

An Interview with

Charles Tutt

at Daniel Boone Regional Library in
Columbia, Missouri

4 December 2014

interviewed by Jeff D. Corrigan



Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri

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One-room Schoolhouse

CD 43

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PREFACE

Charles Tutt was born in Boonville, Missouri on November 24, 1941. Growing up on a farm in Cooper County, Tutt went to public school in Bunceton during first and second grade. After his family moved to Boone County, Tutt attended Valley Springs School, a one-room schoolhouse, from third to eighth grade. Upon graduating from Valley Springs in 1957, Tutt enrolled at University High School in Columbia. After completing one year at University High School, Tutt transferred to Hickman High School where he graduated in 1960. In this interview, Tutt highlights his educational experiences, including notable teachers, family life, transportation to school, holiday programs, and interactions with classmates.

The interview was taped on a CompactFlash card, using a Marantz PMD-660 digital recorder and an audio-technica AT825 microphone placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [/]. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [“”] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Sean Rost.

Narrator: Charles Tutt
Interviewer: Jeff Corrigan
Date: December 4, 2014
Transcribed by: Sean Rost

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[Begin Interview. Begin Track 1.]

10 Corrigan: This is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. I'm here today, December 4, 2014, in Columbia, Missouri. I'm at DBRL, the Daniel Boone Regional Library, to interview Charles Tutt for his experience attending a one-room schoolhouse. Also with us today is Mike Trial who set up this interview for us. Charles, can you start off by telling me when and where you were born?

15 Tutt: I was born November 24, 1941, at the Catholic hospital in Boonville, Missouri, which doesn't exist anymore. My family, at that time, lived in Bunceton, Missouri, which is south of Boonville a few miles.

20 Corrigan: Did you live on a farm?

Tutt: Yes.

Corrigan: Can you describe the farm for me?

25 Tutt: The farm was about a little over two hundred acres, I think. It was kind of interesting, in those days they didn't use much wire fencing. We had those old hedgerows that had to be trimmed about every year and that was kind of interesting. None of those exist anymore.

30 Corrigan: Was it row crops that you were growing? Or pasture?

Tutt: We had a general farm. We had row crops. And we had pigs, and sheep, and cows. We grew almost everything we ate, except when we went to town once a month. We bought flour, and sugar, and salt, and that kind of thing. But we literally grew everything we ate. And my dad and his brother were kind of progressive for the time. They had the only thrashing machine in the neighborhood. One of those old time thrashing machines that made the giant straw piles. And so we thrashed grain for all the neighbors. And the neighbors would all get together during harvest time and go from one farm to the other.

40 Corrigan: Can you tell me a little bit about your family? Did you have any siblings? What were your parents' names?

45 Tutt: Yes. I have three siblings. I'm the oldest of four. My sister, Mary, is two years younger than I. My brother, George, is four years younger than I. And my baby brother, Sam, is six years younger than I.

Corrigan: And what were your parents' names?

Tutt: Oh, my parents' names. My father's name was Francis Emmons Tutt. Better known as Buster. (laughs) And my mother's name, her maiden name was Mary Virginia Gander.

5 Corrigan: And his middle name was Emmons?

Tutt: Emmons, yes.

Corrigan: E-M-M-E-N-S?

10

Tutt: E-M-M-O-N-S.

Corrigan: O-N-S. Okay. And were they both from Missouri?

15 Tutt: Yes, they were. They were both born in Cooper County. Distant ancestors came from Culpeper County, Virginia.

Corrigan: Now, can you start telling me a little bit about where you started school at? How far away the school was to where you lived? Kind of start describing that to me. When you started at that one-room schoolhouse.

20

Tutt: I started school—I actually did not start school at the one-room schoolhouse. In Cooper County, we had a big fancy consolidated school already when I started school. And a bus. We lived about maybe three miles from the school and I rode the bus to school. And I failed the first grade because I hated school and I hated that mean old Miss Kern, my teacher. So my grandmother Tutt lived in Bunceton and at recess time I would sneak out to the ditch at the road, along the road in front of the school. And when the bell rang, and all the kids went in, I would crawl down the hill, down that ditch, to my grandma's house. (laughs) And have cookies and milk and she would try to teach me to play piano. And she called my father Emmons, she told him one day, she said, "Emmons, that child just isn't ready for school." (laughs) So I took the first grade twice. And I also did the second grade there and the third grade we started at Valley Springs, the one-room school. That was in 1950. My parents bought a farm in Boone County and moved over here.

25

30

35 Corrigan: What was the name of the first school that you said you went to?

Tutt: Just the Bunceton—

Corrigan: Bunceton.

40

Tutt: Yeah, it was grades one through twelve.¹

Corrigan: So could describe the physical building of Valley Springs to me? Inside out—

45 **[End Track 1. Begin Track 2.]**

¹ This school is now called Bunceton High School and serves grades seven through twelve.

Corrigan: —what you remember?

5 Tutt: Sure. Yeah. Outside—the building actually faced east. And it was just one room. I'm
going to guess the dimensions of it were maybe twenty-four to thirty-two feet wide by maybe
forty feet long. And it had a porch on the front with steps up to the porch. Had a little shed to
the north where we stored the coal to heat the building with. And a flag pole on the south side
10 where we flew the flag every day. Put it up and took it down. And straight behind the school,
up the hill, was the boy's outdoor toilet. And a little further south was the girl's. And that's
where the boys hid their cigarettes most of the time. (laughs) Inside—when you walked in
the door, to the right, the porch kind of was indented in one side of the front. And then to the
right of that, when you walked in the door, to the right, the other part of the, like the little L-
shaped thing, was called a cloak room where the water jug was and we hung our coats and
15 put our boots and stuff there. We had a big old coal stove with an insulated jacket around it to
keep the kids from getting burned. To heat the building. And the back of the school had a
stage, I don't know, was it elevated maybe six or eight inches. And behind that was a big
green blackboard, it was a blackboard, but it was a green board. All the way across the room.
And the dunce corner was on the right hand corner. (laughs) You remember the dunce
corner, Mike?

20 Mike Trial: Sure.

Tutt: As I recall, there were about thirteen students going from grades one through eight.
And one teacher for all the grades. Her name was Joella Dozier.

25 Corrigan: Joella or Joellen?

Tutt: J-O-E-L-L-A.

30 Corrigan: What was her last name?

Tutt: Dozier. D-O-Z-I-E-R.

35 Corrigan: Now about the building on the outside. Was it white?

Tutt: It was white. Yes, it was white clapboard.

Corrigan: Now on the inside, did you share desks? Or were there individual desks?

40 Tutt: There were individual desks. Yes.

Corrigan: And then you said it was coal heated?

45 Tutt: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Did the boys carry the coal in?

Tutt: Yes, I was one of the boys who carried the coal in and stoked the fire. We got our drinking water from a spring over the fence in the cow pasture. And when that spring didn't have water we would go to the neighbor's house up the hill and draw water out of their well.
5 They had a hand rope well, how you drew the water up, and it was kind of like a tube and you let the tube down in the well on a pulley and got it full of water and pulled it back up and dumped it in your bucket.

Corrigan: And would you do this each morning?

10

Tutt: Whenever the big fountain thing was empty or low. We'd go do that.

Corrigan: Now did you guys have a—individual cups or a dipper? How did you drink?

15 Tutt: You know, I don't remember that feature. We probably did not have individual ones. We probably shared. I don't know for sure.

Corrigan: Okay. Now what about around the building? Was there any type of playground equipment?

20

Tutt: Yeah. We had swings. That was the only equipment. And then across the creek in the neighbor's little flat area we had a softball court. And we pitched horseshoes. We had a horseshoe throwing thing set up.

25 Corrigan: Now, you mentioned this already off the tape, but on the tape, does the building still exist today?

Tutt: No, the building does not exist today.

30 Corrigan: Do you remember what—did they tear it down? Burn it down?

Tutt: I really don't know. It was destroyed when the State Route UU came through. I'm pretty sure that's what took it out because the road goes pretty close to where it stood. And the old road was just a one lane gravel country road. It was kind of cut down pretty deep in some places between the—
35

[End Track 2. Begin Track 3.]

40 Tutt: —banks, the banks were pretty high. And I remember we walked a mile and half from our house each way to school. And one winter we had a big ice storm and the trees were arched over the road. It was like we were in some imaginary fairy land because it was just so beautiful. It was all—the sun was sparkling on that and we were in this big tunnel. It was pretty neat. Miss Dozier's husband, whose name was Arley, he would drive to pick her up every day after school. And since they lived in the direction of our house we would often ride
45 on the fenders or the bumper or the running board of his old Model A Ford, I think that's what it was. He had her named, he called her Hadacol because Hadacol overheated every

once in a while and we had to add some liquid to the radiator. (laughs) The ruts were so deep in the road sometime when the weather was bad, especially in the spring thaw, that the frame of the car would practically drag the ruts they were so deep. Sometimes we'd even have to get out to push the car up the hill.

5

Corrigan: Now you said there were thirteen kids in the school. How many were in your class? Do you remember?

10 Tutt: I think I might have been the only one in my class that year, the graduating class. It's possible that—do you remember, Mike, Reggie Bartmess, if he was the same age as me?

Mike Trial: He would have been the same age or possibly a year younger.

Tutt: I think he might have been a year younger. Yeah.

15

Mike Trial: Are you older or younger than Daryle Moreau?

Tutt: I'm older. Yeah.

20

Mike Trial: Because Bartmess and Moreau were the same age. I kind of guess—

Tutt: Yeah. They were behind me then. Yeah. Well, Reggie and I were in love with Miss Dozier. And we had some fierce jealous competition of who was going to sit by her when she read to us. And who was going to have their arm around her. (laughs)

25

Corrigan: And what was Reggie's last name?

Tutt: Bartmess. B-A-R-T-M-E-S-S.

30

Corrigan: And then you were talking about a Daryle Moreau.

Tutt: Daryle. Yes.

Corrigan: Do you know how to spell Moreau?

35

Tutt: M-O-R-E-A-U.

Mike Trial: And his first name is D-A-R-Y-L-E. I think I've got a picture of those guys.

40

Corrigan: Now, you talked about Miss Dozier. Can you describe her? How she taught? Or do you remember anything in particular about her teaching style?

45

Tutt: She was pretty lenient, actually. Everybody loved her. I don't know of anybody who ever had any bad feelings toward or about her. But she was probably too lenient with us. We liked it, though. I remember she liked to read to us a lot. My father was a reader and between the two of them I've been an avid reader my whole entire life. She liked music, the kind of

old 40s, 30s, 40s, style of music that was popular in those days. We would chord things out on the piano and sing.

5 Corrigan: So there was a piano.

Tutt: Yeah. We had a piano. We even had a little rhythm band. I played the ukulele sometimes. Or the washboard. Do you know what a washboard is? The old washboard. As a matter of fact, in 1950, Miss Dozier's daughter and I took a blue ribbon at the Boone County Fair for our singing talent.

10 Corrigan: And what was her daughter's name?

Tutt: Mary Sue.

15 Corrigan: Now do you remember, did you learn a lot from listening to the older kids?

Tutt: No, because I was one of the older kids.

20 Corrigan: You said, you kind of already described this, but you said it was about a mile and a half to school.

Tutt: Yes.

25 Corrigan: And then you either walked or you hitched a ride on their car.

Tutt: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Now do you remember any activities at the school? Christmas programs?

30 Tutt: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: Can you tell me about them?

35 Tutt: Oh, yeah. Well some of the social activities that we had. Every year we had a fundraiser, it was called a pie supper. And everybody would bring a pie or a box dinner and everybody would bid, competition. And sometimes they would run those things up pretty expensive just to raise—

[End Track 3. Begin Track 4.]

40 Tutt: —money for the school. Of course, we always had a Christmas show. And every year we celebrated May Day, too. Some of the favorite activities that the students did with the teacher were hide and seek, and softball. We competed with the other little rural country schools with the softball team. One of the very best things that the boys did was we would
45 build forts on a bluff, there was a little creek that ran in front of the school and there was a bluff beyond it. And we'd build forts up there and throw walnuts at each other. (laughs)

Corrigan: Do you remember was the school used for anything else, like as a community center or a place to vote or town meetings or anything?

5 Tutt: No.

Corrigan: Now, could you tell me a little about recess? How long it was. Did you have more than one a day?

10 Tutt: Yeah.

Corrigan: And describe more of the games you played.

15 Tutt: Yeah. We had two recesses a day. One in the morning and one in the afternoon. Plus a thirty minute lunch break. But the recesses usually went as much as forty-five minutes. Teacher was a little lenient, especially during softball season when we had to practice for our competition because we had to beat our competition. So—and when it wasn't softball season we would either be in our forts throwing walnuts at each other or playing hide and seek.

20 Corrigan: Now what did you do when it was bad weather? Did you still go outside?

Tutt: Most of the time we would go out, but if it was really stormy or really nasty, no, we didn't. We'd usually would just read or do something. Talk and read. Yeah.

25 Corrigan: Now, you mentioned the coal, but can you describe some of the other chores that students performed at the school?

30 Tutt: Yeah. We had to bring the coal in, of course, from the coal house. And stoke the fire and take the ashes out. We also had to sweep the floor. We had to put the flag up and take the flag down every day. We also said the pledge of allegiance every day as part of the morning routine. We had to clean the blackboard. Let's see, what else did we do? I can't recall anything else specifically that we had to do chore wise.

35 Corrigan: You mentioned getting the water.

Tutt: Yeah. Yeah. We did have to get the water.

Corrigan: Did you take a lunch or was lunch provided?

40 Tutt: We always took a lunch. There was no way to have it provided there.

Corrigan: What was a typical lunch for you each day?

45 Tutt: Oh, sometimes peanut butter and jelly. Sometimes a ham sandwich. Quite often a ham sandwich. We grew our own meat and butchered our own pigs. Every year we butchered six

pigs and two sheep and one beef every year for our family. So we had meat at just about at every meal.

5 Corrigan: How did your parents preserve it? Was it canned? Smoked? Salted?

Tutt: It was salted. It was called sugar cure, it was what we did on the hams and the bacon. And the shoulders, we cured them that way too. But the tenderloins, Mom would can those. And the ribs, sometimes she canned those too.

10 Corrigan: So peanut butter and jelly, ham sandwich. I'm assuming—you said you grew most of the food. Did you have a big garden?

15 Tutt: We had a big garden. I'm still a gardener, but I really like reading and writing about it more now than I actually liked doing it. It's a lot of work. But yes, we had probably close to an acre sized garden. And Mom would can just about everything we ate. We didn't have freezers then. When we did butcher a beef my parents would rent a locker, freezer locker in town. So we'd have to go to town. When we went to town to do shopping we'd bring back some beef from the locker.

20 Corrigan: Did you have an icebox at home?

Tutt: We didn't have an icebox until probably middle '50s.

[End Track 4. Begin Track 5.]

25 Tutt: We didn't have a television until then either. As a matter of fact, when we lived in Cooper County we didn't have electricity or indoor plumbing. And when the folks bought the place in Boone County it did have running water and electricity. And for the longest time my dad wouldn't use the bathroom in the house because he said it wasn't decent to shit in a
30 house. (laughter).

Mike Trial: Interesting philosophy.

35 Corrigan: Did you have a—I think were they called root cellar or something?

Tutt: We did have in Cooper County—the one that was in Boone County had already caved in when we got there so it wasn't usable.

40 Corrigan: Okay. Now did you attend this school—how long did you attend this school till? What grade?

Tutt: I attended through the eighth grade.

45 Corrigan: So what year did you graduate in the eighth grade?

Tutt: Let's see, it would have been spring of '57 because the fall of '57 is when I started the U-High. University High. The Lab School here.

5 Corrigan: Was there any type of a—did you have a little graduation ceremony?

Tutt: Yeah, but you know I don't remember too much about it. Yeah, we had a little ceremony. Yeah.

10 Corrigan: Do you remember what your school year was at that point? Do you remember roughly when you started and ended? You said you went at least through May Day.

Tutt: It was an eight month school year. And the idea was to start in the fall after harvest was done and to end in the spring before planting time. Or by planting time. That was why they scheduled it that way.

15 Corrigan: So then you said you went to University High School here. Were you bussed in then?

20 Tutt: Was I what?

Corrigan: Were you bussed in? Were you still out on the farm?

25 Tutt: Yeah. I did not ride—no, U-High did not have bussing then. I had to ride in with my father who had stopped farming and taken a job at the University of Missouri. So I rode in with him every day and rode home when he got off work.

Corrigan: Okay. What did he do at the university?

30 Tutt: Oh, a little bit of everything. He was a laborer, a plasterer's helper, just labor kind of stuff.

Corrigan: Do you, since you're still in the community, do you still run into people you went to school with?

35 Tutt: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, he's one of them.

Corrigan: Mike is one of them. Okay.

40 Tutt: Also I do—I'm an election judge every time we have an election. So I get to see all the old people that stayed in the neighborhood. Some of whom I would never recognize or dream of who they were if I didn't get to see their names.

Corrigan: Did most people stay in the area?

45 Tutt: Quite a few. A surprising number did.

Corrigan: Okay. Do you feel you got a quality education from the school?

5 Tutt: Not really. I don't regret that experience. I mean I'm so glad that I had it. There was more freedom there than would be possible to have today. But, when I got to U-High, I didn't know my English grammar, and I didn't know my mathematics. I just wasn't ready for that. As a matter of fact, I guess it was at our fiftieth high school reunion I met my ninth grade English teacher from U-High. And I said—I think her name was Mrs. Delmay, "I'm probably the worst student you ever had." She was really old, way up in her eighties, and her eyes were dim. She looked at me and she says, "No," she said, "I don't remember you, but if you were the worst student I ever had I would remember you." (laughs)

Corrigan: So was it difficult to transition to U-High? Or did you have to play a lot of catch-up?

15 Tutt: It was difficult. Yes. And the hormones were starting to rage about then. And I was a lot more interested in girls and playing around, than I was in scholastic activities.

[End Track 5. Begin Track 6.]

20 Tutt: So the following year, I went to the party school, Hickman High School.

Corrigan: So you spent one year at University High School, then you went to Hickman.

25 Tutt: Yes.

Corrigan: And is that where you graduated from?

Tutt: I graduated from there in 1960.

30 Corrigan: Do you have any influences, if any, that you can recall that you think of that attending that one-room school has had on your life at all?

35 Tutt: Yes, I think so. I think it contributed enormously to my love of reading and of exploring thoughts and ideas. That was the strongest, most—that was the most intense thing that we did in that school. I've used that skill a lot. Whatever you want to call it.

Corrigan: What is it that you like to read? What's the genre? Or what's the—

40 Tutt: Well, back in those days it was all about the pioneers of the old West. And the mountain men. And the Riders of the Purple Sage. Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. Mark Twain is still one of my favorite writers. But now, it's mostly non-fiction stuff. I like philosophy. I like, although I'm not a mathematician, I like physics. Some of the stuff that goes on with that. I'm in the process of beginning a memoir now.

45 Corrigan: So you like to write then too?

Tutt: Yes. I've been afraid to publish anything I've written so far. Mike's significant other has been prodding me on that.

5 Mike Trial: Right. We're pushing him.

Corrigan: Are there any other stories about your experience there that, you know, does stick out?

10 Tutt: On, yeah, yeah. There was one occasion. One spring, me and a bunch of other boys were chewing up paper wads in the school. We were chewing paper wads and throwing them up and sticking them on the ceiling. And the school had a drop ceiling. And finally, Miss Dozier caught us doing that and she said, "Alright now boys, I want you to each go out and cut a nice long switch." We thought, oh boy, we are in for it now. We all carried pocket knives in our pocket. So I said to the other guys, I said, "Let's notch them so when she hits us, if she hits us very hard it will just break." So we notched them. When we got back to the school with our switches and our heads hanging down. She said, "Alright now I want to take one of those chairs and get up on that chair and take those switches and knock every one of those off the ceiling." First time we touched the ceiling with our switch, it broke. (laughter)

20 Corrigan: You mentioned it had a drop ceiling, and I just thought of something now. Do you remember looking around, if you can envision that again, were there any maps or pictures? What was on the walls?

25 Tutt: Oh, yeah. There probably were maps. I can't remember. You might remember better than I do, but here were probably some world maps. I remember one of the classes we had we read about the conquistadors coming and the Louisiana Purchase and all that. Yeah, there probably were but I don't remember them very vividly.

30 Corrigan: Do you remember any presidential portraits up or anything?

Tutt: No. No. But I do remember old Harry [Truman] was pretty popular back in those days.

35 Corrigan: And then one last question. You mentioned music, but, did you do any type of, outside of the regular subjects, like art? Or did you ever do any art projects?

Tutt: We didn't do too much art, but we did—one other competition we had was spelling bee. And I was pretty good at that.

[End Track 6. Begin Track 7.]

40 Tutt: I was always able to sound out words pretty good. Get pretty close.

Corrigan: Okay.

45 Mike Trial: I remember those spelling bees.

Tutt: Yeah.

Corrigan: So I assume you did get all the spit wads off the ceiling then.

5 Tutt: Yeah, we finally got them off. Finally got them all off.

Mike Trial: Had to cut new switches.

Tutt: Yeah. (laughs)

10

Mike Trial: Here's actually a picture of the front of the school.

Tutt: Oh yeah.

15

Mike Trial: To refresh your memory. But it's as you described.

Tutt: Right. This was where the cloakroom was in this little part here. And you walked up the steps here into the main door here. And this little room jutted out and took up the space that the porch would have taken had it gone all the way across.

20

Corrigan: Okay. So yeah. Your swings, your flagpole. Looks like there is a teeter-totter there.

Tutt: Yeah.

25

Mike Trail: And some stilts. But I think, as Charles was pointing out, it was—all the entertainments were sort of self-generated.

Tutt: Yeah, we made them ourselves. Yeah. We made stilts and we made go-carts. There was a big hill up behind the school here and it would make a go-cart really go fast down the hill here.

30

Corrigan: But, yeah. It's as you described it. Kind of looks like a home.

35

Tutt: Yeah, right.

Corrigan: Well if you don't have anything else to add, that's it.

Tutt: Oh, I can't think of anything else right now.

40

Corrigan: Alright. Well thank you very much. I will go ahead and shut off the recorder.

Tutt: Okay.

45

[End Interview.]