

Transcript of Oral History Tape #133

Transcribed by Mary Ann Vartia 08/26/03.

Interviewer: Interview with Armandt Rosenbaum. Okay, 1978. Mr. Rosenbaum, could you tell me the date of your birth and where you were born?

Mr. Rosenbaum: I was born at South Bend, Indiana, on Studebaker Road in 1885. That was the last day of the big buffalo hunt in the United States, too. That's when they killed the last big buffalo herd, 1885, the last buffalo (indecipherable). They cleaned up the buffalo so that the Indians wouldn't have any meat to eat so they put 'em on reservations after that, you see.

Interviewer: Did you grow up in South Bend?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I was eight years of age and we moved from South Bend over here. I went two years to school in South Bend at the South Central School in South Bend, Indiana. I went in the word method grade and also in the first grade, you see. When I come to Wanatah, I was in the second grade.

Interviewer: What were some—what are some of your first memories of Wanatah?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I remember the old mill was still there. They called it Wanatah Rotor Mills. The old water wheel was still there, but they didn't use that anymore. They ah—the picture I showed you of Joe Wilson, that was the first steam engine put up in there, so they used the steam engine then for power. Ed Doberman (sp?) was the miller. He was a good miller. He made (indecipherable) flour that was known all over the northern part of Indiana. Wanatah had the best mill in the northern part of Indiana at that time, too. When they rebuilt the—when the old mill burnt down, they rebuilt the mill there, the most modern one in all of Indiana. Well, then the old one got pretty old and he passed away, and the workmen called me and (indecipherable) from Minneapolis came down over here.

Interviewer: And the farmers in the area, from around the area would bring in their grain and have it ground at the mill?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, when I was a boy, there wasn't much grain raised around here. It was mostly hay. You saw haystack after haystack when you got on the Monon Railroad and took the excursion trip to Indianapolis. And Obe Haley (sp?), they called it Obe Haley Grain & Hay, they'd loaded up, oh, five or six cars of hay every day of the year, winter or summer, because that's all they shipped out of here. I don't think that when I was a boy, I saw over a couple of carloads of corn—that was ear corn—go out of town.

Interviewer: Where did they sell the hay to? Who did they sell the hay to?

Mr. Rosenbaum: They shipped it to Chicago. All the hay was shipped to Chicago. They only got about Four Dollars a ton for that prairie and marsh hay and that's all they got, too. So they got pretty rich, didn't they?

Interviewer: Did you ever take the excursion trip into Michigan City?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. Though you get on the Monon over here. It runs north to Michigan City. When you enter Michigan City it makes a big turn and runs in east. Michigan City hundreds of times (indecipherable) Franklin Street runs north and south. When I see the Monon depot it runs east and west. All you gotta do is see the Monon depot. (indecipherable)

Interviewer: When you came here as a boy what did Wanatah look like?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, Wanatah was about the same as it is now, except up town. Now them's all new buildings there in that one block. They worked at—there's still one building left there. That's where the bank is now, Michigan City Bank. Of course, that used to be a two-story building, and people lived upstairs and then they had to walk on (indecipherable) the paper, it run up there. And so they cut that down since the bank was there—remodeled. I built the vault in the bank, got (indecipherable) standing up and down (indecipherable).

Interviewer: What sort of nationalities settled in Wanatah?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, we had a few Irish, and then there's mostly Germans, see. Now this—this part of the house over here has got a three-inch (indecipherable). That used to be the first school in Wanatah right there.

Interviewer: This did here?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Yes, this (indecipherable). And they—they taught German.

Interviewer: They spoke German?

Mr. Rosenbaum: They taught German, too, yeah, because most people around here were German, you see. The people always talked German at home so did the children, so that later on when the war people came in, why they built what they called Enterprise Hall and they used that for the first school to teach English, you see.

Interviewer: Did you play any games when you were a boy here?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yeah, we played plenty games, Run Sheep Run, Fox and the Goose.

Interviewer: How do you play Fox and the Goose?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, Fox and Goose that's the wintertime when there's a lot of snow. You see you dig around, a round trench, just like a wide river (indecipherable) in there and then you'd get back and hide, you see, and see if they could catch you. Kids—you have to laugh. When they had a big bunch of snow, they built a hole up in there and then the new person (indecipherable) play Fox and Goose, they saw that hole covered with snow and then they couldn't find 'em.

Speaker 2: That's why you always played marbles.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. Yeah, we played 'em. We played a lot of marbles in those days. I got my hands, got all chapped playing marbles in the wintertime. We played marbles in the fall.

Interviewer: Did you play any baseball?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. We played baseball, we had an old picture of the old diamond, but I don't know what the heck become of that—the old baseball diamond. Yeah, Wanatah had a pretty good baseball team. They could beat Valparaiso and they played Michigan City, and they could beat LaPorte, too. What do you think of that? Yeah.

Interviewer: What years was that?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, that was 1900.

Interviewer: Was that a semi-pro team? Or just a town team?

Mr. Rosenbaum: They were a town team. Yeah. A town team. Well, we had three or four nines in Wanatah. Us kid belonged to a nine, too, you'd be about nine years of age, ten years of age, when you played ball. Everybody played ball. We used to play a lot of football, too, but they would kick the ball.

Interviewer: They were what?

Mr. Rosenbaum: We kicked the ball. Just kicked the ball from one goal to the other.

Speaker 2: More like soccer.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they call it soccer. I remember when they first come, Jimmy Gross—he was the schoolteacher—he introduced rugby, but we never liked rugby. We (indecipherable) kicked the ball and (indecipherable) as fat a football as we have now.

Interviewer: How much schooling did you get? Did you go to school at Wanatah?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yeah, I went to school. I took a review in 1906, 1905 or 1906. Jimmy Gross wanted me to teach school. And so he said, "You go to school." He said, "Take the review," he says, "I'll give you a school to teach." So I went to school for another year. And then when I got out I didn't know whether I wanted to be a schoolteacher or not. So I just gave it up. And then I went to work for a man by the name of Mike Enger, and he was a mason contractor, and that's how I happened to learn my trade as a mason, you see.

Interviewer: You became a general contractor?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Yeah, then I became a general contractor, I was about—well, when I was 25, I got married when I was 26. I was in the contractor business then.

Interviewer: How did you meet your wife?

Mr. Rosenbaum: How?

Interviewer: Where did you meet your wife?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I met my wife in Wanatah. She was livin' right across the road over here. Her father was—name of Charles Eckhart(sp?). Everybody knew Charles Eckhart. He's a blacksmith. And so we used to sing in the choir in the church over here and that's how I got acquainted with my wife a little bit better. I knew her anyway, but then I got acquainted a bit better with her.

Interviewer: How did the courtship go?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, pretty good. Pretty good. I had a beautiful wife. I can tell you that.

Interviewer: How did you run the courtship?

Mr. Rosenbaum: How?

Interviewer: How did you run the courtship? How did you do the courting?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, in those days, you know, you didn't have no automobiles, so you hired a—what you do about it is you hire a horse and buggy and go out riding.

Interviewer: Out in the countryside?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Out in the country. That's right.

Interviewer: Did you have a chaperone? Or could you go (indecipherable)?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, oh, oh, (laughing). Yeah. You know those days in school they had these box socials every year. The girls, you know, they'd fix up a nice lunch and then they'd sell it. And the fellow that (indecipherable) buy the box was the best girl, you see. Of course, once in a while somebody would sneak in and pay too much money to have (indecipherable). Yeah. I remember when this—right over here at the line, where that other house is, that used to be nothin' but blackberries. We used to out there and pick blackberries. You could pick a market bag full in a couple hours. It was all blackberries up in here. Those blackberries, that was home of the rabbit and also the home of the prairie chicken. No more prairie chickens around. I ain't seen any prairie chickens since 1938, I think. I told you that the other night.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of prairie around here?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, it was all prairie. There was no fences here, you know. They just turned the cows loose out over there, make a pasture over that ground over there, and pay Twenty-five or Fifty Cents a year to pasture a cow. Everybody had a milk cow in those days. All those old-timers had a milk cow. They raised their own garden, potatoes and stuff like that. Yeah, they got along. They didn't make much money either. Most of the old Germans that came down from the old country, they went to work on the Pennsylvania

Railroad—the Pennsylvania Railroad come through in 1854. That's when Wanatah was created. And take in those days, things were pretty lively around here, you know, at that. Mostly boys they played rough and tumble just like some of the boys play in school now.

Interviewer: In the summertime what did the boys do? Did you go around the countryside? Did you have bicycles?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes, we had some bicycles, too, yes. We had bicycles. We'd go to play ball at Hanna or Hammond, and (indecipherable) Westville. That's how we got there on bicycles.

Interviewer: When you did—when you had the masonry job, what was your next job? Did you say you worked on the railroad?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, I worked on the railroad before that. I worked the railroad when I was a young man about 16, 17 years of age, you see.

Interviewer: What was your job there?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I worked on the road maintenance guy, you see what they call a second guy. In those days my wages—I remember when I worked on the Monon was \$1.25 a day. Then I worked on the Pennsylvania Railroad, it was \$1.37 a day, and on the Pennsylvania Railroad you swung a pick at the ties, and I can see that pick over there yet, by gosh. Looking at your sun to see if it's about quittin' time. That was one of the most tiresome jobs, monotonous jobs that I ever got into. I talked about, you know, by gosh, a young fellow like you align yourself up with all these old codgers. But most of those Germans came down over at a second farm that was Pete Lyons. He was Irish and his wife was German extraction. And all the old Germans that came over here they could get a job on the railroad, and they got a job on the railroad and made enough money to buy themselves a piece of land, you see. They could buy land all the way from Two Dollars an acre up to Ten Dollars an acre in those days. Yeah. Bill Rich was considered the wealthiest man in Wanatah in 1900. A fellow by the name of Colters (sp?)—his brother-in-law. He started the first bank in Wanatah, too, Colters did. But we figured Bill Rich was worth Eight Thousand Dollars. (Indecipherable) worth about Nine and (indecipherable) worth about Seven. The richest men in Wanatah. They was considered pretty rich, too, in those days. Joe Podesky (sp?), he was a gold miner. He came from California over here. He started dry good stores. Then he also became the postmaster and the—yeah, became the postmaster and also a Trustee of Cass Township. My father's uncle, John Rosenbaum, he was the first Rosenbaum from the old country over here. Through him all the rest of them came, you see.

Interviewer: Where did he settle?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, he settled out in the country where the Lutheran Church stands now, you see. Yeah.

Interviewer: What was your father's job when he moved to Wanatah?

Mr. Rosenbaum: My father was a woodworker. He was a finished woodworker. He worked for Studebaker's. He was a wagon maker. His original trade was a wagon

maker, you see. My father was pretty exact, my gosh. He could make cuts. They didn't have the tools they got now to make cuts. But he'd do a lot of match wood you couldn't see where it matched.

Interviewer: And when he came to Wanatah, what was his job?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, he ah—he worked at the wagon shop over here. Yeah, he worked at the wagon shop. Those days every town had a blacksmith or two and a wagon shop or two, you see. Old Abraham, August Abraham, he was a wagon maker. His wife was a—his wife was a (indecipherable) cousin of my father, and then Calish (sp?). There was a wagon maker by the name of Calish. They'd ride side by side. They were really brother-in-laws. They both had a wagon shop of their own, and each one had a blacksmith's shop. Yeah, (indecipherable name), my wife's father, he taught a lot of boys how to do the blacksmith business.

Interviewer: Do you remember what it was like in the blacksmith shop? What it looked like?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, there was an anvil there. Mostly horse shoes and well, they set tires on the wagon, you see, the wagons in the summertime they get kind of dry and the steel rims'd get loose, so they take the steel rim off, heat 'em up and then draw 'em together a little bit and then put 'em back on.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of clanging and banging and a fire always going?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they built a fire outside, and they would heat the tires, lay the wheels out, and then when the tire was hot, you know, they had plenty of water, I expect, to get it on there. They could see the wood burner on the other side and pour the water on the other side out outside. Those times were hell all right, they knew their business.

Interviewer: What other stores were downtown?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, when we came here Weisjohn (sp?) and Wojahn (sp?) they had a general store. They also had the pharmacy there, you know, the drugstore there. And then Slushers. Slushers run a store, and they run about the bigger store. Then later on...

Speaker 2: Yeah, but tell him what they had. Tell him what Slushers had.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Slushers?

Speaker 2: Yeah, what did Slushers have in their store?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they were a general store, they had dry...

Speaker 2: Well, I thought they had the milk.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Huh?

Speaker 2: I thought they had milk and cream.

Mr. Rosenbaum: No, no, no. That come later on. That come later on. They didn't buy no milk and cream when I first come over here. All the women made butter. They'd bring their butter into town and sell the butter for seven or Eight Cents per pound. They shipped the butter to Chicago in crocks. The crocks never came back.

Interviewer: Were the women pretty busy?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Huh?

Interviewer: Were the women kept pretty busy in the homes?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I guess so. They—the women were all housewives. They took care of the children and they kept the home going. The husband, though, he worked on the railroad or the coal docks, and that's all it was, a farming town and a railroad town for the section men, you see, when it first started out. Slushers used to have a creamery here in Wanatah. They had a creamery here in Wanatah, made butter here. I used to go over there and get a two gallon pail of buttermilk. I'd get it for nothin'. They'd give you the buttermilk for nothing. Us kids would go over there and want some buttermilk, well, all you have to do is go over there and get some buttermilk, which, of course, they didn't make butter every day. They made butter two or three times a week, you see.

Interviewer: How do you make buttermilk?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they had a big churn. A big churn. Oh, they made two, three hundred pounds of butter, you know, (indecipherable), you see. And that's a big churn. And they poured the cream up in there and just churn it. And then the butter comes out, and when they take the butter out, why what's left in there, that's your buttermilk, you see. That was real buttermilk, too, in those days, I'll tell you. You don't get buttermilk like that anymore.

Speaker 2: Everything is homogenized.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Huh?

Speaker 2: I say everything is homogenized now.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Yeah, well, the creamery used to be Slushers. Slushers run the creamery. They also had a creamery in Hanna, and then they worked at Willis and Hanna, Wanatah, and South Chicago. They got to be commission (indecipherable). And they'd buy calves, they'd buy chickens over there—Slusher brothers would. Yeah, they had the creamery business (indecipherable). They used to have a creamery out there where the South Central Schoolhouse that I built over there. It burned down.

Speaker 2: Didn't they have—when did Belkeys (sp?) come?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Belkeys?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, the Belkeys were the first undertakers here. Old Julius Belkey. Well, that I don't know, but they must have been here, oh, about the time even my father came. When my father came here, he come over in 1865. They could of done the same thing, because Mrs. Belkey. Mrs. Belkey, though, she's a cousin of my fathers. She was a Cozacky (sp?) and they were the first undertakers here. Doc Fisher was the first doctor that I knew out here anyway. Then we got Doc (indecipherable name), too. Oh, we had enough other doctors since that time. But Doc Fisher he brought most of the kids in Wanatah to life. He was the first doctor here.

Interviewer: Did he deliver them at the homes? Or did they go to a...

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, they come to homes. In those days, if you come to the home, he charge you a dollar. If you went to the office, they charged you Fifty Cents. Most of the time when you went over there, he said—he knows German—he said, "What's da madder wit' you, so and so?" He says, "I got nothing to give you." He says, "Go home." He says, "Take some castor oil and some applesauce. That's all you need." He said that all the time. Yes. He says, "I'll tell you something." He says, "When you eat something that agrees with you," he says, "eat it. If it don't agree with you," he says, "don't eat it, you darned fool, you." Yeah.

Interviewer: Were there any local characters in town that had a lot of good stories?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, well, yes. Well, you take my uncle, my Uncle Otis, he'd tell stories and go around from house to house. And so did Johnny Lawrence. They'd tell a story that'd last about a month. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the stories?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, they're all mostly spook stories, you see. And robber stories. But they were good. My gosh, how those fellows could tell a story just like, the story read, the way they told 'em, just about the way you used to read these dime novels, you see. They were, they were good at telling stories. Old Johnny Lawrence and my uncle, he moved to Denham over there, but when he come to visit, then he come to visit here in Wanatah and stay a month or six weeks. He'd go here, he'd go there, he'd go to people he worked with, you know, they were all some relation of his one way or another.

Interviewer: Did the families get together for gatherings?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. They used to have the old square dancers. They had a square dance out in the country. If they didn't have a horse and buggy they'd walk out there, you see.

Interviewer: At a barn out in the country?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, they'd dance in the kitchen, or they'd dance—well, they used to have a lot of barn dances when I was a boy, too. Every time somebody built a new barn, they'd have to have a barn dance, you see.

Interviewer: What sort of musicians played for them?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they had a—of course, you always had to have a fiddle, and mostly, mostly it was a fiddle and a pianah. The Wests from Hanna used to come over here and Mrs. West, she, ah, played the piano then Mr. West he would—I forget what his first name is it's been so long ago. He played the fiddle, and old Chuck Mann, Chuck Mann he'd call the dancers. And especially he had all his specials I enjoyed. Just like going to a (indecipherable) he'd mix a lot of specials. He had (indecipherable) run of passengers. (Indecipherable) called that square dance. It was a lot of fun. Yes.

Interviewer: What were your holidays like? Your holidays, Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, the Fourth of July, Fourth of July (indecipherable) we had celebrations. There was a bunch of us boys at one time we gave celebrations for five or six years, and then a Badd (sp?), Waldo Badd, would give some celebrations. And then sometimes some (indecipherable) men would (indecipherable) celebrations on the Fourth of July, oh, (indecipherable) have a balloon ascension.

Interviewer: Have a what?

Mr. Rosenbaum: A balloon ascension.

Interviewer: What is that?

Speaker 2: A balloon going up.

Mr. Rosenbaum: A balloon. (indecipherable) I forget what his name is now, he came from Knox. It cost ya twenty-five dollars to get him up for a balloon ascension. One year we had him over here and the wind was blowing pretty hard. We had to have the balloon ascension out at the schoolyard over there. And the wind come from the northwest. The Catholic Church spire was up over there. He kept looking. He said, "I don't like that wind. I don't like that wind." I said, "Well, you got the (indecipherable)." I said, "We're going to have to do it." I said, "Seems like the wind blow it right in the church." He said, "That's what I'm afraid of." He said, "I don't know if I ought to go up or not." So, I says, "I don't believe I would go up." He said, "Well, thanks for that." So we paid him Ten Dollars to come up over here back, but he didn't go up. That's the only time to have a balloon ascension. Always had a balloon ascension here.

Interviewer: How did you celebrate Christmas?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, Christmas. Just the usual way. Just about the same as it is even now. We always had exercise on Christmas.

Speaker 2: The church?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Everybody spoke a piece.

Speaker 2: At church? Exercises at church?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes, at the church. At the church. Yes, sure. Yes, they had exercises at the church over here. Oh, and at midnight they'd have

exercise at the Catholic Church. That was at midnight. You could go there at midnight to the Catholic Church. Then over here, the church over here, you'd have to recite a piece, (indecipherable). I had to laugh at some of those boys. They'd be so scared to get up there and have to say their piece that I'd always have to laugh. (Indecipherable name) the barber, he was so scared, he made the darndest face when he had to give his piece. (indecipherable) I'm sure of that.

Speaker 2: Well, you talk about the stores. You had saloons here.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yeah, of course, Wanatah was noted for saloons. Wanatah had six saloons here at one time. And you got a glass of beer for a nickel, a 16-ounce glass of beer for a nickel, and if there'd be six fellas in there buying a treat, they'd give you even six glasses for a quarter—a 16-ounce glass of beer for a quarter. A bottle of beer was Ten Cents a bottle, but that was three bottles for a quarter, too. Well, they just made a livin', that's all.

Interviewer: What did the inside of the saloons look like?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, oh, just about the same as they are now. They had two tables up in there where they could play cards. There was a gathering place. If you come out from the country, you'd go to the tavern and visit, socialize. That's about the only kind of a clubhouse that they had, you see. Yeah, they were all, you know, of course, they had the lodgers. But then the lodgers they weren't like a—the taverns were what you might say is an old fashioned clubhouse in those days, you see.

Interviewer: Sort of a gathering place for the men to get together?

Mr. Rosenbaum: For the men, yeah. The women didn't go into taverns. No women in the tavern. If women went into a tavern, you'd think there was somethin' wrong. She'd get her pedigree read.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time you went into a tavern for a drink?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I was a newsboy. My brother and I were the first newsboys in Wanatah, you see.

(Side one of tape ends.)

(Side two of tape begins.)

And I remember the first thing I'd go for the pretzel bowl. You know they only had pretzels, you know, to eat at the taverns. A load of pretzels, a little salty. Those who'd eat pretzels, they'd drink more beer, you see. Yeah. In those days they had what you called (indecipherable). (Indecipherable) keg. I think there's only two gallon in there. Oh, let's see, I think it was only two gallon. It might have been four gallon in there, too. I don't know, but they cost you a dollar. A dollar for (indecipherable) and some of the fellows would buy a (indecipherable) of beer and go along the crick here and celebrate on Sundays. They'd keep open on Sundays, only doing it on the side, you see, because the churches, you see, used to give 'em the

dickens if they was open on Sundays, so you had to always sneak into the back on Sunday.

Interviewer: What kind of, what kind of beer did they have? Did they have German beer here?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they had Burghoff beer where they made been in Wanatah. That was made in Fort Wayne. They had a beer house here, and they'd get a carload of beer up in there and then a fellow by the name of Charlie Bremer, he'd run the beer out, he'd peddle the beer over to the tavern to know if they wanted it. Yeah, that's the way that was. They had Burghoff, they had Blatz, and Schlitz, and Old Style Lager, but before that Burghoff come in here at first I guess, (indecipherable) Koselke run a tavern and he got some bottles made with his name on it. I got some—did you get one of those bottles?

Speaker 2: I don't remember. I don't think so.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, your grandfather got some bottles he'd make wine. He'd put wine up in there. They had the name 1893, the first beer that was bottled in Wanatah. They bottled it right out of the keg. If the people out in the country wanted some beer, they put it in a bottle for them to take it home. They had to bring the bottles back, though, you see.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first automobile you saw drive into town?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, the first automobile I saw, I got a ride in it. That was an old Rambler. And old Tumbler. It had the old (Indecipherable) for a steering wheel yet. And the (Indecipherable) Willis, he was an auctioneer. And he bought this second hand for his boy, Frank. And Frank he give us a ride. Sometimes we'd get out in the country, we'd have to walk back. More trouble with that car, but he kept it. Yeah, and that was about 1900.

Interviewer: I imagine the roads were a little bumpy then, hmm?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes, the roads. You take all your roads here in town. When I was a boy, in the fall of the year or the spring of the year, those roads would be muddy. They'd shake down with the wagon all the way up to the hub. So, you see, what kind of roads we had. Now most of these roads over here in town, they were up there, oh, they filled in there two feet, two feet and a half of what they originally were. I remember when I was a boy you walked down the streets of Wanatah, they all had board walks. You could sit on those board walks, it was high off the road as this table is. You could sit on those board walks and hang your feet down. And you couldn't look across the railroad when I was a boy.

Interviewer: You could? Or you couldn't?

Mr. Rosenbaum: You couldn't. You couldn't look across it, no. Because the road was down there about two and a half feet lower than it is now. Then they had a wooden platform built up in front of the depot. Oh, they had it up there, I'd say, about fifty or sixty inches to get it to the passengers. It was easy, you see, so you wouldn't have to step so high. But you couldn't look across the tracks.

Interviewer: Did any medicine shows ever come through town?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. Medicine shows. A lot of medicine shows come to town. (indecipherable) what you call that, that's tore down now, and us kids we'd—the medicine show'd come to town, we'd be over there, we'd do all the chores for 'em so that we could get in free, you see.

Interviewer: What did it look like? What did they do?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, they sold medicines. They put shows on, mostly ghost stories. Mostly ghost stories.

Interviewer: Did they dress up in fancy costumes?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. They dressed up. They had some good comedians, though. They had some good singers over there. Oh, we had a fellow over there he was a great fan. He went over to the medicine show, and I would have mentioned his name, but it was (indecipherable name) in Chesterton. And they didn't have any money, he didn't have any money. And they'd go to the trustees and he'd work hard (indecipherable) until they sent 'em so money so he could get home. Then he became the editor, by gosh, of the paper later on. But he liked to sing, you see. He got all the medicine shows he wanted. Yeah, that was the life for you. Some of those shows come in, they had some pretty good talent, some pretty good comedians. Some were just like a bunch of kids running the show, you see. No talent, but a lot of enthusiasm. Yeah. More of the rock and roll type of show. Yeah.

Speaker 2: Well, we had the old ice ponds, too, where you went skating in the wintertime.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, well, yeah, that was later on. We used to skate on the crick. Used to go to Bigelow Mills over there, they had the pond, the reserve pond, you know, to run the wheel over there, and Bolins (sp?) they had a mill over there. Some of the first flour that was made went from Bigelow Mills into Chicago, too. Bigelow Mills was there even before they built it here in Wanatah, you see. Yeah, then we used to go skatin' over there. That was a nice big pond. I used to skate along the crick. At that time the crick wasn't so, wasn't (indecipherable), you see. And round around, of course. It'd freeze up fast. Later on the creek was dredged, why the water run faster and didn't freeze up. Then we had Roosevelt pond out over there. It used to be four, five foot deep. Well, that's all flat. That's been plowed under. Of course, (indecipherable) there was a pond everywhere, used to fish. You'd catch fish any place. You wonder how the fish got there. But the fish never (indecipherable) pond.

Interviewer: Did you do any fishing?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yes. I fished.

Interviewer: What was you pole like? Did you make your own pole?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Sure, sure.

Interviewer: How did you do that?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, we'd go along the crick and get a nice straight piece from the willows. You'd see plenty of willows along the crick. So we always cut a willow pole. They were light, you see. They were only about five, six, maybe eight feet long, the longest. Didn't have anybody to buy any poles in those days. It cost Ten to Fifteen Cents. Ten or Fifteen Cents was pretty big when I was a boy.

Interviewer: You'd just get a string and a hook?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: What did you use for bait?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Worms. Worms. Worms and grasshoppers. Used to be plenty of grasshoppers in those days. Used to be plenty of frogs in those days. You could go out in the morning before the dew was off and get you a couple dozen frogs in an hour.

Interviewer: What kind of fish could you catch?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, mostly sunfish. Sunfish and suckers and bullheads. You go over there in the crick and catch you hundred bullheads over there in a couple hours.

Interviewer: Did you eat them? Did you...

Mr. Rosenbaum: Oh, yeah. They were good eatin', but they were hard feedin'. I never liked 'em but some people, they wanted bullheads. Yeah.

Interviewer: After you worked on the railroad and after you worked as a masoner, what was your next job?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I was a mason until I was about, oh, I don't know, about 55 years of age. Then I got to (indecipherable). I was elected county treasurer, you see.

Interviewer: Was that your first job in politics?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I was a precinct committeeman here for a good many years. And, yeah, that was the first job. I didn't want to run for the job. But old Tom (indecipherable) Tom (indecipherable) he was the county chairman, he says, "Oh, (indecipherable) ought to run." "No," he says, "I won't support him, Armandt." He was strong Republican because like—what you call that across from your Uncle Fred—they were trustees and they always elected a county school superintendent. And Tom, you know, he was for—ah, Hanna over there—what his name used to be—school teacher over there. Oh, gosh, I can't think of his name now.

Interviewer: When were you elected sheriff?

Mr. Rosenbaum: I was elected sheriff in 1940 to '44. In 1944 I was elected sheriff.

Interviewer: How old were you then?

Mr. Rosenbaum: I was about 58.

Interviewer: Did you like that job?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I think I told you the other day, I liked that job, but I had to pick up these insane people, and, oh, by gosh, they gave you a lot of trouble, crying in jail, and a lot of commotions. I felt sorry for everybody. (indecipherable). I used to go to the judge. I said, "Judge, you better get some doctors over there." I said, "We can't sleep." I said, "My wife can't sleep either." See we slept right there in the jail, you see. The residence there. That was the only thing I didn't like about it.

Interviewer: What other parts of it did you like?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, I didn't care about running fellows in, but there was one thing I didn't have to do. I didn't have to run a friend of mine in because I couldn't find him. Of course, these were only light cases. You get a divorce case and I get a paper to pick up the old boy and run him in and, by gosh, I go to him and I says, "you want me to run your husband in there?" Because I knew her first name, I says, "Oh," I says, "By jovey, that's a hard job." But she says, "He's no good. He's no good." "Well," I said, "I know," but I said, "He was pretty good your first night." "Oh, yes," she said. And I says, "Oh, I don't like that." I says, "You got children." I says, "They'll go to school," I says, "And some of the kids will holler 'ah, hah, your pa's a jailbird, your pa's a jailbird.'" I said, "Those kids will come home crying." I says, "Do you want that?" "Oh, no," she says, "I didn't think about that." She says, "You don't have to serve the papers." So I said, "All right."

Interviewer: You were a sheriff for how many years?

Mr. Rosenbaum: I was a sheriff just one term. Then I came back and the Hagenaws. Well, I built the church in Westville, and when I came back, why Johnny Hagenaw, his father. I built the church and his father wanted to build a park. I said, "Well, I don't know if I want to do the contracting work or not." "Oh," he says, "I wish you would." He says, "You built the church under my father." He says, "I'd like to have you build the park underneath me." So, I said, "All right." The church I got a little under Six Thousand Dollars for the church. I got Sixteen Thousand Five Hundred for the park, and the park is only half as big as the church. So that's just how the prices went up. I remember in the church, I bought the bricks (indecipherable) Fifty Dollars down, and for the park I had to have a Hundred and Fifty.

Speaker 2: He's coming over to see you. John's going to come over and see you. He wants a picture with you and him. We saw him the other day. He's going to be over here.

Interviewer: Did you have any trouble during the Depression? Or did Wanatah have any trouble during the Depression?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, oh, I would say we always had some kids raisin' the dickens. I had a deputy. His name was Abe Capelsky (sp?), and go over to

Wanatah, and he wanted to run the kids in. I said, "Abe, you ain't runnin' those kids in, what's the matter with you?" "They're devils," he says, "They're no good." I said, "By gosh," I said, "I've known you pull off tricks just as bad as those were," I said. He said, " (indecipherable) out of jail? (indecipherable). "Well, sure," I said, "Give 'em the devil." (indecipherable name) says to me, he talked to me in German. I said, "Yeah, the kid's the dickens." He said it in German. I said, "I don't want to run those kids in (indecipherable). What's the matter with you?" "Aw," he said, "I don't want to either." But he said, (indecipherable). I said, "Scold 'em, give 'em the devil." The first county board they'd see 'em and they always say (indecipherable).

Speaker 2: Well, yeah, our bank went under at that time. Our bank went under during the Depression.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, yeah, the bank, Waldo bank was the smallest bank, the smallest little bank around over here. We went to Indianapolis to the bank commissioner up there. He said, "Well, the Depression is on." They got their money loaned out to farmers, and the farmers aren't getting any prices for their stuff, and they can't pay their taxes, they've got to borrow money, and so you can't take those old farm loans out because you won't get any money until the farmer gets money. So they advised the bank to buy bonds, railroad bonds. And our bank bought three hundred and some (indecipherable) out of the railroad bonds, and they dropped down from \$85.00 a share down to Seventeen and Eighteen. That's when our bank went under, you see. We had a \$135,000, \$140,000 in reserve money in the bank for that, but after that everything went. Of course, no (indecipherable) turned out or (indecipherable) turned out, but they all paid off in full because they had mostly farm loans, you see. But they didn't have any money, so when they didn't have any money, they had to close down, you see. And our bank kept on a goin' but when this job come, I remember they had radio stock that was up to \$300 a share. That dropped down to \$8.00 a share. That's when they had that big collapse, you see, that big Depression. Yeah, the railroad bonds, well, I would have been on the board to the bank over there to try to save the bank. We kept those bonds for eight or ten years and finally got (indecipherable) and I said, "Liquidate it." I said, "I'm tired of that business." I said, "I can't bring those prices up." But we tried to hold it, you see, the prices come up why we reorganized the bank after that on a fifty-fifty percent basis, you see. Everybody, if you had a Thousand Dollars in there, he still reserved \$500 of that, you see. And so that's, that was the bank at that time. So, R. N Smith, I says to him, "That's what you want." So I appointed R. N. Smith as a receiver for the bank. He used to be the judge, you know. He resigned, R. N. Smith, the Judge of the LaPorte County Circuit Court, judge there for three or four terms, you see. Yeah, so we liquidated. We got Fifty Cents on the Dollar again. So that's what we got anyhow Fifty Cents on the Dollar.

Interviewer: What was Wanatah like during the war years?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, Wanatah was just a little farming community. That's all it is a little farming community, you see.

Interviewer: Did people make—did they do any war efforts? Did they do anything for the war?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, you bought bonds. That's all you could do. If you bought Three or Four Dollars a bond, that was a lot of money, too. That's the First World War. It'd be about three or four thousand dollars now, you see. Yes. Yeah. I had a brother you know. He got to be a casualty of World War I. World War II, Karl was in World War II, my boy Karl was. He got hit with shrapnel, oh, about five months before the war, before the war stopped. And, (indecipherable), why ah, he was up in the eastern part of Japan, on some of those islands over there. He was what they called a seabee. Well, he was (indecipherable) he knew how to run a motor, things like that. Yeah, he was wounded, and didn't want to heal up. So while he was still convalescing, why the war stopped. And then, oh, they made peace, it was one of those islands over there, Japanese islands. He said, "Well, dad," he said, "I don't like to talk about the war." He said, "I don't like to talk about it." But he said, "I saw all that brass," he says. They go up there. They said it was one of those islands over there, they got together first. He said it was one of those islands over there, that he'd have to be there. But he said he never saw so much brass. He said all these big generals, Japanese generals and United States generals. They were all plenty of brass there, you see. They were pretty well dressed up. Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you say that way back in the early 1900s, would you say those were the good old days?

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well, the best days of my life.

Interviewer: Was life a little easier back then?

Mr. Rosenbaum: When you're young, those are the best days of your life, I'll tell you that. 'Cause after you get married, you get troubles. Yeah. Well, so I married a nice little girl. This is my first baby here. Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, I want to thank you very much for the interview.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Well.

Interviewer: That's about all the tape I have.

Mr. Rosenbaum: Yeah, that's okay.

(This is the end of Side Two.)