

Bill Dennett (1921-)

Schoolmate to Madelyn (née Payne) Dunham

Oral history recorded July 29, 2012 (Run time 43:47)

Bill Dennett was interviewed on July 29, 2012, at the Augusta Historical Museum. The interviewer was Teresa Baumgartner, and the videographer was Steve Cless. The first part of the interview was lost, due to technical difficulties, so the recording begins mid-interview.

Bill Dennett (September 2, 1921-) did not have any more of a connection with Madelyn Payne than “knowing of her,” as he put it. His memories shed light on the war and how it influenced the way many young adults got married, rural schools, and what it was like to work on the railroad from 1946 to his retirement.

00.00-00.	Camera, sound adjustments
	The missing segment: In the first part of the interview, the portion that was lost, Bill talked about places, land in the local area, his family history and where they lived. Bill was born in Salter, Kansas (then a small Butler County town around what is now Santa Fe Lake Road, between SW 140 th and 150 th , south of Augusta and north of Rose Hill and Douglass).
00.00-00.4.30	Military service and wedding: Bill came home (on leave from military service) in December of 1942. Bill tells the story of how he got married March 9, 1943. He was discharged from service in October of 1945.
4.31-19.24	Schooling: Bill attended elementary school in a two-room schoolhouse in Gordon through eighth grade. Bill shares memories of his school years, successes and failures. Went to 8 th and 9 th grade in Douglass, then Augusta High School 1936-1939, and part of 1940, but never received a diploma. He knew “of” Madelyn Payne (class of 1939), but did not know her. He talked about transportation to and from school for rural students and his affinity for art: drawing, carving, and wood-burning.
19.25-22.45	Variety in his vocations and avocations: Bill talks about the many things he has done, from grinding rocks to prospecting for the tiny amounts of gold that rolled to Kansas in the Arkansas River.
22.46-43.47	Working on the railroad: Bill recalls his career working on the railroad, starting on January 2, 1946 in the area, and the many different jobs, equipment, and machinery he worked with, as well as how the railroad industry has changed. He shares some of his personal experiences on the job. He talks about how the railroad influenced settlement, and the cattle business in Kansas, as well as disputes over land rights and the railroad right-of-ways.