

Interview with Elias Harris Adams

Interviewer: Rachel Carlsruh

April 19, 1995

**RACHEL CARLSRUH (R.C.): When and where were you born, and what was happening economically and politically during your childhood?**

E. HARRIS ADAMS (E.H.A.): I was born March 12, 1929, in Clearfield, where the Freeport Center is now located. The year I was born, the Depression started. The stock market crash came later in the year I was born. The first thing I can remember; the Depression was on and quite a few people were out of work. But since we were a farming community, most people could find some work to do. I can remember men working on the WPA, which was the Works Project Administration; it was Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal". The economic project to get people work. They were building a new viaduct over the railroad on the Syracuse road, which is called Antelope Drive now. They were removing rocks from the Mountain Road that had come down in the flood of the 1920's. My father worked on both of those and we would take him his lunch sometimes.

**R.C.: How old were you when all of this was happening?**

E.H.A.: Well, the earliest I can remember was about 1934. I can remember the one winter of 1934 when the snow was very deep and we couldn't get our car out so we went in the bob sleigh with our horses.

**R.C.: So, you didn't really feel the effect of the Depression in your community very much?**

E.H.A.: Most everyone was in the same situation. We'd grown corn in our gardens or in part of our farm. We didn't have a refrigerator. We had an icebox, but we couldn't afford to buy ice for it. So to keep the milk cool, my father would take a wooden tomato box and hang it in a limb in a tree, and put a burlap sack over it, then take a tin can and punch a little hole in the bottom of the tin can, then we'd put water in the tin can, and it'd drip down into the burlap bag and the evaporation would keep the milk cool.

**R.C.: What was your family life like, before you were married, and after?**

E.H.A.: Going back to the depression days, there was one industry in Layton, and that was the Sugar Factory. The farmers all grew sugar beets, and they would dig them and top them—the big beets- -and they would be hauled into the sugar factory and stacked up. During the late fall and winter the sugar factory would process the beets into sugar. My father worked at the sugar factory—sometimes night-shifts—because they worked 24 hours a day. When my shoes would wear out, we couldn't buy new shoes. So they would let the workers have some of the worn out belts, the big wide belts that ran the machinery in the sugar factory. My father would bring those belts home, and he would nail them on the bottom of my shoes, and sometimes he would cut them and make them smooth around the edges. There was no television, and radio started coming in. Some people had crystal sets that they would listen to with ear phones to hear the radio broadcasts. We had a radio that stood in the corner. I don't know where it came from, but it was there as early as I can remember. At night "Amos and Andy" was a show that came on, and we would listen to "Amos and Andy". My dad had a Morris chair which had arms on it, and he'd sit in the chair, and early in the evening he'd read us kids the comic strips. My sister

would sit on one arm of the chair, and I'd sit on the other arm of the chair by him. After he read us the comic strips, we'd listen to "Amos and Andy", then we had to go to bed after "Amos and Andy" was over. But in the winter we had a coal stove to heat the house. Mostly, we just used the "kitchen" coal range—they called it—and my father would get up early in the morning and start the fire and then in about a half-an-hour or an hour, when it'd get warm, we'd get up and run out and my mother would warm our clothes on the oven door, and then we'd get dressed because the whole house was cold. A lot of times the water would freeze in the house at night.

**R.C.: How many kids were in your family?**

E.H.A.: I got married in 1947 and I was 19 years old. By that time, when W. W. II came along, it kind of ended the Depression. My father got additional work helping build Hillfield, and we were still living in Clearfield, but they decided to build a Naval Supply Depot in Clearfield so they came and took our land for this Naval Supply Depot. It's now the Freeport Center, because they closed the Naval Supply Depot and sold it to private industries. But when they came and bought our land in the spring of 1942, we didn't know anything about it, and we'd just planted our tomatoes out in our field. And Pearl Harbor had just taken place in the December before. Some surveyors, accompanied by some Marines with rifles, came and cut the fence on the south side of our farm and drove their jeep right through our newly-planted tomato patch. My father went out and tried to stop them. He didn't know what they were doing. They said that it was a war emergency and he'd better leave them alone because they were armed, and said that it was a war emergency and they were going to build some kind of bases there.

**R.C.: Were all the tomatoes ruined?**

E.H.A.: Uh, huh. Well, not all of them, but they drove tracks all through them. But, in a few days we found out that the Navy had decided to make the Navy Base there. They were gonna buy the land, but it took about six or eight months before they actually bought the land. We had about three months to move everything that we wanted; otherwise, they'd bulldoze it and burn it. And my father got busy and got a house mover and moved the house. We got the house moved out on the twenty-first of July, 1942. He'd also moved a few barns, but while our house was being moved off the foundation, they bulldozed up our stables and barns we couldn't move, and they were bulldozing and burning them while our house was being moved. My dad moved the house from Clearfield and came up Antelope Drive. And when it got right up here, to where we live now, at 144 East, Antelope Drive, it got dark and we couldn't go any farther. So we parked the house right in the middle of Antelope Drive, and my father put a red lantern in front and a red lantern in back. All the furniture was in the house, so we got in the house and went to bed. He ran an extension cord from my uncle Will Adams' house, which is now our apartment house,