

This interview with Otto Griewank took place at his residence, 4131 S. 75 W, LaPorte on November 9, 1977. Interviewer was Laurie Radke.

OG: My building experience began quite a while before we started in the contracting business. I was married in 1910---in 1911 we got started in the contracting business. But prior to that, I had been working in a sash and door factory where I learned to do mill work of all kinds and I finished as a cabinet maker there.

LR: Where was the sash and door company?

OG: It was on the corner of Carter Street and State Street in LaPorte. There's a toy factory there now. And I worked there from probably 1905 to 1911. Then in the meantime I reported to night school to study architectural drawing because they started public night school in the high school building here and I attended that for five years. When I went in the contracting business I made the plans for the buildings to be built and we also took contracts for other buildings from other plans and at the same time, other people. The first plan I ever made was printed on the day that my son was baptized, in March of 1911. And it was for a five-room house for John Felton out on Scott Street. I think it was the third house south of Ohio Street on the east side---just a small house. We built it for \$1100. Of course at that time you didn't get a basement under it because they didn't have furnaces and the plumbing consisted of just a sink and a pump, no running water, no electricity, pipes for gas lighting and for gas cooking, and the upstairs attic was not finished. But a kitchen, living room and bedroom downstairs were finished. That's an \$1100 job that didn't include painting because he was a painter and did the painting himself.

LR: Did you design or build this home?

OG: I designed it and built it. My brother and I were in partnership. My brother was four years older than I and had been working as a carpenter for a good many years but I was a cabinet maker. There's quite a distinction between the two.

LR: What is that distinction?

OG: The distinction is that a cabinet maker makes fine things that got to be very accurate and the joints have to be very tight and perfect and finished like furniture. Cabinet work, building kitchen cabinets and any kind of interior trim...we worked on doors for Ingersoll's house which was on the corner of Alexander and Indiana Avenue . We built the second house of the same plans for a fella by the name of Henry Bajer which was on F Street between 4th and 5th streets for the same price. But before we had the job of building a house we'd just start doin' odd jobs. We started out with nothing, we had no money. We had a two-wheel cart and each of us had our tool boxes and tools. So we'd put our tool boxes on the cart and got a job building a storm house on the back of a house on Fox Street. of the same plans for a fella by the name of Henry Bajer which was on F Street between 4th and 5th streets for the same price. But before we had the job of building a house we'd just start doin' odd jobs. We started out with nothing, we had no money. We had a two-wheel cart and each of us had our tool boxes and tools. So we'd put our tool boxes on the cart and got a job building a storm house on the back of a house on Fox Street.

LR: A storm house?

OG: Storm house, yes, well, it was just a little vestibule, temporary vestibule built around the outside door of a house and this happened to be a back door so that when you opened the door to come into the house you'd step into this little storm house and then you'd close the door behind you and then you'd go into the house. The winter cold wouldn't blow into the house. That's a storm house. And in the springtime it would be taken apart. There'd be one section and you'd lift that off and lift off the three sides and put it away and then in fall you'd put it up again.

LR: How long did it take you and your brother to build this?

OG: About two days or maybe two and one-half days and then we'd go on to another job where we had to dress floors. The floors were hardwood and this meant we had to get down on our knees and scrape them with scrapers and then sand 'em with a sanding block ...which is now all done by machine but we had to do it the hard way ...get down on your knees and push a scraper ...that pushed hard. There you were ten hours a day. There was no eight hour day... ten hour days. Work progressed from one thing to another down through the years, we got bigger jobs and we had to hire all our other work besides carpentry work by subcontracts..like masonry and excavating for basements and plastering and plumbing and so forthit was all subcontracted to other trades.

LR: When you began though, you and your brother did it all?

OG: No, those were the parts we subcontracted right away. We confined our work to carpentry. So we came into 1912 which was a boom year in LaPorte. Dr. Rumely started the Advance Rumely business building the oil pull and employed many people. They came in from many parts ...a great influx of people. The result was there wasn't enough homes so they had to build them. In that year, we built 50 homes which was an awful lot in those years. And other builders came in the office, sometimes from six o'clock in the morning until two o'clock the next morning. I'd work on plans and then the customers would come in after supper to look them over and make changes in whatever way they wanted, and it would sometimes take till two o'clock in the morning before they had shown all the plans. When the plan was completed we would give an estimated cost on it and they would have extra plans from other contractors. In 1923 there were some 20 odd contractors in business. Anybody who had a hammer and a saw went into contracting so the competition was terrific. There would be a lot of work but made no money.

LR: After the Advance Rumely Company opened in 1912, where were most of the houses built?

OG: Well we built (on) any vacant lots ...the owner would provide the lots and we'd build it wherever he wanted the building done. We did custom building, we didn't do group building like we do now. Start a new subdivision and just build a group of houses there. We'd build all over town ...wherever anybody had a vacant lot. A lot would sell for \$300. That was a terrific price and we'd build a house there. We couldn't get brick work done fast enough on some projects so we hired a bricklayer who happened to come through here. He was going to Michigan and run out of money and asked us for a job, so we put him to work building a foundation and he stayed with us and built our foundations for us. Later on we had different men working for us ...we had

quite a few masons working for us. As our work progressed and we had bigger buildings to build we had more work to do and had to have more men. We went on through the years, of course they weren't all as affluent as 1912. After that big rush was over then there came a scarce time when you had to search for a job. There was a lot of contractors, they dried up very quickly. We soon were down to about 6 or 8 contractors. We settled down, got a job wherever we could, whatever kind of building, whether it be a house, a barn, a shed..no matter what it was... anything within a radius of 6 or 8 miles because transportation was limited. In 1912 we got hold of an old Model T Ford that had been standing in a warehouse for years and wouldn't run. We had a man pull it into my brother's barn. Mr. Heel was a blacksmith and he was getting interested in tinkering with Fords and automobiles. He come down and showed us how to get it started. Well every little while, it would stop. We used that running here and there...we did make trips out in the country 4 or 5 miles. When we got 4 or 5 miles out in the country we were in a new world, we had to be careful or we'd get lost because there were no roadmarks and there was no pavement out in the country ...just dirt road. We could spread our work out a little bit further, get out of town and do farm work. The farmer was prospering...so we prospered because he'd want barns and we built them. About that time they were putting in stanchions and concrete mangers in the barns for dairy barns. We got into that line of business and built a good many dairy barns and put in stanchions. We built one barn out here for Feeterchild. He had the idea to feed cattle by having them in the stanchion and feeding them European style. They kept them confined to fatten them. He built stanchions in an old barn...he had walls built around it eight foot high, leaving the bottom part for the cattle barn and the upper part for a hay barn. We put in stanchions there for about 80 head of cattle. Then there was W. C. Weir, he was an undertaker. He had his undertaking establishment on the corner of Madison and Jefferson Avenue, I guess there's a labor hall there now. We went from one kind of work to another and got more year after year, that's the way we made our living. This was the early part of our contracting career. Then we began building commercial buildings and store buildings. There were a lot of old store fronts in LaPorte on Lincolnway. There had been store fronts taken out and new store fronts put in ...wider store fronts. The old store fronts had steps in front of them, anywhere from 2, or 4 or 5 steps from the sidewalk up into the store so that down below the store there was a basement. These were usually rented to a cobbler or a barber. We'd put in a new storefront, cover up the bottom and drop the floor down to sidewalk level. That's how a lot of the store fronts are down to sidewalk level. They were of varying heights all the way down Lincolnway.pavement out in the country ...just dirt road. We could spread our work out a little bit further, get out of town and do farm work. The farmer was prospering...so we prospered because he'd want barns and we built them. About that time they were putting in stanchions and concrete mangers in the barns for dairy barns. We got into that line of business and built a good many dairy barns and put in stanchions. We built one barn out here for Feeterchild. He had the idea to feed cattle by having them in the stanchion and feeding them European style. They kept them confined to fatten them. He built stanchions in an old barn...he had walls built around it eight foot high, leaving the bottom part for the cattle barn and the upper part for a hay barn. We put in stanchions there for about 80 head of cattle. Then there was W. C. Weir, he was an undertaker. He had his undertaking establishment on the corner of Madison and Jefferson Avenue, I guess there's a labor hall there now. We went from one kind of work to another and got more year after year, that's the way we made our living. This was the early part of our contracting career. Then we began building commercial buildings and store buildings. There were a lot of old store fronts in LaPorte on Lincolnway. There had been store fronts taken out and new store fronts put in ...wider store fronts. The old store fronts had

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LR: Why were they different heights before..was there an advantage to having a store that you had to step up into?

OG: Yes, as I just explained, the reason they had the floor high was so they had room for some kind of business under there so they could get five dollars a month rent out of them. You see, rent wasn't very high. There was no pavement down Lincolnway at that time. Cedar blocks were used but they were pretty well worn away on Lincolnway which was Main Street at that time. There was a piece of cedar block on Madison Street between Lincoln and the Penn Central tracks, otherwise there was no pavement. The cedar block was just cedar trees cut off about eight inches long and they would be set on and in a sand cushion so they would be approximately even along the top. Now I said approximately. If you'd ride over them with a horse drawn wagon with steel wheels and no springs, why you'd find out they weren't very even. That was one means of keeping out the mud. I saw mud so deep and so fluid between Madison Street and Indiana Avenue that a man had a horse hitched to a boat and he was riding in the boat and the horse was pulling him across the fluid mud. Oh, I don't know... just a little sarcasm there I guess. Ha! Ha! That gives you an idea of what the roads were like in the springtime when the frosts go out. The buggies and wagons they'd mire down deep until you'd have some heavy rains and the grounds would dry out and it would compact. Then you'd stay on top and it would become dusty. When the horses would come around and plop its hooves down and the dust would squirt out and the wind would pick it up and the dust would blow hither and yon into the stores and into the houses and all over. That's the way life was in those days. Later years they began to pave with bricks but we're getting away from our building story. This storefront business turned out to be quite a profitable business according to the standards at that time. It was profitable if we could make wages of 55¢ an hour. Carpenters were getting right around forty or forty-five cents an hour. Common labor was getting ten to fifteen cents an hour so that'll give you an idea of the standards of that time. We'd get a subcontractor to dig the basement - that would be done with slip scrapers, a scraper like a scoop drawn by two horses with a handle. It would hold about 4 or 5 feet of earth, cubic feet, and then you'd go down in the basement and start with a man who'd pick up the handles on the back of the scoop so that it would be held at a slope. The front edge would bite into the dirt ...the horses would pull and as they'd pull along, why it would fill up with dirt. The man would drop the handles, then he'd take it out and the other guy would take ahold of the handle and lift 'em over and duck plop it over to dump the dirt out. Then he'd come back in for another load. Of course, he couldn't dress the sides straight so that there had to be a man down in the basement with a shovel who had to shovel from the sides and dress the sides to the proper dimensions for the foundation. In those days we built banks in the basement so as not to have so much foundation to build. The banks would be built up to about eighteen inches below the surface of the ground.

LR: Now when you say banks what do you mean?

OG: A dirt bank that was left there about two feet wide on top. It would slope down... about a six inch slope, then generally it would be about four or five feet high. Then the mason would build his foundation on top of these banks and he wouldn't have that much more brick work down in the basement. When the first floor would be laid down then the mason would go down in the basement and set brick on edge in mortar against the face of the banks as a retainer and to make a neater job. Prior to that, some of them didn't even put the bricks on them. On top we put a thin coating of cement mortar about an inch thick so it could be kept clean. That's where the lady of the house would store her canned fruits and jellies and so forth ...because not having any furnace in the basement it would be cool... keep vegetables and fruits and apples and various kinds of perishables in the basement. Then we'd go on to put up all the joists and the subfloor and setting up the shedding and if there's a second floor, put on the second floor joist and the shedding on up to the roof. But before we put on the roof we had to put on the lining around the outside to stabilize it to make it stiffer. That would be one by six strips of dressed lumber.

LR: When you say dressed lumber, what do you mean?

OG: It would be run through a planer...it wouldn't be rough like it comes from a sawmill, that's rough lumber. This was dressed on both sides to a definite dimension--seven-eighths of an inch thick at that time. One edge had a tongue on it, the other edge had a groove so that you'd put one board successfully over the other...the groove over the tongue. That's what we call dressed and matched lumber. That would be nailed around the outside for lining. Then we'd put up the rafters and then you'd put on the sheeting. That would be one by six square edged. It wasn't tongue and grooved. That would be nailed on and spaced two or two and one half inches apart. That's put on there so we'd have something to nail the wooden shingles to. The only shingles we had for roof covering was wooden shingles. Prior to ninety-three there were all white pine shingles coming from northern Michigan. We built a barn house here in ninety-three we had cedar shingles, which was something new. The barn and the house also was shingled with cedar shingles which were some of the first used in this area. We used pine shingles too when we first started work but they'd be cheaper, they were getting too many knots in them. Of course only about four and one-half inches of the butt of the shingle showed if there were knots above that, why it didn't matter. Only the butt of the shingle showed and if it was knotted in that upper part, it would be covered. We used nothing but cedar shingles because white pine shingles were taken off the market. The white pine crop was so short they couldn't make good shingles anymore. We used red cedar shingles...they called it red cedar but it was not the true red cedar. The true red cedar was what they used to make pencils out of and they made cedar boxes out of it. It was a very dark redwood, very aromatic wood. The red cedars came from northern Wisconsin and Minnesota and a lot of the northern states. The main lumber - house lumber - was hemlock that came from up in northern Michigan. That was all rough sawed...a two by four measured two by four ...a full two by four. Sometimes it was heavier than two by fours. It had to be two inches thick and four inches wide or it would be rejected. That's what we used for sheddings and other purposes. Then the joists were two by eights, two by tens, and two by twelves, all out of hemlock. They were rough to handle because they had so many slivers. Our hands were always full of slivers. We didn't have any power saws to cut the lumber. All the lumber had to be sized to length, we had to cut by hand. We'd start out with the joists and we'd have to square the cuds. They'd be laid on the saw horse and square marked and cut off by hand. You can imagine pushing a saw through all those joists in the house. In some places, you'd have to saw both ends of the joist. All the lumber

we used had to be sawed by hand even if you wanted to rip a board lengthwise, you had to do it by hand. We had no power saw.

LR: Did you buy your lumber from a local lumber yard?

OG: Yes, all our lumber was bought from several lumber yards that we had in town. There were two at the time, Wilson Lumber Co. and Lumber Company. That's where we bought all our lumber. They would haul it in here by team from Michigan City. It come to Michigan City by boat. The pine would be southern pine that'd come from the south. That would be the sheathing and the lining. Then of course inside for flooring most of it was yellow pine. That would be clear, no knots were allowed in that. That would be the finished floor. It would be dressed, sanded, and then varnished in the living rooms of a house. The bedrooms of course were carpeted, it didn't make any difference there. The outside of the house would be covered with paper. We called it rosin paper used for building; it was a rather heavy paper we put on the outside and then'd we'd put the siding over that. The siding was all nailed on with cut nails - seven penny cut nails. They wouldn't allow us to use wire nails because they'd rust out too soon. These nails all had to be set they had to be sunk below the surface of the wood. Then the painter had to give the house a primer coat and then he would have to putty up all the nail holes that were exposed. Every nail hole had to be filled with putty so there would be no nail heads showing. That's the way the early houses were built. In later years we used wire nails in place of the cut nails. We built factory buildings. We built the building which was Indiana Molding. I don't know what's in there now. It's out there on the east side of LaPorte next to the New York Central tracks. While we were doing that building we had to see to it that all the machinery was running and they could keep right on operating to get out the moldings...they were making moldings that were shipped out all over the world...picture frame moldings mostly. That meant we had to take out what we could cover up for the day and if we couldn't cover it up, we had to put a canvas over it in case of a storm. We had to take down the whole wall. The old windows were wooden windows with small lights of glass. We had to put in steel windows known as Fenestre windows. They were made up in Michigan, that was something new at the time. These were put in, bricked in the twelve inch walls. The second floor had eight inch walls. So they had a two story factory building. After we had the outside finished and supported the roof we had to put in a concrete floor where all these machines were. We would put in a section at a time. They would have to take out one machine at a time, let us lay the floor and then they'd put it right back so they could go to work againto keep machinery going. We worked there for a long time. Later on we built a big warehouse beside it. By that time we had a concrete mixer.

LR: How did you set in concrete?

OG: Well we laid all the concrete by hand. We had wheelbarrows and we'd put down so many wheelbarrows of sand and so many of gravel and then so many sacks of cement put in a row along with boards or anything smooth to shovel from. A man would get on each side and then we'd shovel it back, scoop under it and turn it toward-our back. That's the way we'd work right through the long pile. Then you'd turn that around and work back the other way dry. Then you'd put water on it and then you had to work it twice or three times wet. Then you'd shovel it up in wheelbarrows and haul it to wherever you wanted it. Later on we got a little concrete mixer. It would handle about two or two and one-half feet of concrete at a time. Of course that saved a lot

of back work ...we thought that was wonderful. We did the job of mixing what we could by hand too.

LR: How was the concrete mixer powered?

OG: We had a little gasoline engine on the concrete mixer. Later on that was replaced by an electric motor. But at first it had a little gas engine. We had some bad experience with the gas engine. They put it inside this warehouse I was telling you about. It was cold and I was running this floor in the winter. They kept the windows closed and before we knew it a bunch of men were sick with carbon monoxide poisoning. We didn't know about carbon monoxide poisoning in those days. That was our first experience - quite an education. We had all these new things..new innovations..that we had to learn as we went along. We went on doing more work, remodeling work like the piano factory. It was the Hubbard and Cobel Piano Factory. I don't know what's in there now. I guess the building is gone. We built some of the larger buildings like St. John's Parish Hall on the corner of B and 3rd Street. That was one of the buildings we designed and built. We built a garage for Carl Petrie on the corner of Chicago Street and Lincolnway - I don't remember the name - I believe it was the Palace Garage. He sold the Jeffrey car and he was very proud of that car. The chasis of the car was made out of wood - ash. It wasn't a steel chasis, it was wooden. Later on that changed to steel and he said the motor was so smooth that you could stand a pencil on end on the front fender of the car and it would stand still. The second floor of that building was made out of three by six inch lumber that was nailed flat side against that side edged up and down. It was what we called a laminated floor. The whole floor was built by lamination. It was held by three I-beams that weighed seven tons apiece. We had to haul them from the New York Central tracks to where they had a wooden crane near Madison Street. That's where the heavy objects were unloaded. We swung them around on bobsleds. I think they were around thirty-five or thirty-six feet long. We'd put a bobsled on the front end and a bobsled under the back and then haul it over to the building.

LR: What were these beams made out of?

OG: They were steel. They were what was known as plate girders. They were five feet high, that's what made them so heavy...they were hoisted in place by hand with an A-frame derrick. We'd place a derrick on either end which held up guide ropes to the rear. On the front side where the load was were pulleys and a four-part line. That is a two-wheel pulley on top and single-wheel pulley below. That had a hook on it which would be hauled into a chain around the girder and then the rope went over the top pulley down the derrick on to a winch which was like a spool. There was a crank on each side and two men on each handle would turn the crank to wind up the rope. It was necessary to have one of these on each and so that it took eight men to wind one of these girders up into position. When we had the last one up into position ready to swing it in on the shelf, there was a sharp snap...I happened to have two good level-headed men on the handles...they didn't run, they held on to the handle of the derrick. They didn't let go and put a block in the gears so that the load couldn't run down. We didn't know what had happened. The beam stayed where it was. I told them to go ahead and wind it up and let in on the shelf. We put it in on the shelf. We put a couple bolts in it (to hold it steady) and went home for dinner. After dinner I came back. It was all mud in there. I was walking through, wearing rubber boots. I noticed some dry metal, steel, in the mud. I thought that was strange, everything was wet ...I

reached down and dug it out of the mud and looked at it. It was a hook from the derrick on which one of our pulleys was hooked. I had (taken) the precaution of putting a chair over the head of the derrick and under the hook of the pulley for safety. In case something would break, the chain would catch it and that's what happened, the chain caught it. Otherwise it would have dropped down and broken the other derrick and we probably would have had somebody killed.

Fortunately we had the safety chain on and we got along all right. We also built the LaPorte Library on Indiana Avenue. Another man by the name of Paulson was a stone cutter for Henry Diedson who was a monument man and general stone cutter out of LaPorte. This man Paulson and I set all the stone around the building from the ground up to the first floor. If you ever look at the building you'll notice the stone columns there. Those were a very meticulous thing to set because you had to up end them. The stone was so fragile that if you'd up end them on the sharp edge of the flat cut surface on the bottom you'd break the stone. There was a trick to up end them. That was another problem...the stone cutter was experienced ...we had pieces of rubber hose and we put that under the edge of the stone when we'd turn it up on edge. That would act as a cushion and the stone wouldn't chip. In the head of the stone was a notch cut in deep and flared out about three-fourths of an inch wide and about six inches deep into which we would put lewises. They (lewises) are made of two pieces of steel one-half inch by two inches wide and bent in a curve. They had a hole in the top through which a ring was placed and welded. Two of these would be put back to back, that is, curved back to back. Then there was another ring in the two rings to which you would hook your pulley. By putting these lewises down in the hole and if you'd pull up on the top that would expand the bottom because it was rocking against the rounded back. It would expand the bottom in the lewis hole and it wouldn't come out. Then you could raise the stone by the lewises and set it in place with the derrick; the only way we could move our derrick was by letting the derrick go forward. First we'd pull it back, we'd have three pulleys on the back side on the guide ropes. With one pulley we could pull the derrick back by pulling down on this pulley. Then when we had the weight up to where we wanted it, we could let out on the guide ropes and the derrick would move forward until it would overhand where we wanted to set the load. That's the only way we could handle it...that's the way we had to handle all heavy stones.

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LR: What year was the library built?

OG: I can't tell you that exactly, I don't remember the year.

LR: Do you remember how long it took you to finish that job?

OG: About two years as I remember. I think it took us pretty close to two years. There's a secret about that library that nobody knows and its never been told and only I knew it. The architect that made the plan had all his dimensions measured from a center line through the center of the building. All dimensions were measured from that center line. When we got up to the second floor of the main floor it dawned on me that the center line was two inches off the center. Nobody knew about it, so we kept building right on, compensating for that two inches. That's never been told until I told you. That's bothered me for many, many years. You know, there's some of these things that happen that we just don't talk about. Like with the Palace Garage ...it was five inches narrower in back than in front by an error in setting the stakes. Those things happen because contractors are human and they do make mistakes. Now we also built the parish hall and school for St. Peter's Church which was on Monroe Street. The old church was on the corner. Father Schram was the priest at that time. He was a low German and I was a low German. He'd come around and we'd talk low German. He liked to do that because his parishioners couldn't understand him...most of the people who went there were Irish and spoke English. The other Roman Catholic Church on C Street was St. Joseph's and that was German. There was always feuding between German; and Irish Catholic. This Father Schram was low German and how he ever got into an Irish church, I don't know. He saw to it that we had all the wine we wanted to drink. He had plenty of wine in the basement...there's more secrets he told us that I won't tell you. I imagine you're Catholic so it's better you don't know. Ha Ha. He was in the Protestant ministry, they had secrets too. I've been behind the scenes there. At any rate, I believe that was built in 1917. St. John's was built about 1917 or '18 just before the first World War. When the war was underway and we got into it, building materials were very scarce ...those times were bad for the building business too.

LR: What did you do in the wintertime?

OG: That's a good question...why we'd wait for Spring! HA HA! We didn't build in the winter. Never thought of such a thing as building in the winter. In the fall we'd try to have a building under roof by Christmas because after Christmas there's no chance of building outside anymore. I remember we built the LaPorte Foundry out on Truesdale Ave. We managed to get that under roof by Christmas. Then we went to work on the inside. We'd always try to have some houses ready to go, that is, to do the finishing inside. The plastering could be done in the winter time because we'd use what we called salamanders to heat the building. You'd think of a salamander as a lizard, ha ha. Well these were just sheet iron tubes with a grate on the bottom and set on end.

They had legs on the bottom and there were three holes through which a cone-shaped tray was put underneath. These holes was where the legs stood in and this cone-shaped tray could be raised to shut off the air, preventing the fire from burning too fast. We'd burn coke in them because there was no smoke with that. There was a lot of gas. At night the bottoms would be raised up and ashes banked around it so it would get very little air so the fire would go all night long otherwise the plaster would freeze on the wall. There was no insulation on the walls at all. We didn't know anything about insulation then. When the plaster was dry, we'd get some old stove - a coal stove - and we'd set that up. We'd get a little of the chill out of the houses and then we'd work inside. Of course we'd have our winter wraps on working inside because it was that cold. We couldn't keep it warm enough. Later on we began to put in furnaces. Then we put in a little coal in the furnace, that way we could heat the whole house. We didn't want to heat the whole house because it cost too much for coal. Coal would cost us about six dollars a ton and we couldn't afford that.

LR: How thick were the walls built before insulation?

OG: Same as now only they were a little bit thicker. We called 'em six inch walls. The shedding was four inches wide and the lining was three-fourths of an inch and then the siding was another three-fourths inch. The plaster inside was three-fourths of an inch. It was six inches thick without the siding. The siding, which was three-fourths of an inch was extra.

LR: When did insulation become popular?

OG: Insulation wasn't used until, oh I can't remember...I don't remember ever using any insulation in our contracting. I contracted personally up until 1961. I think we probably used a little insulation in the ceilings and in the attics in the early 50's, that's as near as I can remember. People didn't use it because it was expensive, they couldn't afford it. It's hard to imagine the cost differential between today and then. My brother and I were in business together until 1938.

LR: What was your firm's name?

OG: Griewank Brothers was our firm's name. In 1938 we dissolved partnership, our interests were diverging. I liked farming and I liked to spend time out on the farm so we just dissolved our partnership. I continued to contract and my brother contracted for a little while. Then he decided he wasn't going to contract. He went to work for somebody else. He retired long before I did. Of course, he was older than I am. But I continued until 1961, then I retired. The last years I got wise...I didn't do any new buildings to speak of. The last building I built was the Dast Building on Monroe Street between Lincolnway and Jefferson Avenue on the east side. It was the second building from Jefferson Avenue. That's the last building I built. I built one prior to that - it was a filling station on East Lincolnway and the first road east of Tipton Street - anyhow it was a filling station there. I built that for \$40,000...it was a big job. Those were our last two big jobs. Then I've had mostly repair work. When I did building I'd have to hire help. I'd spend most of my time finding material for the help. I was losing most of my time. When I went in the repair business, I had work and I got paid for my time. I think I charged a dollar and a half an hour. I could make fifteen dollars a day if I worked ten hours. That was big, big wages then. I was on top of the world...living fine...only worked eight hours a day if I felt like it. I was in my 70's and

of course nobody knew how old I was. If they had known how old I was, they wouldn't have let me work so I never told anybody how old I was. I'd tell the people "I'll do your work but I won't promise to work a full eight hour day." I'd work as long as I felt like doing a good days work or a good hours work, then I'd go home. If you want to stop and visit with me, I'll talk with ya'and that time won't be charged against you. That'd be time out. While I'm talking you're not paying for my time. In that way, I could visit ...for instance, with Miss Rikenberg out here on the corner of Tenth and "A" Street. She was a professor at Valparaiso, that is, the old Valparaiso University. She was a very talented woman and I liked to visit with her. When I did building I'd have to hire help. I'd spend most of my time finding material for the help. I was losing most of my time. When I went in the repair business, I had work and I got paid for my time. I think I charged a dollar and a half an hour. I could make fifteen dollars a day if I worked ten hours. That was big, big wages then. I was on top of the world...living fine...only worked eight hours a day if I felt like it. I was in my 70's and of course nobody knew how old I was. If they had known how old I was, they wouldn't have let me work so I never told anybody how old I was. I'd tell the people "I'll do your work but I won't promise to work a full eight hour day." I'd work as long as I felt like doing a good days work or a good hours work, then I'd go home. If you want to stop and visit with me, I'll talk with ya'and that time won't be charged against you. That'd be time out. While I'm talking you're not paying for my time. In that way, I could visit ...for instance, with Miss Rikenberg out here on the corner of Tenth and "A" Street. She was a professor at Valparaiso, that is, the old Valparaiso University. She was a very talented woman and I liked to visit with her. That's really how I ended my building career ...by jobbing. TAlhen I quit in 1971, I was 75 years old. I thought that was time. I had finished my fifty years ...1911 to 1961. My wife died in January of 1961 and I had a little work out in the country, out in the woods, building a shed out of poles and plywood, for mules. I worked on that just to keep busy and forget my grief. Then when springtime came I retired entirely. I've been living here ever since. That's really how I ended my building career ...by jobbing. TAlhen I quit in 1971, I was 75 years old. I thought that was time. I had finished my fifty years ...1911 to 1961. My wife died in January of 1961 and I had a little work out in the country, out in the woods, building a shed out of poles and plywood, for mules. I worked on that just to keep busy and forget my grief. Then when springtime came I retired entirely. I've been living here ever since.