

Windsor Historical Society

Oral History Collection

Inventory and Abstracts

Last updated July 2015

Overview of the Collection

The Windsor Historical Society Oral History Collection is an artificial collection of oral history interviews and other recorded memoirs, public presentations, and short historical essays which have been transcribed by Society staff and volunteers. The earliest recordings were made in 1952, but the collection spans to the present day. A few of the transcripts were prepared from videotaped recordings. Virtually all the recordings are now available in a digital format.

Oral history themes and topics include neighborhood and family history; childhood chores and fun; school days; learning to drive; hunting, fishing, and other sports; working tobacco; church activities; and fondly remembered local stores, shopkeepers, and home delivery services. Recorded lectures and programs provide insight into history of the Lithuanian community in Poquonock; the mills along the Farmington River; the history of the Hayden Station area; Christopher Miner Spencer's many accomplishments; and Windsor's brickmaking industry. Some narrators offer perspective on the changes in the town of Windsor, CT during the 20th century, considering aspects such as the postwar housing shortages, race relations, and the impact of the opening of Interstate 91.

There are currently thirty-six transcripts in the collection, most with a detailed index. This inventory lists the name of the narrator, the date of the recording, the collection number, and a brief abstract of the contents. The transcripts are filed in the Library.

Anderson, Paul

The History of Tobacco Growing in Windsor

Recorded by Kenneth Barber

May 21, 1962

1962.32.1

Dr. Anderson reads his prepared essay which briefly touches on the use of tobacco and its cultivation by the earliest Windsor settlers, the beginnings of home-based cigar production, the soil conditions in Windsor and the Connecticut River Valley especially suitable for growing tobacco, the introduction of shade cloth in 1900, the establishment of the Tobacco Experiment Station in Windsor, and the types of work done at the station for the benefit of tobacco growers.

Ball, Warren and Dorothy Pelton Ball

Together: From Thrall School to the Moorlands

Interviewed by Christina Vida and Barbara Goodwin

June 25, 2013

2013.68.1

The topics of conversation include Dorothy and Warren's families, grade school years at Thrall School, childhood activities, Warren's service in the Navy, establishing their business Graphic

Arts Machinery, Dorothy's volunteer work at the Windsor Historical Society, Albro Case's project to move their historic home to its current location at 5 Moorlands, and their second home in Sandisfield, Mass.

Banta, Laura

The Hezekiah Chaffee House: An Interview with Laura Banta

Interviewed by Marillyn Loomis

November 30, 1993

1993.76.2

Marillyn Loomis interviewed several long-time neighbors to learn more about the history of the Chaffee House. Laura Fowler Banta (1907-1996) lived on North Meadow Road much of her life.

Bradley, Ralph

Oral Histories from the Black Communities: Part III

Interviewed by Iva Allison and Delia Jubrey

August 13, 2008

2010.19.2

Ralph Bradley's home was in Hayden Station. He worked at the Bigelow Carpet Company in Thomsonville, CT and then did odd jobs and labored in the area.

Caesar, Irene Scott

Oral Histories from the Black Communities: Part IV

Interviewed by Iva Allison and Delia Jubrey

August 30, 2008

2010.19.2

Irene Caesar is prompted by photos in an album to comment on her neighborhood on Cook Hill, her schooling, the Depression, and the Miskin family corner store.

Clapp, Grace Lucretia

Hayden Station

Recorded by Kenneth Barber

Feb. 2, 1962

1962.31.1

Grace Lucretia Clapp (1881-1965) reads her paper describing the history of the Hayden Station section of Windsor, CT. The recording was made at Miss Clapp's home at 1245 Palisado Ave., Windsor. Her topics include Hayden Station's early settlers, homesteads, and taverns; the church communities; schools; Hayden Station Social Club; agriculture and local businesses; changes created by the railroad; and notable citizens.

Drake, Anne Wittenzellner

Growing up on a Windsor Farm: An Interview with Anne Wittenzellner Drake Interviewed by Connie Thomas

August 5, 2009

2009.33

The interview includes Drake's memories of growing up in the Deerfield section of Windsor during the 1930s and 1940s. Anne's parents Max and Marie Wittenzellner were immigrants from Germany. Her father worked at a brewery in Hartford and did some commercial shad and eel fishing on the side. Her mother managed the family farm on Midian Avenue; they grew and preserved an array of fruits and vegetables, cut hay, and sold poultry and eggs. Anne describes her home and chores, schooling, recreational activities, volunteering as a WWII air raid warden, working as a telephone operator, and the difficulties of the post-war housing shortage. She offers some of her views regarding the changes she has seen as a life-long resident of Windsor.

Ellsworth, Florence Loomis

An Interview with Florence Loomis Ellsworth

Interviewed by Carol Ann Stephenson

March 15, 1988

1988.7.1

The conversation with Florence Ellsworth (1893-1996) covered a wide range of topics including her childhood and early schooling in Westfield, Mass.; her father's lumber business; trolley cars and early automobiles; the operation of the Windsor Cannery; and her involvement with the Windsor Historical Society and its Walter Fyler House.

Endee, Albert

Poquonock and Rainbow, Connecticut, in the 1920s

Interviewed by Robert T. Silliman

July 11, 1994

1994.85.1

The interview was a conversation about Poquonock history during the early 20th century. Much of the discussion focused on the various businesses in the center of Poquonock. It also touched on Endee's family history, leisure activities such as swimming and fishing in the Farmington River, notable residents, the trolleys, working tobacco as a teenager, schooling, Dunham Mill, and the local P & R [Poquonock and Rainbow] baseball team of the 1920s.

Finley, Thomas

A Conversation with Thomas Finley

Interviewed by Connie Thomas

August 12, 1993

1993.101.1

Thomas Finley's (1904-1994) career at Loomis Chaffee School, his service in the U.S. Air Force during World War II, and his experience as a passenger on the ship *Athenia* which was torpedoed in 1939 were among the topics in this interview.

Fowles, Lloyd

The History of Industry on Mill Brook: The Frustrations of History

Recorded independently

September 24, 1964

1964.33.1

Recording of an illustrated talk Lloyd Fowles presented to a Windsor Historical Society audience on September 24, 1964. Fowles discusses the need for and the economic value of the early

colonial mills along the Mill Brook waterway including John Warham's grist mill, a stave mill, and a saw mill. Maps of the area and conjectural drawings of the historic buildings made by Robert Redmond and Don Lang were shown. In the nineteenth century four other industries used the power supplied by the Mill Brook. These were William Shelton's hat manufacturing concern, a paper mill, the Bedortha Brothers factory which made levels and blocks, and the Windsor Cannery. Fowles researched the topic by talking to family members of the businesses in the area, walking the terrain, and searching for documents, maps, and records.

Frelick, Jane Hayden

My Childhood Visits to Windsor: Reminiscences by Jane Hayden Frelick

Interviewed by Erin Stevic

June 15, 2011

2011.41.10

This transcript of reminiscences and Hayden family history was handwritten by Jane Hayden Frelick in response to a prepared set of oral history questions. See also the transcript of a similar telephone conversation on Dec. 6, 2007. (2009.65.1)

Goslee, Carlan H.

Around Windsor Green: A Picture Tour of Old Windsor

Recorded at public program

June 12, 1958

1958.6.1

Carlan Goslee gave this illustrated lecture to members of the Windsor Historical Society on June 12, 1958 at the Federal Savings and Loan Association building.

Jubrey, Delia Sales and Patricia Sales Narcisse

Oral Histories from the Black Communities: Part I

Interviewed by Iva Allison

June 24, 2008

2010.19.2

Delia Jubrey and her sister Patricia Narcisse talk about their home on Williams St., their neighbors in the Cook Hill Rd. area, mom and pop stores, their relatives and extended family, lawn parties, home delivery and itinerant salesmen, the unspoken boundaries beyond which it was not comfortable for African Americans, Windsor Center, schooling, AME Zion Church, and working tobacco. Both Dee and Patty moved out of Windsor after high school, but have returned to live in Windsor.

Jubrey, Lenora Jackson

Oral Histories from the Black Communities: Part II

Interviewed by Iva Allison and Delia Jubrey

August 12, 2008

2010.19.2

Lenora Jubrey was born on Cook Hill. Her mother had worked for Amy Archer Gilligan but was institutionalized at Middletown State Hospital and Leonora was raised by an aunt. She talks about her schooling at John Fitch High School, taking a secretarial course, not being able to get a job at the big insurance companies in Hartford, and doing domestic work much of her life. She

comments on the types of work her neighbors did, lawn parties, family doctors, the Cymerys' neighborhood store, alcoholism, and the Hartford Circus Fire in 1944.

Kendrick, Carrie Marshall

The History of Poquonock: A Paper Recorded by Carrie Marshall Kendrick

Recorded independently

February 28, 1962

2007.1.41

In this recording, Carrie Marshall Kendrick (1883-1963), a life-long resident of the Poquonock area of Windsor, CT, reads some prepared remarks and memoirs about this community. She mentions some of the earliest settlers of the Elm Grove section, the location of mills and homesteads, the traveling circus and minstrel shows, Old Newgate Prison, the Poquonock post offices, and [William] Allen the "Yeast Man."

Lee, Audrey

Mr. Audrey Lee: "The Mayor of Wilson"

Interviewed by Betsy and Gordon Kenneson

April 22, 2014

2014.60.1

The recording was made at Mr. Lee's home in Windsor. Audrey talks about his early school years at the Arsenal School in Hartford and subsequently at Roger Wolcott School and John Fitch High School in Windsor. He describes the Wilson neighborhood in the mid-20th century; learning to drive; his experiences in the Civilian Conservation Corps in Cornwall, CT; his friendship with Winthrop Rockefeller; serving on various town committees; and his honeymoon trip to Maine and Montreal with a return visit to the Montreal World's Fair Expo 1967.

Mack, Daniel

Ballad of Mack Street

Interviewed by Christine Ermenc, recorded at the WIN-TV Studios

June 28, 2004

2004.29.1

Ermenc interviews Dr. Daniel Mack about his life growing up on Mack Street in Windsor and in particular about the stories embodied in his three-panel painting "Ballad of Mack Street." This recording is a re-enactment of a program presented at Windsor Historical Society in December 2003.

Memery, Mary

Memories from Mary Memery, Kindergarten Teacher at Stony Hill School, 1947-1969

Recorded independently

May 22, 1990

1993.22.1

In this recording session on May 22, 1990, Mary Memery talked about her days as a kindergarten teacher at Stony Hill School in Windsor, CT. She described the regular activities of the school day and special projects and plays. Stony Hill School closed in 1969, but later in the 1980s there was a movement to restore the building and open it as a museum. Mary Memery prepared her stories and made this tape for the Friends of Stony Hill School.

Morgan, Fred W.

Fred Morgan Memoirs: An Interview with Frederick W. Morgan

Interviewed by Hilliard Bryant

October 15, 1952

2007.1.40

The conversation briefly touched on a wide range of topics including Mr. Morgan's schooling, the North Meadow Road area, and his involvement with the Windsor Creamery, the Windsor Trust Company, and the Sage Park race track.

Nearing, Jane Cary

A Long and Happy Life in Windsor: A Conversation with Jane Cary Nearing

Interviewed by Mary Ann Pleva

July 11, 1991

1991.71.1

The interview includes conversation about Jane's life in Windsor, her schooling, social and recreational activities, the family gardens, and various people and places in town. The stories convey some of the flavor of life in Windsor during the early and mid twentieth century.

Parker, Elizabeth Bryant

Growing up in Windsor: An Interview with Elizabeth Bryant Parker

Interviewed by Julia Baldini

January 15, 2010

2010.2.1

The wide-ranging conversation touched on the interviewee's family heritage, her childhood and teen years in Windsor, her marriage to Windsor native Frank Parker and their subsequent return to Windsor in 1953 to take over her father's insurance business. The Parkers were active in local Republican politics, the Chamber of Commerce, youth athletics and Scouting, and the Windsor Historical Society. Elizabeth offers opinions on the changes in the vibrancy of Windsor Center, the effect of the opening of Interstate 91, women's liberation, and the aftereffects of world events such as the attack on Pearl Harbor and September 11, 2001.

Parkinson, Carlton Noble

Working on Tobacco: A Rite of Passage?

Interviewed by Shirley Quintero

March 17, 2010

2011.27.1

Carlton talks about his father Fitzroy Henry Parkinson, a native of Jamaica, and his immigration to Connecticut during the labor shortage in the 1940s. Fitzroy worked in the tobacco fields for a short time and then had a long career in food service, primarily for the tobacco camp. Carlton's mother Mildred Derr Parkinson was a nurse for the migrant tobacco workers. Carlton also describes his short time working tobacco, other jobs and responsibilities as a teenager, and reflects on how these demonstrate the second generation's upward mobility.

Pomeroy, Eleazer

The Windsor Water Works

Interviewed by Hilliard Bryant
Circa 1950
1952.13.1

This short interview with Eleazer Pomeroy is about the early water and sewer system in Windsor. Eleazer Pomeroy was a former first selectman and on the Board of Assessors.

Porteus, Ruth Morgan

A Conversation with Ruth Morgan Porteus

Interviewed by Ted Anderson, Mary Ann Pleva, and Martha Porteus
August 4, 1987
1989.43.1

Topics discussed on the tape include Windsor churches, First Church in Windsor ministers, people and homes on North Meadow Road, the Palisado Bridge, South Carolina congressman Joseph Rainey, Rowland Lane, NY's Governor Morgan, Fenton's Store, and more.

Rimosukas, John

The Lithuanians in Poquonock

Recorded independently
September 26, 1962
1962.29.1

John Rimosukas, Poquonock native and principal of Windsor High School, presented an illustrated lecture for the Windsor Historical Society on September 26, 1962 about "The Lithuanians in Poquonock." He began with a brief history of Lithuania and then talked about when and why the Lithuanian people began to settle in the Poquonock area of Windsor, CT. He relates stories of some of the individuals of Lithuanian descent and of community life in Poquonock in the early 20th century.

Scott, Daniel

Daniel Scott's 100th Birthday

Interviewed by Delia Sales Jubrey and an unidentified *Hartford Courant* reporter
June 25, 1984

Scott talks about managing the farm of Col. Ellsworth Phelps on "The Island" in Windsor which produced a variety of crops, livestock, and tobacco; subsequently working with his horse teams and equipment for other tobacco growing businesses in Windsor including the P. Lorillard Tobacco Company; sulky racing on the Farmington River in the winter; amateur boxing; his two wives; and at the end he offers sage advice for a long life.

Scott, Lois Ethel Niles

Oral Histories from the Black Communities: Part V

Interviewed by Iva Allison and Delia Jubrey
February 14, 2010
2010.19.2

Lois Scott complains of the frustrations of being elderly. Using family photos as a prompt, the interviewers get her to talk about various family members, her grandmother Susan Niles and her Native American heritage, going to church, experiences of discrimination, the Cook Hill neighborhood, and working as a home duty nurse.

Silliman, Priscilla Huntington

Priscilla Huntington Silliman: A Poquonock Childhood

Interviewed by Colette Yeich

August 9, 2010

2010.33.1

Priscilla was the daughter of Charles A. Huntington, Jr. and Margaret Stinson Huntington. Her Stinson grandfather owned a coal distributing company in Windsor and the extended Huntington family grew tobacco. She grew up in Poquonock living in her grandmother's large house at 174 West Street. Priscilla talks about her childhood chores, games and pastimes, school, learning to drive, enjoying movies in Hartford, her brothers' hunting and fishing activities, and town politics. She also describes the rural schools in the north end of Windsor, the filming of the movie *Parrish*, the Hurricane of 1938 and the Flood of 1955, her family's tobacco growing business, rationing during WWII, her husband Robert Silliman and their three children. Her comments reflect how the town of Windsor has grown and changed during the 20th century.

Silliman, Robert T.

Windsor, Connecticut in 1976: Our Bicentennial Year

Recorded independently

December 30, 1976

1976.34.1

Bob Silliman, President of the Windsor Historical Society, made this recording at the end of 1976, our nation's bicentennial year, for the benefit of future Windsor residents. He took the listener on a driving tour of the historic areas of town, summarized the Windsor Historical Society's Bicentennial activities, and concluded with a description of a few of the current businesses, utilities, and farming operations in Windsor.

Silliman, Robert T.

One Hundred Years of Industry in Poquonock and Rainbow

Recorded independently

October 26, 1977

1977.33.1

Robert Silliman, President of the Windsor Historical Society, speaking on the history of the Poquonock and Rainbow manufacturing industries. His talk includes information about the Hatheway Mill, Congress Mills, Franklin Mills Company, and Dunham Mills. Bob accompanied the historical facts with some of his own personal memories.

Taylor, Charles F.

Charles F. Taylor Stories

Interviewed by Kenneth Barber

April 30, 1962

1984.63.1

Charles F. Taylor tells stories about Windsor's "Yeast Man" William Allen and of crossing the Connecticut River on Bissell's Ferry.

Taylor, Vesta Spencer

A Conversation with Vesta Spencer Taylor

Interviewed by Dick Bertel

1965

1984.63.1

The interview concerned the life of Vesta's father, Christopher Miner Spencer, and his many accomplishments, including his meeting with President Abraham Lincoln to demonstrate his Spencer repeating rifle, his development of an automatic screw machine, and his personal steamboat the *Luzette*.

White, Cora M.

Broad Street Green and Other Windsor Landmarks: An Interview with Cora M. White

Interviewed by Carlan H. Goslee

October 18, 1963

1963.57.1

Mrs. White offered many memories and a lively perspective on the families and businesses around Broad Street Green in Windsor during the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, her affection for her church, Grace Episcopal Church, is quite evident.

Wilson, Leland P.

The Fyler House and Windsor's Town Hall

Interviewed by Hilliard Bryant

Circa 1950

1952.14.1

This short interview with Leland P. Wilson touches on Windsor Historical Society's purchase of the Fyler House and Windsor's first Town Hall.

Yavener, Symond

Growing up on Cook Hill in Windsor: An Interview with Symond Yavener

Interviewed by Robert McAllister

March 3, 2009

2009.5.1

The interview includes Yavener's memories of growing up on Cook Hill in Windsor during the 1930s and 1940s. The subject's father Jack Yavener worked for the Agricultural Experiment Station and he and his wife Gussie grew crops on the side to sell to local markets. Yavener expresses appreciation for the benefit of growing up in a diverse neighborhood and recounts memories of his schooling and recreational activities in Windsor Center and the impact of the beginning of World War II.