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MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY OFFICE

X SUMMARY

T A P E L O G

417-235-2

TAPE NUMBER

NAME HUGO AND MARGARET McMANN KENCK

BIRTHDATE Hugo (1892)

ADDRESS 3110 Sheridan, Butte, MT

SPECIAL INTEREST Butte 1900-1940; Musical past of Butte, Depression years, ethnic groups.

OTHERS PRESENT (Note full name and relationship) _____

INTERVIEWED BY Laurie Mercier

DATE December 8, 1982

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW 2 hrs., 10 minutes

NUMBER OF TAPES 3

RECORDER USED Superscope

BRAND OF TAPE TDK & Denon

X CASSETTE

REEL-TO-REEL

QUALITY OF RECORDING good

DESCRIBE ANY INTERFERENCE Some street traffic noise.

RELEASE OBTAINED X RESTRICTIONS FOR USE _____

TRANSCRIBED OR SUMMARIZED BY Laurie Mercier

DATE _____

SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR USE OF TAPE _____

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW CONTEXT AND TAPE CONTENTS (accession card) Discuss music teachers, groups and performers of Butte, 1900-1940. Also describe Butte's ethnics, German clubs, the California Brewery, Miner's Bank and neighborhoods.

INDEX ENTRIES: California Brewery--Butte; Germans; Butte--social life and customs; McMann, James--Butte; Prohibition; musicians; blacks; Miner's Bank--Butte; miners; Kenck, Hugo--Butte; Kenck, Margaret McMann--Butte

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Hugo and Margaret Kenck -- Tape I - Side A

Tape I - Side A

- 0-75 Hugo born Helena, 1892. Father (Frank Kenck) had business on Broadway and Rodney (bar). Moved to Butte 1905, father took over California Brewery (restaurant and nightclub). Describes California Brewery. Hugo often operated cash register and remembers seeing "Copper Kings."
- 75-149 Recalls painting "Rape of the Nymph" hanging over bar. Basement of Brewery had rear entrance and private booths for couples who wished to avoid public notice. All women orchestra. Father sold business before Prohibition. Special silverware, attempts to keep people from stealing it.
- 150-205 Describes Sons of Hermann. Membership in this organization. Anti-German sentiment during world wars drastically reduced numbers. Describes German community in Butte. Singing club, Lederkranz. Germans didn't congregate in certain neighborhoods as did other ethnic groups.
- 206-274 Schooling in Butte, graduated high school, 1910. Delivering newspapers. Daily routine. No currency in Butte "in old days," all silver and gold coins. Miners paid \$93.50 a month. Hugo would deliver money to saloons on payday (saloons would cash paychecks). Atlantic saloon.
- 275-384 Selling papers as youth. Becoming stenographer. Describes WW-I service, work as interpreter.
- 385-455 Accusations of German-Americans being spys. Hysteria of times. Getting job at Miner's Bank. Wages, hours.

Tape I - Side B

- 0-40 Red light district, Butte. Tong war. Miners Union Day parade, ransacking of union hall. Treatment of scabs.
- 41-89 Margaret describes her parents, from Nashville, Tenn. Father (Jim McMann) a miner. Working conditions in mines. Describes dad's dinner pail. Strike of 1917. Life as miner's daughter. T.J. Bennett store in Centerville.
- 90-139 Margaret's father jailed for strike (1917) activity. Miner's newspaper press wrecked by someone throwing in graphite. "There was no end to the dirt to which they would stoop to defeat the miners." Hanging of Frank Little. Remembers Tom Campbell speaking, read message from pumpmen's union. "Sixty-five years later I can still remember the cheer that went up from that crowd." Remembers militia, shooting.
- 140-199 Early street crowds in Butte similar to New York City. Describes confederate soldier character, popcorn man (fixtures of uptown). Margaret describes places where lived in Butte, music in her home.

Kenck -- Tape I - Side B

- 200-324 Musical training. Singing lessons. Describes "marvelous" teachers in Butte. St. Patrick's choir. Arthur Drynan director. Other singers. Christmas Eve concert. Madame MacPherson. Hugo describes music choir sung.
- 325-409 Great interest in music in Butte. Cornish had beautiful voices. Butte Male Chorus. [Director of Chorus was George Stevens.] John McCormick to sing in Butte, ran into Jimmy Cummins (old friend from University of Dublin) at bar and McCormick missed concert.
- 410-450 Hugo explains why music so popular. Ethnic groups. Margaret remembers groups singing in native tongues at Columbia Gardens.

Tape II - Side A

- 0-59 St. Patrick's Day parades. Margaret's aspirations for singing career. Mrs. Wolf's operas, locally produced and acted. Hugo first man in Montana to sing on radio.
- 60-107 Fumes from Butte smelter, air thick. No trees. Ethnic groups.
- 108-164 Meaderville. Mike Salot's restaurant. Rocky Mountain cafe, nightclubs.
- 165-209 Prohibition in Butte. Methods of evading Feds. Hugo describes city jail and sentencing of bootleggers, treated like kings. Liquor flowed. Payoffs, tough for "little guy" to moonshine.
- 210-249 Leonard Waters' music store. Walkerville. Most people lived uptown.
- 250-331 Margaret recalls mine whistles. Sky always seemed grey. Each mine had different whistle. New Year's Eve. Speculator fire disaster.
- 332-406 Serbian Church. Centerville. Mullan Boarding House. Lederkranz singing society.
- 407-454 Hugo describes friend Bob Logan, black man with exceptional singing ability.

Tape II - Side B

- 0-49 Describes Bob Logan's wife, difficulties being accepted because of color. Logan one of Hugo's best friends. Blacks wouldn't eat at Gamer's because of stares. Chinese and blacks in Butte.
- 50-115 Margaret paid for singing lessons by working. Worked Sherman and Reed's Funeral Home. Recalls soup lines at Salvation Army during depression of '30s. Margaret's salary cut from \$100 to \$50. Mother worked for WPA, in charge of Housekeeping Aid Project in Butte. Tough times. Food stamps.

Kenck -- Tape II - Side B

- 116-164 Hugo and Margaret married 1938. Hugo describes bank closure in Butte, Miner's Bank. Reconstruction Finance Corp. Run on Metals Bank, depositors put money in Yaegen (sp?) Bank. (Billings operator), Yaegen Bank failed.
- 165-259 Hugo describes his work at Miner's Bank--stenographer, cashier, later "practically ran the bank." Bank sold to Great Falls outfit in 1960s. Hugo liked this work because likes figures--"all kinds." Impact strikes on bank. People in Butte preferred silver dollars over paper money.
- 260-365 Hugo never laid off, always had paycheck. Margaret describes involvement with Community Concerts. Founders of Community Concerts programs.
- 366-455 Butte Symphony. Strike of 1934. Contract work in mines, Margaret's father would get cheated. Hugo claims company was good to employees in later years, especially in relocating families living by pit.

Tape III - Side A

- 0-79 Attitudes toward company. Butte a company town. Margaret's father had "miner's consumption." Treatment. Poor health from working in mines.
- 80-160 Hugo never wished to work in mines. Margaret describes father, why he worked as miner. Immigrant miners. The Kencks laugh about early prejudices and how their perceptions have changed over the years.