

A. Well, they're one of the cheapest things to eat—about forty cents a pound now. We just had a couple of eggs for dinner. So I always thought it was crazy that these guys would send a wagonload of whiskey to Salt Lake City. I think they were pretty dumb, [laughs]

Q. [MM] They made a lot of money, though.

A. But they made a pack of money! You better believe they did, because they bought those eggs for three cents a dozen and sold them for a dollar.

Q. [HT] Do you know any other stories like that?

A. They always said—this is a myth, I think. It's something that may have been somebody's idea. You know there's a burial ground just about a mile west of here. They also say that that's where they were supposed to have buried Browning rifles and ammunitions. They said that Brigham Young had found out that the Mormons were in trouble. So he's supposed to have sent Browning back to Nauvoo. Some people think Browning took the guns and buried them in the ground there. But I don't know. I know that there have been several people with metal detectors. Now whether they ever found them, I don't know, because people keep that to themselves. But now there was trouble in Van Buren County a couple of times. Things that have happened. There was a scene in Mount Sterling that was over a fat hog and a woman. You'll find that trouble usually has a woman involved, [laughs] Well, I don't know what happened.

The Mormons were always the last to get to the weigh stations because they were bringing livestock with them. The other immigrants would be there bedding down their horses and cattle.

I think that that's all. You can read about the Mormons. They've got a whole bunch of stuff in books.

Lynn and Wanitta Barritt

Niota, Illinois

Lynn's Birthday: April 13, 1918

Wanitta's Birthday: October 25, 1913

Interview on November 20, 2001, in their home by Jedediah Briggs

Jeff Johnson also present

Q. [Jedediah Briggs] Wanitta. were you born here?

A. [Wanitta Barritt] Yes, but not in this house. I was born in this area. I was bom and raised west of this house—that's torn down now.

Q. What year were you born?

A. 1913.

Q. Do you know when your ancestors first came to this area?

A. No. I don't know when they came.

Q. How far back do you know?

A. I'm not into genealogy, and I've never looked it up. Some of my relatives are into genealogy, but I don't follow it too well.

A. [Lynn Barritt] I've got genealogy, of the Mormons when they came over here—they're Swedish. They come over. She said that we're not interested in genealogy, but I've got it and I've read it. All of our kids have read it. Our ancestors told about coming over and the hardships that they had. They would say things like, "Somebody died today aboard the ship . . . a new baby was born . . . somebody was married." I think it took months to come over here because they came so slow from Sweden.

Q. This is your father's or mother's side?

A. This is from my mother's side.

Q. Do you know in what year your ancestors came over?

A. I don't know, but I've got the information in the safe. I didn't know that you were coming.

Q. Did your ancestors come to Nauvoo, or did they just go to Salt Lake?

A. No. They just come over and went up the Mississippi River. They then went on out to Salt Lake.

A. [WB] They come up the Mississippi then switched on over to the Missouri River to go west.

Q. The Mormons had already left for Utah by the time your ancestors had come here?

A. [LB] Well, the lady from whom I'm descended, she came with them from Sweden and then went on to Salt Lake.

Q. In what year were you born, Lynn?

A. 1918. I'm younger.

Q. And you were born in Nebraska?

A. Yes.

Q. You told me before that your ancestors moved out to Utah and then went back to Nebraska?

A. No. They moved back to Council Bluffs, Iowa. That's where all my relatives are.

Q. What was the reason that your ancestors moved away from Utah?

A. That was back when they had plural marriages. It is all recorded in the genealogy that I have. I can't tell you the exact age of my grandmother. There were quite a few in my family. My grandmother was probably fifteen or sixteen years old. One of the Mormons had several wives. This is during polygamy—way, way back. My ancestors said that they left at one or two in the morning. I don't know the exact date, but they left Utah and went back to Council Bluffs, Iowa. One of the Mormons with several wives wanted to marry my grandmother, who was quite young. She didn't want to get married, and that's when they broke away from the Church in Utah. We still have relatives that arc from the Church in Salt Lake and The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [Community of Christ].

Q. Do you know why they went to Council Bluffs?

A. I don't know why they went there.

Q. Have you been out there recently?

A. It's been a couple of years, but we've been out there several times. We had a Barritt family reunion, and that's when I met some of these relatives.

Q. Have you seen the visitors' center out there or the Kanesville Tabernacle?

A. No.

Q. Tell me the story about your family.

A. We met in Souza, California. I happened to have a job before I went out. I had attended college at Lincoln, Nebraska, for one year. I wanted to go out to California. This is back during the Depression days. I worked at the college in Lincoln for twenty cents an hour. I walked a mile each way to go to the paper factory. I got a nickel more an hour working at the paper factory. I was paying my own way through college.

I decided that I didn't have enough money, so I'd go to California to see if I could get a job. I got a job at Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena. I worked as a medical student. They wouldn't hire you unless you were going to be a doctor, so I went in as a medical student. I was there for some time. Then the war came along, and I was deferred. The doctor deferred me for a year. I had broken my arm, and the doctor wouldn't let me go through the service.

We had talked about getting married. My wife was a nurse; I met her there. My wife's from Illinois. She went to California; it was her second trip. Where did you go the first time?

A. [WB] Santa Barbara.

A. [LB] Yes. She nursed there for a year, and then the next time she came to Huntington Memorial Hospital. That's where I worked and we got acquainted with one another. We said that we would wait until after the war to get married. This was World War II. Her roommate got married, and she had a wedding. We said, "Why should we wait?" Going into the service I'd rather be married, and then I'd be a good boy in the army and not cheat on her. We talked about it.

We called this girl, her roommate that just got married. She said, "What are you going to do? Are you going anywhere?" I told her we weren't. She asked us how we would like to go to Las Vegas. Then she asked us if we were going to get married, and we told her we were. My wife had a day off, and I worked the night shift, so I had an extra day off. We went to Las Vegas. My wife said that she didn't want to be married by a justice of the peace, but she wanted to get married in a church. I was a Methodist, and my wife was a Presbyterian. We found a preacher at a Methodist

church, and he told us to come back in half of an hour and that he'd be ready. So we were married. We couldn't find a place to stay all night. The strip wasn't there in Las Vegas at all; it was just a little wide spot in the road. We had to drive almost all the way back to California before we found a place to stay at night. That was a story.

I had to go back to work the next morning, and I saw the doctor. He said, "Hey, I just released you at the draft board." I told him that I had just gotten married over the weekend. He asked me how long I wanted to wait, but like a dummy I should have said a year, but I told him a month. So the doctor called the draft board up and told them to delay me going into the army for a month.

I went to New Orleans, the point of embarkation, and I opened up a thousand-bed hospital. On my records I was a medical student that was going to be a doctor. When they read that, they transferred me over to a thousand-bed hospital. I scrubbed in surgery for three years down there. My wife came down, and we lived and rationed at the post. We had one daughter that was born down there.

Q. What's the post?

A. Well, we didn't live out at camp; we lived in town. I had an apartment. We stayed there because it was close to where my wife worked, and I rode the bus in New Orleans for three years.

Then they came out with the declaration that if you had been in the army for a year that you had to go overseas. So they sent me overseas for a year. I went to the Philippines, and my wife stayed here with her folks out at Carthage. I scrubbed in surgery for a year in the Philippines out in the mountains, in tents and so forth. Then I went to Japan with a group that was there for a couple months. Then I came back to Illinois. That's my story.

Q. Wanitta, you've lived out here your whole life, except for California. How was it growing up here?

A. [WB] Well, I went to school in Nauvoo. It was pretty much a normal school. I graduated from Nauvoo High School in 1930. There weren't very many Mormons there at that time. We barely had any Mormon visitors.

A. [LB] After we moved back here in 1950, Dr. Kimball started the restoration process. We came back here because her brother was killed here on the farm. Her mother had breast cancer as well. My wife's mother wanted us to come back, and so we did.

California was just beginning to have all her freeways then. We told ourselves that we would stay until my mother-in-law passed away, but we never went back to California.

Q. Wanitta, how was it growing up in what used to be a Mormon town?

A. [WB] I don't think there were any Mormons here when I was growing up.

A. [LB] Dr. Kimball was the only Mormon here when we came back in 1950. We used to drive by his house and stop several times—at the Kimball House. There were just a few residents at that time.

There is one thing that I'd like to tell you about. They have really cleaned Nauvoo up. All of these old homes were all dilapidated. The houses are made of brick. The flats (that's what we call it) have really been cleaned up. It looks real nice now from what it was. People lived in those old houses, and they didn't take care of them. The houses were beginning to get old, but the Mormons fixed them up. It looks very nice.

Q. Wanitta, has Nauvoo changed a lot since you were growing up?

A. [WB] Yes. But not much in population. I don't think it's been added to very much—until the Mormons came. They come for two years, I think—I'm talking about the missionaries.

A. [LB] We don't really get acquainted with them. Now, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—our kids went to school with them. We got acquainted with them. They had parties. The kids would come here and stay all night or something. But the other missionaries are only here two years, and we don't get well acquainted with them.

Q. You guys have inherited this farm, and are you still working it?

A. [LB] No. I retired several years ago. Now my son-in-law and daughter farm the place. They live in Nauvoo, Illinois. We've seen the temple being built from ground up. I used to raise a lot of cattle, and I had a pretty good-sized farm. I had a hired man. I farmed quite a little bit.

One of the men that I knew helped in building the temple. I've furnished some of the supplies for the temple. He wanted me to help build the temple.

Q. Have you enjoyed watching the building of the temple?

A. Yes. The nicest thing we like is the City of Joseph pageant.

Q. Do you think that the restoration of the homes is helping Nauvoo?

A. Yes, it is. Do you want me to tell you the bad part? Nauvoo was a little town of twelve to thirteen hundred, but it's not going to be like that anymore. We used to know everybody, but now a half or two-thirds of the people we don't know.

I've seen something that has happened. I don't smoke or drink, and me and my wife never have. The fact is, she had an uncle that drank a lot, and when we got married she told me that she didn't want to marry anybody that drinks. People are surprised when I tell them that I've never smoked in my life. All of the places in Nauvoo are nonsmoking

now because of the Mormons coming. They want your business and your money.

The hotel here is the best eating place—it'll cost you ten bucks. It's called the Hotel Nauvoo. It went nonsmoking. Grandpa Johns across the street, where you eat lunch, is now nonsmoking. All of the eating places within the last month have gone nonsmoking, which is fine and it makes me happy.

There's two things about the Mormons that I'd like to brag about: one. a drunk driver will never run into me—Mormons will never do that because they don't drink; number two is you take care of your poor people. That's two things that I admire you for. Remind me before you leave, there's something here that I want to show you.

Q. Why do you think that the Mormons left here in 1846?

A. What did your mother and father tell you about the Mormons—why they left?

A. [WB] They didn't tell me anything.

A. [LB] You told me that if they needed something, like a cow, they would take it. The farmers got disgusted with that. That was one reason why they disliked them.

Q. The reason that the non-Mormons didn't like the Mormons is because they would steal things?

A. My wife's parents, who lived here for a long time, told my wife that, and she told me.

Q. Did your parents talk more about the Mormons?

A. [WB] My grandpa's brother was a Mormon, Charlie Pitt. My relatives didn't visit back and forth, so I really don't know anything about them. But I know that Charlie went to California. The Mormons took care of him once he got old. His brother used to send him money—he was an alcoholic. The Mormons took care of him when he was down and out.

A. [LB] That's what I'm talking about. You take care of your old people, not just your people, but other ones too.

Q. Could the politics of the area have anything to do with why the Mormons left?

A. [WB] When they shot Joseph Smith in Carthage is when the Mormons left.

A. [LB] They got a red spot out there in Carthage, and I say that they paint that every year. That was supposed to be somebody's blood, but it isn't.

Wanita, tell them about Nauvoo, you were in 4-H. That is where the Reorganized Church is, down by the river. It's down by the log cabin- Joseph Smith is buried there.

A. [WB] The girls were camping there—it used to be a park, but I don't know what it is now. We were camping there one night, and the camp leaders took us into a log cabin house. I think it was Joseph Smith's home at one time.

A. [LB] She tells people that she stayed all night where Joseph Smith lived! That was the reason she was in 4-H.

Q. What is 4-H?

A. It's an agricultural club. Cooking and sewing and things like that for young fanners.

Q. Do you have any interesting accounts or stories about the Mormons?

A. [WB] The Mormons weren't active when I was growing up. They had already left and had just barely started to come back.

A. [LB] In 1950 Dr. Kimball came back and started to redo his house.

Q. Lynn, could you tell me a little more about your ancestors that were Mormons?

A. It is really interesting. They went through terrible times coming over. They would say things like, "Married today." "We buried a baby at sea, l' or "We buried another child."

The Mormon Trail heads out west. It goes through Nebraska, where I live. I've seen it. There's still ruts where the wagons went through. Maybe now they're gone.

Q. How do you think Joseph Smith was viewed before his death?

A. The people didn't like him. We don't know much about that.

A. [WB] The people turned against him because when the Mormons wanted a pig or a cow they would come out into the country and take it. That's what turned the people off. He also started an army. People turned against that because they thought Joseph Smith was going to get too powerful.

I don't know why he went to Carthage Jail—maybe because they thought he was getting too powerful. Then they shot him out there. The Mormons took off after that and went to Salt Lake. They had to cross the river, and it froze over when they went over to Montrose with the wagons.

A. [LB] When my wife was in high school, she used to cross the river because it would freeze. She used to go over and watch them play basketball. She told our girls that, and they told her she was crazy.

We didn't have the barges coming through—now barges come through year round. Maybe for a month during the winter it'll freeze up hard enough they can't come through. All our grain goes by barges to New Orleans. When it froze, you could drive a car across over to Montrose, Iowa.

Q. When was the dam built?

A. [WB] It was started in 1913 and finished in '18 or '19.

A. [LB] They've enlarged it since we've come back. We've gone up and down the Mississippi on trips.

A. [WB] They've enlarged the length of the dam for the barge traffic.

A. [LB] They don't want to disassemble the barges. There's fifteen usually in a group. They get down here a ways and that takes more time and money of course.

Q. What do you know of the Icarians?

A. [WB] They were French. We don't know much about them.

Q. Were any of your ancestors associated with the Icarians?

A. John LaCroix is related to them.

A. [LB] He has prostate cancer and has been going for treatment. He has failed a lot in the last year or two.

Q. What do you know about the wine industry in this area?

A. [WB] We don't drink wine. The Baxters are the ones that started the wine industry. They've done very well.

A. [LB] Wine and bleu cheese.

Q. What do you know about the bleu cheese? Have those things helped the economy?

A. At the eating places here they used to give you a little glass of wine with your meal. But they have cut that out because of the Mormons coming back.

Q. What churches have been influential to Nauvoo?

A. [WB] There's about six churches in Nauvoo. You can get most anything you want.

A. [LB] The Baptists opened up a church last year.

A. [WB] All the churches get along good. They have a Bible school in the summer and the Mormons participate in that. The Mormons don't have any small children here, I don't think.

A. [LB] There's a few families, but I don't know where they go to school.

A. [WB] Well, they must go here because they help with the Bible school. We've got grandchildren that go to Bible school. I'm too old to help with it anymore.

A. [LB] There's a better feeling now than there used to be between the Mormons and the RLDS, or Reorganized Church.

Q. What is your reaction to the tourism here?

A. You don't want to hear that on tape. I hate to see so many tourists. We live in a little town of twenty-five hundred. We used to know everybody, but now you walk around and there's a lot of Mormons. They're not here long enough for us to be able to get acquainted with them. Our daughter knows all of them because they come in to get their pictures done and get their medicine. She knows them by name. But we don't know them.

Everything is going that way. We lived in California when there weren't any freeways. We've been back quite a few times since then. Well, the population is exploding and ruining things. I'm old-fashioned. I'm still back in the mud house days. I lived in a sod house when I was a little kid.

Q. Do you think that the tourism helps the economy?

A. Yes. It helps a lot.

Q. What was your initial reaction to the announcement of the rebuilding of the temple?

A. I've always said that the Mormons were going to come back and build a church or temple. I have gone to your church when they have had Christmas sing-alongs, or something—I've talked to the Mormons about it and told them that they were going to rebuild it. They always told me that they didn't have enough people here. This was a few years ago, but now there's more people coming. I kept telling them that they would, but they always told me they wouldn't. I knew more about it than they did.

Q. What have you heard about other people's thoughts and feelings concerning the Nauvoo Temple?

A. [WB] People have said that it just won't be the same as it was. It won't be a small town where you know all your neighbors.

A. [LB] The school is getting bigger. Some people are worried about the taxes. The waterworks is going to have to increase. Mormons are paying for quite a bit of it. We don't get into town too often to talk to people.

A. [WB] We go to a country church, and we don't go to town unless there's something going on.

Q. Have you had much contact with the students or teachers that are going to the Joseph Smith Academy?

A. [LB] No. You're pretty much the first.

Q. What do you think about having a school out there?

A. Again, I could see that coming. I said that eventually they'd have a school out there. I didn't really think that the Catholic sisters would give it up. We're related to someone that used to cook for them, and she said that they have left and she doesn't work there anymore.

Q. What has your daughter that works at the pharmacy said about the students?

A. The students bring a lot of film in. [chuckles] I was standing in there the other day, and some students brought a whole bunch of film in. The girls all come in from the school. The pharmacy has got more business, that's for sure.

I have a prediction. Our daughter is not a pharmacist. They have a lot of flowers, too. I predict that some Mormon will buy that pharmacy and it'll be Mormon-run.

Q. What do you see for the future of Nauvoo?

A. It's going to grow. It's going to be how it was like when the Mormons were here.

Q. What would you like to see happen with Nauvoo?

A. I'd like to see it back like it used to be. [laughs] No. I'm not going to live forever. The world is changing. We have computers. I'm still old-fashioned.

Q. Before the interview started, you were telling me about Arizona.

A. We had a winter home there for twenty-five years, in Scottsdale. It's supposed to be an up-and-up place. We have forty acres. The area was only a couple years old when we bought our property. Where we live is right close to

downtown. We like it, but a lot of the people are dying off. Of course, I'm going to be the next one.

We buried a neighbor that used to live right across the street here from us. We buried him today. He lived here for quite a while. He lived here all of his life. Our son-in-law farms over there now. The house is gone, and they farm right where the house was. That's how things are changing here for us. It'll change like that in Nauvoo too. Anyway, there's a Mormon lady that lives in Scottsdale. . . .

A. [WB] There's a temple in Mesa, Arizona.

A. [LB] Yes. We just missed seeing that. One time we went down to visit. We used to go back to California every five years when the kids were little. My wife has a cousin that lives in Mesa. We went out to see her. If we had waited a couple days we would've been able to go out and see the temple, but I was still farming then, and so we didn't have time. I would've liked to see it.

I was disappointed when we went to St. Louis. I thought the temple would be like this one was going to be. It is beautiful down there and everything, but you go in there and see one room where you can change your clothes, and we saw a baptismal font that was very pretty. There was another room where you can eat your food. I know why it's that way, but I just expected to see some beautiful rooms.

A. [WB] When we went, we realized it wasn't a worship center—I don't know what you call it, but it isn't where you have your services every Sunday.

A. [LB] Aren't Mormons supposed to go once or twice a year?

Q. About once a month.

A. It's been three or four years since the open house. We had to get tickets. It'll be like the temple here in Nauvoo.

My wife broke her ankle a few years ago and has trouble walking. I put her in a wheelchair, and then we went up and down on the elevators. Our daughters had to go up the stairs to get her. The Mormon people are real nice. They go out of their way and are really friendly.

At the hotel the other night, there was a group of about ten or twelve. You know that they are Mormons because of their dress—these are the missionaries. They stopped and told my wife that she had a beautiful dress. They're always complimentary. Your hair looks nice, etc.

A. [WB] The missionaries are very active in visiting the residents here. They've participated in a lot of activities that are around. If there is a fundraiser or soup supper, the Mormons will go. They're enlarging the fire station because they want to buy a bigger fire truck to reach the top of the temple. They had to raise money to buy this new fire truck, then they had to enlarge the fire station. The missionaries always participate.

Q. Before the interview you were telling me about some bumper sticker?

A. [LB] We have a Mormon lady that lives about three or four blocks from us in Scottsdale, Arizona. One day she walked by, and her next-door neighbor told me that she was a Mormon. I didn't know that. Everybody knows everybody there, and we're real friendly. It's a nice area to live in.

She came by and I said, "Have you looked on my bumper on my car?" She told me she hadn't. She read that it said "I love Nauvoo." She asked me if I was from Nauvoo. I told her I was. She told me that she'd love to go there and that she's never been able to. She has been sick this last year, and I went to see her. She was laid down and sleeping, so I didn't get to see her. She had asked me before if I'd bring her something from Nauvoo when I went back.

She wanted me to talk at her church. I told her that I wasn't Mormon and that she knew more about the Church than I did. She told me that she'd be glad to have me come. I asked her what time the service was at, and I found out it was at the same time as our Presbyterian Church. I didn't get to go anyway. The preacher from your church came over and talked to me a little bit and he gave me the Mormon book here.

Q. Are there any other comments that you'd like to make?

A. [WB] I'm glad to see that they're building a parking garage there. That's one of the biggest problems in Nauvoo. The farm trucks go right down that main street.

A. [LB] They're going to have to do something about that. I don't haul grain anymore. I still have grain—I have a share. My son-in-law has to haul it in, and it goes right past the temple. They routed the main street a little different now, but they're going to have to do something about it and divert it someplace else.

Richard Bolton

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: November 12, 1936

Interview on November 24, 2001, in his home by Libby Hanks

Cava Cahoon and Amy Redd also present

Q. [Libby Hanks] How long have you lived in the Nauvoo area?

A. [Richard Bolton] Since 1965—that long.