Data Sheet

Name of Interviewee: Maude Kegg

Current Age: 87

Place of Birth: Bay Lakes area

Date of Birth: August 26, 1904

Date of Interview: November 7, 1991

Person Conducting Oral Interview: Dr. Anthony Godfrey

Location of Interview: Mille Lacs Indian Trading Post Museum

Vocal Clarity: Good

Biographical Data:
Maude Kegg was born in the Bay Lakes area and presently resides on the Mille Lacs Reservation. Maude was a friend of Jeannette Ayer in the 1930s and visited the trading post on several occasions at that time. Currently, Maude is employed at the Mille Lacs Indian museum as a craftsperson, having received a National Endowment for the Arts award in 1990 for her work. She has written three books on the Ojibwe people: When I was a Little Girl (1976), At the End of the Trail (1978), and What My Grandmother Told Me (1983); and she is the interview subject of a more recent book: Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood edited and transcribed by John D. Nichols.

Major Themes Addressed:
General information on Mille Lacs Indian Trading Post, including Maude Kegg's relationship with Jeannette Ayer.

Related Photographs Donated:
None given.
Interview with Maude Kegg  
Date of Interview: November 7, 1991  
Place of Interview: Ayer Trading Post, Vineland, Minnesota  
Interviewer: Dr. Anthony Godfrey  
Assisted by: Betty Kegg

Begin Tape One, Side One

Godfrey: This is an oral history with Maude Kegg, and it's taking place at the Ayers Trading Post Museum. The first question I have for you is could you tell me your earliest recollection of the Ayers—Harry and Jeannette? Do you remember them very well?

B. Kegg: The very first time you met them—

M. Kegg: The very first time I met them, we used to come and bring some stuff over here and buy things, you know, and I used to come with my grandmother then. I don't know how far back that is.

Godfrey: That's okay. Can you describe them for me?

M. Kegg: She was tall; she was big. She used to—I knew them well—and she used to call me [Ojibwe word(s)] because I was big, too—my namesake, you know. But Mr. Ayer was small. I don't know how we got to know them real well—oh, when my cousin was working for them.

Godfrey: Which cousin was that?

M. Kegg: That was Joe Wadena

Godfrey: Joe Wadena? I see. Did he live nearby to the trading post?

M. Kegg: What?

Godfrey: Did he live near the trading post—Joe Wadena?
M. Kegg: He was just a young kid, about sixteen years old. I think he was sixteen when he had that—he had T.B. in his arm.

B. Kegg: He lived with—her grandma raised him, too.

M. Kegg: My grandmother raised him.

Godfrey: I see, okay. When you knew the Ayers, did they have the trading post?

M. Kegg: Oh, yeah. They had that whole house there. First they used to be over there, and he was selling crackers or things to the Indians. So finally he started buying this beadwork, you know, and I don't remember because we lived far over there. We didn't come here very often bring beadwork for him, you know, so I just don't remember when they started building this house then. I was married by that time.

Godfrey: When were you married?

M. Kegg: Nineteen—I don't even remember, but I was married for a long time. I was about sixteen years old—must've been married for forty-fifty years.

Godfrey: And your husband's name?

M. Kegg: Martin Kegg.

Godfrey: Martin Kegg?

B. Kegg: Deceased now—twenty-two years now, twenty-three.

Godfrey: Do you remember when they first built the general store here?

M. Kegg: No, I don't even remember because we live over there, see.

B. Kegg: Quite a ways from here.
Godfrey: And when you say over there, where do you mean?

M. Kegg: At Bay Lake over there, at Bay Lake.

Godfrey: At Bay Lake.

M. Kegg: Yeah, Bay Lake. Then when I made beadwork or something, he'd stop—Mr. Ayer would stop over there 'cause I knew them well on account of that cousin of mine. He'd pick me—Mrs. Ayer would pick me up, or Mr. Ayer would pick that boy up, you know, to go around with him.

Godfrey: And why were the Ayers coming over there—to buy things from the Indians?

M. Kegg: No, I knew them well.

B. Kegg: Why did they pick you up [Ojibwe word(s)]?

M. Kegg: Just because I'd be with her. I knew her well, you know. You know somebody well that you want to go a long distance, you have to—

B. Kegg: Oh, you mean you with them to go buy stuff?

M. Kegg: Yes, I went with them to go buy stuff.

Godfrey: Where did you go to buy things?

M. Kegg: Oh, mostly where the Indians lived, like Leech Lake or anyplace where the Indians are reservation.

Godfrey: Do you remember any of the communities?

M. Kegg: Remember what?

Godfrey: Can you remember any of the communities?

M. Kegg: I think we went to White Earth, too.
Godfrey: White Earth?

M. Kegg: Uh-huh. Sometimes we'd be gone overnight, you know, so we'd stay at somebody else's place and buy stuff, you know, things like that.

Godfrey: Do you remember what he was buying at that time?

M. Kegg: Just mostly chains, beadwork, you know.

Godfrey: Bead chains?

M. Kegg: Yeah, bead chains, and those little bags, you know, what the Indians make, you know, things like that. I don't remember—I don't even remember ever buying those great big—great big bags, you know. I don't even remember ever buying those.

B. Kegg: ___________.

M. Kegg: Yeah, we just bought bead chains and moccasins and whatever they, the Indians had to sell.

B. Kegg: No birch bark?

M. Kegg: Not hardly any birch bark. Yeah, sometimes they bought little canoes, you know, what the Indians make, what they had, things like that.

Godfrey: How often would he do this? How often did he go on these trips?

M. Kegg: Oh, every once in awhile, sometimes when they had some time. I don't know. About two or three times a summer I think we'd go around.

Godfrey: So this was in the summertime?

M. Kegg: Yeah, this was in the summertime. I don't know why she picked me because—she picked me. I knew them well
anyway.

Godfrey: Could she speak Anishinabe?

M. Kegg: No, she learned a little bit. She learned a little bit. Sometimes, you know, when they'd go someplace, I'd come and stay and stay over here, take care of the place, but not in here, not in the store.

Godfrey: I see. When you went on these trips with her, did you translate for her? Were you her interpreter?

M. Kegg: Oh, we talked—

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)] when she went and bought things?

M. Kegg: Yeah.

B. Kegg: Or did she talk Indian herself?

M. Kegg: Yeah, I used to interpret for her, and she tried to talk Indian.

Godfrey: Do you remember the first time you saw the trading post here?

M. Kegg: I just don't remember how far back that is.

Godfrey: Can you remember what it looked like?

M. Kegg: Yeah, there was just one store here.

Godfrey: Just the one building?

M. Kegg: Yeah, and they started having those little cabins there for the fishermans, you know.

B. Kegg: Where did they live?

M. Kegg: Where did they live? Back in the house here. There was—I don't just remember, you know. There was a lot of things,
'cause it was way over there, and my grandmother used to come and sell things. That's all I remember.

Godfrey: Maude, if you were to look into the old trading post way back when, what did it look like, if you were standing at the door, let's say, looking in?

M. Kegg: There was just a porch there. There was just a porch there. And I come in here, and I come in there, and there were just the things that she bought. Later on they built this thing here that—later on.

B. Kegg: What he meant—when you walked in the door, what did you see? Where was everything first? What did you see as you walk into the door?

M. Kegg: Beadwork and all those chains.

B. Kegg: Was there counters? Was there a stove or anything?

M. Kegg: There was just one counter, counter there where we sell things. I don't know. I just can't figure how—

B. Kegg: You walk in the door right here. Okay, what was over on here? What was here?

M. Kegg: There's all kinds of Indian stuff around in here.

B. Kegg: Hanging on the walls?

M. Kegg: Mm-hmm, on the walls and some on the table.

B. Kegg: On tables?

M. Kegg: Mm-hmm.

B. Kegg: On each side? Where was the k—where was the stove?

M. Kegg: The stove was way back in the corner there.
B. Kegg: Where you could see right here? Where? Right over here?

M. Kegg: Yeah, right there. The stove was right there.

B. Kegg: Right in the middle?

M. Kegg: Yeah, not in the middle—just—yeah, in the middle.

B. Kegg: On that side or on this side?

M. Kegg: I think it was on this side.

B. Kegg: On this side?

M. Kegg: Uh-huh.

B. Kegg: Was there a back door?

M. Kegg: Yeah, there was a back door there.

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)]

M. Kegg: In the back door. That building was there all the time.

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)] back door over here or over here?

M. Kegg: Right, yeah right there.

B. Kegg: Straight back.

M. Kegg: Straight—right straight back, and the stove was right there.

Godfrey: Maude, do you remember where the cash register was?

M. Kegg: Did they have a cash register at that time? I don't know they did. I don't remember.

Godfrey: That's okay. What kinds of goods would be in the store? What kind of food, for instance, would they be selling?
M. Kegg: What was that?

Godfrey: What kind of food?

B. Kegg: What kind of food [Ojibwe word(s)]?

M. Kegg: I don't remember. I remember some sugar and, mostly sugar. She started out with flour and sugar and just little things like that. They had a store right there back in there I remember, back where the old schoolhouse used to be.

Godfrey: That was the first trading post?

M. Kegg: Yeah, that's where they had just sugar and flour and things like that.

B. Kegg: Tea.

M. Kegg: And tea.

Godfrey: So that was at the first trading post?

M. Kegg: Yeah, that stuff was the first trading post.

Godfrey: And then they moved to this one here?

M. Kegg: Yeah, uh-huh. Then they started having fishermen stuff. Because we didn't really live right here, see. We lived by _____, and every once in awhile we'd come over here and bring some stuff, sell some stuff.

Godfrey: Well, what kinds of things did you bring over to sell?

M. Kegg: Just beadwork.

Godfrey: Beadwork?

B. Kegg: You never sold any fish or maple sugar or anything like that?
M. Kegg: No.

B. Kegg: No fish?

M. Kegg: No, huh-uh.

B. Kegg: Who did you sell the fish to when you were telling me you were fishing?

M. Kegg: Some white guys. I don't know.

B. Kegg: Robbins? [Ojibwe word(s)]

M. Kegg: There used to be a fisherman here, lived back in here. I don't know which way, right where the wigwam used to be. That's where he—they used to call an old fisherman, and he used to stay there and buy fish with the Indians. But I forgot his name.

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)]

M. Kegg: I forgot his name.

B. Kegg: Was that before Ayers was here?

M. Kegg: Ayers was here I think. You know, just when I come over here, you know, that's what I know that. And then we came and lived here 19—we move out of there Bay Lake, and we move here by Bedasky's then.

B. Kegg: In the thirties, 1930s.

M. Kegg: Nineteen thirty, nineteen thirty. I used to sell bead chains and all that. That's how—oh, maybe I used to sell little canoes and things like that, but not very often.

Godfrey: Getting back to the general store, can you remember what the floors looked like and the ceilings looked like?
M. Kegg: Well, the ceiling was just like this, but I don't know the color.

B. Kegg: Was it wood? Was it like that or wood?

M. Kegg: It was like this; it was like that.

Godfrey: What kind of floors did it have?

M. Kegg: Boards.

Godfrey: Wood boards?

M. Kegg: Uh-huh, boards.

Godfrey: Were they polished, waxed, or were they worn down?

M. Kegg: Oh, yeah. Yeah, she used—she had a lot of women working for her. ______ worked for her. Yeah, we didn't come here very often. Since we moved out there all I did was walk and bring my beadwork. She'd buy them from me, you know. I remember there was a lot of these little cabins around here, you know, where the fishermens were and things like that, and all the boats in there. I think your dad used to be working on them fishermens, you know. He used to be a guide, my husband, and he used to hire some old ladies to clean the fish for the white people, you know, the fishermens.

Godfrey: Do you remember who did that kind of work?

M. Kegg: Mostly the guys that had the picture in here. One of them was my husband.

Godfrey: And who cleaned the pike?

M. Kegg: The pike?

Godfrey: Yeah.

M. Kegg: The guys that are gutting them out, you know, and I suppose
they put them in ice or something. I don't know. I don't remember. I just don't remember ______

Godfrey: Do you remember which women worked in the general store?

M. Kegg: I don't remember.

Godfrey: That's okay.

M. Kegg: I don't remember who worked in there first. Cecilia Rock—she's from Cass Lake I think. I think she was the one that was working here, but not anybody around here, you know, before that.

Godfrey: Did you catch that name?

B. Kegg: She said Cecilia Rock—

Godfrey: Cecilia Rock?

B. Kegg: —was the first one that worked here. Mostly in the store? She was from Cass Lake.

Godfrey: What kinds of trade goods did they sell? Did they have cloth and—

M. Kegg: Yes, they had some cloths and thread and needles and things like that, and beads and bead needles and things like that, so they sold.

Godfrey: Did most of the local Indians come here to trade?

M. Kegg: What?

Godfrey: Did most of the local people come here?

M. Kegg: Yeah, most of the local people come here from this reservation 'cause we lived that far, you know, once and sometimes when I'd come sell the beadwork—use horse and
buggy. Then we'd trade. She used to have some kind of stamps. I used to have them. She didn't give out money. She used to have some kind of stamps, and when we'd need something, you know, food or anything, well, then she—we'd trade those off. I don't know why she did that.

Godfrey: Did she have any tokens, like metal things?

M. Kegg: Yes, she had some tokens, too—ten cents, fifty cents, even a dollar I think.

Godfrey: Was that for credit? Did she give you credit, then?

M. Kegg: Yes, yes. We can't—anyplace else except in here. I used to have them, but I don't know what happened to them.

Godfrey: I've seen pictures of the tokens. Can you remember any of the brand names on cans or anything like tobacco or salt pork cans or—

M. Kegg: No, I don't remember. I don't remember 'cause we hardly—of course, we lived way over there, you know. I just don't remember. We raised garden and all that over there, you know. We don't really buy that can stuff or anything like that.

Godfrey: Did people ever bring like wild rice to the trading post, do you think?

M. Kegg: Yeah.

Godfrey: Or fish?

M. Kegg: Just wild rice I think. They'd come and sell wild rice and trade. They'd trade, you know, for food, things like that.

Godfrey: What is your latest memory of the trading post? Do you remember the last time you were here with the Ayers?

M. Kegg: Yeah, get so old now. A lot of things happen to me. I used to be just like a relative to them. I don't know why she picked
Godfrey: So you were good friends?

M. Kegg: Yes, real good friends. She used to call me my namesake. I used to—I don't know why they, she picked me to be her partner.

Godfrey: So you never worked for her, then, at the trading post here?

M. Kegg: Not hardly—I don't—not hardly. Just go around with her and buy things—talk with the Indians.

B. Kegg: Didn't you ever work inside here?

M. Kegg: No, I don't remember working inside here. Just lately I've put up those things up here—put those things. I don't know what she ever put up those things there.

Godfrey: Do you remember the addition they put on here for the museum room, where they have all the handicrafts now—the room that's off the old general store?

M. Kegg: Yeah, the general store was always there, but just lately they build this part, you know.

Godfrey: Do you remember when they built it?

M. Kegg: I don't remember. That's when we were living over there. That's kind of hard for me, you know. But, that's when we were living over there. She always would pick me up. When she go someplace, she'd pick me up.

Godfrey: When you came here, did you ever stay overnight?

M. Kegg: Oh yeah.

Godfrey: Yeah? Where did you sleep?
M. Kegg: I'd sleep with her there—the basement. I'd sleep up here. There's a big porch there. That's where we used to—

Godfrey: So you stayed at the Ayers house?

M. Kegg: Yeah, sometimes, you know.

Godfrey: Not this house that's out there now?

M. Kegg: No, huh-uh, back in there someplace.

Godfrey: Well, what did the first Ayers house look like? Was—how big was it?

M. Kegg: Just the cabins up there, I think.

Godfrey: It was like a large cabin?

M. Kegg: Yeah, there were cabins up there, large cabins, you know. That's where the first _____.

Godfrey: So you think they lived on the other side of the road, where all the cabins are, or did they live behind the trading post?

M. Kegg: Behind the trading post.

Godfrey: Behind the trading post?

M. Kegg: At first they used to live over there, right where that old schoolhouse used to be. That's where they stayed at first. That's all I remember. We didn't come here very often until later on.

Godfrey: Did you stay at their house behind the trading post at all? Do you remember?

M. Kegg: I don't remember. But I know her pretty well, but I just don't remember. She was like a sister to me or anything.

Godfrey: Maude, do you remember the restaurant that they had behind
the trading post?

M. Kegg: Yeah, I remember that's when we lived over there, you know, and then they—a lot of Indians were working that time in there, in the restaurant, working for the fishermens.

Godfrey: Do you remember who was doing the cooking?

M. Kegg: No, I don't. I don't remember. I suppose that's when we were over there. I suppose somebody was doing the cooking.

Godfrey: Well, perhaps you can tell me a little bit about the fishermen and the cottages?

M. Kegg: Fishermens?

Godfrey: Yeah.

M. Kegg: Well, I wasn't here that time, you know, when the fishermens were here.

Godfrey: Were you here when they had a boat factory here—when they were making boats?

M. Kegg: No, I wasn't here, but I used to come here often, you know, and then all the Indians were working on those boats, making the boats. That's why these pictures are here. The Indian guys were making the boats, and there used to be a guide here. I remember coming looking at him. There used to be a guide here, and they just have, oh, four-five-six-seven of them. They—those guys would take them to wherever they could fish. They'd know the reefs and where the fish bites, I suppose, so they had guides like that.

Godfrey: Do you remember who was doing the guiding at all—any of the guides?

M. Kegg: Yeah, I don't know their names. They're all gone now.
Godfrey: Were you in any of the cottages? Well, you said you'd lived at some of these cottages?

M. Kegg: I might have been staying in one cottage one time. I was guiding that place just recently, just a table and stove and a bed, some curtains. But I just don't remember which year.

Godfrey: Well, Maude, maybe you can just tell me what you do remember about the trading post. Instead of me asking you questions, maybe you can tell me something about some of your memories of—

M. Kegg: Well—

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)] Ayers?

M. Kegg: Well, that's all I remember, you know, before we moved and she used to go and pick me up. Then she'd take—I'd go with her to buy stuff to the Indians and I'd interpreter for her. And then she'd bring me back home again and then when we moved in here—we moved in here, and then I used to come bring her some stuff, beadwork, and that's all I remember. I didn't pay any attention what—

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)]? When did you start working for her, when they passed—before they passed away, or were they still living?

M. Kegg: They were still living. They were still living.

B. Kegg: [Ojibwe word(s)]? What did you do?

M. Kegg: Just go along with her, and then I'd make beadwork and things like that, and she'd buy my stuff.

B. Kegg: Did you help her in the store? Did you go clean cabins? Did you cook? Did you wait on tables?

M. Kegg: No.
B. Kegg: Did you sell stuff?

M. Kegg: No, huh-uh.

B. Kegg: Did you clean stuff when they'd hang it up?

M. Kegg: No, uh-uh, no I didn't. But they use all those guys that were working here that time, but I didn't work for her—just go around with her. That's all.

Godfrey: Maybe we'll take a break here for a second.

B. Kegg: Did she pay you?

M. Kegg: No, huh-uh. She didn't pay me.

Godfrey: So you were like friends?

M. Kegg: Yeah, it was just like we were like a whole family—just like a family.

Godfrey: Well, I can't think of any other questions to ask, because if she wasn't there, she's not going to know about the individual buildings.

B. Kegg: Yeah, she was. It's just that she don't remember. I've got interviews of her where she tells me how it looked inside, where the stove was. It's that she forgets now.

Godfrey: Well, Maude, I want to thank you, and, thank you Betty, too.

B. Kegg: Sure.
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   Associated Trading Activities:
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III. Cabins, Dining Hall, Kitchen and Outhouses:
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People, Places, Organizations and Businesses Mentioned

Ayer, Harry:
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Bay Lake:
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