Montana War Brides Oral History Project, 2001-2003

Overview of the Collection

**Creator**  Montana Historical Society
**Title**  Montana War Brides Oral History Project
**Dates**  2001-2003 (inclusive)
**Quantity**  20 interviews
**Collection Number**  OH War Brides
**Summary**  This oral history project focused on the experiences of women who came to Montana as the result of marriage to a U.S. soldier during World War II or the Korean War. Interviewees recall life in their home countries, including Australia, England, France, Germany, Korea, Poland, and Wales, as well as the adjustments they made to become Montanans.
**Repository**  Montana Historical Society, Research Center Archives
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**Access Restrictions**  Collection is open for research.

**Languages**  English
**Sponsor**  Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

In the summer of 2001 the Montana Historical Society Archives began work on the Montana War Brides Oral History Project. The project focused on the experiences of women who came to Montana as the result of marriage to a U.S. soldier. War Brides form a unique immigrant group within Montana’s population. Unlike many immigrant groups war brides traveled to Montana alone, came to live with people they had never met, and entered new lives without the comfort of an existing support system to ease the transition. This project documents the process that brought war brides to Montana, the transitions they made in making new lives in the Big Sky County, their efforts to fit into new communities, and the efforts of these communities to welcome them.

Dr. Seena Kohn, Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences Professor at Webster University in Saint Louis, served as the interviewer. A gift from the Friends of the Montana Historical Society and a professional development grant from Webster College enabled Professor Kohl to travel to Montana and interview women from across the state, including Billings, Conrad, Grass Range, Great Falls, |
Lewistown, and Kalispell. The women immigrated from hometowns in Australia, England, France, Germany, Korea, Poland, and Wales.

Content Description

This oral history project focused on the experiences of 20 women who came to Montana as the result of marriage to a U.S. soldier during World War II or the Korean War. Interviewees recall life in their home countries, including Australia, England, France, Germany, Korea, Poland, and Wales, and the adjustments that they had to make when they became Montanans. The interviews were conducted between 2001 and 2003. The interviewer was Professor Seena Kohl, Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences Professor at Webster University in Saint Louis. Dr. Kohl conducted the interviews as a volunteer for the Montana Historical Society, supported with staff development funds from Webster University and a gift from the Friends of the Montana Historical Society.

Other Descriptive Information

Researchers requesting copies of interviews should refer to the OH number when ordering.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

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Preferred Citation


Administrative Information

Arrangement

Inventory is arranged by item, with each oral history interview listed by its unique OH number. An abstract for each interview is provided in the inventory to allow keyword searchability. The abstract includes the number of cassettes, CDs or transcript pages for the interview, as appropriate.

Acquisition Information

Dr. Kohl conducted the interviews as a volunteer for the Montana Historical Society, supported with staff development funds from Webster University and a gift from the Friends of the Montana Historical Society.
Detailed Description of the Collection

Description

OH 1940: EVELYN TUSS INTERVIEW
2 tape(s), Transcript 26 pages
In this interview Evelyn Tuss discusses her childhood in Durham, England; her experiences during the first years of the World War II; living through the bombings; rationing; meeting her husband to be, Frank Tuss; her families concerns about her dating and eventually marrying a U.S. soldier; challenges of her trip, via the "Vulcania" an Italian liner, to the United States; her reactions to seeing New York; reactions to her new home and family in Lewistown, Montana; dealing with homesickness; making friends and settling in to a new domestic routine; getting used to American money; cultural differences; and visiting England over the years. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 17, 2001, Lewistown, Mont.

OH 1941: ELVIA STOCKTON INTERVIEW
1 tape(s) (Transcript 24 pages)
In this interview Elvia Stockton, native of France, discusses her experiences as a war bride from World War II. Topics include her childhood in a small community outside of Paris; her father’s service in WWI as an Italian soldier; being a teenager during the occupation of France; living conditions during those years; an incident where she met members of the Canadian Army in occupied France; meeting her husband-to-be who was attached to a medical unit near her hometown; reactions of her family to the romance; their wedding; her trip to the United States, after the birth of her first child, on a freighter; meeting her new family; moving to the family ranch near Grass Range, Montana; and the difficulty of being away from her family. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 17, 2001, Grass Range, Mont.

OH 1942: PEGGY FLOERCHINGER INTERVIEW
2 tape(s) (Transcript 23 pages)
In this interview Peggy Floerchinger discusses the evacuation of children from her home town of in Liverpool during World War II; experiences during bombings of Liverpool; meeting and dating her future husband, Tom Floerchinger who was part of the post-war service force in England; their wedding; bureaucratic procedures she had to go through prior to leaving Britain; travel to the U.S. on the SS Henry Gibbon with her new husband and other newly married couples; traveling by us to Montana; meeting her new family in Conrad; being homesick; adjustments to new life in farming; and trips made to England over the years. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 29, 2001; June 20, 2002 Lewistown, Mont.

OH 1943: ODETTE SAYLOR INTERVIEW
2 tape(s) (Transcript 42 pages)
In this interview Odette Saylor discusses her childhood in France; daily life during the early years of World War II; her work in various factories near Paris; her family’s flight from Ableiges when the German forces entered that area; refugees; returning home by order of German Army; German occupation of the local businesses; her mother’s experiences with Gestapo because of her British heritage; the arrival of American soldiers; meeting and dating her husband-to-be, Rueben Saylor; her family’s reaction to their relationship; her wedding in France; the trip to America by boat; conflicts about childcare between WAVES and French women; arrival and early life in
Description

Billings; homesickness; and reactions to American food. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 27, 2001, Lewistown, Mont.

OH 2029: JOYCE VASHRO INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 23 pages)
In this interview Joyce Vashro describes her childhood in London, England; her experiences during World War II; bombings and air raids in London; family members military service in World War I and World War II; her work for the Women's Land Army; meeting and courting Dick Vahro, an American soldier; getting married; immigrating to the United States in 1946; her experiences on the Queen Mary with a young child; arrival and life in Butte; her homesickness; moving to Austin, Montana and living there until 1967; and thoughts about her home country. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, Helena, MT, June 24, 2002

OH 2030: MARIE ELIZABETH HOUTZ INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 21 pages)
In this interview Marie Houtz discusses her childhood in England; her experiences during the first years of the World War II; meeting and marrying a U.S. soldier; the journey to the United States aboard the Queen Mary in 1946; traveling to Montana; meeting new in-laws; and adjusting to life in Montana. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, June 25, 2002, Great Falls, Mont.

OH 2031: ELIZABETH C. GOFF INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 18 pages)
In this interview Elizabeth Goff discusses her childhood in Poland; her experiences during the first years of the World War II; meeting her husband to be, Richard Goff; travel to the United States in 1950; traveling to Great Falls, Montana, to live on Malmstrom Air Force Base; marriage to Mr. Goff; and adjusting to life in Montana. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, June 25, 2002, Great Falls, Mont.

OH 2032: KIM VAN DAM INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 23 pages)
In this interview Kim Van Dam (Jung Ja) discusses her childhood in Korea in a village near the 38th parallel; her parents meeting as a result of Japanese occupation of Korea; being separated from her family during civil war in Korea; living in Seoul once her family located her again; meeting her husband to be who was a military chauffeur; attempts by family and military to talk her out of marrying an American; immigrating to the United States as a war bride; arrival in Conrad, Montana, and community reaction to her; and adjusting to new life including money, food, housekeeping. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, June 27, 2002, Conrad, Mont.

OH 2034: ELSIE PERSICKE INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 20 pages)
In this interview Elsie Persicke discusses her childhood in London, England; her experiences during World War II; meeting and courting American soldier; immigration to the United States; and her life in Missoula and Whitefish. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, June 30, 2002, Whitefish, Mont.

OH 2038: ELFRIEDE JOHNSEN INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 22 pages)
In this interview Elfriede Johnsen discusses her childhood in Germany; her experiences during World War II including being evacuated with all young children from here home town in 1939; her
father’s service in the German Army; experiences during bombing raids; the bombing of her father’s business; invasion and occupation of her village by American and French soldiers; meeting and courting an American Soldier beginning in 1947; immigration to the United States; living in Broadus and later Miles City; challenges of adjusting to her new life including raising children and learning to cook; and thoughts about ever returning to Germany to live. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 16, 2002, Great Falls, Mont.

OH 2039: RUTH POORE BATCHEN INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 26 pages)
In this interview Ruth Batchen discusses her childhood in Liverpool; her experiences during World War II; meeting and courting an American soldier; immigration to the United States; and her life in Billings. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 9, 2002, Billings, Mont.

OH 2040: BEATRICE "PETE" BERRINGER INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 18 pages)
In this interview Beatrice Berringer discusses her childhood in Australia; experiences during World War II including rationing; meeting and courting American soldier named Ted Berriger; immigration to the United States in 1945; shipboard experiences; travel to and adjusting to life in Miles City and later Billings; meeting in Billings with other war brides. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 9, 2002, Billings, Mont.

OH 2041: IRENE OWEN INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 23 pages)
In this interview Irene Owen discusses her childhood in Manchester, England; her training in dance; experiences during World War II including bombings, air raids, rationing, military service of family members; meeting and courting an American soldier named Dick Owen; immigration to the United States to live in Harlowton; shipboard experiences on the Queen Mary; moving to Geraldine; and adjusting to life in a small Montana town. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, July 9, 2002, Billings, Mont.

OH 2042: JOYCE BARRY INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 17 pages)
In this interview Joyce Barry discusses her childhood in Cheshire, England; her experiences during World War II including air raids; meeting an American soldier named Ernie Barry; dating and getting married; immigrating to the United States in 1946; arriving in Kalispell and adjusting to life there; having children; and returning to England to visit many years later. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, September 2, 2002, Kalispell, Mont.

OH 2043: NORMA DUFF INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 20 pages)
In this interview Norma Duff discusses her childhood in North Rockhampton, Australia; experiences living close to an U.S. Army base; meeting and marrying an American serviceman named Roy Duff; immigrating to the U.S. from the port of Brisbane; experiences aboard ship with other war brides; arriving in Whitefish; and briefly discusses adjusting to life in new country; Interviewed by Seena Kohl, September 8, 2002, Whitefish, Mont.

OH 2044: SHEILA BUCK INTERVIEW
1 tape(s)(Transcript 10 pages)
In this interview Sheila Buck discusses the formation of the Over Seas Wives Club by the Home Extension Service; her life in Kalispell; and her career as a teacher in the Kalispell area. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, September 10, 2002, Whitefish, Mont.

OH 2045: JANET MOHN INTERVIEW
2 tape(s)(Transcript 25 pages)
In this interview Janet Mohn discusses her childhood in Australia; experiences during World War II; meeting and courting American soldier; immigration to the United States in 1946; adjusting to new life in Kalispell; cultural differences she noticed; her new family; the overseas wives club; and various part-time jobs she held from the 1960s to the 1980s. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, September 11, 2002, Kalispell, Mont.

OH 2046: Joyce De Long Interview
1 tape(s)(Transcript 17 pages)
In this interview Joyce De Long discusses her childhood in Hampshire, England; experiences during World War II including air raids, recruitment into war time work; meeting and dating an American soldier named Russell De Long; getting married in 1944; immigrating to the United States in 1945; travel on the ship Argentina; arrival in Somers, Montana; having children, and adjusting to her new life. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, September 10, 2002, Somers, Mont.

OH 2047: Muriel Morse Interview
1 tape(s)(Transcript 23 pages)
In this interview Muriel Morse discusses her childhood in Cardiff, Wales; her work for the Women’s Land Army; her friends and families views about American soldiers; meeting and marrying Herb Morse; traveling to U.S. with husband aboard a Merchant Marine ship; immigration; adjusting to life in new country while starting a new family; traveling to England in 1950s; moving to Kalispell from Darby; and joining the Overseas Wives Club in Kalispell. Interviewed by Seena Kohl, September 9, 2002, Kalispell, Mont.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:
- Emigration and immigration
- Emigration and immigration--Montana
- War brides
- War brides--Montana

Geographical Names:
- Australia
- England
- France
- Germany
- Korea
- Montana
- Poland
- Wales

Form or Genre Terms:

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