

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

Interviewer: Darrel Bigham

January 28, 1980

Q: This is the 1880 census. Your grandfather William—Matthew, excuse me.

A: Matthew William.

Q: Matthew William is thirty-five, a farmer, born in Prussia. His wife, Gertrude is thirty-four and born in Bavaria. Your father Christian was eleven. He was going to school. He was born in Indiana. That would have been 1869. Were there six children altogether?

A: No, there was more but these here were the ones that lived on the farm.

Q: They were living in Armstrong Township?

A: Yes. Now that's the castle that I was telling you about. If you read in there, you'll read where the Wilhelms had it.

Q: Back to the census. Your grandfather's parents were born in Prussia and your grandmothers were born in Bavaria. You told me once how they met. Didn't they meet on the boat?

A: I think so.

Q: You have another census?

A: I don't know what that is, whether that's some of the other brothers, see? Some of the brothers, the Lintzenich brothers, is in there. Some of them.

Q: Oh, I know what this is. This is the 1870 Census. This shows him at age twenty-five with one child—your father, Christ. This eighteen hundred dollars. That's the value of the...?

A: The ground.

Q: Eighteen hundred and five hundred. I can't remember which...

A: Is it the amount of money that they had at the time?

Q: I think this is real property at eighteen hundred dollars and five hundred dollars personal property. That's what that shows, but it didn't show it on the 1880 Census. What's curious is that it's a little bit more than the people around him there. This is the atlas showing the Lintzenich farm, which is fifty-seven and a half acres, plus forty. C. Lintzenich, that's your father?

A: That's my grandfather.

Q: Your grandfather. What was his first name?

A: William.

Q: But this says C. Lintzenich. What's the difference?

A: I don't know.

Q: W.J., that's your grandfather?

A: It was William Matthew.

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

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January 28, 1980

Q: Now what is this? This is his sale?

A: That's his sale. Matthew William. See, that's his title when he sold his ground, his farm. That was in 1885.

Q: This is a public sale notice. The upper part is in English and the bottom part is in German. 'Public sale, September 8.'

A: I don't know how they ever got that 'e' in there.

Q: Is this the way you spell your name?

A: No. They got an 'e' in it. It is supposed to be L-I-N-T-Z-E-N-I-C-H.

Q: Well, how is it here on the atlas? This is spelled differently. That's now the way you spell it?

A: No. We spell it L-I-N-T-Z-E-N-I-C-H.

Q: That's the way you spell it?

A: Yes.

Q: That just doesn't look like this. Oh, okay. Well, this is misspelled too. L-I-N-T-Z-N-E-I-C-H. Is L-I-N-T-Z-E-N-I-C-H the right way?

A: Yes, that's the way we spell it.

Q: That would be the "e" and the "n" reversed. So, that one is incorrect.

A: Yes, according to the way they spell it. That's the way it is in the telephone book and everything. We've always spelled it that way all of our days.

Q: Okay, I don't want to dwell on that too long. Now, he sold his farm and moved into Evansville? It says he had two mules, a mare, four cows, three heifers, hogs, geese, chickens, and an express wagon, a hay rake, a hay bed, a cider mill, bees and hives, twelve tanks, and one distillery? Corn in the field, farming implements, household furniture, six percent interest on credit. This is fourteen miles from Evansville on the Owensville Road?

A: It's named Millersburg. Mel got this little copy up there. He sold this and then moved here to Evansville.

Q: Maybe I got your grandfather mixed up with Mrs. Emge's.

A: Yes, he had a tavern.

Q: Okay. Your grandfather did what?

A: He was just a farmer and then he came into work at Fisher's Stove Foundry.

Q: I'm glad you gave me those dates. That helped.

A: You would be surprised of the people. They had to mark down their housekeeper and farmers, blacks, and all sorts of things like that.

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Q: Well, the Census is a source of information that very few people know about. I have students using them for social history. It's a valuable source of information.

A: Well, yes, it's good that you can go back and trace that. Here is the Krack family. See, that was my grandmother's people.

Q: K- R- A-C-K?

A: Yes. There is a slew of them here in this city. My brother promised to give me pictures of that castle, I mean the college, but you know how when you visit anybody you get to talking and you forget. Now that was in 1870.

Q: One thing that you talked about last Thursday when we were over across the street that I wanted to spend a little bit more time with you on, since it was so fascinating, was the cigar business.

A: Yes, that cigar business.

Q: You were in it for almost fifty years?

A: Yes, it was a long time to work in a place like that.

Q: You went forty-nine and a half years?

A: Well, they was gonna finally go down to going out of business. People was coming in there to buy them and they was eliminating all their workers.

Q: So, you didn't get the bonus, did you?

A: No, but I lived just the same. It would have been nice. We got a pin and one hundred dollars when you was there twenty-five years.

Q: You didn't get anything when you retired other than social security?

A: Only social security. I worked a year over my social security and then I got that lump sum of money for the year that I worked. That amounted to more than the five hundred dollars.

Q: Well, I wonder. You were in a union for how long?

A: Oh, quite a while, but then it dropped us because it couldn't get nowhere.

Q: What was this? Was this the Cigar Workers Union, Amalgamated?

A: Yes, Amalgamated.

Q: The one that Samuel Gompers founded?

A: Yes, they have books and everything. They had meetings. We didn't hide ourselves. Do you know where the fire station is on First Avenue? They had an upstairs and we had our meetings up there.

Q: How old were you when you joined? Do you remember?

A: I guess about thirty or thirty - five, something in there. I must have been that old because I know that I joined in about 1942 or 1945, something along in that area.

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

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January 28, 1980

Q: In that year, you mean?

A: I think my father was still living at the time.

Q: So, you think you may have joined when the Depression was on? You were born in 1901?

A: In 1901, yes. It could have been along in the time around when the banks were having their trouble and everything.

Q: How long did you stay in the union?

A: We never did get to. They never did accept it. We just signed up for it, but they never would accept it.

Q: So, it was only a brief time?

A: Just a brief time. I brought something out that I thought was interesting. In going back sometimes you get hold of some of the voids. This is our old patrol police patrols and stuff like that. Andy and the boys never got into anything but what they had to have things from it.

Q: What is this?

A: This is a annual book of the Police ...

Q: A souvenir history of the Police Department. Well, this is 1918, I guess.

A: Yes, that goes way back.

Q: Chris Lintzenich. Now that was your father.

A: That's my dad. I pointed out some of these buildings in here. You know these were some of the buildings that we had here on the West Side, the business.

Q: We could go through here and you could talk about some of them.

A: Here was Globe-Bosse Furniture Factory. Years ago, Evansville was noted for being the furniture factory of the world. Globe-Bosse was a big compartment. Here's F. J. Folz Company. These is all places here on the West Side. There was St. Joseph Avenue, Ohio Street and all them places. Just little different things. There is the Old National Bank. That's how it looked way back then.

Q: I guess that's Peoples Savings Bank.

A: It's the Old National, isn't it? Oh, no, that's on Main Street, isn't it? I thought it the was the Old National Bank when I looked at it. There's Buckskins Manufacturing Company. That was on Main Street-a big overall factory. There's all different little businesses on the west side.

Q: Which one did you want to point out?

A: There's Heldt and Voelker Company. They're still here.

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January 28, 1980

Q: It was known as Heldt Company then?

A: Well, it's Heldt and Voelker. Voelker is his brother-in-law. They all went in with it. You would never believe that was a patrol wagon. I don't think they had any of the bicycle policemen in there. They had all the policemen on bicycles when they didn't have cars. They had a couple of dogs. It was really interesting.

Q: You told me your father came on the Police Department under Mayor Boehne, is that right? He was on until he died?

A: Under Bill Dress he retired.

Q: So, he was on for thirty or forty years?

A: Twenty-eight years and then he retired at sixty-five.

Q: Your father was listed in this book as turnkey.

A: He was sergeant when he quit. He was a sergeant at that time when he retired. When Bill Dress was elected, he just handed in his badge and didn't go back to work. He was always a Democrat. Bill Dress was a Democrat too, but we just didn't have the right feeling toward him because he was down here at the West Side Bank when we lost all our money and only got thirty-three percent back on the dollar.

Q: Tell me about that. The West Side Bank closed in 1933 or something like that?

A: 1933 or 1934, something like that. They let everybody go in there up till noontime and put in money. I had a friend who lives on Eleventh Avenue and Iowa Street. Her mother sold their farm. Do you know that just about a half hour before they closed, they took her seventeen thousand dollars and told her the bank was safe and it wasn't gonna close? It wasn't but a few minutes and they shut the doors. Now, that's a dirty way to do people.

Q: They got back thirty-three percent? When did they get the money back?

A: Well, you know what they did? Now this is the gospel truth. I'm just not making it up, either. It's true! We owed seven hundred and fifty dollars on our house. Do you know they wouldn't even give us the money that we had in the bank? They wouldn't give us that on our house. They sold our house to Mead Johnson. We had to go to Mead Johnson and pay our house off.

Q: You had to pay off the seven hundred and fifty to Mead Johnson? Now, you and your brother?

A: No, my father. My father owned the house. He had to take it down there and pay Mead Johnson. They wouldn't let you have enough money out of the bank to settle your house up.

Q: So, that's why you didn't feel comfortable about Mayor Dress? Were there a lot of other people that felt the same way?

A: Oh, you better believe it. There was just a lot of them.

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

Interviewer: Darrel Bigham

January 28, 1980

Q: All on the west side?

A: Well, see he lived here beyond Second Avenue on the west side. Of course, it wasn't the west side then because Fulton Avenue was the dividing line for the west side. At one time our house was considered 931. Instead of 2031 it was considered 931. It started from Fulton Avenue and came down. Now it comes from Main street down. It just wasn't fair that they took the money away. I never will forget this. My mother was like anybody and she would have a Christmas savings. In the spring of the year she would put that money away, and then if she needed anything throughout the year, she would go get it. She wouldn't feel like she was hurting what she did have in there. Of course, she could have paid the house off, but she just kept that money like she was paying rent and she thought she was doing something by saving her money. If she would have paid the place off, she'd have been seven hundred and fifty dollars to her good. Of course, just like my friends' mother, the poor old soul. She sold her farm out there near St. Joe for all that money and what did she get? It just wasn't fair. If they knew they weren't so solid they could have said we're not sure, but they just took that money. It just wasn't right. Now the Permanent over there, they never lost a nickel, those people over there. They got every bit of their money.

Q: Was the West Side Bank the only one to close on the west side?

A: No, they all closed, but they reopened.

Q: This was the only one to close permanently?

A: Yes.

Q: One other thing I wanted to go into. We spent a lot of time last Thursday on your church, your work and the neighborhood. You lived in this house about sixty years?

A: Sixty years, the sixth of January.

Q: You've lived here by yourself for a long time?

A: I have lived by myself for the last nine years. My brother died. He lived with me and then he passed away. My sister passed away about ten or eleven years ago. I've just got the one brother in Florida. He lived in Ohio and then he moved to Florida. It's just us two left. Of course, he's younger than I am. I'm eleven years older than he is. That makes him a little bit younger. Of course, I may outlast him, who knows?

Q: We talked about a number of things about the west side as I remember, including your memories of the way ~n which German was used when you were growing up. You remember German Day.

Undoubtedly, a lot of German expressions and words in songs come back to you.

A: Yes, oh yes, especially Christmas songs because Christmas was a big thing over at St. Boniface for us kids. We would go to five thirty Mass on Christmas morning. After Mass we would go over to school. They would always take all the benches out of the room and put a great big Christmas tree up there.

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

Interviewer: Darrel Bigham

January 28, 1980

Q: On Christmas morning?

A: After five o'clock Mass. They would bring big wooden buckets all full of candy and things. Each kid would get an orange and then' an apple and a big sack of candy with peanuts. They would all stand around the Christmas tree. You never seen so many kids at church Christmas morning. They would sing all the German songs around there, all of them old church songs. I will never forget how things were.

Q: Then you would come home and have presents or what?

A: Well, we always had our Christmas on Christmas Eve. About two weeks before Christmas the doors would always be locked. The gifts would be in there. We had to wait till Christmas Eve. We always had our Christmas. We always had plenty of candy, nuts, oranges, and everything. Of course, we had more than a lot of kids had because my dad was on police force and that pay come in every week. Other kids' dads were either coal miners or some other kind of work. Sometimes they had a lot of work and sometimes they didn't. That made a difference. We always had a good Christmas and a good Easter and everything because my dad was a man that never spent much. When he got his money, he would come home to mom and she took care of it. It never was all mine or yours. It was for the home.

Q: You lived in this house sixty years? Where did you live before?

A: Before we moved here, we lived at Illinois and Lemcke Avenue. We lived there about three years. We moved from there and lived on Michigan where the Haymakers Association tore them two houses down. We lived there. We moved from Virginia over to Michigan to Illinois and then down here.

Q: You were born in the city?

A: Yes. Right down Tenth Avenue across the street from the church. You know, where they have those barber shop quartets practice singing over there?

Q: That was your home?

A: Right on the alley, in back of it is where we lived. A little bitty house on the alley.

Q: The house doesn't exist now?

A: Yes, it does. It is still there yet.

Q: You spent most of your life in this house. When you were growing up here and in the other locations what were the occupations of your friend's fathers?

A: Their fathers. It was carpenters and ...

Q: Coal Miners?

A: Coal Miners. The Helfrichs were in business. They lived across the street from us. Their father lived across the street. They were in the hardware business. They built the building where the Haymakers Association is. The Helfrichs built that and had a hardware store there. We lived in back of them on Michigan Street at that time. We helped build the place. We walked all over everything.

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

Interviewer: Darrel Bigham

January 28, 1980

Q: The fathers of your friends were mostly...

A: The Nurnberns lived on the corner. They had the furniture store. The Millers lived on the corner of Eleventh Avenue. Mr. Miller was a druggist at the drug store, at Currey-Mueller Drug Company. This drug store was where the Koressels Paint Shop is. We had a little grocery store there on the corner. They were just ordinary. Some of them worked at the broom factory. We had a broom factory.

Q: Where was that?

A: It was over here by the creek on Ninth Avenue between Virginia and Michigan. They made what they call the little lady broom and mops and stuff. A lot of women worked at the broom factory. They sorted broom corn. I never did see it, but I know different ones who worked there. They worked at the cotton mills. Everybody had a different job, those that worked. Some of them were fortunate enough that they could go to college or something like that. Or to high school. Us kids didn't want to go to school. When we was able to get out of the Eighth Grade, we was done with it. Of course, we went to St. Boniface, my brother and me. My sister didn't, but my brother and I we went to St. Boniface. When we was in the Seventh Grade Mama took us out and sent us to Centennial School because she thought we could get a little better advance to go into high school. We didn't have Catholic High Schools I don't think Memorial had even started up yet at that time. She thought that we would get a better education but my brother and I couldn't see it that way. We stayed at home. I was taking music lessons and helped with the housework. When I was sixteen, I went to work.

Q: That was at the tobacco factory?

A: I could have went to Sears and Roebuck. They opened up at that time. My friends all worked there, and I wanted to work there with them because you stick with the kids that are your age, so I went there to work.

Q: How did you get to work? It was what how many blocks?

A: Well, see the street cars ---

Q: Down Franklin?

A: Yes, we had trolley streetcars. They had tracks and wires up there. They ran on trolleys. We would walk from Illinois Street to Oakley, get off at Illinois and walk to Oakley. Then later, some of the people ran buses. They had little trucks and would put seats inside of them and you would ride like that. They charged us a nickel a ride and we rode it like that. Most of the time we walked in the summertime. It wasn't nothing to walk that far. When you stop and think how everything was here and how you are afraid somebody will come along and nab you. As kids we used to walk ... Do you know where the Nut Club has their ball diamond? We had a park there called Cook's Park. It was an amusement park. We would walk all the way down from Illinois and Lemckle Avenue, all the way out there to Cook's Park and cross through Wabash Avenue, over the bridge and everything. You weren't afraid. You would come on down the street at ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock at night and nobody never bothered you. There was a Colored Row right here on Ninth Avenue, right off of Wabash, up ~n there. There was just a long row of brick houses.

Interview with Marie Lintzenich

Interviewer: Darrel Bigham

January 28, 1980

Q: Did you say on Ninth Avenue?

A: On Ninth Avenue, yes.

Q: It was off of Wabash?

A: It was off of Ninth Avenue on Michigan towards the creek. it was just a row. One house hooked on to the others. Colored people lived there, but you weren't afraid of those Colored people.

Q: Where did the people work who lived there?

A: Well, they worked the coal mines and at the lumber mills.

Q: Wasn't there a settlement up here on Twelfth Avenue and Virginia?

A: No, that was right in back of Bernardin's. There was a row of houses back there, them brick houses where colored people lived, in back of Bernardin's back there. Nobody ever bothered us. Those Colored people was just as nice as you would ever want to find. They didn't bother you. Now, why my goodness! Baptistown used to not be bad out there, on Lincoln Avenue and those places. You could go out there and get barbecue or anything like that. The had pit barbecue. Nobody never bothered us. People just scared up hatred between the Whites and the Colored. I think that's made us like this.

Q: You moved into this house in 1918 or 1919?

A: Something like that.

Q: You took the trolley to work most of the time?

A: Yes, and then they got the buses. Our streetcars ran until twelve o 'clock at night. Main Street was open every Friday and Saturday night. You could go downtown. You could go shopping and things and come home on the streetcar. It wasn't nothing, you know? Now, they quit at six o'clock. You can't go nowhere if you don't have a car. Of course, I got rid of my car because you had to take everybody home and then you would come home by yourself. I thought I might as just get rid of it and go on the bus or something or by cab.

Q: Well, I've got to run off and get going. Thank you.