

WIU Oral Histories Program - Ida (Kuhn) Blum

Interviewee: Ida (Kuhn) Blum

Birth: 02 Sep 1889

Death: 23 Jun 1980

Date of Recording: 22 Sep 1979

Age at Recording: 90 years old

Interviewer: Dr. John E. Hallwas

Description: Ida Kuhn married Carl J. Blum, one of the owners of the 3B Store in Nauvoo, and they were the parents of Arlette and Carl R. She began writing society columns for local newspapers, discovered she loved to write, and began writing historical columns which were collected into several books: *Nauvoo: An American Heritage* (1969); *Nauvoo: "Beautiful Place"* (1971); *Nauvoo: Gateway to the West* (1974). She was one of the contributors to *A History of Hancock County, Illinois*. Her papers were donated to Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. In the first part of this interview, recorded September 22, 1979, Mrs. Blum discusses her own family background, her early life in Nauvoo, and her career as a local historian. In the second part of the interview, Mrs. Blum discusses various aspects of Nauvoo history, from the Indian era to the present. Included are her comments on the reception of members of the Mormon Church when they came back to Nauvoo to do restoration. Original cassette in vault. Transferred to FLAC, September 2016.

Original Media: Audio cassette

Length: 57:29

Note: At several points during the interview, loud vehicular noises drown out the sound of voices.

Hallwas: This tape contains an interview with Missus Ida Blum, of Nauvoo. She is ninety years old, and she is a lifelong resident of that town. The tape was made on September twenty-second, nineteen seventy-nine. [September 22, 1979] On side one of the tape, Missus Blum discusses her own family background, her early life in Nauvoo, and her career as a local historian. On side two, she discusses various aspects of Nauvoo history, from the Indian era to the present. Included are her comments on the reception of members of the Mormon Church when they came back to Nauvoo, in our own time, to do restoration.

[tape cuts, restarts mid-conversation; 00:50]

Hallwas: [begins mid-sentence] In fact, I might ask you first, um, when did your family come to Nauvoo? Are you from one of the old Nauvoo families? Uh-

Blum: Yes my uh, grandparents, Ulrich Kuhns¹, came here in eighteen fifty-two [1852]. They had um, they had left Switzerland in eighteen forty-eight [1848], they were on the ocean three months in a sailboat, and they came across the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans. There they changed from a sailboat to a steamboat and came up the river to Kaskaskia². And they stayed there for a few years. And during that time they learned of an evacuating city farther north, where they could buy property without paying back taxes. And that's what brought them to Nauvoo. So here they acquired, oh, a piece of property in which they planted a vineyard, six acres, and they, they had an acre of the block where the Nauvoo public school now stands. They had the northeast acre. And my grandfather was a gunsmith and a locksmith and he had a workshop there. It had a fireplace and a billows just like a, um, locksmith has.

Hallwas: Sure.

Blum: And he liked that kind of work.

[tape cuts and restarts; 2:14 - 2:15]

Hallwas: Okay. Ah- if you don't mind, I'll take this off.

Blum: Just make yourself comfortable. [chuckles] Well. My grandparents had three children. They brought their daughter³ along from Switzerland, and then they had- Uncle Herman was born at Kaskaskia⁴, then they came to Nauvoo and my father⁵ was born here in eighteen fifty-three [1853].

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: He was born in the house where they- the present owner has it marked "Joseph Agnew Home."⁶

Hallwas: Oh, yes!

¹ Anna B. (1815-1898) and Ulrich Kuhn (1819-1910). Source: Gravestone in Nauvoo Two Cemetery.

² Established in 1703, Kaskaskia was once an important trading center on the Mississippi River. When Illinois was made a territory in 1809, Kaskaskia became its capitol, remaining so even after Illinois was elevated to a state. However, the capitol was moved to Vandalia in 1820, and a major flood in 1844 nearly destroyed the town. In 1881, another massive flood obliterated it and carved a new channel, cutting Kaskaskia off from Illinois, signaling the once thriving town's death blow. Between the following devastating 1973 and 1993 floods, Kaskaskia's population lowered from about 600 to 14 people. Source: Schwarz, A. (2012). Living in the American Atlantis (Population 14). *New York Times*, p.A22.

³ Emilie Kuhn (1847-1910). Source: Gravestone in Nauvoo Two Cemetery.

⁴ Herman Kuhn (1849-1918). Source: Gravestone in Nauvoo Two Cemetery.

⁵ Robert Kuhn (1853-1936). Source: Gravestone in Nauvoo Two Cemetery.

⁶ 1495 Mulholland St., Nauvoo, Illinois.

Blum: But Joseph Agnew⁷ never lived there, never owned the property. That's a- that's a false statement, because Mike Baumert gave me the information on that. And he said that they never lived there. He told me all the- the few that did. It didn't change hands too many times. Though my parent- my grandparents lived there, and then they bought the acre just to the north. And they spent the rest of their days on that acre.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: And my father was the youngest of the three. And he's- he went to Burlington and learned the [inaudible] of making trade with the Bittners. And he lived with the family for seven years. Lived right in the family while he was apprenticed to learning this. And they- the children called him Uncle Bob, and he was practically all right, I think. And he came back to Nauvoo and opened up a furniture store and made all the furniture that he sold. And he also made some of the early caskets that were made here. Then- then he went into the uh, he took along the undertaking business. Undertaking and furniture. Selling sort of one to the other. And he went to Chicago and took the- passed the uh, examination, and was a licensed embalmer. And he was in the furniture business here fifty years, and thirty years of that time he was in the um, undertaking business also. And my mother⁸ was born in Nauvoo in eighteen sixty [1860]. And she was- she was quite talented in making fancy work and hair wreaths. One of her hair wreaths is on exhibit down at the Nauvoo Restoration *Times and Seasons*⁹ building¹⁰ at the present time.

Hallwas: I've seen it! I've seen it! I wondered who made that, if it was local or not.

[05:00]

Blum: Yes, she made it. And my father made the shadowbox and the walnut easel. And uh, one day, Mister and Missus Ravsten¹¹ came here and they asked me if I wouldn't give them something to put in the- into the organization so they could claim to it and say "Now Ida Blum gave us this."

⁷ Joseph Agnew, a repeated antagonist of the Mormons, is the person most often credited with burning the original Mormon temple in 1848. According to a confidante, Agnew confessed on his deathbed. This was supported by several important residents of Nauvoo, however none of these reports can be wholly verified. Source: Givens, G. (2010). *500 little-known facts about Nauvoo*. Cedar Fort Inc., p.215.

⁸ Louisa A. Urban (1860-1897). After Louisa's death, Robert married a woman named Bertha Bechtel (1868-1954). Source: Gravestone in Nauvoo Two Cemetery.

⁹ Monthly (Nov. 1839-Oct. 1840) and Semimonthly (Nov. 1, 1840-Feb. 15, 1846) publication published in Commerce, later Nauvoo, Illinois primarily for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Issues bound into 6 volumes. Source: BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections.

¹⁰ This building, called "Printing Office," is located at the corner of Main and Kimball Streets.

¹¹ John Byron (1908-1975) and Elva (Godfrey) (1907-2010) Ravsten. J. Byron was manager of Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. Source: Elva (Godfrey) Ravsten obituary.

Hallwas: [chuckles]

Blum: And I said, "Yes, I'll give you something." And they said, "Now we don't care if it's big or little." And uh, I talked it over with my children, and I asked them if it'd be alright if I gave them a hair wreath, because it's really a museum piece. And they said, "If that's what you want to do, then you just go ahead." So that's how they acquired it.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: And I gave them a hundred and one [101] books for their library down on Seventies Hall.¹²

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: And many of those books were uh, brought across the ocean with my grandparents when they came here. Some of them were printed in eighteen twenty, twenty-two, and twenty-three and twenty-four [1820, 1822, 1823, 1824]. Along in there. And um, they were- seemed to be glad to get them. There was a group of um, Germans, you know, among the Mormons. And uh, they had a German choir here. [pause] What else would you like to know? [chuckles]

Hallwas: [chuckles] I- ah, how many people were in your family?

Blum: I had two sisters. One younger and one older. We were Clara, Ida, and Emma. I was the middle one.

Hallwas: Where did you go to school?

Blum: Nauvoo public school. And uh, I just had two years of high school. Our mother died when we were five, seven, and nine. And at that time, doctors didn't know too much about surgery. And so they held a post-mortem, and they found that she died of- of strangulation of the- a strangulated hernia within the abdomen. And a little over a year later my father married again, and my stepmother didn't believe in wasting her time in school. So we each had two years of high school. And the uh, the graduation requirements here were three years, so none of us got to go to that for a year. [chuckles]

Hallwas: [chuckles]

¹² Seventies Hall in Nauvoo was created as a meeting place for the Seventies, a quorum organization in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that focuses on missionary work. After it was completed in late July 1844, the hall also became the first library in Nauvoo. It is located on the corner of Parley Street and historical Bain Street, west of Granger Street. Source: Mormon Historic Sites Foundation. <http://mormonhistoricsites.org>.

Blum: So. [chuckles] At that time, there were um, just about two things open to women. Millinery¹³ and dressmaking. So I took dressmaking. I apprenticed myself to an elderly woman for six months, learning the sewing. And after that I did mostly the way I thought it ought to be, not the way she taught me after all!

Hallwas: [chuckles] How- how is Nauvoo different today from what it was when you were, say apprenticing yourself to the dressmaker? What- Was the town the same size, have the same kind of businesses that it does now?

Blum: Oh we, we had more. We had three doctors, and two dentists at that time. We don't have any now. You see um, [pause] Oh, we had um, six grocery stores. We have one now. See, that's a big difference. And we had many, many boats stopping here to pick up grain, and fruit, and taking up and down the river. There was always the wine to be shipped out. The um, the streets of course were not paved at that time. We had no concrete highways, and um, man would be hard to mow the weeds along the highway, about twice in the summer. See now, it's quite different. Now the Restoration's doing a beautiful job of cleaning up the city.

Hallwas: Mmhmm. Were people conscious at that time, say the turn of the century or whenever, were they ah, conscious that they lived in a rather special town with a particular history, or did people think much about it?

Blum: No, they didn't think much about it.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: No, they uh, they really didn't. It was only after the first missionaries came here that people were history minded.

Hallwas: When did the first missionaries come, would you say?

Blum: Oh, about um, twenty- twenty-five, thirty years ago.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: And um, they commenced to buy property and pay big prices for it, you know. And it seemed like overnight a piece of property worth five hundred dollars [\$500] went for a small fortune.

[10:00]

¹³ "The business or work of a milliner, one who designs, makes, trims, or sells women's hats." Source: "Millinery" and "Milliner". Merriam-Webster.com.

[inaudible] make quite a difference. It was quite a push to the property owners here. And of course they didn't pay well, people wouldn't sell. So the Nauvoo Restoration bought fourteen hundred [1,400] acres here. Which is quite a big wedge shaped part of Nauvoo.

Hallwas: Mmhmm. They uh- I uh- I understand that they tore down a building that had been belonged to the Icarians, or been built by the Icarians.

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: Across the street.

Blum: Yes. It uh, it had been- it had been part of the Nauvoo Temple, and the Mormons had blasted the rock, and polished the stone, and- and built this temple. So after the- after it was burned by an incendiary, the um- a storm finished the rest of it.¹⁴ And all the rocks were bare. So they- they took the rock and piled it up and made this building on the corner. It was a two story building, and the Icarians used the first floor as a school room, and the second floor they used as a dormitory for children. When the children were six years of age they were taken from their parents and put in this upstairs, over the schoolhouse. And the uh- the Icarians had a different way of life than we have. They ate together, and cooked together, and washed together. And um, put everything they had into a common fund and it was doled out to them. To each shall be given according to his need, and from each shall be taken according to his- his ability.¹⁵

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: That went- it didn't work out very well! [chuckles] You can imagine that!

Hallwas: [chuckles] Yeah. They uh, what- what were they doing in town um, when you were a youngster? A lot of commercial fishing, for example? What- what were people employed at?

Blum: [overlapping] Yes [inaudible]. Yes, there was a lot of fishing going on, and there was um- we had a number of button factories that made buttons. And these buttons- the rounds were sent to um, Muscatine, Iowa. There they were- they were punched for the openings you know,

¹⁴ On May 27th, 1850, a tornado struck Nauvoo and debris fell around workers who were repairing the walls of the temple. Source: www.lds.org

¹⁵ This is a version of the slogan popularized by Karl Marx in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*. The socialist principle refers to free access and distribution of goods, capital and services. Source: Gilabert, Pablo (2015). "The Socialist Principle 'From Each According To Their Abilities, To Each According To Their Needs'". *Journal of Social Philosophy*. 46 (2): 197–225.

just so. And uh, oh yes, and every once in a while you know, they'd find a pearl in the clam shell. And that was always an exciting part of that work.

Hallwas: I suppose the coming in of the dam, down at Keokuk, um, made a difference in the uh-

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: -button uh, business.

Blum: Oh yes, it swallowed it up! You see, the um- the uh- when the dam com- when it completed in nineteen fourteen [1914], it raised the water level thirty feet, and inundated two blocks on both sides of the river. And then it formed this lake which extends thirty miles from here up to Burlington. Of course, it's twelve miles down to Hamilton. So this is quite a- quite a lake. Across the river now, it's twelve blocks, or a mile wide. Before that, it was only eight blocks wide. And north of the town, a place where it was two miles wide. Yes, it made quite a difference. And of course the, the people bought the- the lowans, from the government. And the government bought the- the lowans back when the dam was put in. And the um, people were allowed to move their houses or anything off of this land, and cut the trees down. Oh yes, it made a big difference. You see, where the um, where the river makes its bend [pause] The um- Water Street is the one nearest to the- to the river. If you go down between here and the old Ferry Landing it runs very close to the- to the water. And that street is Water Street. But during the time before that, the next street out there was Lumber Street. And the next street was Front Street. Front Street is where all the factories were located. So you see how different it is today.

Hallwas: Mmhmm. What- what do you- what do you think about the uh, the restoration that's going down in that area? I know it's a fine thing, of course. But um-

[15:00]

In what way is it not- not typical of Mormon times? Were there more buildings, a lot more buildings down on the flat-

Blum: [overlapping] Oh Yes. Yes. Many more.

Hallwas: I suppose they weren't all brick.

Blum: Oh, no. There were about two hundred fifty [250] brick. And there were many um, many frame buildings. And many log cabins, and many shanties too. Oh yes, there were all kinds of buildings. You see, these people came here in destitute circumstances. And um, when they scraped off some of the top soil, they found clay. And that's why they made bricks. It was

cheaper to build bricks than it was to cut down trees and um, make lumber. See, out here at um, at New Salem, Illinois, they were building log cabins when they were building brick houses here. But they had timber and so they made frame houses.

Hallwas: Yeah.

Blum: And here, they went over to the lowans and got lime and lumber. Or they had- this was, um, this was a good place for them to start, in spite of the fact that it was a swampland. The first thing they did, you know, was to drain the swampland.

Hallwas: Swamp down close to the river?

Blum: Mmhmm.

Hallwas: Mm.

Blum: And um, it was kind of mosquito-infested when they came here. Fr- When- Many people will look at one thing, but see it differently. And um, probably when these people came, some saw this as a- a good place to locate. There'd be fishing and hunting, that would help a lot with their livelihood. And um, some would see it as a bad place, a very bad place to start, with typhoid- typhoid, malaria, you know. To thin their ranks. And the um, there are some who would see this as a good location along the river, because the river was means of transportation and uh, information. So that's one reason they didn't want to get back far from the river.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: The river was a highway at that time. Then the um- there was others who would see this as a location for a beautiful city, with the river on three sides. And the land sloping to a hill. So.

Hallwas: When- By the um, the uh, the late nineteenth century [late 1800s], the Icarians were gone too, weren't they? From the town-

Blum: [overlapping] Yes. You see, they had dif- eighteen fifty-six. [1856]. They came in eighteen forty-nine [1849] and left in eighteen fifty-six. [1856].

Hallwas: Ah, did they go to Frenchtown? Is that how Frenchtown got started? Up north of Nauvoo?

Blum: [overlapping] Well, some of the uh, French people came to Nauvoo and were dissatisfied. They looked things over and they went on up there and settled.

Hallwas: I see.

Blum: Mmhmm. It wasn't a large place. You see, there never was more than five hundred [500] Icarians here at one time.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: You see, there was eleven thousand [11,000] Mormons here. Not counting the uh, Missouri [inaudible] across the river. There were three thousand [3,000] over there.

Hallwas: Oh, I see.

Blum: [overlapping] See, but they put the two together you see, why they'd have about fifteen thousand [15,000].

Hallwas: That was the maximum number of Mormons.

Blum: Mmhmm.

Hallwas: I've heard estimates as high as twenty thousand, and so forth.

Blum: [overlapping] No, I don't- I don't think it was that much. No.

Hallwas: So when the- when the Icarians were here, they weren't the only ones here.

Blum: Oh, no. Oh, no. The um- there were Germans and Swiss, English, and Irish, and Scotch. All coming in at the same time. You see, they were all coming here because they could buy this property so cheaply. You see, that's why they came. And um, the Mormons far outnumbered the Icarians. And Nauvoo was the largest German speaking settlement in Illinois for fifty years. And our church was a Lutheran. And they didn't give- they were the last to give up the German language. And that was in nineteen fifteen [1915].

Hallwas: Ah.

Blum: See, that lasted a long time.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: And they- they used the German language in the four churches they had here, and they had two German parochial schools, a Lutheran and Catholic. And uh, they used the German language in the stores and the homes. I couldn't speak English until I went to school!

Hallwas: Is that right?

Blum: Mmhmm. We were very Deutsch!¹⁶

[both laugh]

[20:00]

Hallwas: During- Since especially- there were so many Germans in town, by the uh, the time that the Prohibition¹⁷ came along, I suppose that a lot of people went on making uh, beer and so forth, anyway. Was that- was that true?

Blum: [overlapping] That's true, yes. We had two breweries here at one time. The uh, Schenks' Brewery¹⁸ and the Hausmann Brewery.¹⁹ [inaudible]

Hallwas: How did the uh- how would you say that the coming of the Depression²⁰ affected Nauvoo? Did- in other words, did everybody- did it affect Nauvoo in a particular way? Did- did the businesses uh, collapse, or-?

Blum: Yes, the um- the thing- it made them sweeten to the English language. They- and they promptly put up a sign in their store- "Deutsch Verboten."²¹ They-

Hallwas: I see.

Blum: No more German here.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: Yeah. They didn't want to be called [inaudible]

¹⁶ "German" in the German language.

¹⁷ Prohibition in the United States was a nationwide constitutional ban on the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages from 1920 to 1933.

¹⁸ The Schenk Brewery, founded by Gottfried Theodore Schenk in 1849, and located on Young Street between Wells (11th) and Durphy (12th), was in business off and on under various family names until 1909. After Gottfried's death, his two sons Peter and Herman, and later Herman's sons Ernest and Paul, continued the brewery business. The building was razed in 1937 and the property sold to Oscar Rohde, who operated Nauvoo Milk Products, which sold the famous "Nauvoo Blue Cheese." Source: *Brewers Journal*. Nov 1908, Vol. 33, p584.; *Nauvoo: The Way We Were Walking Tour*. Sheet 31, Wrap-Up. www.beautifulnauvoo.com (2010).

¹⁹ The F. Hausmann Brewery opened in 1875, but there is no known close date. Source: www.oldbreweries.com

²⁰ The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression that took place mostly during the 1930s, beginning in the United States.

²¹ Translated from German: "German [language] forbidden."

Hallwas: Sure.

Blum: And uh, Dutch [inaudible], so forth. There were all kind of names for them, you know. So they went- they changed their [inaudible] to the English. [very loud vehicular noise] [inaudible].

Hallwas: What did your husband do?

Blum: He was- had a general merchandise store here. For forty-three years. He went in as a delivery boy for his uncle Jake Fisher. And um, of course, he drove a horse and wagon then. [indecipherable; sounds like, "Like, three wagon"]. And uh, then gradually, he and his brother and John Bechtold bought Uncle Jake's store when he was ready to retire. And they continued, through- just about- about nineteen fifty-two.²²

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: When they sold out. But the stores were quite different than they are today.

Hallwas: Oh I'm sure, yes.

Blum: Mmhmm. Yes. [pause] Yes, the uh- speaking of the uh, changes, it reminds me of the words of the [quote], 'Two men were- looked out from prison bars. The one saw mud, the other stars.'²³

Hallwas: Yes. [chuckles]

Blum: Yes. How different people see things. Maybe other people don't see things the way I see them either.

Hallwas: How did you get into the writing of- you started to explain before- the writing of local history?

Blum: Well, when my husband sold out the store, he was reminiscing. Until the uh, change had taken place from the time he went in as delivery boy. And uh, I took my notes and wrote up a

²² Jacob M. Fisher (1862-1939) purchased "Reibold's General Store" at 1209 Mulholland St. from Max Reibold in 1905 and sold carpet, shoes, and groceries, etc. until 1917. At that time he sold the store to three of his clerks: Carl Blum, John Bechtold, and Robert Blum. They renamed the location the "3-B Store" and ran the business until 1946. Source: Ihrig-Gilbert, Karen and Eugene Shurts, 2009. *Nauvoo: The Way We Were Walking Tour*. Sheet 5, 1205-9 Mulholland. www.beautifulnauvoo.com (2009).

²³ A quote from Dale Harbison Carnegie (1888-1955). Carnegie was an American writer and lecturer and the developer of famous courses in self-improvement, salesmanship, corporate training, public speaking, and interpersonal skills. Full quote: "Two men looked out from prison bars, One saw the mud, the other saw stars."

little article and took it to the Burlington paper. Had no idea if they'd take it or not. And uh, he phoned the next day, and he said, "We just received your letter. Send us some more, we'll take all you'll write."

Hallwas: [chuckles]

Blum: So the next thing I wrote was uh, the "Bring Them Home" and that was- that was when I started on history. From then on I did the John Taylor Home²⁴ and just- I just wrote more about the history of Nauvoo because no one else seemed to be doing it.

Hallwas: Mmhmm. What newspapers did you write for besides the Burlington paper?

Blum: The Fort Madison Democrat, the [inaudible] Democrat, and then I- at first I didn't send in to the Nauvoo paper. The Nauvoo paper never paid me, they just hardly ever said thanks but they took it.

Hallwas: Mm.

Blum: And uh, the first check I got was for thirty-five cents! [laughs]

Hallwas: Wow.

Blum: [laughs] It was fun. I enjoyed it.

Hallwas: And [mumbles] very instructive for people around here, too. Eh, virtually everyone in the county has read some of your articles, at least, so-

Blum: [chuckles] I don't know if they have or not. I never know if anyone reads them or not because I never hear it mentioned.

Hallwas: Did you know um, uh, Pearl Vestal?²⁵

Blum: Oh yeah. Pearl Gordon Vestal.

Hallwas: Yes, she wrote things-

²⁴ John Taylor (1808–1887) was the third president of the Mormon Church from 1880 to 1887. Taylor was with church founder Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum Smith at the jail in Carthage in 1844 when the Smiths were killed by a mob, and was severely wounded. Taylor was also the editor of the Mormon newspaper. His home is located on Main Street in Nauvoo, between the historic Printing Office and the restored Post Office.

²⁵ Pearl Avis (Gordon) Vestal (1881-1964), another local amateur historian for Hancock County. Source: *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), Memorial no. 68293856

Blum: [overlapping] Oh, yeah.

Hallwas: -considerably, too. I guess about the same time, I'm not sure.

Blum: Yes. She started before I did though. Yes. Yes, she had quite a- quite a lot of material. I'm sure she had more than I did. [pause] Yeah. She had um, let's see. Her father and grandfather was a newspaperman, and she acquired all of this uh, material. So-

Hallwas: Go ahead.

Blum: I had to dig for mine!

[both chuckle]

[25:00]

Hallwas: What uh, what newspapers were there in town at the turn of the century? When you were a youngster in Nauvoo?

Blum: [overlapping] We had two. The Nauvoo *Rustler* and the Nauvoo *Independent*.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: And- and they were both printing up twice a week! Imagine that.

Hallwas: Most papers were weekly at the time.

Blum: Mmhmm.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: Oh yes. And Mike Baumert was a real historian. I always thought that whatever he said was right.

Hallwas: In what- did he work for one of the papers?

Blum: You mean hand in materials on the-

Hallwas: Yeah.

Blum: Yes, he did. To the Fort Madison paper.

Hallwas: I see. Mmhmm.

Blum: Yeah. He did that.

Hallwas: Before you, was there anyone uh- or, or him- uh, any- anybody writing about the history of Nauvoo? Were you really the first one to pick that up in town?

Blum: Oh I don't know. I wouldn't know how many people-

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: -they had. I don't- I really don't know. I know a great many are now!

Hallwas: Yes, of course.

Blum: [chuckles] uh, let's see. There have been about three here this week. A Mister [inaudible] from Monmouth was here, and um [pause] this morning a man from Salt Lake City was here. He um, had a magazine of his own. Seems to me it- it's *Sunset*. I think he called it *Sunset*. And um, [pause] some people from, from Idaho were here too. We had a lot of people who are getting articles for- on Nauvoo- a lot of people writing. You know, the *New York Times* has um, on two occasions [loud humming noise], had a big article in it about Nauvoo, and was really correct. I didn't find a mistake in it. [chuckles]

Hallwas: Yes, I just saw in the newspaper²⁶ that uh, Jerry Klein²⁷ wrote one of those articles for the WIU- *New York Times*- who's a friend of mine, he's a Peoria newspaperman, actually.

Blum: Oh, I see.

Hallwas: And he's written on a lot of towns in Western Illinois.

Blum: I see. Yeah.

Hallwas: [overlapping] And uh, I know he writes once in a while- his things will go into the *New York Times*. And I noticed uh-

²⁶ This likely refers to Klein's article, "Nauvoo, the Town the Mormons Left," which appeared in the *New York Times* on August 19, 1979 in the Travel section.

²⁷ Gerald Klein (1926-2017), wrote regularly for the *Peoria Journal Star* from 1953-1992, and continued writing opinion pieces thereafter. Source: "Gerald L. Klein". Obituaries. *Peoria Journal Star*. 25 Aug 2017. Page XXI.

Blum: [overlapping] Yeah.

Hallwas: that-

Blum: [overlapping] Yeah. If it's in the *New York Times* and then the Quad City papers of Moline, Rock Island, Davenport, and Bettendorf. Yes, and then um- [pause] two newspapers- two or three newspapers in Michigan had had a big article. A lady was here visiting- we were old friends. I didn't know she was a newspaperwoman! But she wrote some big articles. And the paper took every bit of it!

Hallwas: Mm. The um- the uh, the people coming here as tourists to Nauvoo. When did that really get started? That, that you had people. Did you have people come here in the nineteen twenties or thirties [1920s or 1930s] at all? To see the town? And even pe- Mormons? Uh, in the church?

Blum: Well, occasionally Mormons would come through.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: They would come through and they would stop at the filling station and say, "What is there to see in this town?" And um, the mayor, who owned the filling station- oh, he'd tell them that- he'd point out places to go, and they would say, "Oh we'll never be able to find that. Can't you take- can't you go with us?" Well if his partner was there, why maybe he could go, but as you recall it was hard to get away. And [mayor's name] knew that I had run some articles in the paper and he called up and said, "Can't you go out for these people? Show them around a little bit? I can't away." And I'd go. So um, when the first missionaries came, why they would come to me. They didn't- they knew their church history, but they didn't know their way around Nauvoo. They didn't know the names of the streets or where to find the houses, you know. And I'd sort of help them. But then he'd ask me if- see, you- they- there was only one couple here first. They were [inaudible] from [inaudible]. And then the- after they left, two couples came. And um, then that was a little better. One couple could have gone out- and of course they had to know where to go and what to show them, too.

[30:00]

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: So I- I was the guide for them, for a long time. I just- I just enjoyed it, you know? Talk- and these people would- would talk about things. But they- they didn't start with their bus tours at that time. It was later than that when these busses commenced coming in. And uh, I enjoyed it. I'd take a busload and I'd say, "Is anyone here a descendent of someone who lived

here during the Mormon period?" Oh and the hands would go up and they'd just love to tell you about them.

[both chuckle]

I'd go home and write about them. I accumulated a lot of material just that way.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: And, after that, why, some of them would come and they'd bring their diaries and their journals. "I wish you'd tell me if you know anything about this person or- are buried here, or if he owned property." And we'd talk, and- and pretty soon I'd get them started-

[both laugh]

Hallwas: Is the uh- do you think the uh- the, the Salt Lake City church has done a pretty good job in- in- in doing the restoration?

Blum: Oh, yes.

Hallwas: Pretty accurate?

Blum: Oh, yes.

Hallwas: The restoration?

Blum: But they don't-

[tape cuts; restarts 31:23-31:24]

-some people wouldn't like it, you know? And we don't want to antagonize anyone. And uh, oh, some- some people were um, [pause] very discourteous to them. And they uh, they really destroyed some of the properties. Tear their signs down, ran over the streets [inaudible]. They turned the mark [possibly marquee] that pointed one way and turn them the other way, and they, oh, there's a lot of things that I know but they never wanted put in the paper.

Hallwas: They were not pleased to see the Mormons return, is that right?

Blum: What'd you say?

Hallwas: That they weren't- Some people in town weren't pleased to see the Mormons come back.

Blum: [overlapping] Oh, no. No. And uh, it made things pretty unpleasant. But they didn't say a word. They just kept still about it. I was just surprised at the things that they would take and not say a word.

Hallwas: Mmhmm. [pause] Have the Germans who were here- are there uh, buildings that belonged to the German people that a person can see in town? You don't hear much about that.

Blum: [overlapping] Mmhmm

Hallwas: Are there German- German architecture or something?

Blum: Well, I don't- I wouldn't say there's any German architecture here.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: No, the uh, the Mormons had that uh- fifth gable they were kind of known for. But I don't know- the Germans- the Germans and the Swiss, they were um, different in this way. They would paint um, sayings on the house. See, there was a Kaufmann place house. There was a saying, "Dies Haus ist Mein, und doch nicht Mein. Wer nach Mir Commt, wirds auch so sein. Ich bin hier gewesen. Wer das wird lessen der ist auch hier gewesen."²⁸ Well that was one, and then there was one that- that- I think that's still on that building. And then up in the- in the Appanoose township, a Mister Bertschi²⁹ had quite a verse on his barn. [speaks in German] [pause] [chuckles] I can't remember that one just now. But he brought- he shipped horses over from uh, Switzerland. And he was a horse trader. And he had quite a- but the barn's gone now. So the only- the only in- inscription that I know of is on the Kaufmann place. And they had his name on it, and the date. [inaudible] Kaufmann [inaudible], I think.

²⁸ On the West gable of the Joseph W. Coolidge home in Nauvoo, Illinois is an inscription in German placed there by Johann Georg Kaufmann after the Mormon exodus which means: "This house is mine and yet not mine. Who comes after me shall find the same. I have been here, and those that read this will have also been here."

²⁹ William Bertschi (1825-1900) arrived in Hancock County in 1849, then traveled back to marry Elizabeth Waltz and return to Illinois in 1851. He purchased forty acres of land on section 22 of Appanoose township (a few miles south of Niota, Illinois), thereby taking ownership of the only apple orchard in the area. Over time he added one hundred and twenty acres of land, and then land in sections 15, 16, and 27 of Appanoose township. Born to William and Elizabeth were eight children: John W., Herman, Albert, Carl, Lizette, P. Otilie, Emma, and William D. Source: "John W. Bertschi". *Biographical Review of Hancock County, Illinois*. Hobart Publishing Company, Chicago. 1907. p306-7.

Hallwas: Here's a question which you may or may not have an answer to, but of course to see the restoration down here, it looks very prosperous, with all the lawns mowed and all the buildings kept up-

Blum: Mmhmm.

Hallwas: -so well. Um, what- what- what about the economic condition of Nauvoo during the Mormon period? Was it sound, good, uh, shaky?

[35:00]

Or, what- of course I know everyone knows why the Mormons left-

Blum: [overlapping] Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

Hallwas: -in terms of the antagonism in the county, but um, if they hadn't left even, was Nauvoo in good economic shape when they were here?

Blum: Oh, I think so. I think- I remember my father said one day, "If they hadn't been the Mormons I think they really [inaudible]. They were so industrious. They were very industrious. And you see, coming here from scratch, why they- they had to- they didn't have money. So they bartered their labor. "I'll help you with my roof if you help me with my foundation." See, they just traded work. That's the way they got along.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: See, they didn't have the cash.

Hallwas: Yeah.

Blum: And you know, a lot of people come- come to them and ask.

Hallwas: Yeah. Mmhmm.

Blum: Not that they- and they all worked. The little ones worked. Unless they um- I really don't see how they ever had time to get out and, and do things they were usually doing. When they had so much to do and they- and they had to even- when it came to building their temple. Now that was an awful big job!

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: They all had rock, [inaudible], you know, and uh, it always comes right [inaudible]-

Hallwas: Mm.

Blum: You know? Some of them tithed their labor. They [inaudible], you know? And um, some gave um, [inaudible] and things like that. They'd tithe.

Hallwas: Ah, the site of Nauvoo was a- was an Indian location³⁰ before the Mormons came, wasn't it? Uh-

Blum: [overlapping] What is that?

Hallwas: The, the site here was supposed to be an Indian location-

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: -before the Mormons, or any white people, came.

Blum: That's right.

Hallwas: Is there anything that- do people know much about that? Uh, uh-

Blum: Well-

Hallwas: Exactly where the Indians were located? On the hill, or down on the flat, or-

Blum: [overlapping] Well, the Indians were mostly close to the river. They all wanted to be near the river. In a low spot. And um, it was- the Battle of the Bad Axe³¹ was fought here. That was the last- the last battle Indians fought east of the Mississippi River. And that was on August the- August the thirteenth [It was actually August 1 to 2], eighteen thirty-two [1832].

Hallwas: Mmhmm. These were Sauk Indians, then, hmm?

Blum: What?

³⁰ The first known residents of the Nauvoo area were Native Americans of the Hopewell culture who built mounds that predate the Cahokia Mounds by several hundred years. When American pioneers first began to settle the area, it was inhabited by the Sauk and Fox tribes.

³¹ Battle of Bad Axe, also called The Bad Axe Massacre, Battle of the Wisconsin, and Battle of the Iowa, took place on August 1-2, 1832. In this battle, the United States Army and the steamboat Warrior slaughtered the Sauk and Fox tribes that were trying to retreat across the Mississippi River and surrender. Source: National Park Service. "Park History". www.nps.gov

Hallwas: These were Sauk Indians, then?

Blum: The Fox and Sac³², uh huh.

Hallwas: Fox and Sac.

Blum: And they um- And they said that the- the white people really were um, treated them- the Indians dreadful. Dreadfully. They um, during this battle, they shot the women and the children regardless of who they were just, just as if it was fun.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: And they um- there was one Indian chief's daughter, had a baby, and she went down to the river and she didn't know how to get across. And that was during this battle. And she saw somebody on a pony getting ready to get across the river. And what did she do but sneak up there and grab that pony's tail. And she had the baby in a shawl and held that in her teeth and held on to that pony and she got across the river that way.³³

Hallwas: Mm.

Blum: Just- really something.

Hallwas: I've uh- I've heard various opinions on uh, Isaac Galland³⁴, who was here-

³² The Sauk/Sac were called the 'People of the Yellow Earth,' which distinguishes them from the Foxes who were called the 'Red Earth People.' The Sauk and Fox were originally two distinct groups. During the 1700s, a French attack on the Foxes caused the two tribes to join forces and form a close alliance, which helped to affect unification. The Treaty of 1815 officially named the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri as a distinct tribe, and they were removed to northeast Missouri from Iowa and Illinois. Source: "History of the Tribe."
<http://www.sacandfoxks.com>

³³ Likely a misinterpreted retelling of this account: "Wishita, a fine looking man, & a chief of considerable standing, was wounded while crossing the Mississippi, but he, with great exertion, reached the western shore. Here the bank being steep, she [his sister] tried to get him out, but could not succeed, & was obliged to leave him behind her on account of her company, which was already in advance of her. She had crossed the river on a pony, carrying her child, about a year old, before her. They hurried on, fearing an attack of our army, or an attack of the Sioux, as they were now in their country." Source: [Spencer, John W.], *The Early Days of Rock Island and Davenport: The Narratives of J. W. Spencer and J. M. D. Burrows*, Milo Milton Quaife, Editor, 1872; reprint Chicago: Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1942, p. 73.

³⁴ Isaac Galland (1791-1858) was an entrepreneur, land speculator, doctor, author, and frontiersman credited with attracting Joseph Smith, Jr. to Commerce, Illinois (later Nauvoo), and selling 20,000 acres of land and the city of Commerce to the Mormons. Galland converted to the Mormon faith and while he was suspected of misusing church funds, he remained in high esteem, being considered a Mormon benefactor. Source: Hudson, D., Bergman, M. and Horton, L. (2009). *The biographical dictionary of Iowa*. Iowa City: Published for the State Historical Society of Iowa by the University of Iowa Press. pp. 176-177.

Blum: Yes, he was uh-

Hallwas: And so- so- Of course he was evidently one of the early founders of Keokuk, too, I guess-

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: -and is pretty highly regarded down there. He's not as highly regarded by-

Blum: [overlapping] No.

Hallwas: the Mormons up here.

Blum: No.

Hallwas: I- I don't know quite what to make out of it.

Blum: No. No. He was um, a traitor. He was- No, he wasn't um- he wasn't a good man.

Hallwas: Probably a um, uh, spent a good deal of time in land investments, evidently, uh-

Blum: [overlapping] He's what you'd call a shyster.³⁵

[both laugh]

Hallwas: Yes, speculator, shyster. Yeah.

Blum: [laughs] Yes, he was. [pause]

Hallwas: Where- how many Mormons do you think were left behind when they-

[40:00]

The exodus took place in eighteen forty-six [1846]? How many would you estimate were- were left in town?

Blum: Well, I don't know, but you know, the most of them left in January and February when they could cross on the ice. And then they um- they were- they were still leaving on September the seventeenth. You see, when the Battle of Nauvoo was fought, there was- the sick, the lame,

³⁵ "A person who is professionally unscrupulous especially in the practice of law or politics". Source: "Shyster". Merriam-Webster.com.

and the halt³⁶ were the ones that couldn't go. The ones that- they had to have um, certain requirements, before they started West. Otherwise, they'd be a handicap on the journey, if they didn't have enough. That the rest of them would have to take care of all these that weren't prepared, you know. They'd all- all fall. But um, so they had a list made of what they had to have. They had to have- they had to have tools, they had to have seeds, and they wouldn't find any stores along the way, you see. So- and they had to take enough food, you know, to last a year.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: Until they had new crops. And you see, they had to have um, a good wagon, and they had to have several good teams of horses, and they had to have a cow, and a sheep, oh they would have- it was quite a list they had to have, before they could start. And um- so the ones that were left were the ones that couldn't raise these requirements, you know. So- when the battle- when the Battle of Nauvoo was fought, why, it was um, it was a pretty one-sided affair. See, the good, strong fellows were away. The ones that could- were meant to provide for all these things, and the ones that couldn't were left here to- you know, to fight.

Hallwas: There's a lot of different uh, opinions on the uh, the whole Mormon episode, of course.

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: A lot of controversy, even.

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: Ah, is there anything in particular that um, that you see written down, now and again, that you disagree with? About the- the Mormon era? And in other words, are there- what are some of the most common misconceptions about uh, the Mormons? Here? And- and- the- the county people?

Blum: Well, I think it was a lot of jealousy involved. And um, even today, Carthage and Warsaw are bitter against the Mormons. Very bitter. And then this uh, President Oaks³⁷ up at BYU [Brigham Young University] was in Carthage um, was it a year ago?

³⁶ The word is a Germanic one that Old English spelled as halt or healt; it's from the verb healtian, which meant to walk with a limp. Source: www.worldwidewords.org

³⁷ Dallin Harris Oaks (1932-) is an American jurist, educator, and religious leader who serves as the First Counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). From 1971 to 1980, Oaks served as the 8th president of Brigham Young University (BYU), the largest religious university in the United States. Source: "Elder Dallin H. Oaks", *Leader Biographies: Official Biographies for leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, LDS Church Newsroom

Hallwas: A year, yeah.

Blum: And he um, gave a book review on his book the *Carthage Conspiracy*³⁸. I thought, "Well, he's stumbling into something that he doesn't know what he's getting into." But I had a way to get out there. See, I hadn't had a car for seven years. I uh- [chuckles] I was too old to drive. And- but I did have a way to go out. And I wondered- I wondered if they would treat him civilly, or if they'd even show up. Or just what was going to happen. And uh, I- I felt that he couldn't possibly please everybody. And I was surprised at the crowd that was there. There was hardly standing room in that big place. And the um, doorways were filled. The hallways were filled. And uh, I just wondered what this man- how he would handle it. But he was very diplomatic. Very diplomatic. And this- this um [loud vehicular noise] oh, this lawyer in Warsaw-

Hallwas: Leon Lamet³⁹.

Blum: Lamet.

Hallwas: Yeah. Lamet.

Blum: Uh, he had been so bitter against the Mormons, you know. And lo and behold, he'd come too! With his hand onto this Professor Oaks' arm! And he just seemed like he was monopolize his attention! I just couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it. [laughs] But this um- any time that anyone asked a question, this man handled it so diplomatic that I think everybody was surprised.

[45:04]

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: I really do. I just marveled at him. Were you there?

Hallwas: No, I wasn't. I- sorry, I wasn't. For some reason I- I didn't know about it, and I heard about it now from half a dozen people. [stammers] So.

Blum: [overlapping] Yes. It was- It was just uh, just surprising how well he did that. I can see why he was president of BYU! [chuckles]

³⁸ *Carthage Conspiracy* deals with the general problem of Mormon/non-Mormon conflict, as well as with the dramatic story of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, and their alleged assassins. Source: Oaks, Dallin H, and Marvin S. Hill. *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

³⁹ Leon L. Lamet (1905-1990)

Hallwas: Since you've written a lot on- on Nauvoo, what- what uh, areas need to be- have more research and study done on them? What- what are the things you think people ought to be studying and writing about? The whole history of Nauvoo. Any things in particular that you think need attention?

Blum: [pause] I don't know. I've got another book coming out.

Hallwas: Oh, you do? What's it on?

Blum: [laughs] It's on Nauvoo. [both chuckle] I'm going to have more in it about the Indians, and the Captain James White⁴⁰ family. I think that doesn't uh, completely cover it. And um, [pause]

Hallwas: So it's going to deal with at- at least a lot, with the very early founding of this particular area and demographic.

Blum: [overlapping] Yes. And in the- [inaudible] a little after these things that have happened uh, recently. The- the- the addition of the statues, you know.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: And the uh- things that- like the um, Cultural Hall⁴¹, the two story building. They added the third floor to it, you know.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: And [pause] things like that! [chuckles]

Hallwas: Mmhmm. You've written some on the uh, the other groups that came to Nauvoo, too, besides the Mormons and Icarians, haven't you?

Blum: [overlapping] Yes.

Hallwas: Some of the other ethnic-

⁴⁰ Captain James White (1782-1836) is considered by many to be one of the first white settlers in Nauvoo, Illinois. Veteran of three wars. White purchased site of Nauvoo from the Indians. Source: *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), Memorial no. 6207693.

⁴¹ The Cultural Hall was dedicated by Hyrum Smith on April 5, 1844. The LDS Church acquired the structure in 1967. By that time the third story had been removed. It has since been replaced to get the building back to its original size and appearance. The building is located at 350 N Main Street (Main and Cutler). Source: Mays, K. (2015). *Picturing History: Cultural Hall, Nauvoo, Illinois. Deseret News.*

Blum: [overlapping] Uh huh.

Hallwas: ethnic groups. Of course we don't hear so much about them.

Blum: [overlapping] No.

Hallwas: Eh, eh- obviously, as- as uh, the Mormons. I uh- um, is there- is there any commercial fishing in town anymore? Anybody- anybody fish for a living? In- in uh, Nauvoo? Or is all the commercial fishing gone?

Blum: [overlapping] Oh, I don't know, I think there's few. A few. [inaudible]

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: I know Delbert Lutz⁴² is quite a fisherman. And um, [pause] hmm. I don't know who they are anymore.

Hallwas: Those are probably the chief uh, economic things. The raising of grapes and um, fishing, I suppose. Cheese making, more recently-

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: I suppose. Have been made the chief things?

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: What about wood? Was- was there ever a sawmill in town? Did people-

Blum: [overlapping]. Oh yes, yes. A lot of sawmills. And when the Mormons were here there were- there were a lot of mills along the river. Grist mills, flour mills, sawmills, steam mills- they had two steam mills! And um-

Hallwas: What is a steam mill, incidentally?⁴³

Blum: What's that?

⁴² Delbert J. Lutz (1908-1998). Source: *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), Memorial no. 183243755.

⁴³ A steam mill is a type of grinding mill using a stationary steam engine to power its mechanism. Early mills had run successfully with water power, but by using a steam engine a factory could be located anywhere, not just close to water.

Hallwas: What is a steam mill? I- I-

Blum: It runs like steam. Some of the water, you know-

Hallwas: But it- is it a saw? You mean for cutting wood, that's run by steam? Or what kind of- what- what would this- [inaudible]

Blum: [overlapping] I really- I really don't know. I can't explain that to you. I know that um, they had different kind of mills, though.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: I know my grandfather had one, that was a grist mill.⁴⁴ That was my mother's father.⁴⁵ But they were- they were all in this area down that's now under water.

Hallwas: Oh, I see.

Blum: All that's under water now. Mmhmm.

Hallwas: How much more was there, would you estimate, in terms of dry land, before the- the dam went in? A couple hundred feet? Out there?

Blum: Two blocks.

Hallwas: Oh, two blocks they-

Blum: [overlapping] Two blocks. Two blocks were inundated. All around the city, and on the lowa side as well.

Hallwas: So there were probably some early maybe Mormon buildings and so forth that are under water.

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: Oh.

⁴⁴ Ikerian Milling Company in Nauvoo, Illinois. Source: Collins, W. and Perry, C. (1905). *Past and present of the city of Quincy and Adams County, Illinois*. Chicago, Illinois: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, pp.626-627.

Also known as Icarian Mills. Source: *Nauvoo Independent* (02 Jan 1874). .

⁴⁵ Andrew Urban (1830-1903) Source: *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), Memorial no. 176422962

Blum: You see, they could- they could remove buildings, if people wanted to. But um, whether they did or not, I don't remember that.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: I really don't remember what- I know that they could remove anything you wanted to. And um, of course there were three very large islands out there.

Hallwas: Did they have names? The islands? What were they called?

Blum: [overlapping] They were numbered.

Hallwas: Oh.

Blum: One was- one was called the [inaudible] Island. That was the one nearest the shore.

[50:00]

But they were, let's see. [pause] Seven, eight, and nine. And uh, number ten was down opposite Tennessee, here on the long way around [inaudible] Very large island. But these islands were very large. Very large. Maybe one man would own um, oh, fifty acres on it. See, one man. And then they had um, oh, quite a- quite a strip of- it was ten- ten acres, and then these strips that was all around it, and so on. And I asked, [loud vehicular noise] "Well how do they have them marked?" And he said they'd mark trees, and they'd mark stones, and- and [of] course people accidentally got on each other's plots and cut down trees, I imagine.

Hallwas: Yeah.

Blum: But um, they were big. And people bought them for the wood.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: The wood was on, you see- we wouldn't burn coal, then. We burned wood. And um- and the uh, the Germans would always keep a two year supply of wood on hand in case the river didn't freeze over one winter. And you see, the ice had to be strong enough to hold up a team of horses, a wagon, a load of wood, and two men.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: So they couldn't go out there the first time it was zero, you know.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: It was um- you had to understand it. And there was more danger crossing the throughs, between these islands. They were dangerous spots because both of the- the trees made a protection. And so the- the throughs didn't freeze over like the river did. And of course they'd have to cross those throughs. And um, every once in a while a wagon would go down.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: That's a true danger. You had to understand it.

Hallwas: Did- I suppose they did a lot of ice cutting in the wintertime, too-

Blum: [overlapping] Oh, yeah.

Hallwas: -out on the river.

Blum: Oh yes. Farmers would put up ice- they'd have their um, their ice houses. They'd make two walls, you know, and fill up with sawdust and, and they'd- oh, the farm- most of the farm- the prosperous farmers- the industrious ones, well they had ice houses, and then of course we had two- two meat- two meat uh, markets here. And they had large ice houses. And of course they all looked for a- a- [pause] oh what's it called? [pause] A bad winter.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: Because they wanted just cold and they looked forward to a real, cold winter, you know. They'd get their wood home and their ice made. And if it didn't freeze over one winter they'd call that an open winter. There was all kinds of open winters they didn't get wood home.

Hallwas: Hmm. [pause] This um, when- when did the school start out here at the priory? They- they um- I understand that the church goes- the Catholic Church goes back a long time, here in town.

Blum: Yes.

Hallwas: But uh, does the uh- did they have a school out here all that time? Since the- the turn of the century in Macomb [Nauvoo]?

Blum: [overlapping] They- they've uh, celebrated their centennial.

Hallwas: Oh, have they?

Blum: Mmhmm. Yes. Yes the- the Catholic Church was here the longest, then the Lutheran, and then the Presbyterian, and then the Methodist. They've all celebrated their centennial.

Hallwas: What is this building out in back of your home here? What does that date back to?

Blum: Well, I don't think it was a Mormon building, because it's got a wine cellar underneath. The Mormons weren't interested in making wine, or raising grapes, so they didn't need wine cellars. And no one would build a house and then put a wine cellar under it, you know.

Hallwas: Mm.

Blum: Not a- an actual wine cellar, I mean. So I feel the- that this Mister Cambre⁴⁶ who owned it and had the big thing here, was the one that built the house and the uh, the wine cellar. See that's just my opinion.

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: They- I just- it's just common sense, you know.

Hallwas: Cambre was one of the big vineyard owners in town?

Blum: He was- no. No, I wouldn't say he was [inaudible] one of the biggest owners, but um- the rest of this block-

Hallwas: I see.

Blum: There was quite a big building on this- where my home is. And it was still flush with the sidewalk on the west and the north- faced the north. And it was built by a Mormon [by the] name of Davis. And um, [inaudible, possibly J.B. Aiken] acquired it after the Mormons left.

[55:00]

⁴⁶ Adolphe Cambre (1827-1907) was a French immigrant to the area, part of the Etienne Cabet group of Icarians who arrived in Nauvoo in 1849. Cambre was a carpenter and helped to refurbish and build many houses in the area. One of those mentioned in this source is described as "a brick home (complete with basement wine vault)" and may be the house Blum speaks of in this interview. Source: Coney, Wm. B.; Posadas, Barbara M. (July 13, 1984). "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Cambre House and Farm". Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

He had a general merchandise store here. And um, I don't remember just what year lightning struck it and it burned. We had no fire protection here. No, no uh, fire equipment of any kind. So the building went. So then afterwards, they knocked those brick walls in, and my husband's uncle bought this site, and the bricks- he sold the bricks for three dollars a thousand. And uh, later he built this home here. This is quite a big home. Was um- and fire took off the top of the house.

Hallwas: [overlapping] Oh!

Blum: It was quite a fancy house. And um, see, that was about thirty-four. Nineteen thirty-four [1934], I think.

Hallwas: But it originally- originally belonged to a Cambre. This area.

Blum: This- this building belonged to a- let me see. Daniel Hanmer Wells.⁴⁷

Hallwas: Mmhmm.

Blum: He bought uh, he bought all this land on the brow of the hill. And uh, he sold the land to the Mormons on long-term, easy payments. Thus, he endeared himself to them, and they honored him by naming this street in front of the temple Wells Street, after him. And this uh, Daniel Hanmer Wells didn't join the Mormons until after they had left.

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: And I think two years later he went out to Utah. And um, he became a Mormon then. But all this time, he fought in the Battle of Nauvoo [inaudible].

Hallwas: Hmm.

Blum: Well anyway, he owned this property first. And then, I think Hyrum- Hyrum Smith's name is on the abstract. I have the abstract. And uh, Amos Davis, and J.B. Aiken. That was it. I'll show you a picture of that house. The way it was.

[End of tape; 57:29]

⁴⁷ Daniel Hanmer Wells (1814-1891) was an apostle of the LDS Church later the third mayor of Salt Lake City, Utah. While he did not join the Church until 1846, he originated the term "Jack Mormon," a non-member who supported and helped Mormons. He defended the city during the mob actions in Nauvoo and helped provide cover for evacuating Mormons. Source: *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), Memorial no. 6326412

Transcribed and researched for Western Illinois University Libraries by Julia Thompson in April of 2018.