

BACK OVER THE YEARS

Reminiscences of Mattituck in the early  
years of the Twentieth Century

VOLUME V



Friends of the Mattituck Free Library

1986

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## INTRODUCTION

We must explain where the material contained in these volumes comes from.

In 1978 the Friends of the Mattituck Free Library undertook to record an oral history of Mattituck. The project was carried on under the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). It was begun by Richard Mack and then developed by John Traversa, and it was intended to bring up to date the 1906 History of Mattituck written by the Reverend Charles Craven, Pastor of the Mattituck Presbyterian Church.

The work began with the recording of interviews with Mattituck citizens who recalled life in the early years of the century. Unexpectedly, work had to stop when the local CETA support was terminated.

The Friends were unable to carry on the project, and it became apparent that our goal of a history could not be achieved in the foreseeable future.

Into our files went the taped interviews, unedited and many incomplete, several hundred slides and a series of audio-visual tapes of groups and individuals. Some years later the Friends decided to make the contents of as many of the taped interviews as possible available as background material on the history of the community.

The tapes contain the voices of Mattituck citizens speaking about a time and a place they knew intimately. The authors of the tapes found it pleasant "... to look back and think back over the years", and the Friends are offering these plain spoken, sometimes humorous or touching accounts of 'how it was in those days'.

The material has been transcribed just as it was given to the interviewers with only repetitious and non-pertinent matter omitted. We have added a few notes, some information from conversations with the authors,

and have included several written pieces. Where pictures were available we have reproduced them together with articles from the Suffolk Times.

We express our gratitude to the authors whose interviews are recorded here as well as to those whose interviews we have not yet been able to transcribe. Our thanks to our volunteer proof readers, Nancy Duryee and Mary Flanagan, and to those who graciously loaned or gave us old photographs.

Many thanks go to our typists, Dorothea Delehanty, Kathleen Reeve and Rose Costello, who were dedicated in their efforts to transcribe the sometimes difficult recordings. And heart-felt thanks to the Mattituck Free Library whose Directors and Staff have been consistently helpful and patient as we carried on our work in their midst.

The Friends of the Mattituck Free Library  
Katherine Lascelle, Project Co-ordinator

July 1986

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape #9-GPM: AMcD-1      Date of Interview: Sept. 23, 1978

Oral Authors: Gertrude (Pip)                      Interviewer: John Traversa  
                 Pullman Marvin  
                 Arabella Stack McDermott

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Wingate, Whittier, Husing's Pond, Down's Creek (now Horton's  
Creek), Kelsey, Jim Rambo, Walter Robinson, John Boutcher,  
Joel (Joe) Nine, Jim Gildersleeve, Reeve & Hall, Jack Zenzius.

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MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape 9-GPM:AMcD-1  
Oral Authors: Gertrude (Pip) Pullman Marvin  
Arabella Stack McDermott  
Place of Interview: Home of A.S. McDermott

Date of Interview: September 22, 1978  
Interviewer: John Traversa

PILL HILL

GPM: I was nine months old in 1919 when my family rented the Husing's cottage down on the Bay for two summers while the present cottage was being built. My impression of that was a typical summer house with a big wide porch. I do have a memory of that, even though I was only about two years old when we came up here, my mother has told me about it. Maybe I saw a picture but when I was about three years old, I remember a concrete bulkhead, which was unusual. I think at that time. My family came to Mattituck primarily because we lived in the city and my father wanted us out of the city in the summertime. When the cottage was finished, we would come out every year at the end of May and stay until the fifteenth of September.

I: Approximately, where in the city did you live?



GPM: We lived in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

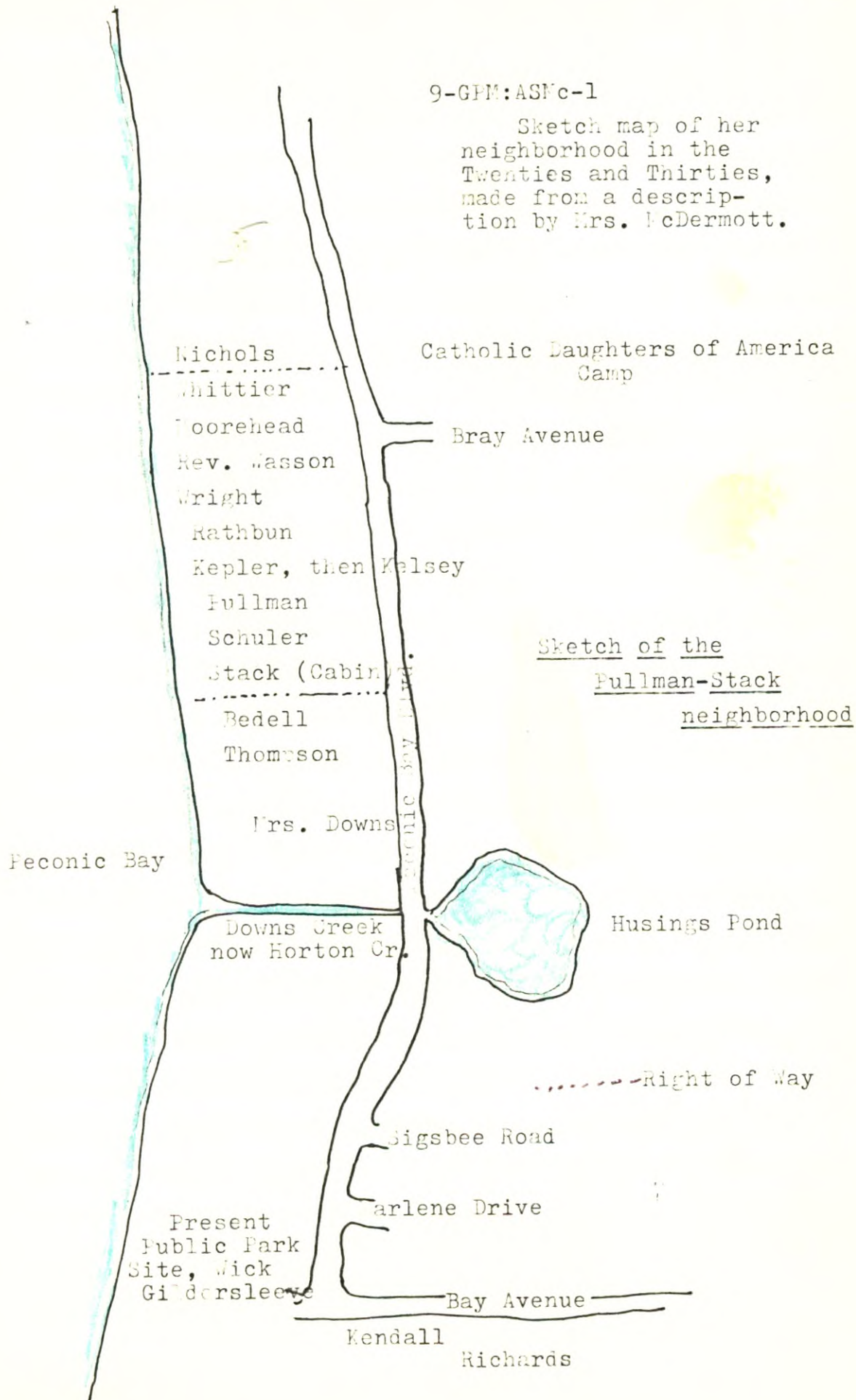
I: And can you tell me what your father did?

GPM: My father was a doctor. It was through other doctors who had already found this place that we came out here, Doctor Moorehead, Doctor Rathbun, Doctor Nichols, Doctor Wright, and that's where the name of the area was picked up. People called it "Pill Hill," because so many doctors occupied these houses. Now, three houses were already there when my parents built our cottage. Doctor Rathbun's house was there, and I think was quite old. Doctor Wright's house was there. Doctor Moorehead's house was there. The Reverend Wasson owned the house that is now the Matlins, (See note below.) and the Wingates. My parents purchased the property from a Robert Wells in Mattituck, for ten dollars a front foot. We owned 100 x 400 feet, and it was merely put in the records as more or less. My uncle, Oscar Kepler, lived right next door to us; he made the actual purchase of the property. He lived in the house that is now owned by the Kelseys.

\*Note: Tape unclear. Possibly Natlins

9-GPM:ASMc-1

Sketch map of her neighborhood in the Twenties and Thirties, made from a description by Mrs. McDermott.



Nichols

Whittier

Moorehead

Rev. Masson

Wright

Rathbun

Kepler, then Kelsey

Pullman

Schuler

Stack (Cabin)

Bedell

Thomson

Mrs. Downs

Peconic Bay

Downs Creek  
now Horton Cr.

Husings Pond

..... Right of Way

Sigsbee Road

Arlene Drive

Present  
Public Park  
Site, Wick  
Gildersleeve

Bay Avenue

Kendall

Richards

Catholic Daughters of America  
Camp

Bray Avenue

Sketch of the  
Pullman-Stack  
neighborhood

During the Depression, he sold the house to the Kelseys. We have stone markers out by the road to indicate the property line. My sister-in-law had great trouble. She had it surveyed and she had trouble finding the stone markers. They were still there and finally she uncovered some of them.

I: Were they simple rocks that were stuck in the ground?

GPM: Yes, just a concrete thing, a long concrete thing, and they had a cross mark, and that marked your property and the next person's property. A couple of hurricanes had washed away some of the banks, so I think most of the property markers went in the Bay. Over the years we have lost about 30 feet frontage. There are no property markers to my knowledge out front at all. My first impression, when I was old enough to have impressions, were the trees that grew right down to the beach, blueberry bushes, and no lawn, no idea of any lawn. It was woods, and I think, that's what made it so charming, because you had the combination of the woods and the water. It wasn't just ocean beach. And one of the reasons my parents thought it was such an excellent place, was because the Bay was basically shallow and no surf to speak of, so that it was safe for children to learn how to swim. Nobody ever taught me to swim. I just learned as we all did out there.

GPM: I don't even remember my mother sitting on the beach with me, but she must have when I was two or three years old. But we learned to swim just by doing, and we learned boating just by doing. My father had spent a lot of time in Connecticut, and was quite a sailor. He had a lot of basic information on boating.

There were no bulkheads, and I guess another impression that both Ara and I have, is the seaweed. It came up on the beach, and we called it eelgrass. Out in the water it was very black, and I figure it was about 150 yards off the beach that it would grow. We all hated to walk through it, because you never knew what was going to be in there, crabs and eels, and of course that's where we found so many of the scallops. Whether the scallops would actually spawn in the eelgrass, I don't know. That is the information we got from the Baymen. During the scallop season there was no going out in a boat. We would just walk down on the beach and we would gather scallops by the handful. I don't think I ever realized how valuable scallops were. As a child I wasn't interested in seafood, I just liked to catch it, that's all. But when the seaweed came up on the beach and dried, it turned grey and it would pile up quite high, and of course whatever marine life that was caught in it would die, and it would be a bit smelly.

GPM: But down at Mrs. Whittiers, they lived between Doctor Nichols and Doctor Moorehead, the name of their property was finally called Seaweed Landing. The farmers would come down the right of way and gather the dry seaweed and take it to their barns, I guess for bedding for their cows.

ARA: Maybe for mulch.

GPM: I don't know what they used it for. I don't remember as a child, but I remember Mrs. Whittier telling me about it. The creeks, I think, were so fascinating. we had a large one down here. It wasn't actually large. we called it "Down's Creek."

ARA: It was called "Down's Creek" because it was at the eastern boundary of Mrs. Down's property. It was fed from a pond that we all called Husing's Pond, and I understand that at one time that had been a cranberry bog. They used to harvest cranberries. That's where we have the beach plums.

GPM: But it was tidal water. The water from the bay went in. When I was about ten years old, one day, Gardner Rathbun and I went down. There were two bridges, concrete bridges, and we took a big net with us, and we caught enormous turtles, snapping turtles, and that started a craze among all of us. we finally put canoes in Husing's Pond, and we'd go with the big nets, and we caught some beauties.

GPM: We finally learned that Doctor Moorehead's cook, he was a black man, George, who later on lived in Mattituck, and Margaret would take these turtles and put them in the closet with their clothes, and she'd take a forked stick and wait for them to stick out their heads. She'd take the forked stick and jam them with it and off would come their heads. They would take the shell off, and they would make turtle soup or whatever, mostly for themselves. He had several black people working for him, delightful people. They said, "Don't you throw away those turtles, you bring those turtles up to us."

I: Can you tell me where Down's Creek is?

GPM: It's now called Horton's Creek. So much of it is filled in because the town has used it for their softball field. I don't know whether it has passage under the road out into the pond anymore.

ARA: One of the boundaries of the Creek would be the Mattituck Yacht Club, the west boundary. That's where the ball field is.

GPM: The sounds which I remember, and I'll never forget, would be the Katydids in August. My father used to come out for the month of August. If I hear a katydid anywhere, I think of Mattituck when I was a child.

GPM: And after several years he sent my brother down into this drain to dig out what was in the bottom, and down there was the most beautiful loam I had ever seen in my life, it was just like humus. So he took it and spread it out on the front, and we had more kinds of birds than we had ever seen before, feeding on this loam that we found at the bottom of this dry well. I don't remember the names of the various birds, but they were fascinating.

(Discussion about humming birds)

ARA: when we had a lot of honeysuckle we used to have them out by the little cabin. Oh God, we'd get in the cabin to look out and that was such an exciting, those miniature things, unbelievable. Stand there goggle-eyed and quiet for at least five minutes.

GPM: Another thing I remember about Mattituck, was the fishing of course. My early interest in fishing was stimulated by my father who loved to fish. The fish were plentiful, kingfish, weakfish, porgies. One year we had what they called a lafayette. They were supposed to come every seven years. It looked like a porgie, but much darker striped than a porgie. Whether this was just an Old Bay Tale, I don't know, but we caught what we called lafayettes.

We were talking earlier about the scallops, and I think one of the things that I remember is that the first of September the scallop boats started out from down in New Suffolk. They would have to sail down the Bay. They could not motor.

GPM: They had to sail with their nets, their seines out back. Then they could motor back. There would be as many as thirty of these boats. It was a beautiful sight to see them sail down the bay.

I: Why couldn't they motor down?

GPM: I think, because they would go too fast. If one man had a faster boat, he could zoom down the bay, and perhaps that would be unfair. I don't know what the reason was.

ARA: Peconic Bay scallops are a rarity. They are not to be confused with Chesapeake Bay scallops or sea scallops. They are a delicacy unto themselves and Peconic Bayers appreciate that more than anybody else.

GPM: This area back here, what they used to call Husing's pond and the creek, was a beautiful area. It was all woodland. There were no houses. I used to have a little spot over there that I'd walk to, if I was scolded by my parents or something. I'd walk in the woods, and it was real woods. I'd sit on this grassy spot and I'd think, well I'll stay here because it was so pretty and they won't know where I was. But now it's all houses and you can't walk anywhere back there where you're not on somebody else's property. But it was a beautiful area. I like creeks and inlets, and things like that.

Ara's father used to do a lot of duck shooting in the fall, it was black duck. My father was not a hunter, he was a fisherman.



GPM: Then the other thing that was always a fun thing to do was to go crabbing, and of course all these creeks down here on the Bay had never been dug out, dredged, so that the ponds were all basically quite shallow, which was an ideal place for the blue crabs. So we would row down, because most of us didn't have motors, and we would row down to the creek with nothing but a pail and a net, and scoop up these blue crabs. We'd catch so much that they would come out of the basket and crawling around the boat. I have a story. It's about Ara's brother and the Second World War. When John and I were probably about twelve, we rowed down to go crabbing one day and caught a great mess of crabs, and as we were coming out of the creek, John was standing in back of the boat with the net, and I was rowing, and we saw what we thought, at the age of twelve, was the largest blue crab that we had ever seen in our lives hanging on the bank, and John and I saw him at the same time. I pulled back on my oars, and John went right over the back of the boat into the arms of this crab. Later when John was in the war, flying B-17's over England, he had written to his mother about a harrowing experience he had had. She told me the story. So I said, "When you're writing back to John, tell him that when he was flying over England, he probably wasn't any more scared than the day that he fell into the arms of the crab." She did, too, I think.

GPM: we didn't have any blue crabs out in front of the house. We had many horseshoe crabs, and we used to catch the horseshoe crabs and give them to Grandpa Smith, who was Mrs. Kelsey's father. He had eel pots, and he would stuff his eel pots with the horseshoe crabs. He'd catch lots of eels that way. We'd go out and help him pull in the eel pots. Of course, we never got paid for that, we never wished to be paid, it was just fun.

Every summer when we came out, we would put a post out in the Bay to moor our rowboat. we had no docks, no marinas. we had many storms and lost many boats. we used to call them northeast storms, and I strongly suspect that they might have been of hurricane force, before they started plotting hurricanes as well as they do now. Trees would go down, and boats would be tossed around like toys. Ara can tell you a story.

ARA: My neighbor, Bedell, to the east, and my neighbor to my right, Ed Schuler, and myself, went out in Milt Bedell's rowboat. It had a kicker on the back of it, a small five horsepower outboard motor. Our, the Stack, rowboat, had broken loose and we could see it going out. Eddie said he'd stay on shore and said that he would tell Bedell's mother and my mother, Stack.

ARA: And Milton and I got in this rowboat, and we decided that we would double oar it. He took one oar and I took the other, because we couldn't get the kicker started. So we go after this boat, and I never saw anything go so fast. That thing just sailed off towards Flanders, as though there was a big hand pushing it. It was a fourteen foot mahogany rowboat. Milton and I were pulling and pulling, and Milton would say, "A little more, a little more," and we would get right up to it, and another gust of wind would come along and it would go boom! Another twenty-five feet. We were getting out there, and I said that I didn't think we should go any further, and he said, "Oh, come on, just a little more." I said, "Well, you can, if you want to," and I spun the boat around. Just then this wave came over the stern, and nearly swamped us, and we came into shore. Well, we were about a mile away from home. We pulled the boat up as far as we could, the heck with the stack rowboat, and we went into the local house, and they had a telephone, which is really unusual, this was about 1928. We called down here, because we had a phone, my mother refused to be here unless we had a telephone, with five kids and no man around. The people permitted us to use the phone, or they called for us, and my mother came up in the car and drove us home.

ARA: We had secured the boat, and the next day we went back to get the boat. But that was the end of our rowboat. My mother put an ad in the paper, and sure enough, somebody on southside found the rowboat. She said that she had implored Saint Anthony. So we got the rowboat back, and she made an occasion out of christening the boat with a bottle of home-made root beer, and she named it "Tony," in honor of Saint Anthony.

GPM: You neglected to tell the part involved the other people. My father had seen these two young kids go out and he went next door to Mr. Kelsey and said, "They are not going to get back in again." So my brother, my father, Mr. Kelsey and Gus Kelsey went out to their motor boat to go rescue these kids. They got the motor going, went down the Bay, went out aways, couldn't find Ara and Milton, didn't know that they had come ashore. And then their motor boat conked out. They had to anchor, and they were all seasick, but my brother. My father <sup>(mother?)</sup> had to call someone from New Suffolk to come rescue the rescuers. It was a harrowing day. Milton Bedell was standing on the shore down beyond Laurel giving semaphore codes, because he was a Boy Scout. But those storms were bad storms, and we just called them northeasters. Now maybe they were, but some of those winds were fierce.

We had a swing on our front porch, the old-fashioned hammock, and the wind, the northeastern wind, came so bad one day that it sent the hammock right through the screen. We looked out of the window and the hammock had disappeared. (Laughter and unclear phrase).

GPM: Now we lost many boats. We'd watch boats just go down Bay, and we soon learned it was better to let them go, because nine out of ten times you couldn't save them.

ARA: The thing that was interesting about anchoring a boat was that it was all sand and not every anchor held. You had to have a certain type of anchor. That's why, as Pip said, they used to put in their post. They would shake it in and somebody would pound it and then you'd get that in (unclear). Then there was a heavy iron ring to which was attached, like a painter, I guess you call it, and that's how the boat was anchored. I think down in Jamesport they may still have some boats moored like that. We have one here now, but there is no boat on it. Nowadays, . . . informed by radio or TV, you batten down and the first thing you do, you run down and secure it at the Marina.

GPM: We had a canoe boat. On a canoe, both ends are the same, but on this boat one end was cut down and there was a motor on it. We knew a storm was coming, so we put the canoe boat on top of the bulkhead, we did have a bulkhead by then, but we had no upper bulkhead. So during the night the wind was so strong, it took that canoe boat right off the bulkhead, down the Bay to the Creek, and it cracked right in half.

GPM: So those were bad storms. The old Baymen used to say that when you had a northeast blow like this, the only way that it was going to clear would be if the wind made a complete circle around to the southeast and around to the northwest...it had to go clockwise... then we could expect clearance.

We all got along beautifully, the first people who came here.

I: You're talking about the doctors' families?

GPM: Yes. And then my uncle lived next door to us, Oscar Kepler. Jim Rambo owned this property from the Tandy right-of-way to our house and it was only one-hundred and fifty feet. My father didn't want Jim Rambo to put two houses up on one property. We had one-hundred feet, most people had one-hundred feet, one-hundred and fifty feet and so on. Rambo wanted to erect two houses, and my father said, "Well, I will buy fifty front feet from you," in order to keep the property open. Jim Rambo wouldn't sell it to him, and eventually he put up a cottage on the east side of our house. We had already built the log cabin. Well, my mother never forgave Jim Rambo for that, for many years. Then finally she needed to have a bulkhead built, and the word she got from all the people in town was that Jim Rambo was the best bulkhead builder in town.

GPM: So my mother swallowed all her ancient feelings about Jim Rambo, and he came and put in a bulkhead, and did a fabulously good job. They recalled their differences at the time and everything was smoothed over. I often think had my father owned another fifty feet whether we could have afforded to keep the place because he would have had to build at least three or four bulkheads in the last 58 years, and each year they get a little bit more expensive. So, if he'd had one-hundred and fifty feet, he'd have had a lot of shore front to cover. Our beaches used to go out so much farther. I think we all agree that it was due to the creek that came out and at the very point it was full of marsh grass and we felt that that marsh grass held in the sand.

ARA: Salt marsh grass.

GPM: Yes, and in 1930, I've forgotten, '34, '35, when the blight came on the eelgrass, I don't know whether it also hit the marsh grass, but slowly that disappeared, and without the eelgrass out in the water to act as sort of a, you know, holder of the sand then our beaches started to erode badly. To my knowledge, they have never found out what killed the eelgrass.

ARA: And when the eelgrass went, the scallops went, and now we have to pay ten dollars a quart for scallops.

GPM: ...the inshore scallops, the ones that were close to shore. Some of the people in Mattituck who will always stick in my mind, who were just great people, was Walter Robinson, and as a child, I do remember him. He built the house, and it was as plain as plain could be. He finally contrived with my mother to build this china closet when my father was in the city. When he came out the china closet was completed. He was a bit upset because he wanted to keep everything down to a bare minimum. Walter Robinson thoroughly understood my mother's desire for this, and he was a marvelous carpenter, and he came out and did this for her. They used to have quite a few sessions together. She would get in the car. "Where are you going?" "Well, I'm going down to Walter Robinson's on Westphalia Road. I have some things to talk to him about."

Another person that had a great deal to do with us in the early years was John Boutcher. John Boutcher used to come once a week, and sell his vegetables from his farm in the rattleyest-bang old truck that you ever saw in your life. He was a very dour man. He hardly ever said "good morning." If you didn't buy from him one week, he was very reluctant to come back the next, but he always came. He had marvelous vegetables.



GPM: His other function was that he collected the garbage. He would drive his truck right into the back yard and pick it up, and off he'd go. And I think it was something like fifty cents a month, not much more than that.

ARA: Do you know that Boutcher had another function that I learned about through the oral history project? He was the bell ringer at the Presbyterian Church for many, many years.

GPM: Then after that it was one of the Nine boys. It was Joel Nine (See note below) that was the bell ringer. Another man with whom we had a great deal of contact with was Jim Gildersleeve. The Gildersleeves are very prominent in Mattituck. He would come also with his dry goods, and he had a little Model-T Ford truck. I think it was a Model-T, I'm pretty sure, the kind that you worked with your feet. The greatest thrill I had as a child is that he let me sit in this thing and showed me how to work the pedals. Of course, Gildersleeves were noted for their perfectly marvelous cheese, and he'd always have the cheese. He was a fine person. Another family, or merchant, in Mattituck that mother dealt with in early years was Reeve and Hall, the butchers. They had their their own formula for sausage, and it was known all over and you went to Reeve and Hall for their sausage.

Note: Tape unclear. It may be Joe Nine.  
Further note: Our proofreader says that Joel is probably correct. Joel Nine was Ray Nine's father and very active in the Presbyterian Church for many, many years.

GPM: Reeve and Hall was where the gift shop is, on Love Lane.

I: In the same building?

GPM: I imagine. And that leads me to the story of Jack Zenzius. In back of Reeve and Hall butcher shop, Jack Zenzius had a horse barn. He had horses for rent, to ride, and all kinds of harnesses and everything. We would occasionally rent horses, bring them up here, but they weren't what you would consider fabulous riding horses, but they were great. When they get the notion that it was time to go back to Zenzius' stables, nobody in the world could control those horses. They took you back to town. Another family in the village that we always remembered were the DePetris family. They had a fruit store across from the present post office. They sold marvelous fruits and vegetables, and in the back they had an ice-cream parlor, with the old-fashioned tables and chairs and so on. The thrill of the summer was to walk to the village and go into DePetris' ice-cream parlor for a banana split. It was quite a meeting place. They were fine people.

ARA: Their grandson now is the pharmacist at Barkers' Drug Store, Larry DePetris.

GPM: Yes, it's posted. Another name that sticks in my mind, is a man from Riverhead by the name of Doctor Hallock Luce. He practiced medicine in Riverhead long before Central Suffolk Hospital. He got to know my parents, I don't know how, and he got to know Doctor Moorehead. And when he would have a difficult case, the Greenport Hospital was there, he would call my father and he'd say, "Come to Greenport Hospital with me and look at this patient." So Dad used to occasionally go with him to see patients around the area. He was an internist. He never charged because he didn't practice out here. So often people used to say, "Doctor Pullman, is there anything you would like?" And one time he told this farmer, "Yes, if you have some manure, I would like some for our garden." Well, a few days later, a truck backed into our driveway with the biggest load of manure I have ever seen in my life. We had manure for several summers for his garden. About the village, of course, the biggest thrill was to go in to meet the train. We had, oh, half dozen trains a day, and the old station was our meeting place. It was a shame, I was sorry to see the station torn down. I remember Doctor Drum, the dentist. I used to go to him, and he had an office where the old Library was on the corner of Westphalia and Pike Street in Library Hall.

ARA: Doctor Bergman had an office there also.

GPM: I remember Mrs. Bailie, over on the Sound. when the Bay was very hot, my mother would gather us all up with Mrs. Whittier and the girls and we'd go over for a swim in the Sound, because the Sound was so much cooler. During a hot spell, the Bay would get quite warm and not nearly as refreshing as the Sound, so we would go over to the Sound. It was deeper, it was a real cool refreshing swim. One time, when we were over there, Mother and Mrs. Whittier gathered seaweed, I'm not certain exactly what kind it was, it looked like kelp. We were little, and they had us gathering this seaweed, and the ladies brought it home, and they boiled it up and made a gelatin, which they called Blemange (see note below). I don't remember eating it, I'm sure I didn't. Somebody gave them the idea, and they brought tons of this seaweed home and boiled it up and made a gelatin out of it. But as we got a little older, we would go over to Bailie's Beach, there were no buildings there at all. we were east of the Breakwater.

Note: The word sounds like Blemange. Possibly it refers to Blanc Mange, a dessert made with gelatine.

GPM: We would go for picnics, maybe our parents took us over, I don't know, but one day we were there, and the girls wanted to change their bathing suits, and we went up this narrow path that was quite covered over, only to meet Mrs. Bailie coming down the other way. She had a snood or something on her head. You know, and scared us to death, merely telling us that this was private property. Well, we went swimming in our clothes that day, we never changed into our bathing suits. Then of course, all that property was sold, I guess.

I: How wide was Bailie's Beach at that time, because it seems rather narrow right now. It seems that it's been eroding.

GPM: That could be. There was a large flat rock out there, and at high tide that was a good swim from the beach to the rock. We used to swim from the beach to the rock. That was another thing that we did. Every summer we would have to challenge that inlet, and swim across it, our parents didn't know we did that either. My parents got interested in the North Fork Country Club because my Dad loved to play golf, and they became active members. The North Fork Country Club was founded in 1912. I think came on kind of hard times, particularly during the Depression. My father got me interested in playing golf at the age of 12.

GPM: The golf pro was a Scotsman by the name of Allen Towns and he spoke with a Scottish brogue. A lot of the Polish girls would caddy, which was rather unique out here. The ladies preferred to have the girls caddy for them.

I: Why did the women prefer the Polish girls to caddy?

GPM: It wasn't because of the fact that they were Polish. They weren't as smart about it as the boys. If you got a boy caddy, I think, they always thought that they were going to be future stars playing golf, whereas, the girls were doing it to earn money. I don't think they had the interest in playing golf. I think the women felt that they weren't being watched so closely, and criticized so closely, so they preferred the girls. Of course women in those days, take my mother's era for example, they'd play nine holes, maybe hit the ball one hundred yards. They had a great time, but it wasn't as serious a game as it later became. I used to play with some of these older women, and I was always scared to death, but I needn't have been, just scared I would do something wrong. I soon began to play better than my mother, then I played with my Dad frequently. I never beat him, in spite of the fact that I played so much that my game improved tremendously. But he became ill, and he couldn't play anymore, and it was a real good thing that he retired from playing before I ever beat him, because I eventually would have.

GPM: Another thing about Mattituck that I remember was the Presbyterian Church. We used to go to Sunday School, and we joined the Christian Endeavor. The Reverend Radford was one of the pastors I remember. He had a great young peoples' group, and we'd go on picnics all over. That's how I got to know quite a few of the local boys and girls--by going to the Sunday School and the Christian Endeavor--the Luptons and Preston Ruland, Fred Boucher, Gene Hallock, and Kay Hallock. I've known Kay Hallock...her mother lives in the village...and if you haven't gotten an interview with her, you must, because she came here, oh, I'm guessing, about 1912 to teach school.

I: What is her mother's name?

GPM: Mrs. Clifford Hallock. Kay Hallock married Jack Pose, and Jack is now President of the Southold Savings Bank. So I have known Kay Hallock Rose for at least thirty-five or forty years.

We had a girl that used to work for the family by the name of Elizabeth Ruthinowski. She was eighteen years old when we took her back to the city. She was born and brought up out here. She used to work for Mrs. Gaffney's Boarding house, and she used to work for what is now the Mattituck Motel, they had a boarding house there.

ARA: That was Gaffney's...

GPM: Well, she used to work for another one down in the village, there was an old black and white one down on the corner, as you go into the village on the left-hand side, there was an old hotel.

ARA: Where Peconic Glass is now.

I: The Mattituck House?

GPM: I forgot the name of it. It was a white and black building and she used to work there. I know my mother had to come out to interview her, to see if she wanted to come and work in the city, she finally did. I don't think she had completed high school here, so my mother made her go back to school while she was working for us. She lived with us for about twenty-five years. She would stay in the city until my father came out in August, and Lib would come out then. Her family lived in the village, and we got to know them all. There was Stanley Ruthinowski and Eddie, and Joey. I have forgotten what her mother's name was, but she worked on the farm until she was well passed when she should have stopped, you know, but it just came second nature to her. Lib was a great clammer and a great scalloper, because she was brought up out here.

I remember when the Mattituck High School was built in 1934, we went to a dance there. I went with Gene Hallock. We came up with a terrible storm that night. Gene called and said he didn't think the party was going on, but eventually Gus and Jim came over and said they were going to the dance, so we did go to the dance.



GPM: I suggest that, if you haven't talked to Marguerite Wasson, who lives back here...She was the wife of Jim Wasson, who owned the North Fork Wrecking Company, eventually.

Doctor John Wasson, his younger brother, was a dentist in Mattituck. His older brother was Doctor Bill Wasson, who eventually came out here to practice. They were a very early family, and before this was ever called Pill Hill, it was called Divinity Hill because the Reverend Wasson owned a house down next to Doctor Wright.

I: Was he the only divinity-related person?

GPM: The only one I knew, and Mrs. Wasson lived for many years back across the road. She owned that house that Wally Smith now owns. She lived there with her son, John, before he was married.

ARA: And Mrs. Wasson's son, Robert Wasson, owned that house.

GPM: My brother, John, and John Wasson were good friends. Marguerite Wasson was born and brought up out here.

ARA: There's a silver salver up in the Presbyterian Church that her family gave.

GPM: We used to get our eggs over on Route 25 from Mrs. Wells.

ARA: Right north of Bray Avenue, and a little bit west. She lived to a very great age.

GPM: I think the reason that we love Mattituck so, aside from everything that we had to do, is that we got to know the people in the community. My brothers became active in a little theatre group that was run by May Lupton from Riverhead. I have forgotten what they called them, but they had great times with that. And then as I got older, I taught for the Red Cross; I ran a campaign in Mattituck and one in Riverhead, swimming over on the Sound. It's true in community associations like this, you do get to meet people and have lasting memories of them.

I: Tell me more about the theatre group. This was based in Riverhead proper or...?

GPM: I don't know where it was based, it was started by Mrs. May Lupton. She was related to Otis Pike, who was the congressman who just retired. She may have been his aunt. I'm not sure now whether they called themselves the North Fork Players, I don't know. She was a fine person. She loved working with the young people. They put on some great shows. They put on a couple of them at the Kimoginor Point club house.

I: Library Hall?

GPM: I don't remember them putting on any there. I can't remember where they put on the shows, but they were good. It quite stimulated my brother, because when he went on to college he joined a little theatre group, my brother, Jim.

ARA: But everybody called him Bob. I don't know why.

GPM: Maybe because my father's name was Jim.

I got to know quite a few of the Riverhead people through my teaching for the Red Cross. I think the headquarters for the East End Red Cross was probably Riverhead, and Midge Ketcham was the driving force behind the water safety program. Nat Tuthill was the one who called me. He lived on Wolf Pit Lake, he had a farm there.

ARA: Did you and John...?

GPM: I never taught with John. He taught with Bob Muir. I got my Water Safety Certificate and we ran a program at Riverhead and at Mattituck. One time it was too rough for the kids to take a diving test, dive ten feet for a rock or something, so we packed them in cars and took them over here to the Bay. When that northwest wind blew, it was always calm over here.

Now you'll have to ask me questions. I think I've told about all I can remember.

ARA: Did you ever feel that you were treated as an outsider, or one of those bad words like "Summer Residents?" And do you have any thoughts or feelings why you never had that?

GPM: I think, basically, because there were not that many of us here, and those of us who were here got to know the people in Mattituck and became friendly with them. Oh, I am sure it was in the back of their minds we were summer residents, and we would never be considered locals. When we voted down here, we voted absentee for many years. I don't think we were considered, "Oh, I'm glad they are going home!" I think they looked forward to seeing us in the Spring because we respected the town so much, and the activities and the people. Actually, we lived a pretty close-knit life right here on the Bay. We only went to town two or three times a week, and Sundays to church. Not as often as we should have, but we did go.

ARA: And you did give of yourself when you went into that Riverhead and Mattituck Red Cross campaign on water safety. Any one of us so-called summer people that have given of themselves have been readily accepted.

GPM: Yes, and the young people that I met in Church and so-forth, I was just one of the gang, I wasn't a summer resident, I was just one of the gang that went off on picnics, or went to Sunday school class. I never got that feeling. In fact, it was always a real pleasure to go into town and say hello to people at the beginning of the summer.

GPM: I went into the Post Office last Fall, and the Ruthinowski girl that worked there for years and years, a cousin of Lib's, recognized me and called me Gertrude and that's always a pleasure. I think it was a question there weren't that many people that were cluttering up their town.

ARA: Well, I think you're right there, but you can't overlook the fact that you gave some of yourself to the town and delighted to do it. Do you think, you said that we had about a thirty foot loss on the property front, do you think that affected the ecology in a great way?

GPM: Oh, yes.

ARA: Do you feel that the salt grass that grew down there where the Yacht Club now is, the fact that that disappeared, do you feel that has helped with the erosion?

GPM: Oh, I do, because the first thing that people started doing once we lost that point out there was to start putting in rock jetties, so that the sand would start to build up again, but it never worked. I'm sure that there is something more scientific about this whole thing because shorelines have been eroding for years. But in this particular area it affected us because of the loss of that marsh grass and the eel grass.

ARA: Definitely. Even though the eel grass was a little hard on the nasal passages after a few weeks, it still helped, I think, to keep the beach there. Some years when the beach froze, the farmers didn't get it all, and I think that helped retain...but lately, it's just atrocious.

GPM: Kay and Jack Rose stopped out a year ago, and I took them out to the beach and they couldn't believe the loss there. The whole ecology of the Bay has changed over the years and whether it's gotten any shallower or not, I don't know. My brother and a friend encountered a porpoise out in Peconic Bay. They were out in a small boat, rowboat with a kicker. Whether that was one or two, I don't know. It was most unusual because they require a lot more depth. How they got sidetracked into the Bay, I don't know. On the Sound, they were a common thing to see. When I was teaching on the beach, every morning at nine o'clock, a school of porpoises would go down east, and every afternoon at five, they would come back, just as though they were commuters. It would always stop the kids. My time may have been a bit off, but every time they went by, the kids would stop and watch the school of porpoises go down to...

ARA: Well, the porpoises are gone. But now, if you look west of the inlet on a northwest wind, you see the hang-gliders, come there from all over. Just bounce around.

GPM: You know, this area has lost other things, too. There were blueberries and huckleberries. You could go in the woods and pick a quart of huckleberries or blueberries in a half hour. These woods were all just woods. But the houses started to build and people started to clear away ground, and they just kept going back farther into the woods. They destroyed the balance. I have huckleberries back of the house here, but they don't produce, I don't know why.

ARA: Of course, the payment for the huckleberries was that sometimes you brought home a tick or two. My mother had a formula. She would doll us up on the hottest day in summer. We had the high-button boys' shirts, buttoned at the neck and at the wrists, long pants and socks over the pants. We would have to go out and get two quarts of berries for our big family, and as soon as we came home, we had to go down to the water and dive in. Then we had to rinse the clothes, and she'd run them through the washer next day to get the salt water out of them. And, at night, we had a going-over from head to foot.

GPM: The first place in New York State where they picked up this Rocky Mountain Fever was Suffolk County. Ten or fifteen years ago, it was a rare thing, but the few cases they found were in Suffolk County.

ARA: We had toad fish out in the Bay and blow bellies.

GPM: The blow fish along in July would be close to eight or ten inches. When you went swimming, you were very careful to keep your feet moving because they would nip you, if you stood still. We got very adept at high tide at maneuvering them into the shallow water, and suddenly kicking them up on the beach. We could catch a half a dozen of them that way.

ARA: And they sell them for big money now, call them chicken-of-the-sea. You don't find them out here anymore. I think the seiners must have gotten them all. If you got a little one up on the beach, it would huff and puff, and get to be the size of a golf ball.

GPM: Another thing, we were speaking about it earlier, was the loss of the salt marsh grass. Down by the creek, we could go down and get sandworms for fishing, and soft clams. After the point was washed away, there were no longer any sandworms, no soft clams...



ARA: And fiddlers, too. I thought one of the greatest sounds, and I can still hear it, in the bed of the creek, when the tide had gone out, there were a lot of discarded scallop shells. One time I was down there, I heard what I thought was rain, and it was a bright day, and here I looked and here was this whole passel of these fiddler crabs, and they were walking across these shells, and it just made the greatest racket...

GPM: It's interesting, I am amazed at how much of an effect this area has had on my family, and my children. I would bring my children out every year for a month. My brother had a month, and I had a month. I don't think a summer goes by that my son or my daughter would say, "Oh, isn't this a typical Mattituck day." Or, "That smells like Mattituck." Now, I've had many arguments with people about taking children to the same place every summer, and not traveling and so-forth. I think every summer we came out here, all through my childhood until my adulthood and through my childrens' growing up, that we didn't learn something new, about the water, about the weather, about the birds. Things I'll never forget, so talking about a learning process, they had one every year, and it was always different.

ARA: Talking about children coming back. When my grandson was born about four years ago, my son said that he would like to have Peter baptized out here. And I said, "Why ever for?" And he said, "Well, God only knows where I'm gonna be five years from now, or ten years from now, but there will always be Mattituck, and we can always come back to the church to get the certificate."

GPM: One of the thrills that our kids also learned to appreciate was a tradition that, if a boat was in trouble, you went to rescue it.

I: Is that a local thing?

GPM: I suppose it's in other places too, but I was brought up that, if someone was in trouble and you had the means to go get them, you did it, and no way did you ever expect any pay. Here, maybe only about ten years ago, Ara's sons, and my daughter and niece went out and rescued a boat on a bad day. We could see them through the glasses that they were in trouble, they were waving a white flag. They took our boat, got out to them, towed them down to the marina, and the first thing the man did was to pull out his wallet, and offer the kids money. They looked at him askance. This was part of their job, and a thrill. They loved doing it. He couldn't understand it. And I rescued a boat down here several years ago, they weren't in serious trouble, but they couldn't get in.

GPM: We went and got them and they kept trying to get our names. We said that we lived down here and that is something they will never forget.

Another man who lived down here who influenced our lives as children was Mr. Warren Thompson. He was a great fisherman. He had a one-cycle engine. He knew every good fishing spot in the Bay. We used to watch to see where Mr. Thompson was going fishing.

I was about two, so I don't remember it, but my father's brother-in-law lived in Connecticut and he had a boat over there that he wanted my father to have. So my father and my uncle went over to Connecticut to get this boat and brought it back across the Long Island Sound through Plum Gut and into the Bay. It was a one-cycle engine, so that was quite an undertaking. I don't know how long it took.

ARA: Well, to come across the Sound would be one thing, but to go through the Gut and down through Greenport and through all those waterways is something else. If you hit that rift off Nassau Point and Robin's Island at the wrong time, you had the dickens of a time getting through that. I had a big thrill when my father first bought the little five horsepower E(to (?)) motor, I was allowed to go to Greenport with him. It took us a long time. We got in that rift. We just stood still.

ARA: I don't think we moved one inch a minute. It was terrible.

I: What is a rift?

GPM: They call it a race or a rift. The south race and north race. It's the waters between the two Bays, that narrow strip between Robin's Island and the South Shore and between Robin's Island <sup>and</sup> New Suffolk. The south race is worse than the north race. My father and my two brothers and I took our little old motorboat years ago. I was about ten, I guess, and we went on an overnight cruise. It was not a fancy boat by any means. We went down through the north race to Jessup's Neck. The boys went on the beach and slept all night and my father and I stayed in the boat. That was the biggest thrill.

ARA: I think we should mention that Pip's mother is still alive and pretty well at 99 years of age, and I attribute it to her summers in Mattituck.

GPM: She kept her apartment in Garden City until she was ninety-two, and came out here every summer from the middle of June to the fifteenth of September. She went through at least two hurricanes alone in this house.

I: You were talking earlier about the change in the ecology, the blight of the marsh grass and the seaweed. Can you pinpoint any turning point in terms of the housing aspect of this area?

GPM: The housing hasn't changed much in the area we're discussing, from Tandy's right of way, well...Doctor Nichols sold his home many years ago to the Catholic Church, and they made a Catholic girls' camp.

ARA: Originally, it was the Catholic Daughters of America who bought the property...but eventually, it was taken over by the Diocese of Brooklyn.

GPM: Doctor Nichols was the first one of the original group from Brooklyn to sell his house. The ownership of the houses has changed now.

I: Was there any point in time at which housing started coming in?

ARA: It came with the automobile!

GPM: It came gradually...On the north side of the Boulevard is where there was nothing. All woods. We used to call Bray Avenue the chute-de-chute road because of the hills. The first one you went down from the main road, there was a creek running across it. The Bay would disappear and then as we'd come up, "There's the Bay!". That that road is more or less leveled out now, not a chute-de-chute any more.

I: What about the area east of here?

GPM: Well, the Husing's cottages were there, and were there long before our house was built....

I: There seems to be houses about every hundred feet at least...

GPM: Well, Judge Richards' house was there, the property that is now, basically, Salt Lake Village. But Judge Richards had a big home right on the other side of what is now Bay Avenue...

ARA: It's still there.

GPM: But it's not in the family any longer. Carol Richards Kendall lives in a house in the back of her original family's house.

ARA: Wick Gildersleeve had a little house down there where the Veteran's Park is presently, and he must have sold that to the town fathers. They put in the park.

GPM: Wick Gildersleeve was sort of an institution around here as far as my mother was concerned. When Walter Robinson died, my mother and my father did their business with Wick Gildersleeve, who was a carpenter and a builder. He was also a life-saver many, many times. Another name that comes to my mind is John Klein. He owned a garage on the south corner of Bay Avenue and Route 25 for many years. John got interested in boats and his son did too, and they had that Marina down there. It's called the Village Marina now, right by the Crown Station.

GPM: When our boat would be out here and mother would be the only one around in later years, all she'd have to do is call John Klein and ask him to come up there, and he would say, "Now, Mrs. Pullman, the boat is fine, you don't have to worry, it's well moored." That's all she wanted to hear...this is just a typical example of the relationships between the people here and the people in town...

I: Do you remember any local people, at that time, who were thought to be prominent or significant in shaping the course of events in town in the twenties and thirties?

GPM: Names that were prominent always were the Tuthills, the Reeves, the Hallocks, the Gildersleeves, just the typical Long Island people. I can't think of anyone who sticks out in my mind. As a child, I wouldn't know.

ARA: The ones who came over in the "Long Boat," their names are still carried on.

GPM: My parents would have known. Phillip Tuthill rings a bell. He was president of the North Fork Bank. All these names were names that I've known all my life. As for one being more prominent than the other, that I cannot recall. My parents probably could. As a child, they did not mean much to me.

ARA: Do you know how your neighbor, Kelsey, got into that, he owned nearly a whole block in Mattituck, I understood?

GPM: Well, he was a real estate dealer in Brooklyn, and bought up that whole side of Love Lane.

I: He was your neighbor out here as well....he lived next door to you...?

GPM: Yes, he was the one who bought my uncle's place...right next door to us...the place was originally owned by Oscar Kepler.

END OF TAPE



AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

9 GPM-ASM-1

name Gertrude Pullman Marvin

birth date 09/23/18 place Brooklyn, N.Y.

father's name James Pullman

mother's name Mabel Brazier Pullman

childhood Brooklyn, Mattituck

education Packer Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn, Skidmore College, B.S.

job training Summer Teaching, American Red Cross (Mattituck and Riverhead)

work Physical Education Teacher

official positions Teaching, Lowville High School, Adelphi Academy, Stevens School, Philadelphia.

member of Upper Dublin H.S., Fort Washington, P.A., UD, Adult School

special activities, projects, hobbies Scouting, Community Recreation, Softball Coach

spouse's name Robert S. Marvin

children's names Barbara, Patricia, Stuart

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____

for me, Mattituck was \_\_\_\_\_

Mattituck is \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like Mattituck to become \_\_\_\_\_

(feel free to expand on any of the above; -your opinions are welcome!)

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

9-GPM-ASMc-1

name Arabella Stack McDermott (Mrs. John)

birth date 6/24/13 place College Point, N.Y. 11356

father's name Daniel James Stack

mother's name Angelica Julzbach Stack

childhood Summered in Mattituck since June 1925 after visiting area in 1924

education Business School

job training Stenotypist

work varied, from technical reporting by stenotyping through secretarial

official positions ~~Brooklyn Dioc. Church of Catholic Women~~

member of Brooklyn Dioc. Church of Catholic Women

special activities, projects, hobbies \_\_\_\_\_

spouse's name John James McDermott

children's names Raffi (J.J. jr.), Marg. Hozza Alona, Timothy, Kathleen

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____

for me, Mattituck was Great

Mattituck is Home

I'd like Mattituck to become Stay as it is

(feel free to expand on any of the above;-your opinions are welcome!)

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape: #18-EHR-1  
Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve  
Place of Interview: Author's home on Park Avenue

HUDSON'S FAMILY AND FACTORY

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MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

601

Contents of Tape: #18-EHR-1  
Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve

Date of Interview:  
Interviewer: John Traversa

HUDSON'S FAMILY AND FACTORY

I: You told me you spell your name with an 'E' and that you were named after your Grandfather, Elbert.

A: Elbert Fleet. He worked for the Standard Oil Company for twenty-five years, but he came from somewhere on the Island. He was a native Long Islander like the rest of the family. He was my Mother's father. My Mother was Alice Fleet. My Father's name was Joseph B. Hudson. Grandfather Hudson, William Henry Hudson, worked in Maine. They packed beef for the Union Army.

I: Why did they come here from Maine?

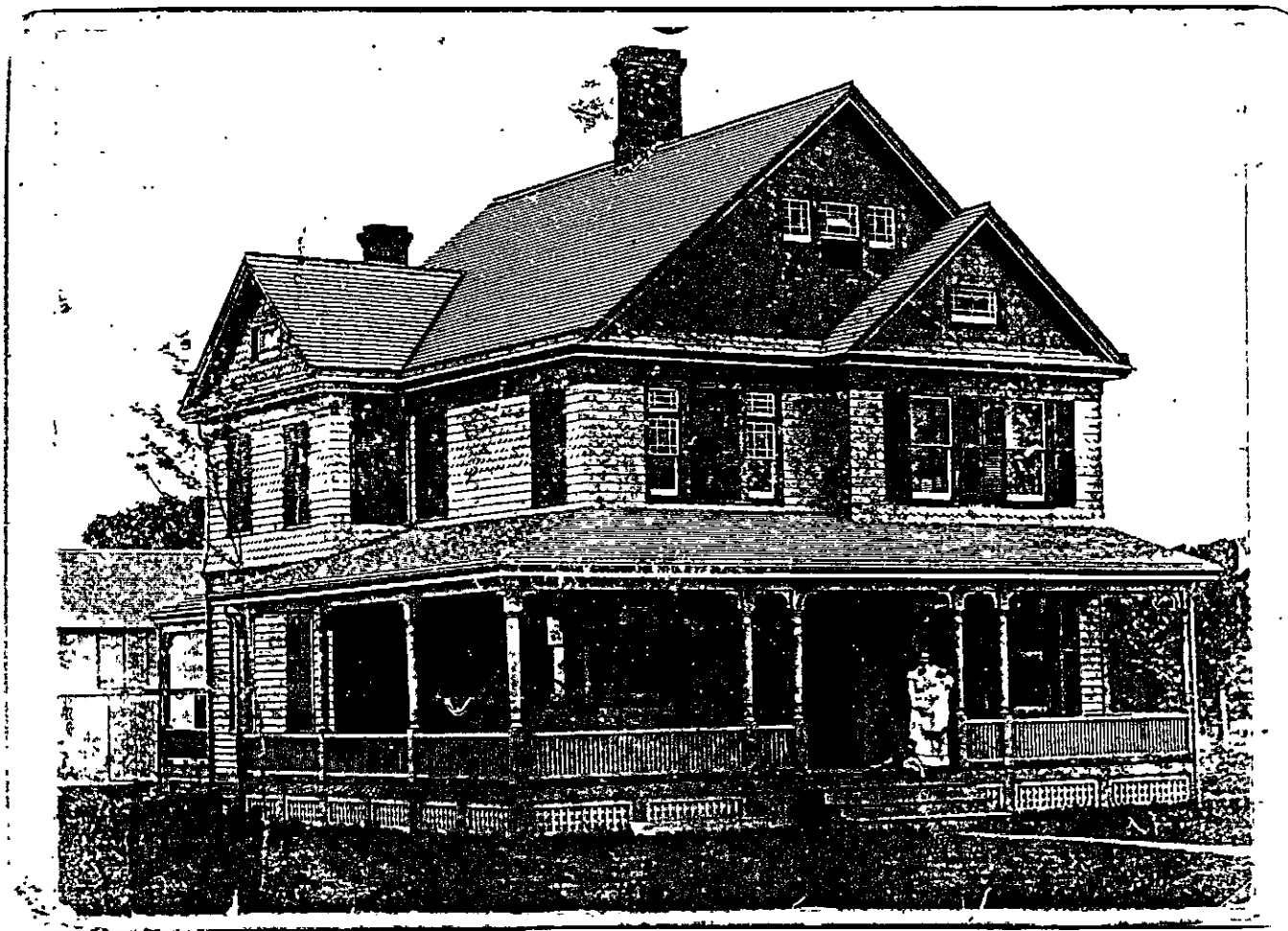
A: I think my Grandmother just didn't like it there.

I was born here in Mattituck over New Suffolk Avenue. There are two big houses on the south side of the road, the second house from John Wickham's greenhouses. Father had the house built there. I was born in April of 1895, the eighth day.

I: How long had your family been here before you were born?

A: Well, they started in business in Glen Head, (Nassau County, Ed.). In those days all the big bugs from New York City that were buying up property and building out around Glen Cove, they really put the farmers out of business. There was nothing to can, you see. They built these big estates and lived on them and there was nothing to do business with. And then they came out here.

Grandfather Hudson's family is buried in the Laurel



Very young Elberta Hudson at home

cemetery. There's a house that we call the Hudson Homestead in Laurel. That was built by Obediah Hudson and heaven knows how long ago that was. And Blair Young lived there for a while. That was called the Hudson Homestead and that's how the group of Hudson's I belong to happened to get buried over in Laurel. So there's a whole flock of Hudson's up in that cemetery. See, I'm the ninth generation of the Hudson family down this end of the Island. They came from Connecticut originally, came to Shelter Island and then circulated; this was in the 1600's.

I: So eventually part of the family ended up in Maine?

A: And then came back. Father and Mother were married in 1888. They must have come between 1888 and 1895 because I was born in the house here in 1895.

I: And your Father came out here because there were Hudsons already here? And also because being in the canning business he'd want to be in a place where there were a lot of crops?

A: Yes.

I: What kinds of crops were there?

A: Well they canned asparagus and tomatoes and squash. I don't think they canned corn out here, but they canned cauliflower. But that was not successful because in the dry season, cauliflower in cans didn't turn out white. It became yellow in the can for some strange reason, whether it was something in the soil when the soil was dry. Then the asparagus.\* Well the facilities around here ended up with nothing to can except tomatoes. Because the farmers went into potatoes. And that's the reason we went upstate. Of course, this(unclear) historically, but Father and Uncle Will

\*21-EHR-4, page 21, mentions that the asparagus suffered a blight.



Hudson's Canning Factory      about 1905

Photo kindness of Elberta Hudson Reeve



were in Buffalo the night President McKinley was shot. They were up looking along that, what they call the Ridge (?) Road, from Rochester into Buffalo. So they built in Holley, H-o-l-l-e-y. Mr. Holley was one of the engineers on the Erie Canal. I was just seven years old, 1902

I: Do you know why the farmers in Mattituck changed over to potatoes?

A: No, I don't know why.

I: Well, where your father started the factory, there was evidently an awful lot of asparagus being....

A: Yes, a good deal of it was planted here and I suppose that it was all sold in New York City, or most of it, anyway.

I: Was that true of tomatoes, that New York City was the major market?

A: Probably was.

I: What about the squash?

A: That was raised out here. They raise a lot of squash and pumpkins out here now.

I: And New York City was the main market?

A: For most of that.

I: Do you remember the labels that were on the cans?

A: I had a scrap book that belonged to Mother, and it had pages of the old brand names in it. And that I have not been able to find.

I: Was it called Hudson Brothers?

A: It was called Hudson and Company. Hudson and Company Asparagus, Hudson and Company Tomatoes. And, of course, we put up stuff for various firms that preferred to use their own labels. Because they

sold to S.S. Pierce in Boston. They sold to A&P -- they were the worst people to do business with that ever were invented.

I: Why?

A: I don't know (unclear). Oh, S.S. Pierce were wonderful, wonderful firm. But they insisted on the best of everything. And A&P bought (unclear).

I: But why were they difficult to deal with?

A: Oh, they were fussy about deliveries. If you sold them a carload lot they had to get it on a certain day and it had to come just so, all that sort of thing. And then nine times out of ten they could lose the bills of lading. The very dickens to do business with. Of course, while we were in business in Holley, we sold carload lots of peas to the Navy and tomatoes to the Army.

I: Where was the factory located in Mattituck?

A: The building is still standing. On Sound Avenue you come to the Railroad Crossing and the building is on the south side of the street. It's bright red if I remember what it looked like. In my day, when I was a kid, there was also a boiler house with a tall brick chimney. But that has been removed. There was a railroad siding that went in there.

I: Do you remember your family's reaction to having to move the factory upstate?

A: Well, I think it bothered my Mother very much, but Dad was so busy all the time that he didn't have time to worry about it. We had a large population of Italians in Holley and question of getting the correct help and all of that.

I: How did you feel about leaving Mattituck?

A: Well, I was kind of excited to go to upstate New York, on the

Empire State Express. I'd never been on a big railroad, not the Long Island. It makes quite a difference for a small child.

I: When did you come back to Mattituck?

A: In 1920

I: Did you find things changed much?

A: Well, there were three winters when we stayed in Mattituck, at the Mattituck House. I think I was in the third, fourth and fifth grades because that's when I got to know Ralph Tuthill. We didn't have any place to live around here. Grandfather Hudson moved into our old house, then one of my Father's sisters inherited it from Grandfather and then her Granddaughter, Katherine Tuthill. I guess she's been gone from there about ten years. But the Riley family (They ran the Mattituck House. Ed.) were very busy and very industrious. It was a (unclear) enough place to live. It was an old fashioned hotel.

I: So you spent three winters here, around 1903 and 1904 and 1905. Then did you buy a house upstate?

A: Father built a house. We used to come here before Thanksgiving and we were back upstate early in March. Then we came back every year for a visit. You see Uncle Will, that's my Father's brother, lived in Mattituck. He lived in the second of the two big houses over on New Suffolk Avenue. So we moved into this house\* in 1924. I've been here over fifty years. My Father actually built it. He could do most anything, very good plumber. Then the inside, the woodwork, was all done by a man here in Mattituck. John Hallock, I think his name was.

I: Do you consider yourself a native of Mattituck?

A: More or less.

\*On Park Avenue

I: Were you accepted by the local children in school?

A: Oh yes, there was no fuss about it. Uncle Will had three sons and I went to school with Harold and Raymond. Of course, George was old enough that he went to a boarding school.

I: You went to school with Ralph Tuthill. Were there any others you remember?

A: Caroline Howell is gone, Lois Fischer is gone. I went to Sunday School with Irma Reeve and Irma's cousin, Helen. My family were Baptists but I never went to Church anywhere. I went to the Presbyterian Sunday School. Irma's mother was my first Sunday School teacher.

I: What did your family think about the Church?

A: Well, my mother was a Baptist, went to the Baptist Church in Holley, but I didn't like the Church, I didn't like the people, and I didn't like the minister. And so I turned out to be a Presbyterian. You know I was a spoiled only daughter, so if I wanted to go there, I wanted to go there.

I: Have you any recollections of the Church here when you were young?

A: I can remember the Christmas celebrations here. And somebody whom I never knew, and I always wondered who did it. You know in those days oranges were very scarce and always at the Presbyterian Sunday School when the gift giving and talking and the speaking of pieces were all done, then this great big crate of lovely big oranges was brought in, and every kid in the Sunday School got an orange. It was done every Christmas I can remember when I was a small child, the oranges. They always had a Christmas tree. I can see Will Duryee now with a pail of water and a sponge on a long pole because the trees were lighted in

those days with candles.... He was always active in Sunday School and he also ran the choir.... I remember the first set of pews were terribly uncomfortable. They were old fashioned with the high back, difficult to sit in and punched you across the soulders.

I: How about school memories?

A: Well, when I went to school here in Mattituck, the school was on the site of the present Library. There were three grades in the class I was in. One teacher was Margaret McHenry and the other one was May Bliss Riley, she married George Riley, one of the numerous Rileys. She lived in the house across the street from the Presbyterian Church.

I: What do you remember about the school?

A: Well, I think it made quite a difference to me to go to school in upstate New York and then to change over to another set of books, and another set of teachers and another set of classmates. And when I got into the fifth grade they discovered that I wasn't learning as much as I was capable of learning, so we stayed upstate after the fifth grade. I graduated from Holley High School and then went to the University of Rochester. I majored in English and History. I graduated in 1917.

I: Was it unusual in those days to go to the University and get a degree?

A: It wasn't unusual. I don't think that women were admitted to Rochester until 1902 or 03 or 04, somewhere around there. Susan Anthony and...who was the other who got the girls in. I should know...

I: So when you came back to live in Mattituck you lived with your family.

A: Well, I worked in the factory. I ran the office for three years in Holley. After I graduated I went right into the office: the men went into the Army and the Navy. Father wanted somebody that he had pretty good connections with to know what was going on. I took up the space. I was in charge of everything. He went off one year and I had the whole pesky factory on my hands for ten days. Some chore for a twenty-two year old. But our foreman was a Mattituck man, Thomas O'Neil.

I: What happened when you moved back here?

A: Father said that he wanted a certain amount of freedom, so Uncle Will and the three boys took over. Then Father was on the Board of the Bank for a long while, the Mattituck Bank in those days before it got to be North Fork Trust Company. Uncle Will was President of the Bank for awhile when we were upstate. Then Father was on the Board. I don't know what they did, Lord Knows, going around looking at property and stuff.

I: What did you do when you came back?

A: Well, I was on the School Board. That took an awful lot of time, too. (Picture of the School Board)

I: The names are on the back. Joe Chick...

A: I don't know how to pronounce it, Chanackowitz or... It was unpronounceable. They always called him Joe Chick.

(Tape interruption)

A: Harold (unclear), and Donald Swahn. He's brother-in-law to Stanley Parkin. Dwight Reeve, he's Irma's brother. I was on the Board for fifteen years. I was on the Board when the new school was built (1934. Ed.) across from the lake.

I: What was the difference in the school when you were in school

and when you were on the School Board?

A: That's a hard question. I know in upstate we had the same set of teachers for years on end, but I don't remember but two teachers down here when I went to school. I think we were more interested in the Holley School, in meeting Albany's School Board's idea of what an education should be. I think there was a greater pressure on kids to make a good showing in school than there was down here. And, of course, we were more obedient, more law abiding. We didn't get into all the trouble the kids get into now. I guess they have had some trouble here, I don't know. I haven't had anything to do with the School Board. Ralph Tuthill was on the Board while I was on the Board. We went to school together Ralph Tuthill, Harold Hudson and I, and a bunch of Comiskey's. . And let's see, Allen Howell. There were a family of Cleaves, . . . It's hard to remember. I think I sat behind Ray Cleaves and in front of Jim Comisk<sup>e</sup>y. Ralph Tuthill was on the Board of that school up on the North Road and when that school sent their kids down here to Mattituck, of course, he had to get off the School Board here, 'cause he was living out of the District. So that kind of spoiled things.

(Pictures)

A: I learned to drive a car when I was thirteen years old. I remember the car perfectly, and it slays me not to have a car now. To have to send in a perfectly nice license with not a question mark on it and have to quit driving. That's my only complaint. I remember the car, it was a Stevens-Duryea. I'll tell you how it happened. When peas were getting to a state where they had to be canned, they were cut with a mowing machine as if they were hay. I rode with the road man. When farmers planted peas they planted them way up on the tail end lot of the farm and you had three or

four gates that you had to get through. And so Charles would get out of the car and open the gate and I would drive through. He would get back in the car and then at the next gate I would take over again, and then on the way out we did the same thing. That's the way I learned. And in those days the State sent you a little sticker which told you what your number was and then you took it to the blacksmith or the tinsmith and he made it into metal....

A: I'd gotten married, the first day of August 1928. I married LeRoy Stanton Reeve, locally known as 'Slats'. He came here to live when we got married. And he had this little girl whose mother died when she was nine days old. And so I brought her up, Janet.. She was in the Waves and she married a Navy man. They're in California. She was in Kindergarten when I took over, a little under five. I was thirty-three when I was married. I was very fortunate. It worked out very nicely. I don't remember when I didn't know him. He played piano beautifully. And Mother used to say, she laughed about it, when we lived up there on New Suffolk Avenue when she was upstairs taking care of the baby, he strolled into the house and played the piano. I knew him in school. He was thirteen years older than I.

I: Can you tell me why he was called Slats?

A: Well, he was built like the normal string bean. He was very tall and very thin..

I: I've heard he was a terrific baseball player.

A: He was a very good shortstop.

I: When you married him he was forty-five or forty-six and he was still playing ball?

A: Oh yes, yes. My Father managed the team. He enjoyed it and I



loved a baseball game.

I: Did you play?

A: No, no, I never did. You know in those days the girls here didn't have a very good chance at athletics except something that was done in a gymnasium. They played baseball where the Catholic Church is now. We not only had a ballfield but we had a sort of narrow little race track all the way round it. And the racing done on it was mostly done with bicycles. Practically everybody had a bicycle. Heavens, I had a bicycle when I was five years old.

I: Did you ever get involved with bicycle races?

A: No, I was pretty small. That was for boys, anyway.

I: What did girls get involved in?

A: Well, we played croquet. And some of the girls that I went around with in upstate New York used to play tennis. I got hit in the eye with a tennis ball. I was never enthusiastic about it after that. But I can't think of anything in particular we did, visited each other's houses, went and spent the night with each other and talked our heads off till the family came in and told us to turn over and shut up. There was a group at the High School in Holley, more or less like a literary society. A lot of reading done. I don't remember any festivities. Then in college it was before the time they began to frown on frats and sororities, so we had a lot of sororities. See, we started classes at Rochester at eight o'clock in the morning and they went until four.

I: Coming back to Mattituck, with the University degree, did you feel at all restricted here?

A: No, I don't think so. I think I was too busy here at home.

I: I have the impression that in those days people were expected not only to have kids, but several kids. Did you have children?

A: No. There seemed to be nothing in the world the matter with me. Just one of those things. Strange, anybody as healthy as I have been. I just never had a child.

I: Was that difficult, personally or socially in those days?

A: Well, I think a lot of people kind of pestered you, 'Why haven't you got a lot of kids?' I think that thing would come up, but otherwise not. And so few people knew that Janet didn't belong to me that there wasn't a great deal of fuss about it.

I: I have the impression that farmers would want a lot of children.

A: Well, I can see if you're a farmer, how you want a whole lot of kids. Somebody to take care of the chickens and somebody to take care of the stock and somebody else to work on the farm. Seems kind of normal.

I: Going back to what you did here. After Janet was grown up and you weren't so busy, you seemed to have felt quite comfortable.

A: Yes, I never was a card player. I never was interested in cards, and a good bit of sociability around here goes with playing bridge.

I: What did you do for fun?

A: I went clamming and swimming.

I: You and Roy?

A: No, he was busy in the office, Real Estate and Insurance.

I: Is that connected with the Real Estate business next to Grabies?

A: That's another Reeve, Roy H. Reeve. There's no connection.

I: Where was LeRoy's office?

A: The office is still there. Valentine Stype now owns it. And his brother ran the Reeve Lumber Company, Harold Reeve. That's Harold Reeve senior, Larry's father.

I: Two big lumber companies in Mattituck. Was there any competition?

A: No. And the Fleet Lumber Company in Cutchogue.

I: Was that connected with your mother's family?

A: No. There's a strange thing there. The Fleets came from farther west on the Island, but we never could make any connection. And mother's Uncle, Charles Fleet, and Will Fleet in Cutchogue would have passed for twins. They looked just alike, florid complexions, voices were strange and high-pitched. They were as like as two peas in a pod, but we never could find the connection. Janet has all the papers on that, because her mother was a Fleet.

I: We were talking about LeRoy, the insurance business. Did he start it?

A: Yes, I think he built that office. And I inherited it and then I sold it to Mr. Stype because my lawyer said not to be a landlord. And Mr. Stype has built on.

I: Do you know how LeRoy got interested in real estate?

A: That I don't know.

I: Were there any high lights in his business, a real estate boom, for instance?

A: Well, of course, there was always a spell for summer rentals. You know so many of the houses along the Bay here were for summer rent. And then so many of the people that came out and like it out here and changed their rental place to a permanent residence. There was quite a bit of that done.

I: Did that begin to happen more frequently in the twenties?

A: I think a lot of people began to get awfully weary in the

City and this was the place to come out and spend the summer. We had a lot of people that used to come out here Decoration Day and stay to Labor Day, and now there isn't a great deal of renting going on because people that did rent came out here and settled. You know, when I go to Church in the morning, if I speak to three or four people I know I'm doing well, so many strangers. Now, for instance, if I go to Church when there's a children's program on, I used to think I knew every kid in the Presbyterian Sunday School. Now if I know any of them, it's because they have a family resemblance. That's the way it is.

I: Was there any point where renters becoming owners in town became a trend?

A: Yes, there was quite a trend earlier on, before the prices went up so. I would say ten or fifteen years ago. It's kind of hard to tell. The big Tuthill farm on the Main Road, they went out of business as farmers and almost all of that property has been sold, and there are houses everywhere, where you just didn't expect them to be. And when we came here, that street which you must have come on, Maratooka Road, that wasn't open and you went that way over to the driveway that goes into the Norris place and came out through the gateway at the old Wickham House. I don't remember what year it was that road was opened and macadamized. The trees ran pretty thickly all the way down to the creek. This way, there are one or two new houses, the Sarkesians, and then Frank Abrams lived there, and there was one house that they moved from somewhere behind the Wickham house. And all these houses here, on the east side of here, they weren't here. And on New Suffolk Avenue, across the street from where we lived, that was

just farm fields. When we built here, this street wasn't town property at all. It was just a little woods road. This house was here and the house next to it and the next house.

I: Three houses to the west of you?

A: They were here when we came here. The big house on the east side of the street belonged to Charles Wells. And the next house then, belonged to his brother Arthur, and this house (pointing west), their mother lived there. Their brother died and she took it over. And I don't think she used it for anything as a summer residence. Paul Manship lived there for a while. You know, he did the statue in New York for that skating rink. He was an artist. And then we lived there for the four years. It wasn't finished inside. In front room instead of four corners in the room you had forty-four and it was a great place for spiders. Housekeeping was pretty awful. And then the Tyrell family lived there for years on end. And then the family that rents it now they used to have a house on the Bay over the other side, on the Boulevard. I see Mary Jane every day. I've known her since she was so high. She comes from somewhere in New Jersey, but they're here every summer. Then the house next door, Stan Parkin's father-in-law was a physician in Brooklyn, They came here summers. I've known Mrs. Parkin since she was eleven years old.

End of tape.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

name Elberta Hudson Reeve

birth date April 8, 1895 place Mattituck

father's name Joseph B. Hudson

mother's name Alive Fleet

childhood Spent partly in Mattituck and partly in Holley, N.Y.  
(near Rochester)

education Mattituck Elementary, Holley High School, University  
of Rochester, BA 1917

job training \_\_\_\_\_

work Office manager in father's factory, 1917 - 1920

official positions Member of the Mattituck School Board

member of \_\_\_\_\_

special activities, projects, hobbies Home, and family

spouse's name married 1928 to LeRoy Stanton Reeve (Slats)

children's names Janet, step-daughter

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____

for me, Mattituck was \_\_\_\_\_

Mattituck is \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like Mattituck to become \_\_\_\_\_

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape: Vol. 19, EHR-2

Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve

Place of Interview: Author's home on Park Avenue

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THE BAY AND OTHER MEMORIES

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Persons mentioned: Norris, F.M. Lupton, Grandfather Fleet, William Breaker, Loudon family, Charles Wells, Arthur Wells, Dr. Lazarus, Raymond Tuthill, Cedric Wickham.

Autobiographical Sketch

MATTITUCK HISTORY PROJECT

Contents of Tape 19-EHR-2

December 1978

Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve Interviewer: John Traversa

Place of Interview: Author's home on Park Avenue

"The Bay and Other Memories"

I: Is there anything that you thought of that you would like to talk about?

EHR: I've led a very quiet life since I've been down here. I've spent a lot of time on the Bay. You know, if you're on the School Board for awhile, it would mean you were busy.

I: Tell me, on the School Board, for instance, what some of the problems were.

EHR: Well, I think that we had meetings by the thousands. Trying first off to find a place for the new schoolhouse, meetings, night after night.

I: Why was that so hard?

EHR: Well in the first place, I don't think that the people that owned the farm that the school is built on wanted to sell. This is on Route 25, the high school. That was the problem. And then during the time that the building was in process of being built, the architect who was from Southampton, he died. Someone else took over, I think it was a man who did work for this man. I've forgotten his name. And of course the question of whether we would have buses or not, that was a problem.

I: How did you resolve that?

EHR: Well we got buses, that's all I can say. And there was meeting after meeting. I know we came out one time with a perfect tie. Some said, "Yes", and some said, "No". And then I think eventually it did happen. The State kind of stepped



in and said things about it, but that was all. We didn't have much trouble with the youngsters. Their mothers didn't go to work, and the kids had somebody at home to go to and we didn't have a great many misbehavior problems at school. I don't know how it is right now. I don't have any relationship with anybody on the School Board now.

I: You hear of behavior problems. And you think all of it has to do with the fact that mothers are not around children, taking care of them?

EHR: Children being home alone, mothers working, I think that's part of the problems nowadays. And some of the kids have gotten into the drug business, all that sort of thing. I don't really think the United States has grown the way it should have grown, but I think that's kind of difficult to explain. And then it's very funny, if you are on the School Board, how often somebody makes a date with you, "Oh, we will come down to talk to you about this, that, and the other thing." Then they let you down, you sit home for a whole afternoon and they don't appear. Then when they think it's (unclear) time for them they come and don't find you home, you know. Then of course it's not a paid job, you get nothing out of it.

I: You were on for many years?

A: Oh yes, fifteen years.

I: From your perspective, as a child in school and as someone who has gone through college and has been on the School Board, what impression do you have about the local attitudes on education?

EHR: Well the kids go to school, but that's about all there is to it, I think.

I: I'm interested in what you mean by that, because it's a rather broad statement.

EHR: Well, I guess they have a Parents Teachers Organization, I don't know, I don't know anything about the school now.

I: I don't mean right now, I mean back when you were on the School Board, what were the problems, let's say, twenty or thirty years ago.

EHR: Well, we had an addition that we put on the school, that was difficult.

I: I was thinking more specifically about attitudes. I am under the impression, from what you said that they didn't seem to place as much importance on high quality education or achievements in school.

EHR: Well, I really don't think they did, I don't know, maybe I'm all wet on that. I think some of the parents have been a bit careless. (unclear) and not surprising. We haven't had anything in the line of trouble up there. Except the kid that learned to scale the side of the school building and open the window and let other people in. Oh, he was a bird. I s'pose he's grown now with kids of his own. We had one period there when things were pretty bad. We had two temporary school rooms outside of the building, when the building was over where Reeve's building is now. And they didn't have any toilet facilities, and they were heated by some sort of a stove in the room. The kids that sat next to the window froze to death, and those who sat next to the stove roasted. If they needed to go to the bathroom, they had to put on coats and hats and everything on and go over to the other building. That was a very unpleasant situation, and I think that's one reason why we had the new big school,

because that really made a stir. The two temporaries we built, they were not successful.

I: When they built the large new building, were there any problems in raising the funds for it?

EHR: I don't remember that there was, no.

I: Who supplied the funds?

EHR: Well they issued bonds. Harold Reeve, Sr. erected it. We were so busy with the architect passing away, and getting started. We had an awfully rainy year, I can't remember what the year was, but they couldn't work on it for awhile. It was a difficult process. Then, of course, when they put the little addition over on the east, there was no trouble at all, everything went in fine. But I think there's space left over in the high school building that hasn't been occupied. I've never been in the new addition.

(Tape interrupted)

EHR: Just lately so many have gone. It's very hard. And not to have a car, that irks me.

I: I know it would make it easier for you if you could drive.

A: Yes, but Thomas is against it.

I: Your stepson? He was harbormaster?

A: Yes. There's about fifteen or eighteen years between the son and the daughter. Thomas looks out for me, a guardian, so to speak. I'm very fond of him.

(Tape interrupted)

I: ....if you could get together with other people in town?

EHR: Well, I have several friends that are left in town.

Bertha was here yesterday. She was my husband's secretary for sixteen years. And Katherine Fleet, she lives in Cutchogue, from the other Fleet family. She's not a known cousin. She must be a cousin somewhere. And Doris Reeve who used to work in the Bank, she comes to see me. And one of Larry Reeve's secretaries, she comes to see me. But I don't get around as much as I would if I had a car. Things are so different from what they used to be.

I: What about older folks, like your mother. She was in serious condition and she didn't end up in a nursing home.

EHR: She wanted me. She wanted me....I think maybe the whole thing is things are so different now-a-days. The kids are so used to packing up and going here and going somewhere else and they don't have any <sup>time for</sup> ~~type~~ family relations, a lot of them don't. And I think that does make a difference. And with mother in the home all of the time when you're a child, you get to feel that that's the way to live. If you have a mother and a father and they are good people and are good to you, that's what makes for good citizenry. But so many of these people that are working for the big businesses, they get sent here, they get sent there, they get sent the other place. And they break up (unclear). It does make a difference.

(Looking at pictures)

I: Who did the painting you have.

EHR: That's Dolly Bell's.

(Tape interrupted)

EHR: Grandfather Fleet was a cabinet maker. He worked for Standard Oil for twenty-five years. He made all the copies

of the patents that went to Washington, by hand. He must have been exceptionally clever. And Mother said that he was paid twenty-five dollars a week and he was paid whether he was sick or well. He never missed a day's pay in twenty-five years, in the days when the ordinary worker got a dollar a day.

(tape interrupted--pictures)

I: What kind of attitude did your parents have about succeeding, achieving?

EHR: Well I was expected to pick up pretty good marks in school, in high school and in college. I got good marks, and I was the top winner in high school. I wasn't in college. I was among the top ten or fifteen. I was expected to do a good job, and when I was given a job to do, I did my best. I didn't mind running the factory, and I didn't mind taking care of the canned tomatoes. When they put them up, hand packed, they were all carefully peeled, and pushed together so that they weren't all juice. If one of the Italian women cut themselves, oh brother, they would come over to the office flying. I don't think I ever put on a clean white blouse but someone bled on me. I don't think I ever did a bandage on any of the women in the plant but what I got kissed afterwards and thanked for it.

(Tape interrupted)

.....  
EHR: ...Grandfather Fleet died when I was three years old. He had an awfully bad case of pneumonia. He came out from New York, and he stayed with us for quite awhile, I don't know how long. One of my pleasantest memories of Grandfather - my mother played piano very nicely.

I: You used to play piano with your husband?

EHR: Oh yes, we used to do duets...My heavens, the family'd keep us up until eleven or twelve o'clock if we'd keep going. He was a very good player.

I: Do you play?

EHR: I have a piano, but I haven't touched it, not in years. You see, with this finger, I can't hit an octave and this finger there is no motion in this joint. And I love to play, but it's one of those things you give up because you have to. But Grandfather was a Baptist, he was a Deacon in the Baptist Church. Mother played the piano very nicely and after supper we always went into the living-room where the piano was. Grandfather having had this bad case of pneumonia, he couldn't pick that little me up off the floor, but he'd ask somebody in the family to pick me up and put me in his lap and I can remember tucking my head under his chin. We sang all the old hymns that we liked, and that is a lovely memory.

I: How are things different now than when you were a child on the Bay?

EHR: Well, there weren't a great number of stairs that ran up. This section here was part of the Wickham farm, Charles Wickham. My parents bought it from Mrs. Wickham. But the first house down here, I think, around 1902, is what they call the Norris place. Now it belongs to one of his sons. It was built by Lupton, F.M. Lupton, I don't remember him at all. There wasn't anything along here except that house and the Breaker house. Mr. Breaker's name was William. And next after those this way

from there, a family by the name of Louden, L-o-u-d-e-n. They had the barn there which was also made into a house. Then you get the street. And the next house when we came here was Charles Wells, the next house was Arthur Wells, then there was the house belonged to Mother Wells and after our house was built Dr. Lazarus built (unclear). And after that there wasn't anything to where Raymond Tuthill lives now.

I: How was the beach different?

EHR: Well, I don't know as if I could say. The beach front has changed I think. I must have lost perhaps five to six feet on this end of the lot, you know, storms, hurricanes and what have you. The lots were supposed to be six-hundred and some odd feet out to this. It was just a little one track road that didn't even belong to the town, and the town took it over. Some people call it Maratooka Park, some call it Park Avenue. While we've lived here the little house on the road was built by the Arthur Wells family and they kept their help in it.

I: Has there been some erosion?

EHR: There's been some erosion here, not badly. Nothing like the way it's eroded on the Sound Beach.

I: When did people start putting bulkheads in?

EHR: When we first came here we didn't have one, the house next door did, and so did the west house. That was before 1920. Cedric Wickham was always angry about it because he said that we wouldn't have had the erosion if we hadn't built the bulkheads. But on the Sound where there are practically no bulkheads, there is still plenty of erosion, so I don't think we lost a great deal.

I: Did he explain why?

EHR: I don't remember his saying why, but he was a very opinionated person. Down below us here, he built a very

large log cabin. I know it's been wrecked three times, and I don't know how many more, but there was no bulkhead in front of it. So the high tides run in and takes everything off the first floor.

I: What about the seaweed, I noticed a lot of the pictures you had showed the beach in the twenties and thirties...

EHR: Well, we had lots of seaweed...and then was some sort of disease took over, and for awhile there we didn't have the least bit of seaweed. It has come back in some places. Of course I haven't been in swimming in the last ten years, so I wouldn't know. I don't know whether there is any out in front or not. You see, I have been gone now a little over three years.

I: You're referring to the Riverhead Nursing Home.

EHR: Yes. I haven't been here, and I don't know what it looks like out in front. Tommy could tell you but I couldn't. I hung on to the house, because I felt that if you had a nice, big solid house free of mortgage, you had something, so I kept the house.

I: Getting back to the Bay, I noticed you had a few pictures of scallop boats that used sails to get around rather than motors.

EHR: They weren't allowed, you know. They weren't allowed power boats to scallop in.

I: Why?

EHR: I don't know, but they were all boats with sails.

I: Can you describe to me what it looked like?

EHR: It was very pleasant, all the boats. There's nothing prettier than white sails on blue water. We used to see anywhere from a dozen to, on the first day of scalloping they



ran almost to a hundred boats. They came from all over, and scallops were very plentiful, fifty cents a quart.

I: Are you talking about the later twenties now, or thirties?

EHR: It must have been in the twenties. But they changed all the laws.--the State did that--about how much you could take, whether you can take them with a motor. Of course if you have just a sail you can take them anyway. But they limit the quantity now that you can take. All that stuff is different.-

I: Did you ever go out for scallops yourself?

EHR: Well, yes with a rowboat. You know the scallops can move around, they can go up or down, or sidewise, whichever way they want, and if you had a crab net, you would stick a crab net under them and catch them that way. And if you had a strong southwest storm coming across the bay you got scallops all mingled in with the seaweed. The seaweed, the scallops and everything came up on the beach...You'd be surprised at the number of people who used to come tearing down here with buckets when we had a good stiff breeze. It was an easy way of doing it, picking them up by hand.

I: Was there good fishing after a So<sup>u</sup>wester?

EHR: I don't know about the fishing. I know when you went in swimming you had to watch out for the blowfish 'cause they bit your toes, just a little nibble, but it made you jump. The kids just loved to pick them out of the Bay and then scratch 'em and they'd blow up. They're very pleasant eating, nice, white fish without any bones.

I: You said people used to come with buckets. Were they allowed to come through, was there a right of way?

EHR: Yes, there is a road that comes right down to the Bay. And we don't own the beach. Only as far as high tide. Your

ownership of this land is from high tide back to the road.

I: What else did So'westers bring in?

EHR: Nothing particular. If you went crabbing you went to the creek, Deephole Creek. But all summer long we usually have that very nice southwest breeze which comes up, oh around two or half past. And then in the winter time we get a northwest wind.

I: How long does the breeze last?

EHR: From the southwest? Usually into the evening. Then the wind dies down.

.....

EHR: Well, this was entirely wooded when we bought the lot, and it was second growth, most of it. We had three very large trees, but the hurricanes that we've had have taken all of them down. I remember the 1938 hurricane. I think we lost ninety-six trees if I am not much mistaken.

I: On your property alone?

EHR: Yes. There's a lot of trees. They weren't all of them big.

I: How did people use the Bay for recreation when you were young?

EHR: Well it was a custom, on Sunday afternoon, to take a walk down to the Bay and walk along the beach. We went swimming, or probably we had a rowboat and rowed around awhile, or just walked. Of course we didn't have all these New Yorkers, and New Jerseyites that you have now-a-days, and that was a common thing among the local people. You had your Sunday dinner and then you went for a walk.

I: Tell me more about New Yorkers.

EHR: People that came out and rented and were here just for the summertime, a good many people.

I: How do you feel about.....?

EHR: Crowded, and so many strangers.

I: What effect did that have on your walks?

EHR: Everybody has a car now, except me, and you seldom see anyone walking on the beach unless it's someone that owns a house around here.

I: So what do you mean by crowded?

EHR: Oh, the Post Office, the Bank, and any of the stores and all that sort of thing.

I: Do you find that annoying?

EHR: It is to me to a certain extent.

I: How do other people feel about it?

EHR: Well, everybody cusses about the traffic. You ride from here to Riverhead in the summertime, and you can't pass anybody. You get in a line of traffic if you can slip in and that's that.

I: Anything else caused by these summer people?

EHR: Some of them are very nice. The people that have rented this place now for several years, they come from New Jersey, and after the girls got married, they would come down here since they were very small. Just like Dr. Lazarus' family and Virginia Parkin and her sister Dorothy. They came from Brooklyn, very very nice family.

I: What would you say the local peoples' attitudes are towards summer visitors?

EHR: I think that depends entirely on if you happen to be neighbors of somebody that's a nice family. You get all

kinds of thoughts. If you like your neighbors you're very well off, and if you don't like them why (unclear). Some of them don't want to know you, and some of them want to be friendly, especially those who own the places.

I: Could you explain that a little bit more?

EHR: Well, you never know what you're going to get. Because some people like those over on the Southside, they get maybe six or eight people, all different families, all cuddled up together in one house, and it keeps the (unclear) neighbors crazy. We haven't been as unfortunate along here.

I: What do you mean keep driving the neighbors crazy?

EHR: Oh get out on the lawn, and raise you-know-what all evening, be very noisy and unpleasant, all that sort of thing. After all, most of the Mattituck folks are pretty decent, and they don't go in for that sort of thing.

I: From having talked to some of the other people that I've interviewed one of the things that seems to crop up is, that there seems to be a gap between local people and non-local people.

EHR: Yes, I think that's quite right.

I: Can you tell me why that's so?

EHR: Well I don't know. I suppose they are used to the noise and the hurry in New York and that sort of thing. And you don't know much about them. A good many of the local people are very nice families, and many of us, of course, have known each other for years. I think it's a question of the speed that the cities have developed, and some of the lack of it out here. It's kind of hard to tell, although we have somewhere or crazy as (unclear)

I: About the Bay, you've gone fishing yourself, haven't you?

EHR: Oh yes.

I: Has the fishing changed?

EHR: I don't think there's anything much in the fishing line going on, except up to the west end of the Bay where the flounders come in in the Spring. Of course, they are a popular fish.

I: Has there been any change in the quantity of fish or scallops available?

EHR: Well, we haven't had a good lot of scallops since the seaweed went. They're just coming back in a few places.

I: And the flounders?

EHR: Well they come up in the Spring.

I: Has there been a considerable amount of pollution by power boats and things like that?

EHR: No, I don't think so. We didn't have very many power boats this summer, very few. Of course, all of us along here have our own water pumps and our own cesspools and such.

I: Any problem with the drinking water?

EHR: Rust! Because there is a layer of decayed iron ore somewhere under this portion of the land. You do have rust but the water is very soft. Wonderful to wash your hair in.

EHR: Well, various groups sail, very pretty to look at... you see a dozen or so little boats with white sails that of course is the summer feature.

End of tape

name Elberta Hudson Reeve

birth date April 8, 1895 place Mattituck

father's name Joseph B. Hudson

mother's name Alive Fleet

childhood Spent partly in Mattituck and partly in Holley, N.Y.  
(near Rochester)

education Mattituck Elementary, Holley High School, University  
of Rochester, BA 1917

job training \_\_\_\_\_

work Office manager in father's factory, 1917 - 1920

official positions Member of the Mattituck School Board

member of \_\_\_\_\_

special activities, projects, hobbies Home, and family

spouse's name married 1928 to LeRoy Stanton Reeve (Slats)

children's names Janet, step-daughter

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____

for me, Mattituck was \_\_\_\_\_

Mattituck is \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like Mattituck to become \_\_\_\_\_



MAPS, PICTURES

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Contents of Tape No. 20-EHR-3  
Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve  
Place of Interview: Author, s  
home on Park Avenue

Date of Interview: Dec. 1978  
Interviewer: John Traversa

Birds, Slats, Memories

I: I'd like you to tell me about your residence on the Bay.

What made people decide to settle down along the bay as opposed to along the Creek\* or along the Sound?

A: Well, I suppose it was love of salt water. It was recreation right in front of you, you know, swimming or sailing. I think the Creek is a great deal more polluted than the Bay is. Dad wanted it for his retirement is all I can think of why he wanted to come down here, and the Creek was not as pleasant as it is on the Bay.

I: Why was that?

A: Well, the Creek was pretty thoroughly settled all the way up along into the village, although they used to raise oysters there, wonderful oysters. But Thomas wouldn't let me eat an oyster or anything else that came out of the Creek.

I: Why?

A: The pollution.

I: You mean human waste pollution?

A: Sure. And motor boats. They come over here from Connecticut, you know, dozens of them, into the Creek there at the harbor. It is deep water. Of course, to go on the water here if you just go from the beach why the water is shallow until you got out a little way.

I: That makes it different from the Sound?

A: Well, the question of swimming. If you like the water icy cold, the Sound is more to your taste. But if you have a whole

flock of small kids, the Bay is the place to take them.

\*They are referring to Mattituck Inlet.

Because they can go out quite awhile without getting into trouble, and the beach is pretty safe. There are no holes or places like that.

I: Were property values any cheaper here?

A: No, I don't think they were. I think they were about the same.

I: Does that hold true today as well?

A: You don't know what you'd have to pay for a lot down here, do you?

I: I've heard it's like \$25,000.

A: \$20,000 or \$25,000 for a lot. My father paid \$2,500 for his lot. That's quite a difference between then and now.

I: So, property has gone up about ten times since the mid twenties.

A: Oh yes, it's gone up terrifically. It's liable to be \$125 per front foot. Maybe more than that now. The property values around here have gone sky-high. Thomas makes me so mad. He says, "Oh well, you're house isn't worth a damn, but your lot you can get -" He told me what I could get for it. Frankly, I like the house very much.

I: I love your house myself. I think it's very charming, and it looks as if it's very well constructed.

A: Well, it's very solid, yes.

I: How large is this property?

A: Well, now I couldn't tell you in acres what it is. It's one-hundred thirty-two feet on the bay, one-hundred thirty-two feet on the road, and it's a little over six-hundred feet deep. Six-hundred and sixty some feet or was before we had a little erosion. But these lots are what are known as eleven o'clock lots.\* They don't go this way, they go this way. And a great \*That is, not perpendicular to a road or a shore line.

many people have built a garage which they thought was on their own lot and have discovered that they were on their neighbor's lot. So you have to buy another piece of land to get the garage or else move it.

I: Do you have any idea why there are eleven o'clock lots?

A: I don't know. That was one of Mr. C. H. Wickham's ideas, and the farms down here all belong to C. H. Wickham, and he laid them out like that. And there it is. It's a question of take it or leave it. That happened along the Bay Boulevard. Oh, I don't know on how many occasions the people built their garage on somebody else's lot. Easily done.

I: I'd like to move on to birds around the bay. I know you're a bird watcher.

A: Well, it would be almost impossible to name them all. We have Doves all over the place, and now even with the weather like this we get Cardinals. We have Blue Jays which dear Tommy hates. I must have at least a hundred and fifty Sparrows in the ivy on the chimney, ordinary English Sparrows. We get all the local birds.

I: Are there any that are rare or peculiar to this area?

A: Well, some years back we got this peculiar Parakeet that came up from somewhere in South America, and I thought I was seeing things, that came from somewhere in the Andes. Then, I mentioned it, and Virginia Parkin and her sister had both seen him. He was green. He was green and had long, long tail feathers. What let him loose on this continent I don't know. But they didn't seem to mind the cold weather. Having looked him up, I discovered that from where he came from in the lower part of the Andes that the weather wasn't too promising either, and they didn't particularly mind the cold.

Well, we had Juncos. We had two or three kinds of Woodpeckers. We have a few little Goldfinches in the summer. We have several different kinds of Sparrows, White Throats. I have had a collection of Wrens. I haven't seen a Wren lately, but we've had them. We have Brown Thrashers who sing beautifully and we have various types of Thrushes. I would have difficulty in naming them all.

I: What about Mockingbirds?

A: Yes, we have Mockers around here.

I: No, I meant Hummingbirds.

A: No, unless you raise something that has a red flower on it you don't get a Hummingbird. Uncle Will always planted salvia in front of his house because it brought the Hummingbirds. Salvia, of course, has bright red blossoms. I haven't seen a Hummingbird down here in heaven knows when.

I: Has there been any significant change in the bird population?

A: I don't think so except for the Cardinals, and they were quite a surprise when they first came. But they stay all winter. Then of course we have Seagulls. I always love to sit in my upstairs window and watch them. Come twilight they go west. Apparently they gang up at night. They are great on following a farmer who is plowing the land. You may go by a lot that is being plowed and see, Oh anywhere from ten to a dozen following the plow and the planter or whatever they are using. They pick up all the grubs and bugs that the farmer

has disturbed from their winter sleep. Sure. You see them a lot.

I: How do the farmers feel about that?

A: Well, I don't think they mind. Of course, last winter we had this great spell of Swans here, but they are protected and down in Cutchogue and in New Suffolk, people went by the dozen with loaves of bread to feed them when things froze over.

I: But they are rather recent and new to this area, the Swans, or have they been here before?

A: I haven't seen a great number of them. Some people used to buy them and turn them loose on the Lake. Ralph Tuthill can tell you. The Nat S. Tuthill family, they used to have Swans. Cedric Wickham had a pair of Swans and one of these great flat turtles bit the head off one of the Swans which was a great tragedy because we enjoyed watching them. One of the younger boys that has a house on the Lake, they feed the birds that come into Maratooka Lake. You can go by there some times of year when the geese are migrating, and the lawn will be covered with geese. Canada Geese. Then, of course, we have the little Snipe running along the beach. It is pleasant to watch them. When we first came down here, we used to get the Black Crown<sup>ed</sup> Night Herons which people down here call Quawks. I used to have Kingfishers out here that would build holes in the bark but I haven't seen a Kingfisher in a long while either. They were common. Then we have Nuthatches and Brown Creepers. Oh, I couldn't name them all. They are a lot of fun. I haven't seen a Quawk in a long time.

I: How do you spell Quawk?

A: Q-u-a-w-k. I used to wake up in the middle of the night and hear the noise "quawk quawk." They fished at night.

Nat S. Tuthill stocked Wolf Pit Lake, which was on his property in those days, with goldfish and he didn't have the goldfish very long because the Quawks all came and sat around the edge of the water and ate the goldfish.

(Tape interrupted)

I: Tell me what you knew of Dr. Craven. Did you call him Dr.?

A: No, he wasn't called Dr. to his face as I remember, but he was a Ph. D. and he was very much interested in his job as pastor of the Church. He had a wonderful education, and a very nice family. One of his sons was a marvelous organist.

I: Which one - do you remember his name?

A: Charles was the younger one. I went to school with Charles. Mac was older. What was his name? MacDougal I think. Yeah, I think that was his first name. He never was called anything but Mac. I know he used to come down here later on in our lives and give us an organ concert. He was really wonderful on the organ. I think he was chief organist of a church somewhere on the west end of the Island. But he played beautifully. He was a very good musician.

I: You're talking about the late twenties and thirties?

A: Yeah, probably in the thirties. I don't know just when Mac died. I could tell you if I could go to the cemetery but I can't tell you now, probably on his gravestone. Dr. Craven was buried in the plot next door to my family. I think Mrs. Craven was a MacDougal but I'm not sure.

I: Yes, she was.

A: Dr. Craven had a vegetable garden on the Lake, on Maratooka Lake, just about on the side of one of the Penny boys'

houses. We always used to say that he said his prayers and got his sermon together on his knees in the garden. He was a very good gardener. My only objection to Dr. Craven was when he began talking to the Lord and praying. He didn't have a great deal of concern for the necks of his audience, when you sat in an attitude of prayer. He prayed quite a long time.

I: Was that customary in those days, long prayers?

A: I think that was more or less peculiar to him. Because he was so involved with his religion that, well I don't know whether it was a question of making contact with the Lord or what but that was his (unclear) and he prayed for a long time.

I: He prayed out loud?

A: Oh yeah.

I: The audience just listened with their heads bowed?

A: With their heads bowed, yeah. Which is a Protestant form of worship, bowed heads. But he was very good and he never slipped on his grammar in any way and he had a beautiful singing voice, too. He used to sing with the choir. Then, there was a quartet. He and Will Duryee, Carrie Conklin, can't think who the fourth one was. Who was it? Aunt Abby, but I can't remember Abby's last name at the moment.

I: This quartet sang what kinds of songs?

A: They were usually church music, not necessarily hymns but church music. Nothing secular. I remember them singing at my grandfather's funeral. I think Abby's name was Conklin too. They were no relation. Yes, I'm sure it was. Because that was a strange thing. When I was finally seated in the dining room at the home...

I: You mean the nursing home in Riverhead?

A: Yeah. They started to introduce me, and I looked at the other girl, and I'd gone to Sunday School with her when I was a kid. I knew her very well. She was a Conklin - Isabelle. No not Isabelle. Isabelle was her sister, May. It was very pleasant to see her again.

I: Were you involved in the Church choir at all?

A: No. I couldn't stay on key long enough. I was all right with my hands, all right when I was playing the piano, but I couldn't stay on key long enough.

I: What about people's attitudes toward Rev. Craven?

A: Well I don't remember that there was any objection to him. I think they all liked him very much. He was on one of the Boards, the first World War. He rode a bicycle.

I: Never a car?

A: Not that I know of. He might have later on, but I know when I was a child he rode a bicycle.

I: You said there were no objections from anybody?

A: No. Certainly not in my family.

I: What about the other people in town?

A: Well, I think he was quite popular. I never heard that he wasn't.

I: I have heard from talking with Julia Penny--you're a good friend of Julia's, aren't you--and I've heard from a couple of other people that there was some trouble regarding his pay. When he first came here, he wanted \$1,000 a year, and they gave him \$900, and they never raised him.

A: I don't think his salary was ever raised in the twenty-five years he was here. I don't know why.

I: And that's why he decided that he had to leave - because he couldn't support his family. That's why he had to have a



vegetable garden, even though he enjoyed it. I mean to help feed his family. Not only was his salary never raised but also it was delayed many times.

A: Well, the poor soul, he got fed with vegetables and so on from other people's gardens. Not in a money way. That was true of a great many ministers in those days.

I: It didn't seem to me that the Presbyterian congregation was poor, like the Methodists seem to have been. The Methodist minister would never get a raise in salary though he seemed to have been very well-liked and very competent.

A: Yes, because one of the winters we stayed at the hotel he came down and boarded there for a while. But they had a very small congregation. They just didn't have money enough to pay a minister, or anybody else for that matter, and to keep with their debts and when the time came that they had to give up the Church, nine tenths of them came over and joined the Presbyterian Church.

I: This was while Dr. Craven was pastor?

A: Yes, he was pastor then. Well, you know pay in those days was pretty low. When I graduated from college, I was offered a job in Cobleskill, New York at \$600 a year, and I wasn't going to take it. I really had no intention of teaching anyhow except as a substitute. But I was very fond of Dr. Craven. I liked him immensely.

I: Tell me some of the qualities that led you to like him.

A: Well, he had such a wonderful education. He was so interesting to talk to. He also was a good musician although I don't know that he was any good with a particular instrument.

I: I have the impression that he was very dedicated, both to the church and the congregation and to the town.

A: Yes, he was a person that nobody could pass any sort of aspersions against. He was very, very nice. Perfectly educated, and a perfect gentleman, which I can't say about some of the pastors we had.

I: It seems that they let him go because they didn't want to raise his salary and I believe that when they tried to get somebody else to replace him, nobody would take the same job for that salary.

A: I can't tell you who the next man was.

I: Julia told me that some people had objection to a pastor smoking a pipe, which Craven did.

A: Well, I see no objection to that if he wanted to.

I: He smoked it at home and in his garden but some people objected even to that.

A: Well Puritanical (unclear) and I know Mrs. Craven was not particularly popular. They thought she was kind of high hat. But I never knew her very well.

I: Did anybody know her well?

A: I don't know. I don't remember anything about her friends. Of course, she was well, maybe somewhat younger than my mother, a little.

I: Did you see any sense of humor in Dr. Craven, yourself?

A: I don't remember. You know he maintained a school here for a while after he was out of the ministry? He lived in the big Lupton\* house on New Suffolk Avenue and my cousin Betty went to school there for a while.

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\*It was the Wickham house. Ed.

I: Do you know anything about the school, how people reacted to the....

A: I really don't know. See, I wasn't here then.

I: Did you sense any bitterness or anger on his part for having to resign his post?

A: No, but I would be pretty young to remember that. The last time I saw Dr. Craven was in the entryway to the church. It was after I was married, after having such a nice long talk with him. I liked him so much. But I'm one of those people, if I like people, I like them, and as my husband said, if I don't like them, I give them a severe letting alone. The present minister makes no calls at all. He isn't what I would call a pastor. I feel that if you're going to have pastoral duties you should know your congregation in their own homes.

I: Was it customary at the time that the pastor did a lot of calling?

A: Oh yes, a lot of calling. Sometimes alone, sometimes with his wife.

I: There were no phones much in the early 1900's?

A: Well, I never had seen a telephone until we moved upstate.

I: So, did he just come in unannounced?

A: Yes.

I: How did the family feel about having the minister come to visit?

A: Why they had no objection to it at all. I know my father liked it. My husband was very fond of it in spite of the fact that he was Episcopalian. But Slats sang in the Mattituck choir for quite awhile. He had a nice tenor voice.

He also played the piano very well.

I: Is that the Presbyterian Church choir?

A: Yes. I remember a story from his childhood. He had an old aunt, Aunt (Ruthema?) which is a nice old Bible name. Aunt (Ruthema?) was a strict Episcopalian and she always insisted that the boys went to church. Well, they lived down way toward the Creek anyway, and it was a Sunday morning, and I guess from what Slats said he was slightly in a (unclear) and so on but he heard the church bell ring. So he went to church. I guess Aunt (Ruthema?) warmed his bottom very thoroughly when she saw the state he was in and he thought he was being treated very cruelly. Because he was supposed to go to church, he did go to church but he didn't go dressed like a gentleman. We often laughed about it.

I: How old was he at the time?

A: Seven or eight. Yeah, a small fry.

I: That's a great story. Thank you for telling me.

A: I understand that he was also barefooted, but anyhow he was not clad for a church service. That was funny.

I: I'd like to know more about Slats while we are talking about it.

A: He was very good with a boat. He could bring a boat up against the dock so easily it wouldn't hurt your hand between the boat and the dock. He was very, very good.

I: A sailboat you're talking about?

A: He sailed, and he had a motorboat. He was very, very good. He was a good boatman.

I: Did he do a lot of fishing?

A: Not a great deal that I can think of although every time I went fishing with him we always caught blowfish, and if

there was anything bigger or finer to catch Slats always caught it. I don't know (laughing). It was funny.

I: From your point of view what did people in town like him for the most and respect him for the most.

A: Well, I think I told you before. Slats liked people. There was no question about it. I never knew anybody that liked people the way he did or if he didn't like you he let you alone very strongly but he really did like people. He was interested in people, interested in everybody, and he was a very, very friendly person. I gave Tommy the other day a little brass. I don't know if it was a mahogany background or what. It was about him having joined the Fire Department. I think I've got a picture of him holding that somewhere. It's right here in the desk come to think about it. He didn't like to be photographed.

I: Tell me why, I'm curious.

A: I don't know. I just don't like it.

I: Tell me why you object to being photographed.

A: I just don't like it, that's all.

I: Okay. Did you feel that way all your life?

A: No, not particularly, but as I have grown older I always look a little bit sterner and crosser than I feel. I just don't like it, that's all. We all have our peculiarities. That's one of mine.

I: How about Slats? Would you say he had the same reason?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't think he cared too much but I have never enjoyed it, I don't know why. And yet I was photographed all over the lot when I was a small fry. Maybe I had some objection to the man who took the pictures, I don't know. I can't remember.

I: That can be. Now, you said Slats was in the Fire Department for quite awhile?

A: Well, he was a charter member of the Mattituck Department. Before we had the siren down here we had a great big iron ring about this big, circular, and when they wanted to call the Fire Department out they took a hammer and pounded on it. You would be amazed how far you could hear it. It was heard thoroughly around the village. They had one of the old-fashioned pumpers with bars on each side, and you get four or five people together, everybody working on it  
(Tape interrupted)

A: .....the one I know of up on Suffolk Avenue.

I: You mean up on the -

A: No, in the ground, with a lid.

I: Those were used as water reservoirs?

A: Yes they were used for reservoir if you needed water. See, we had no regular water system around here. Haven't yet, as far as that's concerned.

I: So the firemen used to hook a hose to -

A: Into the cistern, yes.

I: And then pump?

A: And pump. Of course, we have a very complete Fire Department now, very nice machines and all that sort of thing. But the old pumper was really quite something. When you got tired out, somebody else came and took your place and kept the thing going.

I: Did you ever get involved with that yourself?

A: No. I don't know what they ever did with the old pumper. I hope they preserved it. I hardly think so. But it would be a very wonderful sort of antique to have around.

I: I know Slats was involved with baseball which you liked.

A: Oh yes.

I: Did you attend any of the Firemen's meetings or anything like that?

A: Oh no. I was not interested in that at all. I know the firemen's wives had, I guess they still have, kind of an auxilliary, but I never belonged to that.

I: The plaque that he's holding in this picture is brass on wood.

A: Yes.

I: Do you remember what it's about?

A: Merely the fact that he was a charter member of the Fire Department and the dates on it. Tommy has it.

I: What about the Real Estate business that Slats was involved in?

A: Well, it seemed to me that on summer Sundays in the spring there were always a tribe of people coming in and out looking for places to rent on the Bay. That was a very common project. He knew very well the values of all the farms around here and all that sort of thing.

I: So he was involved almost as much in renting as he was in transfer of property.

A: Yes. He sold insurance too. I think it was mostly insurance on houses although he did work for the New York Life for a while.

I: Was that where the slogan "Ask Slats" came from?

A: Yes. And he used that to the end of his life.

I: Did he have that on his stationery or anything? Did he have stationery?

A: I think so, but I wouldn't know where to find any of it now.

I: You said his secretary .....

A: Well, one of his secretaries was Elizabeth Fleet, who was a sister-in-law by the way. His first wife's sister. His first wife was Clara Fleet. Now, we never knew where that came in on my family of Fleets but there it was, and then Bertha Bader worked for him for around 16 years, but she was the latest one of his secretaries. Oh her name is McHugh now.

I: How do you spell that?

A: M-c-H-u-g-h. He was an Irish Catholic, and she was a good Presbyterian, but I don't know it seemed to work out very nicely. So.

I: When you married Slats, he already had the real estate business, right?

A: Yes.

I: Was there any sign of people at the time trying to or being forced to sell property in order to survive the depression?

A: I don't remember anything of that sort. I know business wasn't very good for a while there.

I: Was there any kind of rapid growth in real estate business in the 1950's or 1960's?

A: Yes, I think then, and of late years, of course, there has been an awful lot of building around here. I should say from 1965 on. A lot of farmers have sold their places and housing has filled it up more or less. For instance, on the Tuthill farm, the houses are beautiful.



I: By the Tuthill farm, are you talking about -

A: Philip Tuthill's. Off the Main Road between New Suffolk Avenue and Route 25, to the east of here. (Along Blossom Bend, Ed.) And then there are some new developments that I don't know anything much about over beyond the new road.

I: What is the attitude of the local people about all the new houses?

A: Well, I don't think that many people are given to associating with the summer people. Some of those that we used to meet in church do come back here. But there seems to be a certain lack of closeness between many of the summer people and the natives. Of course, I'm a native. But they come and go, and many of them are here only in the summertime. There seem to be quite a few people in Nassau Point now that stay here year round. But I don't know about that new settlement between the Main Road and New Suffolk Avenue. The houses are very attractive, very good-looking, very well-kept.

I: I have the impression from talking to both natives and summer people that there is the sense of a gap.

A: Well, I think the only place where they really don't seem to be out-siders is the Cutchogue Country Club, the summer people. I don't know, I suppose because they play golf together and that sort of thing. But, there is, as you say, there is a gap. And some of them, when they discover that you have been to college and do have a degree and a few other things, they are sort of surprised that the natives are sensitive to education and so on. I think they figure that some of us are not good enough to know.

I: A kind of superiority?

A: Yeah, they have sort of a superiority feeling, yeah.

I: Where does it come from?

A: I don't know whether they are used to New York and looking down on a certain group of people in New York or coming out here and figuring the natives don't know anything. It is kind of difficult, I know I was never afflicted that way because Dr. Lazarus who built the house next door to us, we were very good friends from the time he came here. And then the family that lived over in the cottage next. But, of course, they went to church with the group, and we knew them quite well. The daughters have come out here. I think I spoke of that before.

I: Yes, you have. So you would call the Lazarus family an exception to the rule?

A: Yes, I would because I think both of his daughters who live here now have joined in with everybody else around here. They don't affect any dislike for the local people and get along with them very nicely. Stan<sup>\*</sup> sings in the choir, and the girls belong to the various clubs around here so I think they must have in early childhood gotten the feeling that this was going to be home and they expect to stay in it.

I: Can you think of any other exceptions? One example I can think of is Rev. Craven. He was definitely an outsider and came here, and from what I hear he was very well respected and he contributed a tremendous amount of energy and involvement to the congregation and the town. And he wrote a whole book.

A: Uh huh. Well, he was interested in the backgrounds of all the families. A copy of Craven's Mattituck had various

\*Stan Parkin

family members mentioned. I think my great, great grandmother went to church here. I think I've seen her name in the back of the book.

I: Can you think of any other so-called outsiders?

A: Now, along the Bay here, Frank Abrams, he was a very good friend of all the neighbors, and he was chairman of the Board of, dear me what was it, one of the big New York oil companies. And then there was a very lovely woman who lives here on the Bay, and her name is Sarkesian, Florence S., and she is very nice and very friendly person.

I: Is her husband a doctor?

A: No, he was a very pleasant individual and very nice. Now Slats was laid up in bed, and he had blood poisoning on his chin. He was in bed, and I heard a knock at the door, and here was Mr. Sarkesian. I think my husband was getting fed up with feminine company and he asked if he could go and talk to him. I said, "Why, of course, I'd love to have you." I took him upstairs, and he sat and talked with Slats for little more than an hour. And it wasn't necessary but he was a very friendly, nice soul if you got to know him. Standard Oil of New Jersey was where Frank Abrams belonged, Chairman of the Board for a long while. Now, he was a very, very nice person. He didn't have any of that holier-than-thou-art attitude which some of the New York group and New Jersey group have. He was a very nice person. Mr. Sarkesian is gone now, and so is Frank Abrams. Mrs. Sarkesian is wonderfully educated, speaks French like a native.

I: Oh, you mean Frank and Mr. Sarkesian are dead?

A: Yes, both of them are dead. She still comes out here for the summer alone.

I: Uh huh. We said that we would talk about Nat Tuthill.

A: Well, have you been up and looked at Wolf Pit Lake?

I: Yes.

A: Well, he lived in the big house up on the hill, and he maintained a farm. I don't know what they did at the old--he bought the old canning factory. And what they did with it there I don't know, whether it had something to do with mixing fertilizer, I don't know just what the process was. But I don't think he maintained it very long.

I: You mean the Hudson Canning Factory?

A: Yes. And he took down the boiler room, and he took down the big chimney. It was a tall brick building, big chimney.

I: The round kind?

A: It wasn't round, not like the Kodak chimneys. They're beautiful, quite wonderful, outside of Rochester, cream-colored brick, circular.

I: Do you have anything else you want to say about Nat Tuthill, why you think he was important?

A: Well, he was a very dignified, handsome gentleman. He had a daughter who sang with the opera in New York. She had a beautiful contralto voice. But he was an established citizen, and so was his father before him, Captain Ellsworth Tuthill. There is somewhere, I don't know just where, a connection with him and my father, but they are not cousins. I don't know just what it is. If they are cousins it's distant ones.

Captain Ellsworth was more fun. I remember (laughing) taking a walk with him through the cemetery around the church, and he knew something about everybody that was buried there.

And really it was more fun. I remember one story he told me when I was a youngster. Captain Ellsworth Tuthill was a tall, interesting looking gentleman with a large white beard. But this grave that we stopped and looked at, and he said, "You know so and so?"--I can't remember the name or where the stone was now--"he liked to smoke, and his wife wouldn't let him smoke in the house. So out in the backyard he erected a building and smoked out there. But he kept it so nicely that eventually she threw him out of that too. So, I don't know whether he had to smoke in the backyard or....." But that was one of Captain Ellsworth's favorite yarns. Nat's wife was Anna Gildersleeve. And as I told you before, Grandmother always said we were congenital idiots around here because we had all married into each other's families so.

I: It's incredible all the interconnections.

A: Well, when you get down right to it, you are related to a good many people around here. But there is not as much mixing as there used to be. We didn't have any television, and we didn't have any radio in those days, and we amused ourselves. Now, the Mechanics Lodge has given up, and there are a good many other groups that have given up, and of course, with the automobile everybody has gone every which way. So, it doesn't make for a closeness that we used to have years ago.

I: I see. I get the impression that you miss the visiting and the talking.

A: I miss that in a way. Then, when you get to be as old as I am, many of the older group that you liked and went around with, they are gone. It does make a difference. Now, this group of girls, I call them girls, young women, young married women that came down last night. I didn't know any

of them.

I: The ones that came to visit you?

A: Came to visit me, yes. I didn't know them. They belonged to that Maranatha Group from church, and they were visiting all the shut-ins. One of their activities. There were two girls. One of them I knew. She was a daughter-in-law of another family. Another was a daughter of a family that I knew. But the town has changed quite a bit. People have changed and the Church group that my mother belonged to is gone.

I: Which group is that?

A: The Women's Sewing Society. That's gone. They were people my father's and my uncle's age, and that sort of thing. It's one of those things. I used to think when I went to Church that I knew all the kids in the Sunday School and all the Church members. If I go to Church now, if I speak to three people, I'm doing very well. Everything has changed so. And then we have a new Church here. We have the Baptist church. And there is a group that has taken over the Episcopal Church, and many of them are summer people. Things are different.

I: What do you mean has taken over the Episcopal Church?

A: Well, there were a very few people that were members of the Church that are now members of it. The early group are gone. This group is new.

I: You say they are mostly outsiders?

A: A good many of them are outsiders. Many of them are outsiders who have come here to live.

I: You feel they have taken over?

A: Um. The (unclear) of it and that sort of thing.

I: Do you think it has happened in other areas? I see some of that in the Library. It seems that a lot of the people who are Friends of the Library--you know, I go to all their meetings--are non-native or non-local people who have gotten involved, all of whom I like personally. Also, the Board of Trustees, a lot of them are non-native.

A: Ralph Tuthill had something to do with the Library for quite awhile.

I: Right. And Irma Reeve. They are both still involved. They are both on the Friends.

A: Of course, Irma's family went to the Presbyterian Church here, and that's how I knew her. Irma's cousin, Helen, calls me on the telephone now and then. We all went to the same Sunday School class. But when you grow old you lose a lot of contact. There is no question about it. And I think people now-a-days are scattered all over the face of the United States and the World a great deal more than they ever used to be. But there is a line in the Bible that I often think of. I think the Lord is speaking to the Jewish people. "With long life will I satisfy Him and give Him my salvation." But, you know, the older you get, the less involved you are in things that are going on in your hometown.

I: Do you think that it is necessarily so?

A: I feel that way. Now I was up at the Home in Riverhead, I had a caller one day, and I haven't seen her in a long while. She is one of the Reeve family, and you know, she came in to see me every week regularly. She lived in Riverhead. She

lost her husband too. We just picked up where we had left off. We have gotten to be very friendly again. She was one of the Reeves.

I: Was she from Mattituck?

A: Oh yes. Her first name was Hope. Hope Duryee Furnival. But that was a very pleasant experience, to look for Hope one day a week. I liked her very much.

I: I would like to know about Ralph Tuthill. You went to school with him?

A: I went to school with Ralph. Oh, I like Ralph, always did. He tried his darnedest to make me ride a bicycle again. But I have absolutely no intention of doing so. The last time I tried to ride a bicycle--this is silly. One of my daughter's friends came riding down here to see her, and I don't know what Janet said but I said, "Well, I can ride a bicycle." Well, she and her friend didn't believe it. So, I picked up the bicycle and got on and rode around the driveway and out to the road and back again and got back to the backyard and I didn't know how to get off it. I fell off. Didn't fall hard. Those girls never let me forget that.

I: So, Ralph was trying to talk you into it?

A: Well, he isn't going to get anywhere. Absolutely not.

I: Have you considered a tricycle? Those large -

A: No, no. Too much on the road. I think that's kind of asking for sudden death. No, I don't think I'd care for that. Because I know going up to Riverhead to the man who is the oculist, you get into the traffic and you can't pass anybody



from here to Riverhead to save your soul in the summertime. You get in the line, and you stick with it. And therefore, getting on the highway with a bicycle or a tricycle or anything of that sort, I don't think it's befitting my age. I think it's very foolish.

I: Speaking of Ralph Tuthill, he's very well-respected.

A: Yes, he is. He would be. He was a member of the Mattituck School Board while I was on the Board. I think I told you this before too. They discontinued the school in the district where he lived, and he had to get off the Board. <sup>\*\*</sup> He was a very reasonable and interested individual always about everything that was going on. He is a very friendly individual. I always have liked Ralph. He was a cute small boy too. I don't remember what he was like as a scholar. I don't have any idea.

I: Do you have any recollections of him as a judge?

A: No, none at all. But I never got into any trouble with him at all. Why should I? I don't think he was particularly harsh ever.

I: What about Irma Reeve? You went to school with her, didn't you?

A: No, I didn't go to school with her. She went to West Mattituck School. No, I don't know anything about Irma as a scholar. She was a nurse too for a while, I think.\* And like a lot of the rest of us, she came back to Mattituck to live. If you want to know anything about birds, Irma knows it. But she always was a responsible, nice person. As I understand it,

\*Irma Reeve worked in Public Health Nursing for over 45 years.

\*\*Unclear. It may refer to the fact that Mr. Tuthill had been on the Board of the old school, the one that stood where the Public Library now stands.

she went to Cornell, got Phi Beta Kappa in her junior year, so she must have been a very good student. I know she likes to go on all the nature walks and the bird walks.

I: I see. Do you belong to any of the societies like the Audubon?

A: No.

I: You are an independent?

A: Well, in a way yes, but I was tied down with mother being ill for so many years. It makes a difference whether you can go and do things. Father drove a car all right although he was always likely to get into a ditch because he was looking at some farmer's crop upstate. We used to laugh about it. But Father was rather demanding. He took me as a chauffeur a good many times. I was pretty much tied down to family.

I: What do you mean pretty much?

A: Well, he wanted what he wanted when he wanted it. Now, he couldn't have stood my (unclear) worker here because he wanted his dinner at twelve o'clock noon. He never fussed. He never scolded. But if he didn't get it on time he pulled up to the table and sat down. So, he was a bit demanding. But he was most awfully good to me. But when you have someone in the house with a chronic disease it's very difficult to get out and belong to this, that, and the other thing. I didn't do any church work that I might have done. I always was a regular attendant until lately. But it's a long hike from a parking place up to the Church.

End if tape

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

name Elberta Hudson Reeve

birth date April 8, 1895 place Mattituck

father's name Joseph B. Hudson

mother's name Alive Fleet

childhood Spent partly in Mattituck and partly in Holley, N.Y.  
(near Rochester)

education Mattituck Elementary, Holley High School, University  
of Rochester, BA 1917

job training \_\_\_\_\_

work Office manager in father's factory, 1917 - 1920

official positions Member of the Mattituck School Board

member of \_\_\_\_\_

special activities, projects, hobbies Home, and family

spouse's name married 1928 to LeRoy Stanton Reeve (Slats)

children's names Janet, step-daughter

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____

for me, Mattituck was \_\_\_\_\_

Mattituck is \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like Mattituck to become \_\_\_\_\_

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape: #21-EHR-4  
Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve

The Canning Factory

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Persons and places mentioned: Blair Young, James Jones, Grandma Mapes, Thomas O'Neil, Carrie Mapes, Mrs. Ed Mapes, Nellie Mapes.

Autobiographical Sketch

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape 21 EHR-4  
Oral Author: Elberta Hudson Reeve

Date of Interview:  
Interviewer: John Traversa

## The Canning Factory

A: (Unclear) not in the wintertime but between crops when they weren't working on the farm. This is the Hudson tribe. They used to go logging, can't think of the name of the town, and they used to float them down the river, and grandfather was born in Tuscarora County. He was the only one of the tribe that I can think of that wasn't a Long Islander. And I remember how upset Grandma was, my great grandmother, because she went up with her husband, and the baby was born up there. An Indian souaw came in and found the baby in the cradle and picked the child up and nursed him. Grandmother was horrified, not knowing how clean the Indian woman was, but Tulasassa was the name of the town, Tulasassa, that's an Indian name, but a great number of that group did go logging. I suppose it was added to their income, and they weren't sitting around the family's kitchen all winter long, and so on and so forth, and that was a favorite diversion from regular business here on the Island. That group that went up there were many of them from Laurel.

I: Do you know if any of them intermarried?

A: I don't think so. I think they were all married with local people. My grandfather and Blair Young's grandfather did the Long Island Railroad a very dirty trick.

I: How's that?

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A: Somebody's calf got loose, and it was killed by a railroad train - this was in Laurel, and Grandfather and Mr. Young stole their mothers' soft soap, and went and applied it to the rails on the Long Island Railroad, and the train was stalled there until they could wash the soft soap off the rails. The wheels did this, you know?

I: The wheels spun?

A: I don't remember what happened to the two of them. I don't think people minded so much, but I think the railroad was very upset about it. Anyhow it was a famous story told around here.

I: Oh, I see. And this happened approximately in the 1890's?

A: Oh, it must have been long before the 1890's. Sometime in the early 1880's or earlier than that when they were kids, but I always thought that was quite a wonderful stunt myself. I never heard what the passengers thought about it. I know the railroad was very much distressed. Funny the things that come into your mind.

I: It's something that we don't think about very often today, the trains. (Unclear) livestock, you know sparks flying from the trains and starting fires in the buildings next to the trains.

A: Well, all this business of arson in New York City is perfectly horrible. When you stop and think of all the people who have lost their lives. And, of course, the buildings - sometimes the owners have insurance and

sometimes they don't, and sometimes they pay the arsonist to destroy the building. It is kind of difficult, the whole thing.

I: Yeah. Part of the problem with the buildings in this town, for instance, having been made out of wood. It seems as if an awful lot of them have burned down through the years. Which is a shame because I would like to be able to see them.

A: Well, the old Octagon House up on the corner there, that's been there for a long while, and that's wood. My family boarded there while my father's house was being built. I don't know when that was built. Of course, that's an old one. And the beautiful big old tree there has survived a great many years. I think it used to have a sign on it that said when it was planted. But almost all the places around here, the earlier places, were wood. You know that octagon shape of a house. I don't know whether you have read any of Carl Carmer's books?

I: No.

A: Well, he has one of them in upstate New York. I think there are three of them. See, I happen to know about Carl Carmer. He was taking a degree at Rochester. He marked papers and that sort of thing for the English Department. I don't think he ever taught. He wrote the book on the Hudson River. There was a whole series of books gotten out around 1939 or 1940, about the various rivers in the United States, the Mississippi.

and Carl did the one about the Hudson, and there was one river in Florida.

I: We were talking about the Octagon Building.

A: The Octagon Buildings - I don't know who designed them or anything of the sort. But he owns, or did own - Carl is a little older than I - one of the very few, and I think his is brick, but this one down here, of course, is a wood building. And I think they said there were three of them in the state. It was an unusual design.

I: Right. When you boarded in the Octagon Building -

A: Oh, I didn't. I didn't arrive until later on. My family boarded there for a short time while the house was in process. No, my parents were married eight years before I appeared on the scene. My mother was utterly surprised because the doctor told her she would never have a child, but she managed to.

I: I'm sure she was delighted.

A: Oh, heavens, yes, I was thoroughly spoiled as a small fry.

I: So, your family came to Mattituck about eight years before you were born?

A: Yes.

I: And they opened up the canning factory right away?

A: Yes; It was in process of building.

I: I believe it started in 1888 roughly?



A: Around there, yes.

I: And it went until you were about 7 years old, right?

A: No, because Uncle Will canned tomatoes there for a while after we went upstate. I don't know when the plant was closed, I'm sorry to say. I really don't.

I: It seems as if it was closed roughly around 1905; no, it wasn't because in Craven's book it is still going. So, somewhere between 1907 and 1910.

A: Yeah. I don't really know. Because I know after he quit that, he used to come up and spend part of the summer in Holley.

I: I want to take that picture out again, of the canning factory.

A: Well, that was a wood building.

I: Right. Do you remember any of these people yourself?

A: Well, I remember Jones standing up there on the top of the scenery with his arms folded. I remember him.

I: James Jones?

A: Yes.

I: He looks a little bit like a foreman or something. Was he?

A: I don't think he was. He was just an ordinary worker.

I: And there were an awful lot of women in the picture and young boys.

A: Yes. Putting up tomatoes requires a large group of women. Same way with the asparagus.

I: Why women?

A: Well, the men were not long on how to peel tomatoes.

I: The men what?

A: The men were not interested in canning. And it was one of the few jobs that was around here that the women could earn a little money outside of the family finances.

I: I see. Did most of them work full time at it or part time?

A: Well, it ran from asparagus through tomatoes, and then the last crop I think that they packed in Mattituck was squash.

I: This had nothing to do with the pickle factory, right?

A: Oh, no, nothing at all.

I: So, all of these women were local.

A: Uh huh. And I think one of the Mapes women used to baby-sit with me when I was a kid, Grandma Mapes. We always called her "Mapsey", and I've forgotten what her first name was. She lived to a very ripe old age. And her granddaughter is one of the aides up at the Riverhead Nursing Home.

I: Do you have any recollections of any kinds of attitudes on the part of the local people about have a factory in town?

A: I don't think I would have any notion about it. I don't ever remember any strikes or any fuss.

I: If there were any problems on the job, who would the workers talk to? I assume they didn't have any kind of union.

A: Oh no, that was before the day that the unions got going.

I: Do you remember your father or your uncle ever talking about things at the factory here or any of the employees or how things were going?

A: Well, he knew more or less the life history of most of the people there. And I know Mrs. Mapes who used to baby-sit

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with me. She used to do housework when she wasn't working in the factory. But I don't remember. I knew some of the families, not all of them. But you see, I was a small child when they left here, and there is that space of time that I didn't know a great many of them afterwards and what became of them. Except one of the Mapes girls married the foreman of the factory years ago, and he and she parted company, and he came up, Thomas O'Neil, and worked upstate New York with the family.

I: Do you remember if it was any kind of a big blow-up to these workers to have the factory close down?

A: I think it probably was to some of them, yes. Because there wasn't anything else much doing around here.

I: Do you remember what women used to do if they couldn't work in the factory like these women did? Was there sewing and knitting and stuff like that?

A: They did housework for people if they were poor and needed a help financially; they helped with housework. I don't remember anything much else. There wasn't anything much to do here. Carrie Mapes was a seamstress. I don't think she is in that group. I didn't see a picture that looked like her. No there is just Mrs. Ed Mapes and Nellie Mapes ..... (unclear) Annie Mapes. There was nothing much but domestic service that they could do.

I: What about the local men at that time - how did they feel about having their wives working in the factory?

A: Oh, I wouldn't know. I haven't the faintest idea.

I: What about the canning process itself? I know that you were certainly more involved with it after you became older, in your later teens and after college (unclear) upstate. But kind of looking back on it from your memories, try to reconstruct for us, if you can, the process that they went through. For instance, where did these machines come from?

A: They made their own cans. They had sheets of tin, and they had machines.

I: So, they bought the sheets of tin from a supplier in New York City or somewhere?

A: Somewhere in New York, and they actually made the cans. Because I have heard Father speak about that because when he and Mother were going together he was working outside of Glen Cove, and there came this blizzard of 1888, and the Fleet family asked him to stay over during the storm. He said "no," because when they made cans they worked in teams. Two people worked at that same job. If he had stayed, he would have put the other fellow out of a job. So, he went back to Glen Head, and kept on with the can-making process.

Then there was a space I don't remember anything much about. They did make a few cans upstate New York, but not very many, and in Fairport, which is a town outside of Rochester, the Fairport American Can Company went into the business of making cans. From then on, all our cans came from the American Can Company.

I: I see. So what I'm (unclear) to say that up until the American Can Company went into that full steam, that process was pretty much handled by individual packing companies.

A: Individual packing companies, yes. And the lids of the cans were soldered on.

I: My goodness. How was that done?

A: With a soldering iron.

I: How was the iron heated, in a fire?

A: Yes, a charcoal fire.

I: It must have been very time consuming.

A: Oh, of course, it was. And it had to be done very quickly too. And then the Can Company put out what they called a can Canco which was a machine that (unclear) can (unclear) covers like this. The can is opened, and they put the can cover on. This machine whirls around and seals it as it goes around. The Canco machine.

I: They got the tin, and they would make the cans with the machine right here in Mattituck?

A: Yes.

I: And then, I guess, they put all the bottoms on the cans first and filled the can with, let's say, tomatoes.

A: Then the covers were soldered on. You had to be a good workman to do it.

I: You then put labels on the cans?

A: Yes.

I: Where were the labels printed?

A: I haven't any idea where they were printed. Probably in New York somewhere. I wouldn't know.

I: But somebody here glued the labels on, right?

A: Yes, sometimes it was done by hand, and then there was what they called the labeling machine. And it glued them on. It was sort of a one track machine. They put the cans in on one side, turned the handle and picked up the labels which were smeared on each end to fasten the label on, and then they popped out at the end of the run of the thing. It was a peculiar looking device. Then, if you got a firm that liked the label to be folded over on the top or the bottom of the can, they were put on by hand.

I: So, sometimes labels covered the top and the bottom?

A: Yes, sometimes they did. You might get a firm that wanted the labels put on that way. And some of the others just didn't care about it, just wanted the label around.

I: I see. Tell me the whole process, about the crops - they had to be chosen. Your father or your uncle went around choosing and talking to the farmers?

A: Not necessarily. The farmers quite frequently came to them and said they were willing to put in so many acres of this, that, and the other thing.

I: So the farmer came to your father or your uncle and said, "Look I've got a couple of acres. I'm willing to plant it with asparagus or tomatoes or cauliflower or squash or whatever you wanted." And your father and uncle would tell them to plant asparagus or to plant something else. Did they work up a contract beforehand?

A: Yes, they (unclear) a contract.

I: So let's say a blight hit that two acres of asparagus. Would the Hudson Brothers carry part of the cost of that or what?

A: I don't think so. I think that was almost entirely in the farmer's hands. And then when we had the factory in Holley we grew the tomato plants. We had a little greenhouse.

I: But here you didn't.

A: No.

I: You didn't grow any crops at all here, the Hudson Brothers didn't?

A: Not that I know of, no.

I: Who would they get the crops from, I mean like tomatoes?

A: Oh, I couldn't tell you.

I: Were there any greenhouses in operation at that time?

A: Yes, but I don't think they planted farming crops. The Reeves grew flowers for a long while. I don't know whether they grew tomato plants or not. They might have as far as that's concerned. Herbert Reeve probably could tell you that. I wouldn't know.

I: When the crop was ready or before the crop was ready, did the Hudson Brothers or a representative go and periodically look at the crops?

A: No, we never had a yardman down here.

I: Oh, is that what the yardman does?

A: That's what the yardman does. He goes and checks on them.

I: And if they don't grow properly, he gives advice or whatever to the farmer?

A: Well, yes, or if he feels they are ready to be harvested and all that sort of thing.

I: So, this was left strictly up to the farmer?

A: Left strictly up to the farmer, sure.

I: What happened then - when the farmer said okay the crop is ready, I have an acre of beans in.

A: Then the family picked the beans usually.

I: The farmer's?

A: Yes, the farmer's family or the neighbors helped him with it, one or the other.

I: Then?

A: They were brought in.

I: Then, they were inspected, I assume, by the Hudson Brothers?

A: Oh yes.

I: Did you have your own inspector? Was there any kind of federal ..... connected with it?

A: No, there was nothing federal connected with it. The only time we had any federal people was during World War I, when we supplied stuff for the Army and stuff for the Navy.

I: Who was the inspector for the Hudson Brothers here in Mattituck?

A: I don't know anyone who went around and inspected crops down here.

I: What about after they were brought to your factory? Let's say the crop of peas was brought in. Who looked them over?

A: Usually either the foreman or Uncle Will or my father.

I: And how were they separated? Were the workers trained, you know, to be able to tell what was acceptable and what wasn't?

A: No, I think the crops were given to them when the family



thought they were ready to be processed.

I: What I'm asking is who made the decision what to keep and what to throw out?

A: The Hudson Brothers.

I: So, they didn't have one of the workers decide that?

A: No.

I: Who decided what was good enough to send to the firm up in Boston and what was just standards for A & P?

A: Well, the firm in Boston told them -

I: What was the name?

A: S.S. Pierce & Company.

I: Right, Pierce.

A: They told you what they wanted, whether they wanted the hand-packed job or whether they wanted standards or anything like that.

I: What was the difference between standards and hand-packed?

A: Well, hand-packed tomatoes you could practically slice them and use them for a salad, but if they were standards they were juicy. That's as near as I can come to it.

I: So, the hand-packed were firmer?

A: Oh yes. They were firmer, they were better quality, and they were very well taken care of.

I: The standards were kind of mushy?

A: The standards were more mushy. Open a can of tomatoes now and look at them, and you'll know what they are.

Because they are mostly standards that you see nowadays.

I haven't seen a hand-packed tomato in years. And I know a

good piece of canned goods when I see it. (laughing) Having had experience.

I: So then, after let's say a bunch of tomatoes was (unclear) the bad ones were thrown out?

A: Yes. And you saved the pea vines, and they went into a silo.

I: The pea vines - after you took the fruit off the vine, the vines went into a silo?

A: Oh yes. And the cows loved them. Every farmer came up with his wagon and got what he had coming to him on the pea vines.

I: What do you mean what he had coming to him?

A: Well, it depended on - he was paid a certain amount for the peas that he brought. We didn't can those down here for that matter. But, it was figured out how many pounds of pea vines he could have. And they, of course, were stored in a silo. They were all cut up and stored in the silo. And then when the silo was opened, they all came up and got their allotted share. And would the cows just leave everything in the world for those sour pea vines. It was a terrible smell when they opened the silo. And I often wondered how the farmers' wives endured them after they came home after carting home a wagonload of the stuff. But the cattle thought it was perfectly marvelous.

I: So that was. I suppose, part payment?

A: Yes. Well, they didn't have to pay for any of the vines. They got them back when they could use them. And I suppose some of them used it for fertilizer if they didn't raise cattle. But if they had cattle, why that was a favorite food.

I: Can you tell me why the farmers didn't just do that on their own - pick the peas off the -

A: Well, when you raise peas by the acre you have to have a whole army to pick them.

I: I see. And the Hudson Brothers did get the army -

A: No, we couldn't supply the army, not by any means.

I: You had your own army to pick the fruit off the vines?

A: Yeah. They had their own, the farmers did it. And they cut them with the same sort of machine that they used to cut hay.

I: I see. What was it called?

A: I don't know what they called it. It was a regular mowing machine.

I: And the silo, I assume, was close to the factory?

A: Oh yes, right next door. And it was cut by people who were working in the factory, cut with a cutting machine, and stored in it, and then it was left to set for a while.

I: For what - weeks, months?

A: Well, it was usually around Thanksgiving time or before that time, before we had snow on the ground, or had a hard freeze. Then, they used to come up and get the vines.

I: When do peas get harvested, around August or September?

A: Oh no, June. June or July.

I: Oh, so these would be early peas?

A: Oh yes.

I: I see. So, after the peas were picked off the vine, they were opened. Was it by hand? The pods were opened by hand?

A: Oh, no. The machine opened them.

I: The machine? You had a machine that opened pea pods?

A: Oh yes, what they called a viner.

I: Back in the late 1800's?

A: Oh no, not in the 1800's.

I: I mean 1895?

A: 1902 was when we first started. They called it a viner. The peas were popped out by air pressure.

I: You're kidding?

A: Oh no, I'm not.

I: I didn't know they had something that sophisticated back then. Air pressure?

A: Yeah. They were beaten. The peas rolled down one way, and the vines went the other.

I: But first the fruit had to be gotten off the vine?

A: Oh no. Everything went in to the viner, the whole business, the vines, the peas and everything, with the peas on the vines. And then the peas were beaten out. The machine went by steam, of course. I think they still use them as a matter of fact. The peas were collected in boxes. Then, they went through a grader. The small peas came out of the holes on one side, and the big peas kept on until they came out the bigger holes. And then they ran through the factory on belts, on a wide belt like this, a woman on each side that

picked out the Canada thistles and a few other little things, and then they went off that into another sort of container, and then they were put into the cans.

I: Weren't they boiled?

A: Oh, they were not cooked until they were in the cans and the cans were shut. And then they went into these huge buckets of, well they were made out of strips of steel. They were circular. They had a handle. And then they were cooked. They were processed that way. Cooked with steam.

I: I see. I was under the impression they were cooked before.

A: Oh no. I think that's probably the way it's done now. I don't know.

I: Did they have to boil for a certain amount --?

A: They cooked for a certain length of time.

I: Do you remember what that was?

A: I don't remember.

I: Now, were there ever any kind of problems with the cans exploding or anything?

A: Once in a while you'll get a can that wasn't good.

I: No, I mean while they were cooking -

A: Oh no. The question of sitting out in the square house waiting to be labeled or to be packed onto the freight car or something like that. No, all of this stuff was cooked in the can.

I: And once the peas were put in the can and the lid was put on top, you said it had to be soldered. Was that done by hand or was there a machine that did the soldering?

A: Well, fastening the cover on the can with Canco, there was no soldering to do with that. They fastened the can cover on, and they were packed into these big containers and were cooked. And then we had what we called the canal. The big container was hooked onto this steady moving chain, and then it was cooled by going through water. And then when they were taken out, they were still fairly warm. They weren't red-hot.

I: How was the can sealed? You got the peas in the can, then you put the top on it?

A: Well the top was sealed on by the Canco machine. It spun the can around, and these little gadgets squeezed the edges of the cap down on it.

I: Then the soldering, what we're talking about, is the cylindrical part, the sides of the can?

A: Yeah, that was done in the factory, the seam. And the tops and the bottoms were fastened on the same way. That was when the soldering process was used. But, of course, it wasn't used in upstate New York.

I: Do you remember - when the crops came in, there was a storage area for the crops until they were ready -

A: Well, usually the peas were taken right up to the viner on the farmer's wagon. Sometimes we would have a whole long line of farmers waiting outside, but there was a storage point for the tomatoes and another storage point for the apples.

I: Was it a large part of the operation, the storage?

A: Well, a good part of the factory was for storage. We

didn't use the cold storage usually, and usually everything was shipped out between Thanksgiving and Christmas because the plant was then closed down mostly after that.

I: Until when?

A: Oh, I wouldn't know just when.

I: Roughly. Until April?

A: Oh roughly. The place usually was emptied out by early April. Everything had been shipped. And if the weather was bad outside they went in refrigerator cars.

I: Oh yeah?

A: Sure. You don't know very much do you?

I: It doesn't seem like it.

A: (Laughing) Ordinarily they went in a regular freight car if they were shipped out during the summer, but if they were shipped out when the weather was bad they went in refrigerator cars.

I: How come?

A: Well, if they were frozen on the way out, you know, the cans would pop. They had to be taken care of.

I: About what time of the year would they go out in refrigerator cars?

A: Well, it would be probably upstate New York, probably from the first of November on, depending on what the weather was.

I: I'm not following you on that, I'm sorry.

A: (Laughing) You'll have to go to a cannery company and see how it's done. If the temperature was down below freezing you had to protect the canned goods from being frozen.

I: The refrigerator cars had insulation, am I right?

A: Yes.

I: And they kept it at a constant temperature?

A: They were kept at a constant temperature.

I: As opposed to the regular freight cars at which the temperature could drop very severely.

A: Oh it could drop very quickly, surely.

I: Okay. That's why I got a little confused. Because I was thinking in terms of summer, you know, when you would ship something in a refrigerator car.

A: No, the heat wouldn't do any particular damage to them after they had been cooked.

I: Now I've got you.

A: (Laughing)

I: Okay, so you shipped the cans out usually around Thanksgiving?

A: Well, of course, there were some things that went out sooner than that. Because the Army and the Navy stations when they took the canned goods, they told you when to ship them and all about it. And they had storage places too.

I: Right. You mentioned the apples? Once in a while they used to can apples as well?

A: Not here, in upstate New York.

I: I see. You said that you canned asparagus and .....?

A: Some cauliflower, tomatoes, squash.

I: And peas right?

A: No, not peas down here. Peas were done upstate New York.



I: Now, about the asparagus - you said that eventually potatoes became a big crop?

A: Well, so many other crops, yes. And the farmers don't raise asparagus in quantities anymore.

I: I'm guessing asparagus is not that easy to take care of and they do seem to take up a large space for little yield.

A: They take up a large space for a small yield, yes.

I: I assume they switched from asparagus to potatoes because they could get more -

A: Yes, they could plant more crops and could cover more territory.

I: Was there also - I believe there was a blight that occurred in the early 1900's, a blight on the asparagus.

A: Yes, that was true.

I: What about the cauliflower? You said something to the effect that it turned yellow.

I: Why did the cauliflower turn yellow?

A: There was supposed to be a certain amount of sulfur in some of the farmlands. When you had a good heavy rain, it turned out almost like, well pot cheese. It was as white as could be and nice, but if we didn't have a lot of rain, the soil didn't feed the cauliflower correctly, then it turned yellow. It was some sort of sulfur, a sulfide of some sort in the land. I don't know whether it was from the fertilizer or what it was. So that it was not worthwhile to put up cauliflower anymore.

I: Did people object to the color?

A: Yes. They objected to it not being white, pure white.

I: I see. There was not any lower quality?

A: No, there wasn't any question of quality. It was a question of color, as it didn't seem to be so appetizing. Now some people could not eat this dark green cauliflower. I like it.

I: The purple broccoli?

A: Not broccoli, the green cauliflower. It's a little less powerful than the white. And some people expect it to be snow white. I'm afraid I wouldn't have been a good teacher.

I: Why?

A: (Laughing) Because I have difficulty in getting things over.

I: Oh, part of the reason that I do this is so that it is explainable on the tape when somebody else is listening. Now, when you were canning cauliflower, after a while, you know, you stopped. There must have been a period in there from what I heard where you seemed to be successful, and then this yellowing of the crop.

A: Nobody would buy it.

I: Were you stuck with a big shipment?

A: I don't think so.

I: When did you first start hearing complaints?

A: Oh, I couldn't give you a date on that.

I: And did it turn yellow after it was canned?

A: Yeah.

I: There was no indication that it was going to turn yellow?

A: No, none at all.

I: I see. You say the yellow was caused by sulfur or sulfides because of lack of rain.

A: Whether it was in the fertilizer or whether it was in the land we never knew.

I: What were the proportions approximately as far as you can remember of crops that you canned? Can you assign any percentages?

A: Oh no.

I: Were tomatoes the biggest item?

A: They were down here, tomatoes were the biggest item, and it was the last item that they canned here.

I: I mean out of Mattituck, would you say your biggest crop of canned stuff was tomatoes?

A: When the asparagus gave up, why then it was tomatoes.

I: But before that, asparagus was the main product?

A: Yes. They grew very good asparagus around here.

I: Is there anything in particular about the land or the climate here that makes it good for asparagus?

A: I don't think so. I think it was just a question of the use of the land. I think they wanted to plant other things.

I: I see.

A: Because you don't find a farmer anywhere around here that has a big crop of asparagus any longer. They may have one row in the garden but that is about all.

I: Uh huh. I have never seen canned cauliflower myself. Have you?

A: You don't often see it. We didn't have it upstate New York. Cauliflower wasn't popular up there. I have never seen it.

I: Now tell me about the tomatoes. These were grown outdoors. When they were brought in to the factory, I assume they had to be processed right away, first peeled, or what?

A: Well, they were peeled first, sure. They were washed and peeled, and put in the cans and sealed in and heated up, and that was that.

I: I see. Why were you washing the tomatoes, just to get the dirt off?

A: Yes.

I: Well, wouldn't that just come off with the peeling?

A: Yeah, but it depended on the farmer you got whether your tomatoes were nice and clean or whether they were dirty.

I: Now, did they use pesticides or anything like that?

A: Not that I know of. Of course, that would have been on the skin anyhow, but it would have come off with the washing. There would have been no fuss about that.

I: Right. They didn't come with the vine?

A: No, no, they were picked.

I: Right. Did any local or a lot of local stores buy canned goods from the Hudson Brothers?

A: Not necessarily, no, not very many, and the only big store I remember was the one in Boston, but they all were sold through a brokerage in New York.

I: Oh, I see. But did any grocery stores here sell .....

A: No.

I: Did the Hudson Brothers factory sell canned goods to people directly?

A: No.

I: Did the workers ever buy these canned goods?

A: Oh, once in a while, some of the workers would buy a dozen cans of something or other, yes, but that would be all.

I: Was it very common at the time for people to do their own home canning?

A: Oh yes, sure.

I: I see. So, I get the impression that for the farm families around here, there was not much call for them to buy canned goods because they did that themselves.

A: Most of them did it themselves, yeah.

I: This was mostly then a big city product.

A: Yes, it was mostly a city product, sold through brokerage houses mostly.

I: Okay, I was trying to think if there was anything else about the factory.

I: Then tell me about your uncle. He and your father ran the factory for a while. Then somehow is he the one that got involved with the bank?

A: Yeah, my uncle was president of the bank, but it was the Mattituck Bank.

I: When did he get involved with the bank?

A: I couldn't tell you anything about when it was, I haven't any idea, but he was one of the earlier presidents.

I: Okay, then we'll just call it a day, and I want to thank you very much for everything.

A: Well, you're quite welcome. Okay.

I: (Unclear)

A: Yes, I would like to go through a canning factory again. It would be interesting. It sure would. I haven't seen one in a long while.

I: I know you would like to be able to drive yourself, but maybe sometime would you like to go for a ride and look at the canning factory as it is now?

A: Why, I would say yes to that. Sometime when the light was good and it would be convenient for you. I do hate the idea of being sort of housebound as it is, for I really enjoyed driving. But we all get old, and it is unnecessary.  
(End of tape)

name Elberta Hudson Reeve

birth date April 8, 18<sup>05</sup> place Mattituck

father's name Joseph B. Hudson

mother's name Alive Fleet

childhood -- ~~Spent partly in Mattituck and partly in Holley, N.Y.~~  
(near Rochester)

education Mattituck Elementary, Holley High School, University  
of Rochester, BA 1917

job training \_\_\_\_\_

work Office manager in father's factory, 1917 - 1920

official positions Member of the Mattituck School Board

member of \_\_\_\_\_

special activities, projects, hobbies Home, and family

spouse's name married 1928 to LeRoy Stanton Reeve (Slats)

children's names Janet, step-daughter

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____

for me, Mattituck was \_\_\_\_\_

Mattituck is \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like Mattituck to become \_\_\_\_\_