Transcript of Interview with Norman Woodhouse - Part Two

MALE ANNOUNCER: Welcome to Mansfield University Voices, an Oral History. The following interview is part two with Norman Woodhouse. Mr. Woodhouse talks about his memories of school and explains some of the techniques they used for logging. The interview was conducted by former Mansfield University History Professor Dr. Paul O'Rourke in late July of 1973.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Did your father do anything else besides farming?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: No. Well, bark peel during the summer, he'd cut some of these trees and peel them. Then he'd sell the bark to the tannery here in Morris, and they'd sell the logs to them down there, what they didn't need themselves. That way they'd get a little money.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Did the neighbors help each other much? Did your father, for example, go over and help a farmer get his crop in and did they come over to help him? Or was it pretty much each man for himself?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Well, getting the bark there'd be us two boys on one end and dad on the other end of the crosscut saw. That's where we cut them. Every tree that fell, we'd stop and think it over, and I was over to Galeston[?] one day, we'd cut them down, when I was on the way home. We had saved up, what we called [indecipherable]. I'd stayed there, went in there on the first to about the middle of May and had stayed until the bark set. And I just brought one shirt and a pair of blue overalls, in all that time. I brought it home and built the barn up here and when the wind blowed the barn down four or five years afterwards. So we didn't get a very good job out of it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What year was it? How old were you then?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: How old were you then, when that happened?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Oh, it was in the summertime.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Were you about 30?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, about. Yeah, just about.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What was your brother's name?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Ben. Woodhouse.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Ben Woodhouse. What year was he born? You were born in 1881.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Oh, well, he was born after that. He never went to school. He'd run away. He'd get in the [indecipherable] today. I went to school pretty good. But we used to walk over to fences, and so on to get to school. Snowing and tearing around. We used to go to a place over here they call, I forget the name of that school house now. But, anyways over there.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was it in Morris?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was it in Morris? The school?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: No. It was up here, on top of the hill.
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: On top of the hill here?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, over there. There was only one or two schools that we had to walk to get to them, too. We didn't have a big bus haul up and growl about the weather, and so on to get a ride. I tell you, lot of people would look back now and they wouldn't believe it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: One room school house.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: A one room school house.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes. The old, old white school house up there. Well, there was red first then they built it over and made a white one out of it. And now he's got a, I have an uncle up there the Thomas School, called the Thomas School. He owns it up on the hill there.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So this was the Thomas School you went to.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, the Thomas School.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What did they have women teachers in those days or, was your teacher a man or a woman?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Well had it pretty good. We had a woman teacher we used to call Katie Payne, she was an awful, awful good woman. She puts me in mind of this woman that went out of here tonight.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Would make you think. She had a good talk for you, she’d do anything for you. I told her the other day when she was here with meals. I told her I said, “Jan,” I said, “you put me in mind of old days.”

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Jan Schimtz who was here today.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: How do you pronounce that last name of hers?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Schmitz.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Schimtz.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: I tried to tell some of them and they said, “Smith.” “No,” I said, “It ain’t Smith.”

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Well you were right. What was your teacher’s name? Katie--

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Katie Payne.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: P-A-Y-N-E.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes then [indecipherable] to use after that. One of the Williamee [?] boys over here, Orson Williamee, he used to lick the shit out of the boys and he, the old teacher, school house had a lot of old lathe up there and the plaster would come loose, he’d jump up there and scare a nickel out of them boys. Pull one of them lathe down and he would wail them with that lathe.
DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: With a lathe of plaster?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yeah, he’d let the plaster go on the floor and then he’d make the boys clean the plaster up and get it out, throw it out.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: How would the plaster fall on the floor?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Well it’d just pull right down in chunks you know. Where they’d threwed up around and come loose and throw around the lathe and he’d just right up on one of them old fashioned desks where he could reach that. Boy did he ever lick them boys and you’d see them boys flying. They got in the apples boy they, over at Hayley’s. The boys did, end up stealing the apples and eating them. He told them to come out of there twice and they didn’t come and he went over with a whip. When he got back in he throwed the whip away and pulled three or four of them lathes down and if he didn’t lick them boys for being over there stealing them apples.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: How long was the school year? When would you start into school?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: About three months, for a winter.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: So you only went to school for three months?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, went to school for three months.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: From December to February or November to--

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Well about the first of December. Sometimes it wouldn’t be open until later if it, had to be kind of open fall and the farmers needed the boys to clean up and log and so on, put school off.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Sure.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Put it off.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Well what did the teachers do, when they were only teaching for three months? They must have had other jobs.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Teachers were hired just the same as there was well whatever they thought you earned. Some of them wasn’t too good but yet they’d put you to work. They’d hire some of them older fellers. And they was pretty good. This guy and they was pretty good. This man Williamee had a pretty good education but he’d get so mad at them boys.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Williamee.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, Williamee, Orson Williamee.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: What would he do the rest of the year when he wasn’t teaching?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Well I don’t know, he had a farm, he had a farm over there, it’s sold now. They claimed they found oil on it the other day. They drilled a well there, I don’t know maybe 80 or 85 feet and they struck some oil.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Just a few days ago.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, that’s just here about two or three months ago.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Oh I see.
NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes. Some fella bought it, down country, wanted it, one of them old-fashioned farms, and it didn’t have no water on to it. They had to carry the water from up there, a mile away, that they use. So he had in mind he’d drill a well there. And they say the other day they found at 85 feet. I asked some of them, oh about a week ago, how they was making out and they said, well had pretty good symptoms of oil there. Would it work up in that type of ground?

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: I don’t know.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: I don’t know either. I’ve often wondered.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Did you like school?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Did you like school, as a boy, when you went to school?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: I went to school, yes.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: But did you like it? Did you enjoy it?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yeah, I liked school, that’s the reason, oh I ain’t too dumb, for a man as old as I am. That’s what the election the other time there last night said, this here Joe son of a bitch, bought this hotel and sold out the other day to somebody over at Stonyfork. He was shootin’ off in there and of course after I get kind of riled up I’m a little ugly I guess. So they was getting ready to count off, and I told Joe to sit down and shut his mouth. He’s committeeman. Well he kept on shooting it off and shooting it off and--

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Who was this, Granasevich?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Is this Joe Granasevich, the committeeman?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yeah. So I opened the door and I told him, I said, “Now you get the hell out of here. If you don’t I’ll throw you out.”

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Is he the democratic committeeman?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, he’s democrat.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Granasevich?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: He’s running for country treasurer this year.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: So he went out. So now they say he’s so alone down there, leave him down there, I told them go to Stonyfork. I told everybody where he was. I don’t know. He was a good fella, but he was a hard fella to approach then, I think.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Let me ask you, when you got, when you got old enough, when did you leave the farm? Did you ever leave home?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: No. No, I never left home. All the years went on and dad died.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: When did he die?
NORMAN WOODHOUSE: He died in, oh, he’s been dead about 20 years, somewhere in there.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: So you lived with your father for quite a while.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Uh-huh. I lived with father and mother. But my brother, he bailed out. He’s been all over the country working. But he’s had [indecipherable].

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Is he still alive?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes. They were talking of moving home, today.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: When you were a boy you can recall cutting down trees with your father and that kind of thing?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Stripping the bark off them and so. How would you strip the bark off the tree?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Do what?

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: How would you strip the bark off a tree? Did you use some kind of tool?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Oh, we’d use an axe and a spud. You’d use an axe and a spud to cut the limbs off and let them fall down. And then a good tree, around about four feet, slid it on top and then the bark would be loose, from the growth in the spring, you could stick a spud, I sold a spud the other day for five dollars. Didn’t even have a handle in it. They wanted it so bad. I don’t know who he was. He said, “Do you got a spud?” I said, “Yes, I got one or two yet.” So I sold him one. And you stick that in and you put a handle on, about that much of a wood handle, and then there's a splitter part on the handle and you split that with your ax and when the bark is loose in May and June, that's when it loosens and sometimes it will stay loose. Up in Potter County, I would stay up there until the 15th of July and peel. And stick that right in there and shim right down.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: So you would chop down the tree first. Is that right?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes. No. You chop the tree with an axe.

DR PAUL O’ROURKE: You chop the tree down with an axe?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Axe, yes.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: And then you'd slice the bark a little bit.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: And then you'd wait a couple of months, or so.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes. If that splits this way, you stick that front in there and that will loosen it up.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: I see.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: And you can poke that right off. I used to, when I went up there for old Gus Nudy, the first year I was up there we used to get a dollar and a half and board, everyday had to make money. And after we would get a dollar and a half, old Gus come along one morning, he said, "Norm, how 'bout I put another spudder, another splitter ahead of you?" I said, “You overwork me without raising the
price.” “I give you a half a dollar more,” he said. So he did. And I used to spud for them two fellows a bit.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Oh, now there were two fellows.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: What were these two fellows doing?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: They were what we call, "fittin". They'd chop the limbs off and slit them and bring it down the side and then I'd come along with my spud and pull it off. And I'd leave it lay, generally they pulled them trees up on the ground so you could get that bark from down under too. The bark is, well about as important to buy as the lumber.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Yes, the bark of which tree? The Hemlock?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Was the bark of other trees very valuable too?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Or was Hemlock the real valuable tree for the bark?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: The Hemlock was a lot. I got up the other day and went to the creek where I used to fish, years ago, around 20, 25 years ago. I used to fish there. Boy, did we ever have luck with fish and trout. Now I couldn't see a trout the other day.

R. PAUL O’ROURKE: What stream was that?

ORMAN WOODHOUSE: That is what we went up, Cherry Springs, up there where that big carnival is.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: At Cherry Springs.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Why that crowd the other day, I've never seen the woods that full of people. People had been there a week, they said, and lived in them campers, and so on. And they went over to Kittle Creek and over around there. And they told me that the laurel was just getting nice. It’s late this year, it’s so cold.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Who was that fellow, at this camp where you had the two guys cutting and you were the only fellow peeling the bark off? Who was the man who offered you a dollar and a half and raised it to two dollars?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Gus Nudy.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: How do you spell that last name?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: N-U-D-Y.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: Nudy.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes.

DR. PAUL O’ROURKE: And this was over in where--

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Potter County.
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Over in Galeton. Near Galeton.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Yes, yes. Now they've got a big museum over there. If you hadn't been there, ever get a chance, go and look it over. It's worth your time. You can go over to Galeton and oh, you can drive over there in three-quarters of an hour.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: When did you go, when did you go over to Galeton? When you were around 20 or so?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: How old were you when you went over to Galeton?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: How old was I?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah. About what time was that?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Oh, I just don't know. We used to go over, back and forth and walk from Morris down here into Galeton, for a day.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You'd walk from, you'd walk all the way to Galeton from Morris? And how long would that take you?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Oh, we'd leave in the morning and get to Morris about four o'clock. And we'd go up, go over, we'd make Galeton some where's about five.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Five in the afternoon.

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: About four or five.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: How would you walk? Would you walk through the woods or walk along the roads?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: Huh?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: How would you walk, along the roads there or through the woods?

NORMAN WOODHOUSE: We didn't have much roads, just a little bit of brush thrower down some places on the road, just along. And we used to, you couldn't get nothing to eat. We'd carry lunch with us, but when we got over to a place they called “Sweeton Valley,” we'd get to Sweeton Valley, the women generally would give us a lunch there. And they would always have bread, homemade bread made with butter and apple butter on it. Then we'd get a drink of tea or else some coffee there.

MALE ANNOUNCER: That concludes part two of the interview with Norman Woodhouse. To hear more, please download Norman Woodhouse part three. These interviews are not copyrighted and you are encouraged to let others know about them and to use them for your own research.