

Edith Miller Vibert Oral History Interview, 05/28/1976 Administrative Information

Narrator: Edith Miller Vibert

Interviewer: John Koenig

Date of Interview: May 28, 1976

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Biographical Note and Abstract

Edith Miller Vibert was born February 15, 1902, the daughter of Richard and Ida Miller, and was raised in South Windsor, CT. She attended Barber Hill School and Rockville High School. After graduating high school, earned a teaching certificate, and became a schoolteacher. Later in life, she served as librarian of Wood Memorial Library. Edith Miller married J. Watson Bidwell, a dairy farmer, in 1926 and they later had two children. She died on March 18, 1979.

The interviewer, John Koenig, was nine years old at the time of this interview and apparently conducted it as part of a school report. In this interview, Vibert discusses her experiences growing up in a farming family with two sisters. She talks about her childhood games and hobbies, about going to school in a one-room schoolhouse, about becoming a teacher, and her memories of the Flood of 1936.

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Transcript of Oral History Interview

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**Edith Vibert
Oral History Transcript
Interviewed by John Koenig
May 28, 1976**

KOENIG: **0:00:08.0** This is John Koenig interviewing Mrs. Edith Vibert, May 26th, 1976. What was your favorite food when you were little?

VIBERT: My favorite food was chicken and all kinds of vegetables from our garden.

KOENIG: And what was your favorite—what is your favorite hobby now?

VIBERT: I think my favorite hobby now is being librarian of an entirely volunteer library, the Wood Memorial Library in South Windsor.

KOENIG: **0:01:01.6** Where were you born?

VIBERT: I was born in Rockville, which is in the town of Vernon.

KOENIG: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

VIBERT: I had no brothers, but I have two sisters—one sister named Agnes, who was older than me, and one sister named Arline, who was younger.

KOENIG: Where did you live and grow up?

VIBERT: I grew up on a farm in East Windsor and we lived in the section called Barber Hill. My father [Richard Miller] bought the farm when I was about 3 years old, and I just about remember moving out from Rockville when I was a little girl.

KOENIG: What were your main chores you had to do?

VIBERT: **0:01:58.6** Well, I think my main chores were to help my mother [Ida Miller] around the house and help take care of the yard. And I used to like to cook and bake and garden and do various things that a girl did in those days, especially if we lived—especially if one lived in an isolated area, such as we did.

KOENIG: I heard that you used to sell eggs to a man that lived in a mansion which is now the Rockville Hospital.

VIBERT: Yes, that is true. On our farm, we had chickens, as everybody did in those days,

and my father sold eggs and he had a regular route which he followed—and I don't know how it was that the cook of the Maxwell family heard that he had nice, fresh eggs—but anyway, all I remember is that he used to deliver eggs there once a week—I think we went to Rockville on Tuesdays, and we kids used to like to follow him in to the Maxwell home, especially—especially when he delivered the eggs, and it was a mansion and I suppose it intrigued us because it was so much bigger than our own home. Cook was always very nice to us and would have cookies for us. We always—I think we went in one at a time—perhaps we even took turns going in first—Arline would go one week and I would go the next week and then my sister Agnes.

KOENIG: **0:03:49.2** Where did you attend school?

VIBERT: I went to a little one-room school. It was called the Barber Hill School, and it was just a—one or two houses below the hill where I lived. My first teacher was a Miss Bernice Penny.

KOENIG: What hobbies did you have and what professions did you choose?

VIBERT: Oh, what did I say my hobby was? Oh, I think maybe one of the hobbies that I was the most proud of was that I learned how to tat when I was a very young girl, and a Mrs. Doan who lived at the foot of our hill was a nice old lady, and we used to run down to visit her—I think she taught us how to crochet, too. I was quite proud because I could tat and I made edges for handkerchiefs—it's very much like doing macramé today—in other words, it's tying knots—in very fine thread, however.

I remember that I made a camisole that I gave to one of my favorite aunts and it was so beautiful that she never wore it, but I think maybe it's because it didn't fit her. But anyway, she kept it over the years, then we put it between blue paper so that it wouldn't turn yellow—turn yellow—and unbeknown to me, she entered it in the Rockville Fair. I made this when I was 15 years old and I won first prize at the fair with it. So I was very proud of it. I still have it today.

KOENIG: **0:05:38.3** When did you get married and how many children do you have?

VIBERT: I was married in September of 1926 and I had two children, a son named Joseph Vibert, Jr. and a daughter named Caroline; and Caroline is married now and she has four grandchildren and four children who are my grandchildren. And the oldest of those children is already married and the second one is graduating—being graduated from Colgate University this Sunday, and the next one is an art student at the Philadelphia College of Art, and the youngest is a junior at Hall High in West Hartford and she's quite a basketball player. And Joe has two children who are 14 and 13 years old, and then a baby who is not quite a year old, and she's named Edith for me—we call her Little Edie.

KOENIG: **0:06:53.7** Is there anything you remember especially well that you would like to

share with me that would—that would be especially interesting for the report, like special events or experiences?

VIBERT: Well, let me see—you know, when you get to be as old as I am—we've had lots of experiences and lots of events. You mean something like, oh a phenomenon like the Great Flood of '36?

KOENIG: Yeah.

VIBERT: You know, I lived here as I was already married and lived in this house and the flood came up, and it came up and it came up and it rained and it rained, and we had cows in the barn. My husband [J. Watson Vibert] had a dairy farm—and we had to put the cows up in the hayloft because the water started coming in the barn. We had, oh, I think it was maybe 25 cows all tied up in the hayloft on the second floor of the barn, and my husband waded out of the barn through the water. And the next day, he had to go over in a rowboat to feed the cows and water them, and they pulled the water up in pails, I remember.

That was the first flood that I remember of. Now, I think they'd had floods before, but, see, I lived up in East Windsor when I grew up and we were high and dry up there. And I remember we sent Joe and Caroline up to my mother and father's because we didn't know what if the flood line hit the house here. That was the most frightening event I think that ever happened. It was really very frightening.

KOENIG: **0:08:54.5** What did you do for entertainment when you were a child?

VIBERT: We played all sorts of games indoors and out. I think in the wintertime we played games, such as you do today—checkers and—of course we had no radio, and we did like the piano. We liked to sing. And in the summertime, we played outdoor games—croquet and tennis and, oh, let me see, baseball and—but as I tell you, in the wintertime, we used to skate and slide down—we lived down a very steep hill, so we used to slide downhill. I don't think we ever wanted for things to do. And whereas we had very few children to play with in the neighborhood, we three girls were all very compatible and had a real good time amongst ourselves.

KOENIG: **0:10:03.9** What professions did you choose?

VIBERT: Well, we were so isolated that there wasn't very much for a girl to do where I lived, and we had to depend on being transported somewhere, and we discussed it with our parents and decided that perhaps an interesting profession would be to become a schoolteacher, which I did, and my two sisters also became schoolteachers.

We were—began teaching right out of high school, and I was 17 when I had my first one-room school, which was in Ellington. At that time my youngest sister was still in high school, so we all rode to Rockville in the morning in our Model T Ford, and I was taken up to my school

where I taught and Arline was taken up to high school. Then my father repeated the run after school and brought us home again.

I think that we had a very thoughtful father and mother also because not many parents would transport their children back and forth to high school for seven long years until we had all finished. So, I'm very grateful to my parents for what they have done for us. There were no buses, no—that took boys and girls to school. Everybody provided their own transportation, and we used to take two or three neighbor children along with us because we were the first ones to have a Ford. Other than that, it took, oh, sometimes an hour and a half and back going from our home to the high school.

KOENIG: **0:11:52.3** Thank you.

[0:12:09.1 End of audio]

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