

**An Interview with
Florence Loomis Ellsworth (1893-1996)
with Carol Ann Stephenson
March 15, 1988**

INTERVIEWEE: Florence Loomis Ellsworth (1893-1996)
INTERVIEWER: Carol Ann Stephenson
PLACE: 33 Spring Street, Windsor, Connecticut
DATE: March 15, 1988
TRANSCRIBED BY: Connie Thomas on September 11, 2007
EDITORS: Anita Mips on February 27, 2008 and Barbara Goodwin on August 8, 2008

This interview was conducted at Florence Loomis Ellsworth's home at 33 Spring Street, Windsor, CT, on March 15, 1988. Florence is the daughter of George Washington Loomis and Mary (Sibley) Loomis. Carol Ann was on the staff of the Windsor Historical Society. The interview starts with a conversation concerning the mechanics of the tape recorder and some throat clearing.

ELLSWORTH = Florence Ellsworth STEPHENSON= Carol Ann Stephenson

STEPHENSON: You can, umm, answer them.

ELLSWORTH: Yeah, OK. [Coughing and throat clearing] It's already begun.

STEPHENSON Oh dear. We'll be last through.

ELLSWORTH: I guess the cough drop didn't help much.

STEPHENSON Well, if you start, you know, if you need to take a break; please let me know.

ELLSWORTH: That will show up though on the tape every time I clear my throat.

STEPHENSON Yes, but you can't help that.

ELLSWORTH: No. OK.

STEPHENSON All right. The most important question: where were you born?

ELLSWORTH: Well, that is important. I am not a native Windsorite. I was born in Westfield [Massachusetts] about 25 miles north of here in July 1893. I grew up living in the house that my father built the year after I was born. As a matter of fact, the house is still standing and lived in. In those days they built houses to last, and that one certainly has lasted on through these years. It was a large house, ten rooms. It had a beautiful attic, and it was so good and empty when I compare it with my attic here in this house [33 Spring Street, Windsor]. It certainly is different. We children used it on rainy days especially to play in. I have one little cubby hole that I call "my house," and I have my toys and dolls in there. I was the youngest of five children, two brothers and two sisters. I suppose that I was sort of indulged and favored as I grew up. I remember my older sister said once upon a time when somebody had accused me of being.... what's the word I want... spoiled. She said "indulged me," not spoiled. That sort of cheered me up. Well, to get back to the growing up period: we had an old, I did have one grandfather who lived within a mile or so, but no other grandparents or close relatives, aunts or uncles. We were just a group unto ourselves.

STEPHENSON Your parents were native to Westfield?

ELLSWORTH: They were born in Southwick [Massachusetts] which is a sort of suburb of Westfield nowadays. And then they moved to Westfield after they were married. From then on they continued to live in Westfield.

STEPHENSON What does your father do?

ELLSWORTH: My father was a lumber dealer. He logged tracks of lumber in the areas around Westfield, Granville, and Granby, and Suffield. He would buy the land and move in a saw mill and cut trees that were the right size to be cut at that time. After the trees had been cut, they were moved into the saw mill and sawed into planks and boards and different kinds of lumber for houses and so forth. That was an interesting situation for us children, because quite often he would take us with him when he'd go out to his places in Granville, for instance. Of course it was all horse and buggy travel in those days, and it took just about an hour to drive from Westfield out to Granville for instance. Someone (named?) Herby made the trip day after day and, as I said, occasionally he took us along with him.

STEPHENSON That was a big treat, wasn't it?

ELLSWORTH: Yes, it really was. We took our lunch. I can remember him saying one time, Mother occasionally used to pack a piece of mince [mincemeat] pie in his lunch and by the time lunch time came, it was frozen in his dinner pail, but he would set it up close to the boiler in the saw mill and it would thaw out by the time he was ready to eat it, so it wasn't an easy life by any means.

STEPHENSON Not at all.

ELLSWORTH: Also, besides lumber, they got out telephone and telegraph poles and railroad ties. There was a big call for those in those days. When they were ready, when they had a big order, he would order a car from the railroad and bring in the poles and ties and ship them out to surrounding cities and even out of state. Sometimes to New York state he sent them. So it really was a thriving business.

Well, coming back to the family and the house: the house was lighted by kerosene lamps. One of my chores every Saturday was to wipe the lamp chimneys which my mother had just washed. I thought that was quite a chore. Of course it really didn't amount to much, but it was just one thing. Lamps had to be filled with kerosene at least once a week and later we had gas in the house and, of course, eventually electricity. The original was kerosene. We had a furnace, of course, and that was fired by coal. I can remember my father going down into the basement every night before we went to bed and filling up the furnace with fresh coal. Then he would sit there on a chair until the coal gasses had burned off. Otherwise they would all be carried up into the house through the registers same as I have in this house now. That took ten or fifteen minutes or longer, and then he would bank the coal and close the furnace up and go to bed. Quite a process.

STEPHENSON Certainly different than what we're accustomed to today.

ELLSWORTH: Certainly. Nothing automatic. Of course in the kitchen we had a wood-burning stove, and I wonder so many times how people ever baked with a wood-stove oven. You couldn't regulate it but things came out beautifully. Pies and cakes and everything. Well, it was all knowing how to do it, I suppose.

STEPHENSON And you get used to it and it just becomes familiar to you. ___ life would get ___.

ELLSWORTH: I can remember a very quick way, like toast. One of my brothers was quite fond of toast. He would just slap it down on top of the wood stove, right on the surface. Of course it was always heated with the wood burning in the burner. Then he'd flop it over and do the other side. It wasn't toast the way we know it nowadays, but it was toast.

STEPHENSON: It would do. Tasted just as good, probably.

ELLSWORTH: It certainly did. I can almost smell it. We did not raise our own food. How's it coming? [inquiring about the tape?]

STEPHENSON Just fine.

ELLSWORTH: Except to possibly, ah.... We had our own poultry. Mother had a small flock of hens so we always had fresh eggs and they were really more like pets to her than anything else. We bought, of course, our meat. Our vegetables were brought in by farmers from outlying farms. Perhaps twice a week they'd bring in wagonloads of vegetables and fruits -- apples and peaches and grapes and things that were grown in the area. We had very good butcher shops and grocery stores in the center of the town. If we didn't get down to do our shopping in person, Mother used to order by phone. She had a favorite butcher. He had one of the shops and he knew just what she liked and so did she. She would order in the morning and by afternoon it would be delivered right to the door. So it was a kind of satisfactory way of getting our food supplies. We didn't have a garden which, perhaps, was unusual. Mother had a small flower garden but no vegetable gardens. Probably because they were so easily available from surrounding farms.

As for school: in those days, of course, there were no nursery schools or kindergartens. When a youngster was five years old, he or she was registered in the school nearest to the place where he lived. That was in the first grade. We entered as first graders. The school that I attended was only a three or four minutes walk from my home. Mother could watch me going and coming so I was always perfectly safe. It was a two-room school house, typically red brick. The first and second grades were in one room and the third and fourth in the other room. Just two teachers. One thing I remember from my first grade experience: I used to wear my hair in a long braid which, of course, Mother had fixed properly

9:27.3

before I went in the morning; but quite often it seemed to come undone. The teacher would set me up on her desk and rebraid my hair so it would last until noontime. It was just the one session for the first and second graders. The third and fourth graders went all day long. There was not too much discipline. The boys were the ones it seemed to need it most. If they really misbehaved, they had to go to the front of the room, hold out their hands with the palms up, and the teachers would take the wooden rulers that we had in those days and give him one or two good whacks! And I can remember one time one boy who was sort of a tough customer... just before the teacher came down with a ruler, he pulled his hands back so instead of hitting his hand, she hit herself on the thigh. So that was one recollection. Another way of disciplining children was if they whispered is to smack their lips with the first finger and thumb. It really did sting quite a bit. Those were the only disciplines I remember. Probably there were others, but ah...

From the original school, we moved on to grammar school down in the center of town. In those days there were nine grades in school instead of eight. I think soon afterwards they changed it to eight. There was a normal school in Westfield at that time where people went to train as teachers. The people who worked in training spent a certain number of months in the grammar schools training as teachers. We always had besides our regular teacher a couple of trainers who were working with the original. Some were good and some were poor, but it did bring variety into our education. Then we moved on into high school. In Westfield the schools always rated very highly in the state. They had excellent standing and not only scholastically, but they were noted for their very strict discipline too. I think nowadays what high schools must be like and what a difference! The principal in our high school was especially strict. When we walked through the halls to change classes, there was no communication whatsoever. Not a whisper. I suppose we could look at each other, but that was all. I remember especially this: being close to St. Patrick's Day one day some of the senior boys came to classes wearing green socks. The principal sent them all home, made them change their socks before they could come back to classes. I only came up against this discipline just once. I was taking a paper up to the teacher's desk, walking carefully up the aisle. A boy stuck his foot out in the aisle; and, of course, I tripped over his foot. I didn't fall but I just stumbled along. The teacher, who also was a very strict disciplinarian, sent me to the principal's office, and there I had to sit for half an hour. Well, my best friend's father was on the school board, and when she went home and told what had happened to me, he was very upset. The next day he went into the principal's office and told really what had happened, how I had not been to blame, and the teacher somehow was censored and the black mark that would have gone on my report card was erased. So, I was justified. But that's just a sample of the strict discipline that was enforced. We accepted it and nobody was the worse for wear.

14:14.8

STEPHENSON

And think of it nowadays at school.

ELLSWORTH: I know it. No comparison!

STEPHENSON Not at all.

ELLSWORTH: There's a question here later. "Would I take up teaching?" Definitely no, my answer would be. I don't see how teachers put up with some of the situations they encounter. Well, in high school I was most interested in languages, French and German. Of course I took what was called the college preparatory course. So we had four years of English, four of Latin, and three of French and three of German besides, of course, some math. Math was my weakest subject. I never could manage algebra and geometry. The other things didn't bother me much. So I did go on to college. I kept on with the language study, and I majored in French and my minor was German. So when I went on to teach, those were the subjects that I taught in high school.

Let's see. Where are we now? I guess I'm getting ahead of myself.

STEPHENSON We're on number eight [from a list of questions?].

ELLSWORTH: Oh yes. We traveled by horse and wagon. Fortunately, my father was a great horse lover. The time that he built the house that we lived in, he built a very big barn. Of course he needed his horses to carry on his lumber business and there were always two pairs of work horses in our barns. Anywhere from three to five driving horses, so we always had plenty of ways to get around. Different kinds of wagons: we had single buggies for single horses and one very fancy natural-wood (step up?) two seater which Father used to drive with a pair of horses. My sisters and I and, of course, my brothers used to drive the single horses but we never attempted the pairs. They were horses that my father was very proud of. In fact, he had the finest horses in town. He always had that reputation. They were so carefully tended. Each pair of work horses had his own driver, a hired man whose job it was to just look after his pair of horses as well as drive the wagons to the wood lots and bring in the loads of lumber. They cleaned them twice a day before they started out in the morning and when they came back in at night. The horses were curried and brushed and they were always in excellent condition. We had one hired man who was so fond of his pair that he used to buy them ice cream to eat. They were very fond of ice cream, so whenever he got a chance he would buy additional ice cream and feed it to his horses. So that was that story.

There were trolley cars, of course, to get around in town. They ran frequently and we could go from our house to the center of town in about five minutes. Of course there were trains. The old New York, New Haven and Hartford railway ran through town from Northampton down to New Haven, just a short trip. If we were going on a longer trip, we went by that train going to Springfield which was the place where we went to buy clothes especially. We went by trolley. That was about an hour's trip. There were excellent clothing stores at that time in Springfield. Now I think Steiger's is the only one left, but there used to be Forbes

21:27.7

and Morris, which was big, and Brigham's, which was a specialty shop and especially nice clothes. So that was quite an experience to go to Springfield.

STEPHENSON

Near a city? Fun.

22:31.4

ELLSWORTH:

Yes, a city. Automobiles: my father bought a Ford early when they first came out. In those days, of course, there was no driver-education courses. You went out with the man you bought your car from once or twice. He showed you about brakes and clutches and whatever, and then you were on your own. I can remember going out with my father on one of his first trips and as he approached the garage door, he being a horseman, his first thought was to slow up the car someway so instead of applying the brakes, he grabbed the steering wheel with an especially strong grasp and hollered "Whoa!" at the top of his lungs. Fortunately he was going very slowly so there was no damage either to the garage or the car. It just shows how unready people were to accept all the fine points of driving in those days.

I can't remember having a radio early in those years. We probably had one whenever they were available, but I really can't remember having a radio. I guess that takes care of most of those things.

STEPHENSON

Where did you go to college?

ELLSWORTH:

Mount Holyoke. It was near and I could go by trolley. Trolleys went around to Holyoke and then from Holyoke there was another trolley line that went from Holyoke to South Hadley where Mount Holyoke was located. I lived near enough so I came home quite often for weekends, and I brought my laundry home with me and went back with food supplies.

STEPHENSON

That hasn't changed at all!

ELLSWORTH:

[Laughter] I guess. Some things don't change.

STEPHENSON

Dirty laundry and food.

ELLSWORTH:

That's right. Well, those were an interesting four years, and I graduated in 1915, and I joined a teacher's agency in Hartford. Whenever they had a call for somebody in a special subject, they would notify the person who was registered with their agency. In 1916, the year after I graduated, I had a call from the head of the agency saying that Daniel Howard, who was superintendent of schools in Windsor, needed a Modern Language teacher and would I like to apply for the job, which I certainly did want to apply for. So I came into Windsor and met with Mr. Howard and was engaged to teach French and German in high school here. So in the spring of 1916 I came and took over from a teacher who was leaving. I finished up from that spring until June and then I was re-engaged and came back again in the fall. I taught until the fall of 1918, which wasn't a very long spell,

but I was married the next year. That accounted for my short teaching career. It was enjoyable. Classes were very small, of course. The high school was located in what is St. Gabriel's [Parochial School at 77 Bloomfield Avenue, Windsor] now, upstairs. I lived with a friend of our family, Mrs. Nathaniel Hayden, who lived right across from the school. Her house is still standing there. That is where Charlotte Anderson now lives. I don't know as you know her? Of course, that was a wonderful place to live. She took me right into the family, and I had my meals with Dr. Clyde Clark's mother over on Elm Street. She lived in that tall, three-story house which is right next to the Plaza Building. It's still standing. She was a marvelous cook and a wonderful person. So I was very happily located throughout my teaching career here.

STEPHENSON I find it interesting that you came to Hartford instead of going to Springfield.

ELLSWORTH: Yes, I don't know why I did. Whether there wasn't an agency there... I just don't know but several of my friends were registered in the same agency so that might have had something to do with it. But I never even considered Springfield. That is interesting. I might have ended up teaching somewhere else which would have been sad. [Laughter]

STEPHENSON Well, I'm glad you came south, I guess. [more laughter].

ELLSWORTH: Well, where have we arrived now?

STEPHENSON I think we're up on page two. Yes.

ELLSWORTH: One question: how did you meet men when you were a young woman? I can remember meeting men especially. In high school we had a very nice group of young people. There were probably seven or eight girls that were very close all through high school and about the same number of boys. After school after we had a chance to go home and probably get a bite to eat or so, we all congregated, our special crowd, at a tennis court, right near by, it was about a five minutes walk from my home. My best friend had her own tennis court, so it was opened to all of our group. We would show up with our next day's homework and we'd help each other out with, well, of course, I helped them with the French and German translations, which was my specialty, and some of them are good in math so they would help with our math problems. When we weren't playing tennis, we would sit on the sidelines and do our homework, which combined business with pleasure. It worked out beautifully.

STEPHENSON That's the way to do it.

30:14.2

ELLSWORTH: So that was the way we met our boys, not especially young men but...The Westfield High School had a very famous basketball team over the years. After the basketball games, which were held in a public hall there in town, there was

always an informal dance which we all attended. That was where I met my future husband [Philip Ellsworth]. He at the time was employed in the town engineering department. He had attended Worcester Tech and graduated as a civil engineer. He worked in Worcester for a while and then was employed in the Westfield engineering department. That is where I had met him. He attended the high school dances the same as lots of other people. That was that!

STEPHENSON: Did you work after you were married?

ELLSWORTH: I worked briefly during the war [WWII] at Sage Allen [department store in Hartford, CT] in the children's department, part time. I had a friend who drove in to work every morning so I drove in with her, and I got through work at 4 o'clock and she finished at 4:30 p.m., so I had a ride back home again. I carried on my family at the same time. They were fairly along in years at that time. We had three children I had neglected to say. Two daughters and a son. They were old enough to help out with the household end of it, but I was responsible for getting the meals. They made their own beds before they went to school. They seemed to work out, and I've forgotten how long I worked there. Probably a couple of years when they were still short of help. I enjoyed it. It was a very informal group that I worked with and I enjoyed the goods that we were selling, the children's clothing. It was a nice interlude. My children, one of them is married and lives here in town, Mary Ransom, so I am in close touch with her. My older daughter is married, ____, that is she and her family. That's a four-generation picture.

STEPHENSON That's lovely. Very, very nice.

ELLSWORTH: She lives in Milton, Massachusetts, I have been in quite close touch with her, too. My son [Philip Ellsworth, Jr.] lives in Deep River [Connecticut] now. I have seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

STEPHENSON Oh, my goodness.

ELLSWORTH: So I have quite a lot of family. One grandson lives with me now, works at a bank in Hartford, and commutes and is just here mornings and nights which is company for him and good for him, too, because it takes care of his meals and gives him a place to live where he doesn't have to rent an apartment or something. It works out beautifully.

STEPHENSON I'd like to go back to your married life. So your husband, was he a native of Westfield?

ELLSWORTH: No. He came from Windsor, was born here in Windsor in the Ellsworth homestead. Not the big Oliver Ellsworth homestead, but his father lived on Palisado Avenue in the brick house where the Finleys live now [316 Palisado Avenue]. That's where he grew up.

STEPHENSON So he's the Windsor native.

ELLSWORTH: Yes. He was the Windsor native.

STEPHENSON But yet you met him in Westfield.

ELLSWORTH: Yes, I did and didn't see anymore of him until I came back here to Windsor. In the meantime he had left the job in Westfield and had come to Windsor to help out his father in the cannery. They were short of help and needed someone to sort of manage the place. His father was getting older. So he came into Windsor and settled into the canning business. So that accounts for that. Does that take care of your questions?

STEPHENSON Yes, it does. Thank you.

ELLSWORTH: So now we come to the Windsor Cannery. H. H. Ellsworth was my husband's father, and he was the one who was president of the Windsor Cannery originally. He took into the business a William Filley, who also was a Windsor resident. The canning company started out as a stock company. There were about forty stockholders. My father-in-law was the president, and Mr. Filley was one of the directors. In the beginning they canned quite a variety of produce. Later they cut it down to apples, squash, tomatoes. Eventually the company went bankrupt and it came up for auction. H. H. Ellsworth bought it and took Mr. Filley in as his partner. It was the Ellsworth and Filley Cannery to start with. They owned it, of course, after the auction. There were no more shareholders. It wasn't a stock company from then on. It was just owned by Ellsworth and Filley. So that went on. They cut down on the number of products that they canned, as I said before. They improved the quality quite a bit. During the war years, the government took over a certain percentage of the output of the cannery. Different canneries had to send in samples of their produce. It was tomatoes that the Windsor Cannery was specializing in at that time. I think I've heard my husband say there were five hundred different canning companies that sent in specimens of their products and of the five hundred, thirteen were graded highest. The Windsor Cannery was one of the thirteen highest ones. So that shows what a high-quality product they put out at the time. After the government had taken what they wanted of the year's (crop?), there wasn't too much left for local buyers. That didn't set too well with some of the people that my husband had done business with over the years, but it wasn't anything that he could control. The government came first and just what was left was sold to the local buyers. Originally they sold to buyers in Connecticut and Massachusetts and some in New York State. There was quite a big output. After the buyers had put in their orders for a certain number of a hundred or a thousand cases of goods, they would send in their own particular labels. So the Windsor Cannery label was not the only one that the goods were sold under. For instance, in Hartford there was a well-known brand called the Elizabeth Park brand. They would send in their own labels, and it would be the

same product of Windsor Cannery labels was put out under. They had their own labels, and that was the way it was done. Goods were sold by the carload. Whenever a certain pack was ready, my husband would order a [railroad] car, and it would be sent in and put on the siding down here at the depot. Then they would load wagons with the cases of canned goods and drive them down to the loading platform, and the car would be loaded and shipped off. That is the way the goods were handled in those days.

STEPHENSON Where was the cannery located?

40:54.5

ELLSWORTH: Right where that Windsor Medical Center [60 Poquonock Avenue] is now right next to the [Mill] brook, along there. It stood unoccupied for several years and then I called in a man from out of town, I forgot his name, to destroy it, pull it down. And that was all done with machinery and so forth. Somebody, I think it is Del Coe, has pictures of it in the process of being razed. It took quite a while. There were beams there, I think they were twelve-inch square beams. It was very sturdily built and therefore it took a long time to pull down.

STEPHENSON When did the company go out of business? Can you recall the year?

ELLSWORTH: I think late in the '40s, 1946 to eight [1948]. I talked with my son about that, and he says he remembered working in the cannery. He was at Loomis [Loomis Chaffee School] at the time, and he remembers working there in 1946 or '47, and it was soon after that that it went out of business. It gave employment during the late '30s and '40s to a lot of the young boys in town. It operated from perhaps all through August and early September when the tomatoes were ripe. That was the time when there wasn't much else for the people to do, so they enjoyed having a chance to earn some money for a few weeks. It was a nice class of boys that worked there. A good group all around. The local women worked there and some of them worked over as long as the cannery operated. It was a very congenial group.

STEPHENSON Did your husband specifically grow the crops, the vegetables or were they ...?

ELLSWORTH: He grew several acres. We speak of acres as nothing in those days. He grew several acres on land that they owned over off Palisado Avenue. Also, they contracted with the local farmers around to raise a certain number of acres and bring them in to the cannery when they were ripe. Later during the war years, some of the big tobacco growers allotted a certain number of acres to growing tomatoes to help out. So there was never any lack of produce to be grown. The squash was grown locally by farmers around. Apples -- my husband and his father used to drive around to the apple orchards in, oh, Granby and Suffield, fairly near, and buy the output of the whole orchard. When the apples were ripe, they'd put in a man to pick the apples and bring those into the cannery. Eventually they did let up. The apple orchards began to wear out. The crops

weren't as good as they were originally. They just concentrated on the tomatoes. Anything else about cannery? I guess not.

How many people were employed? I would guess including boys and men and women, oh perhaps around fifty or so. Perhaps not always that many, but it varied from time to time.

I guess that takes care of most of those unless you have some other questions.

STEPHENSON Can you recall the Depression years and its effect on the cannery?

ELLSWORTH: Let's see. The Depression was during 1929 and '30. The cannery was still running. I honestly can't recall unless it brought in more local help. That might have affected the cannery in that way. I can't think of any other way that it affected the output. You know, I really can't.

STEPHENSON I think I'm going to stop this [the tape recorder].

ELLSWORTH: Unless you can think of something that I might possibly come up with an answer to.

STEPHENSON Well, just on historical significance. Do you recall your first time that you voted and what presidential election was that?

ELLSWORTH: Oh dear, I can't remember that. I can't remember voting. There is something in connection with the Historical Society. One thing that might be of interest: a long time my husband was president of the Society. This is during its early years. Mrs. Marion Blake Campbell, which probably doesn't mean a thing to you, but she was the head of the Campbell School here in town. She was a very active person. She could take on anything and carry it through. Well, she was just good at everything. She was chairman of the Entertainment Committee, as I remember. Together, my husband and she put on a big dinner at what was John Fitch High School. They had, I've forgotten, it was probably an anniversary of some kind. It was very successful, and they hoped that it would be repeated sometime in the future. I can't... Of course, nowadays they have their dinner over at Loomis occasionally. They weren't comparable really because it was some kind of entertainment. Not just a speaker but I've forgotten what the entertainment was. There was a big turnout for it. It was just good. She was so capable. It worked out very well. That was just one small item. 48:11.5

STEPHENSON Can you think back to the time the Society was organized, and they took over Fyler House?

ELLSWORTH: I don't seem to remember much about that. Just Fyler House was there

and, of course, when it was just a small organization to start with. For instance, the House Committee; I was one of the original three members of the House Committee.

STEPHENSON Who were the others?

ELLSWORTH: Dorothy Blake was chairman and Betty Adams, who died years ago was a member and I was the third member. We took charge of the Fyler House and I have repeated this incident once before. I guess it was one of the anniversary meetings. We cleaned the Fyler House from top to bottom, just we three, including the attic which was a dusty, dirty job; but we thought nothing of it. The schools at that time still made pilgrimages to the Fyler House. Different grades came. I had a grandchild at that time at the Poquonock School, and her grade was going to be taken through the Fyler House. The teacher was explaining what the house stood for and all this and that. My granddaughter spoke up and said, "Oh, I know all about that house. My grandmother's the cleaning woman over there!" [laughter] She WAS one of the cleaning women. That's been one of our family anecdotes. So, and then, of course, as the years went on, the membership increased and the interest in the place and now it's flourishing beautifully. It's something to be proud of really.

STEPHENSON Definitely. And it certainly will be growing this summer when we break ground for the addition.

51:29.6

ELLSWORTH: That will be the next stage.

STEPHENSON That's right.

ELLSWORTH: Seems as if that would have to be the final stage.

STEPHENSON No room to expand now.

ELLSWORTH: No place to go. That will be interesting.

STEPHENSON Well, we're cramped for space. We definitely will have all sorts of space, which we probably will outgrow in a short time.

ELLSWORTH: If it continues to increase, and I don't know how young people, more and more young people, are getting interested in it. Of course you'll continue to lose members, too.

STEPHENSON In the early days of the Historical Society, did you used to give tours of the Fyler House also? Were you on the tour...?

ELLSWORTH: Oh yes, definitely. For years and years.

STEPHENSON Did they ever go all the way upstairs? Did you ever show the attic part of the house?

ELLSWORTH: Almost never. Of course, it finally got straightened around, more or less. It wasn't like it was originally, but it was a place they didn't feel was a good place to show visitors. Perhaps once or twice they would make an exception. It generally wasn't open to the public.

STEPHENSON And there was a time where Fyler House, I guess in the early days, that Fyler House was a residence. The curator, was it?

ELLSWORTH: She lived in. There were several different ones who lived in there. Even at one time, it was a tea room there. Of course it was small. It didn't last very long. That was when some of the ... a person by the name Betsy Kob was the caretaker there. She was the one who operated the tea room.

STEPHENSON Now just where was that located? Which rooms?

ELLSWORTH: The keeping room.

STEPHENSON Oh, in the keeping room.

ELLSWORTH: And the other rooms, the parlor was open, of course, at the time. I don't know about the tea room. I guess the tea room wasn't operated in the keeping room. It was either in the parlor or the small dining room. One of those. And then there were other live-in people after that, but eventually they [WHS Board of Directors] decided that it wasn't the right kind of set up, so they decided not to have a live in curator.

STEPHENSON Now, what is your understanding of the oldest part of the house? This has always been a discussion ____.

ELLSWORTH: I always thought it was the keeping room. That was what we were told from the beginning. Now I understand it's different.

STEPHENSON Yes. I guess Bob [Silliman] has always heard that Dorothy Blake always felt that the parlor and the dining room facing North Meadow Road was the oldest section of the house.

ELLSWORTH: That's right.

STEPHENSON And last semester I took a course on architecture, and my paper was on Fyler House and the early construction. In the research that I have done, I kind of based it on that same assumption.

ELLSWORTH: Is that so? Originally that is not what we were told.

STEPHENSON We're supposed to have a restoration consultant, Marshall, I can't remember his name. Herman Marshall, who is an expert in the construction of older houses, come in and see what he thinks. Whether that keeping room was a lean to and that a lean to was always added onto the house. So, I guess the question will remain unanswered until we do find out.

ELLSWORTH: Well then, how did they figure out the...? The post office was early and that was connected to the keeping room.

STEPHENSON Well, after the house went into [Captain Nathaniel] Howard's possession, each time he went out... Again, this is tradition has it that each time he came back from a voyage, he would always add on a room. And certainly by that time, that was in, I believe, the early... 1802 when the first post office was... So, by that time the house already had that lean to [that] was opened up to the keeping room and then the post office was off the keeping room. All the summer kitchen and the store and all that was added during Howard's time.

ELLSWORTH: So the old woodshed was not one of the original.

STEPHENSON Not to our understanding.

ELLSWORTH: According to the ___ decision. Well, ...

STEPHENSON It's interesting, you know.

ELLSWORTH: Very. Personally it doesn't affect me one way or the other, but, ah... having been brought up with that idea, it's sort of hard to give it up. Well, it's all old anyway.

STEPHENSON So the Society is growing from the time it was first established, and now we're expanding from Fyler House to Wilson Museum to this third building.

ELLSWORTH: And is this going to be called the Mills something?

STEPHENSON Yes. Well, Marguerite [Mills] left in her will the stipulation that a building be built, a fire-proof building, and it is to be dedicated to her parents.

ELLSWORTH: Oh, her parents?

STEPHENSON Yes.

ELLSWORTH: Oh, yes.

STEPHENSON That's a long-time Windsor family also.

ELLSWORTH: Yes it is. Well I'm a Loomis, so in a way I am a native of Windsor.

58:18.0

STEPHENSON Well, I always thought that! Isn't that something.

ELLSWORTH: I'm a direct descendant of a (Joseph ?) [Loomis].

STEPHENSON So you also belong to DAR?

ELLSWORTH: Oh, yes.

STEPHENSON Now they're trying to restore their homestead.

ELLSWORTH: Trying hard.

STEPHENSON These places are really struggling with the upkeep and the costs escalating all the time.

ELLSWORTH: And you just CAN'T let things go.

STEPHENSON I think that's been the problem for so many places. It's just deteriorated so that now its just an unbelievable job. Well, I think this probably brings to the close our interview. The time went by quickly.

ELLSWORTH: So it did!

STEPHENSON So unless you have some other tidbits... [laughter].

ELLSWORTH: Well, it was very pleasant. I hate to think what the result is.

STEPHENSON I'm sure it's very good. Thank you. 59:31.0

ELLSWORTH: You're very welcome. All set. One item of interest that I forgot all about. Speaking about taking my first job, how I was engaged to come and teach languages. You wouldn't guess, I'm sure, what my salary was to me. \$600 a year. That was the going price for teachers in those days. I was telling one of my grandchildren, just mentioning \$600. [Grandchild says...] "Well, \$600 a month isn't bad," she said.

STEPHENSON [laughter] Yes, until she realized.

ELLSWORTH: But \$600 a year was something else. So...

STEPHENSON And that was, what, 1916?

ELLSWORTH: Sixteen.

STEPHENSON My how times have changed!

ELLSWORTH: They certainly have in more ways than one. Well, that was that!

60:38.3

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