

Interview with  
MRS. ROBERT J. LONG

on  
March 3, 1964

by  
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Abilene, Kansas

MR. BARRASH: March 3, 1964. Oral interview with Mrs. R.J. Long at her home.

Mrs. Long, will you please identify yourself and tell us your relationship to The Belle Springs Creamery?

MRS. LONG: I was bookkeeper at The Belle Springs Creamery Company for thirteen years.

MR. BARRASH: Mrs. Long, how did The Belle Springs Creamery come to be established in Abilene, Kansas?

MRS. LONG: The Creamery Company was first established about nine miles south of Abilene, and three and one-half miles east, at a place called Belle Springs, Kansas, in 1886. Mr. Forney moved from his farm in October, 1889 to Abilene. By this time a new and larger plant was built in Abilene.

MR. BARRASH: Who was responsible for the founding of The Belle Springs Creamery and for bringing it to Abilene?

MRS. LONG: Father -- Mr. Forney -- was on the farm. He realized the increasing of butter and eggs that were taken to the stores in Abilene to get in trade provisions and goods and a credit balance increased above that of the need, so there these farmers began to look for different outlets. So, on a hot day in August in 1885, in the shade of a box elder tree, was held a meeting attended by J.K. Forney, J.E. Missley, Eli and Christian Hoffman, and W.G. Hershey. All of these men had been identified with dairy business in Lancaster County, and they decided to have Mr. J.K. Forney make an investigation of the creameries-- which he should visit his home place in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania--which

visit he took in the winter of 1885 and 1886.

MR. BARBASH: Mrs. Long, what was the result of your father's trip to Pennsylvania?

MRS. LONG: My father's visit to Pennsylvania--he returned to Kansas, and the matter was discussed with the parties named before, and they decided to go ahead with the building of the Creamery--which they did in 1886 at Belle Springs.

MR. BARBASH: Mrs. Long, when and why was the Creamery transferred to Abilene, Kansas?

MRS. LONG: The first Belle Springs plant was completed in November in 1886, at Belle Springs, which is about twelve miles from Abilene. Mr. Forney moved from the farm in October 1889 to Abilene. By this time they had built a new and somewhat larger plant in Abilene, into which industry he put all of his energy. They moved to Abilene for the reason that it was -- the reason for their moving to Abilene and building the Creamery was for the fact that they had railroad facilities and it was a shopping center.

MR. BARBASH: Mrs. Long, how did you become connected with The Belle Springs Creamery, and in what capacity?

MRS. LONG: In the spring of 1903, Abilene had one of its floods, I was attending Business College here in a three-story building, located at the corner of Cedar and Third. On account of the flood, the top story fell to

the basement, so, I lost my typewriter and my books, and I had not quite completed my course when they told me I might come down to the Creamery office and do some practice work there -- which I did -- and started as a stenographer in 1903.

MR. BARBASH: Mrs. Long, when did you start to work at the Creamery, and what type of work did you do?

MRS. LONG: I started to work in the Spring of 1903, and did typing and stenographic work.

MR. BARBASH: Mrs. Long, did you work at The Belle Springs Creamery at the same time that David Eisenhower and Dwight and Edgar Eisenhower worked at the Creamery?

MRS. LONG: I worked at the Creamery from 1903 to the fall of 1916. During that time Mr. Eisenhower was there -- employed as the engineer, and also the boys, Edgar and Dwight, worked there during their vacation periods in the summer.

MR. BARBASH: Mrs. Long, what type of work did Mr. Eisenhower perform at the Creamery, and, later on, when the two boys, Dwight and Edgar, worked at the Creamery, what type of work did they perform?

MRS. LONG: Mr. Eisenhower was acting as engineer. And in those days they had to fire boilers to create steam to operate the power to run the machinery. During the vacation periods in the summer, Dwight and Edgar usually were employed at the Creamery at washing cans, and Dwight worked in the butter rooms, where the butter was manufactured, was printed and put into the packages. And then, in later years, he did -- when they began making ice -- he was hired in the ice department -- he "pulled" ice at the Creamery.

MR. BARRASH: Mrs. Long, at the time that Dwight Eisenhower worked at the Belle Springs Creamery, were there any significant, or any happenings, or incidents, that took place that you consider worthy of mentioning, or that you consider significant of mentioning here?

MRS. LONG: I just don't recall any special incidents at all, only that we were very fond of the boys, and they were just like any little boys at that age. They were honest and always very respectful -- and -- rather shy.

MR. BARRASH: Mrs. Long, the accounts of the Belle Springs Dairy show that, at various times, the Eisenhower's were credited for small items, such as ice cream and, sometimes, large items -- such as wooden-soled shoes. Could you tell us how the credit was made regarding the ice cream, and also why it was necessary for the boys to purchase wooden-soled shoes?

MRS. LONG: The Belle Springs Creamery later began manufacturing ice cream, and all of the employees would purchase ice cream from the plant, taking home perhaps a pint or a quart or so, and you'll find on the records where Dwight was charged with a quart of ice cream and it was taken from his salary, so it's recorded on the books in that way. And, otherwise, you will find he was charged with the purchasing of shoes. When Dwight worked in the butter rooms, they were on cement floors -- and they were always wet -- and to protect them, they wore heavy shoes with wooden soles, which were purchased by the company and furnished to their men, and charged to them and taken from their salaries.

MR. BARRASH: Mrs. Long, did you have any contact with the Eisenhower family,

outside of the Belle Springs Creamery, and, if you did, can you give us a general idea of what type of contact this was?

MRS. LONG: My family and the Eisenhower's were always friends and visited back and forth. They also attended the Brethren in Christ Church, of which they were members at one time, and the children went to Sunday School there, and that really is my association with them, more than anything else. I can remember of going to the Eisenhower home when they boys were small and I would see the mother sitting at the piano, teaching one of the boys their piano lessons.

MR. BARBASH: Do you remember who -- what boy -- the mother was teaching the piano to?

MRS. LONG: I think it was Roy that she was giving the lessons -- whom I saw.

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