

**Oral History Interview of  
Walter Potter**

**Interviewed by: Fred Carpenter  
May 5, 1972  
Roscoe, Texas**

**Part of the:**  
*Legacy Southwest Collection Interviews*

© Southwest Collection/  
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/  
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

## Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Walter Potter on May 5, 1972. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

### Preferred Citation for this Document:

Potter, Walter. Oral History Interview, May 5, 1972. Interview by Fred Carpenter, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

*The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses almost 6000 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.*

## Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

### Recording Notes:

*Original Format:* Born Digital Audio

*Digitization Details:* N/A

*Audio Metadata:* 44.1kHz/ 16bit WAV file

*Further Access Restrictions:* N/A

*Related Interviews:*

### Transcription Notes:

*Interviewer:* Fred Carpenter

*Audio Editor:* N/A

*Transcription:* Elissa Stroman

*Editor(s):* Katelin Dixon

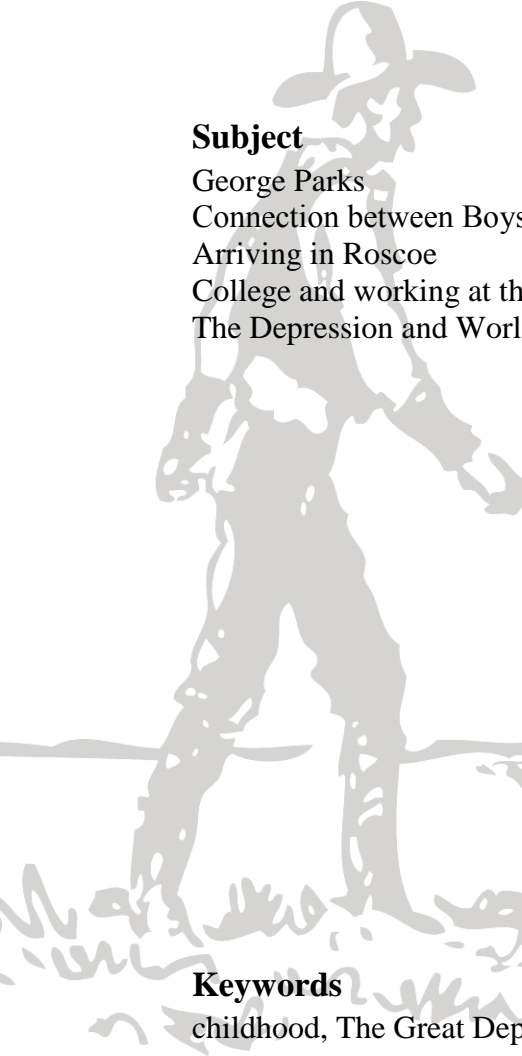
## Interview Series Background:

In the process of conservation and digitization, our Audio/Visual department transcribes existing interviews in the Southwest Collection's holdings for a new generation of listeners to rediscover. Such interviews frequently cover topics relating to the founding of Texas Tech and the settlement of Lubbock but can also encompass a wide range of subjects.

## Transcript Overview:

This oral history interview features Walter Potter of Roscoe, Texas. Potter talks about his experience with George Parks and the Boys' Club.

**Length of Interview:** 00:13:44



Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
George Parks	5	00:00:00
Connection between Boys' Club and athletics	6	00:03:00
Arriving in Roscoe	8	00:05:03
College and working at the bank	8	00:05:03
The Depression and World War II	12	00:11:55

© Southwest Collection/  
Special Collections Library

### Keywords

childhood, The Great Depression, Roscoe, Texas, World War II

**Fred Carpenter (FC):**

Continuing the taping here in Roscoe. I have with me Mr. Walter R. Potter. P-o-t-t-e-r, the president of the Roscoe State Bank. Mr. Potter's going to tell us a little about himself and about his association with the boy's club, and a little bit more about Mr. Parks, who is reticent to tell too much about his own work with him, and I'd like for Mr. Potter to tell us something about what the town of Roscoe thinks about George Parks and his work and the good that it has done for Roscoe, Texas.

**Walter Potter (WP):**

Well, we think it is a wonderful thing. It's an awful lot of time spent with the boys; in fact, he—about all the recreation he has is—from his businesses—that. And he's worked hard, and we think it has cut our juvenile delinquency almost out. We have very little trouble, and if there's some reason for it, we think that's it.

FC:

Mr. Potter, when did you first become acquainted with the program?

WP:

When it started.

FC:

You were here in 1932 when the program started?

WP:

Yes.

FC:

And starting as a boy scout troop. Were you yourself, have you been active in the program?

WP:

Not particularly, no.

FC:

Has—about how many boys, in your opinion, have gone through the program over the period of years?

WP:

I don't have any way to estimate them. Most all that was reared here.

FC:

Have you had any children in the program?

WP:

We had a boy that we reared—that went through the program.

FC:

Evidently the program has been pretty well self-financing.

WP:

Yes, it is self-supporting.

FC:

Through the work that the boys have done. And I think George told me that they had, oh quite a few different accounts in the bank. And it's not just that—they don't raise this money just for themselves, but have evidently done some good in other areas of community work.

WP:

Yeah, because they have an athletic program, baseball and stuff in the summer, and trampoline, and things like that.

FC:

I had the occasion to—I live in Brownwood—I had the occasion to make tapes with Gordon Wood, who was the high school coach here at one time. He's a good friend of mine. And he told me in particular how much he felt of the program there. Have you always had good cooperation between the high school coaches and the boy's club—they work cooperatively together?

WP:

I think the overall program we have—and maybe it's been a little difficult sometimes. But when I think of [inaudible], it's all congenial.

FC:

Well, if you will now, Mr. Potter, we are interested not only in the boy's club of Roscoe, but also in the area. Can you tell me a little bit about your family, when they first came into Roscoe, Texas, here?

WP:

We moved here in 1917.

FC:

And was this your father, and mother moved here?

WP:

Yes.

FC:

Tell us your father's name and your mother's maiden name and where they came to—from—came from, to Roscoe, if you will.

WP:

Well my father's name was D. D., he didn't have a name—

FC:

Just initials?

WP:

And my mother's name was Laura Gracey.

FC:

And they came to Roscoe from where?

WP:

Tarrant County.

FC:

Tarrant County. And they have any particular reason for coming to Roscoe?

WP:

None that I know, except that they thought it was time to go west.

FC:

I see. And what type of business did they enter into?

WP:

Farming.

FC:

Into farming, yes. And you as a boy—did you go to school in Roscoe, then?



WP:

Yes.

FC:

Tell us a little bit about Roscoe, when were you born, by the way, Mr. Potter?

WP:

1899.

FC:

Now tell us a little bit about—why you would have been eight years old when you came to Roscoe, about, did you say 1907?

WP:

Well I was seven, I wasn't quite eight.

FC:

Oh right. And you began your schooling. Tell us a little bit about Roscoe, the town itself, when you first came as a child—about how many people, and who were some of the older families? I'd like to get a little of Roscoe history here.

WP:

Well, that's a hard question. That's hard to think.

FC:

Did they have many families here?

WP:

Yes. I don't really know the population now. It was a small town, but it was thriving, and this is a real good farming district. I guess it's as good a dryland strip as you have in Texas. I don't know of one as good.

FC:

Who were some of the families that were here at this time, when you came in?

WP:

Well, Dobbins, Mr. Dobbins was in the bank at that time, when we moved here. And the bank was established in 1906. And he come established it. And then the Howards and the Whortons, Aters, and the Graceys moved here after that some time. Quite a little while after that.



FC:

That's G-r-a-c-y, or c-e-y?

WP:

C-e-y.

FC:

This was your mother's family, that you came in?

WP:

There were—this particular family and my mother were cousins.

FC:

And you finished your schooling in Roscoe? Did you go through the Roscoe High School? All right, tell us then, where you went from there and when you first started in the bank. When did you first start with the bank?

WP:

I went to school at Simmons College, as it was then, and I quit and went to work in the bank in 1921.

FC:

And have been with the bank ever since? I did some tapes over in Abilene in the last few days in there—did you ever know the Clack sisters who taught in the Abilene schools?

WP:

The what?

FC:

Clack. C-l-a-c-k.

WP:

The name's familiar. I don't—

FC:

When you went to Simmons, that was before it was Hardin-Simmons. Tell us a little bit about who the present teachers were there—if you can remember—when you went to school in '21.

WP:

Well, Sandefer was president of the college. And Dr. Arnett, Dr. Cooper, Camel. Well, now I can't recall others. Olson, Dean Olson.

FC:

Now you were—you came to the bank in '21, and were here from then on. Back in 1934, 1935—is one of the periods we're particularly interested in, and doing research during the drought years and the cattle shooting time. Did you have any particular experience with that in this area? Can you tell us a little bit about your feelings on the cattle shoot, and how it affected this area—what it was like during the depression in Roscoe.

WP:

There's no way to tell what it was like—it was just as bad as you can think of.

FC:

Just no water, and things really rough.

WP:

Well, we had plenty of water and wind, that's about all we had.

FC:

Did many of the people here enter into the program of the cattle shoot?

WP:

Yes, about all of them. Nobody particularly liked it, but they thought it was the next best thing.

FC:

And you feel that it did help the community and helped the area?

WP:

Well it helped the prices. It helped the prices.

FC:

How did they handle the program? They do it differently and have done it differently in different parts of Texas. Did they have a local veterinarian who inspected the cattle, or just how did they handle it?

WP:

That's the way I remember it, yes. And they'd group it and get several people to locate their cattle at a certain place and they'd check them all at that time.

FC:

Did they ship many of them, did the bank itself buy many cattle during this period?

WP:

No.

FC:

I imagine you had notes on most of the cattle that were shot anyway.

WP:

I guess, yes.

FC:

Were you able to recover from these people, did many of them from the money they got to pay off their notes, or did they just have to have that money to live on?

WP:

Well, people did real well to have gone through what they did, we thought. The bank didn't actually lose any money to speak of—in fact we didn't have much money to lose.

FC:

Then the war came along in the forties. How did that affect the economy—?

WP:

Well, we had revived before the war; in fact, the best two years that I have ever know was two years before the war.

FC:

'38 and '39, or '39 and '40.

WP:

We didn't have taxes and we got our government program started—cut the acreage and begin to get living prices for things. And then the war come along and I had to proportion it again—the other way, and had lots of taxes let me tell you when we started that.

FC:

Primarily what is the economy—is it the dryland farming—do you have any industry at all?

WP:

Well, we've got the RS&P [**Roscoe, Snyder & Pacific**] Railway.<sup>1</sup> Its headquarters are located here. And we've got the feedlot that's thriving, and we've got lots of people that are stock farmers as well as cotton farmers.

FC:

I guess when you're a little boy—this Higginbotham-Bartlett—were they already in, or when did they come in.

WP:

I think so—I don't remember when—

FC:

I did a study on the Higginbotham a couple of years ago—

WP:

I think they were here.

FC:

They're one of the older industries that—I mean older businesses that's been here a good long period of time. I talked to Mr. Haney and Mr. Douglas a while. Was he here in those early days too?

WP:

No, that was before he was born, I think.

FC:

I didn't know whether his family had been in the drug business prior to his going in—

WP:

His father was a druggist.

FC:

Mr. Potter, I appreciate you coming by and adding a little bit to our tape about Roscoe history here. I understand you have a little museum that you're starting. I'm interested in looking at over there too.

WP:

---

<sup>1</sup> See <https://sites.google.com/site/roscoesnyderpacific/home>.

Yeah, it's pretty nice.

FC:

And it's good to see. I appreciate you coming by.

FC:

Thank you.

***End of Recording***



© Southwest Collection/  
Special Collections Library