

**TAPE K-101 SIDES A & B**  
**SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH LAURA KUEHSTER\***

**Date: April 12, 1977**

**Interviewer: Margaret Bentley**

(Mrs. Mary Johnson, Laura Kuehster's friend, also participated in the interview)

Laura Kuehster (nee Patterson) was born in May 1896 in Littleton, which she calls "Pickletown." Her father was from Iowa and her mother from England. She was the oldest girl in a family of nine children. When she was about two-and-a-half years old her father moved the family from Littleton where he had gardened (farmed?) to Deer Creek Canyon where he became a miner. Mr. Patterson probably worked in one of many gold and silver mines that dotted Sampson Mountain. Laura recalls that in 1913 or 1914, Mr. Patterson acquired a homestead in Critchell. "We moved up," she said. According to Laura, a mining company had founded and settled Critchell but never had a strike.

Laura's father-in-law, Frederick Kuehster, Isaac Green, and Joseph Dudley founded the Lamb School in Critchell. All three sat on the school board and Green donated land for a new school when the original one burned down. Laura remembered nothing about the Lamb family for whom the school was named. Her parents ran a Sunday School in the same old house that accommodated the daily school, the Post Office and other community activities

Laura and her husband Otto Kuester (1879-1958) had grown up with the same friends, the Huebners, Raimers (Raymers), Greens, Dudleys and Kuehsters, attending Sunday School together and playing baseball afterwards. The big event of the year was the Fourth of July picnic that drew people from miles around.

Pleasant Park had a Grange Hall to which the Pattersons belonged and where adults and young people did most of their socializing – dancing and card playing. Laura also recalled Sis and Milt Brazier who played violin and piano for dances at Long's Dance Hall (formerly Clifton House Hotel?). Sis and Milt helped to build a dance hall in Lone Pine (called Phillipsburg by the locals) around 1939 or 1940. Beaver Ranch had a staple foods store where dances were frequently held. Maggie Crow, the postal carrier and a member of the local Grange, ran the building.

Laura recalled her chores as a little girl – getting breakfast daily, washing clothes with a washboard, and ironing. She asserts that those were by no means the good old days!

The Patterson family lived in a succession of homes. When Laura was about eight or nine years old they lived in a Critchell house once occupied by the Moore family. Then they moved to the Sunday School house, followed by an old log cabin. Finally, they moved to the large five-bedroom homestead house built of huge logs by her father. It still stands on the Patterson ranch.

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Laura and Otto Kuehster raised cattle on their ranch. He was a good skier who didn't quit until he was seventy. Laura also skied. Otto wished their children to learn to ski, so he and the children built a ski course on their ranch. Later, it had a rope tow powered by a car engine. Otto asked for a dollar a year as dues to pay for gasoline. They had potluck dinners and formed a club called "Turkshead Ski Club."

From the Lamb School, the two Kuehster sons attended Englewood High School and boarded with Laura's sister. They went on to Colorado State University at Fort Collins; Otto graduated but his brother Jack stayed for only one year.

The Kuehsters survived the Depression of the 1930s when Otto Kuehster found work on a WPA project on the High Grade Road (later State Road 285). The family also planted a lot of their food and fished and canned their catch.

In the days before the telephone, socializing with neighbors was casual; people visited and stayed for dinner without prior invitation. Laura Kuehster got an eight-party-line telephone around 1959, a year after her husband Otto died. Rural Electrification came earlier, in 1950. Before that, they used an electric generator. They had no water pump at first, relying instead on gravity flow water. They boiled their water. Around 1955 or 1956 they installed a water pump and a hot water heater.

Laura spoke about the building of the High Grade Road in 1918-1919 as a joint effort by the county and the local inhabitants.

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\*See also Charles Arnette of Critchell.