along with her two brothers…who I believe to be her two brothers. One was Elisha Goddard, married to Mary Goddard; and George Thatcher, a brother, and he farmed what would be right where Dunlap is right now. And, her brother, Elisha, farmed where Rock Creek enters into the Neosho River. That’s not where it enters now, because the river, through floods and things, has changed… but it… I believe it is on the Moxley Ranch.

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Shirley: Moxley owns that section, we think, where they lived. There is a windmill, as you go down the Dunlap road, the windmill is still there. Tom Moxley has plowed and dug up stones and things from that field which he believes probably there was a stone
foundation or a stone barn in that area. Later, the Linns built a house which would be
south of there. We’ve seen a picture of the Linn’s home that was on that area. It was, I
believe, was it a stone home? Or a wood frame?

Ken: I don’t remember.

Shirley: There were stone homes.. the farmers of the Flint Hills built stone homes…
wood frame homes… some of them with ginger bread porches, and fancy looking homes.
Some were built very simple, just log structures, like the Atkinson log house we have
here on Maple Camp. So there was a whole variety of things. Now this was right on the
Kaw Reserve and they were criticized. I’ve read articles in the Kansas Press… the
newspaper put out by Emporia… that they were criticized, the Goddards, for settling on
the Kaw Reserve. They were right among the Indians. The Goddard homestead was used
as a Post Office. That was not that uncommon. There were Post Offices all over, when
you read the records, there were many homes that were used as post offices. And the
Goddard home was used as one. And that was the site of the unfortunate happenings for
Americus, where they lost their county seat simply due to the illness of the gentleman
that was to carry the petition for it to Topeka. He became ill, and he stopped at the
Goddard’s home. Along came, unknown to them, the gentleman that was coming to
present the Emporia petition to Topeka. Not knowing who he was, they let him carry the
Americus petition to Topeka for them, since the other guy was ill. Well, as it turns out, of
course, it never got carried to Topeka, only the Emporia one did. And, that all took place
at the Goddard home. The Indian huts are described as being such and such distance from
the Goddard fields, for fences. So, they were right among the Kansa Indians, living right
with them. I don’t know what the relationship was, but I do know they named the Post
Office “Decora” which is a name in Iowa with the Sac and Fox Reserve, that was the
Indian Agency in Iowa - called Decora. So, whether they were involved with the Sac and
Fox… I know that just up the road from them eight miles, was A.I. Baker, who was
involved with the Sac and Fox. He was a blacksmith with them, in the 1850s…, ‘40s and
‘50s…and they were close friends. He had built a home on Rock Creek. And, just east of
him, was the Andersons. This is the famous “Bloody Bill” Anderson and Jim Anderson.
They were both doing trade on the trail. Now as to the farming at that time, or the
ranching, I’m not sure. I’ve seen a map of 1860, and where the fields, plowed fields
were… and it does not show any with the Goddard, at least Elisha Goddard; now there
may be with George Thatcher who was closer to Dunlap, because there was a plowed
field close to Dunlap, what is now the town of Dunlap. I do know he had prairie hay.
Elisha Goddard was the first sheriff of the area. He had to cover a three county area as
sheriff. And I believe, as far as I have researched, he was, probably other these militia
that Governor Robinson established in 1856-7, after all the 1855 and 56 happenings of
burning cabins and killings that were taking place, and they started the militia. Then I
believe

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Shirley: that Goddard would have been the first actual Sheriff elected and Judge Baker was the first Judge. It is said in the paper that there was a flood in 1858, and George Thatcher unfortunately died of consumption, which we believe is probably tuberculosis. That was the flood year, and, in fact, it said that it washed furniture right out of Judge Baker’s home. Of course, he was on Rock Creek, and it washed the furniture right out of his house. But then there was a big prairie fire that came through in 1858 after Elisha was elected Sheriff, and was ranching, or at least you would assume so since it describes that 20 tons of his hay was burned up in this prairie fire. He then resigned his position as Sheriff due to the overwhelming circumstances… having lost his hay, and was in dire condition. So, he resigned as Sheriff. So, such were the difficulties of the early settlers, who were trying to ranch or farm or whatever they were faced with. The Neosho River, which runs right through the Flint Hills here, and Rock Creek which enters into it, were either flooding or drought. Then you had your prairie fires coming through… the grasses were tall… and those fires were huge. I’m sure they were terrifying. I’m sure the skies… it was just a horrific thing to see them coming. It would be pretty difficult… I think what they did, actually, was set backfires to keep their home safe, at least, from these prairie fires. They wet things down, if they were near a river. But it was difficult. During my research, I did interview Ruby Thomas who lived in this area as a young girl; this would be a later period of time. But, she described the flood times when she was going to town with her mother. She was riding in a wagon. She remembered… they were riding along the river. She remembered how scary it was. They were so close to the water. It was flooded, the river was, and she described how terrifying it was, riding along in the buggy, bouncing around, going to Dunlap town. So this flood problem carries even into today, in that area, where Rock Creek and the Neosho River have “King of the Land” you might say. They have the power to affect the farming and ranching that takes place in that area. Lucy Goddard, her live was horribly affected, as all people in this area, by the Civil War. When it broke out, most of the men, actually two-thirds of the men in the State of Kansas, volunteered in service to the Civil War. It also affected the Indians - the Kanza and the Osage - were scouts. Some of the Osage were scouts for the southerners, but most of them were scouts for the northern side. The 9th Kansas Cavalry, the men in this house, the Terwilliger Home here, one of them was the son-in-law of the Rawlinsons, who built the original part of the house here. Their son-in-law was in the 9th Kansas and their son, James, who was twenty, fought in the 8th Kansas Infantry along with George Alexander who was living with the Rawlinsons. He was 45 years old, and we do not know what the relationship was, but he was a gardener, interestingly enough. This was his occupation in England, where he came from, he was a gardener. We think that he did something to save the lives of the Kanza during the drought.

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Shirley: of 1860. That was a horrible time here, for all of the people trying to work the land, or raise cattle, or whatever they were trying to do. Because, in that day and time, there were not stores to buy goods from; you had to grow it yourself. That year, there were none grown, there was no food at all. If the Sunday School classes or the relief
groups from back east had not sent food out here, many of them would have starved to death. The Kanza were already starving… the Kanza Indians. So, they would come to the back doors of the settlers and beg for food. They had none to give them. So, they were in very horrible condition, at that time. So, we are thinking that this George Alexander did something to help them. This is our educated guess. Then, he died during the Civil War, of disease. We think the Kanza Indians came here, to this house. It would have been the Rawlinson’s house at that time. The back door had a two inch thick solid walnut lining [casing], which would have been on the outside part of the door. There, they cut into it a memorial to George Alexander. We think that his had to do with agriculture in that… we think he saved their lives, some how, through his agricultural skills. This is an educated guess. This is not based on any information we have as far as eye witnesses or written accounts. It’s our educated guess from information we’ve collected and pieced it together like a puzzle as to what might have happened. [Chime in background] We think that George, when he died, and they came and made this memorial to him, cut into the wood on the back door [casing] of this house.

Belle: OK, Shirley, that is an excellent explanation of history for quite some time here. We’ll give you a break. Let’s talk to Ken for a little bit.

Ken: OK.

Belle: Ken, what can you tell us about your occupation, former occupation. I think you retired.

Ken: I retired. I’m an attorney, here in Council Grove. I was in the Army Judge Advocate General Corps, from ‘68 to ‘72. Then I owned a private practice here, in ’72, when I got out of the army. I was County Attorney for a while. I retired from the attorney business in 2006. Now I assist full-time out here at the Trail Days Bakery Café, located in the 1861 Terwilliger Home. I grew up here in Council Grove. My father had a gas station, a farm implement dealership, a car dealership, sold some other things as well, during my childhood years. So, I had some association with the farming business, although I did not live on a farm. I’m the first generation of my family that did not grow up on a farm. My ancestors were all farmers, and, as I mentioned before, all eight of my grandparents and their children moved to this county in the 1870s, ‘80s, and ‘90s. My parents both grew up here. My grandparents lived here. One set of grandparents moved to Salina. We’re pretty well rooted here in Council Grove. After my father and uncle left the farm in 1939 to go into business for themselves they happened to have a Texaco station here in the Terwilliger Home – it was a gas station at that time. And then they had a Skelly station which continued through the war. After World War II, they took on the Massey-Harris farm implement franchise, Dodge-Plymouth agency, and their business was located in several different locations, the last of which would be a block west of where we are sitting right now. In 1947, they built a new building to house the dealership. I spent many years out there, helping in the parts department, the service department, selling combine parts on July 4th, when they’re harvesting the wheat, and so forth. My
dad, and uncle and grandfather were partners in the McClintock Motor Company. They had the Massey-Harris franchise until about 1966 or so when they gave it up. The name had changed to Massey-Ferguson, by that time.

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**Ken:** Farm implement dealerships have been in decline for many years. When I was a kid, there were five different farm implement dealerships here in Council Grove and now there have been none for several years. So, I remember spending a lot of time assembling farm machinery which would come in partially unassembled to be sold, going out on service calls, helping my father with that; also, with new cars, and so forth. I became very familiar with farm machinery, but operated very little of it. During the drought years in middle ‘50s the farm implement dealership, as well as the car dealership, was really struggling with the bad economy due to the drought years, which started in ’52 and lasted for several years. I know my dad told me that if that drought had lasted another year, he wasn’t sure that the business could have lasted that last year. He had to borrow a lot of money to keep going during those years. In the late ‘50s we undertook some custom hay baling. During the summer months, when I was probably in the eighth grade or a freshman in high school, I went out and ran the hay baler, on custom baling. So, I got the experience of dust and dirt, grime and heat, and sweat and so forth, of baling hay. So that is my farming experience, except for one year about that same time, my dad made arrangements with Dr. Bowers, who had a small acreage just northwest of town here. It might have been five, or six, or ten acres, or something, which we leased on a share crop basis. We planted milo and harvested it. I kept all the books. Kept track of how much the expenses were for seed and so forth. We harvested it, and split it up. We used the machinery we had at the farm implement dealership. I can remember when we were combining the milo, we ripped a canvas. I forget the terminology of it, but we ripped the canvas on it. The cost of replacing that canvas probably exceeded the profit, the net revenues, from the milo project. That was the only year I was involved farming, myself, personally. Another experience I had, directly related to ranching around here, was fighting prairie fires. My dad became a Council Grove volunteer fireman about 1946 and was on the fire department for probably about 45 or 50 years… when age finally catches up with you. Particularly during my upper grade school and high school years, I would go out with him on a lot of fire calls. We didn’t have a rural fire truck until about 1956. Up until that time, we just had one fire truck in town. There were no rural fire trucks anywhere in the county. A house just west of Council Grove burned, and they had to let it burn to the ground, because they couldn’t take the only fire truck outside the city limits. The city would have been liable had there had been a fire in town at the same time. So, that was the impetus for obtaining a rural fire truck. My dad, being the car dealer, truck dealer, and on the fire department staff, they sent him to find a used truck. As I recall, it was about a 1952 Dodge ton and a half or two ton truck that he found down in Wichita and brought it back. The city had an old trailer, a water tank trailer that they had used after the 1951 flood to wash down the streets. It had a thousand gallon tank on it. So we salvaged the thousand gallon tank off of that trailer and mounted it on the back of that
Dodge truck. I can remember spending a number of hours inside it, scrapping the rust off the inside walls; tarring it so it wouldn’t rust, and so forth. So, it was a nitty, gritty type of job. My father manufactured all the sheet metal to make all the framework and the sheeting on the sides of the truck. That was truck number two of the Council Grove Fire Department and it served for many years after that. They now have a half a dozen fire trucks. Once that truck was built, they started forming fire districts around the county.

Some fire

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Ken: districts contracted with Council Grove to furnish fire protection. Other fire districts got their own trucks. Today, we have a whole bunch of fire trucks. But, before the fire trucks, people had to depend on wet gunny sacks, and other means of fighting prairie fires. It was an uphill struggle. But, I can always recall a number of different instances where I went out with dad on the rural fire truck, sometimes fighting a house fire. When you have a house on fire in the middle of the county, you’re doing good to save anything. You can probably save the out-buildings that are close to it, if anything. You just can’t get there in time to save the structure. Nowadays, with fire trucks placed around the county, you have got a better chance at saving a house. But most of it would be prairie fires. Burning the Flint Hills is an important aspect of ranching but you need to burn it at the right time. When it is burning at the wrong time, you have got to get the fire put out. The rural fire truck that we had, dad had built a platform on the front of it with a hand rail, and put a fire hose on the front of the truck; had a platform and a fire hose on the back of the truck. So, there would be two of us, on each end of the truck, with a hose with a spray nozzle. We would drive along roughly parallel to the line of the fire, spraying it from both ends of the truck. You had to stay on the windward side of the fire so the fire wouldn’t come over the top of you. And I had one specific incident that I particularly remember, somewhere southeast of Council Grove. I was on the front hose, on the front of the truck, and we were driving along behind the fire putting it out. Then, the wind changed on us, and we were in the grassy portion, and so, the fire started popping up in front of us. The only chance we had was to go through the fire. Dad was driving the truck. As it went through the line of the fire, the engine faltered. I don’t know if it was the smoke, or whatever caused trouble; the engine wasn’t running, so it coughed, it hesitated and hesitated. I remember the fire coming over the top of us. It got so hot I turned my back to the fire and covered my face with my arms and so forth. Then the engine caught up, and we drove on through, and got on to the other side of it. But, as a result, I had my eyebrows singed, my hair on the front of my head was singed – and so I didn’t have much in the way of eyebrows for a while until they grew back out. So, that was one scary moment that I remember fighting fires. Other times, if I wasn’t on the truck, there was some of us would be out there with gunny sacks that you’d soak up with water and go around and moppin’ up little pockets that got missed or something. So, I spent quite a few hours fighting fires in high school and college.
Belle: OK. Were these prairie fires accidental or were these purposely set? Because I know that a lot of range burning, pasture burning goes on now.

Ken: Yes, you have several different causes. Sometimes people were legitimately burning their pastures but it got away from them, or it jumped the road, or the wind came up and they didn’t expect it, and it got going places they didn’t expect to go, so you’d get called out on that. You have some people that are fire bugs and just like going around and setting fires. So, you always have some of those. And, once in a while, the railroad would set one. You’d have a hot box, going down the tracks, and some sparks would fly off to the roadside. So you’d have fires set sometimes; like I say, you’d have a hotbox. I haven’t heard of hotboxes for years, but once in a long while, you’d see a train going down the track, and this ball of fire would be going round and round. Some bearing had burned out and set a whole bunch of fires along the railroad right-of-way. So there you had a lot of problems catchin’ up with all the little pockets of fire. And then, some of them are just accidental, you know, that people were burning trash and sparks got away; carelessly throwing cigarettes out of the car. So, some of those are accidental. The ones that really bother you is when people go out there and set them deliberately. There were quite a few fires over the years, still are, for that matter.

Belle: Well, were you called out at any time by the ranchers?

Ken: The fire calls would come in to the city, and then

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Ken: they would call my dad, or, whoever was on the fire department, and they’d decide who was going to take the truck out. If dad was taking it, and I was there, I’d tend to go along with him for the fun… such as it was… (laughter) So, I went to a number of fires here in town over the years, as well. I remember one fire on the edge of town. I was working out at the garage, and another gentleman who was working for my dad at that time in the body shop. He was on the fire department, as well, and there was a building just east of Council Grove, east of the city limits, there, that was on fire. We got the call. So he and I went down to get the rural truck to take it out, and he told me to go ahead and drive it. Nowadays, you wouldn’t think of doing something like that. Here I was, a high school student, not technically on the fire department. He said, “Oh, go ahead and drive it.” So, that was the only time I ever got to drive a fire truck with the siren sounding. And, we went out there and came up to the building, and the grass was on fire. We thought we had a grass fire to start with. We started putting out the grass fire. Then, we realized there was smoke coming out of the building. What happened was, the building was on fire which caught the grass on fire. There was no chance of saving the building anyway. It was on fire, from one end to the other; because it was deliberately set, as it turned out to be. The owner finally went to prison, served some time for that – for the insurance fraud. But, that was the time I got to drive the fire truck in a real setting. That had its own particular memory.
Belle: Well, you have done a lot of historical research on various characters from the Council Grove area, like Seth Hays from the famous Hays House.

Ken: Yes

Belle: Would you like to elaborate on that a little?

Ken: OK. I’ve kind of become the town historian. I might mention the house we are sitting in, the Terwilliger Home, originally was built by the Rawlinson family in 1861 and in 1870 Riley Terwilliger bought it and added on to it. We know it as the Terwilliger Home. He started with a ranch out in the southwest part of the county that he bought in 1859. It is now part of the Six Mile Ranch out there. He came to town shortly after that and he owned some other ranches down on Four Mile Creek. He had a ranch, at least farm land, northwest of Council Grove at one time, so he was in the farming and ranching business himself. While he was in Council Grove in the 1860s he had a livery stable. He also had a grain buying business at one time. He was on the Board of Directors of the first bank in town, in 1870, the Council Grove Savings Bank. So... and he dealt in cattle and so forth... so he had combination of farming, ranching, and Council Grove business interests. He was in Council Grove until about 1891 when he moved to Thomas Station, Utah. And so, the house we are sitting in was owned by a man who did a lot of farming and ranching, and farm-related businesses. [external buzzing sound comes on]

Shirley: The tradition is that the basement of this house was called his club room where he did all the business with the ranching, the trading, whether it be with the Indians, the other ranchers, or whoever. And he did gambling down there too. That’s what they say.

Ken: OK.

Shirley: So, he was kind of notorious, apparently, for that.

Ken: Right. You mentioned Seth Hays. I’ve done a good deal of research on him. I’ve portrayed him as a living history character. In very brief summary, Seth Hays was the great grandson of Daniel Boone, the Kentucky frontiersman. He came here in 1847 to establish a trading post... a log structure just west of the Neosho River crossing of the Santa Fe Trail. He was not in business for himself at that time he was an employee of Boone and Hamilton, a cousin and his partner, who had been trading with the Indians for years. Seth Hays was an Indian trader all of his life. Before coming to Council Grove, he had worked for the Chouteau Brothers on the Chouteau Trading Post on the Kanza, or Kaw, Reservation just west of Topeka. And they closed that in 1846, when they were going to relocate the Kaws to a new reservation. At that time, the location had not been determined, and Seth Hays was out of a job, so that is when his cousin and partner sent him down here to Council Grove to open a trading post on the Santa Fe Trail because it was
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Ken: such a prominent stop on the way. There wasn’t anybody here at that time, so he was the first settler and opened the tradin’ post here. So, he would have had a lot of business with the people who initially settled in this county. Of course, there wasn’t supposed to be anybody here until 1854, unless you were licensed to trade with the Indians or an employee of a licensee. So, it wasn’t until after 1854 that you started having legitimate settlement in the Council Grove area. And most of the early settlement in Morris County was around Council Grove, mostly in the Neosho River valley. Much of it was on the Kaw reservation, because there was some misunderstanding, deliberate or otherwise, as to where the boundaries of the Kaw reservation were. So, many of the people settling in the Neosho River valley, which was the most fertile part of the county, were settling on Indian land, and that created no end of problems there. By hindsight, it didn’t make a whole lot of sense locating the Kaw Reservation right smack dab on top of an international trade route. From Santa Fe to Independence, or Westport, the Santa Fe Trail cuts right through the middle of Morris County. So, you just had a built-in conflict between the settlers and travelers, and the Kaw Indians who were supposed to occupy the reservation here.

Shirley: We imagine it was pretty tough ranching and farming in those days because of all the interruptions of the war, the Indians, all the natural disasters that were occurring at that time. It was probably pretty tough.

Ken: Seth Hays would have been the first supplier of merchandise to the people who were settling in this area. The Chouteau Brothers followed up with their own store in 1848. It was a log structure, south and west of the Seth Hays trading post - Boone and Hamilton, I should say. They were here until about 1853 when they sold out. Later on, there were other traders here, Charles Withington, the firm of Northrup and Chick of Westport, Missouri built the Last Chance Store in 1857. It is normally credited to Tom Hill, who built the Last Chance Store. He later married Lucy, so Lucy Goddard Hill was his wife. Tom Hill is credited with building it. I’ve never found the proof, but I suspect that Tom Hill was the employee of Northrup and Chick. And, they had had a business in Council Grove for several years, built the stone building in 1857, which still stands and is known as the Last Chance Store because from here on to Santa Fe that was the last chance to buy supplies, except maybe for some small ranching operations along the way.

Shirley: At the time Lucy and Tom were there, it wasn’t called the Last Chance Store. It was later years that it was called the Last Chance Store.

Ken: Ya, I think that was just a nickname, it would have been Northrup and Chick

Shirley: Actually, he would have been there only a few months in 1857. In ’58, he built the big trading store downtown on the corner, just across from Seth Hays and actually
probably was probably the inspiration, or … out of competition, that Seth Hays then built the larger store. And, it says ‘57 on the Hays House, but that’s not accurate, it’s actually ‘58, because the other one was built first. The one where Hill, Munkres and Conn went together to build the big stone store on the corner which is now the Redbud Design, and Butler County [Community College] is in that building. And there was a big well in the middle of the street, going south, what would be now between the store I described and Farmers and Drovers Bank. Right in the middle of that street was a big well where the animals and the dogs and horses and the goats and the mules and the people and everybody got water out of that well. It was right on the Santa Fe Trail, so it was real vital to the whole area, that well was. There is one post card with a picture of that well and that is the only evidence we have of that besides some written accounts.

Ken: So, in 1858, James Munkres, Malcolm Conn and Tom Hill went together as partners and built the stone store – sometimes called the Pioneer Store – mostly known as the Conn store because it changed hands a whole number of times in the 1850s, ’60s, and ’70s. But, Malcolm Conn was the one most prominently noted. It kept coming back and either by himself or in partnership with somebody else operatin’ the store again, so

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Ken: most people know it as the Conn store. And, Tom Hill, about 1859, moved to Americus. He was one of the incorporators of the town of Americus in 1857, and he moved down there.

Shirley: And one the interesting things about that is that when they first formed the town of Americus, they built this big hotel. It was called the Americus House, and it was of solid walnut, and they held a big ball there when it was built. That was one of the first structures in Americus. And I suspect that Lucy and Tom went to that ball. And many of the farmers and ranchers of the area were at that ball in that whole area; those who were living here at that time in ‘58… 1857-’58, in that period of time. Another interesting thing, I think, is… what happened in the families of the ranchers. In Lucy’s life,… when they first… well, first of all, when Tom Hill was in his store, that Ken just described, the Conn store, only he had it, at that time, it was Hill store at that time. When the Indian incident occurred, [in 1859] Tom Hill took the side of the Indians and wrote a very vivid account in the paper, that he thought the Council Grove citizens were the blood-thirsty ones and not the Indians. So that was not popular with the citizens of Council Grove. So the next thing you knew, in ‘59, by August of ‘59, that incident happened in June of ’59, the Indian incident, that is so well known in Council Grove. The Indians came in and stopped in front of Seth Hays establishment. A couple men were shot and there was a whole big deal, [but] I won’t go into that story. But, anyway, because of that, Tom and Lucy Hill ended up in Americus and actually took on that hotel. Sam Wood made some comment about her culinary skills at the Americus Hotel. It became known then as the Goddard House and there are pictures of it in Americus that show it as the Goddard House. And that would have been Elisha Goddard, her brother, who was the Sheriff that I
described earlier. And they apparently ran that hotel for some time. But, of course, that was about the time that the Civil War had broken out, so that disrupted a lot of things. And, Tom and Lucy also were running the newspaper in Americus at that time, as well, and then... here’s three things they took on: the Americus Hotel, the newspaper, and the grist mill... also the saw mill. Those are usually combined, the grist mills and the saw mills... those would have been very vital to the ranchers, farmers in the area... the grist mills, saw mills. That was where they would have brought all their crops to be ground to flour for food purposes for themselves. And, there were at least two mills in Americus. And, I’m sure that was the case in many of the little rural towns where they had grist mills and they did both the saw mill and the grist mill work, at those mills. And, ... one of the interesting things that I started to say about the family is that when they moved down there to Americus in 1859 Lucy gave birth to a child they couldn’t even name. The child died just as soon as it was born. And then, about a year later, she gave birth again, to a little girl, and then... no, no, it was a little boy, Edward - they named him Edward. And that was in 1860. And he didn’t even live a year. He was not even a year old when he died. And then she gave birth to Martha, another little girl... because the first child that they didn’t name was a girl. And then Edward, a boy, and then this girl... and she did live to be a year old, but just barely... and it was about December, so you can imagine Christmas... They had lost three children in that short period of time. So out of three children, to have none... And, it wasn’t until after the war, that she did give birth to three children that did live. Then in 1870s, in the early 1870s, she gave birth to a little girl she named Mary, and she died, the following August, and Tom died that April, just after the child was born

Shirley: This gives you a sample of what happened in some of the families. Out of seven children, three lived. That wasn’t always the case, but it was not unusual. So, the farmers and ranchers were struggling with those issues as well; the diseases, and influences of death and so forth.

Belle: Shirley, this is one of characters that you’ve portrayed, Lucy Goddard Hill, right?

Shirley: Yes, yes.

Belle: And you’ve portrayed Seth Hays?

Ken: And I’ve portrayed Seth Hays. I’ve portrayed a number of different people, one of whom is Samuel N. Wood. He came to Kansas in 1854, just as soon as the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed. Within a week, he and his family were on their way to Lawrence from Mount Gilead, Ohio. And, he was a very prominent abolitionist and very prominent in the early history of Kansas. He was in Lawrence before the New England Emigrant Aid Society people got there. He went down to see them as soon as they came. Eventually [he] settled and helped found Cottonwood Falls. [He] came to Council Grove
in 1859, had the first newspaper in town, was the first county attorney. He served in the
last Kansas Territorial legislature as a House of Representative member, and [four chimes
in the background] in the first Kansas State legislature was a State Senator. So, he was
prominent in the very beginnings of Kansas. He did have some ranching properties, as I
recall, but his primary business was newspaper man and outspoken abolitionist, and [he
was] very prominent in the early history of Kansas.

Shirley: Well, many of the ranchers and many of the citizens were involved in politics at
that time because politics were just starting off, the population wasn’t that great, so a lot
of them were involved in politics and forming the governments in the early times. So,
besides their ranching and farming, they were also highly involved in law and order and
politics.

Ken: Until the railroads started coming into this area, Council Grove was the only town
in Morris County. It wasn’t until the KATY railroad came through they started having
towns and when what became the Missouri Pacific… [There were] two branches - one
was the Topeka, Salina and Western Railroad, which started in Council Grove and went
to Colorado; then the Council Grove, Osage City and Ottawa Railroad came in the 1880s
from the east to join up with the Topeka, Salina and Western in Council Grove, and
eventually all became the Missouri Pacific. So, each time these railroads came through,
little towns sprung up beside ‘em, so Council Grove was the source for merchandise, and
repairs, and blacksmiths, and stuff like that until 1869 or so, and others sprung up
afterwards.

Belle: Alright, I think we will stop right here and you have given so very historical
information concerning the Flint Hills and how the people got here. Would you like to
make a closing statement or anything?

Shirley: Well, I would like to tell about a gentleman… I don’t know that this has to do
with farming or ranching but it certainly has to do with the Flint Hills. Here at the café,
we have a gentleman from Iowa that comes back here every year. He can not stay away
from the Flint Hills. He was here… stationed here during the war in the 1940s, during
World War II. And then he ended up living in Iowa. But, he comes back, and he comes to
our café, once a year. He has to come back, he says, to these Flint Hills, ‘cause he said
there is something about the Flint Hills that he cannot stay away from. And he says, some
Indian told him one time that it was “freedom” – and that is what he came back to the
Flint Hills for. So, I thought that was interesting and something important to share with
the rest of the world.

Belle: Thank you. Ken?

Ken: I’ve always lived all my life in Council Grove, Kansas, except for the time I was in
college and off in military service, so this has always been home to me. And I’ve never
ever given any consideration to living anywhere else. I just feel at home here in the Flint
Hills, the green carpet in the spring and beauty of the place. There is such a wealth of history here in Morris County, particularly in Council Grove, and being a local historian, I’m kind of oriented in that way, anyway. But… there is such a rich history here in Council Grove and the Flint Hills. It is unusual. Most people don’t know about us. Although with the current issue of National Geographic magazine having a multiple page spread, of photographs and narrative, about the Flint Hills… why maybe more

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Ken: … people will find out we are here; though we don’t want too many people to find out the secret, you know, because we kind of like keeping it small.

Belle: Well, thank you for being interviewed today.

Ken: You’re welcome.

Ken: As I said, over the weekend, it might be interesting talking with dad. My uncle Wayne now has Alzheimer’s and he couldn’t tell you a thing. But my dad could tell you what it was like setting up a farm implement business after World War II. The heyday… and then the decline… and finally… when you just have to call it quits.

Belle: Would he be willing to talk?

Ken: I’m sure he would. He’s getting a little hard of hearing, so you’d have to speak up. But, he is still extremely alert. He comes in here for lunch every day.

Shirley: He’s lived here all of…

Ken: Well, he had the Americus Gas Company with Wayne… for a number of years.

Belle: Well, I remember him very well. He used to remember me, all the time, when he would see me.

Ken: Right. He is now 93.

Shirley: So he goes way back… personally…

Ken: He grew up on a farm north of town. My Granddad came to town in ’43, when I had just been born, I was a small thing. I don’t remember them living with us for a few months, until they got their own house over on 4th Street. But I’m told, when they came to town, they stayed with us, in the house on Mission Street.

Shirley: That happened a lot. Just like… one thing we didn’t share you. See, we’ve researched and retained the history of some the folk here, and one is the… we’ve got the
Secretary of the Loomis family, and so we have their family history. And then we’ve got… [End of recording]