

Transcriptions of Oral Histories, Papers, and lectures at Rocky Hill Historical Society

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Instructions for Use

This file collects papers, presentations, oral histories, etc., which are available in individual files, in one place so global searches can be done on them. This can be done by pressing the CNTL + F keys and entering the word you want to search for or by dropping down the HOME menu, selecting search, and entering the word you want to search for. For example: Enter Minerva and you will find each place in the document where this word occurs.

Barlows, the Merry or Coming to America

This seems to be an account of an English family coming to America. I don't know who The Merry Barlows were. There doesn't seem to be any connection to Rocky Hill.

Billings, Charles Ethan – by Unnamed Granddaughter

Speech given by the Great-great-granddaughter of Charles Ethan Billings,

Founder of the Billings and Spencer Company

Presented to the Rocky Hill Historical Society on _____ date

(Sometime during the George H. W. Bush Administration 1988-1992) and transcribed nearly verbatim in Rocky Hill, CT in June 1994, by Sandee Brown

(Beginning of cassette): I'm here as a rather informal lecturer tonight. I usually lecture on teddy bears and I have a slide program. I have nothing like that from my great-great-grandfather, but I thank you for showing up on Charlie's behalf.

These tools -- some of them were prototypes from his factory, and I'm not sure which of them were mass-produced and which might have been his personal hand tools. In order to acquaint you a little bit with Charlie, I'd like to give you an unbiased presentation which was apparently advanced throughout the United States by the Advanced Press Service. They describe themselves as "incorporate laws of New York" which meant lawyers, I guess. It's the Advanced Press Service of successful men compiled by experienced newspaper men from several general newspapers and general references by the Writers' Press Association, incorporated laws of New York. It says they are in New York at the Canadian offices. The bulletin is number two, addendum to B-100, change in dictationships and it's written on Charles Ethan Billings.

This is a porcelain portrait done by his daughter Mary, to give you an idea of what he looks like. He was pretty good looking, and he looked, actually, like the actor Richard Boone. As he got older, he had pearl white hair and he had cobalt blue eyes. I have some great photos here of him and his family if you'd like to look later. I don't have a very large photo so that's all you can go by for now. And, I'll read this and I have a little bit of a presentation from a man I spoke with last night who worked for Charlie, he actually worked there during the 50s and the company was run at that time by Prescott Bush¹. For those of you who might know who he is, this is a very timely thing because he was the father of the President of the United States. So, I'll read this.

"Charles Ethan Billings was the President of Billings and Spencer Company of Hartford, Connecticut, and the Canadian Billings and Spencer Company Ltd. of Welland, Ontario and the State Savings Bank of Hartford, Connecticut also."

"Charles Ethan Billings, manufacturer and representative citizen of Hartford, Connecticut was born at Wethersfield, Vermont, December 5, 1835. Of sturdy Green Mountain stock, a son of the late Ethan F. Billings, a respected blacksmith of Vermont, he received a

¹ Father of President George H.W. Bush and grandfather of President George W. Bush

common law education at the age of 17 and entered as an apprentice in the machine works of the Roberts and Lawrence Company of Windsor where he served for three years in their gun department. In 1856, he went with the Colts Arms Company as tool maker and die sinker, and while in that capacity, he mastered all the practical details of the trade with which his future life was destined. He determined to improve upon the methods then in vogue and bent his mind and talents to the solution of the problem."

"In the early stages of the Civil War, he accepted a position in the gun factories of E. Remington and Sons at Llion, New York, and shortly after, he made 147 sets of arms for the United States government. At the close of the war, in 1865, Mr. Billings returned to Hartford, and for three years was superintendent of the manufacturing department of the Weeds Sewing Machine Company."

"In 1869, in association with C. M. Spencer, that's Christopher Spencer, the firm of Billings and Spencer was started and shortly after was incorporated for the purpose of manufacturing drop forgings and developing various improvements and inventions in the numerous small parts of machinery", this was in Rocky Hill, "which through the inventive ingenious of Mr. Billings, became of great value to the world. Besides developing the drop forging business," (and they said this was the first drop forging manufacturing in America. I have the documentation of that also.), "he invented and patented many valuable articles which are largely in use in this country and abroad.

Among them may be mentioned screw plate double-acting ratchet drills, adjustable beam caliber breach floating firearms drills, Chuck's pocketknives, adjustable pocket wrench and numerous others. The Billings and Spencer Company is the largest concern of the kind in the United States. The catalog of their productions a great variety of useful articles invented by Mr. Billings whose talents have been the means of building up the extensive plants of the Billings and Spencer Manufacturing Company of Hartford."

(When it was in Hartford, it was on Broad Street in the first place as I understand it), "and the Canadian Billings & Spencer Co., Ltd. of Welland, Ontario. Mr. Billings has been a member of the Common Council of Hartford. Also, Board of the Alderman, and was for twelve years, president of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the City. He is a former member of the Society of Mechanical Engineers, member of the Honorable Council of Atbody (?), and is a member in perpetuity. He holds the distinction of the 33rd Degree of the Fraternity²" (and we have a cane which was presented to him -- solid gold), "which carries with it every honor that can be bestowed upon a member of that order. He is also a member of the Royal Order of Scotland and is a past Grant Commander of the Grant Commanderee of the State of Connecticut."

"Mr. Billings is president of the Billings & Spencer Manufacturing Company, the Billings &

² These are Masonic orders and degrees.

Spencer Co., Ltd., and the C. E. Billings Manufacturing Company, and of the National Machine Company, he is president of the State Savings Bank of Hartford, a trustee in the Hartford Trust, and the Hartford Club."

"Mr. Billings' first wife was Frances M. Hywood, the issue being Charles H., deceased; Fred Billings, vice president of Billings & Spencer Company; and, Harold E. Billings, deceased."

"His second marriage was to Evis (?) Hold, twenty years his junior, and Lucius Hold of Hartford." (He became a famous goldsmith), "and, to them were born two children: Mary and Lucius, Jr. Billings, the latter being the Superintendent of the Billings & Spencer Company, of Hartford, CT."

(I spoke with a gentleman called Mr. Roar (?) who prefers not to be contacted by anybody because of his personal lifestyle, and he gave me a lot of information on the different people who worked in the different departments in the 50s in the Billings & Spencer Company. At that point, the building was located in the old Holt Building. If anyone knows exactly where that was...Capital Avenue? Thank you.) "Marshall McGuire was the chief mechanical engineer there. He increased the tonnage and brought the company around in the 50s. It was going under for some reason and this was, of course, some while after Charlie was deceased, and his son had taken over the entire company. The chief die-sinker was a Mr. Anderson; drop shop was Harold Burke; the trim shop foreman was Eddie Benoit; and the head treatment foreman was George Shepard. During WWII, the company manufactured the M-1 Garand-which was a staple weapon--a seven shot automatic Billings & Spencer manufacturing and they actually created the operating rods for that gun. They also created the breeches for many Winchester guns in Springfield. And, the second boss foreman was, I believe, Mr. Levitt. He was there in the 50s. They also made landing units for Lockheed jets and they were extremely large forgings. They encompassed four engines and three tails. They had titanium struts which required a special inert atmosphere to create. They had to have salt baths, and he was laboriously describing all of the environment they had to create for these special Lockheed jet parts.

They also had, at one point, to create special brass fittings and they had a special furnace which they used and he (Mr. Wurr) remembers at one point they had set up a wonderful presentation with about 50 or 60 people who came to watch and they decided to turn the heat up so it would melt a little bit faster and they melted the bottom out of the pot in front of everyone (laughter), and the brass went pouring all over the place and it wasn't a very good presentation for that reason.

Well, Mr. Roar was with the company in 1951 through 54. There were 300 people employed and he remembers making something called "lifetime keep" for railroads.

Jewelry and miniature anvils and accessories. And Billings & Spencer became world-famous for that type of implement. They also made something called the Clark King hammer. I hope I got that right. I couldn't really hear him over the phone. But, if anybody knows what that is, correct me, please. They also created a great deal of parachute snap fittings and they still do to this day are very because they put a great deal of expenditure into the coatings -- the beautiful coatings of the Billings & Spencer tools.

At that time, the plant supervisor was _____ stropolis, and Mr. Roar worked there for three years and he lost a great deal of his hearing because of the very poor conditions in the factory. He said it was extremely dirty and really a terrible place to work (laughter). I thought that I might add that, in case you thought it might be tremendously glorious to be part of this empire. He is living proof, and he is a really interesting person, and he was very excited and he learned everything about everything going on in there and I haven't had enough time to talk to him, but, um, he really suffered a great deal just in the three years being there. I guess it was tough employment, but it was very interesting. He did pick up -- I just couldn't put it down -- everything he told me.

And, so, anyway, what I have here are the deeds to the property³ which came in ... It starts with the deed from a Mr. McMalley who was a tenant on the property of a Mr. Buckley, and it seems that Mr. Billings kicked Mr. McMalley out, so that he could sell the property to Mr. Charles Billings and Amos Whitney. Mr. McNalley was subsisting on the props and selling the props to someone else and he started selling them to Charlie. And, then something happened to the agreement. We have -- there should be four deeds and I have only three which doesn't tell you what happens in the transition. This is only part of the transition. So, if you'd like to look at the deeds, great. As far as I can tell ... I'm really interested in finding out... and one of the reasons I'm here is, I'd like to know if anyone knows anything about the transfers of the property after my great-great grandfather left. And, what then became dinosaur Park and all of that. And, I walked through the area. There is a wonderful book that was given to my great-great grandfather by a wonderful woman called Evan Lemmits (?) and does anyone know anything about that name? Evan Lemmits created this book of Dividends and what it has are shots of all the different sections and I walked through part of them but part of what must have been Dividend was the Cooks'. I believe it was two or three years ago. Are they here tonight? ...Oh, darn it. Anyway, I'm not sure. Is this the Dividend Road that this is all on? Anyway, they took me to the beginning of the road and Mr. Cook said this house on the first page, the summer residence, was right there on the corner. I don't

³ She seems to be describing the Billings & Spencer Foundry in what is now (2016) Dividend Park.

know how they know that but if you look at the picture here, we could identify the stream where the factory -- the forge -- was situated and, of course, that rode on hydro-electrical power and there's photographs of that in here.

(Question from audience: "Is there any record of Rocky Hill in here?")

I don't know. I'm going to be writing another book, "The Random House" and I'm going to be writing that for one year solid and I would be thrilled if someone in the Historical Society would be interested enough to do something about that. Because I can provide all of the settings and the deeds, and the deeds give descriptions of properties, too -- of building properties.

(Grace Cone: "What is it actually that you want to know? That you want to find out?") Well, why do we still own the deeds? Why do we still have the deeds? Aren't deeds supposed to go on to the next owner? Now, that's what bothers me, and that's why I've kept these since I was twelve years old, because I never could understand it anyway, I think that being the altruistic person that he was, it's a very good chance he gave it to the State. I'd just like to know about that. If he did, then he gave Dinosaur Park to the State. That's what I think he did. That's 80 acres.

So, that about covers everything I can tell you. There is a family album and some great photos of his family. They're all gorgeous. And, they didn't take out the ugly ones. It's just that they were really all unbelievable and that I can identify about 90% of the people in the photographs. I don't know about _____ there were a lot of interesting people in this family. Nobody was dull, and so that's why we know so much about them. When Lucius Holt died, there was a large article written up on him--that he was a prominent Hartford goldsmith. And, at some point, we had several of his pieces which were very intricate forgings and they were medal, of course, so he worked in medals, too. And, Mary became an artist. She married a world famous artist who is in "Who's Who in American Art", and was in seven or eight periodicals and I often am able to purchase his artwork and resell it. And, at this point, a painting which I sold about nine years ago for \$200 is now worth \$3,000. It sold at Southeby's about four weeks ago and that was Mary's husband. The reason I brought that up is because Charlie left his daughter almost a million dollars in, I think it was 1925 or 1919. And, he had at that time Franklin and Mary left in the family, and Eva (?), his wife, I guess was still alive. And, Frederick decided to give his entire share of the inheritance to Mary which made Mary extremely wealthy, and she traveled all over the world, and created art and we, to this day, have a great deal of the art from her and her husband. And, he (Mary's husband) could have been extremely famous, but he did not have to work for a living. So, at the point that he _____ and, by the way, she proposed to him. He would not propose to her (laughter). Eight periodicals is really something because he would not really have to

work too hard. He had a great body of work that he had amassed but only today, as of, I'd say, eleven months ago, are his works coming around. So, if you ever hear of William Rafford Green; that was Mary's husband. And, I have a lot of material in here on Mary also.

There's a daguerreotype of his second wife. His first wife died. I don't know much about it. I think she died of appendicitis. And, this is his second wife who is twenty years his junior. I'm sorry to say I have a beautiful daguerreotype somewhere of Charlie with Christopher Spencer, standing over their inventions. And, you may have all heard of the Spencer repeating rifle. And, I believe I was watching a documentary along while ago, and the President -- President Grant was it? -- was congratulating Spencer for the gun that won the war. So, I don't know how accurate that documentary was, but that was interesting to me also. The Spencer repeater came out of Billings and Spencer factory.

I also have a prototype gun which Flater made and another gun expert down in Haddam looked at about six years ago. And, the stock is broken off it. It's very dry wood, so I don't carry it around. They had the 1875 date patented into it and the sight is missing. A few other pieces on the end are missing. And, it needs to be re-glued, I've been told, also. And, that's about all we have. He (Charlie Billings) had some wonderful dueling pistols and he had a good gun collection which was dispersed in 1976. And, there's nothing left of that. But, he was a very big gun collector—Charlie Billings was

I have some of Charlie's hand tools here. He initiated this. I believe it has something to do with gauges although they're really sharp. Seem to have been carving gauges of some sort (from the audience, "A scalpel. It was used for letting blood. They would use it to cut a vein".) Interesting. I don't know why he has his own name on that. It's unusual though, for him to sign something. And then, there's an interesting letter—it appears to be a ring that's a vics -- an adjustable vise. So, I guess you could be wearing this vise while you're doing something else-as a dueler.

And, there are various adjustable screwdrivers and they are actually a special kind of screwdriver. There's even a corkscrew that he manufactured. (To an audience comment...) Yes, but I get the feeling that when you get the hard-chrome finish, it had to be Hartford. I saw the foundation of the old factory. It doesn't look large enough to have a plating operation. I've worked in that sort of place and you need a large room to do plating. Also, these have a great finished quality to them--these plated pieces. And, there are a lot of early tools here that don't have that plating on them. Some of the tools seem to be extremely early--maybe worked with...

All I have here are a set of hammers and one set of all marked --clearly, it says Billing & Spencer in this section here. Apparently, those came in sets. Now, there are also three catalogs and I've opened one catalog to the anvil which is here... which is adjustable;

which has a different anvil, a jeweler's anvil. You see, the average cost of these items was roughly thirty cents. You could buy a dozen for roughly two dollars at special rates. And, the things that were most expensive were this type of a vise; the larger vises. And, these vises ran about a dollar--they were pretty expensive (laughter).

(From the audience: "I wondered what kind of medal they were made of") Well, the Regent medal was beneath the chrome, is probably just plain white medal. And I don't know the alloys involved, but I know that the chrome is very thick. It's a lot thicker than many of the quators (?) and it might have been one of the things that put him under. He was kind of like Wallers Nutting (?). Because of his high quality, he couldn't afford to keep going. And, Mr. Roar told me, they had very high inspection quality ratings. And, he was an inspector himself. Mr. Roar was. He told me they had to wear hats because of the extreme heat and they were not allowed to skip over anything. They had to hand size every single element that they inspected.

And, this is an interesting piece. It's just a hammer and kind of a stone breaker but, this is a piece that may have had some very thin chrome on it. And, it's quite rusted, and that's unusual.

Then, you've got the parachute clamps and a saw. He did make a lot of saws and he did make a lot of chisels. I use his chisels today. And, they're very good. They're much, much better than any chisel you can buy on the market today--even from Germany. I haven't had to sharpen one of them. And, my grandfather used them before me. And I'm sure he must have sharpened them-- probably in the 50s. And, they still haven't had to be sharpened. So, I'm sure, whatever the medal was, it was wonderful.

I have the type here. There are three catalogs. The catalogs don't have any dates in them. And, they don't have any addresses on them. All they have are descriptions of the very wonderful things which he made which are really very clear. I have something called a clamp-dog with a swivel jaw which is obviously for a jeweler at home and it's very tiny and I can't find it anywhere but it's the one other really unusual thing that I have from his catalog and, again, they ran \$1.50. And, they're very small so evidently they were either a lot in demand or either very difficult to create.

And, that's all I know. There's a key here--this is what we call a railroad key. Does anyone know? But, this is a key that he made. Almost everything that he made, he made collapsible. That seems to have been another trait of the company. He seems to have loved to have made things collapsible. This is an eyeglass case and it's his personal case, and some calipers, and a lot of tools I'm not sure about. If anybody knows and can identify them -- a coping saw with a typical Billing & Spencer vise attachment. And, this is another tool that he apparently made in his spare time. It's just got little drill heads and a little twist. Apparently, nothing came of it because it doesn't seem to be patented

anywhere.

And that's everything. So, if anybody can give me any information, I'd really appreciate it. And, if you know what all these tools are ... I'd like to take the names down of anyone who worked with Charlie Billings and if there's anyone here who worked with him ... it doesn't look like that's possible in the crowd tonight (laughter). But, if it is, I'd love to hear about it or even if people heard stories about the family. Because, what's actually missing is, we know very little about his personality except he does have hardening of the arteries and he spent the last few years of his life on the Dividend swatting flies on the back porch. That's what my grandfather remembers. And, apparently he was quite eccentric at that point. And, we never heard anything about him before that except he was. So, thank you very much. And, you're welcome to come up and (applause - end of cassette).

Brooks, Ruth Warner⁴ – My Memories of Rocky Hill⁵

Excerpts from a Vanished World

by Anne Gertrude Sneller

Published by Syracuse University Press, 1964

This book is the account of my childhood In Rocky Hill. I can't believe it, but I shall be 80 next October – Ruth Brooks

My Memories of Rocky Hill

"Memories from the Corner of My Mind."

I enjoyed the book "A Vanished world" by Anne Gertrude Sneller so much - The author was born in 1877, three years before my mother, so their childhood experiences were similar. I am of the next generation but my first 10 years were not too different.⁶

I was born in Rocky Hill October 2, 1908, in the Victorian house, built two years earlier by my father and grandfather, where I now live. The house was heated with stoves. Cooking was done on an iron stove in the winter and an oil stove in the summer. – We had no bathroom and no electricity. I can remember my mother - leaning and polishing the lamp chimneys every day. The lamps only lighted a small area so that that beyond that the corners of the room were in shadow. When we finally had our house on Riverview wired for electricity, the first light bulbs were 15 or 25 watt! My mother said they would be strong enough. And the house did seem bright, --compared to the lamplight.

I started out intending to mention -only the sounds of my childhood in Rocky Hill that are now lost. The rattle of coal going down the chute into someone's cellar; the lonesome whistle of a train at night; the crowing of roosters and the contented clucking of hens; the clinking of iceman's empty tongs as he returns to his wagon after a delivery; the clatter of a hay rack being dragged to the meadow the droning hum of a silo being filled; the crackling and crunching of a trolley car as it passes through the town on ice covered-wires the clang of the anvil from Kriendel's blacksmith shop on Main Street; the deep warning toots of the New York steamboats as they approach the Glastonbury dock to pick up freight; the loud rumbling of the daily blasting at the quarry. These were all sounds that you no longer hear in Rocky Hill.

When I was 4 ½ years old in April 1912, my grandmother Warner ,Fannie Mae Warner,

⁴ Ed chuicarello & and Bob Herron found Ruth's 1916-1917 3rd grade report card in our collections. She was a straight A student and missed 13 days in the third term.

⁵ There is n *.mpeg file in our collection which covers this paper along with photographs of the things discussed.

⁶ Ruth Brooks seems to have enjoyed "A Vanished World" and patterned her paper on it.

died and we went to live with my grandfather, Edward Warner in the square tin-roofed house on High Street, now Old Main Street, in the north end of town, now owned by David Fyler.

He had built this house, adjacent to the home of my great-grandmother, Melissa Gilbert Warner, and my father, Newton Welles Warner, was born there and lived there until his marriage.

Living in the north end of town in a big old house instead of a small new house was a change. The house in winter was always cold and we had chilblains. For the only period in my life I had a little girl to play with, Ruth Robbins, daughter of Frank and Harriett Robbins. The Frank Robbins family lived a short distance up the road in the former North School building to which Mr. William Robbins had a second floor added to the brick first floor when the couple was married.

Besides our own big yard and hill we had the Robbins' barns and spacious fields, including a brook in the pasture to roam over. The trolley-tracks were at the far end of the pasture and we sometimes placed crossed pins on the tracks for the wheels to make scissors of them.

It was farther from school and the store but a pleasant neighborhood for children.

The Old Main Street Neighborhood

I had written most of this account when I decided to say more about Old Main Street. It is called that because it has many old houses.

Out the "Lane", as we termed Parsonage Street, beyond the trolley tracks and the brook, was the home of the Speno family. They had a two-seated wagon "with fringe on top" in which they rode to Mass on Sunday. Chapin Avenue was not opened through to Parsonage Street then so it was necessary to drive down to the "center" and up Elm Street to St. James Church, the old church on the hill. As a Child I thought the "temple hills" in the song "America" referred to St. James Church.

Beyond the Speno house was the extensive farm of William F. Griswold with his 4 daughters and 6 sons. The Griswold farm, "Sunny Crest" is now "Gone with the Wind."

The first house above Parsonage Street, on the lower level, was the Georgian house of James Warner, a cousin. His barn was on Parsonage Street and his land reached to the trolley tracks that ran out of the lane and curved west, roughly where the Silas Deane Highway is now.

We flew kites in his corn field. Jim had a delightful sense of humor with which he enlivened town meetings. Next to Jim's house was the long duplex house owned by Truman Gilbert, but then owned by Carl Warner Jim's son. He lived in the south side

summers; the north side was rented property and when we had been at my grandfather's house about 2 years, Mr. And Mrs. Eugene Grover and their two daughter moved in. Mrs. Grover took the place of my lost grandmothers; I always called her "MotherGrover" (one word.)

Then came the barn and horse sheds of the Mr. Blinn whose name was used to designate the property; it was "the Blinn place." The horse sheds, although very old, are still there. The apartment complex, "Parson's Village" is where the fields of James Warner used to be.

Next was the Robbins farm, with remodeled North School home of Mr. Mrs. Frank Robbins and their children, Hamlin and Ruth beyond it. The next house was then the home of Mr. DeWolf; I think he came from New York but we didn't know him. After that were fields, still part of Robbins' farm, until you reached the big house on the brow of Haven's Hill. There were no houses past that. On the south side of Old Main St. At the bottom of the hill was Charter' Pond, the extensive ice pond and buildings of the Spring Brook Ice Company. Naturally ice was an important crop in those days before refrigeration. Every dairy farmer has his own ice pond; there were the ponds we skated on all winter except when ice was being harvested.

On the side of the street, High Street branched off into a gradual rise until the houses in the middle like ours were at a much greater elevation than those on either end. The first house, now owned by Peter Revill, was owned by Carl Warner and was later remodeled. The next house was the Greek revival home of Mr. And Mrs. Fred Morton Ruth Robbins, and other grandparents. Mr. Morton had a long beard. Elderly men in those days often had long gray beards; not neatly trimmed chin coverings, but full heavy beards, that reached to their chests. James Warner, William Griswold, Grandpa William Robbins, Grandpa Fred Morton all had long gray beards. Owen Havens, known as Red Ownie" had a faded red beard but it was trimmed and he looked like King George V.

The Morton household at the time consisted of Grandma Morton, Miss Ethel Morton, who helped run the house; Florence, who taught in Hartford; and their Granddaughter, Edla Roe. Florence married Mr. Viele soon after that and moved to New Haven. When I was five, Edla married Albert Griswold and moved to a 2 family house on Parsonage St., still owned by Richard Griswold.

Next came the gambrel-roofed house where my Great Grandmother Melissa Warner had lived but owned then by the Schoenborns, a German family who had left Germany before any of their sons would have to do compulsory military service. Their son Max and Belle Morton were married and lived on Elm St. They used to come and visit their parents, riding on Max's motorcycle. Robert, age 4, rode on a carrier behind his father. Belle and the infant Frederick rode in a side car. I thought this was thrilling.

Next came our house in the middle of that row of houses. My grandfather's land included the hill in back – part of the "Rocky Hill" for which the town is named and extended to the tracks of the Valley Railroad. At the rear of the house were two "shops", one was a combined wood shed and outhouse. The other was used for storage. There was a large chicken coop and wire yard for the hens. There was a pig pen and a corn crib. We had a large barn that was used only to store the then unused wagons (the horse was gone) and the barn also contained the room partitioned off and occupied by Mr. John Tracy, who did chores and worked in the yard and always washed the supper dishes. He was not really a "hired man", he earned his own money working at odd jobs for other people. He was a fine, high-principled man and very good to us children. I don't know why he chose that way of life. I have a cup with flowers on it that he gave me which I cherish in his memory. He stayed at the house as a caretaker after my Grandfather's death; then he got a factory job and returned to Hartford.

After the house came out of probate, my father sold it. Several owners later, denuded of fruit trees and the grove of hardwood trees where my grandmother has started a wild flower garden, it was bought by Herbert Wilcox. The Wilcoxes lived there for many years. Miss Ruth Wilcox was a dedicated worker at the Historical Society and bequeathed her valuable collection of salt dishes to it. The next house north of my Grandfather's was the Evans homestead. The residents there were Fred Spencer, a cousin; Mr. Evans, Ray⁷, later our postman; Hazel, who worked at the Traveler's; and Violet, who kept the house. Violet was a retiring person, who was too shy to work outside the home. I always thought Lowell meant her when he wrote:

A Violet by the mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye.

Another daughter, Daisy, had married Adrian Tyler and they lived up on the side of the hill in a cottage built while we were at my Grandfather's. Their son, Cleon Tyler, still owned by Owen Havens. Mr. Havens was an important man in those days, a sort of country squire. He drove a smart shiny carriage in summer and an equally smart sleigh in winter. A few years later he married Miss Katherine McCarthy and built a new house next to the old McCarthy home. He and Kate lived there.

When years later Owen took his own life with a shotgun in the bathroom of this new house, the town folk heard about it with shock and disbelief. An official investigation showed that he had made unwise investments had lost his own money and that of other people entrusted to him to invest.

Below the Havens house was the very old gambrel-roofed house, the oldest in Rocky Hill, built by Phillip Goffe. It was then the house of Max Whalen and his wife and

⁷ See Rocky Hill in WWI for stories about Ray Evans - RCH

daughter, Mary. A public drinking trough for horses was near the road on their land.

Mr. William Robbins was still alive. Two other sons, Dick, who was my father's best man, and Doctor Alan Robbins, had gone to Colorado for their health some years before Mrs. Robbins and their daughters, May and Ann, still lived in the big Georgian house. Miss May Robbins was a teacher in Hartford; Miss Anne (sic) was already teaching piano pupils. Other childhood sounds I remember were Anne's pupils doing scales, and her own practice of voice lessons, echoed across the street by Hazel Evans. Some years after Mr. Robbins death, a new house was built east of the farm house and the three Robbins ladies moved into it. Frank and Harriett then moved into the big Robbins house, but there were always rooms there that were reserved for Miss Sarah Robbins, who was the sister of William. Doris Hick Robbins, Hamlin's widow, now lives in the house, but the farm is gone – apartment houses or businesses are where the barns and pasture used to be.

Our Hill

I had written about the houses on Old Main Street when I decided to write more fully about 'our hill.' Every child those days knew the sentence, "Our town receives its name from the ridge of trap rock that extends from Goffe's brook to the railroad station."

My Grandfather Warner owned the hill in back of the house property and also in back of the houses north of ours to a point roughly in back of Julia Warner's house. It extended down through the woods to the railroad tracks.

In the summer of 1911 a small building was built on the crest of the hill and a wooden table and benches were built under the huge big walnut tree that grew there. This "shack" was equipped with 3 folding cots and chairs; shelves and big wooden boxes contained the antique ironstone dishes and kitchenware discarded by my Grandmother in favor of more up-to-date things. But real antiques which would be much sought after today.

There was a beautiful view from the hill. The trees were not as high as they are now and to the northwest you could see Hartford with the gold Capitol Dome, and other buildings; the south end of Hartford was mostly vacant lots then.

Before the hill stretched the meadows with the Connecticut River winding its way down from the north and east. We used to watch the New York boats, the "Hartford" and the "Middletown" steam down in the early evening; there was a big bend at one point so the boats were going north instead of south for a short distance until the river curved south again.

We used to hold picnics on our hill. I remember the huge one we had for the neighborhood when the "shack" was completed; we had fresh pineapple, my first taste

of this fruit! It was a grand place to shoot off fireworks and watch the rockets going up in all directions on the 4th of July. After we moved back to our own house and my grandfather had died, my father still owned the hill and we used to spend weekends there. Once my father picked wild strawberries on the side of the hill and we had a short cake made with them placed on a sheet of biscuit dough brought from home by my mother.

The underbrush and grass on the hill used to get very high. The railroad would burn the bushes along its right of way and sometimes the fires would get the whole hill ablaze, if the wind was blowing. I recall one such fire when I was perhaps 5 years old. It spread rapidly over the whole hilltop and was advancing along the tall grass near the barn. The men were all busy stamping out the fire in other areas. My sister Bessie, then 10, put out the tongues of the flame herself with a broom; I was on my knees by the wood shed, imploring God too save our barn. Between Him and my sister, the barn was spared.

In the 1940s my father sold the hill to C.W. Blakeslee Company who owned the quarry, but they abandoned operations soon after that. All of the hill and former quarry is now under litigation to gain permission to develop the land as condominiums. So far the Old Neighborhood Association has successfully prevented this. The winter when I was in second grade there was an epidemic of measles. All but 2 children in the school came down with the disease which was not surprising. Our school water supply was a pail and dipper for every room. The toilets were out in the yard, a two-sided affair with 5 holes on the girl's side, through which the older boys used to stoop and look at the girls. There was no facility for hand washing and no privacy. To go to the john was a Spartan experience.

Winter of 1915-1916

My measles went double mastoid, which required two operations and long weeks of convalescence. My sister had measles too, and my mother was ill from infected tonsils. Remember, we had none of the "miracle" drugs in those days. We had three beds in our parlor all winter for the sick ones. Our good neighbor, Julia Warner, came over every day and cared for us out of the goodness of her heart.

When I started recovering enough from the measles, suffering constant earaches all the time, I went into St. Francis Hospital for the operations. This was the first time I had ever seen a nun or a saint's statue and the experience of being away from my mother and home at age 7 was very hard. My father made the long trip to St. Francis Hospital every day by trolley; once he made it twice in one day when the hospital called him because I was upset.

It snowed that winter day after day. My mother, from her bed in the parlor, watched

Adrian Tyler patiently shoveled his way down every day from his new home just under the brow of the hill on the Evans place next door to the big pump in the barnyard at Robbins' to get his pail of drinking water. Mr. Tyler, a former violin teacher, had married Daisy Evans, his former pupil, who was also a fine pianist. Their sons Ralph and Cleon, Cleon still lives in this house on the hill in back of the Evans House (where Marion Evans lives.)

It was April before I returned to school. The last two weeks of school that year our second grade class moved into the "new school" building which had been under construction for many months. We were the only class to go there then, as we had been on "double sessions" all year because of overcrowding. We loved the "new school."

In July that year, 1916, my mother had her tonsils removed. My father and grandfather both had quick tempers and sometimes quarreled violently. I remember the battle they had the night she went into the hospital. My grandfather believed, not without some reason, that a hospital was a "pest house." Remember, he had lived during the Civil War and that's what hospitals were in those days. The shouts of discord were so loud that our neighbor and dear friend, Mrs. Carrie Grover, who lived across the street in the house now owned by Truman Gilbert, came over and took my sister and me over to her house to stay during my mother's 12 days in the hospital. That summer we had a visitation of the 17 year locusts and to this day the shrilling of a cicada (can't find the next page – RCH)

PART TWO

Here I want to digress a little and pay tribute to Miss Bertha Brockway. Miss Brockway and her twin brother, Clarence, lived in our house on Riverview Road while we were at my grandfather's. She was a teacher in Hartford. Fortunately, they were able to find a rent in the Will Churchill house, which stood at the corner of Main and Garden Streets, where the tavern is now located. Later, Clarence Brockway married Miss Jenny Griswold, sister of William Griswold, Sr., and then lived with her in the Griswold homestead, now torn down, on Elm St. across from Dr. Moser's. Miss Bertha Brockway then made her home with various friends until, years later, she realized her dream and built the house on the knoll at the corner of Riverview and Esther Roads, now owned by Donald Wheeler.

The town owes a great deal to Miss Brockway. For many years she was an unpaid recreation leader. The Community Club, which she organized, sponsored many activities and gave many plays. Remember, there was almost no cars in those days and activities were strictly "home-grown." The giving of a play provided weeks of preparation and social life. Under her leadership, many plays were given: "A Rose of Plymouth Town", "The Twig and the Thorn", "Lady Ursula's Lover", "The Old Peabody Pew", (given in the

Congregational Church), "Honor Bright." My sister Bessie Warner, played the male lead in many of these; men were too shy or away at war.

It was Miss Brockway who headed the pageant given on the Connecticut River in Wethersfield in 1934 to celebrate the town's 300th birthday. Rocky Hill, the former parish of Stepney and one of Wethersfield's "daughters" was, of course, included.

The early settlers from Massachusetts actually arrived that day in a sloop⁸. There were bleachers put up on the shore the many spectators. Many of the young Rocky Hill boys were Indians in the play. My sister, Bessie, wearing a shocking pink dress, (made by me from 12 yards of material), played the bride of an early resident who had gone to one of the eastern towns in the State to return his dead wife.

The teenagers who came under Miss Brockway's influence were lucky Thank you, Bertha Brockway.

Death of my Grandfather

We moved back to our house on Riverview Road on October 2, 1916, my eighth birthday. My grandfather died in November of a kidney condition. My mother always regretted having moved at that time and said she would have stayed if she had known his condition.

I realize now that my grandfather was an unhappy man. He had never gotten over my grandmother's death. She was only in her early 50s when she died of pneumonia. He was 20 years her senior and must have been over 40 when my father was born. He and my grandmother had been very happy together. When my parents moved in with two little girls, 4 and 8 years old, it was hard for him. I can remember his saying sadly, "T wunt so when Fannie was alive."

He had been the Town Treasurer for many years. He frequently had large sums of the town's money in the house so that he slept with a loaded horse pistol under his pillow – to my Mother's great distress.

⁸ This is probably not so. John Oldham and his followers came overland from Watertown Mass. According to Navigation on the Connecticut River by W.Deloss Glove, 1903, there were no ships the size of a sloop on the river in 1634. - RCH

Capt. William Warner (2)
1672-Oct. 16, 1726

m. 1. Mary Crane
2. Elizabeth Strong

Capt. John Warner (5)
Jan. 4, 1704-Oct. 26, 1786
m. Elizabeth Curtis

Capt. Wait Warner (11)
Apr. 17, 1733-Mar. 19, 1804
m. Abigail Deming

Roger Warner (26)
May 1, 1776-Feb. 17, 1839
m. 1. Nancy Wetherell
2. Martha Wells

Walter Warner (46)
Nov. 14, 1805-Feb. 4, 1861
m. Melissa Griswold

Edward Newton Warner
Feb. 4, 1844-Nov. 1916
m. Fannie A. Welles

Newton Welles Warner
Nov. 23, 1877-
m. Nellie C. Deming

Ruth (Brooks) 1796-1770
Bessie (Webster) 1797-1777

Daniel Warner (4)
Jan. 1, 1680-1750
m. Mary Boardman

William Warner (9)
Oct. 1, 1715-May 1, 1790
m. 1. Elizabeth Mitchell
2. Prudence May

John Warner (25)
Oct. 6, 1762-Oct. 11, 1838
m. Abigail Hale

John Warner, Jr. (43)
Mar. 3, 1786-Oct. 25, 1858
m. Rebecca Coleman

James Warner (61)
Apr. 7, 1822-Apr. 4, 1899
m. Martha Griswold-Warner

James H. Warner (76)
July 18, 1851-
m. Jennie C. Elmore

Carl Griswold
Everett Elmore
James Louis
Jennie Grace
Emma Elmore

Thomas Warner (62)
Jan. 15, 1824-Jan. 15, 1882
m. Caroline M. Spencer

William Warner (79)
Oct. 20, 1869-
m. Julia T. Downs

Albert F.
Caroline
Harriett
Gilson

A short time after Christmas that year, in January, 1917, the old Riah's ⁹Hotel burned down. Mrs. Marino¹⁰ had baked bread in the old brick oven that morning and somehow a spark had caught the wooden rafters. The family was away visiting relatives later that day and by the time the fire was noticed it was too late. With no water supply and no adequate equipment, the volunteers could do nothing but keep other buildings from burning. The Marino family lost everything. The three houses directly north of the Upper Road are built on the site of Riah's hotel.

Someone of the neighbors called my father as my grandfather's house was in probate and if it should prove necessary, the furniture there would have to be moved out. Fortunately there was no wind that night.

Speaking of the water supply in those days makes me think of our own water supply on Riverview Road. We had a pump at the sink which brought up rain water from the cistern; nice soft water¹¹, fit only for washing dishes or clothes. Our drinking water was piped from the artesian well next door, owned by Louis Button¹². This water was pumped from the well to the red storage tank high in the air by a windmill. My father oiled the windmill. He had to climb very high to the level of the paddles to reach the mechanism. One night he was up there after midnight, with lightning flashing all around, to oil it and stop its squawking! Sometimes in the summer after weeks of no wind we would have no drinking water and my father had to carry pails of it from Mr. Homewood's well on Main Street. The Homewood house had once been there. There was no radio or TV. At night we read or played games: Authors, Parchessi, Flinch. Or Checkers.

My days of "dressing up" and playing lady with Ruth Robbins were now over. I was back playing with a little boy, John Andrews.

Our own house was close enough to Center School so that we could go home to lunch. We were also close to the grocery store. Mr. Elwood Belden's grocery store was a one-storied building north of the Congregational Church on Main St. Grocery stores were quite different then. Butter, lard, and peanut butter came in big round tubs and were ladled into small thin wooden containers that looked like boats. Coffee came in the bean and was either ground in the store or freshly at home. Cookies and crackers were weighed from large tin containers. There were almost no canned goods: fruits and vegetables were canned at home. Campbell's Tomato Soup and Campbell's beans were about the only canned goods. Dry cereals: corn flakes or grape nuts. There was no citrus fruit or lettuce to be bought in the winter. Diets lacked many things now considered a

⁹ DeRyer's Hotel.

¹⁰ In another interview Ruth Warner identified this family as Martino

¹¹ Irony?

¹² A powerful politician in Rocky Hill for many years.

daily “must.” Bread was baked at home although Mrs. Chaney’s bakery had a route and Stueck’s bakery came up about once a week from Middletown with pastries. (I love the little chocolate covered triangles of sponge cake which we called “chicken Coops.”)

There were few automobiles and these were “put up” for the winter. Horse-driven sleighs delivered coal, grain, and groceries. Dr. Moser had a sleigh and sometimes used snowshoes to get to an isolated house. There was a lot of snow and it stayed on the roads for months. Sliding on the streets was possible all winter. People with jobs in Hartford went on the trolley or the train. The trolley tracks had been laid in 1909. The trolleys ran from Hartford to Middletown¹³, from 5 A.M. until after midnight. High school students went to Middletown by trolley.

PART THREE

The grammar school was now settled in the new Center School. Our room on the west side housed the third and fourth grades. The school had steam heat, electric lights, and indoor plumbing. But even that first year, the first grade was still in the old academy building, now the museum.

I want to give credit to those boys and girls whose fathers had been brought over from Italy as experienced quarry workers to work in the Connecticut Trap Rock Quarry. They spoke no English, and the children had to go to school and somehow learn a new language, as well as their other studies. They were given no special help and no effort was made to teach them English. Somehow, they did it.

St. Anthony’s day, June 13, was always a red-letter day. Italian flags flew. There was a parade and a band, and you could but ice cream.

Fire of 1921

The “Center” as I had known it was all changed in May, 1921, by the fire which started in Belden’s Store. Again, there was no town water supply and no fire department. The fire destroyed the store; the small building north of the store that contained the barber shop with the shoemaker’s shop to the rear, the Grange Hall on the south corner of Center and Main Streets, the row of barns and sheds on the north side of Center Street, a small building that stored coal for the school and the stairs on the south side of Academy Hall, again fully used as a school buildings. It left the north wall of the Congregational Church blackened and blistered.¹⁴ By that year there were canned goods in the store and we could hear them exploding all night.

¹³ Sources at RHHS say the trolley went all the way to Saybrook.

¹⁴ There is now large extension to the north end of the church which occupies much of the land the destroyed buildings occupied.

Coming of the Twaddles

The last summer at my grandfather's also saw the moving of the William Manchester family to Chile. Mr. Manchester was the manager of the quarry and he had been offered a similar position in Chile. Mrs. Manchester was the daughter of Dr. Plunkett, who had been one of the town's physicians. I think Dr. Oran Moser, the town's beloved doctor all of my childhood, located in town about 1902 to replace Dr. Plunkett.

The Manchesters had been among the town's social leaders and their move to Chile caused great excitement.

In the fall the Twaddles moved into the former Manchester house across from the Methodist Church. Andrew Twaddle¹⁵, a Scotsman, was the head of the Orient Insurance Company, a British firm. I did not realize until many years later how important he was to the insurance world. The Twaddles had four children: Isabel, then 10; Betty, 8; Paul 7;; and Dick, around 5. Betty (Elizabeth Shannon) became my chum; she grew up to be a nurse and married Dr. Albert Peacock, a pediatrician. The Peacocks still in West Hartford and she is still a dear friend. Paul Twaddle became one of the area's leading heart specialists.

Andrew Twaddle always had a prominent place in town affairs; he served as Town Treasurer for many years.

My Mother

My mother, Nellie Deming Warner, was born in Lenox, Iowa, in 1880. Her father, Sherman Deming, a Rocky Hill native, had gone "out west" as some sort of reward for his Civil War service. My mother used to tell very interesting stories of her life as a girl

Also living "in a little house on the prairie." The farm did not prosper and when my mother was 10 the family returned to Rocky Hill. My mother then had two brothers, Fred and Ed, then 14 and 12 and one sister, Mabel, who was five years old. Later, when my mother was 13, another little girl was born, her sister Luella, who died of meningitis when she was 10, shortly after she was the flower girl at my parent's wedding in 1903.

The family lived briefly in the house on South Main St. which stood opposite Brook Street. Then my grandfather Deming bought the Greek Revival house at the corner of Main and West Streets, where my cousin, Jane Nash, lives; the house has been in our family nearly a century.

My mother today would probably be active in the NOW¹⁶ movement. She was an excellent cook and each summer canned an incredible number of jars of fruits,

¹⁵ Andrew Twaddle was co-author of the Rocky Hill Portion of Wethersfield and Her Daughters.

¹⁶ National Organization of Women, a feminist organization.

vegetables, pickles, and jelly for our consumption in the winter months. My father and grandfather were carpenters and always had big gardens to supplement their irregular incomes. We always had a pig and chickens too.

After my Grandmother Warner died (1916), my mother took over as Rocky Hill correspondent for "The Hartford Times." She wrote the local news for the "Times" and later for "The Middletown Press" for about 60 years. She was active in the Methodist Church. She was secretary of the local Grange for 50 years, and belonged to the Pomona¹⁷ and the State Grange. She was one of the early members of the "Motherhood Club", an organization of mothers that preceded the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA). She was one of the starters of the school lunch program.

But she was best known as the town librarian for more than 40 years. Following the death of Adelaide Williams Wright she became the librarian for the Rocky Hill Library Association and continued in that position after the books and building on Church Street, at the side of Elwood Belden's home, were turned over to the town and became the Rocky Hill Library. She was closely associated with Mrs. Cora Belden¹⁸, who purchased the books and did much of the library's business.

It was at my mother's suggestion that the Library Board chose to call the fine new building on the other side of Church Street "The Cora Belden Library" (but no one ever called Mrs. Belden, "Cora." I cringe when I see some of the posters in the new library building!)

My sister always wished that our mother had spent more time at home with us. I think today's children of working mothers must feel the same way.

World War I

Always in those years after August, 1914, was the consciousness of the war going on in Europe. A few days after World War I was declared the Robbins hired man was ordered back to Russia to serve in the Czar's army. He was a handsome, dark-haired young man with a nice smile; we children missed him. Even first graders knew about the sinking of the Lusitania and of the terrible suffering in France and Belgium.

In April 1916¹⁹, the United States declared war. Our daily lives were touched by the war. My father worked as a guard at Colt's. Flour was bleached, sugar, when you could get it,

¹⁷ The Grange is a hierarchical organization ranging from local communities to the National Grange organization. At the local level are community Granges, otherwise known as *subordinate Granges*. All members are affiliated with at least one subordinate. In most states, multiple subordinate Granges are grouped together to form *Pomona Granges*. Typically, Pomona Granges are made up of all the subordinates in a county.

¹⁸ The Cora J. Belden Library is named for her.

¹⁹ The U.S. entered WWI on April 6, 1917.

was coarse, yellow stuff; we put lemon drops in our tea. And we had to mix orange coloring into oleomargarine! The rationing of World War II, although unpopular, certainly made food available²⁰.

The town went into a frenzy of war effort. Young men enlisted or were drafted. The Home Guard drilled on Center School grounds two nights a week. The school children all knit and bought Thrift Stamps. Women sewed for the Red Cross. The 4-H Club came into town and there were pig clubs, food clubs, and sewing clubs. There were Liberty Loan rallies and we all sang "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "Tipperary", and "The Long, Long Trail." By early summer, 1918, the newspapers printed daily black-bordered columns of war casualties. My mother read them and cried.

When peace was declared on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, there was bedlam of whistle-blowing and church bells ringing. The "War to End All Wars" was over; the world was "Safe for Democracy."

Emendations

to

the Narrative of

Ruth Warner Brooks

"The long duple: house" was the home of Captain William Griswold, owner of the Revolutionary War brigantine "Minerva." Originally a gambrel roof house, it was extensively remodeled about 1857 by Joel T. Green for use as a hotel. The stone sink in the Academy Museum came from this house.

"At the bottom of the hill was Charters' Pond, "Named for W. M. Charter of Wethersfield, president of the Springbrook Ice Company.

"Next came the gambrel-roofed house where my great grandmother, Melissa Warner, had lived, "Known to the town as Aunt Melissa Warner, Melissa Griswold Warner, daughter of Josiah and Charlotte Griswold, died July 14, 1898 at the age of 91. Her home had been built by Rev. Burrage Merriam, second minister of the church in Rocky Hill, in 1765. It was torn down in 1926.

"A violet by a mossy stone

Half hidden from the eye.

Fair as a star, when only one

Is shining in the sky."

The poet is not Lowell but William Wordsworth.

²⁰ There was no rationing during WWI.

Julia Downs Warner was the widow of William Warner, son of Thomas and Caroline Spencer Warner, who died October 22, 1901 of typhoid pneumonia at the age of 35.

The sprawling old Riah's Hotel" - This was properly the Hotel de Ryer, run by George Ryer, formerly the home of George C. Chambers, the first First Selectman of Rocky Hill, purchased by Elizabeth P. Ryer, wife of George Ryer, on May 30, 1661.

"John's wife left him" Per Miss Mary Whalen, John R. Robbins' wife was considered to be a "stepper."

"The Greek revival house on the hill with its white columns" This is not a Greek revival house but a hip roof, Georgian colonial with a well-proportioned Doric portico added. The portico was added about 1910 by Mr. Elton Burroughs, a New York City editor, who bought the property from Edward B. Wright on September 11, 1909 and used it as a summer residence, known as Colonial Manor, until 1917.

"... the old gambrel-roofed house, the oldest in Rocky Hill" – Though probably standing on the site of the house built in 1655 by Philip Goffe, the construction of the present house suggests that it dates from about 1790. The public drinking trough was a low, wooden horse trough fed through an iron pipe running from a spring located 20 or 30 feet from the northwest corner of the house.

"In the 1910s my father sold the hill" - On October 30, 1911 Newton N. Warner sold 8+ acres to the New Haven Trap Rock Company, C. W. Blakeslee being a principal of that company. Page II, "in January, 1917, the old Rian's Hotel burned." – The Hotel de Ryer burned New Year's Eve, 1916.

"The Homewood house had once been a private. Young Ladies Academy." - The Young Ladies Academy was conducted by Miss Bertha Brockway.

"The fire destroyed . . . the stairs on the South side of Academy Hall, " - Although both the frame addition housing the stairs on the school and the home of Monroe Crane across Main Street caught fire several times they were saved by the chemical hose streams from Hartford's Engine 10 and Wethersfield's hose and chemical wagon. When the frame additions to the Academy were torn down in 1963 charred shingles and siding were found under the outer layer of shingles and siding.

"... she became librarian for the Rocky Hill Library" – The Rocky Hill Library building was built in 1899 by Edward N. Warner, Nellie Warner's father-in-law.

DMC

4th July, 1993

Brooks, Ruth Warner - Rocky Hill Schools

Transcript of Notes from Ruth Warner Brooks – 1941

Early in the summer, when the committee got together to plan the year's program, we thought it would be fitting at this first meeting in the new school to discuss former school buildings in Rocky Hill.

In 1699 the inhabitants of Rocky Hill, or Stepney as it was then called, were granted exemption from paying school rates in Wethersfield because they had procured their own teacher. Classes were held during the winter months in private homes until the first school building was erected in 1712 in the middle of the highway on the north front of the Hotel DeRyer. (This is the site of the present homes of Charles Spencer and Adrian Tyler.) It was built of wood and was 16 X 20 feet.

When the structure became inadequate, a controversy arose over the location of the new school house so the 1718 legislature recommended two school houses. Accordingly, one was built on the same site and the other was built near the west side cemetery.

In 1726 Stepney Society was organized and in 1729 this society voted to remove the school house from "Cole's Hill"²¹ to the space between the southwest corner of Samuel Williams; pasture and the south end of the meeting house (Congregational, of course) which then stood in the road in front of the property now owned by Fred Atkins. This building was removed in 1731 and another school house was built to replace it. The later building was used for a number of years but, according to my grandfather Warner's notes, there was a period around the middle of the century when school was kept in private homes and in the meeting house. A short while before 1773 certain individuals at their own house expense set up the frame for a new school house. At that date (1773) the parish voted to buy this frame from them at its just value and placed it in the triangular plot of land near Mrs. Batcheler's. This must have been the principal section of town at the time since the Congregational Church, the Center School, and the Post Office were located there. Most of the stores were, of course, located at the River Landing²². The old Post Office building is now the little shed in front of Edmund Wilcox's barn on Riverview Road, back of Kelley's home.

In 1735 the first school in West Rocky Hill was built of wood on the crest of the hill west of the present school. This site is the exact geographic center of the State²³. At that time the highway ran straight west over the hill instead of curving around the base of it as at present. A brick school was later built on the same site to replace the wooden structure. This building was used until 1914, although after the relocation of the highway it was

²¹ Cole's hill is in the Center Cemetery where the flag pole is in 2017.

²² Rocky Hill was a thriving river port at this time.

²³ Geographers have since found that the geographic center of the State is in Berlin.

sometimes difficult for children to reach the school in winter. Me. E.J. Stephens attended this school and he remembers having to stuff paper into the cracks between the bricks to keep out the snow and cold when the mortar became loosened and fell out.

With the establishment of the middle school were four schools in the parish, Middle, one in the west, a third in the north, and a fourth in the south. All these schools were built in the middle of the road. All the early schools were frame construction about 24 feet long and 16 feet wide. They were crudely finished with rough branches and a wood stove and were lighted by one or two small windows. When we consider the small type used in the printing of early books, we wonder how small children ever saw to read in those dark school rooms. The Three R's constituted the school's course of study. Classes were held only for about three months of winter.

I thought perhaps some of you, especially the School Board member who have to pay the bill for present school upkeep might be interested in these excerpts from the journal of Solomon Griswold, my paternal great grandfather. This is a copy of a bill to the North School District.

<u>1815</u>		
Oct. 30	Paid 25 dollars 19 cents for stove	\$25.19
	To 1 bundle of shingle	1.00
	To 30 feet boards & ½ lb. nails	.60
	To setting stove	.25
	To bringing stove, boards, shingles from Hartford	.50
Nov. 31	To squares of glass – to putty & setting	.65
	To putting up fire board & repairing roof	1.10
	To making benches	1.50
	20 20 feet boards ½ lb. nails	.30
Dec.	To 23 feet plank	.45

Under the bill is the notation "This account is settled and balanced."

<u>1875</u>		
Dec.	4 squares glass and setting	.48

	To repairing benches	.50

In 1822 he set five squares of glass and made other repairs including a new threshold. It is amusing to read over his accounts to see how often new panes of glass were necessary, proving that boys were not as different from boys to day.

About 1800 the middle schoolhouse²⁴ was abandoned as a school and the structure was removed to the river landing and made into a dwelling house. In 1871, when the Valley Railroad was laid, this dwelling house had to be moved again and it was then taken to the former South School site on "Cole's Hill." Mr. Dennis McNamara was born in a house on that site which may have been the old Middle School House, but as this where he lived was burned about 60 years ago, I think it more probable that the Middle School was placed upon foundations of the house that was burned. The McNamara stone in the cemetery marks the old door-yard where Mr. McNamara played when he was a boy.

The second South School stood in a triangular piece of land at the intersection of West Street and South Main adjoining the Tea Room property. When it was decided to build a new school on the Holmes property across Main Street, my maternal grandfather, Eratus Deming, a member of the building committee, bought the old building and moved it to the place where Thomas Detweiler's home now stands and remodeled it into a dwelling house for his family. The old red brick south school house, the American Legion Hall for several years, was built in 1849. My grandfather, Sherman Deming, and later my mother and her brothers and sisters went to school in this old building and my grandfather Warner taught there.

The brick building in the center familiarly known as the "old school" was built to replace the "Middle School" in 1803 on land probably obtained from Jacob Robbins or his heirs. It was erected partly by the town and partly by voluntary subscription. The building has had an interesting history in its 138 years of services. Elementary classes were held for nearly a century in the two lower rooms. The second story was formerly one room, arched overhead with a large fireplace at both ends. It became known as Academy Hall since several private schools and a school of navigation were held there at several times. For years the destiny of the old school was allied with the growth of shipbuilding and commerce in the parish. The higher branches of learning, including higher mathematics and the science of navigation were taught here. Many of the sea captains who sailed

²⁴ Middle school because of its location in the town, not because it was the school between elementary and high school.

from Stepney to West Indian and African ports or farther south to the Antarctic on whaling vessels learned their navigation skills in the old red school.²⁵

On December 31, 1839, the building was gutted by fire but the bricks walls were left standing and the interior was rebuilt at once. The second story was let unfurnished by school authorities but was loaned perpetually to the Rocky Hill Ecclesiastical Society²⁶ on condition that the society “do off the upper rooms” and keep them in repair. Various fraternal organizations and the public library had their beginnings here. Communicants of the Episcopal Church worshipped there at various times and services of the Catholic Congregation were held there for many years until the completion of St. James Church in 1881.

In 1850 the last of the North School buildings was built of brick on a site across the road from the previous buildings. This is the school my father and Grandfather Warner attended and my Grandmother Warner, one of the “working wives” taught there. It is interesting that all my mother’s people attended the South School while my father’s family attended the North School. Some conception of the relative distance between the schools in those days before automobiles buses, and trolleys may be gathered by the fact that my grandmother Warner prepared a chicken dinner for my father on his wedding day because she was tearfully afraid “Poor Newton would never have a decent meal again when he married a girl from the south end.”

I have brought with me several books of my forebears and a few other articles pertaining to their school life that may interest you. There are some copy books of my great grandfather, Walter Walter Warner (sic – RCH), and the slate used by my grandfather, Edward Warner. Walter Warner’s geography, published in 1796, is especially complete and interesting. The geography which belonged to his wife, Melissa Griswold Warner, daughter of Solomon of the Journal, was written in 1812 by Nathaniel Dwight for whom the Dwight School on Wethersfield Ave. is named. In it is this description of Hartford:

“It stands on the west side of the Connecticut River, fifty miles from its mouth, at the head of Ship Navigation, and it contains near 500 houses, several of which are handsomely built of brick, three stories high. It contains a state house, two churches for Congregationalists, and one for Episcopalians; and is the most flourishing commercial town in the state.” (Selavonia p. 65.)

²⁵ I read this as saying that seamen trained at Academy Hall were likely to have served on ships from ports other than Rocky Hill, especially since there is no records of whalers being built or sailed from Rocky Hill.

²⁶ (in Congregational churches) a legal corporation with power to sue and be sued and to administer all of the temporalities of the church.

The little "Village School Geography" with its wood-cuts and informal style must have been a welcome relief from some of the books of the period. Although it is not a school book, I couldn't resist bringing along "The Wise Boys", which contains the "entertaining histories" of Fred Forethought, the boy who thought before he acted; Matthew Merrythought, the boy who was always happy; Luke Lovebook, who was fond of learning; and Ben Bee who was always industrious. Each one is a gem, I assure you.

The July 27, 1899 issue of the "Hartford Times" published the following item in the Rocky Hill news, I quote:

"The increasing number of scholars in the Center District has necessitated a change in the line of accommodations and the town has purchased the building known as Society Hall, which will be converted into a schoolroom. The upper floor will be occupied by the larger pupils and will be in charge of Miss Mary Lewis of Portland, who has taught in the same school for several years with great success. Miss Clara Stillman and Miss Florence Morton will teach in the primary department. The North District will consolidate with the center. Miss Alice Williams has been reengaged as teacher I the Western District and Miss Hall of Portland will teach in the South District. "

From later clippings however I infer that the North School building continued to be used until the Library Association moved its books into the new library building which was opened Friday, Dec. 1, 1899. The North pupils were transferred to the Center School when they returned from their Christmas vacation and the upper rooms were used by the 4 higher grades. The North Building was purchased by William Robbins who later remodeled it into a house for his son Frank and his bride, Harriet Morton Robbins. This is now the home of Mr. And Mrs. Frank Griswold.

In September, 1914 a new two-room gray-shingled building was opened in the West District on the corner of Elm St. and Wethersfield Ave²⁷. An additional two rooms was made (sic – RCH) in 1926 and the whole building modernized at that time. The same year the present two-room South School was opened, a brick building with modern equipment which replaced the small one-room school recently vacated by the American Legion.

The four rooms constitute the original part of the school we are in, erected in 1916. I was a member of the Second Grade which first held class in the new building for two weeks before school closed in June. That new building seemed just as wonderful then as this new high school does now. In fact, I think it seemed more wonderful as it meant a change from water pails, dippers, and folding drinking cups to fountains, from outside

²⁷ Wethersfield Ave. seems to have been another name for the Shunpike.

toilets to modern plumbing, from lamps to electric lights, and from stoves to central heating. The building was intended to provide for all eight grades, including South School pupils, but it was never adequate for this so that each year more of the old Academy Building was utilized until for the past twenty years the whole building has been occupied by four lower grades. The old South School building has to be reopened after a few years, too, and an increase of children in the south end necessitated the building of the present South building already mentioned.

Rocky Hill can justly be proud of this fine new school building with its modern equipment and roomy auditorium although it is to be regretted that already the basement of the older part has to be used as a classroom. Perhaps it is a fortunate thing that the Legion has remodeled the old Academy Hall or we might find Junior High pupils over there in a year or two instead of First Graders. However, this condition will probably be remedied and we wish the new Junior High every success as it joins the ranks of Rocky Hill's schools and begins making its own history.

Ruth W. Brooks
September, 1941

Burritt, Elihu

Elihu Burritt was an Abolitionist and peace organizer. He doesn't seem to have had any specific connection to Rocky Hill.

Button, Louis – Houses in Rocky Hill – 1903

Rocky Hill Historical Society Library Rocky Hill

Rocky Hill History - 1903

Written by Louis Worthington Button. Written in 1953

Mr. Button was a prominent Rocky Hill citizen from 1903 until his death in 1955. His wife was also active in town affairs and provided an oral history of the Riley House at the north east corner of Old Main St – Riverview Road.

Mr. Button's writing was somewhat imprecise for a lawyer. He didn't use punctuation or paragraph breaks and he had a penchant for run-on sentences. I'm worried that some of what's in here is my interpretation rather than what Mr. Button intended – RCH. He hops from neighborhood to neighborhood without warning, but it might be an informative project to organize this paper and other that describe neighborhoods and try to map the town at the turn of the 20th century.

Life History – RCH



(Clarendon Photo)
LOUIS W. BUTTON

ATE	EVENT	WHERE	NOTES
1875/06/26	Birth	Hampton, Connecticut	
1898/00/00	Insurance agent for Orient Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut		
1898/00/00 after	Organized the Law and Order League		Mission was to drive liquor out of dry Rocky Hill. Closed six illegal liquor outlets.

1904/11/00	Justice of the Peace	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	
1917/00/00	Oversaw Liberty Loan drives in Rocky Hill	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	Until 1920
	Corporal in the Connecticut Home Guard.	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	
1929/00/00	Treasurer of 10 different funds at one time.	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	Until 1933.
1931/00/00	Judge of Rocky Hill's first Town Court	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	
1934/00/00	Town Clerk	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	Until 1951.
1938/00/00 before	Director of Wethersfield Branch of Connecticut Bank and Trust,	Wethersfield, Connecticut	
1938/00/00	Retired	Rocky Hill, Connecticut	A life-long Republican, he chaired almost every Republican Caucus and Republican town meeting in Rocky Hill. He was also a delegate to many State conventions.
1955/01/21	Death		

Mr. Button's Paper:

I arrived in Rocky Hill, June 21 1903. The first place I visited was Belden's Store. It stood between Canter's and Vinchetti's it was later moved across the street to just south of the Old Grange Hall and was destroyed in the big fire of April 1921. The other business establishments of that time were Merriam's store which was located what is now #239 Mai Street. Brown's store was at the present location. Harry Long had a small store in the brick building, just torn down north of the Conn Foundry. Lewis Wright had a meat market Corner Main & Elm where the Silas Deane Highway is now on the McNamara Place which was one of the old houses torn down and removed from Town and erected elsewhere. Billings had two small shops at the ponds in Dividend and there was an old grist mill and saw mill nearby. The Grist Mill was established in the middle 1600 hundreds By Gersham Bulkeley under a grant from the Town of Wethersfield of about 250 acres with the proviso that it was to be in operation for all time. The Quarry had just been started²⁸ and was only a small plant on the railroad. Edward Belden had some fish sheds south of the Foundry. The Foundry comparatively shall was then operated by The Champion Mfg. Co. foundry²⁹ (Owen Havens & Frank E. Holmes.) Mr. Apply had a stave plant on the north side of Pratt St back of the Rolich house, there was a small Pond there. There was also a rendering plant near Billings, it was known as "The Soup Shop."

Edward J. Stevens has a cider mill at the end of France St. Marshall Wright slaughtered calves at his place on Cromwell Ave. now owned by Mr. Gonthier. This I think was about the extent of the local industry. The population at that time was about 1050 and number of voters about 300. Of those 300 voters only six are now living in Rocky Hill. On July 4th there was picnic on Shipman's Hill. At that time there were two rows of maples about two feet in diameter. The rows were about 75 feet apart. The view was wonderful; The Hill at that time was practically intact, as the Quarry had made only a slight impression at the extreme lower end by the railroad Tracks. There was a road leading up the hill from Main Street just north of the Old Shipman Tavern. This was wonderful old building with a fine dance hall with a spring floor. It was too bad that this landmark was lost to Rocky Hill. It was moved away to a new location I believe in New Jersey. Rocky Hill has lost many of its fine old mansions, but there are still (1953.) Over seventy houses were built before 1800. There were practically no improved roads in Rocky Hill at that time; only a small portion of Main Street. Brook Street was just a mess of sand, and when you drove through, the bushes would brush the vehicle on both sides. On North Main Mr.

²⁸ 1898

²⁹ The foundry changed names and hands and names several times in its history. It was Champion Manufacturing from 1900-1916.

Sutton's³⁰ house was the First on the west side then then the Old North School now occupied as a dwelling. Frank Robbins house built in 1790 came next. The house now owned by Carl Warner followed this house was owned by Captain Griswold. He had four slaves.

Next house was occupied by James Warner-one of the five fortified houses of old Wethersfield during the French and Indian Wars was located about where Donald Hicks house now stands. Dr. Burr occupied the next house. At the time he was the only Doctor in Rocky Hill, Dr. Moser coming to town in Aug 1903 living at what is now 213 Main. There were four other houses on the west side including the Adkin and Goodrich houses (the site of the New Town Building. On the east side of No Main was the small house just over the R. R. Then the Philip Goff house built in 1655, now owned by Milan Cook. The Dexter place owned by Owen Havens who was termed the "Mayor." He was First Selectman. At that time. The Connery house, The Edward Wright place with the Pillars and John Robbins' Mansion built in 1783³¹ said to be the first house in Conn built of native brick-they came from the pit back of Sutton's;-then came three shall (sic) places one of which was the old Ryer³² Tavern which later burned. The Evans place followed and there was an old house he later torn down and replaced by the home of Mrs. _____ then the Werner Home, the Morton homestead then occupied by Frederick Morton who was the local milkman. Then three houses now designated as 127-142, and 147 Main. The Shipman Tavern already referred too. The Standish property came next, it was badly run down part having been used as a store at one time. This was later bought by Geo B. Chandler who made it into the present fine residence; the Beaunot place now owned by Mr. Hurley - the North house and on the corner the old Dr Griswold place now owned by Mr Spolen. Then followed four houses on the North side of Riverview Road with the Stillman place the rear George Stiles' house; Gus Robbins fine apple orchard ran all the way to Joseph Kelly's house at the head of the old Shipyard. Mr.Robbins took a good deal of pride in keeping it up and one day someone asked his "the best time to trim an apple tree" and he replied. "When you have a good sharp saw." Below the Kelly place was the Eugene Belden property with an old house in the rear now remodeled and occupied by Mr. Obermuller and lower down was the George Belden house. He was the local builder and built quite a number of Rocky Hill homes. Then came the Park which was well kept up at that time. I remember we had Bottom line cut off by copier – RCH)

From Mr. Belden's we had quite a sing. Below the Park were the two present houses. On

³⁰ Mr. Sutton was an early real estate developer. Sutton Road is named for him and Gaylord Drive is named for his son.

³¹ About 1760

³² DeRyer's

the South side of River was the old Riley house now occupied by Mr. Fancy. There were no more houses until #40 the house I purchased in Aug of that year and occupied until May 1929. Mrs. Andrews came next. The Andrews came to Rocky Hill in December 1902. Then the Bulkeley house built by him. He was afterward President of the Springfield Fire & Marine Ins. Co. The Gus Robbins place, now owned by John Hall, and #60, now owned by Frank Smith, was the last house.

We are now at the railroad Station which was a very busy place. There were about 70 commuters on the early morning train, some of them from Glastonbury.

The Quarry at that time was shipping a lot of stone also they were bringing Feldspar and Peaches over from South Glastonbury. The Ferry at that time was almost self-supporting, the Towns contributing only the fuel. North of the Station there were three houses, the old Pelton house which burned and a small house this side and the house now owned by Mr. Hughes Also the old Sail Loft House opposite the Ferry which afterward was used as a store by John Ellis as a store in the basement.

South of the Ferry were three small houses as well as a brick house next to the foundry. Back of the foundry at that time was the old Steamboat Landing which was in good repair at that time. On the West side of Meadow Road north of the station are several old cellar holes one of these being the old Callender House. Mr Callender ran the first ferry south of the station. On the west side of Meadow Street was the Honiss place since moved away and a large house just south. Then came the Belden Shipyard with an old house afterward used by Co K of Hartford as a Club House³³. This whole section is now occupied by the American Oil Co.

We will now go up Pratt Street. On the corner on the West side was the old Pomeroy House. It had some of the finest paneling that I have ever seen. It was a very large house the southern portion having been built by Pomeroy for his daughter in 1754 and the other portion being much older. Next was the Agnes Shipman place now owned by the McNamara's. Pratt St which is one of the earliest streets originally went straight down to the river, the present bend was made when the railroad went through in 1873. Also Riverview Road made a turn by the last house and went to the river. Going up Pratt was the Apply house now owned by Mr. Rolich and then the fine old, house now owned by Miss Palmer Belden Lane had only one house the same as at present. Next to Belden Lane is the Donovan house and one is struck by the facing of the house as well as the turn in the road. The writer is of the opinion that at a very early date that Belden Lane continued on to Washington Street (Washington is overstruck by "Glastonbury Avenue" -

³³ Company K of the First Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, Spanish-American War Veterans

RCH) and ended on Riverview Road³⁴. West of the Donovan house were two small houses and the large house now owned by Mr. Lane. On the South side of Pratt St. on the corner was the house now owned by Mr. Yeager, then same seven houses including the General Pratt house now owned by Thomas French and the old Williams Mansion. This was originally a very fine place. Several years ago a corner cupboard from the house was sold for \$1.900. It had one of the highly prized Sun Bursts. Originally the Williams owned all of Pratt Street. We now arrive at the Bradford Estate consisting of three very fine old houses. On Washington St. on the East side were the Merriam and Picard houses also the Hall and Caruso places. On the west side was the old Risley house and down on the corner was the old Risley Blacksmith Shop not then in use but it was opened later On the , west side of Glastonbury avenue, then called Ferry Street. The first house was the Burket house just this side Belden Lane, then the Ed Daley House and the Martin Griswold place now owned by Roger Tyler and the ?ounuck house opposite Washington St. On the north side were six houses this side of Washington St and then the Reduker house, this formerly stood in the middle of the road at the foot of Riverview Road and was purchased by the Town for \$300 and moved to its present location as at that time it was understood that the Valley Road would build the station opposite of where it is now. On the north side of Elm St. the first house was the McNamara place already referred to which was removed at the time the Silas Deane Highway was built. The next was the one now occupied by Mrs. Horace Hill; then Jessie Griswold, the Bulkeley place now owned by Frank Stickels, the Taylor place over in back. Then came the Calvin Chapin's house now owned by: Ernest Lowell.

On Chapin Ave there were only five houses. One on the east side now owned by Starr Elmore and four on the west side, going back to Elm Street.

The house on the corner was owned by Deacon Ashwell, then the Churchill homestead. There was no other house until you came to the house now owned by Mr. Jantzer. It was all vacant lots until you came to the small red house on the corner of Gilbert Avenue since moved north and remodeled, further on was the Luther Williams place now owned by Joseph Annulewicz – the Cold house and the house west now owned by Stanley Klewicke. Coming back on the South side - - the Neumann house, then the small cottage near Rose Hill cemetery and the Webster place in the rear. The Webster house is probably the second oldest house in Town and when it was built it was on the main Road to the western part.

This old road came out at the turn in Grimes Road and in the lots below the Webster place. There are two old cellar holes formerly occupied as Grimes residences. Following down on Elm was the old Elm Street Inn, so called; since torn down. Austin Robbins'

³⁴ It would have to cross Washington to do this - RCH

place now owned by Mr. Segur - the houses on both sides of Grimes Road were there. No more house until you came to Sam Dimmock's - by the way - the frame of this house came from the old congregational Church which was torn down at the time the present edifice was erected.

In 1808 it stood in the middle of the road opposite where the new town building is being erected. There was a small house east from Dimmock's since rebuilt. Ashwell Ave did not exist at that time. The Nathan Olmstead home is very old - then the Pratt House - the small house south. There was a house where the present McNamara house is, it burned later.

We will now jump over to Dividend Road and the Dividend section. After leaving the Yeager house on the corner, the only house on the east side was the Marietta Holmes place. Harvey Evans lived on the south side of Evans road and the McNally house was just east. Along what is now Belamose Avenue were 9 or 10 houses including the old house on the river bank the third oldest in town. All of the present structures were there, no new ones having been built since.

The old Lennox house was on the corner and has since been removed as well as an old house further along on the street coming out on Main. There were no houses on the west side except the house on the old road. All of the section - Lord Street etc. were simply woods.

Forest Street was hardly more than a path, Mr. Webber's house being the only one on that street. Going - back to Main Street, My residence, 199 Main was occupied by (?) John Hall-Libera's house next and was occupied by Dr. Moser then followed Frank Martin.

There was house where Bolduc's market is that was remodeled into a store and later burned and was replaced by the present building; then the Crane house, Vinchetti's was a dwelling at that time. The old Danforth house on the corner³⁵. On the corner across was the Plunket house, the old Mosely place now owned by Sylvester, the larger of the Martino house (sic), then Bulkeley place now owned by E.J. Stevens. There were two houses below the cemetery, then came the Sullivan house and there was a small house near the corner of Forest facing forest St.

Just below the old south school was the Boardman place the next house over the hill was occupied by the Halligans.

There were two houses about opposite Brook Street one of which has since burned and been replaced by Mr. Archie Libera. On the corner of Pleasant, Valley Road was the house, then Chas Canfield Senior, the house owned by Mrs. Lennox which was built

³⁵ The narrative seems to jump from the Dividend/Main St. area to the center of town here.

about 1679, and the old Toll Gate House built about the same time.

Now we go back to the corner of Elm and Main. W. R. Griswold lived there next was a Bulkeley house, since removed and replaced by Grosso's store. Garden Street at that time did not exist. Will Churchill occupied the next house- there were two more houses before Grimes Road. Then came the Valley Hotel two small places followed, then the Goodrich. Then, the house now owned by Hulet Hunt.

There were six house on West Street including the McNamara farm, now the Veterans Home³⁶. There was a house just south of West Street. The two Gamble roof houses following, although very old, were originally moved from the west part of the Town. The Halligan house was next. This was formerly the site of the Gershom Bulkeley Mansion. The first road to Dividend (text cut off by copier.)

This house was burned in 1901 and there was a strong suspicion that a murder might have been committed. The Gorman residence stood on the corner of Brook Street it was a fine old house later it was destroyed by fire. Then came the large house on the south corner followed by five houses the one now occupied by Mr. Bacon being the last on that side.

Going back to Parsonage Street, the first house was the Speno house then the old Morton homestead and W. F. Griswold. There were no more houses until the Guy Russ place corner of Orchard On the south side was the Tryon house just this side of Bailey Road. Beyond Bailey Road was the house now owned by Louis H. Schaefer and the Sam Dean house next. There was only one house on Bailey Road - then occupied by Russell Bailey. Some of the Town's poor were taken care of here³⁷.

At the end or Bailey Road Extension was the Old Maid's place, so called, now owned by the McNamaras. The old road was still passible at that date and I have driven over it. It started in just east of the Silas Deane Highway near Howard Johnson's³⁸ and ran parallel to the Silas Deane Highway on the east side and then crossed over at about the little hill and came out on Bailey Road through Bailey Road extension

There were about five houses on Orchard Street , one on Gilbert Avenue.

North from Elm St., Gilbert was about as bad as a country road could be. The last time I came over it before it was a state road I had to drive through the brook with the water about eight inches high. There were no houses on Waters Ave. On the west side of Maple street was the house recently sold by Mr. Lewis then came the Mike Hynes place,

³⁶ There must be some history here. The Veteran's Home was built on land previously owned by the Hartford Retreat.

³⁷ This may be Grimes' Poor Farm where indigent people were required by the ton to work to support themselves.

³⁸ This seems to have been where the South of the Border Mexican Restaurant is n 2016.

this house has since been torn down and replaced by the home of Mrf. Ploszaj

Then came the Old Methodist Church (text cut of by copier.)

Across on the west side of Cromwell Ave was Henry Whitford's place, an old colonial. I think there was a house just south that was torn down and replaced by the present brick dwelling. On the other side of the road leading up to the old school house was an old dwelling occupied by Jim Lapine since torn down and replaced by the present dwelling. Next was the Marsh Wright house which burned and replaced by the present residence of Mr Gonthier. The Robert Rhodes house was north of the Wright place on the other side of France Street was a house which later burned and since replaced. There were no more houses until The Walker place just south of Cold Spring Road then the house now occupied by Mr Misterka.

The only houses on the East side were a house which later burned and has been replaced by the dwelling of Mrs Bazar. The only other house was the Frank Smith house near the Cromwell line. There were very few houses on New Britain Avenue something like six on the North side and about nine of the south side.

There were three houses in the Cape Bull section near the Berlin line at that time. The children from these three farms went to the Beckley School in Berlin on France Street. Four on the north side and five on the south side (sic)

On the west side of Hayes Road was the Tom Dillon place a very fine old Colonial about five more on the west side and two on the east side.

There were two small houses on Miller Road. There were the two Grimes houses on the south side of Grimes Road.

I find I omitted #165 Main now owned by Thomas Friedrichs Also the Hart place on the south side of Maple St. There are probably more omissions as this was written entirely from Memory without access to data

Canfield, Russell Interview

INTERVIEW OF RUSSELL CANFIELD, October 1976

(Transcribed nearly verbatim by Sandee Brown, in Rocky Hill, July 1994)

(Ed note: I encourage people to listen to the tape if possible. Mr. Canfield is a great story teller who chuckles at his own jokes, making the narrative more entertaining than my typed version. The beginning of the tape skips a lot. Much of this is repeated later in the narrative. I included this early version of Mr. Canfield's recollections because some pieces are slightly different than the later version. Items within parenthesis are editorial remarks.)

...I was born...for a good many years in the ...and...my heart was in the Rocky Hill area...until Labor Day. When it opened, I spent my vacations with my grandparents...My grandparents lived next to what is now the FVW (VFW? – RCH) clubhouse. They had a farm on both sides of the street and they...spent all my summers on the farm and I certainly learned an awful lot about farming from my uncle and grandfather--also, my grandmother. We would go to the fields early in the morning...about Dividends...my grandmother's home...about 1/8 of a mile from...maybe several hundred feet. It would come to what is now known as Dividend Pond. And, below there was another pond...the ponds--two of them--nonexistent as the first pond--the dam gave way a good many years ago. And, the second dam disappeared. At the present time, there are only the two ponds.

Along the road, there used to be several factories. One was a scissor factory and there were old _____ in back of Hick's house there remains a _____. On the Dividend Pond--the upper pond, there was located Billings' and Spencer's Drop Forging Plant. It employed a good many people. It is disintegrated and I don't think there are any remains of it left at the present time.

Right across the street was the house of the manager who was Mr. Billings. (Editor's note: See the transcript of the talk given by Charles Billings' great-great-granddaughter.) The house on the opposite corner was a boarding house for some of the employees. During the peak summer time when there was haying, we used to go into the Dividend meadows ---- and across a wooden bridge, across the railroad tracks into the meadows. I doubt if anybody can get in there now, in that particular way.

Fishing along the brook at one time was pretty good. I don't know if there are trout in there at the present time. My great-grandmother was born in a house two houses from where my grandfather and grandmother had their farm. The house with the big stone wall across the front. Now, that stone wall wasn't there originally. It was put there at the time that Mr. Lennox, who bought the place after Billings & Spencer closed, remodeled

the house and built that wall.

Also, I remember trolley tracks being laid past the farm. The farm itself was quite interesting in many respects. There were a big barn and a cellar where cows and horses were kept--a pigpen quite close; and then there was a shed that ran along north of the barn in which I could remember a big roller. I never could understand what it was for until I asked and found out that it was used in the wintertime to roll the streets to flatten the Snow down. It disappeared, and I don't know what happened to it. Next to that was what they called "the shop" which was lined, from the top to the bottom, with any kind of iron junk that you can imagine. It included everything from a bolt and a nut to automobile license plates; anything my grandfather picked up went on that wall. And, there was a wood shed next to that which kept the wood. And, one of the pleasant things about visiting down there was my grandmother always had a pie for me. And, I've never been able to have anybody make a rhubarb pie the way hers tasted.

One of my early duties was delivering butter and eggs for my grandmother. I had several places I had to call each week. And, on the way home I would go off the main road, and down the Dividend Road as I liked to play through the woods. And, that was a little different route.

Right next to my grandmother's house stood a blacksmith's shop. The blacksmith's shop is still in existence (1976 – RCH). When my uncle build his house just south of the farm, they moved the blacksmith's shop down and they lived in it until their house was ready for occupancy.

By the way, the horse's name was Mayflower. No connection with the Pilgrims. (chuckle) But, while the trolley tracks were being laid in Rocky Hill (1909 – RCH), there was a construction crew in back of what was the old Tollgate House. And, my grandfather and uncle raised most of the vegetables that they used during the summer months. Also, across the street from the farm, just a little to the south, was a good sized barn in which were left fifteen to twenty horses. At that time, I was living in Hartford. And, we had a horse and carriage and used to come down on a Sunday to visit the grandparents. And most always, I would find one or two big watermelons under the seat besides other vegetables--not having a garden in Hartford.

During the blizzard of '88, there was quite a distance between one of the barns on the farm and the farmstead. And, I remember my father talking about having to get several pair of oxen to break a road between the two places so the livestock in the barn could be fed, also during that same winter, he and his father cut about 1200 chestnut railroad ties that winter.

Getting back to Dividend, the only factory in the early part of the century was Billings &

Spencer. After they closed up, they built a factory a little to the north, near the river. And, after that the Belamose Corporation located there. They made what would probably be considered synthetic cloth at the present time. They located in this particular locality from the water which they obtained from the brook being the only one within any distance. I understand there was one in New Jersey that they considered but finally chose this location.

I should have mentioned that there was a certain chemical in the brook which they needed for the manufacture of their product.

About fifteen years ago, my wife and I decided that we would like to live in Rocky Hill and we seized some land from my grandfather's estate. I proceeded to build my present home at 3333 Main Street. And, while watching the town grow, I still have fond memories of the past. Dividend itself, west of the Dividend Road and north of the ponds--there was considerable manufacturing including an oil plant; Pratt & Whitney has a plant there and it is quite a different scene then when I was a boy.

(Conversation that I can't hear)....until Labor Day, I spent many happy days with my grandparents in Rocky Hill. My grandparents lived next to what is now the VFW clubhouse on south Main Street. They had a farm also across the street, so I spent many - I spent all my summers on the farm and certainly learned a lot about farming from my uncle and grandfather; also, my grandmother. Dividend is located in the southeastern part of the town. And, until recently, it was mostly woods. Starting in the northwestern part of the town, Dividend Brook commences and meanders through Dividend and empties into the Connecticut River. Along the way, there were four ponds. The first almost in back of the old Tollgate House. Another was on Pleasant Valley Road, and a short distance farther down on Pleasant Valley Road is Dividend Pond--called Upper Pond. And, on the northeast end was located Billings's and Spencer's drop forge factory. And, below the dam was Little Pond. Today, only the last two ponds exist.

Along Pleasant Valley Road, there were several manufacturing shops. One was a scissors factory. Across the street from the Upper Pond was located a building occupied by the superintendent of the Billings & Spencer. There was also another building nearby that served as a boarding house for other employees.

To get into the Dividend Meadows, you went through a gate just north of the dam and along Lower Pond and across the railroad tracks. Many days have I spent hunting and fishing in Dividend. After Billings & Spencer³⁹ closed their factory, a new one was built along the riverfront which did not last long. And, the property was sold to the Belamose Corporation. And, they bought considerable land. Their reason for coming to Rocky Hill is

³⁹ Much of the follow repeats what been said before. Mr. Canfield may have been working from notes.

that the brook contained a certain chemical they needed to manufacture their products. Pratt & Whitney now is occupying the building.

I also remember when the trolley tracks were laid through Rocky Hill. When the trolley tracks were being laid, there was a construction crew in a shack, or house, in back of the old Tollgate House, and my grandfather and uncle kept them supplied with fresh vegetables which they raised. Also, across the street, in a barn owned by my grandfather, there were fifteen to twenty horses kept. At that time, I was living in Hartford, and I would come down with my parents. And, usually, when leaving for home, there would be a watermelon or two under the seat, as well as other vegetables.

Going back to my grandparents' farm, there was a big barn and several small sheds. There was a cellar under the barn where cows and horses were kept; a pigpen quite close; and then there was a shed which ran along the north end of the barn, and it was used for miscellaneous equipment to be stored--especially, there was a big wooden roller and I never could understand what it was used for until I asked and found out it was used to flatten the snow, and was pulled by several pair of yoked(?) oxen. It disappeared and I don't know what ever happened to it.

Next, there was a shop that was lined from top to bottom on the front of it with every kind of iron junk that you could imagine. It included everything from a bolt or nut to a license plate; anything that my grandfather picked up went on the wall. The wood shed next to that and one of the...during the blizzard of '88, there was a considerable distance between the two barns. And, I remember my father talking about having to use several pair of oxen so they could get from one farm to the other. That same winter, he and his father cut about 1200 railroad. During WWI, my father and I would get up early Sunday morning and take the first trolley to Wethersfield. We were living in Hartford at the time--get a team of horses and a lumber box wagon and come down to land owned by my grandfather. And we raised potatoes and baked beans, which helped out in the food shortage for several of our neighbors. They were more than glad to receive them.

My great-grandmother was a Bulkey⁴⁰, B-U-L-K-L-E-Y, and a good deal of Dividend at one time belonged to the Bulkeley family and Bulkeley Park was named after my family.

One of my jobs while staying with my grandparents was to deliver eggs and butter once a week to several families in the town. And, as near as I can recollect, I think eggs were fifteen or twenty cents a dozen, and butter twenty to twenty-five cents a pound. I would hitch up a horse and wagon--the horse, by the way, was named Mayflower--and deliver. And, as a special treat, I would go down by the Dividend Road, which was an old dirt

⁴⁰ This named is spelled several ways. This document has settled on 'Bulkeley' so it can be found in searches.

road, and was lined with woods on both sides of the street, all the way from the cemetery down. I would come out about at Hicks' filling station.

My great-grandmother and grandmother were born in the house just 2 houses from the old farm. (Ed: this is slightly different than page?). And, at the present time, it is undergoing remodeling.

After Billings & Spencer factory closed, Mr. Lennox, who was superintendent at the time, bought the place and remodeled it then. At that time, he built the long stone wall that goes along Main Street. This house is now 3343 Main Street. One of my earliest remembrances is going to school with my ant (Ed: aunt) at the little red school which is now occupied by the ambulance association. At that time, the teacher was Bertha Shipmaker (?)

(Interviewer: "These recollections of Mr. Canfield were recorded on October 13th, 1976 in his home at 3333 Main Street in Rocky Hill." (Ed: Connecticut)

Clocks

This article wasn't converted to MS Word since it seems to be a general discourse on clocks in Connecticut and doesn't seem to have anything specific to do with Rocky Hill.

Clock Making

This article wasn't converted to MS Word since it seems to be a general discourse on clock making in Connecticut and doesn't seem to have anything specific to do with Rocky Hill.

Collins Family History – Joyce Collins

HISTORY OF
THE COLLINS FAMILY
IN ROCKY HILL

By Joyce Collins

6/9/66

Joyce Anita Collins

I was born on July 16, 1949, at the Saint Francis Hospital in Hartford. For the first eight years of my life I lived on a farm on Cromwell Avenue, in Rocky Hill. For the next two and a half years I lived on Beverly Road in Wethersfield, then I moved to Mountain View Drive in Rocky Hill, where I am now living.

I attended the Dr. Oran A. Moser School for first, second, and part of third grade. Then, in Wethersfield for the remainder of my third year, I went to Lancaster School. For fourth and fifth grades, I attended the Stephen Mix Mitchell School in Wethersfield. When I moved back to Rocky Hill, I went to the Myrtle Stevens School for sixth grade, then to the Rocky Hill Jr. - Sr. High School, which I presently attend as a member of the junior class.

My father's name is William Albert Collins Jr., and my mother's maiden name was Anita Katherine Jensen. I have one brother, Christian Albert, and a sister, Dora Ann, both older than I am. My sister has two little boys, David Eugene Raymond and John William Raymond.

I have blonde hair, blue eyes, and I am about five feet five inches tall. I am an average student in the college prep division, and I plan to major in math in college. I am a member of the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, which my parents also belong to.

WILLIAM ALBERT COLLINS JR.

William A. Collins Jr. was born on January 5, 1920, in the Middlesex Hospital, in Middletown. His father's name was also William, and his mother's maiden name was Anna Neuman⁴¹. Until he got married, he lived with his parents on the corner of Brook Street and Cromwell. He attended the West School in Rocky Hill.

He married Anita Katherine Jensen of Wethersfield in 1912. He bought a farm and raised cows until 1955, when he sold them. At one time he had 110 cows, and ran his own milk route. For a while he worked at the Hartford Rayon⁴², in Rocky Hill, then worked at the farm and started a nursery and construction outfit, besides raising vegetables in the summer.

He now lives on 10 Mountain View Drive, but he runs the farm on Cromwell Avenue and is mainly in the construction business. He owns several trucks, back hoes, and other equipment such as a bull dozer and roller.

⁴¹ Also spelled Neumann. Ann Neumann's family owned a farm on the south side of Elm St. where I91 and the Big Y are in 2016.

⁴² AKA Belamose Corporation.

WILLIAM ALBERT COLLINS SR.

William A. Collins Sr⁴³. was born on June 14, 1893, on Brook Street in Rocky Hill. His father, Edward, farmed some and he Worked winters in Meriden. William Collins married Anna Neuman in 1919. They lived on the corner of Brook Street and Cromwell Avenue, where they still reside. They had seven children, William, Ruth, James, Lydia, Dorothy, Peggy and Ann.

⁴³ William had a brother, Herbert H. Collins who fought with the Yankee Division during WWI.

EDWARD COLLINS

Edward Collins was born in Rocky Hill in 1851. His father's name was Levi Collins II, and his mother was Sarah Hargreaves. He died in 1935, at the age of 81. His grandfather, Levi I, was married to Margaret McGuire.

Sage Collins B. 7/16/49	William A. Collins Jr. B. 1/5/20 m. 9/19/42	William A. Collins Sr. B. 6/14/1893	Edward Collins	Levi Collins II
				Sarah Hagar Collins
	Anna Neuman			
	Anita Jensen B. 6/19/23	Christain Jensen		
	Dorthea Hansen			

Jonathan Collins II Chloë Curtis Levi Curtis Rhoda Stoddard	Jonathan Collins I 	Gideon Goodrich Ebenezer Goodrich Lydia Deming	Eunice Goodrich Eunice Warner	Julius Collins brother of Levi Collins I

Levi Curtis	Joseph Curtis II	Joseph Curtis I	Thomas Curtis	
		Mercy	Elizabeth	
	Dorothy Edwards			

[illegible]

Ebenzer Goodrich Bapt. 3/18/1733	Gideon Goodrich	Ephraim Goodrich B. 6/2/1663 D. 2/27/1738 m. 5/30/1684	William Goodrich Weth. B. 1636 D. 1694 m. 1644/1648	Matthew Martin Sarah Richard Treat (Treat) Stm. Eng. D. 1669-Weth.
		Sarah Treat B. 6/8/1664	Richard Treat II Sarah Coleman	Thomas Coleman
	Sarah			

Hydia Deming	Daniel Deming	Jonathan Deming II	Jonathan Deming I B. 1639 D. 1-8-1699 m. 11-21-1666	John Deming B. 1615 m. 1637 D. 11-7-1705 Honey Treat B. 8-19-1615 D. 2-26-1690 (Rubbish Treat- Pyman's 4th Semester 1615)
		Abigail Filer	Sarah Greaves	
			Zerzhabel Filer	
			Experience Strong	
Mehitable Russell		Moadiah Russell		
Mary Hamlin				

Connecticut Indians – Mr. Mason Andrews – April 1969

Found in the Rocky Hill Historical Society Archives by Bob Herron – May 2016.

Mr. Andrews was a past resident of Rocky Hill who taught Social Science at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. He was involved in some sort of controversy shortly after giving this lecture and moved on the Schenectady Community College.

MR. Mason was President of the Rocky Hill Historical Society in 1967.

It looks like Indians were more of a hobby for him than an occupation. . – RCH.

To a person who is just coming back to the Rocky Hill–Cromwell area, after having been away for a year or a couple of years now, a person can't help but be surprised and impressed at the tremendous growth and change that we see taking place in this area. I'm one of these people that when you look at a town, or two towns, Cromwell and Rocky Hill, and see where they are going now, I can't help but turn my mind back and try to picture this area as it must have looked, not back ten years ago, but 200, 300, 400 years ago. The thought always occurs to me that we, who sit here tonight, those among us and those who are making all these marvelous changes in this area, are really Johnny-come-latelies.

Europeans, any of them, haven't been in this area for more than 300 years. Thinking about the fact that we have so recently appeared on the scene, it always interests me to think of the fact that there was another group of people who lived here in Cromwell and Rocky Hill a good long time, and built their lives here, lived and died here for thousands and thousands of years, long before we ever appeared on the scene at all. Archeological evidence now seems to indicate that people moved into this area perhaps as far back, maybe as far back, as 7,000 or 8,000 years ago.

We don't know very much about these people, but we can see a pattern. It appears that wave upon wave of people moved across the United States and eventually, moving across the country, worked their way here into New England, and passing through Connecticut. We find their artifacts and we can date these artifacts so we know that there have been waves of people moving through here. When the English arrived in this area during the 1630's and 1640's, in that area, they found the towns of Rocky Hill, Cromwell, Middletown and Wethersfield fairly well inhabited by Indians, and we think that these Indians probably were the last wave of inhabitants to work their way into this area. Undoubtedly there were other remnants or earlier waves that remained on, but we believe that this last group who showed up in this area must have come from someplace in the New York–New Jersey area. We believe that they worked their way

along the Connecticut coast and then up the Connecticut River, and we think that they probably came here about the 1300's or 1400's. I suppose there were other people living here already, but this last wave came in in very heavy numbers, settled down along the river banks, along the coastline, and we assume sort of superimposed themselves upon earlier people. It is this group that lived here when the White men arrived that I am particularly interested in talking about tonight.

The name of the Indians, as best we can work it out, was Wangunks. The term is an Algonquin Indian word that seems to mean "bend of the river." We think that these Wangunks were rather heavily settled in a piece of territory running from perhaps what is the present-day Wethersfield, down along both sides of the Connecticut River, probably as far south as the East Haddam area. We also believe that these Wangunks had a number of relative tribes that had come along with them and settled in other parts of the Connecticut River valley about the time and also along the coast. We find that the Indians of the Connecticut River valley about the time of perhaps 1600 had begun to organize themselves into some sort of a bigger confederation ... a confederation which would include just about all the tribes in this area. We find that the confederation was probably built around the Wangunks, the local Indians who lived in this area. They seem to have been the biggest and numerous of these various tribes, and we find a man named "Sequasson", who was what we called the grand sachem of this budding confederacy. Sequasson lived, at least when the English showed up, lived in Pyquaug village, what is now present-day Wethersfield. His power extended out and included most all of the other tribes around here. Some of these names are very familiar to you. They were culturally similar to the Wangunks of this area. They spoke the same language. They must have been related. This included the Tunxis Indians of Farmington, and includes the Poquonock Indians of Windsor, the Podunk Indians of East Hartford and East Windsor. Also included were the Mosacco Indians of Simsbury, the Hammonassetts along the shoreline, and the Quinnipiac Indians of New Haven. In almost every case we still have a river or a pond or something named after the original tribe.

As I say, these groups seem to have been quite closely tied in, and this fellow, Sequasson, came along and built up some sort of power base among the Wangunks, our own Indians in this area, and eventually brought these other sub-tribes into a big grouping which they called the Connecticut River Confederacy. I doubt if the Indians called it that. We just don't know what their name was for it.

Why were they building this confederacy? Primarily to protect themselves from those ferocious old Mohawks in New York State. The Mohawks had come up strong and hard, along with other groups, which we call the Iroquois confederacy, and they spread out their influence. The Mohawks had taken into coming down here to Connecticut, subdue

the Indians in this area, and then exacting tribute from them every year. These Mohawks were no slouches as far as being Warriors go. As a matter of fact, the Mohawks and other member of their confederacy seem to have ruled most of the countryside from the Connecticut River on the east, out as far as Ohio on the west, and from what is now Ontario in Canada down to North Carolina. They were very, very ambitious Indians, and apparently did all right.

So, our Indians over here in Connecticut found themselves paying tribute every year. We believe that the Mohawks established some sort of little stockade over in Glastonbury, across the river from here, and kept apparently a score of warriors over there. Then each fall, after the food had been harvested and so on, an old Mohawk made the rounds of each of the tribes in this area, and had them cough up ... "You owe me so many bushels of corn, so many beaver skins," and so on. The tribes paid this tribute to the Mohawk representative. He apparently lugged it over to Glastonbury, we think, and eventually transshipped it up to Albany and that part of the country where the Mohawks had their home headquarters. Now, what happened if you didn't pay your tribute? I suppose that is why the 20 warriors were sitting over there in Glastonbury. They apparently were sort of shock troops. They took care of seeing to it that you did pay your tribute. And I suppose if 20 weren't enough, it wouldn't take too much to send the word up to New York State, and you would have yourself a good big bunch of Mohawk Warriors down here. From what we learn and read about the Mohawks, you didn't want them coming down to visit you. You coughed up your tribute.

Now the Connecticut Indians were sort of up on the border territory of the Mohawk influence, and we suspect that they were building up this confederacy in order to hopefully gain enough strength to be able to kind of push the Mohawk influence out of this area. The Narragansetts over in Rhode Island were a confederacy--a whole bunch of little tribes, and they were able to build up enough strength so they were able to keep the Mohawks off their backs. We suspect the Connecticut tribes were doing the same thing and coming along pretty well. We believe that probably by 1600 or 1610 Sequesson had pretty well established himself as the head chief, called the grand sachem, and that the Connecticut Indians were thriving. They were fairly numerous, and it looked pretty promising for them.

In 1616 – 1617 disaster struck, a tremendous plague spread across all the tribes in New England, and it severely decimated the numbers of the Connecticut River confederacy. We think that probably one-third or one-half of the Indians living in this area died from this plague. What was this plague? We think it was smallpox. If it wasn't smallpox, it was probably either measles or chickenpox. Now we think that what happened here was that the Indians didn't have any kind of built-in immunity to diseases such as measles,

chickenpox or smallpox. We Europeans apparently do have a somewhat built-in immunity. That is, when we are younger, we get measles, we get sick three or four days, our bodies build up certain antibodies, and we are more or less immune from that particular type of disease for the rest of our lives. The same thing for chickenpox, and a much more severe disease, but the same thing is true if you managed to survive smallpox. The Indians apparently had no such immunity. They never got in contact with blood or viruses or whatever it is that caused these diseases; and so when the white man came exploring the coast the Dutch, the English up around Massachusetts, the French and others, working their way along the coast and so on, back before the Pilgrims ever arrived in Plymouth, they had contact with the Indians, and apparently brought these diseases with them. The Indians picked it up, and the thing spread like wildfire across the New England Indians. Just cut them to ribbons. Apparently it didn't spread up to New York State. We have no evidence of the Mohawks being stricken down. They were far enough away. And the things they brought back in the fall apparently from our Indians didn't include smallpox, chickenpox or measles. Lucky Mohawks. But our Indians down here were in bad shape. We find that in 1622 another outbreak of the same type of plague took place, and probably by the way of Plymouth came down here and just cut them to ribbons. So when the English arrived here, you will find comments or remarks probably about 3000 here in the Connecticut River valley. True. You will find in Stiles, who did a good piece of research and writing on the history of Rocky Hill, the comments that there weren't any Indians in Rocky Hill at the time the whites arrived. Probably true too, but I think there were lots of Indians in this area just before the arrival of the whites. This area just proves too many artifacts and other things. There are just too many indications to figure there were no Indians here at all. There were Indians here, but we believe that their population was cut down so badly by these diseases that when the white man arrived on the scene, the Indians were just about limping along.

Now, to make matters worse, before--now we'll think about it-- they were paying tribute up here to the Mohawks, they are being absolutely decimated by diseases, and then, to make matters worse-- a good deal worse, along came a group of fellows called the Pequots, who really messed up the works for the poor Indians in this area. Who were the Pequots? They lived up in New York State, this side of Albany. They were not related to the Mohawks. There were a group of Indians out there--they called them Mahicans--the same word as Mohican except that to keep them straight we spell the name differently ... MAHIGANS.

These Mahican Indians lived this side of Albany, and apparently worked out some kind of working relationship with the Mohawks. They may have paid tribute to the Mohawks, but our impression is that they were on their way toward becoming a member of the Mohawk confederacy. At any rate, a bunch of young braves of this group of Mahicans

took to looking for greener pastures, and several hundred of them banded themselves together into some sort of an invading party, and left the area of New York State, moved along what would now be about the Massachusetts-Connecticut border, moved their way over and hit the Connecticut River. At that point, they crossed the Connecticut River up about Springfield and started heading south, and moved into the territory of the Connecticut River confederacy.

Sequasson and his Indians, the Wangunks in this area and all the rest of them, gathered together and went out to East Windsor to meet the invading Pequots. The Pequots squashed them. Completely smashed them. We find that Sequasson himself, the grand sachem, was driven out of this area. He had to go over to Rhode Island and hide out with the Narragansetts, and the tribes in this area, the whole confederacy simply collapsed. And they went back to their old little tribal groupings.

The Pequots continued on their pathway, eventually moved down into the Groton, Connecticut area, and set themselves up some forts down there, and began to exact tribute from the Connecticut Indians.

So, the Mohawks didn't stop exacting their tribute. So things were getting kind of tough here. Now every fall the Mohawks came around collecting their tribute--so many beaver skins, so many deer skins, and so on. Every spring the Pequots came around collecting their tribute. The Indians in this area found themselves in a kind of vise. They were being really ground between these two groups. As I say, their confederacy just fell apart, and your Wangunks. -- Wethersfield through East Haddam, -- they became one tribe. The Hammonassetts broke off and went in one direction, the Podunks went in another direction, and they were in pretty tough shape. About this time----- (quite a gap--noisy gap—where it was impossible to transcribe.)

The Indians helped the English, and the English were hopefully going to help the Indians along the way. They helped them all right. They helped them right out of Wethersfield, Rocky Hill and down to Cromwell. But down they came (the English), and they settled down here, and immediately the Indians in this area huddled around the English stockades, threw off the control of the Mohawks and the Pequots, and just about said "look, we've got some allies here, and if you want to come collect tribute, you talk to the English." Very smart. The Mohawks took the hint. Of course, they had territories that went out as far as Ohio, and down as far as North Carolina, and they didn't care all that much.

The Pequots didn't take the hint, and we find that the Pequots were beginning to rub against the English. They would grab Englishmen who would be on their way up the river in boats, and they would grab them and torture them and so on. They began to harry the English trying to drive them out of this area. Why? Of course, they had a good thing

going. They had all the tribes in this area paying tribute to them. The minute the English came in -- no more tribute. So you will find a good deal of friction beginning to arise between the Pequots and the English. Interestingly, the poor Wangunks of this area found that it wasn't such a good deal bringing the English in after all, because the original treaty said the English would settle down in a little area right next to the Wangunk village, but before they knew it, the English were crowding them. They wanted more territory; they wanted more land to cultivate. The next thing you know, the poor Wangunks picked up, left their village in what is Old Wethersfield now, and moved down here to the border of what is now Rocky Hill--Wethersfield, out by Goff Brook. I understand an awful lot of artifacts have turned up in that area. They set themselves up in that area, but were still being crowded. The English, of course, came as farmers, and they badly wanted the land— the good river land especially. So the Indians found themselves being crowded. They brought the English in as allies -- saviors, but the English were crowding them ... too much, so an interesting thing happened. Old Sequesson -- he's back in this area now--the English brought him back and set him up as a kind of puppet chief-- he takes a trip down to Groton and has a talk with his old enemies -- the Pequots, -- and he works out a deal with them: that if the Pequots would come up into this area and perhaps chastise the English a little bit, maybe new arrangements could be made between the Indians here and the Pequots.

So the Pequots came up river and out to the Wethersfield meadows out here, about 1637 or so. I would put them about above where the Glastonbury Bridge is now (Putnam Bridge? -- RCH.) Apparently, the actual site is gone -- The River has a tendency to meander around out here in the valley. One day the English were out working their fields, and in came some Pequots. They clumped about 8 or 9 of the English on the head, killed them, and burned down as many cabins that they could get at, and so on, and hopped back into their canoes, and off they went back down the river, having a merry old time of it -- a big victory over the English. The English weren't too happy about this at all; they were in pretty bad shape, because we figured out now there couldn't have been in 1637 more than 200 male English in Connecticut. They had had their women and children with them, and they ran scared. So they figured the best thing they could do was quickly mount up some sort of attack upon these Pequots and get down there and slap the Pequots into line. If they didn't, the Pequots, after this little victory in Wethersfield, they would be no living with them⁴⁴. So the English rounded up an "army" of 65 men, and down they went, down the Connecticut River. They took -- well, Rocky Hill men fought in this little army— Wethersfield, Hartford, Windsor -- and down they

⁴⁴ Historical researchers in Rhode Island assert that the Pequot War was initiated when John Oldham was butchered by Mashapees on Block Island and Governor Endicott of Massachusetts attacked a Pequot village. They cite the attack on Wethersfield as a contributing factor.

went to Groton. I won't get into this, but one fine sunny morning the English surrounded the stockade of the Pequots, got out their swords, ran into the entranceway and began chopping down Pequots. The Pequots jumped up, madder than the dickens, and began to drive the English back out. The English set up musketeers at the two entrances, and one of the English leaders picked up a firebrand and tossed it on the Indian housing. The whole thing went up in flames. The Pequots then had a choice of burning to death inside the stockade, or running out and being mowed down by the English musketeers. On that bloody morning we think that about 500 or 600 Pequots met their doom. Pretty strong medicine, but the English were in no position to quibble. They had to break the power of the Pequots.

There was more skirmishing afterwards, but we're not interested in particularly the Pequots, but of course the Indians up here had been involved in this -- the Wangunks who had brought the Pequots in. The English knew this, and so they debated up in Hartford, "Should we go out and massacre the Wangunks. Teach them a lesson?" They finally decided "No", they would let the Wangunks give up their land, the rest of their land here in Wethersfield and Rocky Hill, and move down south to their other village in Mattabassett -- Middletown. So your Wangunks picked up and moved down to Middletown, and that became their headquarters. Sequasson moved back in down there. They stayed there.

The English crowded them and crowded them and crowded them, but they hung on and the remnants moved across the river to East Hampton and hung on up until the 1700's and 1800's, and kind of just died out.

Most of the Wangunks, though, when they realized they were beginning to get crowded here by your English, packed up -- some of them left directly from this area; others left from Middletown -- and eventually moved out to the western part of the state and settled up in a place in Kent. They, along with a bunch of other tribes who had been displaced in this area, formed a new tribe called Scatacoke Indians, and they stayed on there for a while. Then the English spotted the Kent valley, and it looked pretty good to them, and they began to crowd the Indians again. The Indians packed up and moved off to New York State, among the Mohawks, of all people.

You can see now that the thing has changed. The Pequots are no longer the enemy; the Mohawks are no longer the enemy; the English are the enemy. They had no way of standing up to them, and you can see our local Indians here pack up and they moved to New York State. They were tied in with the Mohawks. They bet on the British in the Revolution. The British lost and moved out, and the Americans moved in and shoved them out of New York State, and out they went to Wisconsin finally. So if there are any Wangunks left around, and I assume there are, you will find they are way out in

Wisconsin. I often wonder if they are aware of the fact that this is their homeland, and this rightfully was theirs and so on. I don't know.

Now that's, in short, the history of the Indians, what became of them, and it's just something that has been pieced together in the last 5 or 10 years. We had all sorts of bits and pieces of the history, but we just couldn't work out what had happened to the Indians. How come we find certain artifacts and so few; Indians. The answer of course, as I say, is smallpox.

Now I think I have probably taken more time than I intended to on their history. I think maybe now it might be of interest to take a couple of the aspects of these Wangunk Indians and look at them a little more closely, and see if we can get a better picture of these Indians. For instance, now one of the questions I often have asked me is "What did the Wangunks look like?" Now, did they look like the Indians on T. V. tonight, with all the big feathers?" The answer is "No." The Indians that we know are TV Indians. They were the last bunch that fought it out in the plains in the 1800's. The Indians in this area, well, first of all, they were light-complexioned -- a good deal lighter than one would expect. Why, I don't know, but the Indians varied as much as we Europeans do. They were light-complexioned; they were bigger than the English on the average. The English when they arrived in this area would average about 5'6". The males have gotten bigger over the last couple of centuries. The Indians seem to have averaged about 5' 7" and about 5' 4" for the females. They were mostly of slender build. Primarily there were outdoor people; the males made their living by running around hunting, warring, and so on. It was noted that very few of the Indians had any type of crippling or anything like this. And the reason for it was simply this -- they had a mostly hand-to-mouth existence, and any Indian who was born with anything wrong with them, they used to destroy them. They simply could not afford the extra mouth to feed. So most of them around here were in pretty good health. Now, it was noticed that when the Indians were little, when they were born, they were white -- so white, the English, it is interesting who the English thought the Indians were. The English arrived here -- inhabited by a whole bunch of people -- "Who were these people?" The English got out their Old Testament and checked it out, and found that way back, several thousands of years ago, the Jews had been scattered from their homeland, and had wandered off into different areas, and so "Who were these Indians?" They must be a lost tribe of Jews who somehow wandered over here into the new world. That's what they thought they were--they thought they were lost Jews. The adult Indians were a copperish color. It was only the younger ones that were white. What does this mean? We believe now that the Indians were light -- very light-complexioned. When they were born, they were about the same color as the English. But -- think about it -- they lived outdoors, so they had a certain amount of windburn, sunburn, and so on. They were much taken to painting themselves. Most any

occasion required total paint -- green down this side, white down this side, black for mourning, red for war, and white just for the fun of it and so on. The Indians never did put on a coat of paint, dress themselves up and scrub it off, and put another one on. Unh-unh. You kept it on. If you did a good job of painting, you kept it on until it wore off, and then put on a new coat. This had a tendency to darken the Indians. Additionally, of course, no self-respecting Indian ever took a bath. He'd sooner die than take a bath. So, of course, a 20-year old Indian you must assume had a 20-year old accumulation of dirt on him. Red dirt. Right. That explains the copper color. Right. So this darkened their skin, and then on top of that, they had another rather peculiar thing that they did. They coated themselves with bear grease. They coated themselves for two reasons I can think of right offhand. One: this was back before the days of DDT, citronella, and so forth, and they were badly bothered by mosquitos. By coating themselves from head to toe with a coating of bear grease, it made them more or less mosquito-proof. It also probably made them waterproof, which was what they wanted, and also, I would assume also gave them a certain amount of insulation. That is, they could better withstand the cold, and things like that. So most of the Indians around here were coated completely, and so I assume that this would have the effect of giving them a suntan and so on, and as I say, this grease stayed on until it wore out, and they put on a new coating of grease. So it shouldn't be any surprise that little white Indian babies ended up to be dark copper adults.

One other thing that kind of amuses me about them. Teaching up in the college in Winsted ... You've seen pictures of college students in their odd hair-dos, and so on, and I always have this vague feeling when I went in to teach a class as though I were sitting in some meeting of the disciples or something. You know, they all have hair down to here, and it looks like a shepherd from the old Sunday school plays⁴⁵. It makes me think back to our local Indians, who were much given to the same type of decoration, although really, your Wangunks and others would put my college students to shame. There were two particular types of haircuts that the young bucks favored, as far as we can figure out. One was simply a strip of hair down the center of their head. You've seen pictures of these once in a while. They would shave all the hair off the rest of their head with sharpened clamshells, no less, and paint up the area -- green snakes and so on -- and take that long hair (It was long hair too, by the way), that strip down the center, and grease it up real fine with bear grease and stand it up like a Greek or Roman soldier's crest—the only thing I can think of -- and this was quite the fancy headgear for one of the young warriors. The only thing that seemed to rival with it, and this one really stops me -- they used to take their hair and shave all the hair off one side, and let the other

⁴⁵ Mr. Andrews was involved in a controversy over his tenure at Northwest Connecticut Community College shortly after this lecture.

side grow shoulder-length, and they put their own little special totems and things on this side. I thought they must have looked very strange. I've never had the courage to suggest this or mention it in my anthropology class because I would have this lurking fear that one day a Wangunk would show up in class. But the Indians thought this looked just fine.

Now, I don't think I'm going into some of these other areas of their culture and so on, but perhaps it might be a little bit interesting. A couple of these points are fairly amusing. The Indian's food was something again. Basically our Indians in this area were agricultural Indians. Their diet consisted primarily of corn ... corn for breakfast, dinner, supper and the rest of the time. Of course, I doubt that they had three meals a day or anything like that. They also grew lima beans, squash and things of this type, but the basic diet was built around corn, parched corn, crushed corn made into corn cakes, corn chowder. Everything was built around corn.

What they would do was keep a large bowl of corn simmering in the middle of the campground, and anyone who stumbled upon anything that might add some sort of flavor to this chowder, they would bring it in, and then it would go into the pot. Now, if it was the blueberry season, you brought in a couple of quarts of blueberries and dumped them into the corn chowder. I don't know what it tasted like but I guess they got good and sick and tired of just plain old corn. If the fish were running, and of course, Rocky Hill and Cromwell were both beautifully situated for fishing, and when the fish were running, all of the Indians in the confederacy would gather along the river and would have a glorious time spearing the fish and catching them in other ways, bring them home, and in would go the fish into the pot, and would produce fish-flavored corn chowder, I guess. Of course, they weren't very fastidious about their eating habits, and so you know everything went in -- eyes, head, the whole works. Worse yet, we find that if they found a dead bird in the area, in it went -- mouse, frog -- it didn't really matter too much to them. You will find in early accounts some early English explorers and others coming through the area -- you would go out and would talk to them -- Sequasson -- and you were going to negotiate to buy his land, part of Indian hospitality required that you sit down and eat a meal with them. You weren't in a position to say "No". You had to sit down and eat, so you would gather around the large pot and each person would reach and put their hand in and pull out a scoop of something or other and eat it. I've read some of the accounts where you pulled out a mouse--a dead mouse had been put in there -- and the poor Englishman---it just about finished him right there. He figured he'd rather let Sequasson burn him at the stake rather than eat that mouse. I don't know what he did. It never did tell. The English were a bit staggered by the eating habits of the Indians.

A thing that rather amuses me about them--their method of warfare. There weren't all that many Indians in the new world, in this part anyway, and we find that they worked out a fairly decent way of waging war. Most of their fighting, before the English arrived and taught them a better way, most of their fighting was done with their tongues. By this I simply mean -- let's take the Wangunks down in Cromwell had a bone to pick with the Wangunks up here in Rocky Hill. Well, usually what would happen is that a messenger would be sent up from Cromwell, and he would go into the council fire of the local Indians up here, and he would then give a little speech, insulting the Indians here, say they were cowards, and reflecting things upon their ancestry, and so on. The Indians here would then have some sort of big dance and festival and they would send a messenger down to straighten out those Cromwell Indians, and back and forth they'd go, until finally one group was driven to desperation. Then they'd have the big dance, dance around the firelight and set up a stake in the middle, which represented the Cromwell Indians the Rocky Hill Indians were coming to get, then each Indian would dance forward and sing his exploits -- what he had accomplished thus far. -- "I have killed many deer; I have killed 3 Cromwell Indians the last time under war power, and this is what I am going to do to the Cromwell Indians." He would whack this stake. Each one would dance out and tell about his exploits and what he was going to do. Meanwhile, we would assume that down in Cromwell they were having another big fire and dance around telling what they were going to do, when the Rocky Hill Wangunks would show up. Finally when the big day comes, the best way to do it was to launch a sneak attack around dawn and whoop into the Cromwell Indian village, knock a couple around the head and whoop out again, or maybe catch a captive -- that would be best -- and get away. A sneak attack. These would be used very effectively upon the English, as a matter of fact. But then the Cromwell Indians would have to wait their time, and come up and retaliate, and so on. Occasionally it did work this way, that you met each other in broad daylight, with all the warriors drawn up on each side. As I said, they fought a rather good type of warfare in that way. Very, very few people were killed. Where they met each other? I would say it happened in the meadows down below here, and the two groups would draw up in two lines, and they would set up, and their best insulter would go out and probably insult the other Indians. Then the other tribe would have its chance, and back and forth it went. Finally, suddenly it would go beyond endurance, and he would take a spear and throw it over among the other Indians. Now immediately the other Indians on the other side would see the spear coming and would begin to dance around to dodge around the spear. You'd think if the Indians up here would really want to harm the Indians, they would throw a whole bunch of spears. You know, it would be harder to dodge thirty than one. Unh, unh. That wasn't the way it was done. You threw one spear, and you would all watch to see where it went. Then they would launch a spear back.

Even with bows and arrows. Same thing. Shoot one. You never shot another one. You waited to see where that first one went. Eventually, it is surprising to me, eventually someone got hit, and you would run up and try to grab him and drag him to captivate him, and his friends would try to pull him back behind their lines and so on. This is the way the war was fought. We find in huge battles where 500 Narragansetts fought against 400 Pequot that 6 men were killed after fighting all day. You see they could ill afford losses of manpower.

So you see why they were sitting ducks for the English. The English weren't aware of these fine rules. So when the English lined up, and they had 100 musketeers, why, you'd have it -- all hundred shot at once, and they didn't wait to see where the musket ball went either. So you see the English were far too aggressive for the Indians. As I say, the Indians didn't lack for bravery or anything else, they merely lacked an understanding of how Europeans fought their wars. So I say the fighting was ritualistic.

There is another side to this story though. When they captured a man, they brought him back to their campground, and they worked out their ritual upon him -- all of their hatred for the other tribe was vented upon this one individual, and here now, you see, there's no real loss of life, but now they showed their hatred, and of course, practiced all sorts of diabolical tortures upon this poor unfortunate individual who got himself caught. By the way, it wasn't only a matter of poking a guy in the head to catch him either. We find that most tribes it was only a matter of running up and grabbing a man and saying "You are my prisoner." Like touch football almost. He was your prisoner. He came back with you, and he expected to be sacrificed. He knew he was to be sacrificed; he expected you to do so; and you planned on doing so. They went through this whole ritual. The Indians seemed to have been stoics -- they didn't show any particular reaction to pain. They were trained from childhood that if they were captured, this is what would happen to them. So, as far as we have been able to figure out, the Indians each had a death chant apparently, and when he was tied to the stake and was burned and being tortured, he would sing out a death chant. "I am (so-and-so) of the Cromwell Wangunks. I have killed many of your warriors in battle. I am a great warrior. You people can't hurt me. Is that the best you can do to torture me. You can't get me to cry out." And so on -- acting out this ritual. Of course, they were working like crazy to make him cry out. Completely alien to anything we are accustomed to at all. Eventually the poor man died. If he died bravely, his tribe has gained great status and prestige, and so has he. If the Indians here had failed to make him cry out, they failed and so on. So you see the whole thing is ritualistic; so apparently in decades of warfare no more than 5 or 10 Indians were ever sacrificed in these wars. It was always an accident when an Indian got killed. It was a completely different way of doing it, and in a lot of ways I think they had a better idea than the way we Europeans wage war.

Well, I could go on and on tonight talking about a lot of these interesting aspects of the culture of our local Indians, but I think perhaps what I will do is open up the floor for any questions that may have occurred to you, and when we finish up on the questions, we can kind of wrap up the story on the Wangunks.

Are there any questions?

Q. On fishing, did they allow any tribes who were not residents here to fish?

A. Yes. Within the grouping that we call the Connecticut River Confederacy, they were all inter-related and spoke the same language, and my impression is that along the shores of the river here, during the time of shadding, and again salmon, this became almost like neutral territory, and all of their cousin tribes, like the Tunxis and groups like that, would come into this area and there would be a time of much feasting, and this is the time they would play their Indian games and things of this type, and all share in the bounty of the fish frying. Now, whether or not other tribes from other areas would have been welcome, I am inclined to say "No, " However, the nearest enemy tribes were way up in New York State, so everybody else down here was related, and it does seem there was a tremendous intermingling of all tribes at the time the fish ran, which was down in this area.

Q. Incidentally, I believe a good many of these artifacts have been found near the Meadow Apartments area. Was that a part of the village?

A. It appears to have been a smaller village. Now, the set-up was, as far as we can figure out, the Wangunks had two main villages complete with the stockade around, and so forth. One at Pyquaug in Old Wethersfield (about where the Congregational Church is in Old Wethersfield). The other one down in Middletown, called Mattabassett. And beyond that they had a number of little villages, including a couple of them here in town, I believe. These varied in size. They normally were not stockade, and we think what happened was that when the English crowded the Indians out of Pyquaug, they then transferred their greater numbers down to this other village that was down here, down in the meadows about, as I say, about the Wethersfield–Rocky Hill line. We think that at that time they put up a stockade around the village, and so on. There must have been up to 500 to 1000 living there. This might partly explain why you find so many artifacts.

By the way, the one thing I just wanted to mention about the artifacts--There were Indians here When the English arrived, yes, not many, and so on, and there were indications that there were an awful lot more Indians in the earlier days. I don't know what happened to them -- died off in the plague or something, and died off, and so on. For instance, in this collection here, just glancing at it -- These are not artifacts made by the Indians just prior to the English arrival. These are much older. You can tell by the

shape, and so on. All of these artifacts here would easily date back to the -- what we call the old archaic period, which was about the time of Jesus. They'd be back at least a couple of thousand years old. So whatever site they were dug from, late archaic village and so on, we could reasonably assume it was on that site, which would be way back before the Wangunks appeared or turned up on the scene here.

Q. Did the Wangunks all live in central villages?

A. No. But most of them did. We find that in the stockaded villages most of them had 500 to 1000 Indians or so inside the stockade or around it. Then they would have other smaller villages that were more or less temporary campsites. Over in back of the Silas Deane Highway here, where Howard Johnson's is⁴⁶, up in back of that, there is a campsite up there that we would assume 15 or 20 Indians probably lived there.

Now if enemies showed up that were on the warpath, I assume they would flee back to the stockaded village--one in Wethersfield, one down in Middletown, both Wangunk by the way. There may have been another one down the river, too.

Q. I just got through reading Taylor's "Great Trails of New England" (?) and he reports that not all the Indians lived in villages and that a lot of them lived by themselves. Would that be true here?

A/ Yes. They recognized the chief -- they knew that they were Wangunks. For instance, in Rocky Hill there were campsites here. There were Wangunk Indians living here. Maybe they gathered at Wethersfield for the big festivals and things like that, but otherwise they pretty much lived a separate existence. Meanwhile, the Pequots down in Groton, when the English went in and slaughtered the Pequots, there were two big stockades. The English hit one and killed 600, so we can assume there were 600 in that stockade. The other stockade seemed to have another 600 Indians in it. However, there were 3000 or 4000 Pequots, so we've got a good 2500 or 3000 that didn't live in either one of the stockades -- lived out, in little villages all through the Pequot territory. I think the same was true here of the Wangunks.

Q. My question is did the Indians with their own individual families live individually, or did they always congregate in some sort of a village?

A. Yes, they often lived individually. There is a case down in what is now Beckley Gardens⁴⁷ which seems to be a summer residence. Yes, but they had an extended family, and what I mean by this is it wasn't just mama and papa and the kids, it was quite often mama, papa and the kids and several aunts, uncles, grandma, grandpa, and grouped

⁴⁶ Apparently this was a mile or two south the Wethersfield-Rocky Hill town line on the west side of the Silas Dean Highway.

⁴⁷ Just north of where Beckley Road passes under Route 9.

together would maybe number 10 or 12, and would constitute what we would call a clan. When the English got here, it got all mixed up. I mean every guy who was the head of a little dinky area was called a chief. So every Indian you read about was a chief. He really wasn't -- he was just in charge of that little clan. This confused people around here something terribly. Were the Indians in Berlin a separate tribe? They had a chief. No, they were part of the Wangunk Indians again. As I said before, it's in the last ten years that we have worked out this picture and realize that all of the Indians here were quite obviously related. They spoke the same language, dressed the same way, intermarried one another, shared the same fishing grounds, and so on.

Q. What was their life span, and how did they dispose of their dead.

A. Life span, one guess was probably about 28, 29, 30 years of age, but this in part was brought down by a high infant mortality. The Indians who lived to be the wise old men of the tribe, all wrinkled up, and so on, probably, weren't much older than their 50's. To live to your 40's you were doing pretty well. Food was short at a certain time of the year; they lived in a little wigwam. Some of these cold mornings, next winter, when you go out on your way to work, think of living in a wigwam. You know how cold it gets here around the river. We think that 23, 29 or 30 would be a reasonable estimate. The English themselves didn't live long -- only the sturdy ones would live beyond their 40's. They had tremendous mortality too. Now, what was your other question?

Q. How did they dispose of the dead?

A. The Indians in this area buried the dead in the ground and put them in a flex, what I call "flex position." Their knees drawn up to their chest -- their arms around it. They bound them (I have no idea why), put them in the ground sitting down, facing the southwest. These Indians, of course, had come from by way of the New York, New Jersey area. They oftentimes put a bowl in with the Indian with a certain amount of food, and so on, and some weapons and some things like this. They believed that when an Indian died, he was going to make a long trip back to the area where they originally came from, back to visit their great god, whose name seemed to have been Keotan (sp.?) He lived out in the west someplace, southwest, and he kept a great lodge there, and when an Indian died, his spirit left the ground and went on this long trek down to the southwest. By the way, they hung a piece of clothing above the grave on a stick or something, and this would be used for clothing by the spirit when he went on his trip. The English, not knowing about this taboo, had a lot of trouble about this. They would come walking along in the woods and they would say "Look. Here's a beautiful buckskin jacket. I'm going to take it." Of course, the Indians wouldn't touch it because it meant there was somebody buried there, and if this clothing were taken, the spirit had to make his trip without any kind of protective clothing. It was one of the taboos that the English broke

regularly. Now, when he got down to the great lodge, the Indian apparently knocked on the door and Keotan met him there. Now we're not sure. The Indians didn't have any written language, so we have this coming down to us through the English, and the English may have thrown their own ideas in here. But seemingly the Indian was called to account by Keotan, and if it was deemed that he had been a good Indian, he got to live in the great lodge with Keotan forever and ever, and enjoyed all those things that Indians must have enjoyed. If he didn't measure up, Keotan turned him away from the door, and his spirit was destined to wander forever seeking a permanent abode. It sounds to me like a little bit of Christianity sneaked in there. I mean, a very simple form. It sounds like Peter in judgment at the gates, and so on; but that is the story that comes down from the 1600's by the English.

Now, why do we find so few skeletons in the ground, here in this area ... so much so that most people claim that the Indians hadn't been here more than 400 years ... you never find any skeletons. As far as I can work it out, the soil is silt in Connecticut -- the bones simply do not last. They simply disintegrate. I didn't know that somebody last year found a skeleton in Rocky Hill. Did they? And they found a couple across the river over in Glastonbury. Very unusual to find an Indian skeleton. You will find graves; you will find powdered material that must have been bones; you will find a certain collection of bowls and arrowheads which we know was a burial spot, but as I say, it was very, very unusual to find any skeletons at all. I think it is the soil condition that causes it. Then, when you go out tonight, or when you are wandering around Cromwell or Rocky Hill in the next couple of days, why not stop a minute, look around and give a thought or two to the people who originally lived here and think about the fact that, as I said, we are Johnny-come-latelies, and Cromwell and Rocky Hill really in the long run of history, these towns have been the homes of the Wangunks, and not us. Thank you.

ADDRESS given by Mason Andrews, Meeting of Rocky Hill Historical Society, April, 1969
Transcribed by E. M. Rowe

Neil Cox Connecticut Foundry Interview

“There was quite a battle down there”

Neil Cox, age 87 was born November 1st 1923, in Wayland Massachusetts. He worked numerous jobs in different parts of the country and even owned his own business. In 1977 he began his work as a Plant Engineer at The Connecticut Foundry Co. located in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. I was lucky enough for him to take time out of his day so I could listen to him reminisce about his 12 years of service working at the Foundry. If you have every seen the Foundry, perhaps just glanced at in on the way to the river, its hard to believe that in only 21 short years it has transformed from a thriving fully operational factory to the eye sore it is today. Mr. Cox recollects some of his fondest memories of working at the Foundry and gives insight as to what Rocky Hill life was like back in the 70s and 80s.

Ben Harvey
2010

Q: Where and when were you born?

A: Wayland, Massachusetts November 1st 1923

Q: How did you end up in Rocky Hill?

A: Well I went to school at Worchester Tech College, after that I got a job in New Britain at a company called Landers, Frary, and Clark. While I was working there I lived in Wethersfield for about 12 years. The company relocated to Fort Smith, Arkansas and so did I, there the company went out of business, so I decided to open my own business, an engineering consulting firm. That lasted about three years before I decided that it was just too hot in the summer, so I moved back to Connecticut and bought my house in Rocky Hill. That was in 1965. Before I started at the foundry I worked at Veeder Root in Hartford, they mostly manufactured the computers in gas pumps.

Q: In what year did you start working at the foundry?

A: 1977

Q: What position did you work?

A: Plant engineer. It was a management position; I was probably the third ranking person there.

Q: What did you do? What did the Foundry manufacture?

A: I was Responsible for purchasing all of the equipment and deciding where would be the best place to put it, and I would have to teach the employees how to use it, I was also in charge of all of the maintenance work for the equipment. Maintenance was tricky because a lot of machines were interdependent upon one another, we couldn't wait to fix anything. I had to develop a team like firemen, A bell would sound off in the

maintenance department and we would run out to see what was broken. The Foundry made iron castings, mostly for Stanley Iron Works. They were mostly used for switches and control circuits. How they would make these castings was they would buy sand from other parts of the country, mix it with clay and water and use this to make castings that they would fill with iron. They would have a box that they would fill about half way up with the sand mixture then they would place whatever shape they wanted the casting to be in the center, and pour more sand mixture on top of it. So after the sand was compressed they could take the shape out of the center and there would just be an empty space left that they would fill up with iron. There would be a sand man who would reach into the sand and judge if it was the right consistency, "needs a little bit more moisture today" he would say, he had an important job because if you had too much clay it would bubble up and ruin the casting. And all this was done by hand, the only thing done by machines were the molds, and the transportation of the sand. Almost half of the operation was underground with the conveying of sand. Then after the castings were done they would clean the majority of the sand and reuse it. We only used about 10 percent new sand each day. Another one of my responsibilities would be to go down into the tunnels and take the motors out of the conveyer belts, the river would flood two or three times a year and it would ruin the motors if we didn't remove them. The really fun thing was every night they would let the fires drop in the crucible (a large vessel used for melting down the iron) and they would release a door at the bottom of it and all the burning ash and leftover iron still half on fire would hit the ground and it would splash up and it was pretty frightening if you weren't expecting it.

Q: How would you describe Rocky Hill back then?

A: More agricultural, a lot of farms. The housings projects on the west side of town weren't even started, it was all farm land, and the only business out that way was a lumber company. It was certainly less complicated; the population wasn't near what it is today. There was a general store and with the ship building yard the ferry was a big business center.

Q: If you had to guess, about how many employees did the foundry have?

A: About 120 or 125, everybody got along pretty well, a lot of people from Hartford and Middletown.

Q: In what year did the Foundry close and for what reason?

A: 1989, the union descended on the owners. There was quite a battle down there. The Ladies Garment Workers Union was looking for new workers; they tried to unionize the foundry and did a lot of harm. The strike started in about '87; it scared a lot of people away. The union would threaten people at their houses to stop them from going to work, or people would wake up with 4 flat tires on their car, the idea was the Foundry would have to close and have to join the union to reopen. The scariest thing of all was this man would pick people up and drive them into work, one day as he was picking someone up, a car pulled up behind him and they shot into the back of his windshield, and hit him in the neck. In the end nobody won anything, the workers didn't want it the

union and management didn't want it, all it did was put 125 people out of jobs, the company lost and the union lost.

Q: How do you feel about the town buying the foundry? What do you think should be put in its place?

A: I use to walk to work every morning; it was a great way to stay in shape. I think it's sad to see so much politics get involved in it. It could be cleaned up and made into a nice park. I wouldn't want to see anything commercial put down there, maybe a park or a museum.

Q: Describe your time working at the Foundry

A: I enjoyed my time down by the riverside; it was a good challenging job. It took a lot of innovative thinking to make things more efficient. I remember one time before we installed pollution controls in the smoke stacks the guy across the street was painting his boat, and while the paint was still wet and sticky, the smoke stack was spouting out ash and cinders, the stuck to his boat, his paint was the texture of sandpaper. He got pretty angry about that. The Foundry was also a big part in my sons deciding they wanted to go to college. They both worked in the foundry for a summer and after that summer said to me "there's one thing I know I don't want to know with my life, I don't want to work in a factory." A lot of great memories, its sad to see the state it is in today.

Architecture

The Cumberland Inn in the mid-1960s.

Tape Recording found among historical
artifacts at Academy Hall by Bob Herron

Spring 2016

Recording done January 24, 1965

Transcription by Bob Herron

September 2, 2016

This presentation on the Cumberland Inn was done by Charles and Marion Crozier who owned it in 1965. Charles was Chairman of the Rocky Hill Board of Finance. The presentation is laced with enjoyable bits of humor. They reference pictures but these weren't found with the tape.

Charles: Yeah, I will take the outside of the building, Marion will take the inside of the building. Now I got a big kick out of it, and his drawings, and his slides. I want to say that Mr. Moses' talk was most interesting and most delightfully presented. Now this is our house here. This is a page out of the Hartford Times. These are pictures of the house from a couple of years ago, some of you may remember, perhaps you can see a little of it there.

The house was built in 1767. There's some numbers on the outside of the house ... but you can see from this photograph, up here ... there's a chimney ... are the numbers 1767 which presumably are authentic. Then, in *The Old Days of Connecticut* there's a paragraph about the house that says it was built about 1767. Then there's an old (inaudible), you might see these later in more detail, "Duke of Cumberland, Entertainment, 1773." This supposed to be a picture of the original inside. Which is now

in the Morgan-Brainard collection which I believe is down at the Mystic Seaport. The house was built by John Robbins, Esquire ... who was purported to have been the wealthiest man in Connecticut. It is said that he was worth about 80,000 dollars. Now I don't know how many millions that might be in today's rate of exchange but, obviously, he was fairly well-to-do. It was apparently called the Duke of Cumberland Inn because the land was purchased by Robbins from the Duke out of a grant from King George the Third.

Marion: George the Second.

Charles: King George the II, I'm sorry, (laughter), I may have something to say when you get up to talk (more laughter.)

The house is a gambrelled brick house in the style of Mr. Moses' and Mrs. Moses' house. As far as I know, the roof is straight and I've never seen any curves there. I'll go home and take a look (laughter.)

Marion: This is a hundred years later ... the house was ten years when the picture was made.

Charles: Maybe it's been straightened out since then. It was supposed to be one of the first houses in Connecticut made of brick. Unusual glazed (inaudible) and the brick was supposed to have been made from material on the side of the building. The exterior brick walls are made with headers and stretchers every fifth row is headers and stretchers. At the floor levels there is a (inaudible) of extruded brick which stand out from level of the building. You can see them you can see them across here, here, and up here. Then one of the fixtures of the house is this palladium window on the second floor above the front door. It's said to be the earliest palladium window in Connecticut. Now, I can't ... we haven't authenticated all of this information, we've found it in books and records but this is what seems to be the present status of the history of the house.

There are forty three windows in this ... forty three lights of glass ... in this window here; and I assure you, there are at least that, and may more , each time I've had to paint and putty and wash those windows (laughter.) There are three dormer windows on the third floor in the front and three in the back. There are four chimneys in the main house and a chimney in the ell part. The front door is made of double thickness; an inside layer and an outside layer. And then decorated with ogee styles crossing the lower part of the doorway as you can see here.

Marion: And the outside panels are different.

Charles: Right

Marion: The ogee pattern is on the outside and on the inside are four ... five (inaudible, sounds like calzones.)

Charles: Correction noted and allowed (laughter.)

Inside is blocked by this bar. The lady who is holding it, you will see in a few minutes. Yes, that is the only lock on the door.

Then we'll come to the outside of the house except for some early pictures. You can't see that, of course, but it's an old photo, an old picture that was given by a friend in Wethersfield a few years ago. Here's a picture on a post card which is much clearer and taken a little later. In the earlier picture, the fence comes way across the front here, the well spring was here. There are several trees in the front of the house which I ... no longer appear. You' find that true (inaudible.)

I think that covers the outside of the house. I'd be very happy if Marion would relieve me and tell you about the interesting part of the inside.

Marion: (seems like the tape stopped and picked up here) are presently identical with the blue strap hinges ... and this also. The original door knocker is there which is lovely old brass, when it's polished ... which isn't often. We have had it polished on occasion. And, these early pictures, incidentally, show the old twelve over twelve window panes. Now, all but two windows have been changed to six over six. But there are two of the original windows in the house. One on the south side and one on the north side. Now, I think that this stuff is something you just have to look at.

Of course, I can't leave the outside alone ... really ... and one of the important things about the outside is the wonderful wisteria in the back yard. And if any of you haven't driven by there, in wisteria time and seen that going up over the elm tree, you're missing something you'd go south to see. But, Edith Matteson's father⁴⁸ owned the house before we bought it, and that wisteria tree was planted by an early Robbins bride who brought it from England and it was planted to hide the three-holer which was out there. And, Edith is convinced that the reason it is so luxurious is because of its location. Now, just think of it when you go driving by. Incidentally, it was George the Second who gave the grant, 2000 acres apparently, to his son, the Duke of Cumberland, who was called Butcher Cumberland⁴⁹, and, so, he really wasn't a very reputable character. But the house, probably was started for him, and then, with the approach of the Revolution, it didn't seem like a very healthy place for him to come. So, he sold the property to John Robbins, who was a ship owner which, I think, accounts for the paneling in the house. I'm sure that, probably, the living room paneling was removed at one point. But the dining room still had wainscoting. The whole fireplace wall is paneled. The kitchen is all paneled. The two front bedrooms upstairs are paneled. The bathrooms they didn't bother with. But the ell part of the house was slave quarters. And the story that we have ... heard ... that that house had more slaves than in it, and attached to it, than any other house north of the Mason-Dixon Line⁵⁰. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean an awful lot of slaves. They apparently lived in the ell part of the house. Edith says that when her father bought the house there was just a beaten earth floor, in 1914, in that ell just as hard as ... apparently the kind of wall business Arnie has in his basement. And, there

⁴⁸ Edith's father was known by several names. Eugene Matteson, G. Franklin Matteson, and Franklyn G. Matteson. He was a draftsman by trade.

⁴⁹ Prince William Augustus. He was known as Butcher Cumberland for his ruthless treatment of the Scottish Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden which made him a hero in England and despised in Scotland.

⁵⁰ Is this provable or is it folk lore? There are records of large, slave-driven plantations in Eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island.

was no door between the ell and the main part of the house either upstairs or down. And there have been doors cut through now. Those walls are about sixteen inches thick between the main part of the house and the ell. The windows in the main part of the house are all Georgian-type window with slanted reveals. And the east and west walls are about twelve inches thick. The north and south ones about ten inches thick. And that seems strange to me, but actually, the prevailing wind comes from the west and apparently they were protecting with the thick walls there. And, of course, with the four chimneys in the main part of the house, most of the wall space is chimney anyways. The only place where you see the thickness is where the windows come. And those bricks, which were made ... of course ... I'm not paying any attention to my notes (laughter) ... the bricks on the window reveals and on the edges of the fireplace were specially molded, and, you know, a modern fireplace always has a straight brick at the front and then a slant, and then back. These fireplaces slant from the front (first of two tapes ends abruptly here.)

There are pictures. The Times did a terrific job of taking pictures.

There are three beehive ovens in the house. One in the kitchen, one in the ell or slave quarters, and one in the basement. There's a terrific fireplace in the basement, and also a smoke chimney. The cooking for the house, I would say, was all done in the slave quarters. And, to this day, if there is a downdraft in that chimney which, occasionally, you get if there's been no fire for a long time, there's a smell of ham (laughter.) It's terrible, it comes down the chimney.

I think that probably ... have I left out anything I really should say?

Charles: Tell them about the inside and the hole...

Marion: Oh, there's a bullet hole⁵¹, and then we heard that it was made by American recruits who were going to Wethersfield to enlist, and they didn't like the idea of the Duke of Cumberland riding on his horse ... and so they shot him. And there are bullets in the woodwork over the front door. Charley won't admit that they're bullets. He says maybe they're nail heads. I'm sure they're bullets.

I think that is it. If there's anything you want to know ...

From audience: was it built originally as an inn or as a house then became an inn?

Marion: I think it was an inn to the extent that any large old house was required to take in travelers, because there weren't very many places for people to stay and if anyone was traveling, and you had space in your house, you were supposed to give them a bed. The house is not arranged as an inn, and I don't see how it could possibly have been. There are doorways between the bedrooms on the second floor. Edith says that when her father bought the house there was just one room finished in the attic. And it had a loft, similar to what the Webb⁵² House has.

⁵¹ Musket ball hole?

⁵² It's unclear if this is the Webb House in Wethersfield or the William Webb House on Riverview Road in Rocky Hill.

Actually, a great deal of the paneling, the stairway, the carving around the steps, and so forth, is almost exactly like the Webb House, but it gives a completely different feeling because its ceilings are so much higher. You just don't think about the Webb House when you're in that one.

The windows originally, had shutters which folded back into the reveals. We have three sets of shutters which we have though sometime we would get installed in the dining room, but we haven't done it. It's one of those future jobs. We've only been there nineteen years (laughter.)

(Tape peters out here.)

Danforth House – Alice Adler.

Architecture

The Danforth House in the mid-1960s.

Tape Recording found among historical
artifacts at Academy Hall by Bob Herron
Spring 2016

Recording done March 22, 1965

Transcription by Bob Herron

September 3, 2016

Alice (Jennison) Adler was a legal secretary and a long-time resident of Rocky Hill. She was secretary of the PTA in 1926 and was still doing charitable work through the congregational Church in 1974. She was active in Rocky Hill Garden.

Her husband, Sigmund Adler was Born in Germany, he was an educator; a guidance counselor at the YMCA, then at Hartford Public High School. He was a member of the Rocky Hill Draft Board and Board of Education. He was also the first Park Commissioner in Rock Hill as well as serving for several years as tree warden. They lived at 10 Ashwell Street.

Mrs. Adler. Was born in Maine and has a charming Yankee accent. She is reading someone else's report.

Narrator: ... draws to conclusion and Miss Alice Williams⁵³ ... ALICE ADLER (laughter)
we're settled on Alice anyway.

Alice: This is a paper I'm going to read. It's about the Danforth House which is located in the center of town, opposite the Congregational Church, and just recently has been painted and renovated so it looks much better. And, this paper that I'm reading from, it is copied from the Colonial Dames series and the State Library, and was compiled by Mrs.

⁵³ Just a slip, according to the Social Security death index, Alice's natal name was Jennison.

William H. Smith, with technical particulars by Mr. Henry Kelley of Hartford at the request of Mrs. Alfred E. Terry in April 1925.

The earliest owner that I can find was Steven Riley and Comfort, his wife, who sold it November, 13, 1766 to James Weed and Petora, his wife, for fifty pounds lawful money in the seventh year of the reign of George III Our Sovereign Lord, King of Great Britain Anno Domini 1776. James Weed and his wife sold to Thomas Danforth Senior, 1782 for seventy eight pounds. Inherited by Thomas Danforth Junior at appraisal of one thousand five hundred dollars.

There is an old well beneath the back porch. An old barn has been moved away. Two young hemlocks stand in front of the house. In the back yard there is a very old wine apple tree.

The house contained, originally, ten rooms. It now has twelve rooms and a room in the attic. It has an inside porch in front chimney⁵⁴ which contains stairs, built against front walls of the chimney. It has two rooms on ground floor which open onto porch. On the right-hand side the hall or living room. On the left-hand side, the parlor. All the downstairs rooms originally had paneled wainscot about feet high, which has been removed.

This house has a back ell which contains two rooms and a pantry. This ell, which is two stories was built in 1900 and replaces an earlier one which was smaller and one story high. The kitchen, in the center, and connected with both side rooms, originally, the kitchen originally extended to the north end of the house with stairs at the north end. Chimney of brick is central.

The foundation in the cellar is of stone and contains a fireplace beneath that in the hall. The house is framed with 1 ¼ oak planks. Overhead hangs of the second story front about three inches at each end of walls. Single door nor original. It was sponsored by a heavy horizontal beam originally.

Staircase ... starts off with the entrance door going outside, rises and branching to right and left. The stairs are finished with a half grain of wood against the plaster following the contour of the handrail.

The outer and exposed end of stairs is paneled beneath the string which is ornamented with scroll brackets under each nosing. Paneling in all four front rooms, around fireplace side now painted white.

The feature of this house is the unusual stairway. It rises opposite the front door five steps then a small landing. The stairs here divide right and left, upward as shown in plan. A half rail is against the wall and a hand rail on the outside at the bottom of the stairs. A small door to a closet is under the right curve of the stairway. This kind of stairway is more often found in English country houses and may have embodied a reminiscence of the early builder.

⁵⁴ She is reading from a document which seems to have cryptic abbreviations and dropped articles.

The earliest mention of this house is found in the sale of Danforth Senior⁵⁵ to his son. It describes the house as follows: The lot when owned by Steven Riley and wife, adjoined Griswold property. The street which runs beside it, towards the river, is called Griswold Lane⁵⁶ and the locality is named Stepney. Riley and wife sold it for fifteen pounds to James Weed and wife, seventeen sixty six. James Weed and wife sold to Danforth Senior in seventeen eighty two. Three rubes and seventy rods cost seventy eight pounds lawful money received by Danforth Junior , quote 'the place where I now dwell' unquote. A lot, fifteen, reserving a life use, 1824. James Weed and wife, Petora, apparently sold the land to Thomas Danforth Senior, who by (unintelligible) then built the house, seventeen eight two, seventeen eighty five as the house is not mentioned in early sale but was inherited by Thomas Danforth Junior.

Entering the front door of this handsome house, one is confronted by the unusual divided staircase. The narrow bounds of the small cramp such a grand staircase and require steep and narrow stairs to accommodate the double flight. In England, this double stairway is used to divide off that part devoted to nurseries or servant's rooms from that of the owners and guests. Whether this was the idea of the early builder or merely the happy reminder of an early home, offering a grand and unusual effect we do not know. It is a different plan from the usual zigzag stairway that we find in front of the one chimney ordinarily.

The house is beautifully situated on a corner facing the green, with the fine, white painted church nearly opposite. Thirty feet back from the road and with plenty of room each side, it has an airy and sunny location\ . It is an attractive object to passersby.

The one chimney house usually implies fine, square rooms on each side. There rooms have ornamental cornices as the top of the walls, wall covering in the paneling found in the kitchen of all four rooms upstairs and down. The corner cupboard, in this case, is found in the kitchen; a very plain one. The single front door was formerly fastened by a heavy bar across it. Fireplaces in all these main rooms with mantles and unobtrusive, but pleasing, wainscoting all about the central wall which encloses a big chimney.

Turning to the right upstairs, we find a pleasant north front room used as a sitting room. As there are plenty of bedrooms. Wainscoting, three feet high, form the ornamented main rooms, but has been removed. The house has (unintelligible) of remodeling, however. The cellar has the usual brick oven and the attic is a smoke room⁵⁷.

Fortunately, the house has always been owned and inhabited by Americans of refined and cleanly manners, of thrifty habits⁵⁸, whose apparent pride in keeping it in repair without too much alteration. Its prominent features are outside, the double overhang,

⁵⁵ Between 1778 and 1870, the Danforth family carried on a business in pewter and tin ware. Thomas Danforth also carried on this business in Philadelphia, and spent part of his winters there. The Danforth family sent some of their goods by "peddlars" as they called their salesmen, throughout the southern states.

⁵⁶ And, this became Ferry Road, then Glastonbury Avenue?

⁵⁷ Is this a room for smoking meat or tobacco?

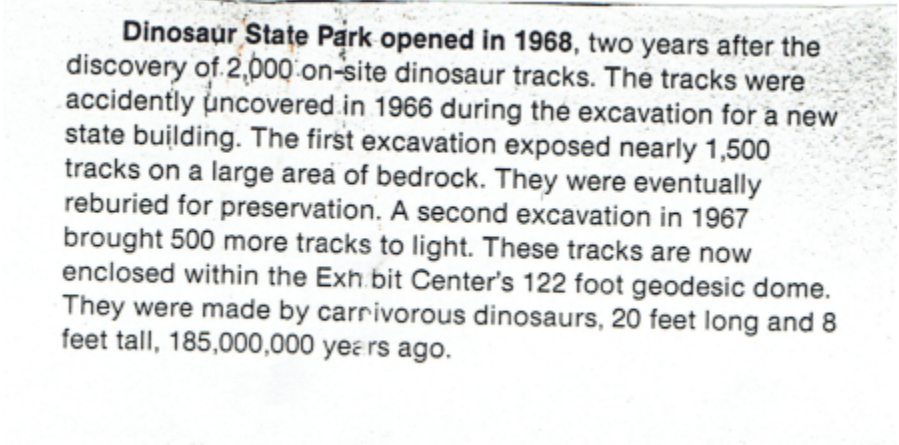
⁵⁸ She seems to be reading this. She issues an embarrassed laugh as she reads it.

and inside the unusual double stairway besides, the spic and span appearance of both house, grounds, and gardens

It's not so spic and span. They painted over.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ This looks like Alice going off script. I had the same reaction. Who paints over antique brick? - RCH

Dinosaur State Park – Mr. Wittier – 1990



Dinosaur State Park opened in 1968, two years after the discovery of 2,000 on-site dinosaur tracks. The tracks were accidentally uncovered in 1966 during the excavation for a new state building. The first excavation exposed nearly 1,500 tracks on a large area of bedrock. They were eventually reburied for preservation. A second excavation in 1967 brought 500 more tracks to light. These tracks are now enclosed within the Exhibit Center's 122 foot geodesic dome. They were made by carnivorous dinosaurs, 20 feet long and 8 feet tall, 185,000,000 years ago.

DINOSAURS

Illustrated talk given by Mr. Whittier at the Rocky Hill Historical Society meeting.

INTRODUCTION; I was a teacher in Bristol for some years, and while I was a teacher, Mr. Whittier had been coming to our school. Mr. Whittier is a retired manufacturer; retired but not resigned, I guess. He says he has been going to the schools with various programs on natural sciences. He has quite a repertoire, and this is one that we thought would be particularly appropriate because of the dinosaur finds here in Rocky Hill. I talked to him about it and asked him to come over to speak to us, and I think you will find him very well prepared. He has an excellent series of slides.

Mr. Whittier: Thank you, Mr. Robbins (?). "Boys and Girls."

We're going to study about history today and some of those creatures that lived those many, many years ago. It is very interesting because you realize that this World has been here a good many years.

Now, we'll turn the light down and start the lecture.

Before we start out we must find out how we pronounce the names. They are all Latin names. The time we will be talking about will be in the vicinity of the Mesozoic Era. You realize these are tongue twisting words, and we have to be careful how we pronounce them. This period is divided into the Cretaceous, Jurassic and Triassic eras. Then we have the ruling animals that ruled the earth. In other words, they were the dominant animals that had dominion over the other life on earth at the time.

Now, The Triassic Age is quite close to us because we are going to talk about some of the tracks that were uncovered in Rocky Hill.

These mean something. Triassic is something to do with Greek; Jurassic refers to mountains -- mountains in Russia -- the Jura Mountains Cretaceous might refer to the

white cliffs of Dover, where many years ago a young lady uncovered the fossil imprints of a dinosaur.

Now the age of the mammals is in the Cenozoic Era. That, of course is the triceratops, and the quarter (I cannot pronounce it. It's hard for me because I have an affectation in pronunciation.) Now, see up here a little creature, and I think you know what it is. It is man. Man has been traced back by Dr. Leakey in Africa to one million to two million years. An ancestor quite different from what we are today.

Now we will show you some of the first life that appeared. These are some little animals that come to us in fossils, and we find them still in the ocean, the same as they appeared to those many, many years ago. This might be 500 million years. You will notice the horseshoe crab; you will notice the sea whorls, and all the various forms and colors, etc.

Now you may wonder how we got these pictures. These pictures were in the Geographic Magazine of February, 1949. The artistic work of one great paleontologist -- Charles Knight.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you that I put a lot of play on the pronunciation of that word, and we have the boys and girls pronounce it after me, and after a while they are able to pronounce that four syllable word.

We have here some of the life in the Carboniferous Period which is a coal bearing age. We would so that this is vegetation that grew in those luxurious times when the Weeds and jungles were full of these fast-growing trees.

You will see on the table in front of you tonight the fossil remains of an imprint made by the dendrum (sp?) tree, which goes back possibly 250 million years.

Then we have here some of the early pictures. The ungainly Euryapsids lived in slimy pools where the Earth's coal beds "s are forming. You will notice these eagle-like animals, and this gross looking crocodile, and the vegetation. None of this grows today. And, of course, as result of evolution that caused new growths of vegetation, but we have the fossil imprints, and that's where the paleontologists enter. As they uncover these fossil imprints, they are able to work out the form and real substance of their body.

This is called a Pteronodon, which is a strange looking flying reptile that flew over the oceans; and if you look carefully, you can see his hands (what represents the hands) folding his wings -- the strange-looking bill and the crest. That creature has a wing span of 1 to 20 feet.

Then we have here the sea lizards, or the reptiles that were in the ocean back 180 or 200 million years.

They have the Dinosaur National Park that's in the western edge of Colorado. The mountains where these fossil remains were found were about 7500 feet high. This was sea level when these sea creatures were in the ocean. In other words, those mountains were uplifted from sea level to 7500 feet.

Now we have the different types of dinosaurs. The dinosaurs that walked on the earth, the dinosaurs that flew through the air, and dinosaurs that swam in the ocean. This is called a bird-eater. My tongue doesn't twist around the Latin word of this particular animal, so I won't try to pronounce it.

Now you will notice the strange-looking animals that flew in the air. There they are. The feathered one, and the one without the feathers. The nearest thing we have too this is probably the rather strange bats.

We have here the Hall of the Amphibians at the Peabody Museum. The children recognized this immediately because there is hardly a child in Connecticut Who hasn't visited the Peabody Museum.

If you look you will see in the background that famous mural painted by Rudolph Solomonsen (sp?). It took him about 4 1/2 years to paint that. The title, I think, is "The Age of the Reptiles." It takes you from the Carboniferous Age right down to the present age. (They sell these slides, so I bought four of them.)

Here we have various types of animals that reigned in the land at that time. Here we have the Dimetrodon. Now see if you remember the Dimetrodon because I'm going to fire it back at you and see if you can identify it later.

Here we have these crawly and ugly-looking animals. Then the big dragon flies. Here we have the flesh eaters.

Now, dinosaur means "terrible lizard." I have to ask the children what dinosaur means in English. They usually come up with the right answer because they seem to know dinosaurs, much to the confusion of their teachers, for that matter.

Now here we have the flesh-eaters – the Tyrannosaurus Rex. Oftentimes I say, "Boys, What does Rex mean?" They usually seem to get floored on that, and that means "the king." "Of course, he was the most powerful of them all.

Here we have the Allosaurus, and if you look carefully you will see that this artist had put on these spikes, etc. However, that's more fanciful because no one has been able to find the fossil remains of one. All they do is hazard a guess as to how they may look.

Now here's the Dimetrodon. He's the strongest of them all because he has that fin-like or sail-like thing that very few animals have today. You will notice that the scientists believe that there is a possibility that this is the air-conditioning arrangement for

maintaining constant blood temperature of the animal. Well, might be right.

Here is the big one – Brontosaurus.

Here is a new one for us. All the children are able to identify it -- They call it Stegosaurus.

Here is the last of the four. You will notice that many years back those many million years ago, we had volcanoes.

Here's one they call Anchisaurus.

This, of course, is the Tyrannosaurus, the most terrible of them all. Here we have the Triceratops, Which has a kind of armor-like arrangement and three horns up in front.

In the Amphibian Hall of the Peabody, the fossil remains show us what the heads look like, and here is another dinosaur that might be a plant eater. I believe it was -- I'm not sure.

Through this door we come to another hall here Mr. Solmosen has painted recently and finished it--"The Age of the Mammal."

Now here is something that all the boys and girls laugh at. I say "what is that?" and of Course the answer is "the Dodo." I tell them the story about the "Dodo" and about how unkind man has been to the other species, and how these Portuguese sailors went around the Cape of Good Hope and Africa and up the east coast north of Madagascar, and they came to this island, and on this island they found these turkey-like sized animals. They were hungry for fresh meat after this long voyage, and they decimated all of these animals, and there are no more. The British Museum gave this exhibit to the museum. It is a very rare exhibit.

Now, in Colonial days, our forefathers dug up these mammals, and one was dug up, I think, in Farmington; another was dug up in Titusville, Pennsylvania, and this one came from Pennsylvania. The story is that Professor Marsh, who was a great paleontologist in that day, paid \$700 for that priceless skeleton. Today I doubt if you could get anything like that for that price. Of course, here are no prices set on these things. It requires tremendous financial outlay on the part of the universities to send expeditions out to the places where the fossils are dug up.

This is a fossil that was dug up -- I imagine it's a skeleton rather than a fossil--showing what might be the ancestor of the rhinoceros. I'm not an expert on the geology of animals, and I don't pretend to be, but in talking to children, arouse their curiosity and let them find out these facts in the various textbooks that are written about these animals.

This is a tremendous animal that lived in Europe at a time shortly after the Ice Age possibly. It might be 10,000, it might be 15,000 years ago. It is called the Irish elk. If you

look carefully you can see that enormous antler -- possibly 12 feet across. In the next picture you will see the way they were hunted. This picture was in the Geographic, and I have a friend in Bristol who is a fine photographer, who took these pictures and photographed them and made them into slides, Edward Goodrich, a good friend of mine for many years.

Now, it says here "The Lake Dwellers of the Early Bronze Age relentlessly pursued the Irish Elk." Standing in the bow of his dugout, the hunter aims his bronze-tipped spear at the giant stag, Megalosaurus." If you look carefully you see what might be a lake, and the Elks. You will see the protected housing that they had out in the lakes, and you will see the weapons that were used in hunting these animals. Now that might be an explanation of why there are no Irish Elks existing today.

The dinosaurs lived together, and as you realize, they were the ruling animals on Earth.

Here we have the Allosaurus. Then we have the Brontosaurus, and the Stegosaurus. Then we have the tremendous exhibit here in the Museum of Natural History in New York. This tremendous thing is almost 20 ft. high. Look at the boy at the bottom. Notice that they have powerful legs, and rudimentary paws or arms that might be their front legs. However, they are used to clutch their prey, and if you will look at the jaw, you will see the sharp teeth -- the way they tore away the flesh of their food supply. Food supply might mean other dinosaurs if they could catch them.

Now here are two of them playing together. See the careful detail that Charles Knight put into these drawings. Now Then, we have Mr. Salinger's art work. It had a different style if you notice. These pictures are in the Golden Book on Dinosaurs that you can buy there at the museum for about \$3.00.

Here is one of Charles Knight's interpretations of Tyrannosaurus-Rex eating off the carcass of some enemy. Here is another one meeting up with a Triceratops.

Then the tracks. This is a huge piece of granite that Wes found in the Big Ben district of Texas. Look at the size of the boy and the size of the track. Now the tracks here in Rocky Hill are not as big as that, however, they've got some fairly good-sized ones. Here they are--showing you some of the smaller type, and some of the ones that visited the trackway here in the Connecticut River.

Now the title of this picture is "Guess what?" They are not only big, but they are also very, very stupid. You will have to ask, "What's wrong with this picture?" Of course, that was drawn by illustration of what is known as humor by the Saturday Evening Post.

Viewer: Man didn't arrive until after the dinosaurs.

Mr. Whittier: That's right. Put a gold star in your book.

Well, here are some more. They like to wallow in the swamps. Here are the plant-eaters. What a grotesque face he's got. He can look both ways. I think the artist kind of stretched the imagination a little bit because that is his head, and that's part of his body back there, but we'll give him the credit of the doubt. You will notice the plant-eaters have legs about the same size.

They wallowed around eating their food -- plants, ferns, etc. Now here you will notice the long neck. He's looking around to see if he's safe. This vegetation you see here is -- I think they call it cycads -- they're halfway between a palm tree and a fern. You will find the fossil of them in the Hall of the Amphibians in the Peabody Museum.

Now here's a remarkable set-up in the Museum of Natural History in New York showing you a flesh-eating Allosaurus that's stalking the large tyrannosaurus, and these are the skeletons or fossil remains.

Now, when they can't find the fossil remains, they oftentimes substitute something in between so that there will be an entire system of skeleton.

This is called the Iguanodon, I believe. That means lizard-like. This, of course, I believe, might be the flesh-eater. The long tail and the hook on the arms or the front legs.

Then we have another called the Duckbill Dinosaur.

Then here's the stegosaurus with these terrible-looking spikes on the tail, and the armor plate on the back. The legs here are slightly larger than the front legs. About 25 to 50 feet long.

Another picture showing you what happens when the stegosaurus meets up with the Tyrantosaurus Rex. He's probably hissing at this animal. And this animal who has a brain about the size of a Walnut, doesn't know what to do. He's well protected because I'm sure he won't beat him.

Here we come to the reproduction of these animals, like the reptiles today, like the turtles, like the chickens. These eggs were found in the Gobi desert in China. It might be Outer Mongolia as that is what this place is called at the present time.

Roy Chapman Andrews was a great scientist sent out by Yale University to find these eggs wherever he could. When they examined the embryo of these eggs they found a substance that would indicate a creature like this. This would be the animal that made these eggs.

These dinosaurs were called the Oviraptor, or egg-stealer. Here's another picture. The incubation of these, like turtle eggs today, would be the action of the warm sun on the sand. They were laid right on top of the sand. You will notice the little ones just hatched out.

Now we come to identification The Dimetrodon, and another. They had a show on television -- life on the Galapagos Islands. These might look like some of those sea lizards that are now living on the Galapagos Islands.

Here is the most grotesque of them all. They found these fossil remains and they were able to exactly reproduce their form and substance once as you will see in these pictures. Strange looking animal here with that crown on top of his head.

Here's one called the Monoclonius.

Here's a strange little animal that has never been able to find his place in evolution because he has disappeared entirely except for fossil remains.

Here are some little creatures that might evolve into the horse of today through evolution. These ages they went through many years introduced strange forms.

These are some of the animals that were found in the Western Plains. Volcanoes were very active at that time out on the coast. Mt. Hood is an old volcano, and quite a few -- Mt. Rainier and a lot of others. Well, those are the animals that lived in America at one time.

Here's something which explains something that might have happened. No match for the saber-tooth tiger was the stupid giant ground sloth. Too slow to run, the Megatherium stood at bay, vainly trying to seize the agile cat, and the powerful arms. Well, you can see what those touches looked like. Well, the theory is that our ancestors were hunters, and they might have killed these animals all off. The smarter were able to make spears that could kill these animals, and the theory is they disappeared, through excessive hunting by our ancestors.

When the Age of Man began, the Mastodon still inhabited the United States. The creature's name meant nipple-tooth -- comes from the queer conical projections on its nose end on its horn.

But this is strange on the woolly mammoth. They found these buried on the tundra in Russia and various places throughout the Earth intact. In other words, skin, flesh and everything so that they were able to know exactly how they looked, because the fur was there, and so forth. The close relative to the modern elephant is the Woolly Mammoth--perfectly preserved. Specimens have been found in Siberia, where they lay frozen in the ice for thousands of years.

Then -- there are our ancestors. No religion a few years back could frown upon any mention that possibly we come from the lower ordered of animals. Even as late as 40 or 50 years ago we had the Dayton trials -- the young biologist who was arrested for teaching the Darwinian Theory. Well, this is an explanation perhaps of the theory. Some

of our ancestors, with the flint-tipped spear, the stone ax and the rocks, the Neanderthal men repelled an invader. You notice they were clever enough to use these rocks and tie them on to clubs, take sticks and make clubs out of them or spears. They lived in caves. How do we know they lived in caves? Because they left their record right there. The surrounding animals that they hunted—the bison, and the elephant and all those animals. Ten thousand years ago the Cro-magnon men drew pictures on the Walls of the caves.

Here are some of the giant bison, and the early American hunters. They would attack the giant bison with darts and arrows.

And then we are coming right down to Rocky Hill.

Here is Edward McCarthy and his big earth-moving machine. This man was trained in local schools and no doubt he had perception and the ability to know what he was scraping, and coming off that big machine, he came down and consulted with his superior, his boss, and the next day scientists came to Rocky Hill in droves -- all of them, and I can only depend upon one Mario Frankel (?) of UConn. Here they are with their cameras and their geologist tools, etc. I wish I knew the names of these people, and I asked Mr. Joe Peoples to let me know. That's an historic picture. That picture was taken the day that they decided that they'd better do something about this, and not let this go down the drain like a lot of other discoveries that were made. They immediately saw the advantage of moving the location somewhere else, and that's what they've done.

Here are some of the pictures I took that day in August, 1967.

Those pathways go a long ways, and they acquired some more land and here we are. Understand that this was mud at one time. It might have been sedimentary -- very fine mud which would make an impression when stepped upon, and turned into this hard rock -- shale, which is in layers, and the various layers had various imprints. It is possible that this trackway prevailed for over one million years, perhaps, and then as it built up as sediment was washed in by the sea, it resulted. It's almost miraculous to realize that there is a place on earth where we have so many tracks. There is no other place, and the scientists will be able to examine these carefully, and we have these men with sufficient knowledge to unravel the secrets of nature.

Here are the geologist's tools—the hammer, on the little wedges and things.

Now, there is a print right there, -- right on top of the imprint of this Ubtronti (sp?) are all kinds of names for them, but that's the only one I can pronounce. These are ripples. You see at the seashore as the tide comes in and out. And to think that these things at the time they were made, that they came down to us these many millions of years, interpreted to us in the form of a hard rock.

Here's a picture of the young fellow. It was in August; he was Here is one side of the print; barefoot. And here is the other side of it--the negative Now, there's a print right there—right on top of the imprint is the Ubronti (sp?). They imprint. These prints were made, and then they were covered over with sand, detritus, etc., and when you split them open, you have the positive and then you have the negative.

There's a lot of action in these pictures, and these were taken that August. It is now called Dinosaur State Park.

Here is the gentlemen who is the custodian. He was a private detective.

He was hired by the State to keep the marauders from stealing. They were ready to come in there with bulldozers and make a merry market, of it.

That's the Ubronti (sp?) print; made by the medium-sized, bi-pedal dinosaurs about 14 ft. in length. They were small ones. They were the granddaddy of the big Tyrannosaurus—Rex, who came later.

Here are some more ripples, created by the wave action, with the sediments of the shore line of a body of water and preserved, and these sediments became rock.

This is what it looked like. They put some kind of stuff over the tracks to preserve them, over the winter, and that gave them that kind of rouge color. That's not the real color. Here is something they provide so that the people who are interested can make their own tracks out of plaster of Paris.

Here is the electric blanket that was put over them to preserve them from the elements, held down by those automobile tires, and heated by electric current, and sump pumps to keep the water out.

Here we come to the scene last fall when the trackway dedicated. We had a man from Washington, and this, of course, is what is known as the plastic bubble. It is really a remarkable building. It is a temporary building, but it's good enough for the present, and it certainly was a wonderful day when we dedicated that.

Here is a picture of the high school band. The master musician there dedicated a new march about the dinosaurs. It was a Wonderful day.

Scroll: Dinosaur Trackway has been dedicated a natural landmark.

(Here he names officials present at the dedication, etc.)

Transcribed in June, 1990 E.M. Rowe

Early American Silver

This article wasn't converted to MS Word since it doesn't seem to have anything to do with Rocky Hill.

Ferry, Rocky Hill-Glastonbury

Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry – No Author

This seems to have been written about 1973. No author is cited.

ROCKY HILL -GLASTONBURY FERRY

In 1650 Wethersfield voted to lay out a road on the west side of the Connecticut River leading to the present Rocky Hill ferry slip and establish a landing. At the same time there was laid out a similar road which led from the river on the Glastonbury side to Nayaug Farms, the old Colonial name for South Glastonbury. At this time Rocky Hill, Glastonbury and Newington were all part of Wethersfield. The ferry was a going concern by 1700 and to date it has never missed a season of operation. Records show that in May of 1721; the charter for the ferry was granted by the General Assembly to Jonathan Smith of Rocky Hill. In 1728 when Smith became too old to manage it, his son, Nathan, took over until his death in 1735. The right was transferred to Hezekiah Grimes, who held it until 1792 when it was taken over by Elizur Goodrich. Various private owners operated the Rocky Hill ferry until the Connecticut Highway Department, citing safety reasons, took it over in 1917. As far as can be determined, the original Rocky-Hill-Glastonbury ferry in 1655 was a raft poled back and forth. Later flatboat's maneuvered by oars or sweeps transported vehicles and passengers. Sails were then added and these combined methods served the needs of travelers up to 1849. At one time a horse on a treadmill in the center of the craft supplied motive power, an in 1867 steam came into use. In 1721, the General Court established the rate for tolls at four pence (6%) for each man, horse & load, and two pence for each person on horseback. Tolls were raised to 8 cents previous to 1864; after steam was introduced, to 10¢ for man, horse & wagon, and 5 cents for each extra passenger, or single person. Today's craft is an open flatboat named the "Hollister" after an early Glastonbury family. Two Hollisters captained the ferry more than 50 years.

The three-car barge is towed back and forth by a diesel powered tow named the "Cumberland" in memory of the Duke of Cumberland who was

Owner of a 2000 acre tract of land in Rock Hill by his father King George II.

Up until a few years ago the toll was passenger cars (including the driver) 2cents; passengers 5 cents; motorcycles, 10 cents; trucks (3 ton or less) 35 cents. The Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry did not have the distinction of being the oldest ferry in continuous operation until 1917. That year the Bissell ferry connecting Windsor and South Windsor and founded in 1618 ceased operation because of the construction of a bridge.

In 1921 Dan Taylor became Captain of the ferry and retained this position for 16 years. Henry Hale, the son of Wilbur Hale, long time commercial fisherman on the Connecticut

River, became the next Captain on the ferry. He retired in 1962, and his son, Arthur, took over as Captain until 1973. Frank Green and Howard Lussen were also Captains of the Rocky Hill Ferry.

On June 1, 1973 the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry was designated an historic landmark during ceremonies held at the ferry slip. A shiny new plaque proclaims the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry as a State Historic Landmark. The ferry is open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. from April 1st to December 1st, Water levels permitting the four minute crossing; toll is 75 cents for car and driver, 25¢ for each additional passenger, and 25 cents for cyclists.

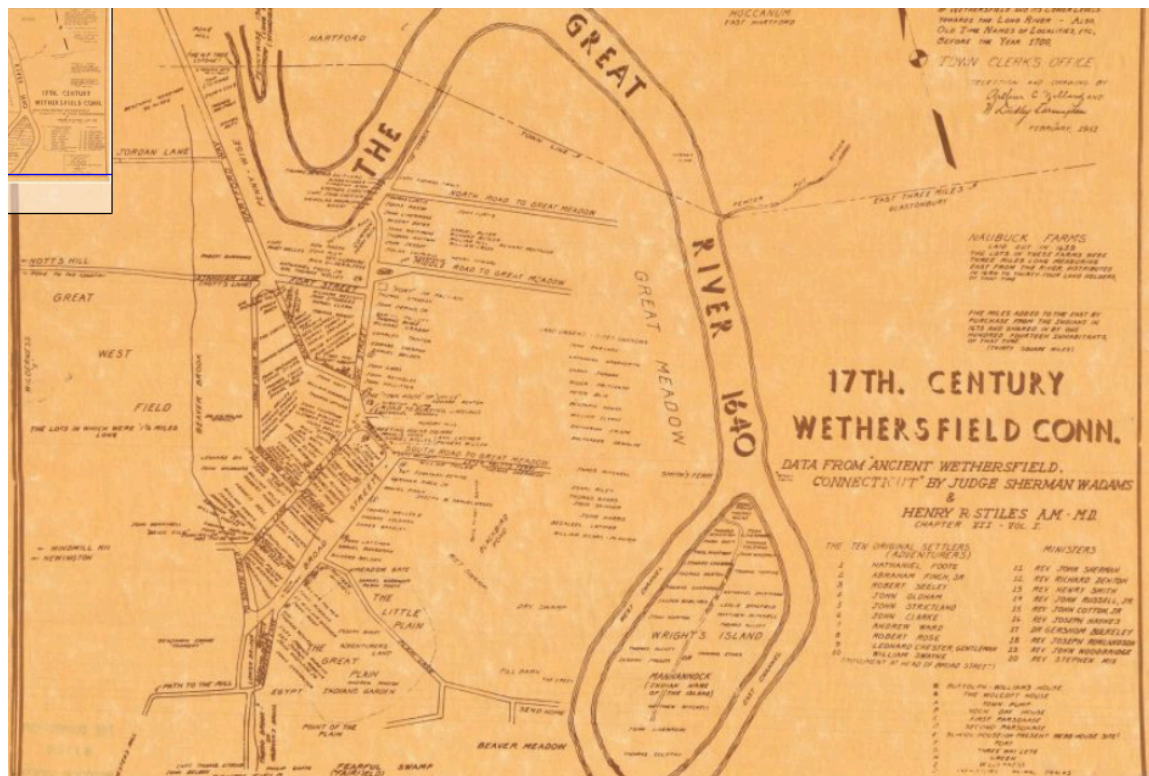
The Two Glastonbury Ferries – Virginia Knox Paper

Read this paper carefully. It describes two ferries, the Smith-Pratt Ferry which ran from Wethersfield to Glastonbury north of the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry and the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry that ran where the current (2016) ferry operates.

Google research reveals the following:

A map of Wethersfield in the 17th century is avail at:

[http://emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People\\$00409169/0/title-asc?t:state:flow=537f8f79-a084-40c2-9d60-b16cf4ac2aef](http://emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People$00409169/0/title-asc?t:state:flow=537f8f79-a084-40c2-9d60-b16cf4ac2aef)



Pratt's road on this map was where March Street is in 2016. The landing on the eastern shore was probably where Naubuc and Pratt Streets intersect. The ferry ran north of Wright's Island. Which seems to have been washed away in the flood circa 1700. The landing on the western shore must have shifted positions from season to season depending on the level of the river. Pratt Road ended in the Meadow which floods in the spring.

The map shows the oxbow circa 1698 where the Wethersfield Cove is in 2016, including the six warehouses, five of which were washed away by the flood.

Below is a map of this area in 2016.



Virginia Knox, the author of this paper, was a member of the Glastonbury Historical Society - RCH

This is the story of the early years of two ferries which operated across the Connecticut River between Wethersfield and Glastonbury. It begins with an account of the laws relating to ferries in general. During this early period both of the ferries were family affairs, and from the colonial and State records, archives, and probate records, quite an interesting picture is developed, of the controversies and claims made by various relatives for the ferry privilege.

The account concludes with the year 1806, the date of the petition for the first bridge across the Connecticut River at Hartford. The opposition by ferry operators and other citizens was so strenuous that passage of legislation creating the Hartford Bridge Company was delayed until October, 1808, and the bridge was not completed until 1810. While Hartford argued, Enfield and Suffield had built and dedicated bridges across the Connecticut on Nov. 9, 1808, thus having the first bridge across the river in the State.

Although the towns of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield were at first settled on the west side of the Connecticut River, their lands extended on the east side of the river. Crossing on ice was conventional for winter, but during the larger part of the year some other means of navigation was necessary. For each land owner to have his own boat crossing from Wethersfield's west side to his land on the east side was an unnecessary

expense and so neighbors joined forces. Soon certain neighbors developed a particular aptitude for maneuvering the crossings and set up as ferrymen. Within the first ten years of the founding of these three towns, in the spring of 1641 the General Court gave the town of Windsor the right to provide a ferry boat to attend the river, with rates of 3 pence a single passenger and 2 pence a person when they carry more than one at a freight, and 12 pence for a horse.

By 1668 the General Court had provided free passage over all ferries in the colonies for magistrates, deputies of the general court, while they are upon the country's occasions, with their necessary attendants, viz, a man and a horse. The respective ferrymen were to be reimbursed out of the public treasury.

Before 1673 the owners of the land east of the river were building their homes there, and in the Wethersfield town votes of February of that year, Richard Smith Jr. was authorized by the town to keep a ferry over the Great River. The exact locations of these ferry landings is lost to history. The stretch of the river between Glastonbury and Wethersfield shifted constantly, islands were wiped out, boundary disputes taken to court, and petitions to the General Court are full of references to shifting conditions, and the need for change of location of ferry landings.

Broadly speaking, the ferry granted Richard Smith Jr. later known as Pratt ferry, plied across the Connecticut River between Wethersfield and Naubuc Farms, in the vicinity of Naubuc Avenue between the Glastonbury town line and Pratt Street. The other local ferry crossed at or near the present location between Rocky Hill and Glastonbury.

The fare for the Wethersfield ferry was set in October, 1695, was for one man, horse, and his load nine pence pay, or six pence money, single man and horse, five pence pay or three pence money. If a single man (or the single horse!) had ready cash, there was a savings in fare. Often they had no money, and "pay" meant an article used as a medium of payment such as grain, corn, pork, or beef, for which values were set when offered as pay, by the general court.

A feeling early developed that the fares set were not sufficient, and ferrymen were tempted to charge more than the legal rate. To prevent this practice, in response to divers complaints of travelers and passengers, the October, 1695 session set a penalty of 5 shillings for every default, and increased this penalty to 20 shillings, half to the complainer and half to the public treasury of the colony in 169. It would appear that the first penalty was not stiff enough to demand respect, and was quadrupled to carry more weight. A question arising as to what was meant by "a horse and his load" it was resolved by the assembly in October 1701, that the meaning was "all persons and what else a horse shall bring to the ferry at one time."

In the revision of 1702 of the Statutes of Connecticut, the law relating to ferries was quite fully developed, and was to continue without too great change for many years. It required that the ferryman be provided with sufficient boats, oars, and hands. The privilege of ferryman carried with it the sole liberty to transport, except for the proviso that individuals may use their own or neighbor's boats or canoes for their ordinary labor or business. The ferryman was not to carry passengers from another's ferry; he was not to use an insufficient boat, and there was a penalty for not providing a boat. No person was to crowd into any boat under penalty of 10 shillings, and the ferryman was not to receive too many passengers at once under penalty of 20 shillings. He had the power to put out passengers, and the order in receiving them was the order of their coming, only all public officers and such as go upon public or urgent occasions, as physician's chyrurgeons (surgeons) and midwives, shall be transported first. Finally, fares were to be set by the general court and published, with penalty for taking more.

In October, 1729, an act was passed to encourage the post office. The assembly observed that the privilege of ferries was a growing and profitable estate, an opinion somewhat in conflict with the feelings of the ferrymen on the matter, and not ordered to be taxed in the public list of estates. To offset the benefit of this tax exemption they enacted the following: after the first of January 1730, the Governor, Deputy Governor, Assistants, and Representatives, for the time being, also judges of the superior, judges of the inferior courts, when and as often as they shall have occasion to pass and repass over the ferries, upon the occasion of public service, whose ferriage fare was wont to be paid out of the public treasury, shall after the first of January, pass ferriage free; and no bills drawn on the treasury shall be paid by the treasurer, nor allowed by the auditors nor signed by any assistant or justice of the peace for any ferriages above mentioned.

In October 1750, the fares were stated in proclamation money, which was coin valued according to a proclamation of Queen Anne, June 18, 1704, valuing most common coin in use in the colonies, the Spanish "pieces of eight" at six shillings. The classes covered in addition to man, horse, and load, footman, and led horse, were for ox or other neat kind; sheep, hog, or goat. Ten years later two and four wheel carriages were added to the list.

With this description of some of the requirements exacted from the ferryman in exchange for his privilege of ferrying the public across the river, at a time when there were no bridges, we come to an account of the two Glastonbury ferries.

As already mentioned, the first ferry authorized between Wethersfield west and east of the river, was a vote made by a town meeting held February 24, 1673. Richard Smith Jr. was appointed to keep the ferry over the Great River in New London Road and give entertainment to strangers and travelers in the same road, as occasions may serve. At

the same meeting the inhabitants in the east side of the Great River were granted liberty to make and maintain a pound for use, (punch hole) together these measures indicate that through travel and settlement were on the increase.

Competition began to rear its ugly head in the spring of 1722. Richard Smith memorialized the May session of the General Assembly, pointing out that he had for a considerable time past attended a ferry at the north part of Glastonbury, at a place known as Smith Ferry, which ferry lent much to the ease of passengers, having more safety in landing and convenience, and that he had been informed that a neighbor about half a mile or more northward, was about to obtain from their honors the sole liberty of ferrying, and he wanted an opportunity to be heard on the case.

The petition which alarmed Richard Smith was by Benoni and Timothy inhabiting near the bounds between and Wethersfield (sic), on the east side, praying liberty to keep a ferry there, and asking that any neighboring ferry which would hurt or prejudice theirs, be disallowed.

These half- brothers, Benoni and Timothy Smith, born in 1700 and 1702 in Hadley, Mass., had returned (removed? – RCH) to Connecticut about 1720. Sons of Deacon Samuel Smith, their grandfather Lt. Phillip Smith had died, the victim of witchcraft, or as it is more dramatically stated by Cotton Mather in an account of the affair quoted in Stiles, History of Wethersfield, Connecticut, “was murdered with an hideous witchcraft.”⁶⁰ They took over Keeney’s ferry which had been granted Richard Keeney of Hartford in October 1712.

Richard Smith Jr. was the son of one of the first settlers of Wethersfield, as was their ancestor, Samuel Smith, the father of Lt. Phillip. If any relationship existed, it was fairly remote.

The ferries continued to coexist and Richard Smith, Jr. tended the Glastonbury ferry until his death, when his son Benjamin took over. Benjamin and his wife, Hannah lane, had sons, Richard, Judathan, and Manoah, born 1705, 1709, and 1711, respectively. Benjamin died in 1731, until which time his sons Richard and Judathan in a petition of 1762 claim he tended the ferry. However, in his will dated 1731, he speaks of himself as “husbandman”, and the inventory of his estate taken in 1731, lists considerable livestock, farm implements, and there is no mention of boats, cars, and other implements used in ferrying. According to the same petition, his son Manoah Smith took over the ferry privilege.

⁶⁰ A search of this phase followed by a search of each keyword in the Archive.org copy of Stiles failed to find this quote - RCH

However, there was a period around 1737-1738 when Thomas Sparks and Elisha Loveland were running the ferry in this vicinity, and not until May 1745, do the colonial records reveal a memorial of Manoah Smith of Glastonbury, praying the Assembly to settle the ferry called Glastonbury Ferry on him, which was granted.

During this period, when Thomas Sparks and ELISHA Loveland were tending the ferry, Timothy Smith of Hartford in May 1738 entered a complaint against them. He related that he had built a house on the banks of the river for convenience, and provided at all times a good tight boat well furnished with oars. Notwithstanding, he said, Sparks and Loveland used to keep a ferry a mile below had set up a ferry removed from the place where the Glastonbury ferry had always been kept, and kept on fourscore rods off his ferry with intent to take a profit.

Not only had they taken away the profits, but when passengers would call for the boat, he, as is his duty, had often gone across the river, and when he comes the passengers tell him they wish to cross on the Glastonbury ferry, and so he loses his labor. Then again, he is forced at late hours in the night to go fetch over his ferry because the Glastonbury ferry house is so remote from the place where they now keep the ferry that passengers cannot be heard call they (them? – RCH) ever so loud or often.

His prayer was, that Sparks and Loveland remove to the place where the Glastonbury ferry used to be kept, or that the Assembly in some other way, give him relief.

He also presented a list of persons who had called Sparks and Loveland, during the period of November 1737 to May 13, 1738, which they had failed to fetch over their ferry. In spite of this, his plea was not granted.

In May 1737, Timothy Smith, keeper of Keeney's ferry in Hartford, and Thomas Sparks, keeper in Glastonbury, prayed for an increase in rates. They claimed the fares had never been raised since first set, whereas there had been a great discount in currency, so that actually the fares amounted to about one third of the true value at the time they were stated. They said further that all public officer's fares and salaries, except theirs, had long since been advanced, and also tradesman and handycraftmen, and that everything had grown at least two thirds dearer, and the increase in passengers is in no properties to the discount in currency, and truly every diligent and faithful ferryman under present regulations, would be brought into debt. For man, horse, and load, they were granted a one pence increase.

In May 1745, Manoah Smith was appointed keeper of the ferry called Glastonbury for the future at the usual place over the Connecticut River, at the current fare. But on August 29, 1752, he died at the age of forty one, he died, leaving a widow Lucy, who soon remarried Daniel Pratt. A family feud over the ferry rights soon began. In May

1754, Manoah Smith's two brothers, Richard and Judathan, were granted the ferrying privilege upon their claim that no person had been appointed to keep Smith's ferry. This claim apparently took their brother's widow and her second husband, Daniel Pratt by surprise, for in May 1762, he informed the Assembly that sometimes in 1754 he had built and completed a house near the ferry called Smith's Ferry, accommodable for a ferryman to live in, there being no other house near said ferry, and that he held land on the east side where said ferry was kept. That Richard and Judathan, without his knowledge or privity represented that no person was appointed to keep the ferry and obtained liberty for themselves to keep it. He requested and was granted the privilege. Richard and Judathan Smith the following October proceeded to contest this appointment. They claimed that the ferry rights had been in the family for nearly 100 years, since their grandfather, Richard Smith, from whence it got its name, Smith's ferry, first tended the ferry from the east to west side of the river. That although their brother Manoah Smith had the ferry stated to himself before his death, all three of them were equally interested and shared expense and profit. That the ferry as of no use without passing across their lands as well as the heirs of Manoah Smith. In fact, Daniel Pratt and his wife had received great profit and advantage by leasing the ferry house and some land set out for her dower, besides the advantage of crossing themselves and all their families ferriage-free, and that the only landing places with any manner of safety that be made use of, except in low water in the summer, is altogether on their lands. Furthermore, Daniel Pratt is altogether unacquainted with the business, whereas their father and themselves were brought up in the business.

In spite of this plea, they apparently were unsuccessful. Another attempt in the form of a petition carrying thirty-seven signatures was presented the following May, 1763. This petition pointed out that the place where the Smiths did keep the ferry was the best place for travelers, and a good harbor for the ferry boat and a good landing place for man and horse. Whereas the place where Daniel Pratt now keeps the ferry hath no harbor for his boat and no good landing place for man nor horse to land safely, and that the Smiths have the ferry stated to them. Samuel Talcott, Benjamin Hale and Jonathan Hale, Jr., all selectmen for the town of Glastonbury also signified to the same Assembly they were of the opinion that it would be for the advantage of the public that Richard and Judathan Smith should keep the ferry, rather than Daniel Pratt, the present ferryman.

All appeals seem to have failed, for Daniel Pratt continued to keep and improve the ferry, and as far as the records show, quiet prevailed for a number of years, until 1791, when Daniel Pratt died on March 20, at the age of 71.

Upon his death, the controversies flamed anew. His sons, Manoah and David Pratt, claimed the right to have and keep Pratt's ferry and take the fare, and also petitioned to have it more conveniently removed 70 rods (385 yards - RCH) southerly. Josiah Benton and Dorothy Smith his wife requested the privilege of keeping the ferry, based on the claim that Lucy, the widow of Manoah Smith, having it as part of her dower, and afterwards marrying Daniel Pratt having since deceased leaving Lucy an aged widow incapable of business, who is the natured parent of Dorothy, and by them taken care of and supported. Further, the land on east and west side of the river adjoining the ferry were in 1753 set out to Dorothy as part of her real estate from her father Manoah Smith.

The town of Glastonbury through Timothy Hale as agent, claimed the ferry, the town having already expended in purchasing and repairing roads for the purpose of accommodation (sic) the public, about 150 pounds.

These petitions were referred to a committee composed of the Honorable John Treadwell, Asher Miller, and Elijah Hubbard, Esqrs. Who were to inquire into the claims, rights, and pretensions of the petitioners, and also as to the place where it ought to be kept, and report their opinion to the next Assembly. Before the next Assembly, Lucy, "aged" widow of Daniel Pratt, had died on January 20, 1792, at the age of 68.

On April 23, 1792, the committee met at the home of Capt. Joseph Wells (now the Chapman home north of the Wells Turner Memorial Library.) The sum of the lengthy report which was presented to the Assembly in May was, as to the keeping of the ferry, that as Daniel Pratt had kept the ferry which was granted him in 1762 til near the close of his life, had trained his sons Manoah and David Pratt not long before his death, and with his wife Lucy deeded August 2, 1790, by quit-claim their right & title to the ferry and to the dwelling house and barn standing on the premises to Manoah and David, who have since kept and at considerable expense built two new boats it would be best for the public and most equitable, as respects themselves, that they be permitted to keep the ferry.

Despite the vivid account of the hazards caused by eroding banks and shifting channel, which had brought the Glastonbury landing place into a place full of springs and miry, the committee concluded the present ferry place was safe and convenient as yet (a few days of the year excepted) and it would be inexpedient to remove the ferry, especially at the present landing, with a little expense in digging and causeying(?) might be rendered for the most part very convenient. The committee was of the opinion, that at such time as it should become necessary to remove the ferry down the river, the expense to the town for purchasing and occupying roads to accommodate the ferry, the right of keeping ought to be vested in the town of Glastonbury to indemnify them.

So Manoah and David Pratt continued to conduct the ferry until David Pratt died in 1796 leaving several minor children. The inventory of his estate listed two ferry boats and tackle and one half the ferry valued at 150 pounds.

In 1797 Manoah Pratt quitclaimed for 300 pounds lawful money all right and title to Pratt's ferry to George Talcott, and removed to New York State. In 1798 the town of Glastonbury petitioned to be granted the ferry, without success.

So came to an end the family ownership of the Smith-Pratt ferry, just a few years prior to building of the first bridge in Hartford. The ferry continued for another fifty years and finally ceased near the middle of the century.

Of the Rock Hill-South Glastonbury ferry much has been written, especially of its recent history, as it still operates as one of the two remaining Connecticut River ferries operated by the State Highway Department. Of its early history family history not much has been said, although it in many respects resembles that of the Smith-Pratt ferry.

As mentioned earlier, this ferry was first granted to a Smith, one Jonathan Smith of Wethersfield, in May 1724. The grant is worded "to set up a ferry" but it seems quite likely that he or some neighbor must have provide service at a much earlier date, although not under legislative grant. The fare was four pence money for each man, two pence for each single person or single horse, and load with a penalty for receiving more than the prescribed fare.

Jonathan Smith after a few years became unable to perform his duties of ferryman, and in May 1728 was released and the ferry granted to his son, Nathan Smith. Nathan at the same time was granted an increase in fare of one penny money.

Nathan Smith had been born in Wethersfield to Jonathan and Hannah Smith in 1705 and was but 23 when he received the grant. He enjoyed the privilege only five years and died December 1733, leaving no male heirs. Whereupon in May 1734 Hezekiah Grimes who was married to one of his two sisters, petitioned the Assembly to be granted the ferry privilege. He and his wife being situated in the same place where Jonathan and Nathan dwelled, and being provided with boats and necessities and being able bodied to do service, the privilege was granted to Hezekiah Grimes.

All was not peaceful in the household. In May 1736 Daniel Clark, husband of the deceased Nathan Smith's other sister, petitioned the Assembly. He claimed that Hezekiah, his brother-in-law, very much neglected the ferry, and was not likely long to continue there, whereas he had since become an inhabitant of Stepney Parish of Rocky Hill, and lived in the ferry house and had part of the house set out to his wife's portion, and the refusal of a lease therefore from Mrs. Hanna Smith the widow of Jonathan to

whom it belongs. His petition was not granted and Hezekiah Grimes retained the ferry privilege.

In October of that year he joined the keepers of the Hartford ferries and Thomas Sparks of the Smith-Pratt ferry in petitioning for a raise in fare which they claimed was far from adequate having been set at a time when no other currency passed in the colony than the heavy silver money at about pound troy, which had depreciated (to the great grief of his majesty's good subjects that are lovers of their country in general and the monarchists in particular) to less than one third part value.

Relief was delayed until October 1738 when the fare for man, horse, and load was raised to six pence. Fare for a single man or single horse remained at three pence. In May 1747 the fare was increased to nine pence for man, horse, and load five pence for foot man, six pence for a led horse, all old tenor (sic.)

Hezekiah Grimes, as his brother-in-law had predicted, did not long continue, though possibly his leaving was not in the manner Daniel Clark had in mind, for he died December 5, 1749 at the age of fifty. His widow, Abigail Grimes, survived him by many years living until 1792 when she died at the age of ninety.

Her estate was Valued at 2536(?), the inventory lists the privilege of the ferry with 25 feet reserved for a road valued at 400 (?). This ferry privilege was distributed to the heirs of her son, John Grimes, who had predeceased her in 1791. Among his possessions John Grimes had left a ferry boat valued at 3 (?) One of his heirs was Elisur Goodrich who had married his sister, Abigail Grimes. She died in 1795 at thirty eight and Elizur did not outlive her long – he died August 1798 at forty two.

During the period of over forty years that the widow of Hezekiah Grimes survived him, the ferry privilege remained in the family, and was conducted by one or more members.

So we come to the end of the century and the decease of Elizur Goodrich in 1798, leaving three minor children, Martha, John, and Andrew Goodrich, claiming and occupying the ferry, struggling in all kinds of weather to carry on the business.

In October of that year the town of Glastonbury, through its agents, Zephaniah W. Smith and John Hale petitioned the Assembly. They claimed that during all the time the ferry was kept by Elizur Goodrich and by persons claiming under him it had been contrary to law, taking more fare than was stated, and neglecting to post it as required, and neglecting to furnish sufficient boats, Neglecting speedy transportation of people wishing to cross, and frequently refusing to transport them at all. Further, that the ferry was now actually kept only by two male lads wholly unqualified for the business and no other person is employed to manage the boats so that it is with much difficulty and danger that persons obtain passage across the river. The petitioners claimed that they

constitute a large portion of the fare taken and have been to great expense to build a causeway through the large break near the river, and from year to year repair it when damaged by freshets, and so pray that the ferry be granted to the town.

At the same session Joseph Woodbridge of Glastonbury, a minor, by his guardian Ebenezer Plummer, petitioned for at least a part of the emoluments arising from the ferry in return for injury to his land which is rendered entirely useless to him by the landing on the east side of the Connecticut River. Neither petition was granted.

It would appear, however, that at least during the minority of the children of Elizur Goodrich, after their complaints were entered, that the ferry rights were rented to various people. For example, in May 1806, Elisha Callender and Elisha Callendar, Jr. of Wethersfield testified that they tended the Rocky Hill ferry, and that (although people gave more than lawful fare) they received no more than three shillings and six pence a day each for wages, and boarded themselves, and many times had another man with them to tend the ferry, finding they could not make wages sufficient to pay the rent and support themselves, they left the business.

That this is true, and not just a claim to get the fare raised, is confirmed by a petition to the same 1806 session, signed by several subscribers living in Rocky Hill and frequently crossing the river there. They certified that in their opinion the fare was too low to enable the owners of the ferry to procure good attendance at the ferry, and that the fare ought to be raised.

Nor was this all, for Joseph Neff, guardian of Andrew Goodrich, a minor, and Chester Williams who had the privilege through his wife, Martha Goodrich, petitioned the same session, pointing to the increase in price of labor, increase in the width of the river, so that large sums of money must be expended or the ferry neglected. Joseph Neff, the guardian, had recently gone to personal expense in outfitting boats and putting other appurtenances into repair, and stated that he would never be repaid at the present fare.

These petitions were granted and the fare given in cents rather than pence, became four cents for a man, horse, and load or for each ox or other neat kind. Three cents for each footman, one cent each sheep or swine, eight cents each wheel of a carriage, sled or sleigh and driver, drawn by one horse, loaded or empty, fifteen cents for each pleasure carriage, sled, or sleigh, stage, cart, wagon, and driver, drawn by two oxen, horses, or mules, loaded or empty, and two cents for each additional horse, ox, or mule.

This May 1806 session of the Assembly, just one hundred fifty years ago, also received the petitions for and against the first bridge across the Connecticut River at Hartford, which wasn't built until 1810. The ferries offered such serious competition that when the bridge was two thirds destroyed by a freshet in 1818, the Hartford Bridge Company

would not rebuild until ferry privileges for the Hartford ferries were revoked. Pratt's ferry between Glastonbury and Wethersfield continued for several years, and as we know, the Rocky Hill ferry, situated halfway between the Middletown and Hartford bridges, continues today.

May 1956

Connecticut River Ferries – Virginia Knox Address

This is an address given by Virginia Knox to the Rocky Hill Historical in 1968. Virginia Knox was a member of the Glastonbury Historical Society.

FERRIES

I brought with me tonight Miss Maude Belden Clark, who has Rocky Hill connections, and who has been my lifetime friend for more years than we either want to think, and my history teacher in Glastonbury High School. I know you could guess how we arrived here from Glastonbury. We came by ferry. I always make at least an annual pilgrimage by ferry, and more often if I have the opportunity. Whenever I have friends from out of state I take them on a ferry ride. I suspect that everyone else here does too.

I thank you for inviting me, and as I said, my good friend and former pinochle companion at the State Library was responsible for getting me here.

As I sing my song about the ferries, I think we all agree that I couldn't have had a better supper to sing it for.

CONNECTICUT RIVER FERRIES

In talking about the early days of the Rocky Hill Ferry, I thought that some of the early laws in the early days might be of interest. There were laws concerning ferries in the early days during a period of family ownership in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The second revision of the Connecticut statutes was a revision of 1702 and by that time laws relating to ferries were already quite thoroughly developed. The ferryman was to provide sufficient boats, oars and hands. He had the sole liberty of transport, except individuals might use their own or their neighbor's boats or canoes for their ordinary labor or business. It was the duty of the ferryman not to carry passengers from another's ferry, not to use an insufficient boat, and there was a penalty for not providing a boat. No person was to crowd into any boat under penalty of ten shillings. And the ferryman was not to receive too many passengers at once, under penalty of 20 shillings. He had the power to put out passengers, and the order of receiving them was in the order of their coming. Only all public officers and such as go upon public or urgency occasions, such as physicians, surgeons or midwives, shall be transported first.

By 1663 free passage for all ferries in the colony was provided for magistrates, deputies of the general court while they were on the country's occasions, with their necessary attendants—(a man and a horse—the ferryman to be reimbursed out of the public treasury.

In October, 1729 to encourage the post office, the assembly observed that the privilege of ferries was a growing and profitable estate, and not ordered to be taxed in the public list of estates. To offset the benefit of this tax exemption, after January, 1730, the following were to be passed ferriage free without reimbursement: the governor, the deputy governor, assistants and representatives of the court, and judges of the court, when they had occasion to use the ferry on public service. Also all posts and other persons on public service whose ferriage fare was want to be paid out of the public treasury.

The fares were set by the general court and published, with the penalty for taking more. In 1695 the Wethersfield ferry was for a man, horse and load: 9 pence pay or 6 pence money; for a single man and a single horse, 5 pence pay or 3 pence money.

Often hard money was scarce, and pay meant an article used as a medium of payment--such as grain, corn, beef or pork, for which the general court set values when offered as pay. A question arose as what was meant by a horse and his load. This was resolved in 1701 as all persons and what else a horse would bring to the ferry at one time. In 1750 the fares were stated in proclamation money, Which was coin valued by a proclamation of Queen Anne, bearing the most common coin in use in the colonies,

which was the Spanish pieces-of-eight, which we've all heard about, at 6 shillings.

Classes covered in addition to man, horse and load, footman and led—horse, were for ox or other lead kine, sheep, hog or goat.

I have here a copy of the act of 1750, and we will note that on the Connecticut River at that time there were 12 ferries. They start at Saybrook; the next one is called Brockway's Ferry, which I figure out was Essex or Lyme; and the next was Chapman's, which I think would be the present ferry from Chester to Hadlyme; then the East Haddam, which would be at the Haddam Bridge; or that vicinity; Middletown; Rocky Hill, Glastonbury, which would be the old Pratt's Ferry; Keeney's, which would be about mile and one-half North of the Pratt Ferry, right on the Hartford-East Hartford line; Hartford and Workett's Ferry ((?)), and this was over the great river, two rivulets cost 2 pence, and the rivulet cost a farthing. That would be where the Farmington River comes in at Windsor, and so you had to go over two rivers to get anywhere you wanted to go, if you were going in a certain direction. And the ferry from Windsor to Scantic and Suffield. (I'll pass this around and you people can get an opportunity to see it.)

Ten years later, two and four-wheeled carriages were added to the list. These were the only means of transportation across the river in the early days. The first petition for a bridge at Hartford was not until May, 1806 session of the assembly, and petitions included for and against ferry-operating in the area. So they delayed the building of the bridge until 1810. In the meantime, Enfield and Suffield had built and dedicated a bridge in 1803, in November, and were thus the first having the first bridge across the river in the state.

The Rocky Hill–South Glastonbury ferry, now operated by the State Highway Department, is one of the two remaining ferries on the Connecticut River, and probably the oldest ferry in continuous service in the United States, may have been in operation by 1649. This supposition is based on a Wethersfield town vote of 1649 to provide a highway in Rocky Hill to the great river opposite Nayaug Farms, which, as you know, is the early name for South Glastonbury. At the same time, there was a provision for a similar road to the river on the East side. It seems obvious that where the respective roads ended up at the river banks, there were the terminals for the ferry, crude or humble it may have been, connecting the two towns.

Though there was a ferry between Rocky Hill and South Glastonbury in the 17th century, the first recorded grant of the ferry privilege was to Johnathan Smith of Wethersfield in May, 1724. Johnathan, after a few years, became unable to perform his duties, and in 1728 was released, and the ferry granted to his son, Nathan, who was but 23 when he received the grant, and enjoyed the privilege only 5 years when he died, leaving no male heirs. At the following assembly Hezekiah Grimes, who was married to one of Nathan's

two sisters, petitioned and was granted ferry privilege, as he and his wife were living where Johnathan and Nathan had dwelled, and were provided with boats and necessities to do the service. But not all was peaceful in the family. In 1736 Daniel Clark, the husband of Nathan's other sister, petitioned. He claimed that Hezekiah neglected the ferry and was not likely long to continue there, whereas he had since become an inhabitant of Stepney Parish of Rocky Hill, lived in the ferry house, and had a part of the house set out for him as his wife's portion, and a refusal of a lease therefore to Mrs. Hannah Smith, the widow of Johnathan, to whom it belonged. His petition was not granted. Hezekiah Crimes, as his brother-in-law predicted, did not long continue, though possibly his leaving was not in the manner Daniel Clark had in mind, for he died in 1749 at the age of 50. His widow lived until 1792, dying at the age of 90. During the 40 years Abigail Smith Grimes survived her husband, the ferry privilege remained in the family, conducted by one or more members. Abigail's estate was a good one, valued at 2,536 pounds. The inventory lists privilege of the ferry, with 25 feet reserved for a road, valued at 400 pounds. This ferry privilege was distributed to her sons of her heir, John Grimes, who had predeceased her in 1791. Among his possessions, John Grimes had left a ferry boat valued at 3 pounds. John's sister Abigail had married Eleaza Goodrich, who was one of his heirs. Abigail Goodrich died within a few years, and Eleaza 3 years later, at the age of 42. They left three minor children, Martha, John and Andrew Goodrich, claiming and occupying the ferry, struggling in all kinds of weather to carry on the business. This situation brought on petitions - one from the Town of Glastonbury, praying it be granted the town. They had been to great expense for road repairs, and constituted a large portion of the fare taken. As this petition reviews the story I have just told, and a little bit of the problems of the young boys, I will read the text of it. It is in the Connecticut Archives, Travel Agents, 2nd Series, dated September 27, 1733. The petition is by Glastonbury, by Zephiniah H. Smith and John Hale, shows Rocky Hill Ferry granted to Johnathan Smith in 1724, kept to his death, when Hezekiah Grimes, then of Wethersfield, was granted and continued until his death, and since kept by his heirs or persons claiming under said grant to him. That was several years last past Elisha Goodrich of said Wethersfield had kept, and said Elisha had deceased, leaving children and heirs to which Martha, John and Andrew, who were all minors under 21, and now claim and actually occupy said ferry. That during all the time said ferry was kept by said Elisha, and any persons claiming under him, it had been kept, contrary to the law on such cases, taking more fare and neglecting to post it, neglecting to furnish sufficient boats at all times, neglecting speed of transportation to persons wishing to cross, and greatly delayed and frequently refused to transport them at all. The petition further states the ferry is now actually kept only by two male lads, wholly unqualified for the business, and no other person being employed to manage the boats, so it was with

much difficulty and danger that persons obtained passage across said river; and petitions constitute large portions of persons who paid ferry, who paid large portion of fare, taken, and had been to great expense to furnish roads to said ferry, and making a causeway for a large brook near said river, on which causeway there would be spent from year to year considerable sums of money in repairs by reason of the freshets happening in said river, which frequently would greatly injure said causeway. They pray grant the ferry to themselves. The other petition by Joseph Woodbridge of Glastonbury, a minor, by his guardian, Ebenezer Plumber, for at least part of the emoluments in return for injury to his land. But neither of these petitions were granted.

It appears following these petitions, at least during the minority of the Goodrich children, the ferry rights were rented to various people. For example, in May, 106, Elisha Calendar and his son, of Wethersfield, testified tending the Rocky Hill ferry, giving \$51.00 a year for the rent, and although they charged more than lawful fare, received no more than 5 shillings and 6 pence a day each for wages, boarded themselves at times, had another men with them to tend the ferry, they could not make wages sufficient to pay rent and support themselves, and so they left the business.

That this situation was true was confirmed by a petition to the same session, signed by subscribers living near the ferry, testifying in their opinion that the fare was too low and not to be raised. These names may be familiar to you, and perhaps were ancestors to some of you. I'll read their names. This is May 23, 1806, and the subscribers are Horace Blinn, Justice Blinn, Ralph Bulkeley, Moses Williams, Justice Robbins, Eli Goodrich, I. Stanley, Josiah Butler, William Williams, Richard Price, Elisha Calendar, Elisha Calendar Jr., and Oliver Goodrich. The guardian of Andrew Goodrich and Chester Williams, the husband of Martha Goodrich, also petitioned, pointing out the increased price of labor and increased width of the river, making large sums necessary for the ferry, or it would be neglected. These petitions were granted in 1806. The increased fare given for the first time in cents, rather than pence, was set at 4 cents for man, horse and load, or for each ox or other neat kine; 3 cents for each footman; 1 cent each sheep or swine; 3 cents each wheeled carriage, sled or sleigh and driver, drawn by one horse, loaded or empty; 15 cents for each pleasure carriage, sled or sleigh; stage part wagon or driver drawn by two oxen, horses or mules.

Today the Rocky Hill Ferry carries passenger cars, commercial vehicles, motorcycles and pedestrians for a reasonable fee. This summer, as you enjoy the short scenic ride on the Hollister III, propelled by the tugboat Cumberland, I hope you will see not only many pleasure boats daring up and down the river, the car park and refreshment stand and other clutter on the bank, in your mind's eye you will be able to picture how this same scene may have looked in the early days to which I have just referred.

ADDRESS GIVEN BY VIRGINI KNOX

Meeting of Rocky Hill Historical Society on May 26, 1968

Transcribed by F. M. Rowe

The Rocky Hill Ferry – Joseph Spadaccini

The author cites 1650 as the date the ferry was founded and state that as the date of the writing if the paper it is 316 year old. That indicates that the paper was written about 1966.

The distribution of three one mile lots east of the River, now the Ton of Glastonbury, was authorized in 1639. John Hollister, a ship builder, owned one lot, Richard Treat owned another, and the New London Road Company owned the third.

An exact date regarding the establishment of a formal setup of ferry transportation between Rocky Hill and Glastonbury as we know it today is impossible to designate. Historians have decided that that this area was used to transport cattle and other livestock across the river on pole-driven rafts about the time of 1649.

The year 1650 is the first time the records show “Rockie Hill” as the name of a site. It appears in the Wethersfield records when Samuel Boardman received a grant of 25 acres of land on the south east side of “Rockie Hill.” The area now known as Quarry Hill” or “the Quarry” was considered to be the “Rockie Hill.”

An assumed age for the Ferry has been set at approximately 316 years. This is arrived at by checking old Wethersfield records. In 1650 the town of Wethersfield (Rocky Hill was part of this town at the time) voted to lay out a road on the west side of the Connecticut River leading to the present Rocky Hill Ferry Slip and establish a landing there ⁶¹. A similar road from the river harbor on the east side of the river to Nayaug Farms (the original name for South Glastonbury) was also laid out. ⁶²) It is assumed that the ferry started with completion of these roads.

One can assume that the mid-seventeenth century project was for ferry purposes. However, it is known that the ferry was operating in 1700 and has been a going concern ever since.

Wethersfield children had already crossed the river to lands included in the original Pyquag (now Wethersfield) purchase. This area is now is now Glastonbury, hence ferries of some type were needed to go between the two lands on each side of the river. This movement was last because the Pequod Indians was removed. As early as 1642 a group of Connecticut Colony men had received permission to build a ship, however, the name of the shipyard or the ship built is unknown. As far as the general area is concerned, we know that in 1643 Thomas Deming was in the ship building business. The last definite

⁶¹ Was this Meadow Road, Old Main Street, or some other, undiscovered road?

⁶² Was this Ferry Street?

venture known involved the ship “Tryall” built at that time. The Deming “yard” turned out seagoing craft for some 200 years.

Other ferries were authorized over the Connecticut River in other towns. In 1681 Thomas Caldwell leased a ferry and fare regulations were adopted. The Connecticut Colonial Records down to 1677 reveal the Windsor Ferry as the only officially established and regulated ferry from 1641 to 1662 when the General Court granted Saybrook a charter for a ferry.

In February of 1673 Richard Smith Jr. was authorized by the town of Wethersfield to “keep a ferry over the Great River on the New London Road.” The Great River, the Connecticut River, as we know it, was becoming the scene of a rapidly growing shipping area.

In the year 1722, a neighbor’s dispute was carried to the General Assembly. A neighbor was seeking to set up a rival ferry one-half mile north of “Smith’s Ferry” and Richard Smith Jr. stated to the General Assembly that he had kept Smith’s Ferry up for a number of years. The franchise of Richards Smith, Jr. was transferred to his son Nathaniel Smith by the General Assembly in the year 1728. This move takes place one hundred and forty years after the act establishing roads⁶³ and fifty years after the authorization of the ferry to Richard Smith, Jr. Between the years 1728 and 1734 Nathaniel Smith passed away. H. Grimes was declared “Ferryman” in the year 1734. Daniel Clark was also seeking the position at this time but his claim was denied. Records show that a private ferry operated by the “Sparks” family at this time. Little is known of this ferry.

Later records of the General Assembly show Richard and Jed Smith were approved keepers of the “Smith Ferry.” Because of the number of families in the area bearing the surname Smith it is not known if these were related to the original ferryman, Richard Smith, Jr. It is understood this was still the same ferry as the one originated in 1673 by Richard Smith, Jr. Eight years later, in 1762 Daniel Pratt of Glastonbury complained that he Smiths (Richard and Jed) obtained the right keepers without his knowledge. Mr. Pratt claimed he had built his ferry house “there being no other said ferry.’ General Assembly records show the decision in favor of Daniel Pratt.

The Selectmen of Wethersfield were granted control of the ferry known under various names such as “Smith’s Ferry, Pratt’s Ferry, the Glastonbury Ferry, and the Rocky Hill Ferry.

The Rocky Hill ferry landing is now known as Hale’s landing. Before 1800 there were two taverns established at the landing. They were “Polly Dickerson’s Tavern” and the “Long Tavern.” The Hale family located here about the year 1894 and gradually the landing became known as “Hale’s Landing.”

⁶³ Is this a typo?

The State of Connecticut took over control of the ferry from the town in 1917. Arthur Taylor was the captain of the ferry about this time and until 1921. In 1921 Dan Taylor, no relation to Arthur Taylor, became captain of the ferry and retained the position for eighteen years. Henry Hale, the son of Wilbur Hale, long time commercial shad fisherman on the Connecticut River became the next captain of the Rocky Hill Ferry. He held that position for twenty three years until his retirement in 1962⁶⁴. The Hale family continued in this tradition of working on and with the Connecticut River, not ending with captain Henry's retirement. Arthur Hale, Henry's son, became the next captain of the Rocky Hill Ferry. He still retains that position, continuing the family tradition as a Connecticut "Riverman."

The Rocky Hill Ferry developed much as did ferries all over the New England colonies. The first ferries were pole-driven rafts. Gradually, canoes were connected to form a base of these rafts. . Vehicles (carts, etc.?) were usually taken apart to transport over the river and horses were tied behind the ferry to swim over. The 1783 records show that the ferry boat was now required to use "suitable" care which lead to what we know as sweeps (oars.) Up to 1849 all three methods were being used.

The thick cable on a pulley was put into use about 1848-1849.

The steam engine came to use for quite a while and in 1951 a 60 H.P. gas engine was installed in the new tugboat purchased at that time. In 1955 a new ferryboat was built at Warwick, R.I. This is the ferry used at present. It is a diesel powered tugboat.

The tugboat purchased in 1951 was named the Selden II and the barge was named Hollister I. We know that that the Hollister name was taken from John Hollister, one of the first settlers in Glastonbury. Two of his descendants were employed on the ferry line. In the year 1860 when the steam engine was put to use on the Rocky Hill Ferry Fred Hollister was the captain and the engineer was Leonard Hollister. The latest tugboat is named the Cumberland after the son of King George II. He once owned a large area of land in Rocky Hill. It is recorded that this grant included as much as two thousand acres. The Duke had a building erected in 1767 on what is now Old Main St.⁶⁵ This building was a very famous inn at one time and still comprises a part of the building at 69 Old Main St. in Rocky Hill⁶⁶. The barge Hollister III still bears the name of the settler of Glastonbury.

⁶⁴ According to his obituary, George Curtis Green, Wilber Hale's grandson, was captain of the ferry from 1945 to 1955.

⁶⁵ Other sources say that the Duke of Cumberland never visited Rock Hill and that Esquire John Robbins built this structure.

⁶⁶ 242 Old Main St. in 2016.

Firearms

This article wasn't converted to MS Word since it doesn't seem to have anything to do with Rocky Hill.

Griswold, Albert

The Griswold family is a prominent family in Rocky Hill. This interviewee was Albert Deming Griswold Jr. b. Oct. 23, 1916 d. Jan. 31, 2015. The reference to Kohl's Department starts argues that the interview was done in the first decade of the 21st century. The interviewer 'J.' may have been June Cooke who was active in the Rocky Hill Historical Society at that time. There is a partial Family Tree at the end of this document.

Bob Herron - 6/12/2016

A. My name is Albert D. Griswold, Jr. I am a long-time resident of Rocky Hill, and I was a member of the Rocky Hill Grange for over 50 years, and I will attempt to give some information about that organization, and about life in Rocky Hill at the time.

J. Why don't you tell me about growing up on the farm?

A. I am the son of Albert D. Griswold, one of the ten children of William S. Griswold, and grew up on the working farm, which was later known as Sunny Crest Farm. I worked there for years, and was educated in schools in Rocky Hill and Wethersfield.

J. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A. I had Wilbur, Richard and Albert and Cora, four of us.

J. Were you the oldest?

A. I was the second in line.

J. What did you do at Christmas time on the farm?

A. Christmas was the day that all of the children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren of William S. Griswold, and the farm hands gathered at the farmhouse.

J. When you were growing up did you hang the stockings when you were a kid?

A. No, we usually had a Christmas tree. I can remember one Christmas day at our house everyone woke up only to find that we were all very ill. Our maid had exposed us to diphtheria, and on Christmas morning this became evident. Dr. Moser came and diagnosed it as diphtheria and my Mother was quite educated along those lines, and just as I thought, she was down at the front door hanging a sign that said there was diphtheria in this home, and that we were quarantined. That was a memorable Christmas day, and it was awful. To be ill, quite ill, and everything you had planned, and looked forward to, was spoiled.

J. Where did you get your Christmas tree? Did you go out to get them?

A. I remember one occasion, we got in the family car, which was an old Reo, and we drove over to Boardman's, to a farm over there in the hills, and we started to trek out

into the woods to chop our Christmas tree for our house, and Will Hale got out his trusty ax and chopped it down. That was our Christmas tree.

J. Was it a hemlock tree?

A. Yes, that is what we used to have too.

J. What about your recreation, in the summer and winter, what did you do? Was there a swimming hole?

A. Well, as kids on the farm there was always chores. First there was cultivating, and haying and taking care of our favorite horse, Mabel. We grew up as farm kids, we worked hard. We learned a great deal from growing up on the farm.

J. Did you go swimming anywhere, was there a farm pond?

A. Well, there was a brook over on the Bailey property; that was over on Parsonage Street over near Sunny Crest Park. There was a wide place in the brook. We occasionally went swimming there.

J. How about in the winter? Did you have a favorite place where you went sliding?

A. Yes, in the area where the Kohl's Department Store is, there was. We used to call it Dead Man's Hill. We would take our sleds and slide downhill.

J. I hadn't heard that term before. (Laughing) Did you have any ball games in the summer? Any neighbor kids?

A. My grandfather had a rather large lawn, and we used to set up a croquet set, and play that by the hour. We used to play soft ball on the lawn I recall.

J. Croquet was pretty popular.

A. It was then. It still is somewhere around.

J. How about marbles?

A. No, marbles we saw at the old Academy. On Center St. On the steps on the south end of the Academy, there was a large stone, and the kids set up their large marble, agate, and try to hit it with their marbles. We rolled marbles at it, and if you hit it; usually someone would end up with all the marbles.

J. What about the great fire?

A. I can remember the 1921 fire. I remember being on Grant's lawn, right there on Parsonage Street. We looked to the South, and my Uncle Bill came running out, and he said it looks like the Congregational Church is on fire; and the bell at the church at that time, was the fire alarm. I remember hearing it ring in the night, and it gave me a sense of fear, someone's house is on fire. And this was a visible broken flame away at

Parsonage St. It was announced that the Congregational Church is on fire. The grounds there was where the Belden's Store was located, it was a General Store. It was the same building that the Library was located in. It was directly near the East Wall of the Congregational Church at the time. Not where it is now. There were what was called Union Hall, later Green's Hall. And there were horse stables. In reading the minutes in the Grange minutes, the first thing was appoint someone to keep the horses under control.

J. How did that fire get started, did you know?

A. That fire, the word around town, was caused by the carelessness of a Standard Oil delivery person who was delivering kerosene oil to Belden's Store. A careless cigarette, or something started the fire, and it ended up, I can remember to this day, a large engine from Hartford Fire Department, coming to the scene, too late, everything was gone. The church, each wall, not where it is now, was blackened and scorched. It seemed very close to the end of it.

J. Rocky Hill didn't have that large a Fire Department, I imagine.

A. They had no Fire Department. The church bell was the fire alarm.

J. How did they attempt to put out the fire?

A. A bucket brigade was the only help. I remember them getting water from the Monroe Crane house, across the street, from the well in that yard. I can remember father who rushed down to the scene when the fire was first announced in the milk truck; the milk route had not been finished, and the farm hands were recruited to help, just anybody. He said I think I saved Academy Hall, well how, He always wore a cap, always, when he was delivering on the route, or working on the farm. He came home hatless. He rolled up that hat, and jammed it in the sink drain on the NW corner of Academy Hall. It was a school house, and turned on the water and let it run over and that saved the Academy by letting it run all over the floor. That stairway area was scorched, and it had to be rebuilt.

J. Now Belden's Store, you said they were delivering kerosene.

A. Kerosene was used in many homes in the kitchen for heating water, and that sort of thing. It was used for cooking.

J. Belden's Store was selling Kerosene. How did they heat their store?

A. I can remember traveling down to that area and standing and looking. That Store was no longer, it was just a foundation.

J. What time of day did this fire start?

A. It was right after lunch as I remember it. That kerosene business came into my life

earlier even, when my grandfather was down at Belden's Store to buy kerosene, and they were living in the Lockwood house up on Riverview Road, he owned that; and my Mother was washing her hair with my Grandmother, and the kerosene stove exploded and a tremendous fire resulted, and she was severely burned, which resulted in burns on her arms. Her little brother came into the kitchen when the stove exploded, and he ran into those floor-to-ceiling windows in the kitchen. It was awful, and they had no way to get him to the Hartford Hospital. They did secure an ambulance, but he died on the way to the hospital.

J. Were you born at home, or at the hospital?

A. I was born on Parsonage Street in that two-family house. I have forgotten the name of the house that we called it, we lived on the second floor, and one of the teamsters, called the Hale's, lived on the first floor.

J. Where did you go to school, and what can you tell me about it.

A. I went to the Academy, and I remember well my teachers, most of them. I was in the Rocky Hill Schools through the 8" grade. I did 4 grades at the old Academy, and enjoyed every minute of it. Miss Keeley was my first grade teacher, she was a very nice lady. My Aunt Catherine, one of my father's sisters, she was in the 8" grade. Everybody went home for lunch, there was no cafeteria. There was not even a place to eat a Sandwich. We used to go home starting from the area where the firehouse sits today down to Chapin Avenue and across the cow pasture and sit down at our house for dinner. All of those 8 years were all of my years in Rocky Hill. Miss Keeley boarded someplace where the Elmore place is. We were going up across the grassy field and she put her arm around me and that started it, "teacher's pet", "teacher's pet" These little things I remember as clearly as night or day. I had Miss Fern Fargo as my second grade teacher. She was there for years, and she was albino, and she had very light hair, and pink eyes. Then I had Miss Gunderson in the third grade on the second floor; and Amy Potter was my teacher in the fourth grade. She later became Mrs. Santelli. And then on up through in what was called the Myrtle Stevens Academy. That was the new school that was built. My Aunt Catherine was in the 8" grade when I started in the 4" grade. That was the next generation.

J. How far away did the kids come from to attend Stevens School?

A. It was more than a mile that we walked.

J. What about Dividend Road?

A. Dividend had a concrete road at the time. Belamose, artificial silk factory was down at the end. That was more than a mile to walk too. I can remember one morning when they announced that they had some bad news. "Archie is gone." He ran in front of a car

on Dividend Road on the way home from School. I think his last name was Medford. The kids down in the south end of town. The kids at the South end of town went to the South School, which is the one at West Street. It is now the American Legion, I believe. And there was the West School, which is no longer there. It is a shopping center on the corner of Elm Street and Route 3. They had 6 grades out there and 6 grades at the South School. When you got to be a 7" grader you had to come in town.

J. Now, were these one-room schools, or did they have a room for each grade?

A. There were six grades in those schools, sometimes they were mixed, two grades in one.

J. It is hard to imagine teaching in those one room schools. Gosh it must have been a chore.

A. I can remember first grade at the old Academy, I was a shy little farm boy. Art Hale the ferry boat Captain who sat behind me, he was always drawing pictures, and I was turning around one day, and he was explaining to me what the picture was all about, and I suppose I was replying. I remember Elvis who was always talking out of turn. Then when I got my next report card, I usually got an 'A' in deportment, I got an 'A-'. These little things I remember so clearly.

J. Do you remember when the Academy Hall was not a school, what did occupy the building?

A. I understood that it was an Academy to teach Navigation. After that it became an American Legion and then it became the Historical Society.

J. You can see the way the floor boards went upstairs, that there must have been a stage up there.

A. I don't remember that.

J. Do you remember if while you in school whether you had days when you had plays or recitation.

A. One morning, Miss Howard was a teacher in the South School, and she thought we would be interested in a cute number she had, and she brought before school started we had just gotten into class and Myrtle (I have forgotten). She did it with a friend, Irene, a song and dance out in front of the class. I was most impressed. A treat before school started in the morning. Can't remember how they got up there. Mrs. Stevens always had a car.

J. After school what did you do? Did you think of going on to college?

A. I had a brother Wilbur, who was one year older than I was. He was in the first class that went to Wethersfield School, not Middletown High School. And I was in the class

behind him, and it was quite a transition. We were always accepted at home, but we were intruding among the Wethersfield kids. It all worked out.

All four years were done at Wethersfield High School. We graduated in 1934. Where did you go from there? Wilbur had been accepted at Trinity College and that put a financial burden on my parents. I was disappointed because I couldn't attend college too, even Uconn., because it was Depression time. My Dad was delivering milk, and he was a kind-hearted soul, and if the customer couldn't pay on Saturday, he still delivered the next week, and the next week, and the next week, and we had debts all over town. He said it looks like you won't be able to go to college, and I was shunted off to Morse College in Hartford. It was two years, but I found out that when I once hit the real world, it being 4 years in the Service, the Army, that picking people for advancement, who was going to Officer's School. I found out that I wasn't on the top of the list. I was the Company Clerk was as far as I was going get, and could look at the Aptitude Tests that the Army gives I was at the head of the class. It was because I didn't have a college to refer to, or have a college degree I started out behind the eight ball. I knew I had a high score because by the way they looked up and down the list, and who has the ability to be Company Clerk. Right away it went to Company Headquarters. Something I regretted later was because I didn't get any field training sitting behind the desk. It was tough times then, and it was sink or swim. Finally I got an appointment to Officer's Candidate School, and I got there, and I found out it was tough because I knew all about desk work, but I didn't know anything about field work. I struggled through that, and I finally got to be Lieutenant. That took 4 years.

J. Now, what about the Grange?

A. I think my grandfather, William S. Griswold was one of the founders of the Grange. Of course, the Grange was a national organization, and it was dedicated to the advancement of farming and to aid and abet the farming community. The Rocky Hill Grange was born, an offshoot of the Connecticut State Grange. It was active in Rocky Hill, a farming community at that time, for years and years. The Grange, in addition to its material side, was interested the advancement and future farming in Rocky Hill. Of course my grandfather was one of the first, and my father followed him and he was quite active in Rocky Hill Grange. The Grange Hall was a place to vote, it started off in the center of town across the street from the old Academy on church side of Center Street. And it burned in the Great Fire. Formerly it was a Labor oriented Union Hall. Then when that was burned, with a lot of help, it was relocated over on Glastonbury Ave. Which was a pretty good building. It had a stage and cooking facilities. It was sort of the center of activities in Rocky Hill at the time. Voting booths were set up in the Main Hall, and voting was where to election took place. They were taken down and stored in off times. On

Election Day, things were pretty active there. No electioneering outside the door. (Chuckles) They had square dances there every Saturday night. People came from all around to be part of it. There was an admission charge, and that became a source of income for the Grange.

J. Do you remember who the caller was for the square dances?

A. No, it was a professional caller, and at times it wasn't too stable, and the Constable had to be called in to keep order. No alcohol was allowed, and there were adequate facilities in the basement for refreshment. Toilet facilities also, and there was a lot of activity in the town there. Town meetings were held there and it was usually full. People discussing their thoughts; there were arguments. My Gramp was a Democrat, through and through and he was loud usually, and my Grandmother always insisted she go with him and many a time he would get out of order, and she would have his coat-tail and told him to take his seat, and take it easy.

J. One more thing we discussed the other day.

A. It was an essay I wrote that won a prize from the Delphian Society. It was a literary group that occasionally had contests. They were always in my thoughts, a group of people who were interested in writing, and literature. I think I remember hearing them each year announcing a given subject that they would specify. In the 8th grade in the Stevens School the contest was announced with the given subject, and I wrote on this particular year, the poets of New England, and I chose John Greenleaf Whittier. At our Graduation, I gave my essay orally standing in front of all these people who filled the Hall.

J. Well, thank you very much.

Griswold Family History – William G. Griswold

History of the Griswold Family

Through William G. Griswold

by

William G. Griswold

June 10, 1966

Introduction

The lineage of the Griswold family may be traced in an unbroken line from Humphrey Griswold of Greet, Lord of the Manor, in the sixteenth century. The Griswold family came into possession of the Malvern Estates about 1600 and have continued to hold them over the centuries. The spelling of the Griswold name changed several times from Grissell to Greshold, to Gresshold to Grisill to Grisold to Gresold to Gressould and finally to Griswold.

William Gourlie Griswold

William Gourlie Griswold was born on Thursday, April 28, 1919 in Hartford Hospital, Hartford Connecticut, at 11: 25 P. M. to Albert D. Griswold, Jr. and Ruth Steele Gourlie. His domineering characteristics include glossy reddish-brown hair, blue eyes, and a medium height. An interesting perception of his childhood is his violent temper tantrums resulting in the slamming of his head against the wall until attention was given him. As the farm was a predominating influence on his father's and grandfather's life it is on his. He is presently employed there working after school hours and on Saturdays. This has been the result of a constant, desire for occupation ever since he began at the age of nine.

He attended Kindergarten at the Congregational Church and then entered the Center School of Rocky Hill for first grade through fifth. After a very successful five years he was bussed to the Old West School in Western Rocky Hill for the sixth grade. Here he gained his first experience of meeting entirely new friends. He entered Junior High School at the Rocky Hill Junior Senior High School in the top division and continued to pursue his excellence through the eighth grade. From there he entered the college course at the Junior Senior High School and embarked upon his four years of High School (the high school becoming a High School in his sophomore year). He is now a junior and expects to finish high school and go on to college where he would like to major in math or science. Presently he is a member of the Chemistry Club, French Club, a past member of the Biology Club, a member of the Band, Orchestra, and is President of The National Honor Society.

His hobbies include collecting coins, water skiing, swimming and boating, and reading. He presently resides with his parents at 283 Old Main Street Rocky Hill, Connecticut and is at this time consuming his eighteenth year in this world.

Attending the Methodist Church, he is a member of the Methodist Youth Fellowship and is presently its treasurer.

Albert Deming Griswold, Jr.

Albert Deming Griswold, Jr. was born on October 23, 1916 as the son of Albert Deming Griswold, Sr. and Edla Morton Burr in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. He attended elementary grades in Rocky Hill and in off hours spent his time working on his father's farm which at the time was still under the domineering control of William F. Griswold. He, along with his other two brothers, Richard and Wilbur, learned much about the farm process by their daily chores around its habitat. Gardens were plowed and harrowed (at the time by horse drawn equipment) and fields were seeded and the harvest, reaped. Pay-day came once a year without fail at Christmas time when "old gramp" would dole out a twenty dollar bill to each of his grandsons for services rendered over the past year. High School consisted of four glorious years at Wethersfield High School since Rocky Hill was still lacking a high school. He was predominantly an A student but athletics were just barely out of his reach. He graduated in 1931. With his selective past behind him he went on to further education at Morse College in Hartford, Connecticut graduating honorably a Business Administration major. Following he became employed for five years at Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company in the Export Department. With World War II now in progress, he entered the service March 25, 1942 and served in the Seventy-seventh Infantry Division, the Ninety-fourth Infantry Division, the Five hundredth and fifteenth Parachute Infantry Division, and the Five hundredth and forty-first Parachute Infantry Division over a period of three years. He graduated from Infantry officers School in 1945 and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Infantry. Subsequently, he served with the Sixth Infantry Division in Korea and was honorably discharged from service into the Officers Reserve Corps on March 25, 1916.

After returning home he married Ruth Steele Gourlie of Thompsonville, Connecticut on October 5, 1916 purchasing a home at 283 Old Main Street Rocky Hill, Connecticut where he has resided since. Their marriage was blessed with the birth of four children: Albert III, the eldest, William G., Carol A., and Donald W. Following he became associated with his father, now one of the owners of Sunny Crest Farm, in the dairy business and for the next twenty years until the present day he has carried on his position at the farm as a driver salesman.

Politically he is a Democrat and is a Member of the Rocky Hill Methodist Church in which he has held several vital offices in the past years. He is also a member of the Rocky Hill Grange and a Past Master of that organization.

He has brown hair, blue eyes, and stands five feet eleven inches, passing his spare time with gardening and collecting Indian relics. He still enjoys fishing and boating on nearby Long Island Sound even as he nears his fiftieth year of joyous life.

Albert Deming Griswold, Sr.

Albert Deming Griswold, Sr. was born September 15, 1890 in Rocky Hill as the son of William Francis Griswold and Margaret Augusta Williams. His father being a prominent dairy man he rapidly adjusted to farm life and has shown his great ability as a businessman in his continuous development of Sunny Crest Farm which he inherited in a trust between him and two of his brothers William and Leonard, at the time of his father's death. Margaret Augusta Williams, incidentally, is still living today at the age of ninety-eight. He attended Local schools in attaining his elementary education and obtained his high school schooling at the high school at Middletown, Connecticut. Just as his son he was in constant service on the farm performing many chores just as was expected of him. He delivered milk at the farm for many years and after the death of his father became in charge of the processing procedure at the plant. He has continued at this job for many years and at the age of seventy-six is still at it reporting to the dairy at eight o'clock every morning and not leaving until seven. He presently resides at 162 Parsonage Street in Rocky Hill.

He married in the prime of his life to Edla Morton Burr who bore him four children, three boys-Wilbur, Richard, and Albert, and one girl - Cora. Wilbur now resides in Wethersfield, Cora in Andover, Massachusetts, and Albert and Richard in Rocky Hill.

Politically he is a Democrat and is a Member of the Rocky Hill Methodist Church of which he also has held many offices which demonstrate his great eagerness for aiding the town people. At the age of only twenty three he became Master of the Grange and held that office for the prescribed term. He served on the Board of Education for twelve beginning in 1931 and was its chairman for four years. Also he has been a member of the Board of Finance for twenty-six years and is a former chairman. Presently he is a member of the Board of School Building Committee of he was a chairman for several years.

He enjoys his vacation at their cottage at Cedar Island, Clinton, Connecticut where he can relax in the sun, drive his boat, and enjoy the friendly company of a mid-summer day.

William Francis Griswold

William Francis Griswold, one of the most successful dairy farmers of Rocky Hill was born in the town of Wethersfield, Hartford County, on January 5, 1860 to Albert D. Griswold and Mary Ann Wells. He was the second child and the eldest of the sons and in that case obtained possession of the farm which his father bought. The family moved to the farm in Rocky Hill when William was only five years old where he lived and grew to manhood and later died. He obtained his early education in the district schools. He did although supplement his education with attendance at Brown Public school on the east side of Hartford. After remaining on his father's farm, he married Miss Margaret A. Williams, a relative who was still of an early age. Their marriage took place in 1888 and since there has been ten children: Frank, Albert, Hayden, Helen, Mary, Leonard, Arthur, Catherine, William, and Margaret. After this marriage he moved from the farm to the center of town but he returned to his old home within two years.

Great-grand carried on an extensive dairy business besides his general farming with a herd of eighty-five cattle, including forty-five cows. He also owned a total of ten horses. His farm was a large one containing over one hundred acres on which he raised fruit extensively. The farm today is more than twice as large and total produce of milk is nearly five times as large covering an area twice as large. In 1897 Great-grand saved one acre for raspberry bushes and another for strawberries, and in 1898 he produced four hundred peach and one hundred plum trees. In the following year he increased his peach orchard to two thousand trees followed by an apple orchard of three hundred trees in the next. This orchard, incidentally, was located on the hill where the High School is now located today. He delivered his milk in the city of Hartford and surrounding towns, selling about seven hundred quarts and using two teams of horses in the pulling of the milk wagon. He was a Democrat in politics and in 1895 was chosen selectman of his town. He was also a member of the Congregational Church and the Grange in Rocky Hill.

Albert Deming Griswold

Albert Deming Griswold was born July 29, 1834, in Wethersfield to Captain Francis Griswold and Sarah P. Deming, both who were natives of Wethersfield. Albert D. was third in a family of ten children, the names of the others being Francis, Sarah, Robert B., Louise C., Teresa C., Robert P., Ella, Martha and Florine.

After living in the town of Wethersfield until he became twenty-one, he went to Ashland, Minnesota, where he went into business as a lumber dealer and the proprietor of a sawmill. By 1859 he had become dissatisfied with the prospected business outlook and returned to his native home where he accepted a position as overseer on a farm of the Robbins Seed Company. He worked there for two years and in 1869 moved to the promising lands of Rocky Hill where he bought a farm which is still owned today by the Sunny Crest Farm Trust made up of prominent Griswolds of today. He made his home here until his death on April 26, 1889. Thirty-three years before his death Albert D. married Miss Mary A. Wells, of Wethersfield, who bore him nine children. The eldest, Mary F., who became a prominent teacher of Hartford Country and continued to hold this as her life profession until only a few years before her death. W. F. Griswold was the second child and the eldest of the sons. Emma L. died early in life and Florine married Henry Vibberts, of Manchester. Hattie married James Williams, the ticket agent for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad at New Britain. Sarah L., became the wife of George Best of Wethersfield, a night watchman at the prison in that town. Albert A., who died early in life was little known. Jesse D. became a teacher in the Hartford Public School System and Everett C. became an insurance man, and made his home in Rocky Hill.

Albert D. never sought office to any prominent post but was the recipient of many proffered honors from his fellow townsmen. He was at one time Selectman of Rocky Hill and represented his town in the Legislature during the session of 1883. He served as school visitor for twenty one years and for many terms served at the office of Justice of the Peace. In politics he was a Democrat and in his general thought he was liberal and broadminded. Active in town affairs and always knowing he served as a vital part in the forming of a constant Rocky Hill. It is not surprising then, that he was one of the founders of the Rocky Hill Library Association.

Captain Francis Griswold

Francis Griswold was born in 1795 to the prominent parents, Captain Caleb Griswold and Lucy Francis. He married Sarah P. Deming and after living a prosperous life he departed from this world on May 12, 1851. Of all the ingredients of this ancestral line, Francis is the most allusive with practically no information available which would be conclusive evidence as to his occupation (although his title does permit food for thought), his education or his probable prosperity,

Captain Caleb Griswold

Captain Caleb Griswold was born on November 11, 1762 to Captain William Griswold and Elizabeth McCloud. He married Lucy Francis and continued to possess his prominent standing in his native town continuously up to his death in June of 1837. He, even more than his father, Captain William Griswold, may have been connected with operations during the Revolutionary War and one can assume therefore, he served his country as a prominent defender of liberty.

Captain William Griswold⁶⁷

Captain William Griswold entered the world at the early part of the year, January 11, 1735, to Captain Caleb Griswold and Abigail Bunce. He married Elizabeth McCloud and after a short life span of only forty-one years died on November 14, 1776 in the relatively early months of the American Revolution. It is thought that he may have been connected with some of the basic maneuvers of the early campaign for freedom in the United States but information is scarce and rather vague.

⁶⁷ Is this the Captain William Griswold who is associated with the brigantine Minerva?

Captain Caleb Griswold

Captain Caleb Griswold, my great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather was born May 8, 1706 to Michael Griswold Jr. and Elizabeth Burnham. He married Abigail Bunce and after an abrupt life of only forty eight years, died on December 20, 1751. As at this time Rocky Hill and Wethersfield were shipping settlements Captain Caleb was undoubtedly a shipping captain just as later generations may have been but again proof is scarce.

Michael Griswold, Jr.

Michael Griswold, Jr. was born March 7, 1666 or 67 to Michael Griswold and Anne Stocking, Hulburt, or Wolcott. Michael probably built the house which now stands as the Michael Griswold House. Upon his father's death the house went to Anne but upon her death it was to go to Michael. This Michael should not be confused with the other Michael who was born early to the same parents but died in early infancy. Michael Jr. carried on the high standards set by his father and on May 12, 1692 he married Elizabeth Burnham, daughter of William Burnham. They were married by John Allen's assistant, Ensign of South Train Band in Wethersfield. After a prosperous life his wife died on September 9, 1711 and stricken by this horrible tragedy he died the next year on July 21, 1712.

Michael Griswold

Unfortunately with Michael Griswold, the first Griswold in my line to come to America, there is some conflict as to the year of his birth. Some books quote about 1597, others say 1608 or 1610. It has been established although that he was born in England and the place was more than likely Kenilworth, Warwickshire but definite proof is scarce. His father was probably Mathew Griswold, Esquire an uncle of Hunphrey Griswold the First Lord of the Manor. According to some genealogists this is conclusive but to others it is doubted. Thus we come to Michael Griswold who settled in Wethersfield and owned land there as early as 1610. "He was the only freeman of that name in Wethersfield in 1659". It is shown that his cattle earmark was recorded and he paid a so-called fence tax in 1617. His house which is still standing was built on Black Lane and he married after he came to America. His wife Anne Stocking Hulburt, or Wolcott was a quiet, woman and an eager one. His house was of a fine quality as he was a mason by trade and he was constantly making improvements. Their marriage was blessed with five boys and three girls:

Thomas, born October 22, 1616

Hester, born May 8, 1648

Mary, born January 28, 1650

Michael, born February 1, 1552; died in childhood

Abigail, born June 8, 1655

Isaac, born about September 30, 1658

Jacob, born April 15, 1660

Sarah, born about September 30, 1662

Michael, born March 7, 166-72

When Michael Griswold died on September 26, 168), an inventory of his estate was taken by several of his friends and it was estimated he had about 628 pounds. The house was given to Anne and upon her death it went to Michael. To his oldest son Thomas, he left a house, barn and 10 acres of land. Isaac obtained the Luke Hitchcock Homestead with lands and Jacob gained sixteen Acres at, "Two –Stone Brook" now Griswoldville.

His jobs to the town consisted of being constable, assessor and appraiser of lands and a mason. He lived a struggling life at the yeoman rank and died nothing changed.

Griswold, Grandma - Remembrances

This is almost certainly Margaret (Woolverton) Griswold the wife of the Rocky Hill patriarch and owner of Sunny Crest Farm, William F. Griswold.

She was 95 when interviewed .If she was born in Feb. 1861the interview was done circa

1956.

Interviewer:⁶⁸ Sigmund Adler assisted by Bill Griswold and Mason Andrews

(Introduction not recorded on tape. First part of table (tape? - RCH) was not audible.)

Mr. Adler—Q: When was that started? Do you remember? Was that when you were a child?

A: What?

Mr. A. Q: The railroad.

Grandma G.: It was built when I was a baby. I was two years old when they unloaded the first engine. They had cars; I heard relatives tell. I can't remember it, but Mother said the first time I walked any distance was to walk down to see the engine. Because my cousin, my mother's sister and her little boy were here. They used a baby carriage, but I walked. I was two years old. It was just after because my birthday was in February.

Mr. Adler. Q: Were they making any ropes in those days at that old rope walk?

Grandma G.: Here? I never believed they did.

Mr. A. -Q: Over there on the park—I thought they made ropes over there.

Grandma G.: Well, they might have, but I don't remember it.

Other Comment: They didn't make the rope there, I don't believe. They had what they called a rope walk.

Grandma G: Yes, but I don't remember seeing it, and I don't remember about it.

Mr. A. Q: You didn't see it?

Grandma G.: No. I never really heard that they made ropes here.

Mr. A. Q.: Do you remember what they used the Shipman Tavern for?

Grandma G.: Why, people come there for big dinners. Shad dinners, and so forth. Noted people from Hartford and around. They usually would get up big dinner there, but I don't remember much about it.

Bill Griswold: Well, the Shipman Tavern, that was there. I can remember the Shipman Tavern.

Mr. Adler: You can? Struck by lightning and burned down.

Bill: That was on the old valley road, wasn't it, right up through to Hartford? Not the railroad, but the road.

Mr. Adler: Right up where the (?) tank used to be— the (?) school, that sets across the

⁶⁸ Quite a lineup of interviewers. Mr. Adler and M. Andrews have papers elsewhere in this file.

road from there?

Bill: No, it used to be down across from the old blacksmith shop. Bill Magaldi lives there now on that same site; and Joe Coelho — right along in there. I remember here that was. That was when? It must have burned down in 1930?

Mr. Adler: It might have been, I don't know. It was right across, up a ways from that big house there. Where Arch Libers used to live?

Other Voice: Just below there. Credel (?) had a blacksmith shop there? Bill: Right across the street--directly, a little ways above a little ways above the Methodist Church.

Bill: What about the grange. When did the grange get going in Rocky Hill?

Grandma G.: Grange? I don't know. I've been a member for 60 years and I wasn't a charter member.

Mr. Adler: You were not a charter member?

Grandma G.: My husband was, but I wasn't. I had too many children.

Mr. Adler: Where was the old Grange building?

Grandma: Right down--the building right in back of the church, and they bought it, after a while. I don't know. We met around at different places for a long time. The hall there--after a while they bought right where the road--Center St. goes across there.

Mr. Adler Q. The hall was there?

Grandma: We bought it from the U. M.⁶⁹, oh, some organization. It burned down because someone was putting kerosene oil in the Belden store, which was pretty near the church, and went outside and didn't pay attention, and it flowed over, and it got on fire. They saved the church, but they didn't save the Grange Hall.

Mr. Adler: Q.: Did you teach school here in town?

Grandma: Yes, I taught school for a while in town.

Mr. Adler Q.: Which school?

Grandma: The South School, where the police station is, the building.

Mr. Adler: Do you remember how long you taught there?

Grandma: Yes, I do. I taught there from September, 1887 until the big blizzard of 1888. I taught there 1887 until April, the blizzard, 1888.

Mr. Adler. Q: Why didn't you go on teaching?

Grandma: Because I was going to be married, and I was sick all the time. I caught cold,

⁶⁹ United Methodist Church? - RCH

and my sister took up the school.

Mr. Adler: Q: When you first got married, did you live in this house, the old house?

Grandma: No, I lived where Jessie lives.

Mr. Adler: Jessie Brockway?

Grandma: Yes. My husband bought that before we were married, and when I got married we went up there. It was our journey.

Mr. Adler: Your wedding trip was from ... ?

Grandma: The house on Main St. right across from the cemetery-- a big white house. I lived there from the time I was fifteen.

Bill: But you weren't born in that house. Where were you born?

I was born down on Pratt Street. I don't know the number – I wish I did. You go down Pratt Street and you keep going – you go into a house – I was born in that house.

Mr. Adler: Oh yes, the house where Millers now live. Grandma: I don't know who lives there now. They painted it dark red.

Bill: It was known as the Fred Belden house.

Grandma: The Williams' house. My father's father lived there. I was born in that house.

Mr. Adler: And when did you come over to this house?

Grandma: I think it was when I was fifteen.

Bill: Not fifteen.

Grandma: I was fifteen years old when I came up there and then I went to South School. I didn't teach; I went to school there.

Bill: You didn't quite get the question. He asked when you came over here.

Grandma; Well, I came over here -- the first day of April, when I was ...

Bill: It was two years after you were married, wasn't it?

Grandma: I lived down there on Elm St. from April, 1888 until the first day of April. ... I don't know if it was 1890 or 1891.

Mr. Adler: Until 1891.

Grandma: I can tell you why, but you don't need to read that record. Father Griswold lived here. He came here and bought this house when my husband was five years old. My husband was 3 years older than I am, and I'm 95. They bought the place, and he grew up there, He died without any warning. He had a heart attack and died immediately. There was only one boy I, and several girls and the mother. They could not

run the farm, so we had to swap houses, much to my disgust.

Mr. Adler: You didn't like that?

Grandma: No, but what's to do, so I did it.

Bill: They had to get farther away from Dr. Moser, you know, when they came out here. It wasn't so handy.

Mr. Adler: Did Dr. Moser live there?

Bill: Sure he did -- right across the street.

Grandma G.: We just swapped places. We put my goods on one wagon and brought it around here; they put theirs on the same wagon and took it back again.

Bill: On the blizzard. When we had the big blizzard? When they had the big blizzard, weren't you down in the South School? How did you get home?

Grandma G.: Yes. It began snowing Sunday afternoon, and it was still snowing Monday morning, and my father dug a path and we went down to school, and people began coming for their children before noon, and finally several came down, and he lived up this side of the school, and he went up home and got my father, and couldn't get the horse -- couldn't travel the snow was so deep -- so he took a yoke of oxen, and it took us an hour to get home from South School to my home. The roads weren't open. That was Monday. The roads were not open so they could get anything down until Wednesday, toward night.

Bill: You're quite an old member of the church. How about the church now, you're an older member? Do you want to tell him a little bit about the church?

Grandma G.: Yes. It's just as it was.

Mr. Adler Q.: When did you join the church?

Grandma G.: Oh, I think about 1884, somewhere about there. I've got a book that tells just exactly the date.

Bill: You are actually one of the oldest members of the church now?

Grandma G.: The oldest, I think.

Bill: Do you remember when the Ladies Benevolent Society started?

Grandma G.: They started before I did.

Mr. Adler: Were you an officer in the L.B.S.?

Grandma G.: Oh, yes. I was treasurer for 25 years.

Mr. Adler: What did they used to do at the L.B.S. meetings back in those early days?

Grandma G.: we sewed and had suppers, and so forth.

Mr. Adler: Did you go to Hartford very much from here?

Grandma G.: We had to go occasionally.

Mr. Adler: How did you go?

Grandma G.: When I was a girl we went in horse and wagon. After I was out here we used to go Saturday nights. When father could get away -- when I came down on Main St. Trolley cars.

Bill - Didn't we used to take the horse and wagon -- some buggy or other, and go up to Wethersfield?

Grandma G.: A too-seater -- they don't have them nowadays -- a two-seated visitor's wagon.

Bill: A surrey, they used to call it. And we used to go up to Wethersfield, leave the horse and wagon, and take the trolley car in to Hartford, didn't we?

Grandma G.: Yes, sometimes we did, yes.

Bill: That was pretty much the schedule on getting to Hartford.

Grandma G.: I don't much recall this.

Bill: Go ahead. Tell us. We'd love to hear. We're having more fun than you are.

Grandma G.: one time I drove the horse and buggy up. We used to put it in Willard's up there, and left it, and the horse somehow or other got his bridle off and came home, and left the buggy there. They were scared to pieces down here.

Mr. Adler, Q.: What did you used to do for good times before you had movies and all that sort of thing?

Grandma G.: Sometimes we had little plays or card parties. We didn't have very much of anything. Some people did, but I had too much to do at home.

Mr. Adler: You had too much to do at home?

Grandma G.: I remember the first movie they had down here. It was a very icy time. My husband wouldn't let me take a horse out to go down to the church to see the first movie, so there were about ten of us, and they were going to walk down to see the first movie.

Mr. Adler: And that was in the church?

Grandma G.: In the church. And when the picture came on, and an engine came across there, all the children went down on the floor, under the seats. It was so real.

Bill: They thought the train was going to run right over them. Is that true?

Yes, I remember Grandma telling me that so many times. Frank and Albert were both there. They jumped down under the seats.

Grandma G.: Frank and Albert were big enough to go. They got right down on the floor.

Mr. Adler. Q: When did the trolley come down here?

Grandma G.: I can't tell you.

Bill: That really isn't old. I remember that.

Mr. Adler: You remember that?

Bill: Oh, yes.

Mr. Adler: I didn't know it was as new as that.

Bill: Oh, yes. I can remember when the trolley came down here very readily. That's not old. Why don't you tell Mr. Adler where the shipyard was? He thinks he knows, but you tell him where it was.

Grandma G.: Well, I'd say, you know where Harris' farm was? It was right there.

Mr. Adler: On Pratt St? Towards the river?

Grandma G.: The farm went down this way, till you came to a fence, a cow pasture, and the cow pasture went on down. Well, we used to go down that hill, get over that fence, go down this way until we got over to a rail fence with a stile over it, and then there was a garden, perhaps as wide as this room. You'd cross that garden, and you'd go right down there, and there was the shipyard. And there was the Holney (?) house, you know where the Holneys used to live, and another house this side, and the shipyard was aside of those. It wasn't up Pratt Street.

Bill: That would be South of where the foundry is, wouldn't it? Grandma G.: Oh, yes, a long ways down from the foundry.

Mr. Adler: Way down toward Dividend?

Grandma G.: No.

Mr. Adler: About where American Oil is now?

Grandma G.: They say it's where the oil company is now. It was right there. It wasn't up that other way.

Mr. Adler Q.: What did they do there at the shipyard?

Grandma G.: Built barges. They built a barge every year. Sometimes two. They'd build one and then another. We used to go there. They'd get them all done, and they'd launch

them right there. Children, young people, and some older ones used to get on that launch.

Mr. Adler: They'd get on it and get launched?

Grandma G.: Slide down it. Slide down it.

Bill: Did they have to break a bottle of sherry over it, or over the barge in those days?

Grandma: I think they did. But the last time I went on one, it turned around this of way and stuck in the mud, up where that brook is across there. And they had to wait and get a tow boat and pull it off.

Bill: That's the brook that goes down through the valley from Belden St., isn't it? Right down through that hollow. The brook you're talking about.

Grandma G.: No, the brook I'm talking about is the brook that goes down by Shipman's place on this side of (?) hill. I mean -- there's one house left there one house was pulled down, and then the Shipman house is there, and there is this low pasture down there -- that's the brook I'm talking about.

Bill: That's the one I'm talking about too.

Grandma G.: All, right, we're talking about the same thing.

Bill: Just to locate that brook that she mentioned. You know where Belden St. is; there's a ravine that goes all the way down through and under the railroad; well, that's where she went. She lived to the south of that and went directly back to the river from here she lived and walked right into the shipyard.

Mr. Adler: The brook was one side of the shipyard?

Bill: Yes. Evidently on the North side. She said the barge came around the North side and got stuck in the mud at the end of the brook, so that seemed to be it.

Mr. Adler: I'm a little bit interested in the harness shop. Was there a harness shop in town? There was a blacksmith shop, but no harness shop?

Grandma G.: Well, I don't know. There was some sort of a shop up on Pratt St. halfway up to the Belden house, the Butler house. There was shop halfway between there, but I don't know what they did do. A man named Butler. He had a lot of tools in there. I don't know if it was a harness shop or not.

Bill: That's where we used to go to the shoemaker years ago, isn't it? We always used to take our shoes down on Pratt St. Yes, we did. Now that you mention it I remember it as well as day.

Other Questioner: Wasn't there a grain mill in this town? Bill: What they called a grain mill was right next to the Grange Hall and they burned together. It was right at the

northwest corner of Academy Hall.

Mr. Adler: Where did you have your harnesses repaired, or where did you get new harnesses?

Grandma G.: I don't know.

Bill: Yes, don't you remember Brazzill (sp.)? Brazzill was the name. He was a harness man in Hartford for years. That's where we always had our work done. He didn't do it in Rocky Hill, I'm sure of that. Brazzill was the name, and they were way up on North Main St. I know that myself. That was part of a house, or it has been made over.

Mr. Adler: But it's interesting that you had a blacksmith shop but no harness shop.

Grandma G.: The blacksmith shop was out here on Personage St. Who lives in that house?

Bill: Its right next to where Lou Wenzel lives -- the shop was next to that.

Grandma G.: It used to be down here under the oak tree, but they pulled it down.

Bill: That's right. Isn't that funny. Right here at the corner where Dom Sylvester lives. Well, there was a shop right there, and there was an oak tree.

Grandma G.: Yes, a big oak tree. Yes.

Bill: You remember these things, and I can't.

Grandma G.: I was always scared to death to come by there at night.

Mr. Adler: Why?

Grandma G. Well, cause I thought there was someone in there to catch you. That's what they used to tell the children.

Bill: Afraid of the bogeymans.

Grandma G.: So they couldn't play at night. So it would scare them so they didn't want to go out.

Mr. Adler: So somebody was going to catch them.

G.: That's what they'd tell them.

Mr. Adler: Did you go past the place?

Grandma G.: Yes, I was grown up then -- but my children and other children in the neighborhood.

Other Questioner: I was going to ask, do you remember anything about -- they said there was a packing or slaughterhouse out here on the Shunpike. I remember Newt Warner, when I was going down there for bees one day, and he spoke, and he said "Over

there by that swamp there was a packing house where the people used to take their sheep and oxen."

Bill: I can tell you the answer to that. You know where Emil Soderberg's barn was there? Right opposite Hilltop Manor? What was the name of that butcher shop over there where Soderberg lived -- it was in Wethersfield. A slaughter-house there, over on Maple Street.

Mr. Adler: Where Hilltop Manor was?

Bill: opposite it -- on the other side of the road. There was a barn there, a farm there, and they used to have a slaughter-house there where they killed cattle.

Grandma G.: Hangdog?

Bill: The Hangdog farm.

Other Questioner: I remember what Newt Warner pointed out to me was south of Elm St., where Elm St. comes in on the Shunpike.

Mr. Adler: Where Soderberg is now, isn't it?

Grandma G.: Near Dr. Moser's house.

Other: No. No. On the Shunpike. It's where they've got the chickens now -- across the street. Out there on Cromwell Ave., almost down on France Street.

Bill: They're talking about this slaughter-house there was in town here, where they killed cattle and packed meat end things. Across the street from ... I don't recall the name, but I know where it was that he's talking about.

Come on in. I didn't know you were out there. Come or in.

Other Voice: That was Marshall Wright's place.

Bill: Oh, yes. Marshall Wright's place, remember? She's reminding me of things that I know all about and I've forgotten about myself. Marshall Wright's. Right across from where they have the chickens there.

Other Voice: It was Marshall Wright's place. They used to kill cattle

Other voice: Was that his home there too?

Bill: It was Marshall Wright's slaughterhouse out there. Right out there just before you get down to France Street, down Cromwell Ave. They've got all those chickens up there on the side hill. That's the place.

Grandma G.: I don't remember.

Other Male: There was a church on corner of New Britain Ave. and the Shunpike too. That was only taken down recently for the road.

Other Voice: It was taken down before I came to Rocky Hill, I know'. That would have been 20 years or less.

Bill: No, that hasn't been out of there 10 years. No, you're wrong.

Mr. Adler: I want to ask you, how old were you when you became a teacher?

Grandma G: I was eighteen.

Mr. Adler: Did you go to – had you been to high school then?

No. I never went to high school. I went to the Rocky Hill schools and to the Normal School⁷⁰. I had tried a teacher here for quite a while, to try the lessons, and then I went to Normal School.

Mr. Adler: To the Normal School in New Britain?

Grandma G.: Yes. And I went from that house on Main St., walked to the depot, took the train to Hartford, took the train from Hartford to New Britain for two and one-half years.

Mr. Adler: And then you were qualified to be a teacher?

Grandma G.: Yes.

Mr. Adler: And this was the one school you taught in.

Grandma G.: No. I taught at one in East Windsor Hill. I went there in January and finished the term until spring for a school aide who was sick. And that's all.

Mr. Adler: Did they have a board of education then here?

Grandma: No. They had a school board.

Mr. Adler: who hired you?

Grandma G. My father was (?) the school board with the condition he hire me to teach school down there. And that's the way I came down here. I had agreed to go back to Windsor Hill. I could board at home so I wrote them I wouldn't come back.

Mr. Adler: So the school you then taught in – the South School – is now the police station?

Grandma G.: Yes. South School.

Mr. Adler: Did you teach in Academy Hall, the old school in the center?

Grandma G.: I taught school ... that little time.

Mr. Adler: Did the youngsters who finished school go to high school from here?

Grandma G.: I don't know at that time whether anybody did or not. I took the

⁷⁰ A Normal School was a teacher's college. Probably Central Connecticut State University in 2016.

examination in Hartford for the high school but I didn't go.

Mr. Adler: Which high school did you take an examination for?

Grandma G.: Hartford High. But I want to tell you that Hayden graduated from the Hartford High School.

Bill: About the cemetery down here in Rocky Hill, You were secretary of the Cemetery Association for a long time.

Grandma G.: For a while I was.

Bill: Well, the book says quite a while.

Grandma G.: That's it then.

Bill: What else can you tell us? We don't want to make you tired, but do you want to say anything else?

Grandma G.: I'm trying to think. I thought of something, but I don't know what it is.

Mr. Adler: You were a member of the Board of Education, weren't you?

Grandma G.: Yes, I Was.

Mr. Adler: How many years?

Grandma G.: I was elected ... for several years I think. I don't know just how long.

Bill: Quite a few.

Mr. Adler: There's so many things I would want to ask.

Grandma G.: It makes me think, when I see these buses, they can't go over a mile to school.

Mr. Adler: How far did you used to walk?

Grandma G.: I walked from my house on Main St. where I lived, to the railroad station in Rocky Hill, then on the train to Hartford, get off the train there, and took another train to New Britain for two and one-half years.

Mr. Adler: Did you commute every day?

Grandma G.: I took the bus (?) every day. Sometimes I stayed in New Britain. I had an uncle who lived there, and an aunt. Sometimes I went to Bristol to stay there.

(Mr. Andrews enters.)

Bill: This is Mr. Andrews. He's a history teacher over at the school.

Grandma G.: Well, I don't know much history.

Bill: You're telling us quite a lot.

Mr. Adler: Which was the Main Road between here and Hartford? When you went with horse and buggy, how did you go?

Grandma G.: Old Main St. into Wethersfield. If there was a freshet, we didn't go. It went over the road up there.

Mr. Adler: When was Church St. made?

Bill: Church St. -- the one that goes in back of the church.

Grandma G.: It was always there. I don't know when it wasn't there.

Bill: That was an old muddy road, as I remember it, as a kid.

Grandma G.: It wasn't a good road. It was always muddy.

'Bill: You could go through there in dry weather that's all. You could hardly drive through there -- you'd lose your horse.

Mr. Adler (to Mr. Andrews.): Did you have a question?

Mr. Andrews: Yes, I had a couple. I don't know what you've covered.

Bill: Go ahead. Mr. Andrews wants to ask you a question or too.

Mr. Andrews: Q: I was wondering, have you talked about the church here in town? The Congregational Church?

Mr. Adler: What specifically?

Mr. Andrews: I was wondering if you remembered some of the Ministers way back. Some of the Ministers?

Grandma G.: Some of them, yes.

Bill: Mr. Waters?

Grandma G.: Mr. Waters. I can remember Mr. Bussey. He lives in Maine. When I was a girl he used to have students. I remember having two when I was about 13 or 14 years old. They boarded with my mother down there on St. They had a room there, the two of them. They were students.

Mr. Adler: Students at the Seminary?

Grandma G.: Do you remember Mr. Macy?

Mr. Adler: Mr. Macy -- yes -- from Newington.

Other voice: Macy didn't teach in Newington.

Mr. Adler: No. No. There was a minister by the name of Macy in Newington.

Grandma G. I don't know. They were just students then.

Bill: How about I

Grandma G.: Oh, no. Goodness, he was before my day.

Mr. Adler: 1794 until 1850.

Grandma: Do you know when he was here?

Mr. Andrews: The revolutionary War. About 1775 through there.

Mr. Adler: 1794 he began.

Bill: Her father could remember him. He was a Civil War veteran.

Mr. Andrews: Yes. I wondered about that. If she remembers any of the veterans of the Civil War. Very likely she did, here in town.

Bill: Do you remember any of the other men who were in the Civil War when your father was?

Grandma G.: Well I wasn't born in the Civil War.

Bill: Well I know, but do you know of any veterans. Your father was in the Civil War.

Grandma: Well, my father wasn't in the Civil War very long. He lost his hearing. He was a second lieutenant and rode horseback, and he couldn't hear the commands of the lieutenant, or whatever. He was a second lieutenant. He couldn't hear the orders to give to the men, so he was sent home. He came home in 1860.

Mr. Adler: "What other men were in the Civil War

Grandma G.: Well, my mother's brother, Daniel Griswold. He nearly died and they brought him home. He lived in that house that has been renovated now. You know, Dividend Rd.

Mr. Adler: Charlie Yeager's house you mean? No. 1.

Grandma G.: Daniel C. Griswold owned that house. He was my mother's brother.

Mr. Adler: Were there any others?

Grandma G.: Oh, yes there were two LeVaugh boys. There were a lot. They died in Prison. They lived in that house on the north side of Pratt St. halfway down.

Bill: "Where Charlie Lane lives? Would that be the house?

Grandma G.: Yes. There were two there. There were a lot of them. I wasn't born then.

Bill: Have you any other questions? We've covered a lot of ground, and we don't want to keep Grandma too much longer.

Mr. Andrews: I wondered if she remembered anything about the elections -- Teddy Roosevelt and so on.

Mr. Adler: Well, I can tell you about that.

M. Andrews: Who had the first car in town?

Grandma G.: I don't know.

Bill: was it Grandpa?

Grandma G: No, but I bet he was the second.

Other Female: It was Bill Lenox, down Dividend.

Grandma G.: It wasn't long before your father had one, I'll bet. Oh yes. He would peddle milk, and he used to peddle with three routes in Hartford. Now they had that in the paper. He took this farm, and his father started a milk route. There was two cows over here when I came here and he had a milk route himself.

Bill. He started from scratch and built it up.

Mr. Adler: Who was it that had a butcher's shop house?

Bill: That was Rob Griswold.

Grandma G: On the corner was Robert's. The house was torn down. One time old Dr. Griswold's son lived next door to where Dr. Moser does.

Bill: But it was Rob Griswold who had the butcher shop and the meat store.

Mr. Adler: And he used to peddle the meat.

Grandma G.: Yes, he did.

Mr. Adler: We've been here nearly an hour. I think that's pretty nearly enough.

Question: The question I was interested in -- the industry in town. If there wasn't a mill on where they ground grain either for horses or chickens, or something like that. I was wondering if there wasn't anything like that. Were there any brooks around here used in dams where they used water power to grind grain or something?

Mr. Adler: There was a cider mill, I know, out it West Rocky Hill.

Bill: Do you remember way back there when you were young, were there any industries, like any little mills, or things of that sort?

Grandma G.: Industries? Not until they brought the foundry. There must have been other things.

Bill: Of course, Frank Holmes started the foundry way back, before these people ever got started.

Grandma: Of course that foundry was handed down about 3 or 4 times.

Bill: Oh, 40 times from what it was in those days.

Female Voice: They used to take the grain to Griswoldville.

Grandma: I remember ... I wasn't 15 because I lived down on Pratt St. There was a big house, right where the office of the foundry is now. The Canby place, but it burned down about 6:00 o'clock in the morning. I remember everybody in the house got up and got dressed to go to that fire. And then after that, I don't know - it was a big brick house. Do you remember a brick house on the other end?

Mr. Adler: Yes, yes.

Bill: The foundry tore that down.

Grandma: There's a story that goes with that house. This woman used to come from New York, and she heard someone trying to get in, so she started to cry like a baby, and then talked to the baby, and then she'd cry "Now, now, still, still, still, " and talked to that baby and they didn't try any more to get in. Next to that house there was a small place, small house that was used for a storehouse. Before I was married my husband bought an orchard out in Bristol, picked the apples, stored them in there, ready to put them in barrels and send them to New York, and the whole place burned up.

Mr. Adler: The boat that used to go from Hartford to New York... they never stopped herein Rocky Hill, did they?

Grandma G.: Yes.

Mr. Adler: Did they stop here?

Grandma G.: No, they stopped on the Glastonbury side. I know a story about those boats.

Mr. Adler: Tell us about them.

Grandma G.: It was 1875, my mother started to go to Philadelphia to the World's Fair. My father took her to Hartford and she got onto the boat. The boat was so loaded with people going to the fair that it got stuck in the mud out by the meadow, and there it was. They had to go up and get row boats and take all those people off so they could get the boat out. They all came home, and the next night they all went to Middletown and took the boat. And I've got a little flag somewhere, about that long, the handle was about that long ... a little silk flag, and I don't know where it is.

Grandma G.: Well, I don't think that was a very good story. It's kind of mixed up.

Bill: You saw these things anyway, and none of the rest of us ever did.

Grandma G.: Well I know any of the stories I've told you are not exaggerated. Of course, you haven't said anything about Regent Hall. We used to have a lot of things going on there.

Mr. Adler: What did you have going on there?

Grandma G.: Oh, we used to have entertainments upstairs, put on little plays, and so forth. Two rooms downstairs. I always went to school up there. Although we were set off for the South district although it was a good deal farther to the South district than it was to the center. My father went to the legislature, and had that part of Rocky Hill set off to the Center School District, so I had to go to Belden St., past Glastonbury Ave., and there I was. I had a letter, too, about that but I can't get around to see where that is. There are a lot of things up in the attic that would be very nice for the Historical Society. There's a register. Before your day they used to have big registers like that, where they kept records of the students.

Mr. Adler: For the schools here in town?

Grandma G: Oh, there are a lot of things up in that attic. I've no idea how it looks.

Bill: If you gave them to them now, they'd have no place to put them.

Grandma: No, that's what Mary says. She can't bring them over here.

Bill: The Historical Society has no place to put them now, so we might as well wait a little bit until they have a place; and then if you want to give them those things, you can.

Grandma: I should think you would want to do something with them.

Bill: "Well, some day. Well, you've done awfully well for them. Sure.

Mr. Adler: Thank you very much.

Bill: Now they're going to let you hear exactly what you told them.

The End ...

Gilbert, Jarvis & Dimmock, Jared

Thursday, June 16, 1994

Gilbert and Dimmock are two of the old family names of Rocky Hill.

My name is Doris Schreier from The Rocky Hill Historical Society who is interested in knowing and preserving Rocky Hill history and I have asked Jarvis Codaire Gilbert of 702 Elm St. , Rocky Hill, Ct. and Jared Gilbert Dimock of 2 Bayberry Court, Cromwell, Ct. to share their memories of the town when they were growing up. Would you like to start, Jarvis?

Jarvis: Well, I was born right here in West Rocky Hill on a farm and Dr. Oran Moser brought me into the world and I went to West School. I started the first grade in 1925. There were 8 grades and three rooms. We had three teachers to teach the 8 grades.

Doris: Was that the West School that was there before the one that got taken down or was that the one our kids went to?

Jarvis: That's what's known as Schoolhouse Corner now. There was no running water in school when we started out. There was a bucket in the hall with a ladle and then they graduated to a container with a few paper cups and the third year we had running water and toilets in the school. Before that we had toilets outside. The boys all wore knickers until they got to the 7th grade and then they graduated to long pants. There was a lot of baseball and everybody had a bag of marbles. In the wintertime everybody played Fox and Geese in the snow. If anybody was bad they used a rubber hose or the ruler on the hand. You had to hold out your hand and the teacher would give you a crack with the rubber hose. If anybody was real bad and I only saw this once this boy was laid across his chair and he had the seat of his pants warmed up. Little girls, I never saw them get hit.

Doris: They were so good.

Jarvis: I can't remember the school being closed because of the snow and we walked to school. In the winter time some of the mothers would come in and make hot cocoa for us for lunch.

Doris: Can you tell us more about school, a typical school day or what you were taught, like what lessons you had, or subjects? Do you remember that? This is what we want to put in now. Can you describe the school more, the teachers. The classes?

Jarvis: My first grade teacher was Mrs. Simpson. Second grade teacher was Mrs. Grigley who died recently. There was a Mrs. Burr when we got into the 4th grade there was Mrs. Lowell when we got into the 7th grade and the same for 8th grade. Every Friday Miss Ann Robbins would come to teach us our music lesson. Every Friday in the 7th and 8th

grade they would turn on the radio so we could listen to Walter Damrosch⁷¹.

Doris: How many children were in the class?

Jarvis: Oh, possibly 14, 15, maybe 16.

Doris: Would you like to tell us about your growing up Jared?

Jared: I was born in 1918. The house we lived in was built by my grandfather at 150 Elm St. I too was delivered by Dr. Oran Moser who I think delivered every child in town. Our house had nine rooms. The front and one side were surrounded by a veranda (porch.) Electricity was minimal: one ceiling light and one wall outlet for each room. There was a fieldstone fireplace in our large living room and in front of it was a large black Franklin stove that burned coal.

Below our kitchen floor was a cistern which held the rain water that ran off the roof. This was then pumped to the kitchen sink to be used only for washing and bathing. Drink water was obtained from a hand dug well about 30 feet from the rear door. Water was obtained by lowering a bucket about 20 feet into the well, waiting for it to tip, and fill and then raising it by cranking it up. Just beyond the well, about another 50 feet was our two-hole outhouse. In retrospect, I think the water from the roof was probably safer than that from the well.

Bath night was every Saturday night. I remember my mother lighting up both burners of a kerosene stove and boiling the water. She'd get out the bathtub and put it on the kitchen floor, pour the water in and we'd have our baths. I was first and my sister was second, we'd use the same water.

About the rooms in the house, we had what was called the parlor. There was a piano in there and about the only time I can remember anyone using that room was when my mother went in there every afternoon about 20 minutes to 5. She'd play the only 2 songs she knew, "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" and "Rock of Ages".

On the back porch we had our ice box. Dad got a little fancy with that. Rather than having to empty the pan under it, he drilled a hole and the water ran down into a funneled opening.

Now, our radio, my Dad came home one day with a crystal set
(1925, I think).

After giving our family a brief description of how a radio works, he then stretched an antenna wire across our backyard and proceeded to show us how we could adjust the crystal to receive station KDKA in Pittsburgh. Each member of the family then waited

⁷¹ Walter Damrosch was the conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra in the 1920s and 1930s.

patiently for their turn with the one pair of headphones.

I started first grade at 5 yrs. old and I remember my mother walking me down Elm St. and leaving me at the bottom of Elm St. near a telephone pole. I didn't want her to walk me all the way. I can still see that telephone pole, in fact I've seen that telephone pole in old pictures. She turned to go back home and as I watched her fading into the distance, I didn't leave that telephone pole. The whole reason was that I had been told that the Principal of the school, Mrs. Myrtle Stevens was a tough egg and that if you did anything wrong, you'd get hit with the rubber hose. Every kid in school knew it and every kid in school dreaded it. Like you, Jarvis, I only saw it used once when she took a kid in the corner and whaled him with it. It was terrible.

Jarvis: The 8th grade teacher was the principal and the Superintendent used to come around now and then, Mr. Daikin.

Jared: Now my wife, Ruby taught first grade at the Academy School. In fact, I can remember the day he arrived in town. I was mowing the lawn and she was going to board where Jimmy Mutch lives. Well, his mother-in-law took in teachers. I saw this beautiful babe get out of a car and I said, "oh, yi, yi!" So, not that Christmas, but the following Christmas, I was Santa Clause for her first grade. I went in to play Santa Claus and when I got through I went into the hall to take off my costume. Some kid came out into the hall and he ran back into the room and yelled, "Santa Claus is out there getting undressed." Now I can't remember all my teachers but two outstanding teachers were Marion Emerson who was my fifth grade teacher. But best of all was Marjorie Libby Guile who I was lucky enough to have in 6th and 7th grades. She was a great person.

Doris: You didn't go West School?

Jared: No I went to the Academy.

Doris: Which houses the Historical Society now?

Jared: Yes, and then the Central School which is right there⁷². I went 8 grades, four were in the Academy and four in other building.

Jarvis: I went through 8 grades at West School.

Jared: We did not mix with the West School, at all.

Jarvis: We used to play baseball every spring and at one game the teachers got into quite an argument, Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Lowell.

Jared: Mrs. Stevens was always the umpire and she was substantially built. Nobody argued with her. After eight grade we went to Wethersfield High School. The town had

⁷² Next to Academy Hall.

three school buses, one for the West district, one for the South district and one for the Central district. Three buses driven by the three Hayes boys. Previous students went to Middletown High until about 1933, then they were sent to Wethersfield.

Doris: Would you name your brothers and sisters and parents and grandparents?

Jared: That's another book, I'm working on our genealogy at home.

Jarvis: My Mother named all her children after ancestors. I was named after Jarvis Blinn who was killed in the battle of Antietam. I have a brother named Leland and another brother named Maynard and a sister, Edith.

Doris: How about the farm when you were growing up?

Jarvis: Well, we had cows and we had horses and had chickens and I belonged to a 4-H Club.

Jared: You had tomatoes, too, Jarvis.

Jarvis: I raised a pig as a project and a heifer calf as a project. We used to go into the Rocky Hill meadows and cut hay for the cows. On a sunny day in June, Elm Street was almost a parade of loads of hay pulled by horses. Tomatoes in Depression times were 17 cents a basket. We used to go to the Regional Market in Hartford, my father did to take the vegetables in. In the Summer time we'd start out at 3 o'clock in the morning. The Regional Market then was on the river bank then, just before the Founder's Bridge. The peddlers would come to the market with their horses and wagons and push-carts. The Agricultural Depression started in the 20's and didn't start in the cities until the 30's. There was plenty of food for everybody but nobody had any money to buy it. The surrounding small towns around Hartford were the Bread Basket for the city. Our milk went to the United Dairy in New Britain. New Britain had very hard times, the factories closed and people were out of work. Milk sold wholesale for 2 cents a quart and I remember the milk check never arrived on time. My father would wait and wait and I finally went over there with him. We got part payment in a check dated 30 days in advance. The City of New Britain was so poor the street lights were shut off and there was no light at night. The hottest job on the farm was putting the hay up in the hay mow⁷³. It was about 110 degrees up there with not too much wind going through there. Going back to the Meadows, there was a Mr. Dowling who was a farmer on West Street. He spoke about the hay all being cut by hand in the Meadows. They used to use oxen to pull the hay out and the ox-carts had wooden axles. Sometimes the wooden axles would heat up and start to smoke. He would come by my grandfather's farm and would stop at my grandfather's farm to get a pail of water to cool the axles off so he could continue without catching fire. Mr. Dowling spoke about his brother who went out to the Gold

⁷³ A place in a barn where hay is stored.

Rush in California bout 1850, I believe it was. He said his brother came back without finding any gold. I heard about my grandfather in the Blizzard of '88, how he was out in the barn doing the milking at nighttime. When he got through he tried to get back to the house by following the fence. When he got in front of the house Grandma Gilbert had a kerosene lamp in the window but the wind and the snow were so strong he couldn't see where it was so he had to go back to the barn to spend the night in the barn. Once in a while in the fall there'd be a husking bee in some farmer's barn. All the neighbors would come in to husk the corn and if anybody found a red ear they would be entitled to a kiss. There would be a whoop and a holler when somebody found the red ear. Jared said: I remember one of those parties out at Mr. Neumann's⁷⁴ house.

Jared: Talking about the Academy, there were 4 rooms, 2 on top and 2 on the main floor, every room the same size. There was no grass around it. Jarvis mentioned playing "Migs"⁷⁵ and that was about all the front yard was good for. It was full of holes where we played Migs. There was never a day went by but there was a fight out there somewhere. I'd like to go back to what I remember about the 20's. First of all, I remember my father and his first car. He rolled into the driveway in a 1918 Model T and boy were we proud to think we could ride in that car. Another thing I remember was going out to Grandpa Gilbert for Christmas. One time there had been a heavy snow and he came in a sleigh to meet us. Out where Rose Hill Memorial Park (is now) the drifts were so high we had to detour around the drifts to get out of there.

Another thing I remember and this was probably around 1924 when we had been down to the beach on vacation, we drove in and there on the lawn was a complete bathroom. Sears Roebuck had delivered 3 crates containing the bowl, the tub, and the sink and left them all on the back lawn.

On the way to school (pretty much every noon we'd go home for lunch) and on the way back my Mother would give me a penny to spend. We'd always stop at Hand's Store which was just across from the church, where a Real Estate business is now. It was a big two story building and the family lived on the second floor and the store was on the first floor. They sold groceries and meat, but one side of the store had penny candy. Maybe you remember, the creams they sold. If you got a pink one you got a candy bar or something. I can't remember what the prize was. All the kids went to the store on the way to school after lunch.

Then there was Brown's store on Church Street where the printing place is now. That's where we got our ice cream, old-fashioned ice cream cones. They had the wire chairs and tables that people would pay top dollar for today.

⁷⁴ The Neumann farm was where Interstate 91 is in 2017.

⁷⁵ A Mig was a type of marble.

Then on Elm Street right next to Dr. Moser's house was an old barn that was a one man meat market. That was all he had - meat— that was it.

On Glastonbury Avenue was Ed Stevens' Coal and Hardware. Actually it was Feed and Grain. When I first knew him he was a guy who drove the horse and wagon right next to the house and slid the coal into the cellar.

Then we had peddlers, all sorts – the fruit man, the ice man, the kerosene man, Watkins products⁷⁶, the rag man, the baker (Viking Baker), the milk man, the ice cream man. It was a different world, it really was, because everything came to the house.

Backe's Garage was on Glastonbury Avenue, west of the Grange Hall. And Belden's Store was just west of the Grange.

Jarvis: I was going to say how my mother treated earaches when I was a kid. My father never smoked but he always had a cigar handy if anyone had an ear ache He'd blow cigar smoke into my ear. If that didn't work, my mother would cook an onion and take the little round spot in the center of the onion and put it into the ear. If you had a cold my Mother would make a hot mustard plaster and center it on the chest under my pajamas, put my feet in hot mustard water just before you got into bed and you slept with that hot mustard plaster all night. I remember going over to the cider mill on France St. in the fall. My father would load up the wagon with apples and join the other farmers who would be waiting in line to have their apples made into cider. You had to bring your own barrel, of course, and you never got your own cider because it was always someone else's apples that went into the barrel and nobody worried too much if there were worms in the apples. During Prohibition times, it wasn't too unusual to see a column of smoke rising from the woods, or maybe a brooder house in July. A lot of people got through the Depression with their still, I guess. When it snowed they never plowed the road bare because the horses wouldn't be able to pull the sleighs on bare roads. On the State roads they didn't have trucks with a hydraulic system then so there was always another man sitting beside the driver to turn a handle to raise and lower the plow.

One night in either the late 20's or early 30's the Klan burned a cross right up here on Wright's Hill. Wright's Hill⁷⁷ was the high ground up here on Gilbert Road. The reason the Ku Klux Klan burned the cross was because there was a man and woman living together, not married.

We used to get our water from the windmill that supplied 3 houses here in the neighborhood. The fourth house had its own well where they could lower a pail down to

⁷⁶ Health aids. Elixirs, tonics, etc.

⁷⁷ Wright's Hill was probably located between Gilbert Avenue, Orchard Street, and Elm Street where Wright's Road is in 2017.

get water. We had a pipe going from the windmill. In the Summer time there were periods of time when there was no wind so no water in the barrel. They would get a car and jack up one rear wheel, line up the pulley with the windmill and let the car pump the water.

I remember going to the NRA parade in Hartford, the National Recovery Act. I remember the men on the sidewalk selling apples for a nickel or sold pencils for a cent. And we got movies in Grange Hall. There were a lot of cowboy movies and there was always a piano player. Stu Bidwell or Jessie Griswold. When the cowboys were galloping at full speed, the piano would be played loud and fast. If the cowboys were just sitting around the camp fire, the music would be slow and quiet. But I think the one thing that everybody got excited about was when the movie camera was put in the middle of the train tracks and then take a picture of the train coming toward them. Of course the train would always pass over them and no damage done but there was always a few screams and yells. I think the first "talkie" I ever saw was about 1929, about a 10 minute film up in Hartford. A man told a story standing in front of a fireplace.

Jared: For the treatment of colds (It seems to me I had a cold every winter, all winter long) every night, just before bedtime, my Mother would go out in the kitchen to fry up some onions and make a poultice (a brand new one every day). She'd tie this around my neck as hot as I could stand it and I'd inhale those onions all night long. That's why I can't stand onions today!

Dr. Moser made house calls because then you called the Dr. and he came to the house. He would always have his pill case, I can see it now. He'd open the pill case and there would be bottle after bottle of all different colored pills. Whatever you needed, you got it right then and there. He always had a few special pills for the kids which were sugar pills, those were nothing really. I heard a story about Dr. Moser which I believe to be true and maybe Dave knows it better than I. I understand in his billing a patient for service if he didn't get a payment within a couple of months, he's send another bill and the price in half. If he didn't get a payment for that, he'd cut the price in half again. He'd keep doing that and let it go at that. He was quite a man.

When we were kids, Rocky Hill was our world and so many areas in town had names. I don't know where some of them came from but there was Cold Spring which is where Century Hills is now and the actual spring didn't amount to a hill of beans. I don't think it was bigger -- any bigger -- than this room right here was it?

Jarvis: No, but there was water bubbling up.

Jared: Oh yes, it was an active spring. As Boy Scouts we used to camp out there and now when I go out there I just can't believe what I see. Then there was vexation, which

was out on New Britain Avenue about half-way out, right near where the Lewis's live. That was another of our camping spots. Off Book Street we had an area called Sandy Desert which we figured was like the Sahara Desert. Then, of course, we'd always go down to Dividend. We'd climb the rocks in the quarry.

We had another place just south of Grimes Road where the brook is. We called that Fairyland and we'd go down there quite often. I can't believe how naïve we were.

When I was a Boy Scout we had to do a 14 mile hike for a badge so this buddy of mine and I started off and came out Elm Street and then we went out to East Berlin. We guessed we'd gone about halfway so we turned around and came back to the West School. Then there was a discussion - Do you think we went 14 miles? And we weren't sure so we went around the West School. We kept walking around the West School until we were sure we got our 14 miles in.

Doris: Did you get your badge?

Jared: Oh yeah. Now Jarvis, I got one here for you. Do you remember over here in this pasture land one day when you and I were out there and an airplane flew over and sputtered?

Jarvis: I don't remember that.

Jared: It was a Pratt & Whitney test plane and the engine fell off?

Jarvis: Oh yes, yes I do remember that.

Jared: It landed in a garden on Chapin Ave. There was a guy working out in his garden right next to where the engine came down.

Jarvis: Wasn't that Jerry Huntoon?

Jared: Yes, yes, you're right. In 1925 there was a heavy snow storm. That was my year in second grade and my father had gone down to meet the trolley to go to work. My mother insisted that I was not going to go to school because it was a real blizzard. But I knew that kids that got to school on a snow day didn't have to study but could play all day long because there wouldn't be enough kids to conduct a class. So I wanted to go to school and finally convinced her to let me go. She bundled me all up. I had corduroy knickers on, you know the kind that "clicked" every time you walked. Me and my knickers went down the street to the bottom of the hill on Elm St. My father and a neighbor were coming along home because the trolleys weren't running. My father looked up and saw me coming and said to his neighbor "What ____ fool would let a kid out on a day like this?" Needless to say I never got to school. Then there was a blizzard in 1934 and again this spot out here by Rose Hill, was blocked solid. That was when FDR was throwing his weight around so all us kids got a job. I don't know whether it was the

CCC or the WPA but we could go out there to shovel snow. A gang of us went out. I had a shovel that was big, about yay-wide and all the rest had small shovels, like spades. I lasted one day and didn't go back again!

In the same blizzard I can remember where Gilbert's barn is on Elm Street, there was a bad curve and there was a yellow cab that couldn't make it. You could just see the roof of the cab peeking over the top of the snow.

Then I witnessed the 1938 hurricane from Hand's Store right across from the Congregational Church. I saw every one of those beautiful elm trees go down with windows and shutters flying. I was working in the store at the time, a part time job after school. After the storm let up a fellow came in and I recognized him as a boarder from across the street. I had never met him before but knew his face so I asked him how things were up on Elm St. He was boarding in the house across the street from our house. "Well, there's a lot of trees down but the house right across the street from where I live has a big pine tree down right on top of it (which was our house.) Fortunately the branches broke most of the tree's fall and it poked a few holes but didn't collapse the house.

During school I had jobs here and there but I didn't work all day long like the farmers did here. But I did mow a lot of lawns. They didn't have power mowers then, all hand pushing. I had 2 large lawns that I got a dollar a job for and all the others were.

Of course, in the wintertime I got shovelling jobs. I can remember one long driveway and when the woman opened the door, she said "I'll pay you fifty cents if you just shovel half the driveway because that will be enough for my husband to get his car in. It took about 2 hours just to shovel half the driveway and when I went to collect my money she said "I'll tell you what. If you'll do the other half I'll give you another dime." Well, I didn't fall for that.

Then, for 2 weeks after I got my driver's license I was chauffeur for Dr. Moser. He had broken his arm and he needed someone to drive him to his house calls. I recall one time he had to go to Hartford and we had to stop for a stop light. Apparently I had quite a bit of distance between the car ahead of me and me. He said "Move up there, get up close to him. When that light goes, you go ahead. He'd been a 'hot' driver. The most infamous job I had was at Club Hollywood. They were preparing for the opening and they had a septic problem out there. Ted Adler and I went out to clean out the septic tank. We'd take buckets on a string, drop them down in and pull them out all day long. After we got that done, they offered us jobs as parking attendants and that was my first taste of the "high life." We lasted two nights on that job. We got good tips getting the cars back and forth but after that we had to clean up the barroom. By the second night we'd had just about enough of that and wound up making snow balls out of ice cream and had a

snowball fight. Then we left.

Jarvis: Were you one of those boys who tied a string on the clapper of the church bell, lowered the string down the side, and brought it across the street, waited until it was dark. That night, they kept ringing the church bell until finally somebody climbed up to find out what was making that church bell ring. You weren't one of them?

Jared: No, I never even heard the story. I never got into mischief like that.

Jarvis. I missed my biggest opportunity. One day after school, a gang of kids had arranged to go up to the Shipman Hotel. There was nobody living there at the time and it was run down but it had a lot of windows in it so the gang decided they would go up and throw stones at all the windows. Why didn't I go, too? I wanted to but I had to deliver the Saturday Evening Post that afternoon and couldn't make it. But the kids got caught and had to go to court. Each one got fined \$32.00 each. That was big money, a lot of money then.

Jarvis: That Shipman's was torn down board by board and taken down to New Jersey somewhere and rebuilt there.

Jared: My grandfather ran that hotel for a long time. I can remember going out to my cousin Jarvis's frequently. We would meet after I called him on the phone or he'd call me, we'd start out. Bailey Road was where we'd meet, that was supposed to be halfway but I think you got the longest half.

Jarvis: talking about tomatoes, I can remember your father sitting out in the back yard with tomatoes all around him. He had a cloth and polished those tomatoes for hours.

Jared: Jarvis did you ever go to the Young Peoples fellowship at the Rocky Hill Congregational Church? Did you enjoy your religious upbringing?

Jarvis: Oh yes.

Jared: We had a wonderful group of at least twenty of us. We would go to church religiously every Sunday afternoon for young people's fellowship. Of course, after the meeting we would adjourn to someone's house and that's where we would play "Spin the Bottle", "Post Office", That group was a close knit group and we had a lot of good clean fun, and the remarkable thing is that the girls of that group are meeting once a month today for lunch. There were ten or twelve girls in the group, they are still meeting after 60 years. Some of the group were:

Jarvis
Charlie Gilbert
Frank Mellen
John Mellen

Arline Beaumont
Doris Beaumont
Priscilla Mellen
Olive Sherwood
Ruth Sherwood
Dave Moser
Phyllis Davis Spencer
Lela Sherwood
Thelma Dimock Somes
Jared
Shirley Belden
Oran Moser
Marylin Davis Matthias
Bob Beck
Ted Adler
Arnold Davis

Doris: Who was the minister?

Jared: Reverend E. N. Bussey, kind of a staid minister. He was not a young people's minister, guess that's why our group was so successful.

We had a gang, not like today's gangs, but on a summer day there was always something to do. Sometimes we'd go down to the clay banks which were where the Howard Johnson Motel is now. Where the brook ran through there were banks of clay, at least we called them clay. I don't know whether they were or not. We'd wet down the clay, remove our clothes and we'd slide down the banks, into the brook, rinse off the mud and blood suckers and do it again. We'd also swim in the Charter Brook where the old ice house was, down toward the river. We had a tree down there with a vine on it, and we'd swing out over the water. We played a lot of war games, like "Capture the Flag" or just plain "Cowboys and Indians." Another games we kids played I called Jackknife and there might have been another name for it. We'd do all kinds of tricks, flipping the knife up and so on.

Doris: Was that Mumbletypeg?

Jared: No, that wasn't it. We used a jackknife that had two blades on it. You'd flip it on one blade and it had to land on the other. Then Jarvis and I had a one-ring circus one time, remember Jarv? We had everything. We had a wagon wheel rim that we covered with newspapers and some lucky guy jumped through it. That was the height of the circus!

Doris: You had an audience then?

Jared: Oh yes, our families, they obliged. But it was never dull, there was always something to do. There were three churches in town, we were a real WASP town then. I only knew two Jewish families, one black family, and not many Catholics. The Catholic Church was on Chapin Avenue and the priest came up from Cromwell to serve the church.

Jarvis: He used to come out to the West School and pick up the kids. The boys couldn't sit on the same side as the girls.

Both men: That's just about it for us tonight

MORE MEMORIES BY Jarvis Gilbert

Miss Simpson taught the first three grades. Her name changed to Mrs. Grigely later on, when she married.

About 1935 we drove to Massachusetts to see Admiral Byrd's snowmobile . The Admiral was going to take an expedition to the South Pole. In order to get around on the snow, he had a giant snowmobile made. It had huge rubber tires and an enclosed body. It was driven over the road on its way to be loaded on a ship in Boston. People lined both sides of the street to see it as it drove by.

Once a year gypsies made their way up Elm St. with their families riding in horse drawn wagons. They stopped at a neighboring farm one year. A gypsy lady offered to tell Grandpa's fortune. They both sat on a log in the back yard while she read the grandfather's palm. After the gypsies left, Grandpa discovered that his wallet was missing.

Harris, William Interview

f/n: RH-haris

WILLIAM L. HARRIS 3/17/70

(Transcribed nearly verbatim in Rocky Hill, CT by Sandra P. Brown, June 1994.)

Mrs. Holan: "We are in the home of Mr. W. L. Harris, Jr., 237 Old Main St., Rocky Hill, Ct. and, it is the morning of March 17, 1970."

Good morning, Mrs. Holan. I'm terrible on remembering names. My experience in Rocky Hill -- contact with Rocky Hill began in 1927 when, as the agricultural agent, I visited farms in this town and other farms to get acquainted -- to learn what their problems were. Then, in future years, when we were holding meetings, we would call up gentlemen in Rocky Hill and we would ask them if they would like to have a dairy meeting. And, could they arrange to have us use, in the evening, the West Rocky Hill School. We started using it so often that when the lights were turned on in the rest of the school, the farmers would come in to see what the professor (Ed: Dr. Merrill), had to say from the University of Connecticut.

Dr. Merrill was very much liked by the dairy farmers of Rocky Hill. We used to come occasionally to visit the few orchard growers in Rocky Hill and discuss their problems with the fruits and species (Ed: could be 'specialists'). I also recall that you did not hold meetings in Rocky Hill in April because of the mud problem and there were a good many dirt roads at that time.

In more recent years, starting in 1936, we had a house built in Rocky Hill and I've lived in Rocky Hill ever since. I became very much interested in community problems before I came to Rocky Hill, but I found that there were community problems in Rocky Hill and I have been somewhat concerned and active in community affairs ever since I began living here...not so much until I retired as county agent of work in 1952. I think it was in 1952 when, at the suggestion of the planning and zoning board, at that time a non-profit Rocky Hill Development Corporation was formed to see if a desirable industry could be brought into town to help develop our grand list. At that time, there was very little land zoned for business or industry; some acreage down Dividend, most of which was owned by the Bigelow & Sanford Company, and not on the market.

There's a little land down around Oak Street and Laurel Street, and the old ice pond at the north end of town was zoned. But, that, of course, was not an attractive spot because that was flooded every spring.

I found at an early period that, before I was aware, a good deal of planning had occurred in Rocky Hill. I have a clipping of an editorial from the Hartford Courant of March 9,

1949⁷⁸. The heading is, "Far-sighted Rocky Hill." "Town leaders in Rocky Hill have sought to look into the future of their community and planned for its development accordingly. They have done a remarkably fine job. They have first made a careful grass roots study of the population, use of lands, roads and so forth." Well, this editorial letter was based on a study which the town of Rocky Hill was having done by Homer Hoyt Associates. I believe Dr. Black was an active member of that firm and did much of the study. They recommended quite a revision and realigning of streets in the center of Rocky Hill. And, the plan of traffic would be quite changed. Elm Street was to be a two-way street and the center quite changed.

Among other parts of the report was some protest, or pointing up the pollution in the Connecticut River. And, that fishing in the area was really not desirable; nor swimming. Well, I recall going to a town meeting and having this report--this recommendation that the planning and zoning board had secured, (being) discussed. And, among other things, some of the people who made their living fishing in Rocky Hill made considerable protest about this point being made in their report.

The proposed street layout was never adopted in the following years. But, I think, possibly, some of the points of this study were followed out by the planning and zoning committee in the future years.

I can't quite date it, but at some time, an early decision was made to have the eastern part of the town--Gilbert Street east--developed first and the western area was zoned more for farm use and large lot requirements. And, I think this was very wise thinking on the part of town leaders at that time.

The Rocky Hill Development Corporation, which I spoke of earlier, never brought any good to the town; never brought any industry. We made some efforts to get out a little promotional material. But, in later years--I think it was probably in (the) 1960 or 61 period--it was suggested that the town have its official public development commission. The old corporation gladly, willingly, disbanded and some of the people who put a little money into it got sixty cents on the dollar. I think that was about it. And, the new town development commission, which is organized along the state statutes, has been able to do a great deal and has brought a very considerable amount of new industry and new business to the town of Rocky Hill.

I refer a little bit to some of my thoughts which I presented to a public meeting at one of the churches in Rocky Hill. I believe I presented this in 1955, or it might have been 1957, and I have my notes before me. I'm making a comparison of the town of Rocky Hill between 1925 and 1950. In the 28-29 (year) period, the town spent \$36,000 for

⁷⁸ I can't find this on Proquest.com. It may have been the Hartford Times.

education. Ten years later, we spent \$47,000. In this 28-20 (year) period, there was \$17,000 spent on roads, and \$5,000 for street lighting; \$1,300 for paupers and insane.

The town planning started in 1929 and zoning started as a separate board in 1937. Municipality was incorporated for a water district in 1932. I presume that did not cover the whole town. I'm not sure, but I think the early corporation was the eastern part of the town.

The narrative type of town reports started in August 1945. The earlier type of reports give the bills paid, who was receiving money for supplying wood, what the teachers' salaries were, but there's no narrative in the earlier town reports that I've been able to find.

I have a copy of early building zone regulations for the town of Rocky Hill, November 11, 1938, and it had four zones. The residence zone "A" requiring 11,000 square feet of building, and a 75 foot wide lot. Residence "B" smaller size house requiring 7,500 square feet with a 50 foot lot. (Editor's note: Mr. Harris probably meant 1,100 and 750 square feet. The size he mentions would not fit on the building lots.) And, zoned for business the maximum height of 50 feet, and the building limited to 80% of the lot. And, the industrial zone a maximum height of 75 feet with the building limited to 80% of the lot.

There was a board of appeals established at this time, and in 1942, certain amendments were voted changing the definition of the area of the house; spelling out the credit for the first and second stories.

This Homer Hoyt survey which I earlier referred to was reported to the town in 1948.

And, they include the fact that there were 1455 wage earners but only 320 of these worked in Rocky Hill. And, they predicted what we now know so well happened, that there would be suburban movement to Rocky Hill. And, Rocky Hill, at this time, according to their report, had 1383 acres east of Gilbert Avenue and the population predicted for 1973 by the home associates was 17,600. (Editor's note: what was the actual population in 1973?) And, they made the point in their report that new industry, to be advantageous, would have to have an average pay scale of over \$3,700.

I think this also comes from their report. "The Rocky Hill population in 1925 was reported as 1,800; and that year, 1948, was 3200." A large part of this increase would come, however, between 1940 and '50.

In making this talk to the group at the church, I spoke of my concern for the open space use of land and the attitude of the people being all important as to the future of the land, and the fact that the ownership decision about what their land would be used for was an important part of the decision as well as the public voting issues.

I'm not sure if there is much more that I can add in the early areas. I do have a report which the selectmen made in, I believe, 1957, pointing out the way the budget was set up. This is the budget of May 5, 1958. There was town tax money -- \$803,000, representing 77 in the 75 hundreds percent in the total income of the town. (ED.: I do not understand this.) State grants of 176,000 representing 17 and 11 hundreds percent. Other income listed as \$53,000 and this report speaks of the devoted hours--of the thousands of hours of the volunteer offices, boards and commissions serving the town at that time. And, I would like to say that this willingness of many people--devoted people —has continued up to the present time, to serve Rocky Hill by unpaid conscientious service.

In that year in which this particular report was made and mailed to the people of the town, the expenditures were listed. And, the police at that time were budgeted for \$44,000; the courts for nearly \$3,000; and the school bond payments were quite considerable. School bond payments of \$103,000 and interest on the bonds of \$50,000. And, insurance on the school buildings nearly \$10,000. During the past year, the progress reported was that old Craft (?) number two fire house headquarters had been replaced with a new building that will serve the town for years to come. The town dump was relocated and entrance roads and care improved by new agreement between the Caruso Brothers and the town. "The sidewalk study committee is busy preparing a thorough analysis of the location and relative need for walks, and the cross-proposal as to financing. When the study is complete, an appropriate proposal would be brought to town meeting" And, we are still waiting for the sidewalks (laughter).

"A start toward the monumenting of old streets and equipping our new streets with standard signposts is being carried forward. The street lighting program had started with a 70-year catch up program. _____ conditions on _____ placing has been improved by installing catch basins." And, to go on as to comments of today, many of our streets will need to be further improved to take care of drainage water. As a personal observation, common knowledge today is that the more we build parking areas, the more blacktop we put in, the roads, sidewalks, the more roof we have to run fast water off--the drainage problem becomes an increasing issue.

I think I should mention that the development commission had some assistance at an early time by the plan for Rocky Hill -- a pamphlet that had gotten out by the State development commission pointing out the advantages of Rocky Hill being a central location in the state and about halfway between New York and Boston.

Mrs. Holan: "Well, Mr. Harris, you have been an official in this town in many capacities since the days when you joined this community. I wonder if you could tell us something about the physical aspects of Rocky Hill and its government in the 30s and 40s, 50s and

60s. For instance, the question has been raised, where was the physical seat of the government at that time? Did we have a building that we used for all town offices or were they fairly well scattered around town?"

(Mr. Harris' reply) Well, the first building that I know of that was used by the town was the old library building on the west side of Church Street. I'm quite sure that, in the very early years, most of the town government was operated from the homes of the various board chairmen. And, the town meetings, I believe, in the very early days, were held in the town church; later, in the grange hall. (Editor's note: What is now located where the library used to be? Is the town church the Congregational Church next to the Academy?)

I remember my early voting in town was in the basement of the town hall. (Ed's note: where is or was the grange hall?) The old library on Church Street that I spoke of, was not a very large building. But, when I first came to town, all the departments of government were crowded in there, and worked out of there. Undoubtedly, some work was done out of homes, and records kept in various people's homes, too. I ran across, recently, something about the South school that the police have used in recent years and what was to be done with this building in the future. And, I found town meeting records from October 3, 1949. "A town meeting authorized that a committee be set up to investigate and recommend that proper disposition be made of the old South School." And, I found out, on May 1, 1950, "A committee recommended that the town keep the old South School property for use of the several branches of government not requiring access to the vault; a selectman to determine use of this building in that line." And, this report was accepted. In the town report of 1950, on pages two and four, there's reference to use of the building by the police and that year, 1950 I believe, that use of the building from 1950 to the present time (1970 - Ed.) has been the old South School. There was a vault--a fire-proof vault--added onto the old library building. What year that was done, I don't know. But, I believe in WWII times of rationing, I went to this building to get my gasoline allotment, and my sugar allotment and Myrtle Stevens and other people who were serving in the usual volunteer way that people have, and still do. And, the town clerk and secretary of assistant were crowded into a room in the south of this building. And, the door into this vault was from this room. The selectman, apparently and the planning and zoning board, with different days, evening and scheduling, used the Northwest room in this building and the library was only in the larger front room, on the northeast.

As it happened, I was asked to be on the building committee called, "The Present Town Office Building Committee" and served with Mr. Lynch and Mr. Roll? on this building committee. And, the building was planned so that an addition could be made as a second story with the service connections included in the structure as it was put up. The

town recently has voted to add a wing--to the present building, and not go up. But to have this wing if additional room for the general town government, but also, very adequate room, much needed for our police department. This, of course, will help in our consolidation of government and bookkeeping and purchasing--which, under our present government of town council and a professionally trained manager, are beginning to make good strides. And, I think the expansion of the space for the town office personnel, and the increased services which we now have. We have a planner, (an) engineer, and other things which had to be expanded. And, a concentration of purchasing will be greatly improved when this building is completed.

I believe there are many other people who could contribute to the records of the historical society. And, I certainly think it is time well taken. And, I appreciate your coming here to hear what little I've been able to tell you.

Mrs. Holan: "Well, we certainly appreciate the time you have spent with us, Mr. Harris.

I'm sure this tape will be invaluable to those who will listen to it in future times. We _____ information from it, and it's been an extremely interesting interview. We thank you very much for your time." (End of interview.)

Harry Hick and Samuel Dimmick - Late 19th, Early 20th Century

LATE NINETEEN CENTURY - EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY IN ROCKY HILL

Tape made by Sixty-Plus Club of R. H. Congregational Church, Nov. 4, 1969

Dialogue with Harry Hick and Samuel Dimock

(First few feet on tape not audible to transcribe.)

Harry Hick: Oh, we got all excited. We were going to have all this pasture land, and we were going to have this cow, and come to find out, in back of those houses on the West side, down a little way from the police station, there's a big hill up in back of the house, and the pasture was up over the hill there. So we had this cow, and I, being the oldest one in the family, had to learn how to milk this cow. Her name of as "Rosie" black and white. It didn't take me long to get on to the pull. So that was my job. We were quite poor then. I think Father had four children at that time a two were born after we came to Rocky Hill; my two sisters. Of course, we didn't have any money to buy any hay. Hay was high in those days. All the farmers needed it for themselves, and one thing or another. So Father said "Why don't you go down in the woods and get leaves, so we took bags that grain came in and went down in the woods and raked up leaves. I got a big kick out of that. And I guess all the years we had the cow we filled up hundreds of bags of leaves for the cow's bedding. In one place they were almost up to the top rafters of the barn, we had so many. I believed in getting things ahead. It was nice on a snowy day to go out there and feel you had all the bedding that you wanted and dive into those leaves. The cow would lay down. She would mat them all down and they'd be all wet, and I would have to go out and clean out and put in the dry ones again for the next day.

Later on Mr. Belden's store was built right out here almost, where this road was. The Rocky Hill Grange of was on the other side of the store, and I think there was a little barber shop in between Belden's store and the Grocery store. It was known as Jimmy's Barber Shop. He hold a pool room, and my brother used to hang around there a lot.

Q.: Where was that?

Harry: Center St. Right out here on this side of the street, so it's not very far from where we're sitting right now.

Harry: And right along this road were a bunch of old sheds that belonged to Belden. I don't know what he had in them, but there was a whole series of sheds that ran way down there, way to the end.

They were always locked up, boarded up, and I never knew to this day what was in them, but they said Mr. Belden owned them.

Other Male: Those were the old shipments of the rum that came up the River. They had

to keep them under lock and key.

Harry: Of course, I graduated from the school down below where the police station is . I went down there. I'll get back to that later, and came up here and went to school here with all the people in the center of the town.

Q: The old Academy Hall, you mean?

Harry: Yes, the old Academy Hall. We had back stairs going up, and the boys used to go in the in back of the girls and pinch their legs as they were going to the stairs. My nickname ... and I don't know why -- they called me Jeremiah. It was always Jeremiah this and Jeremiah that.

Well, speaking about Halloween, I've seen wagons up on the roof ... whole complete wagons right on top of the roof of that building. I've seen pieces of wagons ... wheels and everything ... up on top of a flagpole; and it was a great thing to break into this church and ring this bell. There were a lot of watch people around, trying to stop people from ringing this bell many times, but they would always get in here and ring this bill, even when they had people always watching out. Of course, I never went with this crowd, and I don't know what happened, but I know the bell always rang on the Fourth of July, even if it was long after midnight.

Q.: May I interrupt here a minute. Speaking of those sheds ... Ernie Lowell here was speaking about the fire. Were you here when they caught fire?

Harry: Yes, I'll tell about that. First off, while I was up here, I got pulled out of school by the State Police. I was in the 7th grade. You'd think, you know, that I'd be scared to death, but I was as calm as a cucumber knowing that I didn't do the deed that they were trying to find out about. It seems that all these sheds were covered with obscene pictures and lettering all over the place, and they were told that I did it, because they knew I could draw a little bit. You see I was drawing way back in those days. And I Went out there, and right out on this corner were two or three benches where a ballgame used to be held here. Home plate was right on this corner, and center field was out where the firehouse is.

Other Voice: Where the church is and the land north of it.

Harry: The other side of the road. And the State Police got me out on this bench and they questioned me, this and that, and I answered the questions right along "No", "Yes", and I guess they could see by my attitude I didn't act afraid, and I was on the right track, and I didn't feel bad at all. And come to find out . . .

(Glitch in tape)

Harry: Speaking of ballgames, we had one player there ... he was an excellent player,

and I guess everybody knew him, and he was a good all-round fellow -- Axel Anderson. He could swat out these flies, and I've seen flies go way out to center field ... way down to the firehouse. One of them nearly hit the path down there. That's the way the diamond is as situated.

Then to go back to my home down there, this home was bought by ... rented from an Irish Woman ... typical Irish... (Another gap in tape)

... for over a year or more . He had so many blowouts that he devised ...he got an old tire and put it over the regular tire and laced it on, but it cut down on the drag of the bicycle an awful lot. We got a call one morning that he was going to work in one of the city dump cars, and I guess he slipped and went under one of these dump carts pulled by a horse. He didn't get hurt bad. I guess he was only laid up a couple of days. But imagine that ... \$1.50 a day. When we were in Wethersfield our rent was \$9.00 a week.

Of course, I had to go to this South School down here. We had Bertha Shipmaker for a teacher. It was about that time that I was being interested in radio ... wireless they called it in those days. I did a lot of reading and talked about it a lot but didn't have anything assembled at that time. That was quite early.

Q.: May I interrupt. Did that have a name -- that school? Nutmeg?

Harry: I never knew it to. I never knew it. We had quite a time there

Q: All the grades in one room?

Harry: Yes, all the grades in one room. And a big pot-belly stove, and the coal bin was out in one entryway, and then there was a great big bucket of Water and a great big dipper with a handle on it, and that served for everybody. I used to fill that water pail, and I also brought coal to the stove much of the time. I guess I was probably one of the oldest ones there. I afterwards became janitor of the school. I don't know what my pay was, but I think it was probably 50cents or \$1.00 a week or something like that.

I remember I used to throw green stuff on the floor and brush it up. We had a teacher down there whose name was Miss Battey. She was English, and I guess she took a dislike to me, and everything was dirty. I didn't do anything right.

(Another gap in tape)

We had some great times. You'd think people sitting near the stove would be roasting to death, and those in the back seat would be freezing. That's about the size of it. They had some families down the South end named Dacey. They had three girls, and one of them was quit quite good looking ... used to 'come to school there, and she was quite dumb ... she couldn't even find Hartford on the map of Connecticut. They used to have these double seats, and they had one pupil here and another one there, so I used to sit down

with her and show Hartford on the map. Then she used to give me a big apple. Her father was one of the last ones in Rocky Hill that raised onions, and he lived in the house where Libera has his fruit stand down there now. Down in back there's a flat place ... of course, all that down there is sand, and gee, he hold some of the nicest onions there you ever saw. I'll bet he had half or three quarter (gap). When I had the job I planted that big maple tree that is down in front of the police station. I did that one Arbor Day. There were two planted, but the one on the South side died.

Q.: What year was that, do you remember?

Harry: No, I don't.

Then I began to get interested in radio. I was growing a little bigger then. (glitch in tape again)

All the way into Hartford and then transfer?

Harry: It was on Main St. at that time.

Q: When was that?

A. 1917

Q: When did they start the trolley?

Harry: I can't recall.

Sam: 1909.

Harry: You're right, Sam.

Q: They quit in about 1930?

Sam: I guess so.

Harry: I have a picture taken on a postal card. I think it's over in that place there. The first trolley came in to Rocky Hill and stopped right out here. Us kids were so excited we got the names of the conductors and motorman, and we used to call him Mr. Brown. The motorman's name was Mr. Brown, and he stopped and we went through. Anybody could get on and go through the car. 1909 was the year I dropped out of school. I thought it was a little before that ... probably it was the early part of 1909.

Q: At that time, I don't suppose many Rocky Hill people worked in Hartford, did they?

Harry: No, but some went on the train. Sam used to go down to the depot and get on the train.

Sam: Most of the people employed worked in Hartford at that time. Rocky hill was mostly farming, and the foundry and Billings & Spencer door in Dividend and fishing. There was very little industry in town.

Q: Was Billings & Spencer's main plant here in town?

Sam: It started down there long before my time.

Harry: I thought the main plant was in Hartford.

Sam: No, the original plant was down there. And they built a subsequent one at the end of the road.

Q: What sort of business did they carry on?

Harry: Forging. Drop-forging and tool - forging. And I want to say that I worked in that shop, and Mr. Lenox was superintendent down there. They had two shops up on the hill, and then they had a shop down below where the drop-forging was, and that was run by water power from the dam. And one time it was my job time it was my job to open up and start the machinery. I turned that big water wheel, and I thought that I was something ... Start those belts going ... all the machinery in the shop. Nothing was electrical in those days. In my father's shop up on the hill was die-sinking place. My father had left Colts and at the age of 33 he turned around and learned this new die-sinking business which involved making a mold on the other side to match. In other words, say for instance he is making a ball. (Gap – must be a comment about the 1921 fire)

Q: What year was this?

Harry: 1921. I don't know how the thing got afire. Do you, Sam?

Sam: No.

Q: I suppose they were one-story frame stores? Harry: Yes, and it went fast.

Q: How far from the back of the church at that time.

A. I'd say about 60 feet. They bought the property afterwards. And I can remember all types of ladders, and I remember Frank Churchill way up the top with a pail of water, and they would pass pails of water, and the church was blistering. Boy, they worked hard to save the back of this church.

Well, as I was just telling Russ here, Mrs. Crane had a plant over there in the window, towards the right of the veranda over there ... a geranium, I think it was ... and it died from the heat. The glass was absolutely hot. I didn't see the flames come up when it was at its worse, but I was here for a number of days and saw the smoke and all the ruins. And the funny thing was that cans of fruit and vegetables were popping for five or six days.

Q: Sam, you were here at the time?

Sam: I've been here for eighty years.

Q: You were here at the time of the fire? Sam?

Other Voice: He was working in Hartford that afternoon. Everybody was home.

Sam: Everybody come home for the fire.

Other Male: Was that Mrs. Crane, the wife of the old town clerk

Harry: Yes.

Q.: Where did Marty Pratt live?

A. He lived on Pratt St.

Harry: That's all I can say about that. They made an awful racket around here shooting off cannons.

Q: Let's hear from Sam for a while no .

Sam: I don't know what you want to hear.

Q: Whatever you want to talk about.

Sam: Harry has covered things pretty well. As I just told you, I've been here 30 years. I'm a native. In fact, I was born in the house I still live in. Let's take it a little differently. Between 1890 and 1900, I do recall that period. I'm estimating, judging ... I think I'm pretty near right ... The population of Rocky Hill was between 900 and 1,000 people at that time. It was predominantly Protestant. There might have been 15 or 16 Catholic families in town, not more than that, during that period. The schools consisted of West School, which is at the end of Elm St. at the top of the hill (Where the Starbuck's is in 2016 – RCH.) That is still called the center of Connecticut (It was believed that the geographic center of Connecticut was where New Street is in 2016. It's actually near the Beckley Section in Berlin – RCH.)

Q: Where the marker is, reported to be the center of Connecticut.

Sam: And then we had the North School, which is the building this side of where Ed Forsberg lives. They were one-room schools, both of those; and then they had the South School, which is the police station, which was one room; and we had this one here, which was two rooms.

Q: The building which is now the Historical Society?

Sam: The Historical Society ... with two rooms on the first floor, and one the second floor was a hall, the Mechanic 's Hall, they called it, in which the town conducted most of their business -- their election: , courts, and also a library. They also had a stage there. Traveling troupes used to come occasionally and give us a little entertainment, and it was quite an occasion. That was before the Grange Hall, which of burned, was here, and afterwards all those things moved over to the Grange Hall. All the activities. As I told you

before, the businesses ... We didn't have much. We had the Connecticut Foundry, and the Billings & Spencer ... Remember this was between 1890 and 1900, besides the farming, which was mostly what we did here in those days.

During 1898, just before the Spanish–American War, the school children ... We all marched down to the railroad station and the company's ... the soldiers were going down to the camp in Niantic and going to the Spanish-American War. Henry Hale's brother, Arthur Hale, and an Irishman by the name of Mike (I don't remember his last name), they stood in the freight train door, Waving at us kids. We had little flags we were waving. It was a big thrill to see those boys going to war. It didn't last long.

Well, right now there is a lot of agitation in town about the sidewalks. In that period we had no sidewalks. We had paths ... and that's all we had ... paths. The only piece of sidewalk we had was from Chapin Ave. to Main St ... which was a board walk and that was something.

Other Voice: If you dropped nickel on it -- that was too bad -- you didn't get it back.

Sam: That was really important. I can remember that. It finally got a little broken up, and we had to take it up, and so then a path for a while until we got the macadam.

As I said, this Mechanic's Hall of was the center for all activity It was two rooms, and it continued on there for quite some time.

At that time, everybody commuted by railroad. At 7:20 in the morning, going to Hartford, and it was 7:00 going to Middletown, and that was certainly a busy period. I don't know, but I would say there were 50 or 60 people at least, maybe more, would go down to the railroad station to take the train. Of course, I don't know too much about the Middletown train, but that was the Hartford train, and there was a family of Joneses lived just below where those elevations are, just south of the factory, and he used to eat his breakfast until the train came along, and just as the train would come by his house, Ralph would grab his coat and hat and follow the train up to the railroad station. There was a fellow by the name of Beckwith who as the conductor, and he always had a white stiff shirt on and a blue cutaway coat and hat ... very distinguished-looking gentleman ... and he was out there chewing his mustache, until Ralph could catch the train. Of course, he had a lot of encouragement. Everyone was clapping, and Ralph would finally make it all right. That's the way we used to commute.

Q: That must have been a long hike -up from the railroad to your place, when you were coming back in the afternoon, wasn't it? Sam: Yes, it was 5:00 or 6:00. There were two coming back.

Q: I say, it must have been quite a hike.

Sam: It was a hike. There was no macadam road. At that same time the Wethersfield trolley came to the green, and we had a coach. I'm talking about a regular Western coach that used to go from here to the end of the Wethersfield line, and I don't know what it cost. It probably went 2 or 3 times a day, and if you wanted to go to Hartford, you took this coach to the end of the Wethersfield line, and you took the trolley to Hartford.

Q: That kept on until the trolley came out here in 1909?

Sam: Yuh. And if you didn't want to do that, you could drive to the Wethersfield line, and the house right at the end of the line -- they would drive to the Wethersfield line and the house right at the end of the line -- they would let you park your car -- your horse, I mean ... in there for 10 cents and take care of it.

Q: That's where John Willard lives today.

Sam: Willard. Well, that's the period up to 1900 roughly. So in 1900 things began to change in Rocky Hill. We had an influx of Italian people ... come over here because of the quarry opened which previous to that was Shipman's Hill. We called it Shipman's Hill, and Sunday school picnics and all the other picnics were held on Shipman's Hill, which was quite a climb from Main St. up. You could go by team, but it was a little bit dangerous coming down because the horse didn't like to hold back so much. He had to stand on his hind legs to keep the wagon from falling all over him. Some people would drive up, but mostly you walked up.

Sam: This Italian proposition changed the town considerably. A great many of them came to the house on the corner of Grimes Rd. and Elm St. In fact, the house belonged to my father at the time. But without a doubt there were probably as many as 20 or 30 Italians living there at one time. They all seemed to flock there. Your former building inspector, Tolli ... that's where he landed. Fred Tolli. Berardino, the fellows went on here across the street, Rigoletti ... they all landed right there.

I might tell you on incident there. We used to pick strawberries on that street over there where Griswold was ... all us kids, particularly around Fourth of July to get money to buy some firecrackers. All the Italians used to work over there, and one day there was this Italian woman working there, and she left. All the kids said "Where'd she go?" Nobody seemed to know. Well, what happened, she started to go home to this house over here, and she had a baby, right on ... right in front of Larry Wilson's house, Bailey Rd. That used to be a dump, and she had a baby right there in the dump; and Sam Dean, who was a drunken old blacksmith, he comes along and picks this women up and the baby and took them home. That was all right. The next day I stopped there in the morning ... I don't know why, but we were probably going to pick some strawberries, and anyway,

she was up doing the washing. That's the way they used to do it. They didn't go to hospitals. Just had a baby and went to work.

Q: Wasn't there a hotel down here? On the brow of the hill?

Sam: Yes, there was a tavern.

Q: Shipman's Tavern?

Sam: There was a tavern on Main St. there. Shipman's Hotel was at the foot of Shipman's Hill, across from this church a little north, and that was quite a renowned place. It was subsequently moved to some place in New Jersey, and burned. But when we were young people, we had a club ... a boys' club up there. It had a floating room upstairs, which was on dance hell. When we say "floating" ... it was on rubber cushions. We used to have an athletic club, if you wish to call it that, and we used to go up there and do a little boxing and things like that. We had one fellow ... he stuttered a lot, but he thought he was pretty smart, and we also had a big man who worked down at Dick Spencer's store, and this fellow who was going to put on a little exhibit. He picked on this big fellow, and he says, "Now look here, when you get up you just h-h-h-h-hit me there." And he did. (Laughter.)

Q: Shipman's Tavern was quite old, wasn't it ... dated back to Revolutionary times?

Sam: About 1730 or something like that. It was quite a place. There were probably 20 or 30 rooms in it. Subsequently my brother-in-law owned it. Andrew Shipman owned it and left it to his nephew, who married my sister, so I know something about it. There were 2 or 3 (floors? RCH) ... cut into apartments after that until it went to pieces until it was bought by these New Jersey people. I don't know who they were.

Well, anyway, during this period of 1900 we had dirt roads up until then. In 1903–1909 we built a macadam road here and on Elm St., which was a big addition, and people began to move into Rocky Hill, and during that period of 1900–1910 there was quite a building development, built homes, and these people coming in who took quite an interest in town. I could name them, but it isn't necessary. They were really high-type people, and at the same time the town got electric lights ... that is, down through the Main St. They weren't too general, but they were starting. I think that with the trolley, with the macadam road, the new people, the town began to grow in population. That was about the same year that the men's Business Club started (was this the Rocky Hill Men's Club? – RCH), in 1908. That consisted of about 20 or 30 men, and that club was responsible for getting most of these things in order. The electric lights, subsequently the police department, the fire department. Many things that happened in town originated with the Men's Club. They really took a real part ... a little different than they are now. They really accomplished something. I think during that period of 1900 to 1910

the town grew from 900-1,000 to 2000, and from there on has been growing right along. Then the next period was from 1910 to 1920. Then the rayon factory came, and that added a couple of hundred people at the time, so that brought in more people to Rocky Hill.

Center School was enlarged, when this building was made, to four rooms.

.Q: 1914.

Sam: Yes. I put it between that period, from 1910 to 1920.

Also during that period we had the World War, of course, and Rocky Hill had what they called a "Home Guard" of 30–35 men, and they met pretty regularly, and they had a firing range over what is Wright Acres now. There was nothing there then. We had a firing range over there, and we had to guard some bridges, and so on, and also some men were drafted from that. One man in particular was drafted from the Home Guard. He was a tall slender fellow, and in six weeks he was dead (the only Rocky Hill soldier killed during WWI was Antonio Campilio – RCH). They shipped him ... he was sent over to Europe and in six weeks he had been shot ... without any training. That was the First World War.

Q: May I ask on thing? The foundry. That was here much longer. When was the foundry started here originally? It dates way back, doesn't it?

Sam: Oh, that was the Connecticut Foundry. It was run by Holmes at one time.

Harry: Wasn't it known as the Champion Co. I've got postal cards.

Sam: Probably. (?) Havens (probably Owen R. Havens – RCH) and Frank Holmes ran it, and even before that my father ran it ... was interested in it. It goes back ... the railroad come in 1873, about that period, and that was a flutter too. A lot of things happened.

Q: Did you see anything of the end of the shipbuilding?

Sam: I go back to 1890-1900. I guess I missed it. South of the factory-foundry, considerable, some of those elevations there ---I don't know what they are now, but there was Belden Shipyard down there, and old Company K house (Company K was a volunteer group during the Spanish American War.) They had a clubhouse by the River – RCH) was way back down there, and they had these launching rails out in the river. That's where we used to go swimming. It was dangerous because it was deep. But they used to make these little boats, Belden did, up in this lot, and launch them on these things that went out into the water. Do you remember, Harry?

Harry: No.

Q: What size boats were they?

Sam: They were what you called ... tug boats ... oh, 50'-60' in those days.

Harry: I have one over at the library that I painted from a photograph, and it was 100' long.

Q: Freightin'?

Sam: Originally, but going within my time, but they made ships for the Navy. The first ships for the U. S. Navy were made in Rocky Hill, but that was before my time, so I can't report on that. I'm just trying to give you what I know about it.

Also during that same period Center School was built ... 4 rooms were built in it, and they built one - the West School, which has now been destroyed, and also in the South. There was quite a bit of building activity from 1910 to 1920 in town.

Q: What's that Sam? They built on the South School?

Sam: No. Built the new building, what is now the Moser School.

Harry: My father was on that building committee.

Sam: Going back to the origin, as I said, there was one in North, One in West, one in South, and two here. That was five rooms ... only five schoolrooms here. If you cared to continue your education, you went to Middletown High School. We had no high school ... you went to Middletown. No, not all, because very few did, but if you did ... there were one or two that went to Hartford. They were what you called the selected ones. It cost a little more to go to Hartford, so there were very few who did that ... but those that did go to Middletown were satisfied. As far as I was concerned, I went to the South School in Hartford the last two years. I had a little fracas over here. I was in the sixth grade, so I decided to leave and go to Hartford. Others did too at the time ... Chauncey Harris School. Do you know where the old South School was? Going back to that other thing too, Harry said his father earned 13 cents an hour, and I went to work at the Travelers for \$250 a year, and paid \$4.50 a month to go on the railroad train.

Other Voice: You got \$10 more than I did: I got \$240.

Sam: We got paid twice a month -- 320.33 by the end of the month-- \$10.00 in the middle of the month, and 10.83 at the end: that 33 cents was something; I'm not kidding.

Harry: In 1902 they had a coal strike, I think, and my father and another man built a large boat ---larger than the ordinary size of a rowboat -- to pick up wood. And before he went to work, he went out at 4:00 O'clock in the morning to the river to pick up floating wood. They'd throw it up on the bank. This was fine except at a time during the spring when the river was rising, and that's the time they'd get all the wood. I had to watch the river like a hawk, because the river would rise up and would be up to my Wood pile, and

it would be up to me to go down and throw it back farther up on the bank. I had to do that 2 or 3 times.

Q: Did you get a mess of lumber when the bridge burned at Hartford? Remember when the bridge burned at Hartford?

Harry: No. I don't remember that.

Q: That lumber came all the way down.

Harry: I imagine it would. No, I don't remember that.

Other: As far south as East Haddam.

Sam: We didn't have any Mason Lodge then. We would go to the Columbian in Glastonbury. You either had to go across by rowboat or go away around in Hartford. It was quite a trip. Or you could walk across the ice if you really wanted to in the wintertime, which we did.

Q: Wasn't the ferry operating then?

Sam: Not in the winter.

Q: Did they cut ice on the river, or only on the ponds?

Sam: No, they never cut ice on the river, no, but there used to be plenty of ice. They'd close the river for 2 or 3 months in the wintertime. In the old days they did, but they don't now. It used to be quite a treat to go down by the river around 4:00-5:00 and watch the Middletown or Hartford boat go down. It used to suck the water away from the beach, you know, about 20 or 30 feet. The kids, you know, used to like to follow it in, and then when the boat went sherRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR.

Harry: That's when I almost drowned in Wethersfield. I jumped out about the time the wave went out, and I thought I was going out under the boat and jumped out.

Harry or /Other Voice: My three brothers and Winnie Dimec was one of them, in that boat the time the Wave went out, -- knocked me down, and that boat was on top of me. I was going down and all the water was coming back. Boy, pretty near the end of Harry.

Sam: We used to go down and see that boat. Earlier it used to stop in Rocky Hill here -- the other side of the foundry now. There used to be a dock there.

Other: People used it to go to New York.

A. Yes.

Harry: Speaking of this school, this lot was a swamp. -

Q: Where the Academy Hall is now, you mean?

Harry: No. Center School. I can remember Frank Holmes carting dirt load after dirt load.

He had a racket with the Town of Rocky Hill, and he had this fellow, a colored man, Thompson, and he used to get drunk every once in a while. You'd see him loading -the loads and loads of dirt he brought in there. Speaking of when I was down the South School, Frank was Superintendent of the Schools.

We could do everything we wanted in the school. We could talk, we could whisper, we could eat, chew gum--anything you wanted.

Harry: Grace Shipman let us. We had a ball down there, but we'd see Frank Holmes coming in his wagon. He had a funny way of holding his head over, and he'd look at you like that, up over his glasses -- and we'd see Frank coming, and the teacher said "All right -- everything away. Get everything in order", and Frank would come in and look around the room, talk with the teacher and see how everything was: and after he went, all the stuff would come out again -- candy and everything else. (Laughter)

Other: They do that in the service when they knew the company commander was coming to inspect—everything is spic and span, and when he leaves, it goes right back to normal.

Harry: Speaking of the fruit men that comes around today that we buy things of, his father came around with a horse and wagon, and had a much bigger wagon than than what this fellow has -- automobile, truck.

He had, I think, he had three sections. He had the bottom of the thing, and he had a shelf about up here, and then he had another one on top. He had all his heavy stuff like potatoes, and heavy vegetables, down below. When he came along, the teacher would go out or send a kid out, and she'd buy 5 pounds of dates for the kids. I never knew what a date was hardly until I got a hold of them. All in a bunch, you know. She'd come in with 5 pounds of dates, and we'd break them off and eat them, and oh, we had a wonderful time. I knew the father of Hick, who goes around now.

Q: I'd like to ask something. This Brown's Store that is running here now--Mrs. Brown is running it -- that went back quite a ways, didn't it -- over across the street here?

Sam: It was Brown's store all my life. His father ran it before, and Gene ran it afterwards. It was quite a gathering place for all the young boys—some of the older ones for that matter. They played cards over there and had a pool table, but nothing bad that I know of.

Q: It was a general store – candy, the works was it?

Sam: No. It was a tobacco store.

Harry: Then it grew into a general store. You could get hair nets there, safety pins.

Other: Soda and ice cream. There was a soda fountain there.

Sam: Well, you're talking late in life.

Q: Originally a tobacco store?

Sam: That's right.

Other: Who patronized that enough to support it?

Sam: Well, they had a poolroom too.

Harry: That was chawin" tobacco, you know.

Other Voice: Mrs. Brown had a serious habit in later days, when she wanted to go across to the post office, she would lock the door and leave all the keys in the lock. That was a sign that she wasn't there, but she'd be back soon.

Sam: That was after Gene died. Gene ran it for years and years, and his father ran it for years and years before that. His father was a great horseman. He always had a fast horse. He used to race some too. It was that type of headquarters -- the racy type, if you want.

Harry: The sporting crowd.

Q: The post office for a long time was right across the street here. Does that date back a long in ways?

Sam: Yes, that was quite a ways back. Horace Merriam had a store down below here. The post office was somewhere else before that, too, but I can't remember.

Q: Where was the principal grocery store in the old days?

Sam: That was a grocery store too.

Harry: Bob Hand's place. That's where Bob Hand was?

Sam: No, no. Right across the street.

Other: That was Bob Hand's place. Warner had it, and the post office was in one side of it.

Sam: Do you say who was the principal? Well, Merriam's store probably, was the original, and as I said before that was...

Q: Along Glastonbury Ave., south of Glastonbury Ave.?

Sam: "No, that was on Main St. The second house down on Main St. They had everything. Other: Over where Pioneer Press is now, was that an A. & P.?

Sam: A. & P.

Harry: They sold coal from there -- Stevens did. Hey -- you'd go down cellar and -- some of the dust is sifting through now.

Sam: Well, that was established by a fellow name of Collins. He had it and Stevens bought it afterwards. A feed store, yeah. But that was later to.

Q: How far back does that old mill go, that was over there, where the 'crick' is out at the end of Pratt St. (Belden Brook – RCH)

Sam: That was a cider mill.

Q: Cider mill. Didn't that belong to Stevens?

Sam: Yeah. Stevens' family.

Q: Prior to Ed.

Sam: Ed's parents. He inherited it too.

Q: Cider mill. Run by Water?

Sam: It had a wheel. For a minute I knew the name, but I don't now. He was supposed to be sort of a dumb guy. People used to go in and throw their apples in his bin -- I don't know if you'd call it a bin. But this dumb guy used to get in there with his boots and his tobacco. He used to chew tobacco and crush those apples with his boots and spit tobacco juice. It helped the cider. (Laughter.)

Q: Ernie Lowell is a relatively newcomer around here. He's only been here 49 years, but he might have a few things to add.

Ernie: No, I think things have been pretty well covered.

Q: You were here at the time of the fire, weren't you?

Ernie: I had been down here about a Week End had rented the house. I rented four rooms upstairs in the house where the tavern is now. I heard the church bells ringing that day, but I was too busy painting inside the house, getting ready to move down from Hartford. It wasn't until I left to go back to Hartford that I walked up here because the trolley couldn't get by the fire, and I stood here and watched them throw a pail of water on the roof of the church. I never realized until then how small a pail of water was.

Q: What's the source or derivation of the Parsonage St. Was that related to a personage? -- That existed or intended to provide a parsonage?

Ernie: That I don't know. That was before my time.

Q: I have a story back here I think from old Mrs. Griswold. I've never been able to verify it. Ernie: When I came to town, the parsonage was up on Chapin Ave.

Sam: In that early period, as far as this church is concerned, there wasn't any basement. They had these two stoves in the south end of it. They were big things like that.

Subsequently they built tunnels underneath and out in a central heating system. There

was just one central heating system, and you could go in from this end. There was just a walk in there, that's all. And Chapin Hall. Were you here when that was built?

Ernie: That was about the time that I came -- about 1921.

Sam: About in 1920—Chapin Hall— they dug it out, becoming Chapin Hall. .

Q: Was there a lot of dairying done in those days? Dairy farms?

Sam: Farming. It was all farming here. You would call them dairy farms? Yes. When I was -- it don't seem possible -- but when I was 12 years old, I took care of 12 cows all by myself. My father, incidentally, was an old man when I was born.

Q: How extensive of as the Dimock farm?

Sam: Well, it was quite extensive. You know where the soldier's ...

Q: Veteran's Home?

Sam: 'Well, that was the extent of that. It was all around there.

Q: Down along Elm St.?

Sam: On Elm St., Grimes Rd. Oh, that was a lot.

Harry: From the number of loads of hay that went up and down Elm St. you'd think the town was a dairy town all right.

Q: They always got hay down in the meadows, isn't that right?

A. Yes.

Sam: There were four houses between Grimes Rd. and Gilbert Ave., that's all. The ____? going up Gilbert's Rd. and so forth. Everything was all hills (unable to hear remainder of sentence)

Q: When they first put in macadam, how far up Elm St. did it go? AS far as Grimes St?

Sam: The first time? No, I think it was beyond that. I think it went out to Gilbert Rd. There was a great period there, when I was a kid, we used to get a lot of snow. We used to get more snow than we've been getting the last few years, and when we got a good blizzard, we couldn't go to school for 2 or 3 days until Gilbert's came through and broke through the road, because they had horses, and they had men. We weren't too anxious to see him come, but by the second or third day, they'd break through, and we'd have to go to school.

Q: Was that curve on Elm St. at Rose Hill always there, so far as you remember?

Sam: It wasn't a hole like that. In 1918. I unscrewed the electric light bulbs by standing on the drifts.

Q: Electric light bulbs along the streets?

Sam: Yeah. Harry: There was another storm around 1923 or 1924 about the same, and that road wasn't cleared for ten days, I should think.

Sam: Easy. It was nothing in those days, in that period. I think at least three times we walked from Griswoldville do on through the lots, Sam, because that was as far as the trolley would go, on account of drifts. And you walked the rest of the Way home.

Harry: I've done that.

Q: Wasn't there a certain amount of traffic back across the river too? On the ice in the winter? Weren't there a certain amount of teams back and forth across the river?

Sam: In that early period there was an awful lot of activity down by the river. The feldspar mines over in Glastonbury -- they brought all their stuff to the railroad over here. There was team after team lined up where that feldspar went on freight trains from Rocky Hill.

Harry: I was going to put that in the picture of the depot but I didn't have enough room to put it in. I was going to have a wagon o backed up. The stuff looked like flour, piled up high. All loose, you know, and they'd just shovel it in.

Sam: They had team after team lined up there.

Q: When they couldn't go across on the ice, how did they get here? Sam: Well, I don't know ... the ferry.

Q: Oh, they only did that in the winter?

Harry: No, the summer.

Sam: On the ferry.

Q: How many teams would the ferry handle?

Sam: Three. It took them quite a While to unload it ... with a shovel, you know. They didn't have machinery in those days.

Harry: Sam, do you remember, going back, do you remember the shear factory? I heard there was a shear factory down by the Billings & Spencer, and I dug around where they said it was, and I found parts of sheers in the sand ... in the dirt. Do you remember that? Was there a factory there?

Sam: Yes. All they made was shears down there.

Q: Wasn't that east of the tracks?

Harry: That was right before you got to -- between the ponds.

Sam: There was also ... I called it a soap shop, but there was also a flat grinding shop

down there too.

Harry: That was right down by the railroad.

Sam: I had a little sow one time ... she had 13 little pigs, and she ate them all up and then she died, and I took her down there, and she weighed 500 pounds.

(Laughter)

Q: Made a lot of soap, huh?

Harry: Going around in the woods and everything, I don't know if I was different from the rest, but we had our special places to find flowers ... lady slippers, white and yellow violets, and one thing or another. And then we had places where we got arbutus. We'd never tell anybody where we found it. You know, I haven't seen any arbutus for years. Oh, the smell of that was just wonderful.

Q: Did you have hunting around here? Did you have bird hunting? Have any game?

Sam: There wasn't any law that I know of in those days. Anybody could go out and shoot anywhere. I guess there were state laws then, but in Rocky Hill, you did what you wanted to do. Q: Did you ever dig up any Indian arrowheads and that sort of thing? Around town here?

Sam: They used to get some. Johnny Hall lived up here where Button's live now -- He could cover this table here with arrowheads and various things.

Q: I know they used to get them around the old Robbins' farm. Do you know anywhere else where they found them?

Sam: You could get them most anywhere in town. In my lot over here on the hill. I never paid much attention. You got them, but you probably traded them with somebody for something else.

Q: How old is the Button place up here (The Riley House on the northwest corner of Riverview and Old Main – RCH)? Was that always a residence?

Sam: It was, as far as I know. There was some sea captain built it. In the early days they used to have cock fights up there.

(After this the tape became very noisy, and continued noise, so I was unable to transcribe anything further.)

E. M. - Rowe Transcribed: March, 1990

Captured as OCR and comments added by Bob Herron: July 6, 2016

Hunt, Walter

This is June Cooke, and it is Friday February 15, 2002, and today I am going to interview WALTER HUNT who was born January 4, 1908.

Walter will you tell us a little bit about your family.

I came to Rocky Hill when I was about one year old. My father, Herbert Hunt, Jr. came to live with his father, Herbert Hunt, Sr. My mother was Antoinette Holmes and later on my two sisters were born, Jennie and Edna. As of today they are both alive Grandfather had a farm of about 120 acres on what was then known as the Shunpike. My father peddled papers. That now today is split into 3 sections because Route 91 goes through a portion of it, and Cold Springs Road goes through another portion of it. We lived there until about 1918, when we moved to Pratt St. to a house that is now #57. I started school in West Rocky Hill in a 2-room school house which was on the corner of the Shunpike, or Cromwell Avenue and Elm St. Then when I moved to the village I went to the 4-room schoolhouse which was right next to the Academy.

Do you have any questions?

Maybe you could describe the neighborhood around the farm.

The houses were very well separated. My house was 1 mile from the school house and in that mile there was one house owned by a Mr. Fred Bacon, another one owned by a man named Goldberg that would be about on the corner of France Street. The next house was owned by a man named Wright, and then a house owned by a family named Rhodes who used to have a blacksmith shop. That was the extent of the houses going north. South on the Shunpike there was 1 family known by Dickinson, another one by Collins, one by Stenner. And then we were at the Cromwell line on the south side of the Hunt property was a road which went over into East Berlin. It was not used except for the people who owned property on the edge of it.

Is that road improved today?

That road is shut off today because 91 and Cold Spring Road cut across it. While there were people using it before route 91, were Mr. Gardner who ran a tobacco farm on Brook Street later became a nursery, and he had a large piece of land which ran along the south edge of on your grandfather's farm.

What did he raise there? Was it a dairy farm?

It started out as a general farm. He went there in the 1880's and he traveled to New York and New Jersey and wanted to be a gentleman farmer, but he found out that it was kind of a rough life. A portion of which was large orchards, there was probably 25-30 acres of tillable land. The rest of it was mostly woodlands and pastures. They tried the dairy

business, with cows, naturally, and when father came to live on the farm with my grandfather, he went into market gardening and he used to take fruits and vegetables, and so on into Hartford. The dairy business about 1914-1915 became, what should I say, governmental regulations forced them out of the dairy business, and rightfully so. The regulations were for health reasons. There wasn't the money to provide the necessary sanitary conditions. Really they couldn't because the electricity had not reached that area at that time.

You were still using kerosene lamps at that time, Yes. Do you recall any of the vendors who came around, a meat man, an ice man?

Yes, vendors that came, one man came on foot with a leather back pack selling threads, needles, etc. He later came on a horse and wagon, and when he got enough together financially, he gave that up, and opened a store in Hartford, on Park Street.

Do you recall his name?

Louis Tuck. Kerosene oil for the lights, a two horse tank wagon used to come from Middletown on a regular basis, and in the wintertime he came with a sleigh, the tanker was attached to a sleigh, and he peddled the kerosene all through that area.

Did you heat with kerosene too?

No. We had wood, strictly.

As far as groceries are concerned, there was a meat man who came through occasionally. He had a regular route. His name was Wright. He came from Rocky Hill.

How about bread?.

All homemade, practically, all homemade. With the exception that when father would go to Hartford with vegetables and/or fruit, he would stop at a bakery and get a sugar barrel full of day old bread, and 90% of that went to feed the pigs. Of course there was the grocery store right in the center of Rocky Hill. And the feed store, the grain store, I should say. It was only a matter of 2-3 miles. He used to barter with them too. Take potatoes and fruits and vegetables. There was a lot of that that went on. Oh yes, as a matter of fact, he had one store in Hartford. Pilgards was the name. I remember that name. Mr. Pilgard lived in Glastonbury. He had the enormous store on the corner of Main and Morgan. OK. Dad would go there with a whole load of sweet corn, and Mr. Pilgard would come out and look at it and check it over and say how much he would allow for it, and then put it right on the sidewalk, and sell it from there. They didn't even take it in the store. I'll be darned. He took the wagon load of tomatoes, and Mr. Pilgard used to pay \$5 for the first basket of tomatoes that came in the spring. My father got that \$5 several years in a row. Of course by August he was selling tomatoes for 10 cents

a basket, 14 qts. Like a peach basket. Yes, And I can remember going with him, and there was a Farmer's Market down the end of State Street, next to the Steamboat dock, and by the time the tomatoes became very plentiful, say in August, there was really no outlet for them.

There were a lot of Italian people who lived on Front St, the Front St. area, and those ladies would come, 3 or 4 in a group, with their washtubs, and he would fill up their washtubs with tomatoes for 10 cents a basket. They probably made sauce. Sure, they made sauce. That was a big switch from \$5 a basket, but he wouldn't let them have the basket, because the basket cost money. Sure. That was the way they tried to make a living out on the farm.

After they couldn't sell milk any more, they sold it to a cheese factory in Middletown.

How did they finally dispose of the cows? Did they auction them?

Just sold them all. Because there was 2 or 3 pig farmers who had the money to set up the right sanitary conditions, and they would be the ones to grow and they would grow up to be bigger, so they would buy up these cows. One of them was Gilbert on Elm Street.

What breed of cows did you have?

Holsteins. No, it was a mixture. We had about 6 cows all together. 3 of them were Jersey They gave a rich milk. Yes. Of course back then, you didn't measure the fat content. It was just milk, that's all.

What did you do as far as fun while you were growing up? Did you have any kids to play with in the area?

Yes, there was. There was Mr. Gardner who had a couple of boys, and a daughter. At the Dickinson's there were two girls. But, you know, there was mostly work because even at 6 years old I used to go to Mr. Dickinson's farm and pick Strawberries, 2 cents a quart, and it was a big day that I could fill a crate and get my 64 cents. 64 cents bought quite a bit then. Oh yes.

What would you compare the purchase of something for 64 cents today? Like for instance. Get a pair of shoes for \$2. How about a movie?

I never heard of movies. Summers I had an aunt and cousins who came from Jersey City and spend most of the summer. There was 2 girls. They were both a little older than myself.

Did you have a swimming hole anywhere in the area?

No, we did not. The only water was a little brook on the north side of the property. Across the road. Outside of that there was really no water.

How did you come to move down on Pratt St?

Well, father and grandfather decided that they could not make a living on the farm, and one of the factors was that the kids were not getting the best of education. They were looking forward to the day of High School, and that was one factor. And also there was the end of the War, the First World War. There was plenty of work. As a matter of fact, both father and grandfather had worked off the farm too. At one time, in the winter they both worked for in Dividend. Can't think of the name of the company. They made drop forges.

Was it Belamose?

No, Belamose came later.

Wilcox' Billings?

No. I should know that name. Well anyways, grandfather was night watchman, and my father ran a drop forge machine during the day, so in the morning my father would go away with the horse and buggy and go to work, and then grandfather would take the horse and come home. At night he would go in, and my father would come home. There were no double trips there. Oh yes. That's double duty for the horse.

And so, my grandfather went to live with my uncle who already lived in Rocky Hill, Hubert Hunt lived on Main St. near West St. where Jane Nash lives now. That would have been her grandfather. My mother's father came to live with us, part of the time when we were on Pratt St.

What was his name?

Walter Holmes. He was an odd duck. I never knew where - I don't think he actually ever had a home. As I remember, he would come out to the farm and stay, maybe a week, two weeks, and then he would be gone. But he had a sister, and 2 brothers who lived around. And I suppose he went to stay with them for a while, but near the end of his life he came to live with us on Pratt Street.

Can you describe the Pratt St neighborhood at that time?

Yes. We lived in #57, it was a gable roofed house, and that house was owned by a Mrs. Grimes, who lived the house that is now called the Bradford house. Which has now been torn down, I understand. And next house, next to us, which Mrs. Grimes owned was a man named Charles Wood who was foreman in one of the electrical shops in Hartford, and he had a housekeeper named Mrs. Carter, and she had a daughter who was a little older than myself named Bernice. Mr. Wood, really he was an Engineer, I would think. He was the individual who invented the snap switch for the light. Before that, it was either a turn button or push button, but his idea was that a person coming into the house with

an arm full of groceries would just hit the switch with his elbow to turn the light on.

In the next house #53, while I lived there, there was 2 Italian families in there who worked in the quarry and that was the extent of children on the street, because across the street lived Mrs. Apley and her daughter, and the next house was John Bawkey (?) who was absolutely stone deaf.

Do you know if at the time you were living there, were those people all renting, or did they actually own the house?

Mrs. Apley was the only one that I know of who actually owned the house. Mrs. Grimes owned 3 houses in a row, and who owned the house where the Italian family, I don't know. And I don't know who lived in the house across the street where John Bowkey lived.

Did you know Mrs. Grimes very well?

Yes. She was a very delightful lady, and sort of a naturalist. She was very much interested in birds, animals, flowers, plants. I used to rake leaves for her, help to rake the lawn, and she was very friendly. I don't believe if she used to talk to me. She had a brother, I don't know what his name was. He was in the Marines, who got killed in the Boxer Revolution in India, sorry, in China. Was there another house behind the Bradford house, more towards the woods. There was at one time. That was gone. There was a barn left down there behind, but she owned all through there too. Someone told me once that they used to have a stagecoach kept in that barn. I don't think I was ever in the barn, but I know there was one out there. And she used to go walking through the woods, and along the river. She was very active. It seems to me that her first name was Lillian, I'm not sure now. Who her husband was I have no idea. I don't think she ever married. Oh wait a minute, she must have. She was a Mrs.

How long did you live there?

It must have been about 4 or 5 years. Anyways, we moved up to Glastonbury Ave into a 2 family house owned by Frank Holmes. I graduated from High School in 1921 and I was still living on Glastonbury Ave. Then shortly after that I used to get boys from high school.

As far as playmates were concerned, it was when I was in grammar school, there were plenty of them. But I was an individual who was always looking for work. I played, I had fun, yes, but I was always looking for work, and at one time I was very friendly with the stationmaster of the railroad station in Rocky Hill. When he received Western Union telegrams, he had me deliver them. I also had worked for a Mr. Fred Sprague in the summer time. He lived on Main St. near the Methodist Church, and he had a little piece of land up on top of the hill, where he used to raise vegetables, and he would go around

from house to house in town and get the right to pick the fruit left on the trees in their yards. Each house might have a pear tree, a cherry tree, and apple tree, and I would go with him and pick this fruit and take it up to his house, and then Saturday afternoon, Saturday Nights, Sunday afternoon and Sunday nights, and he would have a fruit and vegetable stand out in his front yard because of all of the traffic going down Main St. to the shore and coming back Sunday night. So I used to work for him. I used to work for Mr. Fred Belden. He had a lot of fruit and berries. I used to pick for him. Mr. Burt Belden lived on Pratt St. as you come down Pratt where the corner turns to go down the hill where we used to live.

When I got into high school I used to work in Mr. Belden's grocery store. That is, I mean the new one on Glastonbury Ave, because I was still in grammar school. And I think the year that I graduated Belden's store on Main St. burned along with the Grange Hall and the barber shop⁷⁹. Behind the Congregational Church. Yes ma'am. And one thing that I remember, and I thought about it. Now I can pinpoint the year, in 1920 in the Presidential Election, the Grange Hall was still on Main St. A group of people got together on Election Night. They had made arrangements with the Western Union and the telegraph operator at the railroad station to have the telegraph receiver help out at the Grange Hall, and as the returns were returned over the telegraph lines, he would write out the returns, hand them to someone, and he would write them out on the blackboard. And I remember being there in the early part of the evening, but of course, being only 13 years old, I got sent home early. I don't know how long those men stayed there listening to the Presidential returns. It must have been till all the returns of the Presidential election were in.

That year when we graduated from grammar school we could no longer use the Grange Hall. It was gone. The graduation ceremony was in the Congregational Church. Before that they used to be held in the Grange Hall. Yes, I remember starting in the Grange Hall, and in later years they were held in the new Grange Hall Where was the new Grange Hall located? On Glastonbury Ave, on the South side. As you go down Glastonbury Ave. there was the Mr. Stevens Grain Store, (grist mill). The next building was Mr. Belden's new store, and the next building was the Grange Hall. That was quite a fire when those burned. That was terrible. With the bucket brigade they saved the church. One side of the church as all scorched.

And then as I say, when I was in high school I worked at Mr. Belden's store. That was quite an experience. Now once you graduated, you pretty much stayed working in the store there, till you left Rocky Hill. I went to Hartford High. At that time the high schoolers went to Middletown High School from Rocky Hill. Each year one graduating

⁷⁹ 1921

member in grammar school was given a scholarship to go to Hartford High. This was a scholarship which was set up by Albert Prince, who worked in one of the banks, I don't know which one. Albert I Prince, one of the schools was named after him. All the cost to the town was for the transportation. I was fortunate because we got a broader education in Hartford. It was a bigger school there. The academic school was on Asylum Ave and Hopkins St. And attached to it on Broad St. was the Secretarial School. We had a very broad choice of classes. We had Ancient History, English, Mathematics, Latin, Greek, which was very rare, and all the sciences too, Chemistry, so it was just a little bit better education than Middletown. It was a much different school then than it is now. No picnic to teach there today.

Did you play on any school team?

No. I did not. I used to referee baseball in the grammar School. And that reminds me, speaking of sports, later on in life when I had graduated from High School and I was working, I worked in the office of the Connecticut Foundry.

I took part in building the first tennis court in Rocky Hill. That tennis court was built on property owned by Joseph Bachelor. His house was the first house on Riverview at the corner of Main. He had 3 daughters, Margaret, who was gym teacher in Middletown High, Laura who was librarian at Middletown High, and Esther who kept right on going to school, and kept a Doctor's degree as dietitian, and went to work for the Federal Government. Food & Drug. They wanted to play tennis, and their father said, I will give up my vegetable garden for a tennis court, if you can get those 3 guys who are chasing you around to build the darned thing. Well of course they were all older than the 3 of us; so we did, we built the tennis court there. That was the one game that I really got into. And later in life another guy and myself would go up to Colt's Park and play.

Is there anything else you can think of?

When we first moved to Pratt Street I can remember when the shear shop burned down, which is where the Conn. Foundry Co. is located.

Shears?

They made shears, scissors. Another thing that I can remember when we lived on Pratt St. was that after the shear shop burned down, and that was cleaned up, a group of men formed the Conn. Foundry and built a cast iron foundry on that spot. That is now not operating, it is all fenced in as I notice, and now the town is trying to get it cleaned up. After graduating from High School I worked in the office of the Conn. Foundry Co. and they made cast iron parts for lawnmowers, typewriters, pay station telephone boxes, marry (?) boxes for SKF in Hartford, small boxes for use in factories, as barens on shafts, some of them big enough to be the boxes on the wheels of a freight car. They branched

out in 1927–28 making cast iron bases for floor lamps of various designs, and they made shrubs (?) for cone speakers for radios. There was various designs in them, and from this they started making cast iron book ends, and eventually opened a paint shop in Wethersfield, to paint the book ends. That company consisted of a Mr. Kanutson, who lived in West Hartford. He was President. An Ernest Spencer who lived in Wethersfield, an Arthur Enquist who lived in Wethersfield, and Edgar Spencer who eventually left the company, and he became part owner of Philbrick, Booth & Spencer of Hartford. I know that after I left there, they got into other things eventually too. Of course cast iron was eventually replaced, and there are very few cast iron foundries left.

Living in the Pratt Street/Glastonbury Ave area, how do you remember that area where the ferry comes in?

That was very simple. Different from the way it is today. Just below where the pilings for the ferry and at that time the ferry boat was a single boat. It was a double-end steam engine powered, and he didn't turn around at either side of the river, and there was a store right down there near the landing, owned by a man named Ellis, and all of his trade was right there, all with river people. He carried a thing called naphtha, which ran the internal combustion engine on the small boats. They could pull in there and get a supply, like they can get gasoline today. Now is that store a separate building? The family lived upstairs, the building backed up against the railroad embankment. It had a long front porch on the front side. The store was on the first floor, and the family lived on the second floor.

Was that the house that they called the Sail Loft House?

I have no idea. I do not know.

Were there any remains of the Rope Walk there that you know of?

No.

Where was the rope walk located?

It ran along the hill behind the railroad tracks. It ran North and South. I do remember some of the buildings. They were down East of the RR track where there were some buildings where they used to dry fish to ship out to the Caribbean.

Shad?

No they dried herring. And they pickled herring there, and there were 2 or 3 buildings. Some of the drying racks were left. Shad were taken out of the river with 2 different methods, one was with eel nets, which they floated down stream during the night. And the other was with the haul-in seines which were operated during the day, and they were on the Glastonbury side of the river, which was known as Nayaug Meadows. This

was the hauling seine which is used today, and was owned by Mr. Belden who ran the grocery store in Rocky Hill. Of course, those fish were sold right away, they were not preserved.

Do you ever remember the names of any of the ferry captains?

Yes. The original ferry that I remember, Daniel Taylor was a Captain. He lived off from Elm St. in a house that was set way back, and his Engineer was a Glen Hollister, who lived just a little ways from the ferry landing in Glastonbury. Those are the 2 people that I can remember. Oh, wait a minute later on, after they retired the name of that Steam boat was the Nayaug, run by a man named Arthur Dickinson. I remember I was told that he worked on that.

What year would this have been, roughly?

I can't remember when the Nayaug was retired. Probably around 1930 I would guess. Because a friend of mine, her Grandfather used to run the Bissell ferry, and when they closed that in 192- something, he came down to Rocky Hill and ran that ferry. His name was Walter Baker. I don't remember him. Those are the 2 people that I remember. Trolley cars went out in about 1930.

Hurricane of 1938

This seems to be paper written by an 18 year old college student. There seems to be more focus on her professor's theories about oral histories than there is information from the respondent. For what it's worth – I've found that information in the oral histories usually jibes with empirical sources – RCH.

Jennifer Nash

Memory

Professor Babb

October 25, 1988

Oral History

EXTRACT FROM ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF BARBARA ABISKI

by

JENNIFER NASH OCTOBER 1988

This extract is taken from an interview between my grandmother and I. We are speaking of the Hurricane of 1938, concentrating on the damages done in Rocky Hill.

Q: In the hurricane, could you go out?

A: I know we couldn't leave Rocky Hill. We had no ice, I learned to drink black coffee during the hurricane. There were huge trees down everywhere, you couldn't even walk to the center of town. I must have been working down by the river, we got shut down during the flood.

Q: Did you work during the hurricane?

A: Oh no the winds blew and it flooded ... the water just kept coming up and up ... the wind had been blowing and it had been raining...

Q: So because of the rain and wind more damage was done?

A : It had been raining for five days before the hurricane hit. There was a man around familiar with hurricanes who said this smells like a hurricane. Oh no, everybody said ... there's no hurricane. It's just gonna rain and some wind. Well it tore the trees up right by the roots, ripped 'em right out of the ground. Brand new houses right up here (points) it was ripping the shingles off, they were flying by like leaves. We were standing across the street, it was a stone thing ... there were no trees around it ... we all went over there. We stayed there for hours while the wind was blowing. I was upstairs reading in Jule's (my sister) bedroom, Life magazine, (laugh) and all of a sudden I hear this terrible noise. One of the big limbs out there like this (opens arms) fell down on the roof and pulled it right off the (pause) house. That had to be fixed after. So I said "well I guess I will get out of here". I brought my little magazine down, put my boots on and we all went over to Morris' (across the street)

Q: How long did it last?

A: Oh that wind blew. ... I came home, it had been blowing before I came home from a two o'clock shift, when I could hardly walk in here. It seems like forever that wind was howling, maybe ... 'til 7, 6, 7—8 o'clock. We had no electricity, we had no telephone

Q: For how long were you without power?

A: Oh for days. Until they ... we had just about gotten a phone, they weren't very ... you know, established. My father was a police officer so he had to have a phone but we had

just gotten it and - - - um ... iceman couldn't come⁸⁰, groceries couldn't come I don't know about the trolley⁸¹. I don't know about trolley car.

Q: What did you eat?

A: Well we had dry food and Morris (a neighbor) had a little store over there. He had sugar and bread and you know ... the neighbors could get some things and um ... I can't remember ... we had a wood stove or an oil 'cuz we had heat I remember we had heat for both storms [In 1936 there was also a terrible flood. I because it was cold after the hurricane.

Q: How old were you?

A : In '38 I was um. ... 28 - Was I? ... Yes.

MOM: No you were born in 1912 so in '38 you were 26.

(My mom interrupted here)

A: I was what? 26? Okay 26. I had been working at the mill for almost 10 years.

: It occurred in the fall, correct? Was there any freezing?

A: Yes, in was in September. We just celebrated it (the 50th anniversary), September 17th maybe. It wasn't that cold, it was sort of clammy, because it was wet-like but I remember we had a stove, a coal or by then it was oil so it was warm here but it didn't matter because there was nothing to cook here (laughs) it didn't matter. My mother could bake bread because we had staples in the house, we had flour and stuff like that but we used to run up street you know whenever we wanted anything. There was two grocery stores up there then. In the snow storms, the trolley cars used to come through ...

Q: Did they get them for you in '38?

A: No, I don't know if the trolleys were around then. . . I had a car. I used to drive the girls to work. We worked 6-2 or 2-10 at the silk mill⁸². When we came out that day we had left our cars on the hill, because they told us to. I took the girls home and I couldn't even drive on the streets down by the river, the water was so high. I dropped her off, I don't know how she got into her house. She must have stayed with a neighbor.

Q: Who told you to park your car on the hill?

A: The men that worked in the factory with us. It had been raining for five days and the water was really getting quite high.

⁸⁰ Her family had an icebox in 1938?

⁸¹ The trolley began to be phased out in 1931. Was it still running in 1938?

⁸² Belamose Corporation on Belamose Ave. at the end of Old Forge Road.

Q: Were the weather men predicting a hurricane?

A: Oh no. That was the big thing about this storm. ... It had been raining for days and finally it started to clear, it was ... early fall ... everyone was still waiting for the nice weather ... you know; that late summer weather. The day the hurricane hit, it finally started to clear up and everyone said finally the nice weather of the end of summer ... except that man who kept on saying it smells like a hurricane, it smells like a hurricane. It was so devastating because no one expected it. Remember a few years ago when we had a hurricane? Well we all knew it was coming and were prepared for it, but this hurricane. Nope, we had no idea it was coming. As a matter of fact, I remember hearing something about ... um ... an improvement in the weather predicting equipment after the storm.

Q: Did anyone you know personally die or lose a house or anything in the storm?

A: Oh yes. Everyone had some damage somehow. I remember for weeks Rocky Hill was recovering. We spent days cleaning up the trees so traffic could pass, if we didn't ... no one would have been able to eat. Uncle Walter's brand new house was destroyed in the storm and a lot of people's homes on the shore were lost.

Q: Did the storm hit the coast harder than here?

A: The coast was hardest hit. Hundreds of people were killed. People were buried alive in debris. Luckily, none of our relatives were killed during it ... but, I tell you, I thought I was gonna die. I've been through some terrible things but that was definitely one of the worst.

Q: Did you miss any work because of the storm?

A: Well, the day of the hurricane we all had to leave the mill in canoes. The mill was flooded all the men were ... putting all the silk things up high, those ceilings were really high, so they wouldn't get wet. We must have missed a week of work because they had to clean the entire mill because it had all that river silt on the walls. We couldn't get into the mill anyways ... the water surrounded it and the trees blocked the roads, I remember being confined to the house and yard and reading a lot.

2: What did the people who lost their homes do, where did they stay?

A: The Red Cross set up help in the high school⁸³, where Center school is now. They helped people who were terrified and gave them food. Almost everyone stayed there but some people stayed with friends in town. You couldn't leave to stay with relatives because of um ... the roads.

⁸³ Does she mean Junior High School? RHHS records show the construction of Rocky Hill High School began in 1955.

While talking to grandmother about classes and college we started talking about my memory class. I don't quite remember how the subject came up (ironically), but she told me she remembered the start of World War I, when the U. S. joined. She was five years old. Hold on, I said to myself, this needs some questioning I asked her about it in a little more depth, not believing it was a "true" memory. I asked her question after question using all my newly acquired knowledge from class but it seemed she really did remember. She remembers the bells ringing and her mom was in the hospital - I was amazed. Even I can't remember when I was five and that was only (?) thirteen years ago. She remembered when she was five and that was over seventy years ago. I decided to select her as my "guinea pig" for my most recent memory assignment.

I researched in Rocky Hill's historical society. My grandmother has lived her entire life in Rocky Hill and was born in the house I now live in, in the bathroom, which was then a bedroom. They had outhouses way back then. I found a few local news events that were significant enough to write on. Then I had to find out what she remembered the most of, either the Flood of 1936 or the Hurricane of 1938. She remembers the hurricane in great detail but does not really recall the Flood of 1936, which I found interesting. I assume she remembered the hurricane in more detail because it was much worse than the flood.

My grandmother's entire attitude towards the hurricane was surprisingly casual. Although when she recalls vivid memories the horror seems to return, overall she laughs about it. She laughed when I asked her what they ate and when the storm hit Rocky Hill she was upstairs reading Life magazine and said "well I guess I will get out of here. At this point in the interview she was jokingly speaking of the hurricane. On the other hand when she recalls how hard the storm hit the coast she says "I Can tell You, I thought I was gonna die. I've been through some terrible things but that was definitely one of the worst." I think she's so casual about it now because it was fifty years ago and she's been through a lot since then. When she vividly remembers the storm, she remembers how horrifying it really was.

When I interviewed my grandmother, I had a basic knowledge of the storm and of the damages done in Rocky Hill and in In Connecticut. She told me about things I couldn't Have read in the local papers. When I cited dates she remembered more. For example, I said "It occurred in the fall, correct?", and she quickly came up with September 17. Before I had asked her, she had not mentioned the season or the month, but as soon as I did, she remembered a specific date, only three days off. The storm actually hit September 20, 1938 but I feel that her recall of the 17th is extraordinary. My questioning evoked this memory. Another effective question was "were the weather men predicting a hurricane?" From research I knew that the hurricane was a total surprise so I asked to evoke that memory. She accurately remembers that the storm was unpredicted and her

story coincides with the documentation I read on the subject.

"All over dark, battered New England, thousands of huddling refugees were asking themselves that same question: how extensive had the great storm been? Why hadn't they been warned?" ... "Perhaps the only other [lumber from broken trees was used for military barracks] good to come from the disaster was when an outraged Congress ordered that the U. S. Weather Service be systematically improved so that such a tragedy could never happen again. " (Yankee magazine, pp. 185, 187, 1988.)"

This fact was also recalled by my grandmother. I don't think she thought she forgot these things. I'm under the impression that she does not truly forget, because if she's reminded, she remembers. She could be lying or she may just make these things up but every time I ask her about anything, she always seems to have some recollection of it. I think she does remember. Often, I doubt my memories, not really knowing if they are true memories or not. Contrastly, my grandmother rarely doubts her memory and believes they are all real. My grandmother uses associations to remember. When she remembers things, it helps her to know where she was working or living. She uses extendures, according to Linton.

The written sources I relied on seemed more credible after interviewing my mother. They agreed with each other although my grandmother's account was much more detailed and local. These sources were not as important in designing the interview as they were checking my grandmother's responses. All I had was a general understanding of the storm and I still found out all I needed to about the hurricane. This could be because my grandmother seems to elaborate on events quite often. Unlike Ellen Schrecker, I did not already know all the facts and go into the interview looking for a confirmation. I learned of new things and events through the interview.

I see how useful oral history really can be, especially in Ms. Schrecker's case. If oral history was not in existence, neither would her book, No Ivory Tower. Ms. Schrecker does not use oral history in its most advantage way because she has an opinion on the subject and the people she interviews know of that opinion. In my own experience, the details revealed using oral history wouldn't have been discovered any other way. I believe this experience is very similar to Grele's.

... they (interviews) give us a slant or view that has not been documented With regularity elsewhere, enlarge the historical universe, and cause us to ask new questions about what actually happened in the past and how people live through history. " Grele p. 573)

Oral history gives later generations a personal view of history. Neuenschwander is not so favorable to oral history. He believes interviews are unreliable because: first, they are not always accurate memories, and, second, the interviewer does not understand the memory or have the know how to interpret the responses. He thinks the only way oral

history can be made useful is when conducted by interviewers with a knowledge of Psychology, anthropology and sociology.

I believe oral history is very useful. It gives a different perspective on events and history. All history is written with some view, mainly the authors. I see oral history as the same thing. It's the same thing as written or unwritten history. By interviewing several people on the same subject, the overall story is bound to surface. The general scheme is revealed with the personal actions and responses of the participants. Oral history is a great assistance to history because it gives a local and personal view. It also enlivens history because "real" people are involved with "real" emotions. Oral History can also be lots of fun and surprising. While reading *The Mind of a Mnemonist by Luria*, I was totally astonished. Now, after this interview, I have a better grasp of what a phenomenon this man's memory really was. Interviewing lots of people, one is bound to run into people with extraordinary memories. Luria is famous now, maybe if I interview enough people, I will be too.

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Mason, George – Childhood Memories of the Quarry

This was received from Mr. Mason in Mid-September 2016. It was transcribed by Bob Herron and a thank you note was sent along with a release form so we can add it to our Personal History files. - RCH

George Mason
5225 S. Prince Street Apt. 311
Littleton, Co. 80123-7773

Started: July 2016
Finished: Sept. 2016

I recently received your mailer about the quarry in R.H. and would like to make my memories available for that meeting.

Our home, 11 Riverview Road, was at the eastern edge of the ridge which I presume gave the town its name. Just west of our place, on land my grandfather had sold, a house was built right at the east end of the quarry excavation. The exact timing I'm not sure of, but I think construction started in 1928. I would have been 9 years, and I was delighted to be able to watch as it went up. It was built for Dr. Charles Buck and his wife Eunice Barstow.

They had lived there for a year or so when "the Great Crash" of October 1929 happened. Dr. Buck, apparently, was nearly "wiped out" by the financial crisis, but was able to buy an old farm up in Naples, Maine which they turned into a chicken and egg production facility.

The house then became the home of Herb and Harriett Sherwood Hall. Mr. Hall owned the Hallcraft lamp Shop on Asylum Street in Hartford.

During the time Herb and Harriet lived there, they adopted twin girls. There were storms that shut down the electrical power, and they had to stay at our house where the heating system did not require electricity. (Storms of 1937 and 1938, I'm not sure, I would have been away at Bouduin College at the time!)

When WWII started, Herb became an officer in the U.S. Army Coastal Artillery and was posted to Watsonville, Ca, area and they lived in Soquel, Ca. (near Santa Cruz) and operated an antique shop "The Pink Cottage."

Not totally sure, but I think the owners were Felix Montana and his wife Mildred. I am sure Felix is remembered with affection in Rocky Hill. He was very much a gentleman and a gardener as well! (So much for the house at the edge of the quarry.)

The quarry itself was pretty much a wide open playground for me growing up. Bill Quinn was the boss at the quarry and let us watch operations, very tolerant of us kids, who included Donald Keen (Kean?) Aet Clinton, Ralph and Erando Omicioli, Tom French.

The different activities at the quarry were endlessly fascinating. The “steam shovels” really used steam. Mr. Omicio was one of the steam shovel operators.

Blasting was fascinating even though we were hardly close enough to “see” anything.

Tenney Covey would let us ride along with him and we were fascinated at his skill manipulating the rather crude machine which consisted of a really big 4-cylinder motor with a big open flat-face fly wheel contacted at right angles to the drive shaft which powered the wheels.

Though I never saw it in operation, there was an inclined “railway” once used to get the rock down to the level of the lower crusher. The downhill load pulled the empty car back to the source level with no added power, only gravity!

(Page 4 begins here on the handwritten document.)

The foregoing three pages were written in July, and I obviously did not get them to Rocky Hill Historical Society for the meeting about the quarry, but I thought I'd do a little more on the subject and send it to you, hopefully, to be kept in the files for reference.

Mrs. Buck was interested in raising rabbits, and built a small frame building for that purpose west of their house, but down at the quarry level. I remember she had only two varieties, one white (I forget the name of the breed) and a brownish variety called “Flemish Giant”, and they were, indeed, big bunnies.

I frequently walked up to the top of the rock ledge, looking down into the quarry, to enjoy the wonderful view of the river and the meadows, and to pick the flowers that grew there. I particularly remember a patch of red columbines and another of tiger lilies. Also, the abundant bayberry shrubs (very aromatic) and saxifrage, one year. One year, I remember, there was a dead deer up there.

During WWII, an observation tower was set up on the ridge and my father, along with a lot of others, put in a lot of hours manning the post. As far as I know, they didn't see very many “enemy aircraft.”

One more topic about the quarry comes to mind. Some of the quarry rock was taken from the quarry on the railroad, and they used a “compressed air” powered locomotive to move the freight cars around. But a lot of rock was taken away by dump trucks, Mack trucks, which had (initially at least) solid rubber tires and an external chain drive. They were very slow climbing the long road out of the quarry up to Riverview Road and a more level situation.

Before the trucks came into use, horse carts were used. Typically, they had only one axle and used really big draft horses, the like of which we only see nowadays in beer advertising, the Budweiser Clydesdales, for example.

George Lowell Mason

9/17/2016

PS:

I always thought I was very fortunate growing up in Rocky Hill and tend to idealize it in my memory. Best Wishes

For the future for the town and its people. GML

Mooz, Aaron, Goffe House – 1965

Architecture

The Goffe House in the mid-1960s. – Aaron Mooz

Tape recording found among historical artifacts at
Academy Hall by Bob Herron
Spring 2016

Recording done January 25, 1965
Transcription by Bob Herron & Linda Nadeau
November, 2016

The sound quality on this tape wasn't very good but we've transcribed it anyway because it describes the Goffe House in 1965.

The Hartford Courant showcased the Goffe House, owned by Aaron Mooz, on House Tour in 1955. As town councilman, in 1971, he fought construction of the MDC sewage treatment plant in the Rocky Hill Meadows. In 1974 he was elected Town Committee Chairman as a Republican. In 1975, as Chairman of the Town Council, he supported changes to the Town Charter strengthening the powers of the Mayor and replacing the Chief of Police with a Public Safety Officer. Mr. Mooz died in 2006.

His lecture refers to diagrams he drew. It would be great to find these pictures buried in the bowels of the RHHS Library or some other place.

Aaron: (shuffling noises, unclear audio) we looked everywhere too. (More fiddling with recorder, garbled noises.) ... hinged cellar door, which was a half-door, cause I carry ashes out through that half-door for quite a while. But since we put a new addition on the place the door is no longer used. But I thought it would be of interest to save this metal strapping which I think is tremendous. And upon examination, I think you'll find it (loud bang ... testifies to their age (inaudible) well, they're irregular, they're very rough. I don't know if they burned them or drove them, or struck them or whatever it was. They're quite irregular. The strapping is very irregular it comes to a very thin ... method

here. And these are just bent around roughly and I think that later that if anyone later sees them I think they're even quite a fright.

But I'm running a little backwards here. I thought it might be well to start at the roof of our home and move down to the cellar. This may be unusual treatment but I'd like to try it that way.

Inaudible) here, a little sophistication about the house. A Gambrel roof, has a mansard ... can everyone see? I'll (inaudible) here for a minute ... chimney, which currently has four flues and was wide open at one time. But the reason I made this little sketch for you was to show you just a little sophistication. Naturally, the shape or profile of the roof is dictated by the depth. The depth of the house is approximately twenty eight feet. And, it's six feet from this line to the ceiling of the second floor, and approximately six feet to the top of the ... to the roof line of the house. This comes off here, but you'll notice, if you can, this doesn't come down straight. It comes down a little way, it comes up a bit, and then it kicks out a little bit. I don't know if you call this a Dutch kick or not. We have a board here that supports this straight line, just a little shallow board, about five inches in height. This comes straight down with a little upward movement, then down and then out. And this is a very graceful line that you would never notice unless you took a very close look. And it's unfortunate that many people who try to design houses can't use this. As a matter of fact, when But I just thought it would be of interest. This the architect who designed our rear extension, they forgot all about (inaudible) straight, also, we didn't even (inaudible) our new house. But I just thought it would be of interest, this little line. Thank you very much.

Just like any other old (inaudible) frame houses, (inaudible) and the earlier houses were quite low so you must stoop as you go through, otherwise the nails coming through the shingles will cut you wide open. Later houses of the Colonial Period were much higher. They made ballrooms and did all kinds of other things in this area but we simply wouldn't have that space in this house. This can either be, this drawing here, can either be a first floor or second floor plane. And for the moment, I'm coming down now, I'd rather describe it as the second floor area. The old (inaudible) house called these chambers. This would be a chamber; this would be a chamber. This would also be a chamber. This would be a hallway connecting these three. This also would be a chamber. However, before they became chambers ... all floorboards from the second floor run from left to right all the way across, meaning that, at one time, there were no dividers or divisions, room divisions as we know them today. It must have been, then, that as the family grew children were born, the owner of the house elected then to make divisions.

You'll notice this massive chimney still goes up through the second floor. At present, this, these two areas now, become closets; they're closets for this chamber and closets for this chamber.

But this is just a part of the (inaudible) now. You can see that this hallway is very sizeable and opens up to this whole area such as you don't have in the present house. For modern usage, this then becomes your bath, bedroom, bedroom, bedroom, and den. It then lends itself very well to modern living. The height of this area is only 6 feet, so yeah, you have to duck just a little if you're tall.

As you move downstairs, we have the same floorplan. (Next section interrupted by coughing) This one here was the living room. (and) This room here was the buttery. And this one was a kitchen. This was a chamber or morning room. I've indicated in this line here, this dotted line, because at present this was all open and in modern conditions you use it as a room that is 12 by approximately 27 long for a living area.

In (inaudible), you would enter the porch here; this was called a porch and in winter time this door and this door would be closed. If you would enter by this door here, which would then be access (or serve as access) to these two doors and serve as access to the rest of the area because at that time they had to do everything possible to conserve the heat. Under today's conditions, this becomes a closet and the traffic through the house then goes through the porch or front hall in a normal way.

Behind the (inaudible) on the first floor is interesting because it's a little unusual; 8 feet is the dimension. This probably would class the house as an earlier house because when it was built in 1655, they didn't quite realize (at least this is what I thought) they didn't quite realize how cold our planet would be here in New England. And we think that at a later date, during the Revolution, that the ceilings were dropped to conserve the heat. The wall areas are all cow hair and lime which formed the early plasters. Quite strangely, the downstairs area has almost all this plaster treatment with very little paneling. Whereas, the upstairs had a great deal of paneling.

I haven't shown all the windows in this sketch but there are 4 windows; all the windows are of smaller size – 5 by 7. And as the time passed, these windows got larger but they're certainly small in this house.

You can see by the size: the size is 36 feet by 28 foot 6 inches in depth. This gives you a size of 2075 square feet of living area on the first and second floor. By modern standards, this is a sizeable square foot area. As you know, we were in this house for a period of 4 or five years but you always feel that you don't have quite enough room so we put another 750 square feet off the back end. So you now have something on the order of 2750 square feet of livable area.

Today, this is used as a den. Five high cabinets are placed at the back of the room. This is forward.

This is our stairway up to the second floor. This floor has a kitchen and with its 12 feet is quite generous when you put cabinets on both left and right sides. This is, this room here, now becomes the dining room. Now you can image that this house provides rather delightful living under our present day standards with a fireplace in each room which gives a nice appearance no matter where you go.

Well, I've done the attic, the second floor, and the first floor and we'll go to the cellar now. This massive chimney is large, as most early American colonials were. In reading about this, they ran anywhere from 7 to 8 feet square on edge up to approximately 12. This one measures just under 10 feet on the side. I should correct one thing, one bit of information that may be a bit misleading. On the second floor, there are no fireplaces. As in many older houses, there are no fireplaces on the second floor. However, you can see that on the first floor, we have the kitchen, the parlor and the living room fireplaces. However, in the cellar or basement, there is a ham curing fireplace in this location that has since been ripped up to provide a flue for the furnace. So we would still have three

flues available for these three fireplaces. So the maximum number of flues have been put in to the existing chimney. Of course, the cellars in these old places are always dirty but it has since been covered by a very thin layer of concrete.

I think that the unbleached walls are of interest though; there is no evidence of water between the stones. It's absolutely dry. Now in our area, there are innumerable springs all over the place as witnessed by the pond on the north end of the property. But despite the dry structure of stones, we've never had any water in that cellar. So four years ago when we put the extension on (inaudible) and we have moisture in this new area and we did everything we knew how to prevent this. (Laughter)

Now, I have some slides, just a handful – don't worry, I just want to know before I go to the slides if anyone has any questions about the house, the structure, what we know about it before I get into the slides.

(Inaudible response)

We found stones at least 3 and a half feet in depth at the back side - this was a very rough wall. And we have no reason to believe that throughout the entire foundation you could have anywhere from 2 to 3 foot stones all the way around, with nothing but earth to hold them. Of course, toward the forward part of the house, you have brown "dress" stones. In these old houses they always used dress stones that you see first and then you would come into the rough stone but other than that I wouldn't know.

One other thing, your flooring throughout is really ... for the age of the house, the flooring is in magnificent condition and usually around 12 inches in width. Wainscoting in the now-kitchen area, runs 22, 23, 24 inches. Very, very wide pieces. At one time the kitchen floor was ripped up, when someone must have decided they needed a nice new oak floor. I was ripped but one of the previous owners, a David Kelly, realized that the oak floor was not in keeping with this house. They had an old barn toward the back of the property which was torn down. (And incidentally, they used 4 to 5 teams of horses to pull it down because these pegs are so strong you just can't pull these houses down.) They finally got it out but before they did, they saved a number of these very wide boards and they just re-floored the kitchen area and you just wouldn't know if it was original or not because they pretty much duplicated what was there. So let me just ...

Question: Is all this pine solid?

This (inaudible) must be done through the solid with massive runs of conduit or up in the attic area and you drop down into outlet boxes. The walls are solid.

Question: The outside and the inside? (Narrator continued talking over the questioner so loss of a few words here...)

Biographies of Ancient Wethersfield, page 357, (Volume II of Henry Stiles' history)

The Goffe family:

Philip Goffe was the first of the name in Wethersfield where he settled in 1649. He was not among the settlers of 1635 to 36, and probably did not come from Watertown, Massachusetts. He was Town Cryer in 1651. He built the first house within the present bounds of Rocky Hill, near Wethersfield Center, and added to the present village of Rocky Hill in 1655. (See Chapter 7, volume 1.) A brook flowing into the Connecticut River just north of Rocky Hill still retains his name, although none of the name had lived near it for a century and a half.

Appointed Town Cryer 1651, he was admitted freeman in Wethersfield in October, 1669 and died in 1674, leaving wife Rebecca and 5 children. No ... tombstones except a few of the present century remain in any Wethersfield cemetery. Children: Jacob, Rebecca, Philip, Moses, Aaron. Philip Goffe, a settler who may have been in Wethersfield as early as 1646, received his holdings 30 June, 1655: a house and 28 and $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of land, bought of Luke Hitchcock, bounded by Middletown Road west and John Tinker Paul weighing to what is now Rocky Hill meadow but formerly the Old Road, Rocky Hill, South. It was the tract which gave a name to Goffe's Brook. He also had a timber yard there, was town Cryer, drew in the 1670 allotment, 1667. Philip Goffe, Wethersfield.

Inventory: (This apparently was a debt) his inventory was "297 pounds taken 2nd June 1674."

This would indicate that the man was of considerable wealth. I'd like to make one observation here. This indicates that the original grant was 28 and $\frac{3}{4}$ acres. That grant held true until shortly before our purchase which included 6 segments on this side of the railroad track plus something on the order of 22 on the opposite side of the track. Now that was sold by Mrs. Milan Cook⁸⁴ a year or so before we came to the town of Rocky Hill 10 years ago. So it's interesting that the original grant goes back to 1655. We think this is of note.

(some garbled commentary about the chimneys again with laughing references to Christmas and "Dasher")

⁸⁴ Milan Cooke died in 1954. His wife's name was Ora

Parks : A Short History of Rocky Hill's -

A SHORT HISTORY OF ROCKY HILL'S PARKS

The Park Commission

Creation of a Rocky Hill Park Commission was suggested by the Rocky Hill Garden Club in a resolution presented at a Town Meeting in 1950. Later that year the Board of Selectmen appointed Sigmund Adler, Russell Anderson and Roscoe Gardner, Jr., as the Town's first Park Commissioners. Their duties were outlined as follows: To beautify the Town parks, greens and other Town properties.

The Commission found it had two tracts in its land portfolio. The early Wethersfield Colonists, in December, 1672, while the Town was little more than a wilderness, reserved five acres of land at the riverside for a Public Landing, and provided that it might be used for a Shipyard. Starting at the waterfront was a Rope Walk, 600 feet in length which went up the hill to Riverview Road, our present "Shipyard Park". The other tract is an extensive wooded area of 24 acres south of the Rocky Hill Cemetery. It is a bequest from the Bulkeley family of Rocky Hill, and is already named Bulkeley Park in the donor's honor. Memorial Park at Main Street and Dividend Road was landscaped with dogwood trees and appropriate shrubs. Mr. Charles Yeager raised and lowered the Memorial flag each day for a number of years. The Park Commission developed a program of tree planting on streets where there were few or no trees, and urged the planting of dogwood trees in the front yards of Rocky Hill homes. It was most gratifying to see the response to this request.

The Rocky Hill Garden Club placed a bronze marker at the foot of the "Constitution Oak" at the Cemetery Green. There are several organizations to which the Town is indebted: Gardner's Nurseries, Hartford Electric Light Company, Southern New England Telephone Company and the four Garden Clubs.

In 1957 Hoye Field was named in memory of James J. Hoye, a player in the Little League. The teachers established the Hoye Scholarship Fund which was to be used for a student from the first graduating class of the Griswold Junior High School. The location of Hoye Field was changed to Moser School.

By 1960 Ferry Park became a reality with the area on a paying basis. With the recent acquisition of Land from the State Veterans Home & Hospital, it is hoped in the near future to increase the park facilities for the townspeople.

The American Legion designed and contributed two Memorial plaques at Cemetery Green, one for World War II and the other for the Korean conflict. The Council of Rocky Hill Garden Clubs is commended for its continued good work; promoting the "Litterbug Drive", and for the flower gardens planted and maintained at the Memorial Green, Ferry

Park and several other key areas.

The 1966 season started with a new Recreation Commission consisting of Harry Fisher, Paul Lombardo and Mrs. Margaret Adams. The Commission elected the Town's first part-time Recreation Director, John McVicar. All organized recreation and sports programs were his responsibility. He was kind enough to store all the equipment in his basement.

In 1967, Parks & Recreation, previously separate activities, were combined. With the approval of the Council, the Town Manager appointed a Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. The members were James Griswold, Mrs. Lucille Fox, Mrs. Margaret Adams, Charles Gutaukas, Robert Hunter and John Barrett.

In 1974 Wayne Alfieri was appointed Rocky Hill's first full-time Director of Parks & Recreation. "Alexander Brilliant, Sr. Park" north of the Town Building was dedicated. The following year Sunnycrest Baseball Diamond, Junior High Girls' Softball field, Sunnycrest Football field and the Stevens School Girls' Softball field were all developed and maintained by the personnel of Parks & Recreation.

In 1977 Miss Christy Hass was appointed Director of Parks & Recreation. Water was installed at Hoyer Field and the beautification of Ferry Park was begun. In August, 1979 the Annual Senior Citizens' Picnic was held at Alexander Brilliant Park, and shuffleboard was very much enjoyed. Among those cited as "Senior Citizen of the Year" are Lillian Yerrington, Lillian Sweezy, Harold Murphy, Alice Faillace, Hildred Dorman, Gertrude Struthers, Bella Nierendorf, Grace Amodeo and Sally Ferguson. A series of nature, hiking, skiing and physical fitness trails are planned for Dividend Park, also ice skating.

In 1981 John and Ellen McVicar, the entire Recreation Department for 13 years, were honored by the Connecticut State Recreation & Parks Association and presented with a plaque. In the southwest corner of Sunnycrest Park near Flanagan Field, the Rocky Hill Firefighters Association, with valuable assistance from Town employees, constructed a large covered pavilion made from discarded telephone poles and lumber.

In 1982 the Rocky Hill Parks & Recreation Department was awarded first place nationwide for towns under 20,000 population for outstanding "Life Be in it tm" programming, by the National Recreation & Park Association. The "Life Be in it tm" campaign is a national effort to educate the public on the benefits of creative use of leisure. The program offered by the Department grew to 35 Programs per Season.

In 1983, Barbara Zakrzewski, Recreation Supervisor, was awarded the Connecticut Recreation & Park Association Award for outstanding "Life Be in it tm" programming. Barbara was hired under the CETA program in 1979 and became full-time in 1981.

Dividend Open Space, located off of Old Forge Road, is a park that holds great potential. The ponds and a waterfall help to make it one of the most beautiful areas in town. There is fishing and canoeing in the warm weather and ice skating in winter.

Elm Ridge Park

In March 1962 the Board of Selectmen authorized a "Name the Park" contest for the newly acquired 27 acres on Elm Street. Judges were representatives of the local civic organizations, and after considering many names, the judges, chose "Elm Ridge Park", the name submitted by Edward Zavaski. The name was announced on April 28th, the opening of the local "Litterbug Drive". The land was acquired the previous year from the State Veterans Home & Hospital. The road required in the purchase agreement was cut and 1000 yards of gravel brought in as a base. Over 1000' of drainage tile was purchased and was installed by the Public Works Department.

The Junior Women's Club donated pre-school playground equipment for Candy Cane City. The Town Recreation Department added several pieces of equipment for school-age children. The American Enca Corporation donated a large whirl, and the Junior Women's Club (husbands) constructed a weather shelter. 1964 saw the completion of the fence along Elm Street, and the building of a road through the park. The Rocky Hill Lions Club planted a large picnic grove and constructed fireplaces. The area was dedicated to the deceased members of the Lions Club at Memorial Day Services on May 30, 1965. The Lions Club also dedicated a 60' aluminum flagpole and flag on that day.

By 1966 5 tennis courts were completed and plans for installation of bocce courts and drinking fountains were well underway. The following year the Little League diamond was completed and named in memory of Ronald DiMauro. On July 1st, 1967 the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board began an eight-week program of summer playground activities on a half day basis at Elm Ridge Park and Moser School. Attendance of 2,460 was realized. A Quonset hut for equipment and storage was erected, and in June, 1968 the swimming pool was dedicated.

A Soft ball diamond and 5 lighted tennis courts are highly successful, also the basketball court. Elm Ridge Park completed its 6th season with 2, 375 admissions: 170 youngsters received instruction and 120 completed the course. Average daily attendance, 101 main pool, 36 wading pool. The swim team participated in 5 meets which involved 60 youngsters.

In June 1978, Townspeople gathered at the Park to participate in a celebration of Flag Day. The 20 piece Charter Oak Band managed by Benny Macri and conducted by Captain Mario de Caprio performed. Presentation of the Regimental Colors was made by the Fife and Drum Corp Color Guard.

In 1981 Amy Beardsley was hired as the first Aquatics Director operating Elm Ridge Pool and the High school pool. This unique approach of Parks & Recreation personnel handling all aspects of pool operation and programming within a Board of Education facility has served as a model for other Connecticut communities. This highly successful joining of forces between Town and Board of Education has exposed the residents to full use of a very expensive facility.

In 1981 the Friends of the Park were organized by Gail Rapoza to fundraise for playground equipment for Elm Ridge Park. In 1984 the first fruit of their labor, a \$6,300.00 piece of redwood playground apparatus was installed.

Also, in 1981 the Town was awarded a \$160,000 grant to develop Elm Ridge skating pond and Little League field, by the State in the Land & Water Conservation Fund Program.

On July 29, 1982, Mrs. Inez Wormcke, for many years a member of the Town Planning & Zoning Board, including stints as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, was honored at the Park when a grove of maple trees in the playground was dedicated to her. The fund for the trees was raised by the Republican Town Committee at a testimonial dinner the previous year. Mrs. Wormcke was presented with a plaque during the ceremonies, and a concert was performed by the Greater Hartford Musicians Association.

The 1884 Summer Sports Classic opened with Directors Karl Shea and Frank Wilkosz offering instruction in basketball, tennis, baseball and badminton. Elm Ridge Park continues to be a popular place, and Christy Hass and her staff are to be commended for the programs and activities they present for all ages.

Ferry Park

Some years ago First Selectman William F. Quinn and Sigmund Adler, Chairman of the Rocky Hill Park Commission, were informally discussing local affairs. The conversation veered around to the Town's future parks. "Hartford has a Riverside Park", Quinn suggested reflectively, "Why not Rocky Hill?" Thus was born the idea of Rocky Hill's first sizable public park scheduled for 1958. Hale's Landing marks the spot where each navigation season the historic state-owned Rocky Hill–Glastonbury Ferry makes interminable trips daily to South Glastonbury and return." So, wrote Herbert J. Stoeckel in the Hartford Courant Magazine Oct. 10, 1954.

The Connecticut Foundry provided fill for the Park, and in 1957 a boat landing was placed at the river's edge. By 1960 it was a reality with the area on a paying basis. It became a busy boat launching spot, and two men were employed to collect fees and to enforce the rules as drawn up and posted in the Park. Picnic benches and tables donated by the Lions Club were installed, and a privet hedge planted along the western boundary line. When a new dock was installed the area became increasingly popular both with

local and out-of-town boating enthusiasts, and by picnickers and river watchers. The Council of Rocky Hill Garden Clubs planted and maintained floral and evergreen beds.

On June 4, 1974, ceremonies were held in Ferry Park at the dedication of a sizable blue plaque which proclaims the Rocky Hill— Glastonbury Ferry as a State Historic Landmark. The Rocky Hill Garden Club continues to plant and maintain the flower bed at the base of the plaque.

In 1978 the Park was filled, graded and seeded. Picnic tables and benches and two "gazing benches" donated by the Rocky Hill Garden Club were installed by the Parks & Recreation Department. The boat launch and parking lot were resurfaced in 1982, and a new dock facility installed.

The "Pilot House" is a popular spot in the summer, and the Cumberland plies back and forth across the Connecticut from April to December, except on Monday and Tuesday.

Shipyard Park

During the period from 1700–1820 the dream of Thomas Williams to "build the greatest ship landing and ship building center upon the river" materialized. Hundreds of boats were built in the shipyards at Rocky Hill, some of which saw service in the American Revolution, and others in triangular trade between the Colonies, West Indies and Africa. Many a ship left Rocky Hill loaded with onions, cattle, swine, grain, shingles and manufactured articles to return months later with sugar, rum and molasses. Forty per cent of the male inhabitants were engaged in seafaring, and navigation and higher mathematics were taught in Academy Hall, the present headquarters of the Rocky Hill Historical Society.

The riverfront was the center of activity with its shipyards, stores, taverns, and mills. One house known as "The Sail Loft" still stands opposite the Ferry landing. In this house of odd lines, sails were fashioned for the ships built nearby. The house is two stories in front rising to three stories in the rear, so that sails could be hung up as they were worked upon. The Rope Walk, a long covered building, 600 feet in length went up the hill to a spot at the rear of 39 Riverview Road. Here hemp rope was woven and the worn rope dried and mended upon the return of a ship months later.

In 1949, Mrs. Myrtle Stevens, Chairman of the Town's Recreation Committee, suggested that the Rocky Hill Garden Club take on the project of creating a park on Riverview hillside. After consulting with Town officials, and taking care of various problems, the members agreed to do so. In 1952 Mrs. Katharine Stevenson was engaged by the Club as landscape architect. On July 5th a flagpole and flag were donated by Mr. & Mrs. Hall, and Mrs. Inez Wormcke traced the history of the area as written by Mr. Jared Standish of Wethersfield. Mr. Hall took good care of the flag for many years.

The Civic Improvement Committee of the Garden Club located a boulder on the farm of Leland Gilbert and he moved it to its present location. The boulder is flanked with two blue-gray benches and a pebble path extends to the road. Evergreens and laurel were planted and an historic bronze marker placed on the boulder. In 1962, the Garden Club had Mr. Gilbert remove rocks and the stumps of old trees from the hillside extending from the Memorial area down to the rail— road tracks. Later the area was graded and seeded, and a hedge planted to prevent children playing on the hillside from going onto the tracks.

The beautiful view of the Connecticut River is now obscured by the growth of the trees on the lower part of the slope.

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NOTE

MY thanks to Aurora Manso for her assistance.

Reduker, Evelyn Hodges

This interview seems disjointed; many of the statements don't seem related. I wonder if there were problems on the tape that weren't annotated in the transcript? - RCH

EVELYN HODGES REDUKER - taken on March 10, 1993 - by Anita Watson,

Interview Tom & Doris Schreier

As a little girl she lived on Brook Street in Rocky Hill. Tell us about going to school here.

You know the little Police station down near West Street. I went there before I came up here.

What did you call the school when you went there?

I don't know. The other one was the South School. I was so small then, I don't remember.

Were you all in one class, or did you have different classes?

We all sat in one room with one teacher. In the winter we used coal and the teacher had to bring the coal. I burnt my finger all the way up to my wrist, and I didn't tell my mother or she wouldn't let me out sliding that night, so I suffered.

Did it infect or anything?

That was the first day. That was the real danger, and after that I don't remember. I guess my finger got better.

Where did you live?

On Brook Street. Do you know where the Patterson's house is? They tore that house down now, and put new ones up. I felt sorry because my father built that house.

Was that the one that burned?

No.

Where was your father from?

From Glastonbury.

Did he farm here?

We lived in New Britain and he was a motorman on a car in Hartford.

You mean trolleys? Did he haul trap rock for building?

I remember Mr. Henry was on the trolley and hauled things, not necessarily trap rock.

When I went to school I had to walk all the way up. After a while we got tickets, and had to pay \$6.00 a book. We had to walk from Brook Street all the way up here. (Center School).

How old were you then?

I was 6 years old, because I had moved from Cromwell up here. They had closed the school, and had to come up here while they were waiting for that one to be finished. :

You mean the new one?

Center School.

I have lived in Rocky Hill practically all my life.

Can you tell us about your recesses, like kids have today? How about your lunch?

They had hot cocoa. We had to pay 2 or 3 pennies.

But you brought the rest? Did you bring it in a basket, or a brown bag?

Brown bag, that hasn't changed. Not like little Red Riding Hood. And you know about the games that we play at recess, were probably different from today.

Up in Hartford, because my husband was brought up in Hartford.

Did you remember my cousin, when I told you about the old blacksmith? Well, she was in West Cromwell. He married my cousin, in The Nook. I should tell Tom, because he might know. Your family knew Tom's father because he was a blacksmith in Cromwell. My Grandfather did, but I don't think my father did. I used to hear my Mother talk.

You just wandered from one town to the next. Tom didn't come far, you didn't come too far.

That was interesting. Did she have you sign the school book? We would like to find the names of students who came here. Did you know about the toilet we used to go to? Do you have a picture?

It was one building and had all little seats for the girls all along, of course; and the boys had their own. We were all sitting there in line visiting the outhouse. Oh my goodness. We ought to have a picture of the outhouse. People didn't take pictures of outhouses, they didn't know that they were picture-takeable. So it wasn't just a one or two holer, but a ten holer. So we were all sitting there in line.

Were you cold?

No. It didn't bother you because you were used to that.

So when did you graduate from Middletown High?

1935 No. Tom says he had so many brothers and sisters, he can't remember. See, he is the youngest. Well with 13 kids. My Mother had 8 and we thought that was big.

When I met him, his father was no longer doing the blacksmith work. The good old days! I was a sick kid all the time. I would love to be going to school now. I wish it were them

days.

So you liked school then, if I could get this right. Did you have a favorite subject?

No. If I went to school now, I think I would like Science. Oh, that would be the thing to do.

Was Mr. Eukert there when you were there?

At Middletown High he was the Science teacher.

Did you ever go to the High School? Do you have anything that would interest you?

Of course there are evening classes. Not sure Science is offered. These are for Seniors. Another thing, I learned cartooning a lot.

Oh really. Steve was an artist. He had that painting houses and different things like that. You both liked that.

But I gave it up after he died. You had to, you had to give all your time to him.

I worked for Pratt & Whitney for 25 years. I would call him up. They were good to me over there. I had a certain phoner over there where I would call him up. I would hang up and he would call me back. So if I didn't hear from him, I would have to tell the boss if something was wrong. He would let me come home. I would find him on the floor where he fell. I would pick up and put him in a chair, and I would go back to work all that week. I had quite a time. I had a lot to worry about.

I like to enjoy myself a little now.

Absolutely. You have gone through a lot then!

I have been alone for 23 years. I like to get out.

Do you like to go to the library if they have anything going on?

Oh, books are wonderful.

The Start of My Life D. H. Robbins 10/94

The main recollection I have of my early childhood was that I was very sickly, I had all the childhood contagious diseases, sometimes more than once and was also anemic. I was subject to unpredictable puking up episodes at least once a day which was later diagnosed as the result of parasite infection (worms), My health did not improve until age eight or nine,

We lived in a new house which contained very few furnishings, my constant companion was radios of which I had many. As I was often sick I listened to lots of radio. My imagination went wild listening to The Shadow, Jack Armstrong, I Love a Mystery, Stella Dallas and many others, I always had a radio in my room, and another in the basement. I received a few shocks trying to improve reception by making antenna connections and alterations.

Our family farm was down the street about a tenth of a mile however there was only three houses between it and us. At night, except for summer, I would watch for the lights to go out in the barns, knowing my father⁸⁵ would be home soon for supper although I often had little or no appetite. Our family was so poor when I was one or two years old they had to rent this house to Mr. & Mrs. Felix Montana and we had to move in with Grandma Harriet & Grandpa Frank Robbins down at the farmhouse. The builder of my father's house-a Mr. Mackie of Glastonbury took his own life after going bankrupt during the '29 stock crash, my father withdrew all his savings for down payment on the house just days before the run on banks started. He would have lost it all,

I attended the Rocky Hill grammar school which is now known as the Academy It housed four grades. The first floor housed the first grade on the south side and the second on the north. I will never forget how cold the rooms were and the lavatories which were attached to the back (west) side were always flooded, I had no more than a few days in first grade when one afternoon I started walking home on a howling windy day when Mrs. Yerrington came by with her car and picked me up about where the Library is now. Trees and wires and telephone poles started leaning some of which fell into the road. Mrs. Y undaunted started detouring all around these by driving on lawns and walks until she arrived at our house, I ran inside and only then did I realize how hard the wind was blowing. This, the '38 hurricane did much damage to Rocky Hill and Connecticut especially at the shore, Our cottage on Chalker Beach⁸⁶ where we had stayed for a week just a few weeks before was completely gone. It was an eerie feeling. We didn't have power for weeks to milk cows, cool milk or pump water, Down trees were blocking the

⁸⁵ Hamlin Robbins – See Hamlin Morton Oral History in this document. There is a nice continuity between that document and this one.

⁸⁶ In Old Saybrook.

driveway and in the front yard. The cleanup took months as I continued to walk to school thru debris and downed Wires, Disasters like this and the '36 flood a few years earlier made a lasting impression, for years I dreamed of floods, thunderstorms and hurricanes.

I always looked forward to spring, and especially summers and still do as this was the time of the year when I could get out and play and visit the farm. In 39 we purchased a brand spanking new Ford–Ferguson tractor. All this time we had a steel wheeled Fordson tractor which I kept a respectful distance from because it made such a God awful noise and it used to blow water all over the place when it started because it had an unprotected vertical exhaust. This new tractor was a dream and I was taken with it immediately. I began to ride on it with my father or grandfather but that didn't seem to be enough. When spring plowing began on the home lots I took over the driver's seat and by June 1 was plowing, harrowing or doing other field duties sometimes six to ten hours a day every day⁸⁷. I got so good at it they started to pay me a small allowance per day. At that point I was hooked, I was going to be a farmer when I grew up. I worked thru haying, corn harvesting, potato harvesting every weekend and more. The four horses took a much deserved rest and soon two of them were sold,

Next door to the farm was the home of my two great aunts Anne the music teacher and May⁸⁸ the retired school teacher. Both were intellectuals and knew everything about the literary world. Aunt Anne had all the aspiring young musicians in town as piano students including my unknown future wife. She knew who were quick to learn and who was slow; I was one of the slow ones. I started lessons that were free while in the second grade but in the middle of Thompson book Two or Three in the fifth or sixth grade I quit. The Aunts tried to spoil me with apple-rolly-poly, cookies and vacations every year at Young's cottage at West Beach, I had lots of beach time there in exchange for emptying the garbage, setting up the beach chairs etc. At night we would play Monopoly or cards. They did lots of reading. There was a pier at West Beach at that time later destroyed by a hurricane.

During my fourth school year the town made a large addition to the old Center school building so that in the following school year all students were transferred from the old Academy building. We all thought this new building was the greatest. It had a science room, home economics room, gym, showers hallways, and lockers all strange to us. We would not be using most of these facilities until we finished fifth and sixth grades in the old part of the building. Both our fifth and sixth grade teachers made an impression on many of us. Mrs. Aveyard in fifth hit kids with a vengeance with a ruler usually. One day

⁸⁷ Note that Doug was born July 16, 1932. He was 6 or 7 years old at this time.

⁸⁸ May Robbins has an oral history in this document, Mary Robbins

she was beating on Robert Yeager when he quickly moved his arm and she cracked her hand on his desk so hard we could all hear it. While she nursed her hand we all cracked up. If you were real bad you were dragged up to Mrs. Stevens room the sixth grade teacher and school principal. She took you out to her office where she had a rubber hose. This was the school's last deterrent before they sent you home, Most of us never got the hose but a few did. The school had few outward detected discipline problems. The farm continued to interest me mostly during the summer months. I spent many days in the Rocky Hill Meadows as we cut hay and grew corn down there. We either owned or rented over 100 acres there in many scattered plots ranging from two to sixteen acres. We owned or rented another fifty acres at home and owned twenty-five on the west side of the Silas Deane Hwy, and twenty-five more between Orchard St. and Bailey Rd. These last two properties were mainly used as pasture for dry cows or young stock, In the meadows I was witness to many events such as run-away horses, spilled hay loads, fires, stuck vehicles including tractors, etc. One time Dave Cook and I were mixing it up in the Ford truck seat while the truck was parked. The passenger side door was open and I fell out, hit the running board and fell into a big bed of poison ivy where we fought some more. A few days later I had such a case of poison ivy my mother called Dr. Moser who prescribed potassium permanganate, My mother was to dissolve this in a liquid but she didn't do a very good job and the applied crystals ate thru the skin in my groin, I still have the scars, I was so mad at Doc Moser when he I were alone in my room I kicked him over backwards in the chair he was using. I guess he didn't get hurt much but I took him by surprise. I listened to stories from my father and grandfather about farm accidents on other farms and our own. On our own farm they used a simple hit & miss stationary engine before the Fordson to power the ensilage cutter. It was on a belt and had a huge flywheel. They started it by pulling on the belt and turning the flywheel. One day after installing sharpened knives on the rotating cutter a hired hand told everyone it was ready to use. They started the hit & miss and it picked up speed and everything was fine until a huge stilson wrench left on the feed table went thru the cutter shattering the case, hurling steel fragments everywhere including up the pipe into the silo. That was the end of that Blizzard cutter. The Fordson was very unpredictable also as the clutch did not work when it was cold, I never saw my grandfather attempt to drive it. My father would line up the gearshift with the gear position he wanted to use. He then would rock the shift with his hand or more likely his foot which would rock the wheels a little until he'd give it one last punch putting it in gear all the way. In some gears it would dig a couple of little holes with those high steel cleats on steel wheels before it would take off. It was an adventure while backing up to an implement or wagon. It was usually easier to move the attachment than the tractor. I could understand why they preferred to use it on a belt most of the time. When plowing it had a nasty habit of raising its front end

almost vertical before hopefully stalling if it hit an immovable object. The reason this could happen was due to a drive train which screwed the front end into the air rather than into the ground as the later Ford–Fergusons did.

The farm had lots of help when I was a kid. We had a full time resident helper, Ed Bates who lived in the hired help house now 319 Old Main St. He worked for us for twelve years or so but after that we went through help in rapid succession, Elliot Banfield who later moved to Bailey Rd, stayed with us for a few years. We had a farm hand from Kansas, Virgil Thompson who moved on to A. C. Petersons. Dan Burpee a Navy sailor who couldn't swim and another Dan who was a helpless alcoholic. When I was young we had lots of seasonal help but as the farm developed from labor intensive truck crops to less intensive dairy production we finally were down to two people for most of the year. This was intensified by WW-II. During the truck farming days we had a major retail farm stand on the Silas Deane about where McDonald's is now. We paid Harry Ahrens to run this for us until we finally reached an agreement where he took it over completely but would buy all our available produce. I think this business was a gold mine. Harry retired to Florida, This retail stand and another where Waterchase Drive is also sold fireworks in summer before the Fourth until they were banned.

My father organized the first 4-H Club in Rocky Hill when I was about seven. This was soon eclipsed by another club run by Bill Burpee who was more of a politician than a farmer. My father though he did it more for notoriety than anything else. I became interested at nine and started a poultry flock in the old pump house my grandfather dragged up from the farm to our backyard. As WWII had just started black-market eggs and meat was very much in demand. As a result I made a good profit from door-to-door sales and bought more stamps and War Bonds than anyone at school, I also got the farm to donate over a ton of scrap metal. The farm had a deep well of 100+ feet which is under the house lot north of 399/401 Old Main. This pump was on a concrete slab over a ten-by-ten underground room which had a six inch diameter casing in the center. The pump was driven by a very large electric motor connected by a flat belt. This belt slipped more than once which would burn up the belt, or the motor and at least once the roof of the pump house. This supplied water to our house, the barns, the farmhouse, the hired help's house and, at one time, two or three others before city water was available. The cellar of the farm house had a 1000 gallon tank. The donated scrap mentioned above included the pump, tank, a manure spreader, and other junk.

My uncle Ted Peterson lived next door after building a new house. He and Aunt Ruth Robbins Peterson had a son Don and daughter Ellen. Ted worked at Remington Rand in Middletown in the Spring Dept. Ted soon discovered a way to make springs cheaper and automatically at home. Remington moved to Elmira NY and so did the Petersons. Ted

soon rented a garage and then a shop to develop his patents and spring production. After a few years Ted quit Remington and supplied them and many other customers until he had 250+ workers. His factory was devastated by the Chemung River flood and rebuilt in Horseheads NY, Ted always owned a boat his whole married life. His first boat in Rocky Hill was a 23–24 ft. Maine fisherman that he totally disassembled and rebuilt. He made a steam fitting chamber to steam and bend wood planks at the farm. He converted a Ford Model 'A' engine to water cooling with a reduction gear and reverse. I went on some of his shakedown cruises on LI sound. Sometimes I thought we weren't coming back. After a few years, Frank bought Ted a new Lathrop Marine engine for the boat and helped him install it. Soon after WWII broke out and Ted moved so; Frank and my father were left with the boat. It was in a cradle all during the war. After the war we used it until about 1949. Ted was soon back in CT for all his summer vacations at Cedar Island Clinton with a new boat and a series of boats thereafter until the end of 1993 season, Ted died 1/94. In '55 during the big hurricane Ted and I ferried 30-35 people off Cedar Island which was completely covered with water. The State Police took credit for it, however. The Griswolds, who were there, wrote a story for local papers that gave credit to us, especially Ted, as it was his Penn Yan boat that was used. After my vacation was ruined I came home to face a flood in the meadows affecting my own farm. Ted's boats were spectacular. The last one was about 65ft, was fully air conditioned with a dish washer, freezer, every electronic navigation device. It was powered by two diesels. He could only go out at high tide. It must have cost ½ million.

During WWII in the fall of 43 my father came down with appendicitis. Just before a severe hurricane he went in the hospital so my mother and I stood Watch during the night. As I recall we lost a 100ft.* willow tree which took some other trees with it. My father was in serious condition only I didn't appreciate how serious. His appendix had burst and poison fluids traveled his abdomen, Hospitals did not have the equipment they have today to drain or pump these fluids from him. They were constantly experimenting with different methods. He was in the hospital for more than two months and when he came home he couldn't work for weeks. I'm not sure but he may have been in the hospital from early Oct. to Feb. Meanwhile my grandfather was having a bad time just trying to do the daily farm chores. He had no time for field work or repairs etc. and he was not young. Some days I would stay home from school to help but even that was not enough. He finally arranged for Leland Gilbert to help with some haying and morning milking. The Rocky Hill Men's Club helped us harvest seven acres of potatoes all in one day with Sunny Crest's potato digger, I tried to work as much as I could after school but I was having a hard time staying awake in school. The effect of the hurricane made it difficult for my grandfather also, Somehow we survived until my father partially recovered. His ordeal had caused an opening in his abdomen thru which a section of his

intestine protruded which would not heal. Almost like a hernia, it prevented him from lifting and other tasks. He continued this way until the following fall when he went back to the hospital for removal of a section of his intestine. He also developed peritonitis and had both legs operated on to tie his arteries so that floating blood-clots would not pass thru his heart, lungs and brain. He was at one time given only a day or two to live according to his doctors.

During this long summer of '44 my grandfather knew he would not be able to survive the summer without more help. He sold off some of the poorer producing cows and joined up with Sunny Crest on all field operations. My father that year mowed over 300 acres of hay as that was one of the few things he could do. The rest of us raked, baled, and hauled many tons of hay to our barns and to Sunny Crests new barn location on Orchard St. This worked out well for them because they had lost their barns to a fire that also claimed 35 lost cows. Although it was not an easy summer and many hours worked from 5:30 to 8:30 at night I was having many new experiences. I got to use all of Griswold's tractors which included two row-crop IH's (H&M) and two Olivers, a compact orchard tractor with 6 gears forward and a high steel wheeled wide front end monster. Both Olivers had six-cylinder engines and nothing would slow them down. I could haul a load of 150 bales up any of the hills from the Meadow in 6th gear. I also spent many hours pulling Griswolds Case baler with our tractors or theirs. Our picture baling hay was the cover for a Connecticut farm magazine.

Our farm had petitioned the War rationing department for new labor saving equipment including another new tractor, one man baler and corn harvesting machinery. Even after obtaining priority to purchase getting delivery was another matter. We were on many dealer lists but deliveries to anyone were few. Finally, after the war, we obtained a New Holland automatic baler and picked up a used John Deere field harvester with corn and windrow heads.

My friends as a kid were Paul Tyler, Dave Cook and Dino Zariphes. We were the North End gang in school. Later in adolescence I met Burge Dayton and Robert Forsburg but they were both older than me. My friendship with Dayton ended after he almost choked me to death. Robert F. saved me by attacking Dayton who had an uncontrollable temper.

My last few school years in Rocky Hill were not bad, I did reasonably well despite my farm chores. My first year in Wethersfield was a near disaster as I failed the first and only subject in my lifetime, 1st Latin. My father and I had to have a meeting with the Principal during the summer to get me back on track. I had to pick up an extra course to make up the failed subject and started French. The next year with a heavier load I did better than the other two years. I didn't set any records but I did get accepted at Uconn without much trouble.

MY days at UConn had to be among my best, I was free at last from worry about the farm, my parents, my sister etc. It was like starting all over. The campus was beautiful where I lived in Grange Hall a new, never before used, dormitory. I felt that I could not enroll in enough courses, read enough books, write enough, and I had no more than started studies in the fall of '50 when the Korean war broke out and I knew I would have to dig in if I intended to finish college. At the end of the first or second semester I found myself in the upper two-fifths of my class which was about a 'B' avg. At the end of my second year I was inducted into Alpha Beta national honorary agricultural society. In A-Z I was elected historian of this relatively new chapter at U-C.

I made many lifelong friends at UConn including Dave Mason son of the Manager of Osborn Prison Farm, Henry Grabber and Jon Randall both from farm families in Lebanon. Hugh Mackenzie kept Jonathan the Siberian mascot in his room some of the time and ran for "Mayor of Storrs" with our support. My room-mates after the first year with Len Woike, who flunked out, were Al Bishop of Guilford's Bishop Orchards, Lea Hutchinson who I haven't heard from or about since graduation, and Herman Weingart a failed dairy farmer who now works for the State. Other friends were Larry Soma who became a Vet, Walt Harper who worked for the Ag Dept after graduation. When I succeeded to obtain a high class standing the University allowed a course load up to 25 credits so I started loading up in my junior year, I needed 124 credits to graduate and I ended up with over 150. In my last two years my social/business life became more active. I was elected or appointed to the Agricultural Council for which I started a Ag Newsletter which I had published once per semester, I was also active in the Univ. Dairy Club and Block & Bridal. In my last year I was President of the Dairy Club with about 30 members. In this position I presided as Master of Ceremonies at the Annual Dairy Club Breakfast held in the spring to honor two dignitaries one from Dairy Manuf. who was Don Hammerburg and one from Dairy Production. I joined the U of C Dairy Products Judging Team. In the first Northeastern competition I came in first in milk and 2nd in ice cream out of all the contestants from 5 Universities, U of C as a team came in first, we also came in first in the International Contest.

During my last two years I had a girlfriend in Wethersfield—Joan Frankum. We went steady for about two years but by the end of my senior year it was all over. I also dated Alice Butler who from Wethersfield also was attending Willimantic Teachers College. Joan attended Hartford College for Women, I had a not serious fling with Joan Buckbee of Cromwell while she was on Cedar Island when I was 13 or 14.

The Uconn Dairy Manuf. Dept. offered me consideration as Asst. Manager of the Dairy Plant upon graduation but I told them I had a commitment to my family.

Coming home to my family and the farm was a real hard thing for me to do after seeing

how the rest of the World Works and lives, I made a resolution to myself that the farm would have to change if I were to stay. I made no attempts at other employment. My father, grandfather and I made a written covenant for partnership with my grandfather's share (one-half) of all livestock and machinery to be transferred to me on his death or retirement. I soon made plans to remodel the barns as a compromise to purchasing land on the hill to utilize the meadows for livestock, I really wanted a loose housing arrangement as a study of this was a project in college.

While in school a new Unidilla silo had been built and a barn cleaner installed in the north barn. The east-west barn was still very inefficient and needed rearrangement to accommodate a barn cleaner and more efficient milk handling. We borrowed a cement mixer and started changes during the summer of '54, We purchased two used trucks and eventually converted the '34 Ford to a flatbed trailer. I later converted the Ford dump to a dump trailer with a power-takeoff drive to the transmission for four-wheel drive. We purchased a silo unloader which saved much time and labor and trips up into the silos. We sold the J-D field harvester and bought a new Papec with a 30HP LeRoi engine. We purchased a bale-loader and a bale conveyor that reached far back into the haylofts. We discontinued the upper exterior milk storage area attached to the garage and built an all new milk room with the old aerator and a new larger can tank cooler that would hold 20–40gal, cans. The old milk storage area was used for tools. We slowly built up the herd with offspring from the best cows and A1 bulls. We rented more land in the meadows, joined DHIA⁸⁹ kept better records, named all livestock and diagramed their markings. We rotated crops on land that had not been plowed in years with land constantly plowed. We seeded new alfalfa, grew Sudan grass and new varieties of corn.

We had some seasonal help from Ron Wenzel, Brad Warner and Doug Herman, Other helpers were Tom Sullivan Ed Clapp, Stewart Sprague, Kenney Smith and some of the Tylers,

Much energy was expended the first year mixing cement, pipefitting, building forms, installing new stanchions, installing another barn cleaner, silo unloader etc. I acquired the prime responsibility of servicing, trouble shooting and repairing all equipment. My father took care of most of the record keeping and the finances.

By mid '55 I decided to get involved with affairs outside the farm. I joined the Grange which was a mistake because I couldn't stand all the ritual which is the same reason I never joined the Masons. I quit going to Grange meetings and joined Farm Bureau which held up ideals I agreed with. I helped organize a local Young Peoples FB which had an ambitious agenda. I soon was elected to the Hartford County FB Board of Directors, Their main project was to lobby the Legislature to secure assessments on land used for

⁸⁹ Dairy Herd Information Association

farming at farm rates and not for some future potential rate.

I also joined RHCC choir, I had belonged to the Jr. Choir for a short time under Ethyl Bacon. After about two or three months I asked Nancy Lane a choir member for a date. She was younger than me by six years but she was intelligent, mature and a no nonsense person.

Robbins, Hamlin Morton

A margin note says that this interview was done circa 1975. Hamlin Morton Robbins was born Nov. 16, 1906 and died Jan. 1979. His father was Frank H. Robbins, his mother was Harriet Robbins, and his wife was Doris M. Robbins. His son is Doug Robbins who has an interview in this document. The interviewer is not identified.

Bob Herron 6/12/2016

History of Broadview Farm – Rocky Hill, Connecticut - Hamlin Robbins

Our farm was always located on the west side of Main Street in the northeastern section of Rocky Hill. It was called High Street at one time, but is now called Old Main Street. The farm was called Broadview Farm officially for the last 30 years. There was a magnificent view to the west extending to the Talcott Mountains to the north around to the Middletown hills to the south. The farm composed of approximately 110 acres in the Robbins name with additional land rented, from the property in the Great Meadow owned formally by my grandfather, Frederick Morton. There was over 50 acres that extended along Main Street, and westerly to the old trolley tracks. This plot was cut in two by the Silas Deane Highway construction in the 1930's and proved to be quite a handicap to us for agricultural purposes in the future. We always had to pasture dry stock and young animals there forever afterwards. Other land which was owned for farm use included a 32 acre plot between Bailey Road and Orchard Street, and about 70 acres in the Great Meadow, some of which was rented. The meadow plots consisted of 12 lots, ranging from 1/10 of an acre to a 16 acre field. We also owned two Dividend woodlots, one near Bulkeley Park and one in the Mustard Bowl.

The original land holdings by the Robbins family of which this farm was a part, dated back to the original John Robbins. The farmhouse which stands on the farm site was built by Elijah Robbins in 1790 and has been owned by 6 generations of Robbins family up to the present time. The early farm operations were limited to producing for their family needs, probably keeping a few cows for milk, butter – a few pigs for meat and some poultry for eggs and meat, exchanging excess supplies for food at the local country Store. Tobacco was grown at one time and the home garden plus a few fruit trees was grown mostly to supply their own needs. Broom corn was raised on the farm and brooms were made by the hundreds in the cellar of the farm house and sold for the magnificent price of 13 cents each. Not until my father, Frank Hamlin Robbins, took over the farm in the early 1900's did it become a large dairy operation. There was one large barn which was about 40 by 80 feet which was already about 100 years old. My father reconstructed it to accommodate about 30 dairy cows and 4 horses. In 1926 my father built a new addition of a modern barn approximately 60 feet long by 30 feet wide which

would accommodate about 30 more cows, with one silo attached to the old barn and another attached to the newer barn. Large haylofts were on the upper floors of both barns where all the neighborhood kids just loved to play. My father built up a small milk route in Hartford, Connecticut, but later sold the route to a Mr. DeWolf as it became an impossible task to produce and also to operate the route. He did peddle milk in Rocky Hill for a brief time, taking over my Grandfather Morton's route. From then on, he became a wholesale milk producer. My grandfather, William G. Robbins, worked with my father until my grandfather's death in 1914, when my grandmother and two aunts built a house next door, and my father took over the farmhouse. My father bought the farmhouse and land from his mother and sisters and brothers, paying approximately \$18,000.

Previous to moving to the farmhouse, my father purchased one building and one lot (the Old North School), making it over into a house where he lived at one time, and on the lot he built a new home where I was born in 1906. I remember living in the home which was the Old North School and being confined with scarlet fever for 6 weeks, with my mother as my father had to move out because of the milk business. Another house that played a part in the farm's operation was one built in 1926 to house farm hired help. The house was built for \$2,900.24 according to records I have and was recently appraised at \$19,500.

This house enabled us to hire married men rather than single men who had to live at the farmhouse. In regard to the hired help, we had men of many different nationalities, including smart men, dull men, drunks, loafers, ambitious and some who were honest and some not so honest. Many didn't stay long enough for us to learn anything but their first name. Some of the men I remember best were Tony and Dan. They lived here during World War I and I remember they were Russians, as the State Police came to investigate their activities. The police thought they might be Russian spies, but that wasn't true. Tony and Dan were riding with my father along the meadow roads in a horse drawn wagon when a very large snapping turtle was seen in the road. My father quickly threw the turtle into the wagon and the Russians just as quickly decided not to ride. The turtle was brought home and we had delicious turtle soup. According to an old farm record book which I had, farm help received wages about \$25 to \$30 per month plus food and lodging. Another local man named Jonny Hall, also worked by the day, but he didn't live at the farm. He was a deaf mute, but was intelligent with very sharp eyesight, always picking up arrowheads, having collected and accumulated many fine artifacts. Another man I remember was John. He was an Austrian, a very smart hard worker but often absent due to his drinking problems. He lived in an ell off the cellar, or in the old Chaise House. He had a very bad temper and once threatened to quit because we allowed a neighbor to drive the team of horses to get an extra load of ice. During the

years of World War I the hired help came and departed so fast that I can't remember their names, for example: in the month of June, 1917, a record book listed John, Eric, Peter, Hobo, Italian and Rufus as being on the payroll. I remember one of these men threatened to burn the barn down if he didn't get his demands. He repented when the sheriff came up and gave him a good tongue lashing. The first married man to be hired and to live in the house for hired help was Paul Nystrop. He was an excellent worker and stayed with us for a year or two. Later Ed Bates worked for us for 11 years during the Depression years.

Those years were hard times for all of us. We tried all types of farming, including market gardening (A market garden is the relatively small-scale production of fruits, vegetables and flowers as cash crops, frequently sold directly to consumers and restaurants. —RCH), dairying, poultry raising for meat and eggs, and even built a house in 1938. Many of these projects were not very profitable but kept ourselves and our help busy. I remember selling beets in the wholesale market for 8 cents per a dozen bunches, or 48 beets, and spinach for 10 cents per bushel.

Another man who worked for us about 10 years during the Depression, Albert Aston. He lived at the farmhouse. He came here after working for Richard Spencer, another Rocky Hill farmer, for 16 years where he claimed he had pancakes every day for breakfast. He wasn't too bright and couldn't perform many tasks, but he was most dependable. He took one day off a month but spent not more than \$5.00 of his pay and saved the rest. He died shortly after leaving here with quite a sizeable bank account. Once he bought a suit of clothes for \$5.00, which was 50% burlap as far as I could see, but he thought he got a bargain. One other man I remember well was Dan. He had been in the Navy but they could never teach him how to swim. This man could spend his pay much faster than he received it and was always trying to get paid in advance, which was a request we didn't cotton to. When he left the hired help house we had to fumigate the place to eliminate the fleas left there by ducks, pigeons and dogs. He kept these animals and birds in the cellar. In 1944 and 1945 I spent a total of 5 months in the hospital with a ruptured appendix and its resulting miseries. During this time, my father and my son, who was only 12 years of age at the time, and the rest of the family carried on the farm operations without outside help, as there was none available at that time. Finally when I was recuperating, a man named Sweeney came to work. Although he was a good worker, he was often worthless to us because of his drinking problems. He even sold his own chickens for a drink, and one day started a fire in a corncrib. This did no damage as it was soon put out.

During the later years of the farm we had no regular full time help and resorted to schoolboys of various ages. Some of those who worked for us were Brad Warner, John

Cooke, Skip Herman, Ron Wenzel, Kenny Smith, Eddy Clapp, several of the Hughes family and the Tyler family, plus many others. Many of these were only interested in driving the tractor and not much else. One of the favorite tricks was to have our regular boy ask some friend over to work, the new friend doing all the work and the regular we were paying doing almost nothing. We solved that problem by paying only one of them.

I would like to say that our farm was operated as a family project, my mother and wife were helping every day, washing milking machines, candling eggs and selling eggs at the door, dressing chickens and turkeys, getting celery ready for market, and numerous other projects that required extra help in rushed times. To go back to the horse and wagon days of farming I like to recall our farms experience with horses. We kept usually four horses which we worked singularly or in pairs. My father used a horse and wagon to pedal milk in Hartford and later in Rocky Hill. I was really scared stiff once as a small boy when my father left me in the milk wagon while he was delivering to a customer and about that time the steam train came thundering by scaring the horse with me hanging on to the reins for dear life. Luckily the horse didn't run away. Horses seem to have pretty definite dispositions. Kit, a black mare that was always very lazy and willing to let any other horse she was paired with carry the load. She was extremely frightened of trolley cars and would dash off the opposite side of the road. Bob was a gray gelding with a very stubborn and nervous nature. He always wanted to pull way ahead of any other horse he was teamed with or else became stubborn and refused to move at all. I remember about age 10 I was raking hay with Bob the horse and because my legs were too short to sit on the rake seat and trip the pedal which dumped the hay out, I fell down in back of the horse's legs and into the rake, finally sliding out from under the rake without much damage. Pete was all white, I really loved Pete. This horse was a hard worker, never nervous and one that you could trust not to run away. He was often hired by the mail carrier in winter when a sleigh had to be used to carry the mail. Dan and Fanny were two dapple gray horses that were used as a team for many years. Dan was a beautiful animal, a willing worker and very calm, unless he was encouraged to run away with his very nervous partner Fanny. This team did run away on one occasion that I remember. Once they ran with an empty wagon into a tall cornfield. After flattening much corn they tired of this and someone caught up with them. The last team we owned was Bill and Doll who ran away in the meadows. The team had their bridles off and were eating grain from burlap feedbags slipped over their heads. Several of us were eating lunch beside the team and when we threw a blanket down to rest after lunch, the skittish Doll took off fast with Bill and an unloaded wagon. A boy who came with us to the meadow was sitting in the wagon near the front at the time the horses started running but after racing across a few meadow roads at right angles he was bounced to the rear of the wagon. We took off after the team with a truck and got ahead of them

gradually slowing them down. The team was well winded by this time because they couldn't breathe well through the feedbags. Everything finally ground to a halt and a very scared boy was rescued. This team of Bill and Doll were the best one we ever owned and the last before we turned to tractors in 1940.

As for the many cows on the farm it is hard to remember them in such a distinctive manner, although during the last years of farming we had a name for every bred or milking cow. We did this to more easily keep breeding, milking and feeding records on each animal. It was easier to remember a cow's name than an ear tag number. I do remember one big Holstein cow which was producing 70 pounds of milk per day in her best years. We raised many of our animals especially after 1947 when we went into artificial breeding and no longer kept a bull. We knew, as many other farmers did, that we could raise better calves from these superior bulls that were cooperatively owned. The average production level of cows in the country has jumped from around 5,000 pounds per year in early 1900's to about 15,000 at the present time due to better breeding, better feeding and improved agricultural growing practices.

Like any dairy farmer we had many disasters in business. Two hurricanes we experienced, one in 1938 and another in 1955 were very bad because they came in the growing season with the complete loss of crops especially in the meadow from flooding by the Connecticut River. Many farmers lost animals by drowning when they kept animals on the flooded area.

I remember one cow we lost because someone placed cans with paint in them along the pasture fence. She died of lead poisoning and we never knew who placed the pails in the pasture. Once, I remember on Christmas Eve one of our cows broke her leg in the barn and this meant on Christmas Day the cow was butchered. This was done here at the farm with help from a neighbor and it left a deep impression upon me as a small boy as butchering was rarely practiced at our farm. We sold some of the meat and kept some which I'll admit was very tough.

In a record book I have there is recorded the transactions that were made when my father sold all of his herd that at the time were not tested for tuberculosis, for new cows that had passed the TB test. My father did this to avoid the almost certain loss he would have if his old herd were tested. Our neighboring farmers lost 80% of their herds when the Connecticut law did come into effect a few years later. The State would test your animals and all reactors were butchered for beef and were reimbursed by the State. The dairy farmers would have to buy or raise animals that had successfully passed the TB tests. My father's plan was to sell untested cows before it became a law to test for TB that saved us from a big financial loss.

At this period of time we were building a new 30 cow barn and so were able to keep the

newly tested cows isolated from untested stock in the old barn. After young new herds became accredited (that meant passing 3 successful tests for TB), the cows were tested regularly once a year and finally the whole state became nearly tuberculosis free. Undulant fever was also about totally controlled in later years in the state dairy herds by testing.

The bulls we had on the farm were always potentially dangerous animals. We always had to be on guard when moving them. A brass ring was inserted in their noses and then the bull could be lead with a long pole attached to the ring. We always carried a pitchfork to protect ourselves. One of our former hired men was nearly killed when he went into a pen with a bull on another farm in town. As a boy, I found out that a cow could be real dangerous also. I was sent to pick up a cow and her calf in the pasture. As I approached the cow and calf, the cow charged me, tore the sleeve out of my coat While I Stepped to one side and kept going away from her. The cow must have been Crazy because she charged others who went after her and she died a few days later. My father was also charged by a young animal in the pasture but he grabbed her head and flipped the animal on its back without injury. I don't want to leave the impression that many of our animals were dangerous, those mentioned were exceptions.

In the warmer months of the year we kept cows that were in a dry period in one of our two pastures. I recall many times the experiences we had trying to find a new born calf or calves. If the cow stayed with her calf it wasn't much of a problem, but if she left the calf hidden and was busy feeding, your troubles started. One favorite trick we had was to blatt like the calf and then look in the direction the cow would turn her head. Often, though, we would have to drive the cow home to the barn and we might make several trips back to the pasture to find the calf carefully hidden in the bushes or swamp. One calf we brought to the barn with the cow suddenly disappeared while we were driving the cow into the barn. A neighbor later told us a calf went up through his yard, so we followed the course we thought the calf had taken. We came to a stone quarry and looked down 75 feet to see the calf on the quarry floor. The calf broke its jaw but was otherwise healthy. We fed the calf with a rubber tube and sold it for veal in a few days.

During my grandfather's days the farm had perhaps a half dozen cows but when my father took over the farm this was increased to 25 or 30. The animals were all housed in the old barn basement with the horses and some young stock kept in pens at the ground level in the east end. To the west of the horse barn section was the main barn with hay loft to the west and above the horse stable. There was a lean-to shed to the south side used as a corn storage and a wagon shed on the northeast corner. In 1926 a new 30 stall cow barn was built so that totally in both barns we finally had stanchions for 56 cows with several calf pens for a total of 80 head of stock. A silo was built in my father's early

years on the north side of the older barn and later another on the northwest corner of the new barn. We also had a large machinery shed and a new milk room on the south side of the old barn with two hen houses above portions of each. We usually kept about 300 laying hens and sold most of our eggs retail at the farmhouse. In order to have 300 layers we usually started around 700 day old chicks. In later years we bought sex linked chicks, therefore only starting about 350 chicks.

For many years we sold roasters at a vegetable stand we started on the Silas Deane Highway, besides growing much of the produce sold there. One year we grew 18 acres of sweet corn plus many other vegetables. Harry Arens ran the stand for many years and we sold to him. Once, we together bought a whole orchard of apples in New York State and sold them at the stand.

To help explain the great changes that have occurred on our farm during my lifetime, I am going to note the changes in several practices. For instance, take the changes that have taken place in plowing the land. My father and grandfather plowed the soil with a hand-held 112 inch steel plow drawn by a pair of horses. Later the horses plowed with a two-way riding sulky plow. When the tractor came along at first we simply held a single horse drawn plow behind the tractor, but that took two men to operate. When the rubber tired, 3 point hitch Ford tractor came into being for us in 1940, we could plow with two plows that could be raised and lowered and go twice as fast as horses without any time out for resting. Of course, there are tractors today that will pull 6 to 8 plows with ease but they are not practical for the many smaller farms here in New England. Haying has always been a big job requiring several months' efforts each year. I personally never saw much grass cut with a scythe, but my grandfather did. The horse-drawn McCormick 4 foot sickle bar mower was the common mowing machine in my boyhood days and continued to be until the tractors came along. At first the tractor simply pulled a horse-drawn mower but later we used heavy duty tractor drawn mowers with a 7 foot cutting bar, followed by a machine that could be raised and lowered by simply pulling a rope. Later on we used power takeoff mowers and finally bought a power takeoff flail mower which could be used to mow grass to be harvested as hay or as a machine to chop grass and blow it into a truck as grass silage or fed on a day by day basis. The hay baler we purchased during World War II days was the greatest labor saver of all haying machines. One could store and transport twice as much hay in a given space or truck over the loose hay method and also harvest hay in half the time. Before the day of the hay baler the grass was cut with a horse drawn mower, dried and then raked with the one horse, many tined dump rake. Later the hay was arranged in small stacks, by hand pitchfork, and finally pitched onto the hay wagon by hand. The loading operation usually took three men, two pitching and one loading on the wagon. The hay loader came along next and this machine speeded operations. The loader was drawn behind the wagon or

truck over a continuous row of raked hay and elevated the hay higher and higher as the load was built. To have that long continuous row of hay the farmer had to own a side delivery rake, which was a machine drawn by horses or tractor over the mowed field. The wheels of the rake, or later power takeoff from a tractor, rotated a many tined revolving bar which was mounted at an angle to gently push the hay into a long continuous row.

As a rather small boy I remember my job was to drive the horses while two men were loading on the wagons. As the load got heavier the horses wanted to move faster, much to the disgust of the men loading, but I was stumbling and dragging my feet to hold the horses to a slower pace. We were harvesting over 100 acres of hay during most of my farming career and much of the land was cut over twice and in some instances, three times. The method of harvesting corn saw the most change over my years of farming. During the early years we cut the corn by hand with a corn knife and placed it in small bundles on the ground. The bundles were lifted to the man on the wagon who loaded it across the width of the wagon. The loaded wagon then took off for the silo. At the silo we had an ensilage cutter which was a machine with rotating or moving table carrying the corn stalks into the throat of the blower. The blower cut the corn stalks into small inch pieces with the several revolving knives and then blew the ensilage up a pipe into the silo at the top. Someone had to be inside the silo to distribute the silage. For many years we used a stationery single cylinder gas engine to power the blower and later used a tractor. I remember the difficult times we had to start that old engine. You had to swing the heavy flywheel against the compression of the cylinder and at the same time trip the sparking device and then she was supposed to start off with a bang. As the engine and blower were stationery it was a tricky operation to slide the long belt onto the pulley of the motor while it was running. Later in time we owned a corn harvester which cut the corn in the row and bundled and tied each bundle with heavy twine. In the years after 1950 we owned a forage harvester. This machine had its own 55 horsepower engine which was towed by tractor along the rows of corn. The harvester would cut the corn directly from the field and blow the chopped silage into a truck body which was driven along beside the row. The truck had a false front in the body which could be pulled backwards thus pushing the silage into the revolving table on the blower and then blown into the silo. With this method of harvesting corn silage two persons could store more than a dozen or more men could possibly accomplish by the old hand method. We had two silos which could store 150 tons each. The silage was removed from the silos in later years by a silage unloader. The tractor brought about the greatest change and savings in time of any farm machinery.

In 1928 we secured a Fordson tractor. This was an English made tractor with heavy iron wheels and no self -tarter. It couldn't travel on highways because of the iron logs on the

wheels. It was just about impossible to start by the hand crank during cold weather. I remember even building a fire under the engine for easier starting or trying to start it by towing with a truck, therefore the tractor wasn't able to replace our horses. We did use it to saw wood, run the ensilage cutter blower and for some plowing and mowing. It was very easy to get stuck in the mud and also quite dangerous to operate because the clutch wasn't very sensitive and the tractor could easily wind up on the rear wheels and flip over backwards. Not until about 1940 was a satisfactory pneumatic tire developed for the tractor and when that happened a successful farm tractor was a reality. In 1939 I visited the World's Fair in New York and saw for the first time the Ford-Ferguson tractor, which introduced a tractor that could replace horses. It was a 25 or 30 horsepower, 4 cylinder tractor with pneumatic tires and best of all a three point hitch with hydraulic lift and an electric starter. The tractor was at first sold by Ford car dealers and we bought one from Cromwell Motors in 1940 for \$625, including a plow. Later we purchased another in 1944 for about \$900 - - another in 1950 which we still have (1976), still another in about 1956 with the price jumping to \$1,800 and finally the fifth one in 1960 for \$2,000. This last tractor was a 50 horsepower machine that was 2 years old but a very much improved model, one that we had to have to operate the flail chopper we purchased. As our horses were getting old we made the complete change to tractors and trucks in the 1940's. With the advent of Successful tractors all types of power takeoff equipment came along and today the trend is to the big \$8,000 to \$10,000 tractors to operate most every machine. From horse drawn machines which cost a hundred dollars more or less, today there are big grain combines that cost \$30,000. The first truck we owned was a Chevrolet 4 cylinder, stake body, one ton model. Later we bought a new V8 Ford 1 1/2 ton stake body truck for approximately \$900. Still later in the 1950's we had a second-hand Ford V8 truck which was nearly demolished by a rear end collision while parked on the Silas Deane Highway. One person was killed in that accident and it was months before we could repair the truck to its original condition. We also had a used Ford dump truck and another cheap second-hand Chevrolet platform truck.

With the great increased use of mechanical equipment, a farmer had to be a pretty fair mechanic to keep everything operating. The farm used milking machines from the middle 1920's. The first year or two we used and tried three different models of milking machines. I remember when the fourth agent tried to sell my father a De Lavel milker. Mr. C. Peterson, the agent, was told that we would try it out for one year with no charge and if we liked the machine we would pay for it in full, plus interest for one year. Mr. Peterson had such faith in his machine and in my father that he accepted this deal and it worked out successfully. We used that machine for about 25 years and bought another one (De Lavel) later on, both working with most satisfactory results.

As a boy, I enjoyed working on the farm and couldn't wait to get home from school to

help out. My father always paid me and taught me the value of a dollar at a very early age. I remember earning 10 cents a day bottling milk we sold retail at the farm. During World War I days, I owned a pig of my own in a 4H Club project. I raised about 4 acre of potatoes which according to an old account book, netted me \$63.58 profit. When I was in high school I bought a milking cow for \$150 and paid for the cow and the grain and hay she consumed in about three months. Of course I had a price advantage by selling all her milk at retail price at the farm which was 10 cents a quart. The wholesale price at that time was around 3 or 4 cents per quart.

Some of the milk dealers we sold to during my memory were Mr. DeWolf who took over my father's retail route in Hartford, Kagan Brothers, Pete Jensen, Dubrow and A.C. Peterson. Actually we sold our milk to these dealers through the C.M.P.A. (Connecticut Milk Producers Association), which we joined in 1918 to 1919 and remained continually as members until the farm was sold in 1963. The association was able to stabilize the milk market in Connecticut and guaranteed the producer his money in case the dealer went bankrupt, or for other reasons. The C.M.P.A. owned their own processing plant and sold bottled or canned milk to many small dealers as well as cream, Ready-Whip, and Italian cheese, etc. All of these byproducts were processed to relieve peak over-production periods. My father was a district delegate for many years and I remember the happy association we had at many a district meeting with some of the best people I ever knew, the dairy farmers of Connecticut. The yearly meeting in one of the big Hartford hotels was also a very enjoyable highlight for me. We purchased our feed, fertilizers and other items through another great cooperative, the Eastern States Farmers Exchange. Before this co-op was widely established a group of farmers in Rocky Hill and Wethersfield banded together and bought feed at bid prices from several large feed dealers in the state. Later the Eastern States Co-op supplied nearly all dairy and poultry farmers in this area with a carload being shipped to South Wethersfield every two weeks. A farmer had to order two weeks in advance about all he needed. A local agent carried on the necessary financial business. When this cooperative and others became strong, the local feed Store was doomed. Another coop that we supported was the artificial breeding association. Our local association, which was called the Southern Hartford County Association, was a part of a state association and later a New England association. I was a director and secretary of our local group for the first several years. This method of breeding dairy cows increased production more than any other practice I know of. The results came from better cows sired by superior bulls than the average farmer could afford. It was also a lot safer than being chased up a tree by an angry bull.

During the World War II period the milk industry and dairy farmer's lives began to be controlled by state and government regulations. Prices were fixed on the products he sold but not on what he bought, so that farmers were caught in the middle. Labor costs,

feed costs, machinery costs and taxes all rose so fast that farmers just couldn't compete with the rest of the world. Some attempt has been made lately to adjust the farmer's tax burden and land preservation, but mostly help has come too late. This is easily reflected in the number of farms in Rocky Hill and other towns in the whole country. Rocky Hill had about 25–30 large dairy farms until the mid-1950's, but today there are only two that I can recall. The milk dealers have also fallen from 200 at one time in Hartford to 8 existing today. Milk is sold in the supermarket almost 100%. The meadows along the Connecticut River were a great boon to farming in this region.

Rocky Hill meadows have about 1,000 acres of land that are not highly taxed because the land is in a flood plain area and no development is allowed. This situation gave the local farmers a beautiful Stone free level land that adapts itself to tractor farming with long fields for hay crops and corn. The meadows flood nearly every year in the spring and deposits some silt to produce good crops. Disaster to the crops occasionally results when flooding occurs in the summer or early fall. Hurricanes are often followed by flooding, which begins at 16 feet above mean low water level of the river. The meadow is divided into hundreds of individually owned plots. We own now eleven pieces for a total of about 70 acres. The problem of determining the boundary lines of each lot in the meadows is mainly solved by years of experience. There are some pipe markers, furrows, trees, roads or the river to guide you, but the change of color or texture of the grassland from lot to lot is a good guide. Even in the land records in the town hall simply state approximate acreage and adjoining owners and not a designation of length or width in feet. Often the river gives or takes away from the land. Most of the meadow is in natural grass with some devoted to Silage corn and recently large plots of snap beans and grass sod. I have spent many enjoyable days working in the meadows and about every kid in town wanted to or did ride down to the meadows with us and especially if he could drive the tractor, and then ride home on the load of hay,

Floods leave some peculiar deposits on the meadow land. In 1936 flood about 10 rolls of paper weighing about a ton each landed in the Rocky Hill meadow. The paper came from Hadley, Massachusetts, 50 miles away. It was a very heavy grade of paper and we drove down with the wagon and picked up one roll. We spent four hours sawing a roll five feet long by four feet in diameter in two pieces for easier handling. As we were sawing we spotted a large dead hog nearby. We used the paper for insulation and for blanching celery. There were small buildings, bags of fertilizer, broken pieces of lumber caught in the trees. After floods recede, often small depressions in the land trap some large carp or shad, when these Small pools slowly dry up.

When flood control dams were built in the States north of Connecticut, the very high floods up to 36 feet or more have not occurred in the meadow.

The village blacksmith shop was always an intriguing place. I often took our horses to be shod. Sometimes I left a horse there and the blacksmith would take the horse out into the street when shod, give him a slap and from there the horse would come racing home right into the stable. This practice didn't work with many of our horses so it was interesting to see the blacksmith trim the horse's hoof, heat and shape the metal shoe and nail it to the horse's hoof. There were two blacksmiths in my memory, Mr. Kriedel and Mr. Connors. Mr. Kriedel's shop was located in a building now standing, one house north of the west corner of Old Main Street and Church Street. Mr. Connors's shop was in back of the Methodist Church on Church Street. A blacksmith was a fixer of most every farm implement when parts were hard to get and not as complicated as are the machines of today.

The blacksmiths' trade died out with the disappearance of horses. We had four horses and our neighboring farmer, the Sunny Crest Farm at the time, had 10 or 12 horses. After the horse population dwindled, some blacksmiths used to go around from place to place with a truck and do the Shoeing mostly on riding horses. The grocery man from E. F. Belden's store used to come around to each customer about once a week, take your order, and then deliver later in the day. We used to swap eggs for groceries for several years.

Today, the close personal contact with the people you did business with has gone. There are no more grain agents who come every week, no more rag men, no more ice men, very few bread men, meat men or even the Fuller Brush man. The outlook of selling our farm became a real possibility even before my father's death in 1959.

Certain parts of the land were put into a real estate agent's hands in the late 1950's. The ever increasing price cost squeeze was forcing us out, together with skyrocketing land values. When the actual course of the new Route I-91 was established and construction began, we knew the end of our farm was approaching. The sale of the stock and machinery came in mid-1963 and the home lot of thirty acres went to Mr. Reiser and to Mr. Burson about this time. The newer part of our main barn and one silo was knocked down and burnt up because it stood in an intended roadway. The older main barn we gave away to a person who agreed to knock it down and cart it away. The other silo was braced up and transported to another farm on a flatbed truck. It was a rather sad time for us to terminate a seventy five year or more business enterprise. Later on in 1963 I found a job in a nursery in Tariffville, Connecticut and still later that year a position at Comstock-Ferre Seed Company in Wethersfield, which I continued at for eight years. My partner and son Douglas after a few short jobs, secured a good position with Pratt Whitney, where he is still employed. A family farm such as this was successful because of the dedicated effort of the whole farm family. It represents a togetherness effort that

doesn't exist in most families today, where everyone is doing his own thing in his particular separate effort.

Written by Hamlin Morton Robbins, at age 69 years 401 Old Main Street Rocky Hill Connecticut

Robbins, Mary

The Robbins House

This the house next to The Cumberland Inn on Old Main Street. Mary Robbins says it was built by Elijah Robbins in 1790. Other sources attribute it to Jacob Robbins around 1770.

EARLY TRADITIONS AND HISTORY

According to Stiles history of "Ancient Wethersfield," John-Robbins and his wife Hester lived in Hedingworth, Leicester, England. As the records of the church of that village were burned with the church about the year 1600, very little can be learned of the family, but a monument in the church yard gives the date of death of these two. Another authority says they lived in Thedenworth, England. They had six sons of whom five came to America in 1638: John; Richard; Nicholas; Thomas and Samuel. The last four named settled in Massachusetts, but John came to Wethersfield and settled, and is the ancestor of many different branches of the Robbins family in Wethersfield and Rocky Hill. He was called John Robbins, Gentleman, in the early records, and in 1638 bought land in Wethersfield which included 20 acres of what was called "adventurers land," and was one of the first settlers of Wethersfield. In 1639 he married Mary Welles, eldest daughter of Thomas Welles, governor of the colony. Their children were Mary, born in 1641; Hannah in 1643; Comfort in 1646; John in 1649 and Joshua in 1652, the youngest, whose name does not appear in some genealogies, but Stiles gives the line of descendants of this son Joshua as well as the line by the son John. It is the line of Joshua that I will follow.

Joshua married Elizabeth Butler and they had eight children: Joshua, born in 1681; Elizabeth in 1684; Hannah in 1688; Mary in 1692; Jonathan in 1694, Abigail in 1697; Comfort in 1699 and Sarah in 1703. The eldest son, Joshua, born in 1681, was married in 1707 to Sarah Bidwell, and their children were: Nathaniel, born in 1708; Zebulon in 1710; Sarah in 1712; John in 1713; Hannah in 1715; Joshua in 1717; Elizabeth in 1719 and Abigail in 1721. Nathaniel, the eldest, born in 1708, married his cousin Mary Robbins in 1735. She was the sister of Esquire John Robbins who built the brick Robbins house in Rocky Hill in 1797. Nathaniel Robbins was a deacon in the church of Stepney Parish, as Rocky Hill used to be called. The Children of Deacon Nathaniel were Sarah, born in 1736, who died young; Richard, born in 1738; Joshua in 1740; Sarah in 1742; Nathaniel in 1745; Mary in 1751, Eunice in 1755. The repetition of names here is due to the custom in old families of naming another child for one who died in infancy.

Deacon Nathaniel's son Richard married Abigail Warner and they had many children: Elijah, born in 1763; Enos in 1765; Rhoda in 1767; Warner and Roger who died in

infancy; Warner in 1772; Abigail (called Nabby) in 1773; Rachel in 1776; Robert in 1778; Mary (called Polly) in 1782; Joshua, Nathaniel and Sarah.

This brings us to the fifth generation from the first John and to Elijah Robbins, born in 1763, who was the builder of the house which is the subject of this paper.

Elijah Robbins and his brothers and sisters lived at the northern end of Rocky Hill, about a quarter of a mile back from the main road, near what is now known as Parsonage Street. Four of Elijah's sisters were spinsters and referred to as the "old maids." Elijah Robbins married Martha Griswold in 1787 and for a few years lived in the old house with his brothers and sisters. His first two children were born there. The second son was born on the morning of January 10, 1790, and, after all was well, the father went out of the house and looked over the fields to a new house which was being erected for him, on land which was owned by him some distance east on the main street of the town of Rocky Hill. As he looked, he saw that the masons were just coming through the roof with the great chimney.

So it was during the year of 1790 that the Robbins house was completed⁹⁰. This house is the old New England colonial style of farm house, with plenty of room for a large family of those days, and Elijah's family filled it well. They were: Richard, born in 1788; William in 1790; Augusta in 1792; Benjamin in 1794; Martha in 1796; Loren in 1797; Edward in 1801; Sarah in 1803 and Mary in 1808.

Elijah Robbins died in 1815 and his son William, born while his father's house was being built, became the second owner of the house. He married Ruth Williams in 1817 and they had six children: Richard, born in 1818; Eliza in 1819; Jerusha in 1820; William in 1821; Julia in 1823 and James in 1824. The last three died in infancy, and the mother died at the age of 34.

William Robbins was called "Squire Bill" as he was Justice of the Peace for many years, and did a good deal of drawing up of legal and documents for the townspeople. He was State Senator in the year 1840. He did farming only in a small way, having only a boy to help him. "

Squire Bill" was my great grandfather, my father's grandfather, and I have heard more of the old house while he lived there, from my father and his family, than when it was occupied by ancestors further removed, so I will tell you about the house at this point. Originally, the house had eleven rooms, five upstairs and six down, and a pantry. "Squire Bill" used the south front room for his office. This room has white wooden paneling all across one side, the side on which is the fireplace. Back of this room is what was

⁹⁰ This is the house at 401 Old Main Street in 2016. There is a plaque on the front that says, "Built by Elijah Robbins – 1790")

originally the kitchen, which had a fireplace so large that my grandmother and her brother, when they were children, used to sit inside of it, on a bench made for that purpose, and I remember my father saying he also sat on that bench inside the fireplace, when a boy. It had two wide doors opening in the middle, so that it could be closed up when not in use. It also had a brick oven where pies and election cake used to be baked. In "Squire Bill's" time, the floors of these two rooms were kept sanded. The sand was taken up and washed once a week and then the floor was sanded again, and sometimes a fancy pattern made with a broom. The north front room was the parlor. The fireplace in this room is decorated with straight line carving and there is a fancy molding at the ceiling and another about three feet from the floor. Back of this room was a dark bedroom and pantry. There was another bedroom in the south west corner, and a room called the sink room at the back, from which the back stairs went down. There is an ell on the house and the lower part used to be used for a chaise house with two doors opening on the north side. The rest of the ell was used for a wood house and the upper part, which was open, was often used for hanging tobacco to dry.

As the house is built on a side hill, there are rooms below the back part of the house, which, at one time, were rented for a broom shop, and brooms were made there. This was later referred to as "the shop" and I remember after the noonday dinner, my grandfather always sat there, and the men of the neighborhood would congregate there and sit for a while, in those leisurely times, and talk together, probably politics.

The first windows of the house had 24 panes of glass. The two attic windows still have the 24 small panes.

William Robbins' daughter, Eliza Robbins, married Roswell Rose Robbins in 1840, and after a few years they came to live in the old house, and Roswell Robbins was the third owner. He was born in 1816, that notable year when there was a frost every month in the year. He learned the trade of tinner, but when he came to the old place he worked the farm and had a few cows, and my grandmother made butter. Roswell and Eliza had six children: William George, born in 1842; Henry Francis in 1844; Nathaniel Warner in 1846; Julia Susan in 1849; Ruth Eunice in 1853 and Sarah Rose in 1862. Of these children, Nathaniel and Julia died in childhood. Ruth married Martin J. Griswold and died in 1890. Henry remained a bachelor, spending most of his life in South Meriden, where he died in 1909. Sarah, the youngest of the children lived with her father and mother in the old house, and after their deaths, lived for a few years in the two north front rooms, in which she had a life right. She is now the only surviving member of the family and lives in Hartford with Dr. Emma J. Thompson. William George Robbins, my father, was the eldest of the family. He married Anna Amelia Robbins in 1871, the second instance in the line of a Robbins marrying a Robbins.

My father and mother, William and Anna Robbins, lived in his father's family for a few years after their marriage. Their first three children were born there. Then they moved to a house on Chapin Avenue where three more children were born. Their first child was Julia Amelia, born in 1872 and died two years later. The others are: Allen William, born in 1874; Mary Elizabeth in 1875; Richard Henry in 1877; Frank Hamlin in 1879 and Anne Rose in 1887. When a young man, William Robbins, my father, taught school for a few winters in Rocky Hill, Glastonbury, and, after he was married, in Cromwell.

After the death of his father, he came back to the old house to live, and was the fourth owner. He worked the farm of about 40 acres and gradually changed it into a dairy farm, with the assistance of his son, Frank. He was a Republican in politics and held the office of town treasurer many years, and afterwards was the town clerk for several years and also represented the town at the State Legislature. He was active in the Congregational Church, where he was deacon for 32 years, following in the footsteps of his ancestor, Deacon Nathaniel Robbins, and for many years held the treasuryship of the church. Of the six children born to William and Anna Robbins, Julia died in infancy.

The eldest son, Allen, went to Colorado at the age of 21. There he studied medicine in Boulder College and is now a physician and surgeon in Durango, Colorado. He married Anna Melville, and has two sons, Owen Francis, born in 1907, and William Allen, born in 1912.

The next member of the family is Mary (the writer of this paper) who has been a teacher in the Brown School in Hartford for many years.

Richard was for many years connected with the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company of Hartford. He married Mabel Harding and in 1914, they went to Colorado to live, where he died in 1924. Anne, the youngest of the family, has followed the profession of music in church and school.

Frank Hamlin Robbins, the youngest son, stayed on the farm, and, after the death of his father in 1914, became three years later the fifth owner, making five generations of Robbinses in the old house. Frank Robbins married Harriet Morton in 1915 (1905?), and they have two children, Hamlin, Morton, born in 1906, a student at Storrs College and in line to keep up the family traditions and someday be owner of the old home. The second child is Ruth Harris, born in 1909. Frank Robbins succeeded his father as church treasurer and deacon, and he also represented the Republicans of the town in the Legislature in 1918-1919. He was, at one time, chairman of the School Board, and now serves the town on the board of assessors.

There have been many changes made in the house which have made it more comfortable. Modern conveniences have been added inside and outside. Instead of a

chaise house, there is a garage; instead of the old oaken bucket there is a driven well with a motor for pumping, and, adjoining the old barn is a new modernly equipped dairy barn filled with fine stock. The farm, which now contains about 60 acres, is called "Broadview Farm," because of the fine outlook to the north and west. Anna, wife of William Robbins, my mother, survived her husband 12 years, living with her daughters in a new house just south of the old homestead, where she died in January, 1926.

This is the history of the Robbins family and house thus far: a white wooden colonial house, one hundred and thirty-six years old, which has housed only those of the Robbins name. May it continue to do so for many generations to come.

Written by May (Mary) Robbins

Rocky Hill, Connecticut, May 31, 1926

Copy on file at the State Library

Footnote:

So that the history may continue and be kept up to date the following has been added after the death of May and Anne Robbins.

Hamlin Morton Robbins, son of Frank and Harriet Robbins, married Doris Hick on September 27, 1930. To them were given a son, Douglas Hamlin, born in 1932, and Carolyn Anne, born in 1937. After the death of his father

Frank, Hamlin and his wife Doris moved into the old house and became the 6th owners after the death of Hamlin's mother in February, 1972.

Douglas Hamlin Robbins married Nancy Lane in 1956. Their sons are William Douglas Robbins, born in 1960, and Ronald Frank Robbins, born in 1962.

Carolyn Anne Robbins married Pelham Morehouse Whiting in 1961 and to them was born a son, Pelham

Morehouse Whiting II, in 1964.

Rocky Hill Waterfront circa 1940s Memories

The Water-front at Rocky Hill

There's a lot of boosterism in this paper. For example the claim that "a large percentage of Yankee Traders" came from Rocky Hill needs justification.

(Transcription of notes written by either Nellie Warner or Liz Brooks circa 1940's?)

The water-front at Rocky Hill was once very different than it is to-day. In place of the handful of humble homes now found along the river-bank had stretched store after store belonging to the prosperous traders of those early days. A carriage shop had stood where the northern part of the foundry is; the carriages were shipped to southern markets. North of the carriage shop, on each side of the thoroughfare, had extended the shops of the early traders – the Bulkeleys, Boardmans, Bradfords, Grimes, Williams, Demings, Pomeroy's and so many more. Some, whose families have long since died out, have been forgotten, but others are greatly venerated by descendants who realize fully that their present prosperity is due to the tidy fortunes amassed by their enterprising forebears. Each store on the riverbank had had its own wharf and there had always been a schooner or two tied up, waiting to unload the barrels of rum, brandy, molasses, or sugar from the West Indies; the ivory and ebony, (and very probably slaves), from Africa; "domestics" imported from France and England – or loading the native goods for which Stepney Parish was noted: the horses, hogs, cattle, Salted fish, potatoes, onions, tobacco, barrel-staves and bricks bound for the markets of New York and the South.

The vessels had also, about 1815, maintained a profitable carrying service, supplying food to the ships of the British Navy in the Caribbean, which chose not to risk encountering Napoleon's might in their own ports across the Atlantic.

There had been pewter and silversmith shops; sail-lofts; cooper shops; Smithies busy hammering out bolts and spikes; Small yards that had made wooden blocks and spars. Above the ferry-landing, set aside for the purpose more than three hundred years before, had been located the five-acre tract of the town ship-yard, a spot that had hummed with activity as early as 1700. From 1750 to 1820, during the town's greatest commercial prosperity, six vessels had commonly been on the stocks at once; the sound of the saws cutting by hand the planking and timbers had rung out day after day. It had been a gala event when a boat was launched; all the men in the yard, no matter by whom employed, had helped push it down the weighs, and had partaken of the supper and Jamaica rum which followed. The ladies and little children, all decked in their best (which in those days had been very fine indeed) had gathered to cheer at the great occasion, and the small boys had much coveted the privilege of riding on the vessel when she finally eased off into the water. The old launching-ground of the ship-yard is

now the town dump.

North of the dump stretch, the broad, level expanse of the meadows. These low-lying alluvial fields extend on either bank of the rivers for miles throughout central Connecticut. The richness of the grass in the meadows had been a principal factor in the choice of this locality for Settlement by the original colonists from Watertown⁹¹. The meadows were held as common grazing ground for many years but have since been divided and sold, many lots still being owned by descendants of the early settlers.

Northwest of the ship-yard, but still on part of the town reservation, had been located a rope walk. Dotted here and there, at places conveniently near to the water-front, had been taverns and hotels to accomodate (sic) the crowds of seamen and farmers who had flocked there in great numbers.

A few years in the West Indies trade and the storekeepers, who were also usually ship owners, were able to build the ornate houses which had stood as memorials to their Sagacity. There had been so many of them once, those sturdy well-built homes, but of them all only the William Bradford house (1784) on the hill overlooking the river above the American Oil Company and the Captain Jacob Williams house (1770), where Rachel Fisk (Fish?) now lives, still remain.

There are, to be sure, other fine houses in scattered parts of the village; their builders had also owed their fortunes to the successful shipping ventures. Farmers had acquired comfortable fortunes by the sale of their crops, especially onions. So great had been the demand for labor that the good wives themselves had often been found in the fields bunching onions for shipment. Rye was an important product, too, and distilleries had flourished.

Many of the boys became sailors, of course. They had learned the science of navigation up-stairs in the old red school where the Rationing Board now is located⁹². Others had gone through Pennsylvania and the Southern States peddling the pewter and tin-ware made in early Rocky Hill. A large percent of the "Yankee Peddlers" who made the Nutmeg State famous came from Stepney Parish.

It is almost impossible now to picture in your mind the water-front as it formerly looked. Cross and Henry Streets, once populous, are entirely gone. There was once a road near the site of the depot, probably right where the railroad tracks are now⁹³; the flourishing "Long Hotel" and a successful drug store had stood where the freight-house now is. There had been numerous small dwelling houses too, the homes of Aunt Abigail Grimes and her many nieces and nephews, but of these no trace can now be found. On the

⁹¹ Wethersfield

⁹² Academy Hall

⁹³ Was this the old Post Road? Needs investigation.

embankment back of the former depot are faintly discernable stone-walls, which may have been part of old foundations but no one now will ever know.

The ferry and an occasional oil barge are all that are left of Rocky Hill's shipping. Trains, except for a slight increase due to the war, were fast following the sail-boats into the pages of memory: the passenger station was abandoned years ago.

Half-way up the hill on Riverside Road is the now neglected lot which once was a little fenced-in park used by the families who lived around it. This strip of land which the town is neglecting so badly, with the dump, is all that remains, as town property, of the early ship-yard reservation.

(Observations of waterfront life in Rocky Hill, Connecticut)

Seventh Day Adventist Church

This article wasn't converted to MS Word since it doesn't seem to have anything to do with Rocky Hill. It is a transcript of people from out of town who met in a house in Rocky Hill. It is a large document that doesn't copy well.

Shad Fishing on the Connecticut River – Arthur Hale

Arthur Hale was a prominent river man in the middle of the 20th century. He served on the Rocky Hill ferry as well as being a fisherman on the river. He was active in town politics. His picture is displayed on the Chester-Hadlyme ferry where he is acknowledged as an important river man.

SHAD FISHING ON THE CONNECTICUT RIVER

Talk given by Arthur Hale
Pictures shown by Edith
R. H. Historical Society
Meeting – March 3, 1967

Introduction:

Welcome to the Spring-Late Winter Meeting of the Rocky Hill Historical Society. Mr. Hale has operated the ferry here in town for the last 24 years and the shad business that he runs has been in his family for over 100 years. His talk will be about the shad industry in this area.

Mr. Hale: At first I would like to thank you for inviting me here tonight. My wife regrets that she couldn't be here.

Edith here has some slides that she had taken in 1945–1946.

** - Indicates slides.

**In this picture of the nets on the pier was taken on the Glastonbury side of the river. You see the lantern on one end there -- that is used on one end and set overboard from the boat and then the net is rolled up in a half circle. The lantern is put in the fastest part of the river, and the boat goes around into the slowest part of the river, and then it is up to the men who are running the oars to keep up the lantern.

** This picture was taken down in Haddam, I believe. These are fellows stringing up the gill net. That was probably a nylon net.

** This is a truck that was used in 1946–47–48–49 for herring fishing. These fish were loaded into this trailer and taken to Tillman Packing Co. in Baltimore, Md. The biggest part of these fish were used for overseas shipment, and you probably have seen in the stores as part of food pack. That was what these were. There were tons of herring that were caught in the Connecticut River. The herring that were caught in the river in that time were caught probably from a ton to ten tons in a haul. There were very few shad caught in there. The reason for it was that the first net that went out was a shad net, and then it was followed by a shorter net that was used with a lot smaller mesh to keep the herring. You will probably see a few shad in there, but they were supposed to have been

thrown overboard, according to law.

** Another boatload of herring. In the front part of that boat you can see there the big fish--those are what are called German carp. We shipped, for the three or four years that we fished for these herring, anywhere from 30 to 40 ton a day to Tillman Packing Co.

** Here is George Green⁹⁴ lived on Elm St. This is when we were first starting to bone shad.

**This here is a sturgeon that was caught in the river. It is really a small one. At one time the sturgeon weighed anywhere from 300–400 to 450 pounds. It wasn't during my time, but they used to fish for these during the summer. They used to just take a spot in the river and just watch for the sturgeon to come up and roll in the sun. Then they had a net that was made of heavy twine that had a mesh that was a foot square. And when they would see one of these, they would take and go around that sturgeon, and once they had that sturgeon, the sturgeon would most likely stay on top of the water. The tail of a sturgeon is like a fin and very small at the end. Somebody would take and put two half winches (?) on that sturgeon's tail and hold it up in the air, and the sturgeon was helpless. They would then take and cut the nose of the sturgeon and bleed it out, and that would stop the sturgeon from turning black.

** That's my father. The fellow in the blue shirt there is young Ralph Carbonaro. He has charge of the Public Works here now. The other boy there, I believe, is Herbie Spencer. He lives in Moodus now.

** That's my father there, and he had a shad there that I believe weighed probably around ten pounds. That actually is a real big shad.

** This scene was taken when we lived up on Elm St., up next to Charlie Gilbert's farm. We had a small building that we packed shad in. My mother did most of the packing of the shad, while we were on Elm St.

**That's my father again, and as you can see, with every haul that was made, the fish were thrown into a barrel of ice water and then they were sorted—those roe shad in one barrel and the buck shad in another⁹⁵.

** These here are fish that were caught on the meadow, and after they were taken out of the barrel, they were thrown into boxes and brought to Rocky Hill and then iced.

** This is some more shad. On the right hand side of that picture you can see two dogs. They wanted to eat them. Those two dogs were about the nosiest two dogs you ever saw.

⁹⁴ George Curtis Green was the grandson of Wilbur Hale and was captain of the ferry for many years

⁹⁵ Female and male shad

** That is another picture of one of our dogs. That dog is in amongst all the herring. I believe he probably had to have a bath that night.

**This is a picture of just shad alone. That is when we were just shad — fishing.\

**T his is on the Glastonbury side, on Nayaug meadow. Across the river you can see the Rocky Hill side, and that is a power boat that was gotten by at the time.

**These here the biggest part of these were shad. This is a shad net, and the herring are mixed in with them, so you can imagine how many herring are in the river. Actually at times even with a 5 1/2 inch stretch mesh net those herring would back the net up the river.

** This picture, I think, is of all herring there.

** That is when the net was coming in, and Edith's dog was out in the water waiting for them to come in. In fact, the dog would snap the fish as they came up near him.

**This is hauling the net in.

** This is an old Model A Ford, '28 with a "nigger-head"⁹⁶ welded in to the hind wheel that we used to Winch the net in. I think in the next picture that there is the shore end that we used to bring the net down. At one time we brought it down with horses, and put it on this, and one man would wind the shore end down along the shore.

**This here is the real old horse capstan. At one time before we used the old Model A Ford, we had this capstan here, and a horse used to run around the circle, and after one day's time that horse would know what he was supposed to do, and he would never step on the rope that came from the river up to that capstan, and that rope brought the round—about end of the net ashore. The horse would take, and when he knew it was time and there was a good strain on the net, he would know when to stop and let the net swing a little and then take the slack in again.

** This here is the old Model A Ford when we first went over there. Of course we stripped it down after that. We still used the old horse capstan there so that if the Ford should ever stop, we could put the rope back onto the horse capstan.

**This here is when the net was ready to go off shore. At the top of the net you can see a small jack. Attached to that there was a rope probably 250 ft. long that was thrown ashore, and the fellows would take and start it down, and if the horse wasn't there, they would walk it down by hand until they reached the small hand capstan. The net is out on with the corks and the leads in, and they have to be coiled on these so that they will take and go off in their turn and not get a twist around another one. The two that are in that

⁹⁶ A short, thick post on the deck of a ship or on a wharf, to which a ship's rope may be secured. The term has racist overtones referring to the shape of an African-American's head,

picture-- I believe one of them is my brother, and I don't know who the other

** That rowboat there at that time was well over 50 years old. The only time the boat was used was five months in the spring, and then put in the shed for the rest of the year.

**This here is when the boat was ashore and they were loading the net. They would take and overhaul the net backwards and then boat the net again.

** This here is when the net is about all boated, and the jack is right there to the stern of the boat ready to be put on and then start up again. As you can see, Edith's dog is still pulling at the net there. The fellow on the left hand side in my brother; the other fellow on the lead line is Walter Swishere (?) from Wethersfield.

** This is when the boat was about ready to be out away in the spring when the shad fishing was all over.

** This is on the Rocky Hill side, and as you can see, there was quite a mess there. Now we have a launching area, which is a nice place down there now.

** The two scows here are what the herring were loaded into and brought forward to the Rocky Hill side. During the fishing we always kept one extra net on hand so that if we were torn up, we wouldn't be held in by waiting to mend the net. We would just back up to this reel and reel the net right back onto the boat.

The shad fishing has been in the Hale family for over 100 years. It started when my grandfather was discharged from the Civil War in 1865. My father, Henry A. Hale, started fishing in the early 1900's. I started to fish in 1930. My first year of fishing was with Elmer Belden. My father as up North working in Fremont, New Hampshire, in 1930, and I started fishing after school at nights, and I fished with Belden in 1950. In 1931 my father came back from New Hampshire. He worked for the A.&P⁹⁷. He was a build-up manager at that time.

Mr. Belden felt he had one more year of fishing, and he asked my father if he would take him fishing one more year, and he would turn the fish rights for Nayaug Meadow over to him. So, in 1931, we fished for Mr. Belden, and at the end of the year Mr. Belden turned the fishing rights over to my father. The old rights read "as long as water flows - and grass grows." The old fishing rights has since that time disappeared, and we don't know where it went.

In the year 1945 my dad and I became partners in the shad fishing. At this time it was called Hale's Fishery, and to this date is known as Hale's Fishery. My dad died in 1965, and now I am known as Hale's Fishery.

The boning of shad started about 1940, and was started by George Green, better known

⁹⁷ A grocery store chain which was once prosperous but went out of business in 2015.

as "Pert." He lived in Rocky Hill and was my second cousin. At that time he worked at Squire's Fish Market at the corner of State and Market Streets in Hartford. There was another fellow from California Lunch on Asylum St. When they first started to bone shad, there was a bit of waste, as they took a lot of meat with the bone. Today there is very little waste. My wife started to bone shad in 1956. Last spring my wife boned about 4,000 shad. To show you how much the boned shad business has grown since, the first year she boned 524.

I also have another woman from Rocky Hill, whose name is Margaret Foley. She boned shad nights for us, after she gets through boning shad for the West Side Seafood, which her brother-in-law owned. My wife will start about the 15th of March to bone shad for Honiss Oyster House. They buy their shad from Chesapeake Bay; the shad are shipped to Hartford, and my wife bones them, until we start to catch our own shad. We have had Honiss' for a customer for over 27 years. During the season their average use is 75 boned shad a day.

We have for two years put shad in a freezer for Honiss' to try in January. Last year they had 300 shad and used them in 2 weeks. They claim the fish are just as good in the 6 and 7 months in the freezer as are the ones that come right out of the water.

To get a good boned shad, the fish has to be at least a 4 pounder. About 9 out of 10 commercial fishermen throw their buck shad overboard. Now this is something we have tried to stop, but it still hasn't worked. I don't believe that the fishermen should take and throw fish overboard. What they should do: There is a legal stretch mesh limit of 5 inches. What we have up here is a 5 1/2 or 4 3/4 inch stretch, which will let the smaller fish through the net. When the shad come up the river, the buck shad always come first. The first big run of bucks are always big shad. Most of them will average 4 to 4 1/2 pound fish. These fish are just the right size for boning for freezer use in our retail of boned shad. We have people who have had our shad tell us that they have just finished our shad from last year. This proves that if a fish is out away in the freezer fresh, it will last much longer than the six months.

Our fish are caught at night, washed in city water and packed in ice in at least less than one hour after they are caught. They are boned in the morning, so that what are not sold that day go into the freezer, and less than 24 hours old. We wrap our shad in cellophane paper and seal the ends of the paper. My daughter, Barbara, and my sister's two boys overhaul the gill nets, which they have done for 5 years. At one time we had children from out of school, and it and it would take them from 4, 5, or 6 hours to do this job; and my daughter and my sister's two boys will take and do the job in less than 2 hours' time. She's away at school now, and she's just waiting to get back to Rocky Hill. She stays down in Hamden during the week and comes home weekends, but she intends

to commute back and forth after April, so she can help and take care of the shad fishing. In 1939 we had one haul of shad where we caught about 2500 shad in one haul. In that day alone, which was on a Memorial Day, we caught more than 4500 shad. For that amount of shad one received less than \$150.00, so the bigger the quantity, the less money you have.

In 1946, 47, 40, 49 one fished for herring for the Tillman Packing Co. in Maryland. Most of these herring were packed for overseas. From 1942 to 1959, we had a standing order for 100 ton of herring for Davey Brothers Trout Pools in Plainville. They were fed to the trout. Then the Purina Chow people came out with a pellet that had all the necessary ingredients to take care of trout feeding. I wasn't sorry to see that go. That was all work.

They start to catch shad in the St. John's River in Florida around January 1st. They have a shad derby that starts the second week in January. The buck shad average about 11/2 pounds. The roe shad average around 5 pounds. If they get a 4 pound shad in Florida, they do have a real big shad.

The shad start coming up the East coast and are at the Chesapeake Bay by March 1st. Even these shad are nowhere as big as the ones we catch in the Connecticut River.

They start to catch them in the Hudson River by the second week in March. As yet they haven't caught any down there. The weather, as you know, has been a lot colder than the average at this time. The first shad come into the Connecticut River by April 1st. A few have been caught by March 15th by herring fishermen. The shad come into fresh water streams to spawn. The shad doesn't eat from the time it comes into the river until it leaves. Some people ask if shad don't eat at this time how come they catch them on hook and line. The only place they catch them on hook and line by an angler is in the spawning grounds. The shad when spawning mill in the sand and shallow water. With their fins and bellies they make a pocket in the sand to lay their eggs. It takes about 5 days from the time the eggs are laid until they hatch. When the angler's bright colored beads, jigs and feathers, or red and white and yellow beads float near them, they toss their heads, flipping the lures out of the way. About 90% of the shad are hooked from the outside in. When an angler uses a feather lure, the shad sometimes in breathing, sucks the feather in. The water over the spawning grounds runs fairly fast. When the shad are hatched in the river, by the time they go out of the river they are from 3 to 4 inches long. They are all gone out of the river by the middle of September. These shad will return to the river or stream, wherever they are hatched, in 5 year's time. This has been proven when the State had the trout hatchery in Leesville in the Salmon River. The State hatchery went out in 1956 in the hurricane. Since that time there have been no artificially-hatched shad. You can tell whether the shad were hatched artificially or whether it was a naturally hatched shad. The artificially-hatched shad, in swimming in

their tanks and tubes, as they went through these tubes, they were counted, and their tails would wiggle against the sides of these tubes and break off, so that the tail looked like a saw. A naturally-hatched shad had its regular smooth tail.

During the last week of July and the Month of August, thousands of young shad are killed by the prop wash from outboards. The gulls will take an area, follow outboards and pick up the small ones that have been stunned by the prop wash.

You can tell the difference between shad and herring even in the small stage - the shad has a row of spots along their sides.

We built our present place of business in 1945. On the well of my wife's rock garden there is a brownstone that came out of the old seawall that was where our house was built on that now has the date of 1822.

That is all. Thank you.

QUESTIONS:

Fishing at night. We have my uncle, who is 76 now. He just waits for the fishing to come. Of course, he can't fish, so last spring he used to sit in the car and watch the tow boats up the river. Then a tow boat would come around Two Stone Brook up there, he would blink a light, and we could pull our nets. Of course, those coming of course, those coming up the river we could see them and pull our nets up in time.

Q: Ordinarily you are fishing right in the channel?

A: Right in the channel, yes.

Q: in the old days there were salmon in the river. Do you ever see any salmon nowadays?

A: I've never seen any. I don't know how many have.

Q: None at all?

A: No.

Q: I understand that part of this program that they're talking about of cleaning up the river and trying to rehabilitate the whole thing, they talk in terms of trying to re-stock it with salmon.

A: The State of Massachusetts said that if Connecticut would get rid of the commercial fishermen, they would stock it with salmon. (Laughter) But I can say one thing, a lot of people believe there is great pollution. The pollution in the river today is nothing like it was before. At one time if you stepped in the mud, the minute you brought your foot out of that mud, you would have a real gassy smell. Today there is nothing like that. Of course, the river is polluted, and nobody should swim there, and what makes it bad and

the bacteria count is in the warm weather. Of course, they take a sample every day down there; the Metropolitan District does; the water temperature reached 86, and that brings up a big bacteria count.

Q: Do you find many sturgeon?

A: There are a lot of small sturgeon in the river. Last year we got one that was about 46 inches long. We let them go; we don't bother with them. It has to be a 5 foot sturgeon, and rather than take them, it is better to let them go if they're not tangled up in the net.

Q: The Enfield Dam there. Spawning is in the Enfield Dam?

A: The Enfield Dam and Salmon River.

Q: They can't get any farther than that?

A: They do lift them over the dam now. The only time they could go up further would be when the gates were open in the canal there. Windsor Locks.

Q: ? (Couldn't hear the question.) A question probably about the ferry

A. About 25 years. Of course, I worked there before. This last time I've been there 17 years, but my father was there a long time before that. Dan Taylor? Of course, in those days, the old ferry boat, if the wind blew a little bit too much, we used to get stuck over in the meadow with the horses, and we'd have to stay there, but now the boat will run all the time unless the water is real high, or we have a real high wind.

Q: How many do you make?

A: At night? Drifting with the tide, it all depends on the tide. We average about 4. Each man could make 4 drifts. Still there are times you will go out there and get there at the right part of the tide, and you are liable to sit in one spot for two or 2 1/2 hours. The fish will back away from the gunnel.

Other voice: I remember when your grandfather used to fish, and he used to get 2 or 3 sturgeon that weighed about 300 or 400 pounds.

A: Those big ones have gone now, Sam.

Q: Pollution doesn't bother them?

A: Yes, it does. Of course, during the shad fishing, the water temperature is real low, and we're all through fishing by the 15th of June, and the water is just starting to warm up by that time, so as long as the water temperature is cool, there is very little bacteria in the water; and the shad don't feed at all from the time they go into the river until the time they go out. As far as an oily taste, the oil would be on top of the water, and not down in the water, so it would be up to the fishermen themselves to see that they didn't get the oil in them. For a lot of fishermen with an outboard, they would throw the fish in the

boat, and the boat has no well or anything in it, and if there was a gasoline spill in the boat, of course the fish would lay in it. We have a well in our boat, so if there should be a gasoline spill from the outboards, the fish can't get near that gasoline.

Q: As soon as the shad come into the river and come up to spawn, how long will it be before the leave?

A: The big fish start right back out when they spawn. Of course, they are weak, and if the weather is a little bit warm, a lot of shad die; but if you have a rainstorm so the water gets real cool again the biggest part of those fish live and go right back to the sound. To this day, they don't know where the shad go from the time they come in the river and leave the river, where they go, but they have come to the conclusion that the shad go out into deep water after they leave the river to regain their strength.

Q: Perhaps in the neighborhood of 2 weeks?

A. From the time they spawn, it is probably around that time. They tag the shad now down in Saybrook where this new atomic plant is. Of course, the fishermen claim that if this new atomic plant -- of course we were all crossed up there with one of our former men from the Fish and Game. We claim that these shad won't come up the river and come through this warm water right where they will spawn. At that time, I won't hold back anyone's name, his name was Lionel Thorpe; he had gone to work for the atomic plant, so through his say-so, the State of Connecticut never really forced this thing, so that the government would make the atomic plant put in a cooler system down there. So the atomic power plant has taken a survey, and now this is their third year. From the time they tag these shad; they're tagged by Angelo Baldi, a man from the wild life survey, and also a man from the State of Connecticut. We have caught shad up at our place, and there is a plastic tag stuck in their back with a metal tube, and we have caught them up there, and they have been tagged about two days. Before that, we caught a shad that was tagged in Sandy Hook in two days' time. So a shad is a fast swimmer if he wants to be.

Q: Did your grandfather used to make his nets or tie his nets?

A: Sometimes, but the way we do now, of course it would take a long time. I can't prove it, but they used to say he would spend all winter netting his own nets. But you can buy your nets. We buy ours from Joseph Shea in Haddam, and then, of course, we would have to string them ourselves. The gill nets are nylon, whereas before it was all Irish liner, and before that it was cotton. Nylon does, of course, catch the fish. Of course, they came up with a (?) net, which the State still _____ (some remarks inaudible due to background noise.)

Q. Do you catch other fish in your nets?

A. Very few. Although we do catch quite a few striped bass. Of course, we have to let them go. Once in a while you get them tangled up in a gill net at night, and by the time you get one picked out, he would probably be all tangled up and tear half the net, so what we do we let the fish roll up in the net, and we're still taking a chance on having a warden there when we get back and arrest us. No, we don't try to take any. Once in a while one of the fellows would want one, and we'd save one for him, but most generally we'd let them go.

About the worse thing we catch in the net (of course, the State say they didn't do it, but we know they did) is a rock catfish. Four years ago they brought catfish from down South, put them in the river, and when they put those catfish in the fish were only between 4 and 5 inch long. In four years' time they have caught some of these catfish up around Enfield Dam and in Saybrook that have weighed from 24 to 25 pounds. We catch some of them down here, but nothing like Angelo Baldo has. Once they get in the ill net, the back horn (the same thing as a bullhead only the color) would go up straight, and the too side ones would go out like this, and it's impossible to get one out of the net.

So what we do, we take a pair of cutters and cut the fin. Last fall, in one drift, Angelo Baldo caught over 250 pounds of them, and he was all night and part of the next day picking them out of the net (laughter.)

Woman commentator: I can remember an experience with summer boats.

I used to go do n there end rent a boat, and we put clean fish boxes in the boats as as they had nothing to sit on, and we could only go along the edge of the river. It was absolutely fascinating – all of the wildlife we would see. We would go up as far as the weirs, and we saw the nesting place of the blue herons on the side of the river where a little brook comes into the river, Roaring Brook, over on the Glastonbury side, and oh, one would see so many animals.

Mr. Hale: What disappeared around there is the white egrets. Until about two or three years ago there used to be a flock of them, about 25 or 30 of them, that would stay around Meadowbrook but they haven't been there in about 2 or perhaps 3 years now.

Woman: They used to enjoy the pools that were left after the floods.

Mr. Hale: Another thing that has disappeared from the river is the northern pike, and now they are slowly disappearing.

Me. Hale:

We used to fish during the winter for suckers.

Woman: That was the fish that Jewish people used to come over and get.

Mr. Hale: Carp. We used to fish for suckers and perch, and stuff like that, and, of course,

the State used to buy all the perch and stock them.

But the Jewish people have even gotten away from eating the fish now. They're the same as everyone – they want it put right on their plates, whereas before they would spend the whole day cooking their fish.

And that's it.

Transcribed – April 1990

E.M. Rowe

Sprague, Albert- Sledding on Elm Street 100 Years Ago

My father, Albert William Sprague, was born May 26, 1897 in Portland, Maine of northern European stock, with some Maine Native American blood thrown in for good measure. I say good measure because by rights, his European ancestry should have produced a fair-skinned, blue eyed, blond haired person, but his hair was dark, his eyes were brown, and he never got sun-burned or had any need for sunglasses. In addition, his temperament was serene, and I can honestly say I never saw him lose his temper nor utter a profanity.

Shortly after he was born, the family moved to Hartford where he and his younger brother, Raymond, attended the Washington Street School. Moving to Rocky Hill soon thereafter the family bought a house at the present location of the town hall, where his father earned a living as a nurseryman, and also raised pigs. The location became known as Sprague's pig farm. Many of the large trees on Main Street and surrounding streets were planted by Albert's father, and some still stand, despite the ravages of the 1938 hurricane and similar storms. (The late Mrs. Kate Honiss on Pratt Street many years ago pointed out numerous trees on that street purportedly planted by Albert's father, Frank Sprague.)

Children of the early 1900's had to enjoy simple pleasures - my father remembered that rolling a hoop was a favorite pastime of many children. The hoop was the inner steel ring from a discarded wagon wheel. Bicycles were unaffordable for most of Rocky Hill's children. However, baseball and ice hockey were favorite sports for Albert and his friends just as they remain popular today.

One sport that certainly sounds as if it was more fun then than now was sledding. While today there are few hills left for such activities, in early Rocky Hill, before the Silas Deane Highway was built, my father and mother, as teenagers, would join others in sledding down Elm Street, from the very top of the hill by Gilbert's farm, all the way down to Glastonbury Avenue and ending at or out on the frozen river.

The trip back up the hill was often accomplished by hitching a tow from a horse and wagon. Their sleds were "pigstickers", wood sleds with wood runners turned up at the front but without a front crossbar, hence the term "pigsticker". The rider would lie on the sled and steering was accomplished by shifting bodyweight. Some larger families owned a "ripper", a long wood platform sitting a foot or so above the runners, on which half a dozen riders would sit and be steered by the driver who steered two short front runners via a steering wheel or handlebar.

Needless to say, this sport generated numerous stories which were told and retold. One of my mother's favorites was the time she and others were racing down Elm Street and

as they approached what is now the Silas Deane, two horses pulling a wagon were crossing their paths. Unable to stop, several pigstickers, including my mother's simply steered between the horses' legs and continued on down to the river.

After grammar school students fortunate enough to go on to high school attended Middletown High, and most traveled by train from the station at the bottom of Glastonbury Avenue. Albert graduated in 1916 at the top of his class, and soon thereafter entered the army. After the war ended he began his first and only job at the Aetna Fire Insurance Company, a career that spanned forty five years. He was a charter member of the Rocky Hill volunteer fire department, and having joined the Congregational Church in 1918, he was the oldest member, in length of service, when he died, having been a member for seventy nine years.

In the early 1900s, the Rocky Hill train station was a popular meeting place, as most everyone who worked in Hartford got to work and back by train, and walked from their house to the station. Later on, the trolley also served the town, and the tracks went right past his house. (Incidentally, as a teenager, I worked for Ernie Holmes one summer digging away the earth bank to create the Eastview Terrace entrance from Main Street, and dug into the "trolley graveyard" where junked trolley cars were dismantled and burned.) The trolley became a popular mode of transportation, and both my parents marveled at the speed of these vehicles when they got into the open fields away from Hartford, especially in "the cut" in Griswoldville, where the speed and rocking back and forth was sometimes terrifying.

During this period and continuing into the forties, entertainment revolved around family and friends, bridge clubs and setback clubs were popular and would meet at different member's houses each week.

In this period Albert and his wife Lorelda and moved into Lorelda's family home at 14 Washington Street to look after Lorelda's father who had become a widower. This house, which still survives, had been a sea captain's house located near the river, and had been moved by oxen to its present location. Supposedly, the house was placed sideways on the lot since that was simpler than turning it to face the street.

In later years my father and mother traveled extensively until he gave up driving at age eighty eight. He shoveled snow and mowed the lawn like a forty year old into his nineties, and if he hadn't contracted pneumonia three months short of his 100th birthday, he probably would have reached that century mark, and, who knows, he might even have witnessed his third century. Quite an experience!

Shipbuilding on the Connecticut River - Mrs. Clifford Kelsey

Parts of this are a tough read. I don't know if it was tape quality but much of the syntax is hard to figure out. The transcriber E.M. Rowe wrote that she transcribed it "...to the best of my ability." I suspect that she had trouble with it too. I've captured this text just as the transcriber wrote it down and leave it to you provide you own interpretation.

There's good stuff in here and it's worth the work. - RCH

Mrs. Clifford Kelsey

Jan. 12, 1966

My father has given this talk many, many times, and there were notes, also like this, and finally this is what he did in South Glastonbury. Mr. Williams had it printed for the Historical Society of Glastonbury in October, 1947, in their publication "Retrospect." So I will read this article first, but then I found there was a lot more about the Revolutionary shipbuilding in the notes, which are not quite as well written up to now, and also about the ships that were built here in Rocky Hill. So I will read the article and then add something more from these notes.

During the 1700, 1800, 1900 centuries there were shipyards all along the Connecticut River at least from Hartford to its mouth. In my memory, there were yards in Hartford, East Hartford, South Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, Guildersleeve, Portland, Middle Haddam, East Haddam, and Essex, and in earlier times there were many others.

Probably the first shipyard in Wethersfield and perhaps in the colony was established in 1648 by Thomas Denny⁹⁸ of Wethersfield, a ship carpenter, who was given a grant of land by the town by the landing place for his house and a work yard. This yard was maintained down to a date within the memory of people living around in 1887. Records show that Glastonbury had at least two shipyards - one was at Pratt's Ferry where ships were built for river and coastal trade. The site of this yard has disappeared due to the changes in the bed of the river. The other was at Log Landing in Nayaung at South Glastonbury. Here the Welles' and the Hollisters carried on operations, and history has it that Capt. Roswell Hollister during his long life, 1768-1842, built there 100 sails of vessel. The last craft to slide down the ways at Log Landing was a barge built by Deacon Martin Hollister in 1870.

In these many river shipyards, all types of vessels were built. And while the word "ship" was probably applied to vessels that were three-masted and square-rigged, it was also applied to crafts of all sizes and rigs. Here were constructed ships, pinks, scows, barks, ketches, rigs and schooners, many of them being of from 100 to 300 tons burden. The

⁹⁸ This is probably a typo. Most sources say Thomas Deming - RCH

Mayflower, with over 100 passengers, only registered 120 tons, and most of the vessels built on the river, while they were not as illustrious as the Mayflower, were about her size, Trim, staunch vessels--all of them, built of native oak, and they cruised the seven seas, carrying produce and manufactured goods to many ports.

My particular interest is in shipbuilding in Rocky Hill, as I lived there for more than 20 years. For written history about this, I am indebted to two men who have been gone these many years now -- Sherman W. Adams Wethersfield, and Dr. Rufus W. Griswold of Rocky Hill. Both were indefatigable and ardent in their efforts to dig up from all possible sources the early history of the old town of Wethersfield, of which Stepney Parish, later Rocky Hill, was a part (sic, from transcript.) Stepney Parish was the head of navigation for boats drawing much water, for a change in the river bed before 1700 in present Wethersfield necessitating abandonment of the public building place there, landing place there, and the change of the shipping place at Stepney (sic, from transcript.)

The town of Wethersfield, in December, 1672, when divide land on the east side of Rocky Hill, reserved 5 acres for the public use of the town in general, or for a common place or for building ships or other vessels. The site was on the Riverview Hill, north of railroad station, and most of the shipbuilding in early times may have been done there. But when the valley road was put through, it cut across the east side of the reserved property, and since then it has been a public park.⁹⁹ It is uncertain when shipbuilding began in Stepney, but probably not long after 1672, the date this reservation was made.

Commencement of the 18th century was then probable starting time, and around the middle of the century, up to and through the Revolutionary period, it had increased in importance.

Connecticut River shipbuilding had an important part in the Revolutionary War, and extent records tell of many ships built on the banks of the river that saw service of more or less value in the cause of the Patriots. The list of these is too long to be given here, but boats of all sizes and description built there had a part in the Revolutionary struggle. My great-grandfather, Richard Belden, Jr., was a shipbuilder in Rocky Hill, and he probably built the sloop, "Huron" in 1804; then the sloop "Harry" in 1807; and the sloop "Julia" in 1810. From 1750 to 1820 was the height of Stepney shipbuilding, and probably about 100 were built during that period. Mr. Charles Williams remembered that in 1814 there were six vessels on the stocks at one time. All these vessels cruised the seas, sailing to Caribbean ports, Bermuda, the Canaries, ports in Western Europe and to all seacoast places in the States, carrying horses, cattle, hogs, hay, hoop poles, barrel staves, salt beef, pork, fish, potatoes, onions and bricks for ballast. They brought back West Indies' goods - rum, brandy, wines, sugars, teas, molasses, salt, see coal (?), and

⁹⁹ I'm guessing she means the Valley Railroad, and the park is Shipyard Park, - RCH

domestic goods from U. S. ports. In these flourishing times there were eight or more stores about the Rocky mill landing, three shipyards, a rope-walk, and block and spar anchors (hangers). My own ancestors were vitally connected with the river shipbuilding, My great-grandfather, Simeon, and my grandfather, Seabury, at Middletown, while my Grandfather and my father, Eugene, ran a yard at Dutch Point in Hartford, and Rocky Hill. I have many recollections of my boyhood spent in and around the Rocky Hill Shipyard. Here I played with my boy friends, and here I watched the building of many kinds of vessels.

At first, sailing vessels were built - trim, two-masted schooners and sloops¹⁰⁰, followed by barges for carrying heavy merchandise, with now and then a ferry, a tug, or a pleasure boat on the weighs. The a last my father developed the building of derrick lighters¹⁰¹, and twin-screw lighters for the special purpose of making breakwaters, and when it was seen that wooden shipbuilding was doomed, we gave up shipbuilding and took up the breakwater building business, having constructed breakwaters from Bar Harbor, Maine, all along the New England coast, and as far as New York Harbor. This particular business I followed from 1910 to 1920.

How precious to me are the recollections of the building of these many vessels. I can see my grandfather working up the model of the boat to be built, and what care he took to design with good lines a bulkhead that would be strong and seaworthy. I still remember him laying out on the floor of the loft of the shipyard the forms from which the ship carpenters would fashion the frames of the boat. I remember my trips to Gilead and East Glastonbury while the timber was selected to build these frames, and the stamp and stern pieces, all of which were the firmest and finest, best oak. I had watched the ship carpenters by the hours, as entirely by hand they hewed out with ax and adze the pieces for the frames. I had seen them shoulder frames and planks, the latter which had been steamed in the steam-box so that they could make the bends in the bow and stern of the boat, carrying the planks, placing them on the sides of the boat, where they were fastened with tree (?) nails and iron bolts to give great strength. I have listened to the mallets of the corks, as they struck on cork to iron, by which the seams were filled with oakum to make them watertight. With the completion of the boat, the equipment called for good, strong, well-made anchors, and the Pratt Anchor Forges in South Glastonbury supplied these for many years. I still remember trips to the forges with my father, crossing the river on the ferryboats and (?) run by the old friends, Lin and Lyme (?) Kellam and Martin Hollister.

At the forge I watched men fashioning iron into great anchors, which would hold our

¹⁰⁰ A sloop has one mast which holds a triangular main sail and a forestay that holds a jib.

¹⁰¹ In maritime parlance, a lighter is a barge

boats through quiet weather and storm as well.

After the painting came launching day, and people from all around came to see the event. What a thrill it was when the last block or two was tripped: The boat shuddered a bit on her and started on her slide on the weighs down into the water. Fortunate indeed was I to have been born a shipbuilders son, and to have had all these interesting experiences. But with the dying of wooden shipbuilding, because of the use of steel, came the disappearance of shipbuilding in Connecticut, and finally from Southern New England; and although the late war brought a considerable revival of the construction of sub-chasers, mine-sweepers and other war craft, it is hoped this brief account will help the reader to cherish the traditions and memories of those who labored all around us during the past years in the shipbuilding industry. Then I told Mr. Harry that I couldn't have spoken entirely from the notes because they are not that complete, but my father, when he gave his talk in Glastonbury, gave a lot more details, and I thought some of these would add to that, because it doesn't tell that much about the details of it, so I thought I could read part of this.

My father was pleased to go to South Glastonbury to talk because he had been over there so much on the ferry, and he didn't know anything about North Glastonbury, but he did say that his father used to take the horse and buggy across on the ferry and ride up to Hartford on the west side of the river, to get a different drive to Hertford.

I'll read from here. It says "Boyhood days spent in Rocky Hill with hours spent on the ferry boat, tramps with boyfriends down toward Tryon town and up through the dried out road, hunting for arbutus¹⁰² in the spring and for chestnuts in the fall. Roaring Brook that in the spring really roared. That's in South Glastonbury.

"When in my bed on the hill in Rocky Hill, I could lie and listen to the water coursing down the stream.

I was quite interested in these notes on a ship because I heard he told about the different vessels. "A ship applied to vessels-- these were three masts and also it was applied to vessels of all sizes end rigs. The Mayflower with over 100 passengers only registered 120 tons burden. Three-masted vessels of the period - pink, scow and barks. A "pink" is a square-rigged, and some smaller than the ship; scow - nearly bark rig; bark - smaller than other three-masted vessels or two-masted vessels, the ketch is very much like the brigantine of present day, and schooner came into use in a later period. Clipper ship "Red Ranger" built in Thomaston, Maine, 2,300 tons. Probably the first shipyard in Wethersfield and perhaps in the colony was established in 1648 by Tomas Denny of

¹⁰² Any of several temperate ericaceous shrubs of the genus **Arbutus**, esp the strawberry tree of S Europe. They have clusters of white or pinkish flowers, broad evergreen leaves, and strawberry-like berries

Wethersfield, a ship carpenter, who was granted land by the town by the landing place, both for his house and for a work yard. This yard maintained down to a date within the memory of people living around 1887. It was said Glastonbury had at least two ship yards. "(I think I said that before.)

Then I was very interested in what my father had found out about the shipbuilding in the Revolution. The Connecticut River shipbuilders had an important part in the Revolutionary War, on the extent records tell of many ships, built, along the banks of the river, that saw service of more or less value to the cause of the Patriots. I did not know what part any of my ancestors had in the building of any of these boats, but my Revolutionary grandfather, Richard, Sr., was a shipman's carpenter in Rocky Hill, and as some of the boats used were built in Rocky Hill yards, quite possibly he may have worked on some of them.

In the campaign of 1776, during the hot days of August, immediately preceding the battle of Long Island, when Connecticut was pressing all of its militia and every ounce of ammunition into New York City, then immediately threatened by the British fleet, reserve records show how a militia company of Wethersfield men came to New York as passengers on a Wethersfield sloop, owned and commanded by one of their number. Little is known what happened to these men, but at a troop muster roll of passengers of sloop men from Connecticut to New York, Lemuel Deming, master of a sloop, vouches for patriotism of men who went - 72 men on the list making up half of Capt. Haymer's¹⁰³ (?) militia company. An authority of pirates had a ship built, probably in Rocky Hill, on where more shipbuilding was then carried on then the cove in Wethersfield. Vessel may have been sloop "Revenge", sloop "Lash" (?) one of many privateers, Capt. Thomas Newsome (I have picture of him I'll show you later) said to have been a harsh man, commanded her.

Then, this is from Littlebrookes' Maritime Connecticut during the American Revolution:

Lash, sloop, Continental Navy done when the Revolution started -first armed vessels purchased by Connecticut were Brigantine "Minerva" and sloop "Spy."

Some more of the ships that were bought— —Jason's brigantine. One is built end owned by Capt. William Griswold of Rocky Hill. Capt. Ward Tryon built and owned, built at Rocky Hill, a brigantine. Capt. Tryon Also commanded a Connecticut 24 (I can't read my father's writing) built in Guildersleeve or East Middletown, as it was then called, to the above list to be added the names of many more boats of all sizes and descriptions that had part in the Revolutionary struggle. (I must not dwell on it now.) I don't know whether this is different -

¹⁰³ May be Hamner, an old Wethersfield name.

second yard at Rocky Hill at mouth of Hog Brook, south of present railroad station. Here Mr. John Williams about 1797 began building ships. This yard is of special interest to me personally, for it was the place where some 75 years later my grandfather and father started their shipyard. Richard Belden, Jr., my great-grandfather, was a shipbuilder in Rocky Hill, and probably built sloop "Huron" (I'm repeating), Harry" and "Julia.

I don't know whether I told the name of some of the other shipbuilders in Rocky Hill: Capt. Gideon Goodrich, who died in 1769; his brother Oliver, Sr., who died in 1780; and Capt. Moses Williams, died 1810, and many others. Now Moses Williams was on mother's side of the family, so I didn't know that they had things to do with ship building.

I said that from 1750 to 1820 was the height of Stepney shipbuilding.

(I guess that most of this is repeated now.)

Pictures were then shown, mostly of family members, but I am including some comments as they applied to some former Rocky Hill residents - EMR. This is my grandfather, Eugene Belden, who lived on Riverview St., and who was in charge of the shipyard.

**** My grandmother, Alice Hubbard Cole Belden-(was my name). They were very good to me. They took me all kinds of places. I was the oldest grandchild.**

When they lived on Riverview St. they had both my great-grandmother Nancy Hubbard Cole, and her sister, Aunt Hannah Hubbard, living with them, and these two women pieced quilt after quilt, patchwork, and we have quite a few of them that were made up, but we still have trunks (?). If any of you would like one, I'll give you one, because I haven't even used the ones that were completed.

****This is the Kelly home, which was next. Of course, the Kelly's lived upon Elm Street later.**

****My mother and my Aunt Bessie Williams, are nieces of Mrs. Ella Churchill of Elm St. That's where my mother met my father. They played tennis S L L S out in front of the old Williams homestead outside the fence were there were two rows of Elm trees. My mother seated on the ground, and my Aunt Bessie Williams standing.**

****That is the George Belden home. They are not related to my Belden family at all, but they were very good friends.**

**** This is Esther Belden, George Belden's daughter. I think she was pretty much the age of my Uncle Clifford Belden, who was 6 years younger than my father. My father was born in 1871 and my uncle was born in 1876, think, in Rocky Hill.**

**This is George Bulkeley's house. Of course, my family saw a lot of George Bulkeley over the years because he was in insurance, and my father was in Hartford Fire for quite a while. Then all the Bulkeley boys came to Hartford to work in the insurance companies too.

**That's the river where my father spent lots of his time. Does that look familiar, from the top of the hill?

I guess my family were the last people to use the shipyard, weren't they?

**There's sailing on the Connecticut River

**This is one of the ships in the shipyard. You can see them working on the bow of the boat. My father didn't have many pictures of boats about then.

**This is my father sitting at the rock over Roaring Brook falls, where they had the forge where the anchors were built, across the river in South Glastonbury.

The camera and tripod – these were taken on glass plates, like the old fashioned photographers.

**Now we're up on Elm St. at the Williams' homestead, and that's Mrs. Moses Williams, my mother's great - grandmother. You see the old fence on Elm St. The Churchill's house, yes.

**That is Moses Williams. That toward the ell part of the house. Of course, the Churchills added - Frank's family getting so large, so it, went up two stories.

**There is the old barn where my Great-grandfather Williams, and the old horse and wagon. I remember that grapevine growing up on the side of that bar until it was torn down when they finally built Edward Churchill's house right there. You know we always came to the farm. We spent a lot of time down there. We liked all the grapes, the apples, the cherries, corn, peaches.

**More photos of the Roaring Brook Falls. Some of my father's best pictures. This is one of the other side of the fall. My father must have had time when they were over there getting anchors. Maybe they were over there on a picnic, who knows. They picnicked all over the place here.--Dividend woods.

**This is the flume at Roaring Brook. Wasn't there a mill down below that was run by (?) Looks like a mill down below.

Pictures of the Ferry are in the book. My father was very fond of wandering in the meadows and took a lot of his best pictures down there. He wasn't surprised when he graduated from Hartford High School in 1890, and the prophecy said he was going to be a photographer.

More family pictures were shown.

Transcribed by E. M. Rowe (To the best of my ability.)

May, 1990

Sword, John & Midge

Rocky Hill Histories Interviewed for the Rocky Hill Historical Society Transcription
November, 2005

It's October 13, 2005, and our visit today is with **John** A. Sword of 663 Brook Street, Rocky Hill and with us is **John's** wife "Midge", actually Mildred Ruth Sword.

Question John, when and where were you born and brought up?

John: I was born October 24, 1925 in the town of Flushing, Long Island, New York. I came to Rocky Hill in 1948 to work for Gardner's Nursery on Brook Street.

Question What did you do at Gardner's Nursery?

John: Horticultural work. Orchard and nursery stock...apple orchards.

Question How did you happen to find out about Gardner's from Long Island to Rocky Hill?

John: My father-in-law was the next door neighbor of Marshall Gardner on Main Street in Cromwell. He lived on the Gardner homestead. I was twenty-two years old... I was a pup. We were married and living in Long Island...Flushing, Long Island.

Question How had your parents made a living?

John: My dad was a printer for the New York Herald Tribune. My mother was a stay at home Mom. I had one sister and she also lived at home. My sister is younger and her name is Helen. Now she's in Ohio.

Question What got you interested in horticulture?

John: I enjoyed working outside.

Question And did you get schooling for that?

John: No, no formal schooling. WWII had ended and I came out of the Navy and I wanted to go into the horticultural type of work. Well, what brought us up here to Rocky Hill is that we visited Midge's father in Cromwell Christmas of 1947 and I met Marsh Gardner who was a neighbor of Midge's father and he was saying that they were looking for a man to come to work for them. And I said, "I was anticipating going to school for horticulture." And he said, "Hell, you're not going to learn nothing at school. Come and work for me." And that's how I wound up at Gardner's Nursery.

Question And what were the first kinds of things that you did?

John: I did everything and anything they told me to do: Empty the "G.I." can...that's a trash can. I just did anything you did on a farm, just like you do round your house. You had to empty the GI can, you paint the windows, and you maintain the farm. You do

farm work.

Question How much hands-on with the plants or the produce did you have?

John: Well, we propagated and we harvested both. We harvested 140,000 bushel of apples. They were put in cold storage and the market was sold Boston market, New York market, Worcester market, Springfield market...anybody who wanted to buy apples, we sold them wholesale.

Question And, how long did you stay with Gardner?

John: Fifty. I went to work in 48 and I retired formally in 1989, and I went back to work for them seasonally until the year 2003. I commuted back and forth to work on my bicycle all those years.

Question Did you progress in your farming skills?

John: Oh yeah. Sure. Sure. I did other things. I did anything that Gardner's requested me to do. I dug trees. I operated farm equipment. I also did shipping of nursery stock...anything to do on a farm. On a farm you do anything and everything. We graded apples.

Question It was exclusively produce? There weren't animals or livestock on the farm?

John: We had mules and horses for cultivation of nursery stock originally, and then we went to completely mechanized with tractors, and that was one reason you had to have trees lined up straight, because tractors cannot walk around shrubs like farm animals can do...a horse or a mule. But everything was all completely mechanized when I left the farm.

Question You said you would ship trees and things. Did they sell all across the country?

John: Our market went as far as St. Louis, Missouri. We sold all New England, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Gardner's is located at Brook Street, Rocky Hill, right across from Trout Brook Crossing. It still functions. When I first came on the farm, they had 450 acres of apple orchard, 150 acres of nursery stock. When I left the farm, we were 2000 acres of nursery stock and we had gone out of the apple business in 19...Um, let's see what year did we build? We built in 1958 (Midge: 1957)...in '57. Mr. Gardner majored in "palmology" at agricultural school at Storrs which is now presently UCONN but at that time it was only a two-year school. And we went out of the apple business in 1957 when he passed away. As a matter of fact, I chopped down the last apple tree and that's the day he died.

Question Where did you go on to after?

John: I stayed right here on Brook Street and we raised nursery stock, because nursery stock was more profitable than an essential commodity. In other words, you make more

with a luxury than you do with a staple such as an apple.

Question What is your association with the Collins Farm and the Collins family?

John: When I first came to Rocky Hill I lived on Cromwell Avenue which is commonly known as The Shunpike. We lived at what they call the West Lot and the Collins Farm was across the street and that was a dairy farm and where Century Hills is now that was all the Collins Farm and Gardner's Nursery was on the other side of it. We had 75 acres of apple orchard there, we had 45 acres over at the West Lot next to the Veterans' Hospital, and the balance of the apple orchard was over in East Hampton, Marlborough and Colchester. It was located three towns, three counties: towns of East Hampton, Marlborough, and Colchester; the counties of New London County, Hartford County, and Middlesex County.

Question Now, when you're saying "we" is that still the Gardners?

John: That's the Gardners. I'm sorry if I refer to (laughs)...I guess after you work a while you get to be part of the family.

Midge: Anytime they're looking for history of Gardner's they call **John** up.

Question And is there a connection between Gardners and Collins?

John: Marsh Gardner married Ruth Collins. The Collins family, Bill Collins and ... what was Mrs. Collins' first name?

Midge: Ann.

John: Ann and Bill Collins, Sr. were our neighbors, also, across the street and they had five daughters and two sons. So with the result that five daughters are presently...well, Ruth Gardner married Marshall Gardner, Dottie Collins married Clifford Canfield, Ann King or, I should say, Ann Collins married Ray King, and Lydia Collins married Bob Rhodes, and Peggy Collins married Russ Stickles, and they are still living in Rocky Hill.

Question All of them?

John: All of them with the exception of Ruth who passed away about two years ago.

Midge: Actually, Dot lives in Wethersfield.

John: Yeah, Dot lives just at the Wethersfield/Rocky Hill line.

Question Did any of them stay in the farming industry?

John: Bill Collins, Jr. took over his uncle's dairy farm which is adjacent to Bill's farm on the corner of Brook and Cromwell Avenue. The Collins continued in that Bill Collins, Jr. was into market gardening. Bill, Jr. just passed away about two years ago...three years ago...at about the age of 81 or 82. As a matter of fact, Ruth and Bill were both born in the same year: 1920. Bill was born in January of 1920 and Ruth was born in December of

1920. So they were fairly close, needless to say. (Chuckles) As I say Ruth married Marsh Gardner so she was in farming as far as the nursery was concerned. And Bill continued on with the dairy farm. He then turned the farm over to his son, Christopher. Christopher has since had a shock or a stroke and his son Bill, who was named after his grandfather, is now running the farm with his wife, Mary. Chris is incapacitated now because of having the stroke. It's still a farm. They're no longer in the dairy business, they're now in the market garden type of farming, raising vegetables and selling their vegetables wholesale.

Question How has Rocky Hill altered since you arrived here in '48?

John: Well, when I first arrived here in 48 I wasn't even known by my name. I was known as "that New Yorker out on Cromwell Avenue", and they still consider me a pilgrim. My son is a native of Rocky Hill, but I'm still a pilgrim, was not a native of Rocky Hill. As I say, we arrived in 1948. Rocky Hill was a nice little sleepy town. We had a population of about 3500. It was mostly dairy farming The center of Rocky Hill was located right around the Congregational Church, the Town Hall was right across the street on Church Street. The Town Hall consisted of the library and the town hall. It was encompassed all in one building. We had one variety store. We used to call it Brown's Variety Store and it had a soda fountain in it. That's where I picked up my paper on Sunday after church.

Midge: One traffic light.

John: One traffic light. That was in the center of town. At Brown's I used to pick up my morning newspaper.

Question Was it a Connecticut paper?

John: It was a Connecticut paper. The Hartford Courant and the Hartford Times. We also had a pharmacy and that was located on Silas Deane. We had several grocery Stores: There was Bullock's and Grasso's. We had a First National: which was a one man operation and that was run by a guy by the name of Dittman...Charlie Dittman and his wife's name was Eunice Dittman and that was First National which is now, I think [Saint] Rita's Bakery. That was where the First National was located. ...Then we had Caruso's service station which is now a transmission garage.

Question Most of the homes in town were related to people who worked on the farms?

John: No, most of the people in town were "bedroom" people. They earned their living in Hartford. Most of them involved with insurance. As I say we had about 26 farms. I can't remember all of them: Meisterling is no longer, it was on France Street. That was dairy; Bombanti's was dairy; Smith was dairy; Krol was dairy; Schultz was dairy. That's five alone that were located just on France Street. Then, we have Gilbert on Elm Street; Robbins on Main Street, which is now "Old" Main Street; the Newman farm was located

where Big Y is located now. St. James Church is located where the Annulewicz farm was. There was Sunny Crest Dairy which was the Griswold family on Parsonage Street. Rocky Hill High School and Griswold Junior High are located on what was part of Sunny Crest. The family homestead is still there and Martin Smith now owns it and lives there.

Question Now, Gilbert, Collins and Gardner are all surviving. Are any of the others surviving?

John: Gilbert's isn't...Well, there is a Gilbert. On the corner is Leland Gilbert which has a couple of cows on it. Whether he is still selling milk I'm not sure, but his daughter has a little nursery stand. I know they've got cows, now whether it's just for home consumption or for sale. We have one farm located on Brook Street and that's Steve Matway and I think he's still producing a little milk, but he sells it wholesale to another dairy.

Midge: If this interview had been done five years ago you would have had Bill Collins, and Charlie Gilbert, and

John together they could have named right off...

John: Well, and also Jarvis Gilbert...If Jarvis were alive... Who you ought to talk to is Leland Gilbert. He's right on the corner. As I say his daughter has her own nursery there.

Question Thank you, right now I'm pleased to be talking with you. Just back to the Collins' a little bit, you said some of them are still involved in it, but some of them have gone on to do other things?

John: Well, all the girls actually they're not into farming. They all married other people who weren't in the farming industry Jim Collins, he passed away. He worked on the farm for his brother for a while, but he passed away when he was in his early forties.

Question What do you like most about working on the farm?

John: You're your own man.

Question Ah, the trees don't give you orders?

John: No, I just like farming. I couldn't be confined to a desk. I've got to be able to see things around me. I just like working outdoors.

Question Is there anything about it you don't like or what do you like least about that life?

John: Well, the toughest part is the element of weather, but you get to live with it.

Question Are you still working in the farming area?

John: No, I just have a yard and my piece of property is an acre and a half. And my

garden is 50 by 200, so I feed the woodchucks, chipmunks, squirrels, neighbors, postmen and myself (Midge: And Gardners) And Gardners I take a little bit of produce...one reason that makes it easy for farming a garden of that size, when I left Gardner's I told Jack my retirement was using his equipment. I worked for four generations of Gardners: Roscoe Gardner, Marshall and Roscoe, Jr., Jack Gardner, and now, Douglas and Adam.

Question That's quite a legacy.

Midge: In farming you don't have any pension.

Question Midge and John, did you have children?

John: We have a son. He's now living in North Carolina. He's in the ministry and working with emotionally disturbed and battered children in North Carolina. He didn't take up the vocation of farming. He worked on the farm until he was sixteen and then he went to work for George Emmanuel at his...he liked actually working on cars and equipment, so he went to work at South End [Auto] Body. Then when he went off to college because of his knowledge working on cars, it came in handy earning extra money when he was on campus...He then graduated college, went to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, he also attended University of Pittsburg and when he graduated from there he wound up with two Masters: Masters of Divinity and Masters of Social Work.

Question I can tell by how you speak about him you're not sorry he didn't go into farming.

John: I wanted him to be an entomologist, but I guess he couldn't see it. (Laughs)

Question When Peter was growing up did his friends and he all work on the farm?

John: No, just Peter and Mark Gardner, they worked on the farm. They started working on the farm when they were about twelve years old, the two of them. They were classmates and good buddies. Mark Gardner is living out in Litchfield and he is in the nursery business out in Litchfield.

Question I know that farming is long hours, but what kinds of entertainment things would you do in Rocky Hill in 1948 and on?

John: We were involved mostly as far as entertainment goes with the church work and with the Couples Club. When we were putting the addition on to the Congregational Church, we got together with people.

Question When was that?

John: In 1948. (Midge: Well, it started in 48.) It started in '48. Then I went back on active duty in the Navy for two years during the Korean Conflict and when we got back we'd

get together with people playing cards in the evening. That'd be about it and going to dance functions. Like the Masons used to throw an annual dance down at the Grange Hall. Other than that, that would be about it, I guess. When you're working a minimum of 55 hours a week, I didn't have much time for social visits. Now, I stayed in the Reserve Program, so with the result my vacation time was spent on two weeks active duty for training, and then one weekend a month drilling at the Reserves.

Question Was work on the farm seasonal? In the wintertime were there also things that you did on the farm?

John: Oh, yeah. You worked all year round.

Question What kinds of things would you do in the winter?

John: In the wintertime you graded apples; in cold storage, with the temperature at 35 degrees, because you didn't want the apples to sweat. You had to maintain a constant temperature.

Question When you say you "graded" them, what...?

John: You graded them for marketing. There are various grades of apples. You took out the bad from the good, and they were sized. Then we had to propagate the nursery stock in the greenhouse.

Midge: Then, they went out of the apple business.

John: Then, we went out of the apples business and it was strictly propagation of nursery stock until we could set the stuff out in the fields in the summertime and in the spring. Then all winter long if we weren't propagating, I was repairing tractors, servicing equipment. So, you're a mechanic and a farmer both.

Question How many folks worked on the farm at that time?

John: At that time, let's see, a total of both office personnel and ... about twenty-five. After we got rid of the apples, it went down to, I say, about fifteen.

Midge: And then you had seasonal help you hired.

John: And then seasonal help we hired from spring to Fall. They got laid off around Thanksgiving.

Question You mentioned that you were in the Service. What was that like for you?

John: I enjoyed that. That was my social outlet. I enjoyed the Navy. If I hadn't gotten married, I probably would have stayed on active duty the entire time. It was a good fraternity

Question You served during World War Two?

John: I served during World War Two, then came out...another reason I joined the Reserves was at the time I started to work on the farm we weren't covered by Social Security, and so to have a little bit of a pension, I joined the Naval Reserves and stayed with the program until July of 1975, until it gave me a cumulative retirement of 32 years, both regular and reserve time.

Question After a while, did farm workers start to get Social Security benefits?

John: Farm workers started getting Social Security around 1951 or '52, I think it was. Mr. Gardner used to worry about, "What if you didn't live to be 65, who collected that money?" He didn't like the idea of Social Security. He was an independent, Yankee thinker.

Question What does that mean to you when you say "independent, Yankee thinker"?

John: I was all for it. I admired the man. He was great. He was honest as the day is long and his sons were the same way, and his grandson and his great-grandchildren.

Question Is that a value you also tried to instill in Peter?

John: I tried to instill it in Peter, yes. He has a good work ethic.

Question Tell me some adventure that you've had.

John: During WWII, I happened to be onboard a cruiser, and we got torpedoed, and I managed to survive that.

Midge: Eighteen hours in the water.

John: I spent a little time in the water until...they picked me up.

Question Did I hear Midge say "18 hours"...a "little time" in the water? Was it cold water?

John: No, it was warm water. Everyone asks me, "Did I see any sharks?" Well, didn't see any sharks. I wasn't looking for any sharks.

Question What year?

John: The first torpedo hit us the night of October 14" and the second torpedo hit us the 16" of October of 1944. Then I had to go over the side.

Question Was that kind of an early birthday present for you?

John: Yeah, I guess I was going to be 19 in a few days. It was exciting and then I came back and had 30 days survivor leave then I went back out to the Pacific on an aircraft carrier and we steamed around for a while and then the war ended. I think one of the big adventures on board The Houston, that was my first ship, was when we went through the Panama Canal. When the war ended we wound up on a detail they called

“Magic Carpet” and we converted the aircraft carrier into a troop carrier and we brought all the troops back from the Pacific. Then when that terminated, I guess it was around March of 1946, they then sent us through the Panama Canal again and I wound up in Norfolk, VA and while we were in Norfolk, VA they transferred the ship to Boston, MA, and I then met...when we were in Boston, joke with Midge, the ship stayed in port too long. All this time I was always steaming and didn’t have a time to court a young lady. I met Midge and I courted her...I picked her up in Boston Common. They had a “buddies club” at USO. I courted her for two and a half months and we were engaged in July and we were married January 19, 1947. Midge: It may not last.

John: We'll be celebrating our 59" wedding anniversary this coming January. As far as the Navy's concerned, I joined the Navy when I was a kid of seventeen. I joined the Navy to see the world. My dad, as a matter of fact, was in the Navy. He retired as a Chief Boatswains Mate. He went in the Navy in 1916. He was involved in the Nicaragua campaign of 1916, WWI, WWII, and the Korean War. So, I guess you could call me a Navy brat. That was one of the reasons I went into the Navy. Dad was in the Pacific when I enlisted and I met him in Pearl Harbor in 1944, just before the invasion of the Marianna Islands which encompassed Guam and Saipan. I had been involved in various invasions until the Philippines when we were torpedoed.

Question You survived the torpedoing, were you injured at all?

John: No, I wasn't injured. Amen. We lost 75 men on board. [Inaudible] Because of serving on so many ships, I belong to three ships' associations: The USS Houston (CL81), The USS Kula Gulf (CVE108), which is a jeep carrier, and a destroyer, USS Harold J. Ellison (DD864). That is what Midge and I have been doing for vacations. We've been going to ships' reunions. It was great seeing old shipmates... We have to look at name tags [to recognize each other.] When we got hit, I was on the 40 millimeter anti-aircraft battery. One of the men got injured; his name was Wolf and he came from Canton, Ohio. I can't remember his first name. We were all addressed by our last names. No one was addressed by their first name as far as enlisted personnel. His last name was Wolf. I was assigned, when we had to abandon ship, to take care of him. So I managed to get ahold of a battle lantern. This was a lantern that we had aboard ship so when the main lights went out, it was like a big super flashlight. So I said to Wolf, “When we go over the side, we'll take this flashlight so that in case it's night...we'll get someone to pick us up, we'll turn the flashlight on.” I tied a knot onto the flashlight, it had a handle, and we both went over the side. But we had very rough seas, as a matter of fact a typhoon was coming up, so therefore ocean was very rough. We had no sooner got in the water when we got separated. I felt very bad 'cause he was injured. I sort a fell down on the job, not taking care of him. But, I got picked up and unbeknownst to me, he got picked up. When

I got back to Pearl, he was there and I felt better about it. We both got picked up by two different ships. The destroyer that picked me up was The Grayson, destroyer 435 named after Admiral Grayson who was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's physician and so therefore they named the Grayson after him. So, when my son was born, his middle name is Grayson. (Midge) I thought it was President Wilson's physician. **John** I think you're right. Grayson was President Wilson's physician.

Question But you honored the ship that picked you up by giving your son that middle name. It's a happy ending that the other man was rescued also and that you saw each other when you got to Pearl.

[Conversation continues about other events during **John's** service in the Navy.]

Question With all that has happened in your life, what would you consider your big accomplishment?

John: I'm just an average guy doing an average thing. Midge and I have traveled to the United Kingdom and Ireland. We've been eight times. I love the people. They're great. They're so friendly. I would never stay at a hotel or motel. We've always done the bed and breakfast thing... stayed at farms. The people are just so down to earth. We feel a connection there. We've traveled all through Europe: Luxembourg, France, Germany Holland, Austria, and Switzerland. I didn't care for The Mediterranean. I did two tours in The Mediterranean and I didn't particularly care...I went as far as Istanbul, Turkey.

[Further discussion of experiences in the Navy, e.g., being aboard a British ship; NATO exercises off Londonderry, Ireland; communication challenges among Canadians and seamen of other dialects from throughout the British Isles; "wee dram" and lack of heat aboard British ship; retirement as a Chief Petty Officer (Chief Radar man).] END

The Rocky Hill Historical Society is very grateful for the time and memories shared

by John A. Sword and "Midge" Sword for the Rocky Hill Oral History Program.

Titcomb, Vivian Lowe – Teaching Memories

This is a transcription of a handwritten document created by Vivian Titcomb Lowe, a retired Rocky Hill school teacher. She retired in 1972.

This is a brief outline of my 19 ½ years of teaching in various Rocky Hill elementary schools.

My introduction to the town began the last week of August, 1957 when I arrived from an orientation and meeting with Olaf Aho, the Superintendent.

It was quite a shock to learn I was to teach only ½ day and be in the then High School. The morning session was for third grade Miss Lucille Reluga as teacher. The afternoon session started at 12:15 with my grade using the same room.

The second surprise came the first day of school. There was not bit of fourth grade material to be found in the building nor in the town. Well – I always wanted to know how I would teach without materials. I learned quickly, it can be done.

Miss Reluga was very well organized and a big help. She showed me which half of the counter I could use; which half of the desk was mine; which drawers I could use; loaned me half of her supplies; and divided the desks & chairs so we had our own.

All went surprisingly well. Mr. Quigley, the principal set up a schedule so none of his students came in contact with mine.

But as January approached, many parents became perturbed over the children getting out so late, 4:30, in the dark. We had no problem, however.

When moving day arrived, G. Fox ¹⁰⁴ furnished shopping bags for each child. All belongings were packed in the bags and the children boarded the school bus for the new Myrtle H. Stevens School.

The saying, “The only constant is change” surely applied to me. I moved 4 times to various places then 3 times within West Hill.

Overcrowding at MHS (Myrtle H. Stevens) necessitated one teacher to move. I was assigned a fifth grade and spent one year at the junior high school. It was a very good year with much help from all the other teachers.

The next fall I had a room at MHS with a fourth grade. Then, once again, MHS was overcrowded. Three of us were housed around the town. Leda Humphrey to the fire house – grade 5. Another teacher, whose name I forget, was upstairs in the roof-leaking church – grade five, and my class in the basement of Town Hall.

¹⁰⁴ A major Hartford department store for most of the 20th century.

Recesses were spent at the Town Hall, utilizing the parking lot. Our spring festival was a tremendous success. The students practiced & waited in my room. Parents sat in folding chairs outside. It was hot but breeze kept it comfortable. Each group preformed then returned to the basement.

Two humorous things stand out in my mind. The second day in the basement classroom I noticed the boys across the back of the room snickering. Upon looking out the window, I discovered the secretaries going down the fire escape affording the boys quit a view. I lost no time in moving the desks.

The second event happened about mid-October. Of course, it was always damp but comfortably warm. The class had done a large mural connected with our history. It was glued across the back of the wall. I was at the front of the room and heard a crackling sound and screams form the students in front of the mural. Low & behold – the whole thing had fallen down on the children. The walls were too damp to permit anything to be mounted on them.

For music, I carried my toy three octave organ down there. I think every member of the class played (or tried to) it during indoor recess.

I believe the year was '70 – '71 because Linda and I earned our Master's Degree from Central Conn.

My last years were spent at West Hill. I moved from the blue unit to the purple unit. I really felt the open classroom concept to be the best learning situation for the children that I ever taught in.

The many field trips I took with each of my classes remain firm in my mind. Mystic Seaport was especially educational and exciting. Among other trips were Sturbridge Village; fire house; newspaper office (the children loved all the free paper given them); and other business. The telephone company furnished us with phones so the class could practice proper use of phones.

And then in May came the all-day field trip in which the students competed in all the athletic activities they had drilled all year.

My most exciting and touching evening was my farewell party given me by the PTA with Andrea Graffam as coordinator.

I sincerely loved my years in Rocky Hill and nurture fond memories of all the wonderful people there.

Now I'm 80 years old and still doing volunteer work. I've been teaching English to "speakers of other languages" but will stop this year.

Vivian Titcomb Lowe

Williams, Alice B.

Transcription of RH Historical Society Audio Tape Alice B. Williams

02/04/1965

Interviewer: "We are visiting Miss Alice B. Williams at 174 Elm Street in Rocky Hill; this being February 4, 1965. With me is Reverend Arthur Weil who is helping in making this recording."

"Miss Williams would you be willing to tell us a little about your life in Rocky Hill and your memories of Rocky Hill and the community, your family, your ancestors? Did you go to school in Rocky Hill?"

Miss Williams: "Well, my ancestors were among the earliest settlers in this town and had been Williams' in my line all these years. My Grandfather Williams was a deacon in the church for over 30 years. His wife came from the Thomas Danforth family in Rocky Hill. This same grandfather taught navigation in The Academy, now the Historical Society building.

My father was born in Rocky Hill, left when he was 18 years old, but came back when he was retired. So, my recollections go back to the time when I was 8 years old.

I went first to the West School in Rocky Hill in the western part of the town, the geographical center of the state. It was a red brick building entered with a huge brass key, seven inches long. The room...one room had a wood burning box stove in the center surrounded with double desks and benches, very crudely made, painted grey; probably the work of some local carpenter. These were later replaced with adjustable desk and chairs.

The parents furnished the textbooks for the children. Older children had histories, geographies, arithmetics (sic), but the younger children had just one book a year. The first grade owned one book which they read over and over and probably memorized most of the selections. I remember distinctly the fourth grade reading books which had some really worthwhile material in it. Some of the selections that I remember are The Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Andersen, A Man's Lost Life in Prison and a short selection from The Merchant of Venice. A short poem that I remember without having seen the book for over 70 years,

(Recites)

Traveler by the trammel-side
You who wander far and wide
Tell me since you yearly go
Where the Sweetest roses blow

Where be what you call the fairest land
Hereby 'tis, near and far
It is where friends and loved ones are
Though a desert on its face
Though it be a little space
Where your friends and loved ones stand

From the West School I went to the Center School now the building where the Historical Society meets. That was a big room that had been divided: the larger part for the big pupils, the small section for little children. That was the heyday of autograph albums and strings of unusual memory buttons. Three of the teachers I remember distinctly: Lottie ... who lived in the Thomas Danforth house; Jane ... who married Monroe Crane, the Town clerk; and Florence Morton, the sister of Mrs. Frank Roberts.

At the South School in Hartford where I had my grammar school they not only had spelling matches, but matches for the dates of the admission of the states into the Union, and for the terms and dates of the Presidents of the United States.

In the early... 1890's, I was the only one in town who graduated from high school. At that time, my father paid for my tuition, my transportation and, finally, for my board. Some contrast to today where everybody goes to high school at town expense and where almost everybody goes to college."

Interviewer: "Miss Williams, when I entered your house a few minutes ago, I noticed hanging on the wall, a picture of a schooner, the Henry A. Deming. Is that schooner by any chance related to your family history? Could you tell us something about it?"

Miss Williams: "That schooner, of which I have a large painting, is the Henry A. Deming built in East Haddam, CT for my grandfather, Captain Frank Boardman. The flags were given by Mr. Henry A. Deming of Wethersfield and carried...and the boat carried his name. Mr. Deming was a grandfather of Mrs. Robert Mason of Rocky Hill.

The Boardman home in East Haddam was on the river within sight of the river and the sound of its boats. Communication was difficult then. When a family heard a boat whistle on the river, one of the children would rush down to call, "Have you seen the Henry A. Deming? Have you seen the Henry A. Deming?"

Captain Frank Boardman had a grandfather in Rocky Hill, Captain Jason Boardman who lived on what is now Old Main Street. It was called the Long House, really two small houses that were joined. The unusual feature being that you could not go from one side to the other without going out of doors.

Captain Jason Boardman was married twice and had 12 children. There were three generations of seamen in that family. One son not only sailed boats but built them and

had a packet of boats that went regularly from Rocky Hill to Richmond, VA with side trips to the West Indies and to South America. The cargo was usually articles made by my great-great-grandfather, Thomas Danforth, the pewterist: lumber, grain, animals - horses, cows, sheep, Swine – garden produce, always onions. On the returning trip, the cargo was sugar, molasses, and rum.

Rocky Hill was especially adapted for ship building because of the contour of the land. On the Sound boats could be exposed to foreign vessels, in Higganum, the heathen arrows, Glastonbury, sand bars. The ship yard extended from Hog Brook on the North to Dividend on the South. There were times when you might see 8 or 9 boats on the scaffold ready to be launched.

Boats were built...they were used in the American Revolution. At one time a big schooner was built on Elm Street opposite my present home. When that was ready to leave, it required specially built wheels and forty yoke of oxen to take it to the river. At one time, 40% of the men of Rocky Hill were engaged in the ship building trade. In one year 22 seamen lost their lives.

Sometimes Elm Street from the river as far west as Grimes Road would have a line of carts, horse drawn or oxen drawn, with loads of produce either going to the docks to be unloaded or to receive its load. Navigation had no help in those days so that it was especially hazardous. It continued until 1892 when smaller boats were built by the Beldens and the launchings were of gay color. I remember well the launching of one of the last of these boats.”

Interviewer: “Thank you very much Miss Alice Williams for this fascinating story and for this record which we know will be of value to our Rocky Hill Historical Society, and thank you, too, Mr. Harris for the part you have played in this recording.”

Transcribed Sept. 2005

Witches

This is a treatment on witches in New England in general. It doesn't cover Rocky Hill specifically. There has been talk of a relationship between witches and Vexation Hill. This could be an interesting project.

Dr. Zariphes: Growing Up On Old Main Street

Interviewed by Robert Herron
and Ed Chiucarello

Recording done 11/22/ 2017
Transcription by Linda Nadeau
Footnotes by Robert Herron
January 14, 2017

Part of an ongoing series of oral histories about life in Rocky Hill, CT.

RH:¹⁰⁵ Dr. Zariphes has lived here for a long, long time. He Lives in the Cumberland Inn and owns the big house next door. Here's his story... Tell us how you came to live in Rocky Hill, what it was like growing up here, and that sort of thing.

Dr. Z: I was born in Hartford, CT at Hartford Hospital.¹⁰⁶ My father was a physician in Hartford for many years and was well known¹⁰⁷. My mother was married to him and the family moved to Campfield Avenue. From there, we moved to Newington where we stayed for a couple of years and then we moved to Rocky Hill. My father bought the house in 1938, I believe. It was at the time of the hurricane¹⁰⁸. The Rocky Hill meadows were flooded and the water came up almost to the Silas Deane highway. But that didn't stop him from buying the property from a man who was a photographer in Hartford. He was very well known; his last name was Johnstone. We're talking about 242 Old Main Street and all that land behind it.

The property involved what was at that time "65 Main Street" which is an indication of how many houses have been built since; now it's 244 Old Main Street. This included the house with the pillars, a brick house, and 14 acres of land behind it. We also had 6 acres of land which was in the deed that was given to all the colonial homes in the Meadows, which was approximately six acres. It could be farmed so that they could make a living way back in colonial times.

I began school late in 1938, in the spring of 1938. At that time the little brick building included four grades. They were grades 1 through 4. Because I was born in September, I joined the first grade class early. I probably could have benefited by waiting another year but "boom", it was a sharp surprise. (laughter). I do remember the building and it still stands. My first grade teacher's last name was Melody and she was very pleasant.

RH: What was the name of the school?

Dr. Z: Ummm. Rocky Hill Grammar ...it might have been called Center School because there was another school in town called the West School. The students there joined the class in the first year of junior high; there was grades 1 through 6¹⁰⁹ here in this area and then there was 4 years of junior high and then there was High School in Wethersfield.

RH: Yes, that's that year book I need to get back to you.

Dr. Z: Yeah. We'll mention that later. The second grade teacher I do not recall. The third grade teacher was Mrs. Zaviar and I do remember her distinctly. I was talking to another classmate when I shouldn't have been and she (laughter throughout this comment) penalized me by using a ruler on the palms of my hands.¹¹⁰

RH: Does the school building still exist?

EC: He's talking about **this** building¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁶ Circa 1933

¹⁰⁷ Dr. Zariphes is the second of three generations of successful doctors as of this writing.

¹⁰⁸ An unnamed hurricane, which was the worst in recorded history, struck Southern New England in 1938

¹⁰⁹ Assuming 12 years of town education, DR. Z might have meant 4 years here

¹¹⁰

¹¹¹ Academy Hall

Dr. Z: Yah, this building **here** , ... so I learned my lesson to obey the teacher. So I graduated from here, that would be the fourth grade, and moved to the Myrtle Stevens School which was next door.

EC: Do we know anything about Myrtle Stevens?

Dr. Z: She was Principal of the school and she had a way of keeping kids in line (chuckle). It was talked about by the students before they got there... She had a rubber hose for disciplining people.

EC: **Rubber Hose? Wow.** So she was the principal and they also named the school after her? Why? 'Cuz she was a great principal?

Dr. Z: Must have been. So here we were. We were in junior high school and at that time the kids from West School joined us and there were maybe just a handful of them. They blended in very quickly, there were no problems and we spent 4 years in junior high.

RH: I want to back it up a bit. I want to know what you kids used to do back then.

Dr. Z: From the time I went to first grade to the end of junior high, the world became more and more complex. There were more houses being built and it was 1942. At that time we had friends and my friends were mainly from the north end of town. These included Dave Cook¹¹² who was much like my brother.

RH: When you say the north end, was it like a community?

Dr. Z: No, it was just a street that went from Rocky Hill to Wethersfield that followed the river. We had the Meadows behind us and then the (Connecticut) river. So at that time, the land was being farmed all up the river until the quarry where the trap rock company owned it. I mentioned Dave Cook: He was living on North Main Street just down the road from us and there was Douglas Robbins¹¹³ whose father owned the farm. I remember that we were close friends and I remember that I joined the 4H Club. When my father bought the property, he was a gentleman farmer. We inherited therefore many animals which included ducks, geese, turkeys, sheep, goats, and pigs. He farmed 2 plots in which he grew corn, tomatoes, strawberries, peppers, much of the green plants including watermelons and melons.

RH: Your father was a doctor though; so who did the actual farming?

Dr. Z: We did, the kids did. And he hired a man to look over things. He (my Dad) just loved farming as a way to relax.

EC: So that whole west side¹¹⁴ up to the quarry was farm?

Dr. Z: No, no. From Matteson¹¹⁵. There were a couple of farms next to us that were bought later with the property going up to the quarry. That was farmed by a man in Wethersfield – Carney – which was down road from the hill from Old Main Street.

EC: Goffe?

¹¹² Dave Cook was an active member of the Rocky Hill Historical Society and was involved in archaeological projects such as the Morgan Dig in the Rocky Hill Meadows.

¹¹³ This collection includes an interview with Doug Robbins who describes his life as a boy on Broadview Farm off Old Main St.

¹¹⁴ Dr.Z's property is on the East side of Old Main St. nearly across from Marshall Rd. Matteson Avenue is a short road south of the Zariphe's property. The name sounds like "Madison." The Cumberland Inn was owned G. Franklyn Matteson in the 1930s.

¹¹⁵

Dr. Z: yeah. It follows Goffe Brook and the railroad tracks. And then Carney's place. He farmed it and he had also pigs, a small number of pigs, and also lettuce, tomatoes, squash, corn, and carrots.

RH: When we were looking for the Lone Pine Site, you said that the trees weren't there during the war¹¹⁶.

Dr. Z: There were no trees on the property except for at the property lines. And from the back of 244, which was 65 Main Street, we could see the river and tug boats going up and down with barges going to Hartford and from Hartford.

EC: Did you see steamship? Do you remember any of the names?

Dr. Z: Yeah. I have pictures of the tug boats.

EC: Let me ask you about this ... someone once told me that in the downstairs of the Cumberland Inn there was evidence of slave quarters.

Dr. Z: Yeah but that was not known to me at the time. Later on, when I bought the house, I found evidence that one or two slaves were kept there if they disobeyed the owner.

RH: In his will, he mentioned 7 slaves¹¹⁷.

Dr. Z: I'm not surprised.

EC: What evidence did you find?

Dr. Z: Leg irons in the room.

EC: Are they still there?

Dr. Z: No, I removed them; the kids would have fooled around with them so I pulled them out.

Dr. Z: The Duke of Cumberland had ... I don't know who did this but they took all the rooms that were in the cellar out so that that left the first floor gradually sinking some until it was stopped with jacks. That made the floors uneven.

RH: I want to back up little. You moved into 244. We're talking about the Cumberland Inn now.

Dr. Z: Yah, which I bought after medical school. During my residency.

RH: so when you were a teenager you and your friends were hanging out in the woods. What were you doing there?

Dr. Z: Let me back up a little more. When we were in grammar school, we played marbles and we played a card game against the wall – we threw the cards against the wall and whoever got closest got to keep all the cards that didn't get close to the wall. The marble game was the same way; whoever got their marble into the little pot got all the other marbles in play. I remember playing kick baseball and other games in the yard. And tag, kick the can...different games like that.

EC: and digging the ground. Didn't you and David just like to dig¹¹⁸?

Dr. Z: Yeah, but that was later.

EC: I thought David (Cook) was your childhood friend. From What age?

¹¹⁶ The Lone Pine Site was once a Wangunk Indian Village. The war referred to is World War II.

¹¹⁷ "He" was Esquire John Robbins who owned the Cumberland Inn in the mid-18th century and was one of several wealthy slave owners who lived along Old Main St.

¹¹⁸ The interviewer is opening the topic of archaeology. Dr. Z is a respect archaeologist, specializing in Native American artifacts and has been involved in digs throughout the Northeast.

Dr. Z: yes, we were friends since first grade.

EC: so I thought you guys got into archeology?

Dr. Z:

Dr. Z: That was later on, like in the switch to junior high (4 or 5th grade). We got interested in archeology. One day we were walking next door to the property that was owned by Mr. Matteson. He had bought the house before we moved in. We were walking through the ploughed field that farmer Carney owned and I noted a little white stone that was peculiarly shaped. I asked Dave what it was and he said "Oh, my brother Dudley collects them. They are Indian arrow heads." Which absolutely blew me away. I never thought there was anyone else but whites owning the property. That started an interest and we started looking for arrow heads. And I do recall one day on our property – it was a rainy day – and I was hoeing squash plants. I looked up and saw a man on the adjacent property (the Matteson property) and there was a man walking back and forth with an umbrella. I pointed him out to my father and he said "Let's go down and see what he's looking for." Because he was every now and then stooping and picking something up. So we went down and walked over and there was Albert Morgan. He introduced himself. He had a huge collection of things that he'd found that were at the museum in Hartford, the Athenaeum. My father took me to see that (the collection) in the front of the museum on the second floor. It was incredible. It really stimulated me to get into archeology.

EC: This is the Albert Morgan that was the founder of the archeological society?

Dr. Z: I think it was the same man. They named a lot of things for Albert Morgan. He was very old at the time I met him and he told me stories of the American Indians while we stood there with my father in the rain.

RH: but you were just a kid then and years and years later you were working with him again?

Dr. Z: When I joined the Archeological Society of Connecticut. It was fascinating. Fascinating. Because later on we did find a site and we named it the Lone Pine Site. Which was discovered by an uncle that I had that was a professor at Harvard. He would visit during the summer and stay with us. He was the brother of my mother. He found the site and took me to it then I took Dave to the site and showed it to him. Later on, when we learned a little about archeology, we decided to stake the site out and do it as well as we could, being beginners, in squares of five feet by five feet.

RH: When we were out in the woods you seemed pretty adamant about amateur archeologists digging things up.

Dr. Z: Oh yeah, later on they (amateurs) found out where the site was and they just demolished it. They just dug and scattered things all around. You could see mounds of dirt. They used shovels and it's a shame.

RH: So you were very passionate about this...

Dr. Z: Oh yeah. We staked it out appropriately and we dug with trowels in those squares. We found those artifacts that are here and I have artifacts that I am going to turn over to the museum too. We found two soapstone bowls; one in the Lone Pine site and one in another site to the south which was owned by the quarry. At that time the land was open and people dug all over the place, when they found out there were

artifacts – just to find relics and that's it. We also did surface hunting to find artifacts all over Connecticut but we did label them. Interestingly enough, I have labeled artifacts that I found on our property as "1 point something" and we labeled other that we found at other sites "2 point something" and so on.

RH: OK, we've gotten way, way far away from talking about Dr Z, the early years but I think this is much more interesting. We'll come back to this. Let's circle back. We had you as a teenage kid wandering around in the woods meeting Dr. Morgan.

Dr. Z: He had a fabulous collection, it's owned by another historical museum in Hartford. I don't remember exactly what it is but it's connected with the museum¹¹⁹ on Elizabeth Street.

RH: Let's get back to your teenage years.

Dr. Z: We hung around with Dave and Doug Robbins and another friend, Paul Tyler. We had a wonderful time in the barn with the animals on the farm: cows and so forth. We learned a great deal about other things like the birthing cows. The bull that was there was huge in our eyes and dangerous. We had hundreds of chickens and sold eggs and turkeys for Thanksgiving and milk from the cows. We were one of his ardent buyers of his products. I joined, At that time, the 4H Club.

During that time, the 1940's... in 1938 and 1939, Hitler was developing power in Europe, and after we were attacked at Pearl Harbor President Roosevelt declared war. The Axis was the enemy and my father began to think about joining the army as a medical officer. He did join in about 1942, I believe, and he was away for two years as a Captain in the Medical Corps in Europe. That was a big thing for me; I developed asthma and I do think it was psychological asthma. Now they know that asthma can be psychological; it doesn't necessarily have to be due to impurities in the air.

RH: We should mention for the tape that Dr. Zariphes is a psychiatrist.

Dr. Z: Yeah, I didn't learn that until medical school. And interestingly, I remember that during that time there were several places that were important to us because, as kids, we'd go to Browne's variety store to get chocolate ice cream. Browne's was on Church Street which used to go straight through to connect with Main St. The library was there, next door (South) of where the library is now. Browne's was a variety store. You could get ice cream cones, fudgesicles, and that was important to us. In the spring days, that's where we were. She had a plaque that had holes covered over and in those holes she had white gum, marble-sized. If you poked one hole and you got the white marble of gum you got nothing, but the gum but if you poked a red one you got a free chocolate bar. It was a penny for each poke so we learned to gamble at an early age (laughter). There was also Vancetti's which was a similar store but I think they had clothing too and then there was a meat store, I don't remember what it was called. There was Grasso's on Main Street where the CVS is now¹²⁰. Now during that time, we wanted to know about the War so we would walk the railroad tracks all the way to the Webb House in Wethersfield to see the movies which was quite a treat. We'd do this on the weekends; we'd see the movies and then the newsreels about the war. There was also a pharmacy and a barber shop, don't remember exactly where they were. The Silas Deane highway

¹¹⁹ Connecticut Historical Society? The "Dames" may be the National Society of Colonial Dames.

¹²⁰ At the Corner of Main St. and Garden St.

was already there. The effect (of the Silas Deane) was that the Howard Johnson's was on the line almost. We would walk to Howard Johnson's¹²¹ to get a soda and a hot dog when we were in grammar school. In junior high we had bicycles. The thing I remember about the bicycles – Flag Day was very important and so was the 4th of July. We would decorate our bicycles and there would be a parade with veterans and a band. It was quite an experience to ride your bicycles, all decorated, in a parade down Main Street. We walked or rode behind the band, right behind the drums. It was very exciting.

RH: Was the parade route down Old Main Street?

Dr. Z: Right here (in front of the Historical Society building). I think it also went around the corner to Church Street and then back.

The original Silas Deane was concrete but they covered it with tar later.

EC: Did the Silas Deane have any impact on your Dad's farming?

Dr. Z: No, Doug Robbins was impacted but that was on the opposite side of Main Street toward the hill and the river. The hill was what the town was named for; prior to that it was Stepney Parrish.

RH: If we're going to get through WWII, we'd better get on track.

Dr. Z: Yeah. It was interesting that the class had parents that came from different parts of Europe. There were Italians, Irish, English. There was one African American, a wonderful guy. He was well built, better than anyone else in the class and smart, very smart. He became an athlete.

RH: I want to ask you about the real estate development that Sutton¹²² did. I'm trying to track the transition...

Dr. Z: That was after we moved and after WWII. Gaylord Drive goes north and joins Main Street down the hill. Gaylord was Sutton's son.

RH: What I'm wondering is if the Silas Deane had anything to do with him building houses so people could get out here.

DR. Z: Pratt and Whitney was a big inducer for people to come to this area. They came from all over. They came from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire. They all migrated down and there was a great need for housing. And the kind of housing reminds me of cape houses. They would be one after the other, down the street and even on Main Street.

RH: When was this?

Dr. Z: During the war. During the war Pratt and Whitney started building airplane engines in East Hartford. That became an issue because Pratt and Whitney had to be protected. At that point, up on the hill they had, I don't remember aircraft guns, I remember they had soldiers and spotters for enemy aircraft. At that time, we were afraid that Hartford would be bombed because of Colt (Firearms) being in Hartford and Pratt and Whitney. I remember visiting the soldiers when I was a kid with Dave and Doug Robbins. They (the soldiers) had two 12x16 tents and they were there in winter time too.

¹²¹ At the time, Howard Johnson's was where the South of the Border restaurant is in 2017, a few hundred yards south of the Interstate 91 overpass.

¹²² Walter Sutton was a real estate developer off Old Main St. Sutton Road is named for him and Gaylord Drive is named for his son.

Up on the quarry hill. There would be four cots in every tent and a little stove in the middle. They would talk about their experiences.

The other thing was, after the war, the hill became a ski club (Wethersfield Ski Club) with a rope tow. That lasted about 2 ½ years. Then other ski places developed.

RH: The amazing thing is that you, Ed, and I were there a couple of weeks ago. It was overgrown with trees; it's a forest.

Dr Z: There was nothing there. Just bare ground, even the quarry where they were getting trap rock for the roads and driveways. There was another quarry in Newington, a trap rock quarry. This (the trap rock was very important for roads¹²³. There were just bushes and young trees in the quarry that were easily bulldozed. You can see where they stopped. The trees now have grown quite large.

RH: How noisy was that for you guys in the neighborhood?

Dr. Z: It was very noisy and we worried about our brick house. The house would tremble when they used explosives to break up the rocks. I believe that the Duke of Cumberland (inn) also shows cracks in the walls from that. It was like an earthquake. I want to mention that there were two doctors in town. David and Oran Mosher were brothers and they were Native American. I wouldn't be surprised if they came from up river ... Dartmouth. And the other one in town was Dr. Kelly whose house was just sold. It's a big house on Riverview Rd. And I will always remember him because he saved my life. Just before my father went into the army I had terrific pains in my abdomen and my father said "this is an acute appendix" and called Dr. Kelly. And they rushed me into Hartford Hospital and removed my inflamed appendix. I will never forget that experience; I think I had PTSD for a long time (chuckles). I remember being taken into surgery. And I see this light shining on top of my stomach. And there's a man in a mask, all dressed in a white uniform and he puts a cloth on top of my nose and says "Now breathe and you'll fall asleep". And I did. But the next thing I know is I wake up and it's completely dark. And I started crying, and crying, and crying for my mother until they brought a cot in for my mother to stay until I was transferred out.

RH: You had your appendix problems and Doug Robbins had a ruptured appendix. Seemed like a lot of people back then had problems with their appendix.

Dr. Z: A lot of people did. My wife's mother had a ruptured appendix and died. She was in Greece and the Germans had taken all the doctors so she therefore died.

EC: Let's end this Part 1 here and take up where we left off. Really, really interesting stories. Let's take this up again next month.

Thank you.

¹²³ The trap rock was also used to build the levees on the Connecticut River.