

Caroline Fuller, (Mrs. George). Interviewed June 14, 1973, by May Gillies in Thermopolis, Wyoming. Mrs. Fuller was an early day female dentist in Thermopolis.

Interview with Mrs. George Fuller at the Wyoming Pioneer Home in Thermopolis. Caroline Fuller never heard of women's liberation back in 1905 when she entered a field of medicine usually reserved for men, that of dentistry. How she came to care for the dental needs of the local cowboys in an isolated part of Wyoming at the turn of the century is only one phase of her interesting life story. The interviewer is May Gillies, representing the Hot Springs County Historical Society. The date is June 14, 1973.

Caroline, you have had a very interesting life and I'd like you to tell me about it. But first I'd like you to tell me where you were born and when.

In Czechoslovakia in 1880.

And you came to this country

To Omaha, Nebraska.

When was that?

In '83.

What was your father's name?

Joesph Fibiger, F-i-b-i-g-e-r.

And your mother's name?

He was a watch maker in . Mother's name was Caroline.

What was her maiden name?

VonBrill, V-o-n and then B-r-i-l-l.

And then did you go to school in Omaha?

I went all the way through high school and grade school and business college.

And then you worked there?

I worked for Dr. Bailey, the dentist for 5 or 6 years.

And you learned dentistry?

I learned enough dentistry so to be able to fill teeth and pull teeth and send away and have plates made.

Not very many women did that did they?

No, not in those years, no.

In fact not very many do it now I don't suppose.

There's more of them now.

How did you come out to Wyoming?

I came to visit, I came out in 1904, came out to visit the Longfellow family at their ranch.

And did you like it well enough to come back?

I liked it well enough, I met and got married, of course, my future husband there and came back the following year.

How did you met your husband?

At a dance.

And I understand you did some dentist work, dentistry then on your visit.

Yes, I did a lot of dentistry.

Can you tell me about helping Mr. Okey?

Yes, that was an emergency case. He had a terrible tooth ache and he couldn't get to Casper to the nearest dentist because the stage didn't come on until Monday so we, he came down and got me at the, after the dance at the hotel, and got me and we didn't have any instruments of any kind, so we got a pair of, what do you call them?

A brace and bit?

Yea, brace and bit things in the store and different boys around there held him down and I used the instrument and opened up his tooth and releaved the pressure and he was able to go onto Casper Monday to have his tooth filled.

And how did he travel to Casper?

On the bus.

How did he manage to stand it without antistetic?

Well he took, he had several drinks and he was pretty well under the effects of the drinks.

But still it was quite a job to hold him down.

Oh yes, they had to hold him down.

So, then, that's where you met Mr. Fuller?

Yes.

And the following year you were married?

Yes.

Can you tell me about that?

I was married in Casper.

And 2 other couples were married about the same time.

Yea, they were married at Lost Cabin and we had a preacher comeing through and they were married. But I was married in Casper and that night we came down and then we all celebrated together.

Who were these other 2 couples?

Dr. Jewel and his wife, Williby and her sister.

Well, you must have had a good time all of you.

Young folk. Danced all night.

Those dances were really something. Well then, you and your husband were in the ranching business.

Yes.

And you had, your family was born there.

Born at Lost Cabin.

Can you tell me their names?

Yes. It was Caroline Louise was the first one born and she passed away when she was 12 years old. Poisoned candy during the war. Then I had Inez was born and then my son, George.

And you had trouble getting a teacher to teach your children I understand.

Yea, we were so far out in the country and the girls comeing out from the cities were afraid to walk down to the school house and back. They'd walk in the wrong direction, they'd go down hill instead of uphill coming home so finally this one girl stayed 3 days.

Oh my. What did you do then?

Well then, I tried to get a teacher and they told me to take it over myself so I did. I took a course from the university, corespondance work, and no books to study out of. Just

Did they send you questions that you had to answer and no books?

Yes, and no books to study but I made it.

You probably relied on what you learned in school yourself like reading and arithmetic.

From what I remember.

How many pupils did you have?

8.

Your own 3 and these others.

Yes, but there was 8 altogether.

And how long did you teach?

2 years.

Then you did get a teacher.

Finished them and then we came to town to, for high school.

Oh yes, and that was, now, while you still were at Lost Cabin, you did some dentistry there for the cowboys.

Oh I did a lot of it, yea. They'd come over the mountain to have teeth pulled and I'd take impressions for teeth. Make new teeth for them.

For heaven's sake, you mean you did it, you actually did the teeth?

No, no, I sent to Omaha. But I'd take the impressions. Pull teeth and take impressions.

And you did finally get the instruments you needed, didn't you?

Oh yes, Dr. Bailey sent me the instruments. Little engine and 3 pairs of pliers and we went into business.

Oh, I think that's really something. Did you have a sign that said, Dr. Fuller.

No I didn't have any sign. I didn't want any sign I had enough trade without putting up a sign.

I see this article in the Riverton Ranger that headed, Aunt Caroline, Dentist of Lost Cabin. Did they all call you Antie?

I think Ruth Fuller put that in. That's why she put Aunt Caroline.

She was you neice that wrote the article. Well, this is wonderful, this article. Well then, you came to Thermopolis and that was in 1920.

Started Inez in high school and I was supertendant of the county hospital.

What were your duties then?

Well I would see that I had, I kept the books and saw that we had the correct number of nurses. All new work to me.

Then you had some more jobs.

Yea, I had, I worked for 3 different county supertendants of schools.

And one of them was Mrs. Thompson?

Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Hodgson, and who was the other one?

Well anyway, you worked for the 3 of them. And you were pretty busy in a number of clubs in Thermopolis too? And then you came to live here at the Pioneer Home. And you're still busy.

I'm still busy.

You play the piano. And you've been here 6 years now. Do you think it's a good place to live?

Wonderful, and I've always thought so ever since I came in.

Well, I sure do thank you Caroline. This has been real interesting.

It's kind of rough but.

No, it's just fine.

End of Side One.

Side Two.

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