

Interview with Helen C. Carter
October 5, 1977 and October 12, 1977
Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection
St. Cloud State University Archives
Interviewed by Calvin W. Gower

Gower: When were you born and where?

Carter: December 29, 1891 in St. Cloud, on Fourth Avenue, between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

Gower: Were your parents born in the United States?

Carter: Yes. Mother was born in St. Cloud. Both of her parents were born in Maine. She was a Clark. W.T. Clark was her father. He was a lumberman. He lived on Fourth Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets. The Clarks came to Minnesota in the 1850's probably. They came by boat. There were several of his children here in St. Cloud in later years: E. Everett Clark, George R. Clark, and my mother, Caroline. My father was born in Lancaster, Wisconsin, I believe, on October 29, 1864. His father came from England. He attended school in Platteville, Wisconsin, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin (pharmacy program) in 1886.

Gower: What was your father's occupation?

Carter: He was a druggist. The first store he worked in was one of the early stores in St. Cloud, on Fifth Avenue South, in the Kain-Hansen Building. He started working with a man named G.C. Waller, a druggist. Mr. Carter later set up his own drug store next to the California Wine House on the corner of Fifth Avenue and St. Germain (next to the Press Bar now). The B.F. Carter Drug Store. He was on the State Board of Pharmacy for one term, appointed by Governor

Samuel Van Sant. He was in the drug business for 36 years. He retired in 1925. Then for several years he was Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce. He died on May 13, 1954. My mother was 94 years old when she died. She died in 1961. She was born in 1867 in St. Cloud.

Gower: What schools did you attend?

Carter: Union school for the elementary years and the secondary school years too. (On the present site of St. Cloud City offices.) Then St. Cloud Normal School for two years, 1911-1913, where I received my advanced graduate diploma. I taught one year in Barnum, Minnesota. I taught a number of topics (English, Latin, Music, History, Civics) mostly in the high school. But some of the assignments were in the lower grades too. I preferred teaching in high school, but I needed to take more math to qualify for this. I went to Carleton College for three years. I received a B. A. degree from Carleton. I took a number of additional classes after that, also. Then I taught at St. Cloud Tech beginning in 1919. I was there for 10 years, teaching English primarily, with some Latin classes (American Literature at the 11th grade level.) then I left in 1929 along with several people who were dissatisfied about some administrative decisions. I went back to St. Cloud State Teacher's College and took some music courses. In 1930 to 1933 I taught at Mountain Iron, Minnesota. Then I returned to St. Cloud and then I taught at St. Cloud Tech again from 1933 to 1956.

Gower: Where did you live when you were growing up?

Carter: In the section of St. Cloud around St. Cloud Normal School. One house was the Chandler House in that area. Later we lived in the block where W. T. Clark lived on Fourth Avenue South in a duplex, shared with an uncle on the other side of the house. This entire block was occupied by the Clark family. The Clark family had lots of social get togethers then. At

Christmas time we had a Christmas tree which was a family Christmas tree for the entire Clark family. We had a big Christmas dinner. We had Santa Claus and I was afraid of him because he was so noisy.

Gower: Was there much change in St. Cloud then?

Carter: No, there wasn't. The big changes came later. The big changes in St. Cloud came in the 1960's with the expansion of SCSU.

Gower: Please tell us something about your teaching activities.

Carter: I graduated from Carleton College in 1917. I taught at Wadena from 1917 to 1919. Then from 1919 to 1923 I taught English at St. Cloud Tech. Then from 1923 to 1929 I taught Latin at St. Cloud Tech. I also played for operettas, cantatas, etc. I played the piano accompaniment. I directed a boys' glee club at St. Cloud Tech. I liked music a lot and wanted to teach music, but I had majored in English and minored in Latin. I taught at Tech from 1933 to 1956. In 1933 my first assignment was teaching World History and I handled the boy's and girls' glee clubs. This was the only way I could get back into St. Cloud Tech. Then from 1934 to 1941 I taught English and handled some music classes and glee clubs. In 1941 to retirement I taught English and Latin. I preferred a mixed assignment of English and Latin. I liked Latin grammar.

Gower: Did you live in South St. Cloud all the time you were in St. Cloud?

Carter: Yes. In later years I lived next to the Presbyterian manse on Fourth Avenue South, 391 Fourth Avenue South. I lived there many years with my parents.

Gower: Did you enjoy teaching?

Carter: Yes, especially my junior classes, which were grammar and American Literature. I didn't see much of a change in students during the time I taught. I liked my associates in teaching. I got along well with the administration.

Gower: Would you like to have had some other career?

Carter: No, I enjoyed teaching especially the classes of juniors.

Gower: Did you notice the effect of the depression much in the 1930's?

Carter: No, except in my salary. My salary even at Mountain Iron was low. One year we didn't get any raise at all. However, I was not affected much by the depression. But when I returned to St. Cloud Tech in 1933 I had to start at the beginning of the salary schedule. I was willing to do this so I could come home and stay with my folks.

Gower: Did you look after your folks in their old age?

Carter: Yes, but they had looked after me too. They were nice folks.

Gower: Did you feel in a minority since you weren't Catholic?

Carter: No. my father had good Catholic patrons. He liked Bishop Busch a lot. Lots of my friends were Catholics. The Catholics lived north of St. Germain to a great extent in the early years of my life. We never paid much attention to whether a person was Catholic or Protestant. The Catholics were not as prominent in St. Cloud the, although there were some very important Catholic people here.

Gower: This concludes this interview.