



Frankfort Area Historical Society of Will County, Illinois

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January – February 2021

The mission of the Frankfort History Museum is to tell Frankfort's story through oral history, documents, and artifacts.

The following narrative borrows from oral history interviews to look at early twentieth life in Frankfort. You may find similarities with today.



*Henry and Anna Krohn farm south of Spencer,
George Messecknecht in buggy.*

FRANKFORT STORIES

At the turn of the twentieth century, family farms extended beyond the small business district along Kansas Street. “Moving at that time,” recalled Waldon Larson, “was quite a problem because all roads were mud roads and in the winter, mud would freeze up on the wheels and the mud would get so thick that the horses could hardly pull the wagon.” As a teen-ager, Waldon did all the

work on the farm, getting up at 4:30 a.m. to milk the cows and clean the barns.

Moving to Frankfort in 1930, Robert Flassig stated that they bought their property on ‘a shoe string.’ “I was working for the railroad at that time and I was getting 80 dollars a month and we came out here. And we paid \$20 on the property and \$20 on the house a month and we got by.”

During the Great Depression, Lois Ebert recalled, “We lived on the farm so we had our milk and eggs and we had our butter. At that time it was such a drought in the 1930s that the crops couldn’t grow and we had very little money at all. Then it was the chinch bugs came in. ... We had very little but we always had chickens and there were ducks. We always had food. ... Mother always had a big garden and she did a lot of canning. We would have a pig that we would butcher and she would make pork chops and pork sausage and liver sausage...”

Children valued school. Frank Bobzin had an essential job. “I was always the first boy got to school in the morning and I’d build a fire for the teacher because the schoolhouse never got warm unless it was built early enough, you know. School started at 9:00

At the turn of the century, Constable Knippel had the dual job of law enforcement officer and lamp-lighter. Each evening just before dark, he would make his rounds lowering each lamp, lighting it, then raising it back into position. The lamps were hung on pulleys over the intersections. To conserve on tax payers' money, he would make the rounds once again at 1:00 a.m. and turn out all of the lamps.