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Interview with Mary Glick

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Fort Hays State University

Maria Christina Fink Glick

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CHAPTER II
ORAL HISTORY OF MARIE FINK GLICK
ONE-ROOM SCHOOLTEACHER

Tom: This is Tom Long on July 13, 1989. My oral history interview of a one-room Kansas schoolhouse teacher is with Marie Fink Glick of Grainfield, Kansas. This interview is taking place at her home. Marie, What is your full name?

Marie: Marie Christina Fink Glick

Tom: Your age today is?

Marie: 73

Tom: The schools you attended were?

Marie: I attended Goshen District #48, for grade school; St. Joseph's Academy and Lenora Rural High School for high school. The fifty hours of college education that I have, I got from Fort Hays State University.

Tom: You graduated from High School in 19??

Marie: 34

Tom: You began to teach school in 1934. How many years did you teach?

Marie: Nine consecutive years.

Tom: What were the names of the schools you taught at and what counties were they in?

Marie: The first school I taught in was Goshen District #48, in Allodium township of Graham County for three years. Then I taught at Gradan, also in Graham County, which was only

six miles from Goshen, for two years. After that I taught in a city school at Collyer, Kansas, in Trego county for three years. It had three regular classrooms. The last school was Harmony, which was another country school in the northeastern part of Gove county. I taught there for one year.

Tom: During that time, were there any awards given to you for your teaching?

Marie: No.

Tom: How old were you, when you began your teaching experiences?

Marie: Eighteen.

Tom: Your name at that time was?

Marie: Marie Fink

Tom: You taught for a total of 9 years between the years 1934 and 1944?

Marie: 43

Tom: Between 1934 and 1943?

Marie: Yes.

Tom: Why did you leave the Collyer Grade school and go back to a one-room school?

Marie: My husband was in the service and the Harmony school was in his district. They needed a teacher and were paying a higher salary than Collyer. I was living with my inlaws

at that time and would be able to drive to the Harmony school.

Tom: Were you pregnant at the time?

Marie: Yes, I was also pregnant. I thought it might be a little easier to handle a group of children in a country school than to go into town where there were all ages of children in the same building.

Tom: Did they have any reservations back at that time if a teacher was pregnant?

Marie: No.

Tom: How many of your family taught at Goshen?

Marie: My great uncle, my great aunt, my father, my brother and myself.

Tom: In all the schools you taught at, which one was your favorite school?

Marie: Oh, probably, Gradan.

Tom: Ok, why do you pick Gradan?

Marie: It just seemed like I was closer to the children. I knew them and their families better. They were all real friendly.

Tom: Where did you live when you taught at these schools?

Marie: When I taught at Goshen I boarded and roomed at home. When I taught at Gradan I boarded and roomed at Frank Gross's. Edith Gross, my friend, was teaching at Jeffrey school about two miles north of Gradan. She would drive

within a quarter mile of my school, so she would drop me off at my school and then go on to Jeffrey. In the evening, she would pick me up at my school and then we'd go home together.

Tom: Do you know when the schoolhouses were built?

Marie: No, I don't know that.

Tom: What kind of materials were used in building the schools?

Marie: They were all wood frame buildings. They were all similar with three windows on each side and a door on the one end. They weren't very large.

Tom: What kind of heating system was used?

Marie: We had a pot belly heating stove that burned coal and cobs. One of them had a kind of skirt around it that distributed the heat more evenly. It probably made it warmer.

Tom: Were you responsible for getting it started?

Marie: Yes. I had to get the fuel and even bring the kindling to school. The coal was purchased but there wasn't any kindling. So it was my job in one school to bring the kindling every morning - a sack of cobs or something like that.

Tom: Where did they keep the coal?

Marie: In a little coal house that was close to the school. We'd carry it in what we called coal scuttles, which were

regular coal buckets. We always had a shovel to shovel in the coal and take out the ashes.

Tom: Did they have a janitor to open and clean the school or did you have to do that?

Marie: Oh, I did all of that. Sometimes I would pay a little boy 50 or 75 cents to help me take out the ashes or to bring in the coal. Sometimes they would offer to do it just because they wanted to.

Tom: What age group did you teach?

Marie: I had all ages - from five years old to fifteen years old.

Tom: How much schooling did you need in order to teach school back then?

Marie: I needed a high school diploma and had to pass the county examination for teachers.

Tom: How much were you paid back then?

Marie: The first year I received \$35 a month and the next two years \$40 a month. Then it went up to \$62.50. Finally, the last year I was getting about \$145 a month.

Tom: How did you get your paycheck?

Marie: There were three members of the school board; a director, a clerk and a treasurer. The director would make out a warrant for me and usually his children would bring it to school and give it to me. Then I would have to give it to another board member. Maybe he had a child in school and

I'd send it home with that child and he'd bring it back to me or I'd drive to their place to get it. And then finally, I'd take it to the treasurer and he'd make out a check.

Tom: How long was the school year?

Marie: Eight months.

Tom: How long was the school day?

Marie: Seven hours - from nine to four, always.

Tom: Did they ever have any other teachers come in while you were teaching or were you basically the only one?

Marie: I was the only one. No others ever came in. The county superintendent would visit our school each year.

Tom: Was there a principal for the school?

Marie: No, not in the one-room country schools.

Tom: Who employed the teachers?

Marie: The school board.

Tom: Did you ever have to meet with the school board?

Marie: No.

Tom: How did you get the supplies for your school?

Marie: We had very few supplies, like a box a chalk and things like that. We got books from the county seat. We checked them out and then took them back and exchanged them. Any other supplies that I wanted, I would usually bring myself. They were things that weren't very expensive anyway. I didn't get paid for them.

Tom: Could you expand a little more on the materials in the classroom?

Marie: We had flash-cards or anyway I did. Flash cards, reading charts and phonics charts I made at home. At school we had maps, a globe and a very limited supply of library books. We also had a big box of chalk. Then we had a course of study, a paperback book that was supplied by the county superintendents. He would give them to us in August during the two week sessions that teachers had to attend before school began. It was called "The Normal School." There were no fans and the heat was terrible. The Normal School was usually held at a grade school at the county seat.

Tom: What evaluation system was used for the teachers or did they have any?

Marie: No, not really. Of course, word of mouth. Word got around if you were a good teacher. If different ones would speak highly of you, that would give you a good chance to get a school.

Tom: How were discipline problems handled with the children?

Marie: I never had any real discipline problems. I just can't pin point any discipline problems that I had except one and that was in the city school with a small boy. I went

to the principal with that. In the country school I never had a discipline problem.

Tom: How were teachers expected to conduct themselves in the community?

Marie: They had to walk the straight and narrow line. They were expected to have good morals and such and also to be outgoing and friendly.

Tom: Were the one-room schools public schools?

Marie: Yes.

Tom: What subjects were studied?

Marie: Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, civics, Kansas history, and physiology. We always had some art work because I had taken art in high school and had done pretty well in it.

Tom: Could you describe any of the textbooks that you used, like the readers?

Marie: Bob's Merrell readers were used a lot of the time. They were different from what they are now. There weren't as many pictures and no colored pictures. The books were not attractive or appealing to the child.

Tom: Were there any special classes or unique educational services offered?

Marie: No. If we had a child who was slow, we just spent more time with him. We just took them where they were and brought them along the best we could.

Tom: Were competency tests taken for promotion purposes?

Marie: No, except at the end of the seventh grade they took the county examination to determine whether they were ready to pass into the eighth grade. Then in the eighth grade they wrote on another examination to see if they were ready for high school.

Tom: Could you talk a little about the types of records that were kept?

Marie: We had a school attendance record and grade register. The register was a stiff backed book that was left in the school at all times. Sometimes there were as many as ten or twelve registers left in the school that had been used by different teachers. The register was always filled out by the teacher and then taken in to the county superintendent at the end of the term to be checked over by him. Before we received our last pay check, we had to make sure we had the register completed and turned in. Now in those schools that burned down like Goshen, all of those records were destroyed.

Tom: Did any of the students have to repeat classes?

- Marie: Yes, often they would, but it was always up to the teacher. The parents didn't have anything to say about that. They would say, "Well, you're the teacher. You tell me if he's ready to go on or not." They never offered any advice.
- Tom: Did the one-room schools have a library?
- Marie: Yes, a very poor library in most of them.
- Tom: How did you decide on a textbook?
- Marie: Every five years or so the state would adopt a different textbook. The state superintendent and his committee would select a book and then everyone used that book. The teacher didn't examine it or have any input at all.
- Tom: What were some rules of the school that may be different from today?
- Marie: We didn't have any extra-curricular activities. School was held every day, rain or shine. Whoever could get there went.
- Tom: What were some of the special observances, like Christmas, spelling bees, or music contests? Did you have any of those?
- Marie: We had usually one day off for Thanksgiving, just Thanksgiving day itself, and for Christmas we would have three to four days off. I don't think we ever had a week

off. In the spring, several schools would come together and have a track meet. We would take a day off for that.

Tom: Did the one-room school have a graduation exercise?

Marie: Yes, they had an eighth grade graduation exercise. All of the seventh and eighth graders took a county examination. Four or five schools would come together at a centrally located school. The county superintendent would select a teacher to hold the county exam. It was quite an honor and we would usually be paid five to ten dollars to do it. Questions were sent out by the State Superintendent for the test and if the students passed the exam, then they graduated. All students from the county would come together for the graduation exercise at the county seat in Hill City or wherever the county seat was. It was quite an honor to be valedictorian or salutatorian of the county. Each one had to give a speech.

Tom: How did you teach all the classes in the same day? How were you able to get everthing in?

Marie: We had short fifteen minute recitations. The first grade students for instance, would begin with reading. I'd call them up to the recitation bench in the front of the school. They would sit and I would work with them, hearing them read in those fifteen minutes and then they would go back to their seats. Usually there would be an

eighth grade girl or two who was always ahead or caught up, and they would help the other students by listening to them read. Then the upper grade would come forward and they would have their recitations. They would be assigned an assignment for the next day and go back to their seats to work on their lesson. I would allow them to help each other if they were quiet. Some of the younger students would listen as I was teaching the older students and would already know the material when it was their time to come to the front of the room. Some would already know even the following year when they were in the next class.

Tom: What type of lighting and toilets were available?

Marie: For lighting in the one-room schools, we had brackets on the wall with coal oil lamps. When we had a program, some member of the district would bring a gasoline lamp, gas lamp they called them, or a gas lantern. We would hang it on a hook somewhere in the school to give us a little more light. All three of the country schools were like that. We had outdoor toilets.

Tom: How did the schools get their water?

Marie: At Gradan I had to furnish the drinking water. I had to bring a cream can of water with me everyday. The other two districts had a pump. I would pump a bucket of water in the morning right after I would get to school or if I didn't get it done, some of the boys would take the bucket

out and pump it full to be used for drinking. At night I would have to remember to empty the bucket because in the winter time it would be frozen solid by the next morning. We also had a little wash basin and a bar of soap on a table in the back of the room for washing your hands. I'm sure every child didn't bring their own towel. Most of the time we would just use a towel that I would bring. Each student had a drinking cup hanging on a hook with their name on it. We didn't use too much water, but we would wash our hands before we had our lunch.

Tom: What happened to the schoolhouses?

Marie: Goshen burned down. Gradan school was moved to a farm close by and used for a garage or machinery shed. I don't know what happened to Harmony. I think someone bought it and moved it away.

Tom: What happened to the equipment and supplies after the schools closed?

Marie: There was very little equipment. Sometimes there would be a merry-go-round or two, always a swing set and maybe a slipper-slide. We had basketball goals, too. They were all taken down. I just don't know what did happen to them. The books and encyclopedias would be sold to interested parties or at an auction.

Tom: What was the usual age a child began school?

- Marie: Six, but sometimes if the youngest child was five and would be the only one left at home and seemed to be a rather brilliant child then the parents would just send him along with the other children.
- Tom: What was the greatest distance traveled by any student and what was the mode of transportation?
- Marie: I had three students who walked nearly three miles to school. Most of them walked. A few had horses to ride or a buggy to drive. There was a few that the parents brought occasionally with their cars. That wasn't very often though, except maybe in extremely cold weather.
- Tom: Going back to the age level. You said you had a few students go at the age of five. How old were some of the older students you taught?
- Marie: I believe fifteen was the oldest one I ever had.
- Tom: How many students went to the school?
- Marie: The most I had was twenty-three and the least was six.
- Tom: Do you remember which school these were at?
- Marie: At my first school, Goshen, I had six my first term. In the last school, Harmony, I had twenty-three.
- Tom: What grade levels did you teach?
- Marie: In all three schools, I have taught all the grade levels. But I never had all the grade levels in one school at the same time. At Harmony, I lacked one, having seven grade

levels. In the other schools I lacked maybe two or three grade levels.

Tom: What type of occupations did the students usually take up?

Marie: As a general rule, it was farming. Although, I remember I had one that became a veterinarian and also ran for the office of State Representative. Several others went to college but went back to farming. They did become leaders in their communities.

Tom: Did many of the students go on to college?

Marie: No, I wouldn't say many, just a few.

Tom: Did the students of Goshen, Gradan, and Harmony schools come from a particular cultural or heritage background?

Marie: In Harmony there were some of German-Russian heritage.

Tom: What was the average number of years a student spent in school?

Marie: Eight years.

Tom: How many years was a student required to go to school?

Marie: Either finish the eighth grade or sixteen years of age.

Tom: What was the dress and overall appearance of the students?

Marie: Well, the times were hard. The girls had cotton dresses often made of feed sacks and flour sacks. The little boys always wore overalls and shirts made by the mothers. The little overalls would be patched in the knees before school would be out. And there would be patches in the

shirts, too, on the elbows. They were always clean. I never had a student come to school who wasn't clean. But most of them were not dressed up in the very latest. They had one pair of shoes. They were good sturdy shoes that would be resoled and have new heels put on, usually by their fathers, and worn all winter. They also had overshoes. Their clothes were warm: scarves, stocking caps and coats. They'd be bundled up when they came.

Tom: What was the cost of education to the student and his family?

Marie: I don't know how to answer that. I don't know if they ever figured out how much it took to educate a child.

Tom: Could you describe the interior of one of the one-room schools you taught in? Were they basically the same?

Marie: They were basically the same. I could probably describe Goshen because I attended school there eight years and taught three years. It had three north windows and three south windows and faced east and west. In the winter time, the ones who sat close to the north windows would just freeze and then in the fall the ones who sat near the south windows would be real hot where the sun would be shining in. We'd leave the door open most all the time in the fall and spring. And of course, we had a few flies. When the weather was real cold, many times I'd let them all move up to the front of the school and sit on the

recitation bench or the front benches until it got warm enough to go back to the back of the room.

Tom: Were there any physical changes made to the schoolhouses while you were teaching there?

Marie: They built a little anteroom on to Goshen for a place to hang coats and set the dinner pails before you entered the school room. In the summertime, we would put the water bucket and a little table with the cups and soap on it out there. But in the winter, we had to bring it in so it wouldn't freeze during the day.

Tom: Why was the Goshen school built?

Marie: Because they saw a need for a school and someone donated the ground. I don't know who it was but someone donated those acres to the school district.

Tom: What were the boundaries of the school's jurisdiction?

Marie: I don't know.

Tom: How was it decided who went to school there?

Marie: I don't know just how they did it. The districts were laid out because each one knew where their district was. They had maps at the county seat that had the districts outlined on them. If someone couldn't get along in their own district, then often they would go to another district that wouldn't be very far away.

- Tom: Were the schoolhouses used for community social activities as well as for education?
- Marie: Yes, they were. Some of them had church in them on Sunday mornings. Literary societies sometimes met in them. They were also used for voting places during election years.
- Tom: Did any of the schools have an organization similar to PTA?
- Marie: No, they didn't have. Parents would visit schools in most of the districts.
- Tom: Who hired and fired the teachers?
- Marie: The school board.
- Tom: Did anyone else have any input in this?
- Marie: Yes, sometimes if someone was real dissatisfied with what was going on they would go to the school board and talk to them. Maybe even go to each one and voice their complaint. If it was strong enough or kept on long enough, the school board would have a meeting and decide what they were going to do about it.
- Tom: Did any activities take place between schools?
- Marie: Yes, we'd have track meets in the spring. We never went back and forth to play ball with another school. I can't think of anything outside of track meets. That was really looked forward to.
- Tom: Why did the school close?

Marie: Goshen closed because there weren't enough students there anymore to hold school. There weren't so many children and their brothers and sisters were going to town schools for high school. They would just take the grade schoolers to the town school along with them.

Tom: Where did the funds for the construction of the school come from?

Marie: Taxes, I think it would be.

Tom: You said that in one of the schools the land was donated to the school. Then the community through taxation would help finance the construction. How much did it cost a student to enroll in the one-room school?

Marie: Really nothing for enrollment. They had their books to buy, their "Big Chief" tablet and a penny lead pencil. The ones who could afford better ones got better lead pencils. The penny pencils were really a penny apiece. The others were a nickel or a dime apiece. Some of them would get a better pencil but a lot of them would have their penny pencil and that Big Chief tablet. Their books would be passed down from their older brothers and sisters and they would use the same books as long as they could. When the books changed, of course, they would have to get all new ones but they never did exchange books back and forth with other families. I'm sure of that. They just

took good care of their books so their brothers and sisters could use them.

Tom: How was your salary determined?

Marie: Well, by what the district was able to pay. It seemed some districts had more money than others. Money was real scarce at Goshen for some reason. They were never able to pay a very high salary. My next school, Gradan, paid quite a lot more because they had more funds. I don't know how they happened to have more than we did.

Sometimes, though, if there was a teacher who was highly thought of, they would offer more to get that teacher.

Tom: Did a teacher have a voice in salary decisions?

Marie: Yes, in our applications we would write our name and what schools we had taught at and things like that. We also wrote what our salary preference was. We'd always do that.

Tom: Could you describe a typical day before and after school?

Marie: Upon arriving at school around 8:00, I would kindle and start the fire, pump a bucket of water, help thaw out the small children who had walked a mile or two and put lessons on the board. After school I would sweep the floor, erase the boards, clean the erasers, empty the water bucket, get in the kindling and coal and empty out the ashes.

Tom: Did the "Dirty Thirties" have any effect on you as a teacher?

Marie: Oh yes, I remember my second year of teaching in 1935 at Goshen. Every morning I would have to sweep the dirt off the tops of the desks and the floor and when I would be finished, I would have a full bucket of dirt.

Tom: Marie, I'm finally through with all my questions I wanted to ask. Do you have anything you would like to add or that I may have left out?

Marie: One-room country schools are a thing of the past now but they hold a pleasant memory for me.

Tom: Would you say that teachers then had a lot higher status than they do now? Would you say that was true?

Marie: I believe they did.

Tom: Well, Marie, I've really enjoyed this interview with you this afternoon. It has been interesting listening to you share your experiences as a one-room school teacher and I'm sure that a lot of people will enjoy reading this after I get it completed. Thank you very much.