

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Janet (Shuman) Roney

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
& Illinois State Museum's
Oral History of Illinois Agriculture project

Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-066

Janet (Shuman) Roney, daughter of former American Farm Bureau president Charles Shuman, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Illinois State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: September 22, 2008 Location: Paul Shuman residence, rural Sullivan, IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): Tony Bateman and Greg Lipe, IL Information Service

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 30 Total Time: 1 hr 1 min + 35 min = 1 hr 36 min / 1.6 hrs

Session 1: Shuman family history & lore in early Illinois & growing up

Session 2: Career of Charles Shuman, President of the Am. Farm Bureau

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 12/01/2008.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Janet Roney, *Oral History of IL Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-066

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Janet (Shuman) Roney was born on March 17, 1942 in Decatur, Illinois and raised on the Charles Shuman family farm in rural Sullivan, Illinois. Janet traced the family's history on the same farm property, starting in 1853 when Major Addison McPheeters purchased the land. The son of a German shoemaker, Charles Shuman, found work on the farm during the Civil War, and ended up marrying the Major's daughter. Janet discussed in detail how the farm tradition was carried on from generation to generation. She discussed Irving Shuman, her great Uncle, who helped Woodrow Wilson become the Democratic candidate for president, and later served as Wilson's Director of the Chicago Sub-Treasury for a time.

Janet discussed her father's career as the President of the American Farm Bureau from 1954 to 1971. She also discussed her childhood on the farm, and life with her older brothers, and a father who spent his work week in Chicago. When Janet was twelve, her mother Ida passed away. Charles was a man of strong convictions and powerful personality, an eloquent speaker and prolific writer. He was a life-long advocate against government subsidies and other aggressive New Deal era programs. Instead, he sought to allow market forces to work in the farm economy. In 1963, he successfully led farmers in defeating the Wheat Referendum, a government measure that sought to establish a two-price plan including acreage allotments and land retirements for individual farmers. After retirement, Charles' many activities included the Millikin University Board of Trustees, where he characteristically took up the fight against teacher tenure. He also taught Sunday school for decades at the local Methodist church, but sometimes found his religious views at odds with the church hierarchy.

[Also see the Paul Shuman interview, Janet's brother.]

Subject Headings/Key Words: George Rogers Clark; Major Addison McPheeters; Civil War; Charles Shuman, President, American Farm Bureau, 1954-1971; Illinois Farm Bureau; American Farm Bureau; National Farm Union; Wheat Referendum of 1963; William Irving Shuman; Chicago Sub-Treasury; Rural Electrification Association; Ida Shuman; Mabel Shuman; importance of education in farming; Methodist Church; Millikin University; teacher tenure

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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