

This interview with Mrs. Florence Pierce took place at her residence, 1904 Pine St., on January 15, 1978. Interviewer was Laurie Radke. Gould's Farm - first Pierces lived there, Hansen's lived there and a German man lived there.

LR: How big was that farm?

FP: 600 acres.

LR: Do you know where the boundaries were?

FP: Yes, you see they cut roads in between there now. Karwick Road's been cut through there and Liberty Trail - the log cabin house - that wasn't the road going down through there.

LR: Where was the farmhouse located?

FP: It's still out there yet. Where Peters lives now.

LR: Not Dr. Gardner's house?

FP: No, the Gardner's house used to be the old Gould house and Peters house was where the 'over-see-er' worked. The 600 acres was mostly woods and grazing land cause they kept a dairy herd of 65 cattle.

LR: Did your mother know the Goulds when she was a little girl?

FP: Yes, the Gould Brothers lived there. I don't know when - the Goulds was taken away before we kids was big enough.

LR: Where were they taken away to?

FP: Prison.

LR: Do you know why?

FP: Mama says in those days if they didn't like ya they just done away with ya. I can't tell you how far out the farm went but those days they had chains and links.

LR: You mean like fences?

FP: No, they sold the property by links and chains.

LR: What do you mean - they didn't measure out acres?

FP: They sold it by chains and links. I don't know what it measured. We didn't have that in school. They'd tell us enough but not that.

LR: Do you know who the Goulds bought the farm from?

FP: They owned it.

LR: I know but who owned it before them?

FP: It was always there. They bought that there farm. That belonged to them in the first place. Those days I think mama said they got the land for a dollar an acre or chain links, whatever they called it then.

LR: Where was your mother's house?

FP: You know where the old Eastport schoolhouse used to be. That whole place there was my mothers.

LR: What was your mother's maiden name?

FP: Turner.

LR: You told me before about your mother baking bread for the Indians?

FP: Yes, we were talking about that fountain - Marquette Springs - water used to spout way up, about 4 or 5 feet. Doc. Warren or Stauffer that's there now, Mrs. Warren's brother or sumpin', you see when they started to build there what killed it, they let all their sewage go into the crick. When they made this over into Friendship Gardens, they had to cut that out.

LR: Dumping sewage?

FP: Cause people used to go there and gather that spring water. Cause that was the purest water there was.

LR: You told me before that the Indians lived in camps down there.

FP: Yes, that there lagoon on that side where the garden is now, that's where they used to camp and this side of that little crick, there horses and all like that traveled around in through these woods and it went from here to the Sixth Street bridge. All of that in there, that was all one farm. I couldn't tell you how far it all went but I know it was 650 some odd acres in it.

LR: You said the Indians used to cut across your mother's land.

FP: Yes, they'd come from those springs and they'd come up a little doe (?) path and come across Trail Creek and they followed the creek, through the woods, across the hill, we had a big hill where we went sliding, coasting. We didn't have those snow shoes like they got but we'd use our sled as a piece of tin and slide down hill. That used to be the McIntyre Hill.

LR: Named after your family?

FP: Uh-huh, then they'd come across. Mother used to tell me that if we didn't behave ourselves, she'd let them have us. After awhile, you know how kids get kinda friendly, they'd cut through there and come over my mother's hill. There was a little store on corner of Cleveland and Michigan - had everything from soup to nuts, y' know, it's a little farmer place - and then they'd come through. Mother used to do a lot of baking - she'd bake two or three times a week - bread or cookies or fried cakes and she'd always put 'em out to cool so we kids could eat 'em and when they'd come through and they'd see 'em and take some and the next day Mom found something they brought her.

LR: What'd they bring her?

FP: Sometimes prairie chicken, sometimes - whadda ya call them big birds?

LR: Turkeys?

FP: Yeah, there were plenty of those and geese, I think, they used to fly through the air and they used to be this thick on that Trail Creek they used to fish on that little pond.

LR: What Indians were these?

FP: Seminoles

LR: Where were they from?

FP: They come from Canada.

LR: Where were they headed?

FP: Was it Dakotas where there camp is now?

LR: How often did they come through - was it once a year?

FP: I guess those that were here they stayed all summer and then they went on, I guess to get rested up. I guess it was good eatin' around there.

LR: How many were there?

FP: I couldn't tell ya - it looked like there was regiments, (chuckle) and they had spotted horses and they had like cows that pulled a wagon.

LR: Oxen?

FP: Yes, I guess that's what you called them. They had those when they pulled out - they'd pull out at night and we never saw where they went.

LR: What kind of homes did they have?

FP: We didn't see none I guess they'd sleep on the ground.

LR: You told me before you used to play with the Indians.

FP: Yes, they used to come out and play with us in the sand. They was only a couple of blocks from where my mother's place was.

LR: How old were you?

FP: About five - six.

LR: How old were you when the Indians stopped coming through

FP: They stayed that summer.

LR: That's the only time - but your mother could remember more times when they came through.

FP: Mother never said - they'd take eggs from my mother - she'd give it to 'em - those only got three to five cents a dozen. If they took a loaf of bread the next morning they'd bring her something in place of it. Where this here Elston School used to be a graveyard.

LR: An Indian graveyard?

FP: I don't know but in 1909 they dug all the graves up before they built the school and took them out to this other. You didn't know who it was or nothin' about 'em.

LR: You were telling me you and your friends would play in the springs?

FP: Yea, sure we did.

LR: What would you play?

FP: Run around in it, come home soakin' wet and get our pants blistered (chuckle).

LR: Boys?

FP: Yea, where Sprague's Devices was that was all swamp, see, that all belonged to the farm and there'd be little places where there'd be water and then you'd jump from one thing to the other.

LR: Did the Goulds ever mind that all the kids played on their farm?

FP: No, huh-uh.

LR: When did the Pierce's take over?

FP: In 1905.

LR:, You said they ran a dairy. Was it a big dairy?

FP: yes.

LR: Did the property change - you said something about a bridge?

FP: You mean the bridge Ross and I set across the low circk - it's still there., You walk across the garden over onto this little lagoon where water was, we laid down logs from cut down trees and made a walk across it.

LR: Why did you make a bridge?

FP: So we could get on the other side (laugh). The other side was farmland and when we had to go there at night to bring the cattle up - this is good - we used to get a tree and get a hod of it and teeter (?) it back and forth and then we'd get back like this and we'd run and let loose and we were on the other side before we had the bridge.

LR: How big was the tree?

FP: Oh, it must have been 6 feet wide - it would throw us across - did you ever try that?  
(chuckle) That was fun.

LR: What year did you build the bridge?

FP: In 1908.

LR: the swimming hole?

FP: That's down there yet where Dr. Gardner lives now, we used to go and when the kids come out from high school they used to go swimmin' there. Us girls would go set on the bank and they had to stay in the water.

LR: The boys would go swimming?

FP: Yes.

LR: They went skinny-dipping?

FP: I don't know but they had to stay in the water. Their clothes were on the bank and we would set there - how could they come out?

LR: How'd they finally get out?

FP: Mr. Kernan (?) made us come home. He could see us - he had those glasses, he could see down in - he could see their heads in the water but they wouldn't dare to come out because they

didn't have nothin' on. And we knew it. So we set on the bank and they had to stay in the water - in the cold water.

LR: What other games would the kids play on that property?

FP: Oh, they played hide and go seek and fly, sheep, fly, like the kids do today. One of them would have to be blindfolded and he'd have to stand and the rest of us'd run our legs off to hide and they'd have to go look for us and if they found us, they'd say whatever your name was and then we had to be the guys to hunt the next ones.

LR: Did Pierce's change that property much when they bought it from the Goulds?

FP: It's just the same it is now only now they built in there.

LR: You mean Pottowattomie Park?

FP: Uh-huh, because that was a grazed land.

LR: What about the golf course?

FP: That golf course was laid out by my husband and Charlie Tryon and Vail was an instigator and he was a haughty overbearing - you know - about 1909.

LR: Did the townspeople want a golf course?

FP: Well, they used to have the golf course here on that road here on Barker Avenue and they had about 4 or 5 acres and then when they started to build out there then they laid out this other one. And they've only got 90 years on that golf course.

LR: What do you mean?

FP: It's only leased to them for 90 years.

LR: Who does it belong to then?

FP: Helen Krueger goes back to the Pierces.

LR: Did the Pierces own the land or only manage it?

FP: That I couldn't deliberately tell because I wasn't nosey enough. But the cattle stock fertilized it and made it good.

LR: Was the land for raising crops?

FP: They raised wheat, corn-- you know - like an ordinary farm.

LR: When did Friendship Gardens start getting built up?

FP: The first one that got started was Mrs. O'Hara. She bought that there corner lot where you go down to the club.

LR: The country club?

FP: No, no, that there log cabin. She was the first one that bought in there. That's where that fence goes around and you go in there - Mrs. O'Hara lived there - she built that house. Acker bought in there and then Johnson, he bought in there. Mr. Alexander was a real estate man and he started to sell lots in there.

LR: When Dr. Warren and his wife moved in there, is that when his brother-in-law started to build?

FP: Yes, that's when he took it over and started Friendship Gardens.

LR: Was it a cornfield?

FP: Yes, whatever the farmer put in - they didn't put the same thing in each year. They had to rotate. I don't know much about that and afterwards they started Friendship Gardens and built that log cabin club place. If you know when that was built, that could tell ya!

LR: Did you and your husband live in Pottowattomie Park?

FP: We lived upon State Road.

LR: That weather-beaten little shack? FP Yes, I guess it's still there. I don't know.

LR: How long did you live there?

FP: A year. That's when my husband was a chauffeur for Krueger, you know we had the buggy and they didn't have cars in those days - you had horses - so he was a coachman, I guess you'd call it.

LR: Gould's Farm, was that land back there?

FP: I couldn't tell ya' because they're cut roads.

LR: But did it border on Michigan?

FP: No. Coolepring towards Michigan, I don't know how far out - down to the bridge.

LR: You grew up on School and Michigan. What did Michigan Boulevard look like then?

FP: The first was just a sandy road about and then they had a plank road.

LR: At first it was a little narrow dirt road only for one buggy. How wide was the plank road?

FP: Big enough for horses to pass one another. Those days they didn't have many buggies because it was mostly all horseback. They'd go by the grocers with a sack and take their food in the sack. My grandfather McIntyre owned all that ground clear out beyond the Relief Road.

LR: What road is the Relief Road?

FP: 212, that 212 cut through his farm.

LR: Did he own the land where Hoeske's Grist Mill is?

FP: Yes; my grandpa owned that.

LR: Did he have a mill before Roeske?

FP: Yes, that grist mill belonged to grandpa and when that left, they used to make bricks there. That was a clay pit and they made bricks - they called them Roeske bricks but he made those bricks before Roeske took over after he died. That mill pond turned the mill.

LR: Did it employ a lot of men?

FP: The only one I knew run that was Mr. Mathias. Whether they ground the grain or not, I don't know.

LR: Did you see a lot of wagons full of grain coming down Michigan Road?

FP: Sure, they went to the grist mill and Michigan City, our main town here, was only 2 block.

LR: Did you get into town much?

FP: There was nothing to see.

LR: You were completely in the country, weren't you?

FP: Yes, our place there was country - farmland. There wasn't very many houses - our school was only 75 kids. In the first and 2nd grades.

LR: Were there many families out where you lived?

FP: No there wasn't.

LR: The house you grew up in was on School and Michigan?

FP: Only that one room - the school that they tore down was only one room.

LR: Did you have a gang of kids that you went around with?

FP: Oh yes, we all played under the electric lights, catching bats. We had like a fish net and we'd catch 'em and put 'em in a fruit can.

LR: How big a can?

FP: Oh, two-quart. We'd watch 'em and feed 'em and keep 'em a couple days and let 'em out again.

LR: What would you feed them?

FP: Bread, cookie crumbs - we'd go without and give it to them.

LR: How many kids were in your gang?

FP: Probably eight or ten.

LR: How old?

FP: Well my brother was older - four years older than I was so they was from twelve years old down to three or four and after that they wouldn't let the oldsters - I was the youngest and I always had to be the "tar bucket". They'd run and I couldn't keep up with them 'cause my legs was too short.

LR: You used to meet down by the Peanut Bridge?

FP: Oh yes, we'd run across that.

LR: What was that story you told me about a Lake Erie train?

FP: We'd wait for the train, then we'd get on the track and run across in front of it.

LR: And nobody was ever hurt? I betcha the conductor got pretty mad seeing you kids out there all the time.

FP: Well, yeah! What could he do. He'd go slower, see, and he'd wait till we kids got across cause if he was a couple minutes late, give 'em a little more speed after he'd get by. That was a dirty, dirty trick.

LR: What else did your gang do?

FP: Oh, just like all kids do.

LR: You said you went ice skating on Sycamore Pond.

FP: I couldn't ice skate but the boys would take us girls and we'd set on the sled and they'd crack the whip with us. They'd skate and then they'd start to whirl and our sleds would go around like that.

LR: Sounds like fun.

FP: It was. It was. Probably wasn't over ten, twenty kids on that big pond. It was much bigger than it is now. I donno - I guess they cut into the marsh and they drained it a whole lot. That was all marsh where Sprague's Device is and that brewery and that was all marsh. There wasn't nothing there. That's all been built up afterwards.

LR: You were telling me a story about your gang and you went out in the woods with sticks.

FP: Oh yeah! Yeah! We asked our mothers, "Mama," we said, (you know how kids were) "where did Mrs. Benke (?) get that baby?" "Well", she said, "you know they go out in the woods and you look around and find them laying besides a stump." Next day we kids all got a club and we were going out there and kill everyone we found.

LR: Would you really do that?

FP: We didn't want 'em. We didn't want no more kids around.

LR: You said you believed in that until you got married?

FP: I guess so, I don't know (chuckle). That's what they told us. None of the kids in our neighborhood wanted any more. Mrs. Benke had about 8 or 10 of them and Mrs. Deustcher she had a bunch of kids and we didn't want no more. If you had to take care of them, you wouldn't want them either.

LR: How old were you when you had to take care of them?

FP: I had 2 or 3 sisters younger than me that I had to lug around.

LR: You weren't the "tar bucket" anymore, huh?

FP: No, no - uh-uh. You know kids get tired of it. If you had to carry 'em around on your hip, you wouldn't want 'em either. Mother had so much to do, she had to take care of and there was my uncle, my Uncle John who took care of my father's place and so we didn't want no more.

LR: So you were going to club all those babies?

FP: We was going to but we didn't find any.

LR: Did the kids in your gang have jobs you said you were a newspaper----

FP: Yes, I worked for the newspaper - Michigan City News.

LR: Was it common for little girls to be news carriers?

FP: My brother took a double route so I helped him. He was 14 years old and I helped him. He'd pull me in the wagon and he'd take one side and I'd take the other.

LR: Where was the route?

FP: It started at Sixth Street.

LR: How far did it go?

FP: Out to Waterford Road.

LR: How long would it take you to cover your route?

FP: Well as a rule we had to be down to the office at 4:00 and I think we got home about 7.

LR: Did you get paid?

FP: Yes.

LR: How much did you get?

FP: Seventy-five cents.

LR: A day?

FP: No, a week!

LR: How old were you?

FP: Well I said my brother was fourteen and I was four years younger - I was big enough to run along and help him, see what I mean?

LR: How long did it last?

FP: I dunno, he was peddling papers till he must have been sixteen when he quit. He got so he'd got to cut the grass or stuff like that that paid him more than seventy-five cents a week.

LR: When you peddled papers did everyone have a subscription or did you just try to sell the paper.

FP: It's just like today. On Saturday morning you'd go out and collect seventy-five cents a week - that's all it cost.

LR: How much did you have to pay for the paper?

FP: We turned all the money in and then Mr. Robb'd give us our seventy-five cents.

LR: What would you do with the money?

FP: Give it to my mother.

LR: You'd never go to shows or anything - did you get to see very many picture shows?

FP: We didn't have 'em.

LR: What about things like vaudeville?

FP: We didn't have that. No, that didn't come in until later - you didn't have shows like that till after World War I.

LR: Did circuses come to town when you were little?

FP: Once in a great while.

LR: Did you get to go see them?

FP: Peek under the curtain.

LR: You look so tiny you could probably sneak in and no one would see you.

FP: Don't worry, they had their tents baled down with tapes so you couldn't raise 'em up. You must remember that seventy-five cents in those days was equal to five dollars today. We could buy eggs for five cents a dozen, butter was ten cents a pouhd and sugar was three cents. Seventy-five cents equalled probably two or three dollars today. It hasn't changed too much - it's the same today - only it's different environment. You were classed as classy if you had a horse and buggy.

LR: What else made you classy?

FP: Years ago the rich people were very snobbish. If you went to Sunday School and your dress touched one of these other ones, (gesture). Although they weren't any better than we are, but anyway they made you feel out of place.

LR: Who were the people who were real snobby - the ones that ran businesses?

FP: Yes, businessmen.

LR: Was there much discrimination of ethnic groups - difference in religion or .....

FP: I couldn't just tell you but if they had five cents more than you had, they looked down on the poor because I think when World War I, Mama was out to Mrs. Redpath's, you know how they

have coffee and all that, the Hotchkiss boy took sick and he died during the war of 1914, so Mrs. Redpath said (my mother was kinda hot-tempered),

LR: Did she have red hair too?

FP: Uh-uh, just my dad. And so she said, "I feel sorry for Mrs. Hotchkiss that she lost her son. It wouldn't have been so bad if it had been a poor kid." You know what my mom said? Mother said, "I don't care what you say, Miz Redpath, but let me tell you that mother had a heart too. That son was just as dear to her as the son of a rich woman." My mother was mad that's what I'm trying to tell you - that's the way they looked at the poor then.

LR: Did the poor have a rough time in Michigan City?

FP: Yes.

LR: What area did most of the poor live?

FP: Wherever they could get a house.

LR: Where did most of the rich live?

FP: Like Barker is now they had nice houses. The house is still out there. Mr. Robb was out on South Franklin Street. Those fancy ones - that's where the rich went out there but the poor lived down like in the patch. When my mother lived there, we lived in a little house with just four rooms. Our bedroom was only 6 x 9.

LR: Is that the house on Michigan Street?

FP: That's where it was. It was my mother's mother. The poor was poor and you worked for ten cents a day.

LR: And there was nothing the poor could do?

FP: What's he gonna do? You had to be a slave. In other words it was just slavery to the rich. I'm just showing you - if you were poor, you were poor and you were poor, see? Because my husband, when we were married, he worked for Martin Krueger and he was a coachman and Ross worked all summer and he asked Mr. Krueger to give him some money for pay and he never paid Ross and he never did. Everyone that worked for him, he beat them out of their wages. That's the way it was, it wasn't no roses.

LR: The stories you remember though are so nice.

FP: You'd remember too if you had to eat potatoes and kite paste.

LR: When did you eat that?

FP: Well Mother boiled potatoes and then she roast flour and she put milk in it and made gravy and we called it kite paste.

LR: When you were a little girl?

FP: Yeah, that's what we had to eat and she'd make bread and then we'd have potatoes and what little bit we had in the garden that was extra.

LR: What was your favorite food when you were growing up?

FP: Potatoes and gravy and bread

LR: That was your favorite?

FP: That was all we got!

LR: If you could have had anything, what kind of foods did you .....

FP: We had to eat what my mother put on the table. What she could afford.

LR: I was just trying to figure out what would be considered fancy food.

FP: Oh we didn't have fancy food. We just had nothing left to waste - even little small carrots and stuff like that she'd clean 'em and cook 'em.

LR: How old were you when you had to start cooking?

FP: When I got married.

LR: You didn't have to cook when you were growing up?

FP: My mother never allowed me too cause she wouldn't want to waste the stuff. If you was learning you wouldn't know when you had to be conservative.

LR: How did your husband like that?

FP: I learned on him. When we was married, he weighed 128 pounds and he said to me., "My ma didn't do this and my ma didn't do that" and I said, "I don't care what your ma did your ma didn't fatten you up but my cookin' did."

LR: How much did he weigh after....

FP: 180 pounds

LR: Were you feeding him potatoes and kite paste?

FP: Yeah (chuckle) of course, from the dairy they would skim the cream and send that to Chicago and we got the milk for ten cents a gallon. We got plenty of milk that mother could use, she'd make puddings - we had plenty of eggs and she'd use sugar and put it in the oven and bake it.

LR: What kind of wedding did you have?

FP: I didn't have no wedding. When you got wedding in those days, why you went away and got married and when you come home all the kids in the neighborhood got all the tin cans they could and they'd go to your house and pound and pound and then the mothers would send a cake out to the ladies and a keg of beer to the boys.

LR: You'd get married where?

FP: Whatever minister you had. I mean when you'd come home that night, the gang would gang up on ya and they'd pound until they got this here keg or whatever it was that you gave.

LR: Did you come back to your mother's house or the Pierces?

FP: To my mother.

LR: Did they usually go back to the mother's house?

FP: Just my mother. We stayed there and then we furnished our house over on State Road.

LR: What about other customs?

FP: I couldn't say that it was any different than it is today. Everyone wore their dresses long. Even little kids two and three years old, when they started to walk their dresses was long.

LR: I was thinking of big fancy weddings - nowadays ....

FP: They didn't have nothin' like that.

LR: They didn't have things like wedding receptions?

FP: No, huh-uh. We Went and got - your man went and he could go and get the marriage license. A woman didn't have to have none. It cost you two dollars to get it.