

## Socorro County Historical Society, Oral History Tapes

Clarence Hammel interviewed by Helen Sickles

### First Interview

My father, William G. Hammel was born in Illinois, and my mother was born in St. Louis Missouri. I'm not sure what year she was born.

*Well your father says he was born on November 16, 1857. That's right. In 1882 he came to Socorro for his health. He was advised by his doctors back there at that time to come out west here, and as I? have an uncle here that was living there at the time and located here in Socorro.*

*What was your uncle's name? Jeff (Jess?) Hammel.*

*And why did he come to Socorro? Well, he came -- I don't know why he came out west here he just wanted to get away from the East, you know. He came out west to Socorro and located here. Socorro at that time was the biggest town in New Mexico. My uncle was engaged in the mining business around here, and my grandfather would send him money to invest in mines, but he never did make anything out of the mines. When my father came out here in 1882 he decided he'd have to stay here for his health.*

*How did your father get established in the brewery business? My grandfather. My grandfather started it back in Illinois about 1870.*

*And your grandfather was originally from Germany? He was from Germany.*

*What was your grandfather's name? His name was Jakob Hammel. And so, my grandfather, he was in the brewery business back there in Illinois. My grandfather came over from Germany with Mr. Anheuser who later on established the Anheuser Brewery Company.*

*What part of Germany? He was from Bavaria and he came over here with Mr. Anheuser, see, so Anheuser located in St. Louis.*

*Do you know about when they came over? In 1848 they came over here.*

*Were they very young? Oh yes, they were young then and they were going to beat conscription into the German army.*

*What war was going on then? I don't know there was any war (Ed. note: revolution of 1849) . Well they came over to this country to Illinois, and when Mr. Anheuser got married he was so poor that my grandfather had to lend him a coat to get married. He was best man at the wedding. Later on, he established a little brewery there in Lebanon, Illinois, and Mr. Anheuser , now Anheuser-Busch, established one there in St. Louis. So he wanted my grandfather to go into business with him there and my grandfather says no, I want to be independent. Otherwise it would probably be Anheuser- Hammel instead of Anheuser-Busch.*

*You wouldn't be in Socorro. No, I wouldn't be in Socorro. Later on, after my father left - he used to help my grandfather in the brewery in Illinois - he was not - he always had his hands in too many things you know. So when my father came out here he got in trouble back there and a boiler blew up and everything and he had to leave here and go back for about a year. He got him back on his feet again and my father came back out here again and after 8 or 10 years.*

*Was your father married when he came out here?* No, he got married I think it was in 1889.

*Who did he marry?* (----) Dr. Reiniger? he was a big doctor in St. Louis ---

*Who was your mother?* Lulu Hammel, yeah.

*When did they get married? Do you remember when?* In eighteen hundred and ninety-eight. In St. Louis. I have some wedding pictures - she looked beautiful. Then she came out here and my mother used to tell me for the first two years she just cried her eyes out. She was out here and she didn't know anybody, you know, all alone, and she'd been born and raised back there, you know, she just cried and cried.

*How old was she?* Oh, I don't think she was more than 22 years old, but of course she'd never been and after she lived here about 6 or 8 years she didn't want to go back there any more.

*How many children did your parents have?* We had four boys and one girl, five. I was the fourth one. Then I had one younger brother.

*Can you tell us a little about your brothers and sisters?* My youngest brother went to California and my sister, she died, she was married to Edmond Sachs?

*Is she the one that was a secretary?* Domestic secretary, yeah a secretary for about 15 years. She died in 1953.

*And what were your brothers' names and what did they do?* Well my oldest brother's name was Willy and he was the head bookkeeper and they had a manager out there with the Becker Mercantile Company in Springerville Arizona.

*Did you have a relative with Mr. Becker and (---)?* Yeah, Mr. Becker (---) was a brother of (---) Becker with a store there and then they had the Becker Mercantile out there that used to be a big store. Later on they established a bank out there and he was cashier of the bank. He died young, he died --- oh he got married and after about a year and a half, he died. My eldest brother, he got killed down in Pachuca, Mexico, - fell down a mineshaft there -- 23 years old .

*And then the other one is living?* Yeah, he lives in Los Angeles.

*And what was his name, what did he do?* Francis.

*Then there was one girl?* Just one girl.

*What did Francis do?* He was an engineer.

*Did he go to school out here at the Tech* Yeah, my two brothers went out there. Two of my brothers graduated. One of them died in Mexico. He was a brilliant engineer, you know. He was a teacher. He fell down a mine shaft - well he didn't fall down it - he was trying to climb up and the big shaft had a rope, you know, a rope ladder, and he just got to the top and he fell a hundred and twenty-five feet.

*What about schools when you were young here?* Well, the first school I attended was the little red schoolhouse here at the Stop and Shop center. My sister was a teacher. Her teacher taught there for years.

*Which school, Loretta?* Yeah, he taught thee for years.

*They didn't have a convent.* Oh, yeah but two of them taught there. They taught my brothers and all of my family went there - and I transferred up to the old school where the high school is - a big red brick building there.

*Was Carrie Hammel's father a superintendent of any kind?* Oh no, Carrie's father was superintendent in 1925 -- I found the papers one day - I shed it to Carrie one day in 1920. No, I graduated in 1918.

*Do you want to tell us when you were born?* Yes, in 1898.

*Were you born at home or in a hospital here?* Well I was born at home. In those days nobody was born away from home.

*A midwife ---.* No, Dr. Duncan.

*What was the day?* December 4. I found a picture the other day. I was born right across from the church. I have a picture of the house where I was born.

*I'd like to go back to your dad and as much as you can remember about starting the brewery - picking the location and who you got the land from* When he first came here and started the brewery business, he found other people and he built a little warehouse down there and he had the beer shipped out from Illinois from my grandfather. Then in 1886 he bought this property and he bought it from Jose Montoya. He was an old crippled guy. Pedro Montoya was his son. So he bought this property from them and he built this up here.

*Where did he get the lumber, was there a lumber mill here?* No, I guess there was somebody selling lumber here. I want to show you these pictures.

*When it was later, he made his own beer?* Oh yeah, that's when he established the brewery here. I gotta write this up some time. There's the original brewery when he put it up around --.

*How much land did he have?* Well I guess it was near an alley over here.

*No, that looks like a barn.* He added that later on. That's the original brewery.

*Where did the highway go? The same place it does now?* It run right back up the street here - 60.

*Yeah, that was the highway, I heard that.* That was the original brewery there and later on that's like it is today. Then my father built these buildings in 1904. That smokestack ran 24 hours a day, pretty near the year round. They used to have 10 to 15 trains a day go through all puffin' smoke. The environmentalists are crazy. I get mad at them. The environmentalists are crazy. Yeah, that was the state hearings, that was the reason they building there, you know.

*You needed a lot of space.* And later on this was all adobe in here and that was all torn down. You see this building here was built first.

*Do you remember the date that that first one was built?* I would say that was about 1885 or 1886. *And when did you make your addition?* Well these additions here was built in 1904. All these rock buildings, see these used to be adobe buildings. Here I am. That's old Dub? Baca. He used to work as city clerk for a number of years. Here's my dad there.

*He looks like somebody from New England.* Yeah, they used to tell me everybody looked the same as -- Here's where the boilers was. There' a bottle of beer in there, see? Here I am and here is Francis.

*Where's your dad?* Right here. We all had to work here you know and we'd been brought up to work all our life. (looking at details in pictures)

*Your dad had a moustache, didn't he? Where did he buy his hops and things? Did he have to go back to --.* He got 'em from back east. He bought the hops in Ohio and he bought (--) in Wisconsin and up in Oregon.

*What is involved in making beer?* Well, you gotta take the malt and mash it, and after you mash it you gotta cook it and a little later on, hops is added to it and boiled again.

*Did you have one wagon to deliver things?* That's where I used to come up there. We had just one delivery wagon.

*With two horses?* Yeah, and up at the School of Mines they used the wagon for years and finally they just let it go to pieces, you know.

*Who is this man here?* That's (---). That's old Judge? Green? there up there where the Capitol Bar is now. Here's the inside of the building. ---- That's Lupe.

*Oh, that's your delivery wagon?* Yeah, this is Francis Eppel's brother.

*Where did you keep the horses.* They were back over here. We had a stable back there. Well, now that's a good picture. That's where Mr. Fitch's office is. That's it where the First State Bank is now. Mr. Fitch owned that whole thing. He and Baca used to have a meat market down here. That's my brother, Willy. Well that's Leonard Hill. Well this is Curtis it says. I think that's one of Lupe's sisters.

*What happened to this kid, the Hill kid?* In 1918 when they had the big flu epidemic, he and his wife - he worked in El Paso there, and he and his wife died within 24 hours of each of them.

*Did you distribute beer all over the county or --?* Yes, this county and shipped as far down south as El Paso.

*What was the name of your beer?* Export.

*Did you have different grades of beer?* The first beer my dad put out was Export Beer and then later on he changed the name to Select. It was about five and a half percent.

*Did you have to age it?* Oh yeah, three months - beer now is aged three months. It's not like the old time beer, you know. Our old time beer - there was no comparison. Well it's in a 12 ounce bottle or 24.

*Do you have any beer bottles?* No, prohibition closed it up in 1919 I was sent down to (---) my dad never saved anything. They closed us down, you know. He was just getting on his feet there after it took years to get this thing set up.

*And how long were you closed before they repealed it? Did you reopen?* No, we had the ice plant and we had the soda water plant - about \$150,000 all went to hell. It wiped him out overnight. They had a big plant in St. Louis - it was about five million and after prohibition came it was closed.

*Who was President at that time?* Wilson. It was an amendment.

*Yes, the twenty-first (Ed. note: eighteenth).* Now they would compensate you, you know, but in those days millions and millions of dollars ---.

*And Anheuser, it didn't affect him?* Well he had lots of money ahead of time, anyway, you see, and they were a big outfit - they made near beer - they was making cereals and all kinds of stuff. A small outfit like this one here - it just ruined it completely.

*Who had the one in Albuquerque?* A fellow by the name of Loeb.

*January 17-- 25 pounds of flour 90 cents- rice 25 21 candles to (--)*

*Baca one dollar. Here's another one 1910 -bill of sale from (---) a dollar and a half - what was that for?* Here's an interesting thing - coal 75 cents a ton. You could buy a trainload of coal for \$28.

*Five pounds of beans ninety-five cents - butter four cents.* Seven hundred-fifty pounds of flour for \$3. --unintelligible rambling about miscellaneous details with three people interrupting one another while looking at a scrapbook----

## Second Interview

--the Burris (Byers?) Ranch, the Evergreen Ranch - old man Burris, he was a good friend of our family, you know --

*What was his first name?* It was W. H. Burris is all I know. He had this big orchard up there and he operated this orchard with one man. He had fruit trees and grape vines and 100,000 trees there and used to ship his fruits in baskets by express to Chicago, Denver. Los Angeles and he brought stuff into town in a big flat wagon. (Ed. note: any relation to Coon orchard?) and he'd whip that food all over these big cities and he'd peddle around town here. You remember those great big luscious peaches - you can't find peaches like that today. And grape vines up there - he had I'd guess not less than 2 or 3 thousand. His finest grapes was California grapes -the finest grapes you're ate in your life - cantaloupes and everything - he had a spring separate from Socorro. He had more water than the city of Socorro had. Every once in a while Socorro would dig a tunnel in deeper and tap some new water - it was nip and tuck there all the time. This Mr. Byers he used to have a strawberry patch up there, you know. In the summertime we'd go up there in the morning - get the little horse and buggy and eat strawberries all day and then we'd bring 'em down and go around town and sell 'em. On time after old man Burris - he was so stingy - he was the richest man in town - he owned half the town - he'd go in the bakery shop there and he'd always wait until Monday to go in and buy six loaves of bread left over from the week before. We sat him down for dinner at the house one time and he sure did enjoy it. People don't know anything about it any more - he had a pretty nice house up there and lived all by himself up there -he was an old bachelor. The water came out of the spring - he had a big tank there and he never allowed anybody to swim in there. He left it to the Salvation Army - in five years he was gone. They didn't irrigate the trees anymore and they let them all die and it was a shame, you know. Today I think it would be worth 2 or 3 million dollars.

*He didn't have any heirs at all?* No, he had a brother and two sisters and when he died he left his brother one (--) and he left his two sisters ten thousand dollars apiece. He left it to the Salvation Army. But they just let all them fruit trees die. There was apples, pears and every fruit imaginable up there and these grapes those white (--) from California they was great big ones like that.

*Did the Salvation Army lose it, or what happened?* Well, the Salvation Army wanted to get rid of it and they offered it to the city they (---) for \$15,000 and that was in 1934 during th depression. They offered it to the city council for \$10,000- the ranch and spring and everything and those fruit trees was left there and the whole thing and of course the depression was on then, you know, I think it was in 1935 - I went up to the Bank of Belen - I couldn't get my money and I went up to the bank in Albuquerque and they said your money is loaned out for six years. I went to talk to the Salvation Army in San Francisco - well they agreed to let the city have it for \$12,000 - and finally they sold it for \$8,000. It was a shame to let that orchard go. (---) used to have an orchard out here too. Old man (Laos?) they had a fruit orchard. They had a big water right, you know, and they irrigated everything Byers just had one man working for him. He was the luckiest man alive - he'd take trees u in those rocks in the hills and they'd grow, you know.

*Compared to that there's very little fruit grown here now.* Nothing. At that time that was the biggest fruit orchard in the country. He shipped these luscious peaches and pears and

all that stuff to Chicago, Denver, St. Louis, Los Angeles - ship them by express I guess in those days.

*I remember when I first came here they were growing cantaloupes.* They were grown in the area here over here by the radio station. They first shipped out peas - there were peas there you know. Old man (---) used to grow peas and ship them out of here by the carload, you know. Then they went into cantaloupes. Socorro was hard to get to, those days but they used to take that old Hope Farms down there and they raised peas - oh yeah these peas was shipped out by (---). I used to sell them ice, you know. They'd pick a bushel of peas and put ice in there in these refrigerator cars.

*Well now where did you get your ice?* Well I made the ice. I had the ice plant here. See, this was the first ice plant in the state of New Mexico.

*Could you tell about the ice plant and how that operated?* Well the ice plant was put in in 1887. My father had a lot of refrigeration for the beer, you see, and he put the ice plant in. As I say, that was the first ice plant that was ever established in New Mexico and the machinery all came from back in St. Louis, Missouri. It was one of the first ice machines ever built in the United States. It's still out there, you know. It came from the St. Louis Iron Machine Works. The machinery had the capacity to make two ton of ice a day and had to make the refrigeration for the beer you know.

*But then, you sold ice to people?* Oh yeah, sure around town - we used to ship ice with a horse and buggy and wagon. I delivered a lot of ice myself from the time I was 10 or 12 years old up to about 18.

*Well, everybody had ice boxes in those days, didn't they?* Oh yeah, they wasn't no such thing as the electric refrigerator. When the electric refrigerator come out (----). I'd say about 1933 and about the time the war broke out they were coming out pretty good, and then they stopped the manufacture of it. I had a good ice business during World War II and then after that they manufactured these electric refrigerators.

*That machinery, I bet, is all in good shape.* Yeah, well it needs to be cleaned up - but there was a fellow here one time from Philadelphia and he said there was a big museum back in Philadelphia that they'd like to have that thing. So I told him I couldn't sell the thing - if you want to come on back here and tear it down I'll get it for you. I was giving it to him since it wasn't good for nothing but scrap iron. It would be a museum piece now, you know. Like that old mill we have out there.

*That's a museum piece too, well I guess that whole building was.* If these people ant it I told them they'd have to take I out piece by piece, they'd have to tear it down. The other thing I was thinking about here was about the first automobile that ever came to Socorro. The first automobile to come to Socorro was a Hudson. It was owned by Eddie Price, the banker.

*There was a Price Mercantile here wasn't there?* Well actually there was a picture show it was over by the bank, you know. The Prices owned the First State Bank, you know. Eddy brought the first car to Socorro, the Hudson roadster, you know. And he took my sister riding all the time, you know and he put people in the back.

*What color was it - bright red?* No, it was sort of a yellowish color - yellow or green - I think it was green. Anyway he was so proud of that car in those days you know how they'd put those hats on and everything and he'd come down and take my sister (----) and not one word. And he got so he could read your lips, you know, he'd take us kids and put us in the back, you know, and take us for a ride. Boy, what a sensation it was in those

days to ride. That was way back in probably 1915. He'd take everybody in town for a ride. Then after that, Mr. Gilliland, he put the first auto agency in.

*Is that related to Jim Gilliland?* His father.

*Where was that located?* Right across from the Val Verde Hotel. That building's burned don now. Do you know where the Chieftain Office is? Right next to it. C. T. Brown had his office there you know and in between there Gilliland had his garage and Jim Gilliland was a master mechanic. I saw Mrs. Tripp one day and she said that's the first time I heard about that - I want you to come down and give me the whole story. I went down there two or three times and I never did find her so she said I want to write a story on this and I said nobody here knows something about and she said what did Mr. Givens? do? And I said he was a master mechanic and I said that's before they got automobiles, and he'd go around and fix machinery. He had a steam thrashin' machine and he'd go sown and thrash the wheat for farmers.

*They grew a lot of wheat in those days.* Oh yea, a lot of wheat. He'd set up this machine every year and thrash wheat. And later on he got the Maxwell, and then the Ford agency and then Reo.

*C. T. Brown, did he have the first ---(rambling about blacksmiths )----*