

# Oral History - Clydia Gribble

Interviewed by April Bernard

August 9, 2004

*This the oral history interview with Clydia Gribble. It's the 9th of August, 2004 and we are in Canon City and this is from the Local History Archives oral history project. My name is April Bernard. Let's just start with the biographical data sheet.*

***Can you give me your full name?***

Clydia Gribble

***Is there a middle name?***

No middle name. I usually use NMI—no middle initial.

***And your address?***

1037 Woodlawn, #405, Canon City, Colorado, 81212-2881.

***And your telephone number?***

719-275-1796.

***And do you have an email address?***

No.

***And your date of birth?***

8/31/24.

***You have a birthday coming up..***

Yes, any day now.

***And where were you born?***

In the Walker Hospital in Florence, Colorado. It was more or less just a maternity—I have a picture. My mother was in her forties and the doctor thought it was safer for her to go to this facility. We lived in Wetmore, which is in Custer County.

***How far was that?***

Seventeen miles.

***Your ethnic or cultural group?***

Pardon me?

***Your ethnic or cultural group?***

I'm not following you.

***Your ethnic background.***

I guess it's English and French.

***OK. Names and occupations of your parents.***

My mother was a housewife. My father at the time was the justice of the peace of Wetmore.

***And, I'm sorry, Wetmore?***

Wetmore, W E T M O R E.

***And what was your father's name?***

Thomas Jefferson Raybell.

***And your mother's name?***

Mateldia Gertrude Heath.

***Any others that helped raise you?***

No, just my mother and father.

***And the names of your grandparents.***

George Washington Heath and Mary Jane Moxley. Now that's my mother's parents.

***And your father's?***

Thomas Jefferson Raybell and Manervia Jane Walters.

***Any siblings?***

Not really in the home. My father had been married before, but none lived with us; they were all adults more or less when I was born.

***Do you recall any of their names?***

Well, yes. But it's not part of my history. Really they are unknown to anyone really but me.

***So were those siblings from another marriage?***

Of his first marriage and his wife died. And then he married my mother. I still correspond with a couple of nieces but it was so remote that people that know me would not know them.

***So I should just leave them out?***

Uh,huh.

***And the name of your spouse.***

George Alden Gribble. His nickname was Bo, everybody knew him by Bo.

***And the date of the marriage.***

11/17/43

***And names of children with ages or birth dates.***

Georgia Lou Gribble Martin. March 16, 1946.

***Any others?***

That's it.

***Friends or other persons significant throughout your life.***

Actually most of my friends, close friends, are actually from Westcliffe, which is in Custer County. In Park County, my goodness, they're all—ok, we were very close friends to the Hazels, Dorothy and Shorty—Amos Shorty Hazel—and their families. And then most of all the Locke's, they owned the South Park Mercantile. Harry Locke, he was the State Senator. And then Wilbur Lewis, who was the County Commissioner. And at the time in 1954, really '53, when I decided to become postmaster they helped me because that appointment was political. At that time, and they were of course, Republicans. And then of course Mr. McDannald that owned all the Hartsel Ranches and was a millionaire.

***Anybody else I should put down?***

Well, of course, when you're postmaster you know everybody and they come and go on the ranches. Kay Pocock was my clerk and Bonnie Wilcox who's moved somewhere, I think, Arizona. Her parents were Hockaday's who had the Hockaday Motors in Fairplay. And of course there is Louise Kintz, who still lives there. And most of the people on the ranches aren't there anymore. Do you live in Fairplay?

***I don't. I live in Littleton. But I'm interested in history in Park County.***

And Mr. McDannald also owned the Ken Caryl Ranch in Littleton. I've got some pictures you wouldn't believe. I'll show them to you. Mr. McDannald had ranch land; he had beautiful stock. He was very generous to the 4H children. Well, for instance, he gave my daughter a horse and we could use any of the equipment the Hartsel Ranch had to help the 4H children, for instance, when we had the contests he would gather up the animals for the children and take them. He wouldn't, but he allowed that.

***That was generous.***

It was very generous. A Texan.

***Really. There's always been a thing between Texans and....***

Yah, well, he said the one thing he didn't like to be called was a Texan. But Coloradoans and Texans don't care for each other particularly, but he was a wonderful man.

***Now you lived in Hartsel for a while.***

Yes, we lived in Hartsel really from '48 to '72. And then moved to Fairplay when I became postmaster there. Then we moved here in 1979.

***So, do you want to talk a little bit about—I have some information that your husband was the foreman on the Hartsel Ranch. When were those dates?***

Yes, he was for Mr. McDannald. At first he started out as just being over the cattle, then they turned to sheep and to horses. And at the end he was over everything on the McDannald property and holdings. I can't tell you the exact year. It was in the '60s, probably '63 maybe. Mr. McDannald flew up from Houston and passed away that night, at the ranch. And then his son Maurice took over the handling of the McDannald part of the ranch, but he also lived in Houston. And he passed away in—I can't quote the year there, either, but it was before 1970. And then we became sort of alienated from part of the McDannalds, wanted to do something different, but Maurice passed away. He had an operation on his ear and didn't make it through. But they were both wonderful men, A.T. and Maurice. And there was a lady Ms. Lacy who was a cook on the ranch for years. And she has also passed away. So everybody has gone.

***Now was Lacy a McDannald?***

No, she was just really a native of around Cripple Creek, Minnie Lacy. And many people knew her because she was very active in the Eastern Star in Fairplay.

***Now what is the Eastern Star?***

It's a fraternal organization, the feminine part of the Masons. And there's also the Oddfellows, and the Rebeccas in Fairplay.

***And those were some organizations that were in existence at the time you were....***

Oh, yes, I imagine they still are. Well, I think maybe the past level grand of South Park Lodge #21 the Rebeccas have her picture. I think they have ceased to function. Well, the fraternal organizations aren't as popular as they used to be.

***Yah, lots of activities going on. Now it was in the mid sixties to late sixties that your husband was manager of the Hartsel Ranch?***

No, he started in 1948 when we moved to Hartsel. He was from up at the last four months of his working days. But we still stayed in Hartsel.

***So like 1948 to 1968?—40 years?***

Uh-huh.

***So he was responsible you said for a variety of different things?***

Oh yes, of the property.

***So he would direct the other folks who worked on the ranch?***

Well, he hired the employees and also had to fire them. Saw that the hay was harvested. And that the sheep and sheep permits up on the mountains out of Westcliffe and also some over on Loveland Pass. It was a big operation.

***How big do you estimate the ranch was at that time period?***

I think it tells somewhere here—the McDannald Ranches. There is so much that is deeded and—I believe this is it here. (rustling paper)

***So is this the acres, then, 11,560?***

I think so, but then there would be much more with the state lease and so on.

***Jane may be interested in this—I'll tell her about it. Was the ranch always called the Hartsel Ranch or was it called the Hartsel Springs Ranch?***

It was always as far as I know. Mr. McDannald purchased the ranches—he purchased both the upper and lower Spinney, the Buckley ranch, the Witcher ranch, the Colton ranch, Badger Springs ranch. He almost owned all of the land between Hartsel and Fairplay up to the Platte Ranch. And then he owned the land that was twenty miles the other side of Hartsel where the Witcher Ranch was.

***Did he start accumulating all that before 1948 or throughout the time period?***

He had purchased the biggest part of it by '48 when we went—no, he obtained the Buckley ranch later, after we had been there. And the Badger Springs, I believe. But he bought a lot of the land as the people wanted to sell.

***Now, when your husband was managing the ranch, were you the postmistress at the same time?***

The term is postmaster. And, yes, I went to work—he started in 1948 and I started in the post office in 1954 in Hartsel. And then in '72 I was promoted to Fairplay.

***So was it just a different post office?***

Different post office, same title. And Hartsel was much smaller than Fairplay.

***What did you do as a postmaster?***

Well, you were responsible for selling stamps, receiving the mail, dispatching the mail, waiting on the customers. You're the master of the post.

***You had other employees working with you?***

Yes, I did in Hartsel, just one. At a time. Because it was more in Fairplay I had two.

***And so did that person have a lot of different duties?***

Yah, they do everything the postmaster can except be the manager.

***Now did you, when you were postmaster, was there a lot of growth—how many people lived there at the time?***

Well, in Fairplay, of course there had started to be growth. In Hartsel there was because I got a large mailing in from a land development company, I forget what their name was and they mailed out a lot of brochures. I have pictures of that. And the office advanced to third class down there. But in Fairplay that being a county seat, there was always lots of mail. A lot of work.

***So much more than what you experienced in Hartsel.***

Yah, because it was an office of the second class. And also when I was in Fairplay I was a trainer postmaster and I had two other offices to help train officers in charge and postmasters. And then I went for almost six months to Leadville as officer in charge. And my clerks handled the office totally.

***So you were training the folks up there.***

Yes, I did other things, had a lot of fun.

***Now you said that Fairplay was third class..***

Second class.

***Or second class, what does all that mean?***

It was graded according to a revenue unit that is the amount of stamps you sold, but that figure changed from year to year according to how much a postage stamp is. When I started a postage stamp was only three cents and I can't remember what they ended up. But in Fairplay we,... I can't remember just how many revenue units we had, but each year you had to keep track of your sales. And then that determined your class of office by the revenue units, by the amount of mail you sell, you move.

***So then the more things that you sold then that made it possible to move up. And did you want that as a postmaster?***

Oh, absolutely. It's more salary, more clerk hours.

***Oh, so you would get more help.***

Yes, yes.

***Now were there specific guidelines if you, like if there was a small town and they wanted a post office did you have to have so much in population?***

The post offices were already established, but some were discontinued. Very small, for instance there was one at Glentivar, Colorado, down below Hartsel, and Garo. And they discontinued so many they did stop doing that. And then they would consolidate offices and like I say, I retired in '84. I was thirty years in. But I didn't... I'm not that familiar with the procedures now. But a lot of little post offices were in grocery stores or,.. but it's, as you know federal employment. It's no longer appointed by...

***???***

Yah, it was political. And that's why many times a different party was in, you'd get a different postmaster. It was a political problem.

***Now when you were the postmaster was that when they closed the Garo and the Glentivar post offices?***

Yes, the postmaster in Glentivar had to bring her stamps, certain things in to me, to my post office and then I sent them on in. It didn't give me any authority over her, but that's just the way it was done. And I think Garo took theirs into the Fairplay post office.

***So did they still operate that they had to take things to their own post offices?***

Then the mail they would receive would be on a route.

***What year do you think about that was?***

That was probably in '52 or so.

***Oh, really. Now at that time when you were postmaster and your husband was managing the Hartsel ranch, did the train still...?***

Oh, no, no. It was a long time before then. It came in Star Route trucks, pickup. I did not ever see a train.

***I think they quit back like in the thirties, I want to say.***

I believe so. The depots were there. Mr. McDannald owned the property the depots were on.

***Did he do anything with those buildings?***

Well, store grain and things in them.

***Do you know how many head of cattle he had, or...?***

Oh, it was thousands, I can't remember. He also had registered Herefords. I'm not very good at statistics but he had registered Herefords and commercial Herefords and he had Black Angus, too. He had wonderful horses.

***So he had quite a few varieties..?***

Oh, yes. He had everything. And sheep.

***Oh, and sheep, too, you said. Now at that time when you lived there, how many people do you think lived in Hartsel?***

Well, probably a hundred or so. Not many. Most of them were ranches. And we had several families from Taos, New Mexico. The Spanish families that helped with the sheep.

***And how did you and your husband end up in Hartsel?***

Well, he came up here looking for employment. We hadn't been married all that long in '48, about five years. And we left Westcliffe. Mr. McKenzie sold his ranch, the Beckwith Ranch in Westcliffe.

***So then he had worked at that ranch prior to that?***

No, no. He was familiar with the Hartsel area, because the family ties with the Rogers family who owned the ranches down at...oh, they're under the Eleven Mile Canyon Dam, Howbert, and he had worked on the Witcher Ranch, which is below Hartsel. And he was familiar with the area. And most everybody that needed work, on the ranch type, would go to the Hartsel Ranch.

***So, if you weren't that great, you just...?***

You'd go down the road. But we bought a home so we were secure. We didn't need to live on the ranch. Then I became postmaster.

***So you bought a home in the Hartsel area? Where was that at?***

Well it was right in Hartsel. I can show it to you in the pictures. Actually it was in between the property of the Hartsel Ranch. You'll have to see it to know. But when the sold the Hartsel Ranch, when Mr. McDannald died, he left a will. So the estate had to sell something to pay the income tax, to pay the inheritance tax, I believe. So they put both the Ken Caryl Ranch up for sale and the Hartsel Ranch. And the Hartsel Ranch sold. And it sold to the Badger Basin Grazing Association and the Eleven Mile Grazing Association. It was federal money. And they got three million for it. I can remember the checks came in, three different checks. But that's not much money considering what they would get now. So he kept the Ken Caryl Ranch. And for three years we drove...he lived down at the Ken Caryl and I would drive down on the weekends and he'd come home in the week and we got tired of that.

***So your husband actually had to go down and manage the Ken Caryl Ranch after that. You said the grazing association bought the Hartsel Ranch.***

Yes, and they sold all the water, so that's why it's so desolate looking up there.

***So they sold the water to...?***

Different, like Aurora and I believe...

***So not the grazing association...***

Yes, they sold some, too. But some of the ranchers had already sold their water. Because they would get more money out of that than they could possibly make ranching. But it also ruined the land. They turned it into grazing associations. So they would graze it just in the summer. Graze the meadows rather than cut the hay.

***Oh, so they couldn't do the haying they would just be doing the grazing.***

And several people, they formed associations to buy these.

***The ranches?***

The members of the association.

***So some of the ranchers would get together.***

Mostly they were ranchers from down here, they weren't ranchers in the Park.

***So people from this area, Canon City, ...***

I know that Bob Frederickson, one of the lawyers here—he's my lawyer—put the deal together for the Eleven Mile Grazing Association. And I know one of the ranchers down here, Nate Patton, was one of the holders there.

***And so the folks that were local didn't really get involved because...?***

Not so much, they didn't have any cattle to put on it. But they could have, I guess. But it was outlying ranchers that needed summer pasture.

***Now, were there other... It sounds like those organizations were formed more for people outside of the community. Were there organizations within the community, you said something a little bit about the fraternal order. Were there other things, you said 4-H.***

Oh, the 4-H. Yes they still have that. And I think there's still an award honoring my husband, I believe. The Bo Gribble kindness award. I forget the real title of it. My sister-in-law set it up when he died. And I believe I received a thank you note once from one of the recipients. The 4-H was just like any 4-H setup, if you're familiar with it. And Hartsel was called the fifth H. 4-H. Well, Hartsel. Head, hands, heart and health, that's the four H's. 4-H. So they added the fifth H, which was the Hartsel group.

***Now you said that Mr. McDannald helped the 4-H a lot.***

Well, he would. Anything that was,... that he could do. But really it was through my husband and he didn't object to anything.

***Was there like a specific, like a fairly large thing or event that you helped out with?***

Cydia: Well we did every year the 4-H. And Jefferson was a big part of it. And then Bailey, Platte Canyon.

***So you all would get together.***

Yes, and the fair was held in Fairplay. They used to do it in conjunction with the burro race. And then they stopped that, well the burro race fell through. We had a fight with Leadville.

***Oh, how did that come about?***

I don't know what happened. They didn't like us very well. So then they'd go over Mosquito Pass to Leadville. Then something happened and so then Fairplay would go to the top of Mosquito Pass and back. I don't know what they do now.

***I have never been to it, so I'm not sure what they do now. Now were there other groups, community type get-togethers or gatherings that you went to?***

Oh there was always PTA in Fairplay. But there really wasn't that much community life. Friends in Hartsel, you know, you'd get together and play cards. But in Fairplay the cattlemen had a banquet and dance once a year or so. The Hut Murphy, oh gosh, where the 4-H building, where the extension office is now, I think. And there was, I think the American Legion. Doesn't the American Legion have a hut there in Fairplay yet?

***I don't know. A quonset hut.***

Yah, a quonset hut up there. And of course there were the churches. Hartsel did not have a church.

***Oh, no. No church then. So what did you folks do?***

Well, I went to Buena Vista to church.

***Oh, you did. So not to Fairplay, you had a church that you went to in Buena Vista.***

And school activities. Everybody took part in the school activities.

***So was there always a school in that time period you were there in Hartsel?***

Yes, it went through the sixth grade, and then everybody went to Fairplay.

***After the sixth grade. Now at that time, there was I think there was the elementary school and the high school.***

Let's see, there was the junior high. No the two years...it was all together when my daughter went. High school and the six, seven, eight, nine, grade, I guess. But her last two years she came to Canon and went to St. Scholastic, she got bored. But then after she had left school, they built the new school in Fairplay and they kept the other part for the grade school.

***So the entire time then that you were in Hartsel your daughter went through sixth grade in Hartsel and then ...***

Then went to Fairplay.

***Did she take a bus to Fairplay?***

Yes there was a bus.

***Did that just pick up in one location?***

Yes, everybody came into Hartsel and then they picked up children on their way to Fairplay. And there is no school in Hartsel. And I can't remember the year they discontinued it.

***Now were there some businesses in Hartsel that you remember?***

Oh, yes. There was the South Park Mercantile that was owned by the Locke brothers and they sold a lot of machinery to the farmers and anything they could get, they would get for you. And then there was the Hartsel Mercantile and they had some cabins, motel cabins, sort of, that were rustic. And they had a little restaurant. And then the big hotel was there. And it burned while we were there. Burned right down.

***What year was that?***

Oh, golly. That had to have been, I would say in the sixties.

***Do you recall what happened?***

No. Something just ignited, and I remember it burning.

***Now did Hartsel at that time have like a local fire...?***

Well they had the volunteer fire department, but they never lost a foundation.

***Are you trying to say they weren't very effective?***

Well, it was usually so cold and in the middle of the night. But we had a lot of fun. We always had what we called the fireman's ball, after a fire. Immediately after. Everybody got together for drinks. Because it was so cold, usually. And the fire truck would freeze up.

***So was your husband part of the volunteer fire department?***

No. Oh, he always went, but there was no formal fire department. Whoever could drive the truck did. Usually it was froze up. They had a very bad fire at Hartsel Ranch time one time. It burned both their houses. And then they had to move their other houses in. The main house and the cook house.

***Now when did that happen?***

I couldn't tell you what year. Probably back in the sixties or fifties. It was in the sixties.

***So you're saying the main house...***

Yes, what we called the main house was where Mr. McDannald always kept for himself and his guests. And then there was the cook house where at one time Miss Lacy would cook for the hired hands that lived in the bunk house.

***So then those buildings were pretty much destroyed?***

Yes, totally. Then they moved other buildings in.

***Oh, from the Ranch or...?***

From down below by Eleven Mile from the Rogers Ranch.

***So they moved in maybe a main house type thing and a cook type...***

Yes, the ones that are there now.

***Now at that time I've heard some people say there are springs there. Did you use those?***

Oh, yes, above Hartsel, the bath springs. Mr. McDannald stopped letting anybody really use them because they have uranium. And then behind our property in Hartsel somebody drilled a well and they got hot water and it would flow and we used that. It came down past our, the back of our property and we'd let the horses drink it. But in that country you would drill around and lots of times you'd get hot water that would flow.

***Just around the Hartsel area?***

Uh huh.

***About what time did he say that people can't use that any more?***

Well there again I would say it was in the sixties.

***And so had the well been tested?***

Well he somehow did. But the spring is still there. At the Hot Springs. But people used to come for baths there. But him being the person he was with a lot of money he did not want people to be able to sue him. And of course that whole country is radioactive. I'm sure. Well a lot of minerals. So I feel it is.

***I hadn't heard that. I thought there was kind of a mystery as to why...***

Well people just stopped coming and then when he found out...well he had seismograph crews come in to drill for oil and all. He had ways of, you know...

***Now was oil ever found?***

Not that we know of. If it was, they were all capped.

***Now did you go to Fairplay on a fairly, I mean, once you became a postmaster of Fairplay you probably traveled there fairly often.***

We moved there. I think our house address was 781 Hathaway. A little gray house.

***At that time your husband still managed...***

No. He had become disabled in '68. He hurt his back and just wasn't able to go back to work.

***So in about 1968 you lived in Fairplay.***

Well, no. Not till '72. In '68 hurt his back but we were still in Hartsel. And then in '72 we decided the best thing...the postmaster in Fairplay retired. I went before a selection board and was promoted to Fairplay. Because we felt it was a good thing to move into.

***So they had running water.***

Oh, yes. They had city water and that meant you had a septic tank. And it was just less rural than Hartsel. And of course a bigger post office.