

DORIS PELTON BURGENDORF Oral History Interview #5, 8-14-07
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note and Abstract

Doris Burgdorf is a life-long resident of South Windsor. She is a member of the South Windsor Historical Society. Doris is the designer of our town seal, the illustrator of *Long Hill; The Mary Jeannette Elmore Story*, and the author of *A Country Mile*, a book about the houses in the historic district on Main Street. Doris is currently working on the committee to restore Union School and she is doing the deed searches and research necessary for a new book about the houses on the rest of Main Street.

In this final interview, Doris talks about the Rockwell and Southergill families. She also speaks of John Watson and the Watson house library with its special bookcases. Doris dispels rumors of a Watson house tunnel supporting the underground railroad, and discusses the marriage of Abigail Bissell to John Williams, the minister who was kidnapped by Native American Indians in Deerfield, MA.

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Doris Pelton Burgdorf
Oral History Interview #5
Interviewed by Maureen Bourn
August 14, 2007

Maureen Bourn: Today is August 14th and we're at Doris's home on Main Street. And this is our 5th session of interviewing Doris on taking her oral history. Doris, in our discussions on tape before, we had discussed the Rockwell family making violins and furniture. And, after our last session, we had lunch with our friend, Charlene Southergill, and some more information came up that I think we should put on tape. Can you tell us how the Rockwells and the Southergills are connected and what you know about the furniture?

Doris Pelton Burgdorf: Okay. Martin Rockwell was a cabinet maker. I better put his birth date. He lived between 1778 and 1834. He was a descending nephew of old Dr. Matthew Rockwell whose house is one of the Edith Watson watercolors in Wood Library. And Matthew Rockwell, eventually, inherited that old Rockwell house - Martin - I did say Martin, right?

MB: And you said Matthew but you meant Martin inherited it.

DPB: Martin - yeah.

MB: Okay. And then, eventually, that became a Southergill house.

DPB: Well, Martin's son, Julius Rockwell, married Elizabeth Southergill. Wait a minute. Martin's son Julius's daughter, Elizabeth, married Tom Southergill.

MB: Okay.

DPB: You got that?

MB: All right. So when the Watson - When Edith Watson did the watercolor, it was a Southergill house?

DPB: It was a dilapidated - oh, yeah well.

MB: There's 2 pictures.

DPB: It got dilapidated from the Tom Southergill people living in it.

MB: Okay. All right because there are 2 pictures, one where it was in better condition and one when it was considerably dilapidated.

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DPB: They, evidentially, had moved out of it and because they the Southergill also inherited another house further down the street. They must, evidentially, had moved out of that one and let it fall into disrepair.

MB: Okay. And where where was the house that was in the painting?

DPB: About where Oxbow is a street called Oxbow.

MB: Okay. So it was eventually taken down then?

DPB: Yeah eventually. I don't know who finally knocked it down. They needed the tobacco land.

MB: Okay. Now, it was the Martin Rockwell who inherited house was the cabinet maker that made the furniture that Charlene has.

DPB: Yes. And Charlene has it because Mrs. Hildred Raymond happened to have it, knowing where it had come from. And she knew Charlene and thought it belonged, more appropriately, in Charlene's hands because she is a Southergill more related to Matthew to Martin Rockwell than anyone else at the moment. In other words, that's how Charlene got it.

MB: Okay. Now, this is the same Rockwell family that produced the violins that are at Wood?

DPB: Yes.

MB: And that was Jimmy Rockwell. But the furniture is much older then; from a much earlier period of time than the violins are.

DPB: Dr. Sidney Rockwell was a nephew of Martin Rockwell. He married Martha Pelton. And their son, James Rockwell or Jimmy made violins. And his little woodworking shop disappeared within the last 10 years. It was replaced by Allison Pandosi-Jennings's new house.

MB: Okay.

DPB: Mrs. Dr. Sidney Rockwell had a sister, Harriett, who married Daniel G. Sperry, the great-grandfather of Hildred Raymond.

MB: It's amazing how families are all confused.

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DPB: And Doris Rockwell, who has been a benefactor of many things in our community—her great-grandfather was a brother of Martin, the cabinet maker.

MB: Okay. Now, while we're talking about Doris Rockwell, she has a painting— or more than one, I guess—down at Wood also. And you have some paintings that were done by Will Moore. And Jean [Klein] was telling me that they're done in the Hudson River School style. And there was a local artist who trained them, who taught them. Do you know—?

DPB: Wow. Who was he?

MB: Oh, that's what she wanted me to ask you, if you knew who the local artist was who trained them or taught them.

DPB: Does she have other paintings by other people who were in—?

MB: Well, that's what she wanted us to follow up on—to see if you knew who the artist was and maybe who some other people were who that artist trained.

DPB: I don't know, but I'll tell you the date on Mr. Moore's painting.

MB: Okay.

DPB: This particular painting was done when he was a teenager.

MB: Oh.

DPB: Quite some skill for a kid—1891. 1891 is when he painted the Hudson River School variety that I have.

MB: Okay. Now, is that the Moore that lived in this house that you restored?

DPB: No, he lived in the next house, south—where Elsie Wood—

MB: Where Elsie lives now. Okay. And this was Will Moore?

DPB: William, yep.

MB: Okay. Now, did you find the paintings in the house?

DPB: In his attic.

MB: Oh.

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DPB: He hid them because his mother did not approve of him being an artist.

MB: Oh, gee. That was too bad.

DPB: She wanted him to be the man in the family.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: She made him raise the tobacco. And he was very artistic.

MB: Ifô go ahead.

DPB: Oh. He began his career designing ladies hats in Hartford. But, she made him quit and come home and take over raising the tobacco.

MB: Okay. Now, the paintings that he did areô you knowô in the style of the Hudson River, but are they scenes fromô local scenes?

DPB: No, they look as if they were copied from paintings done by some other noted artists, probably.

MB: Okay.

DPB: Thatø how they learned, by copying pictures.

MB: Okay. So, would you knowô if Jean wanted to know more about this artist, where would she go? Where would someone else be, maybe in town, that she could ask or that would maybe beô ?

DPB: I donø know. I just donø know.

MB: Okay.

DPB: You see, there wasnø much talk about things because it wasnøô wasnø considered masculine.

MB: Not an accepted occupationô

DPB: All right for the ladies to sit and watercolor and sew and things like that. But, I donø know. At least in this communityô so I just donø know. I donø know where these lessons were taught.

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MB: Okay.

DPB: Or who else took them. I don't know.

MB: Okay. Well, while we're talking about the Watson girls, Jean gave me some questions to ask you about them and their family. She mentioned a friend of Edith and Amelia Watson was Edith Beach from West Hartford. And there's a picture of— Jean wasn't sure whether it was Edith Beach looking out of the Watson house or Edith Beach took the picture and it's Edith Watson looking out of the Watson house—the picture they have. But, she wondered if you knew anything about the connection between the 2 families, between the Watsons and Beachs of West Hartford.

DPB: No, I never heard of any connection at all.

MB: Okay.

DPB: To the word Beach. No connection.

MB: And she also was interested in anything you know about John Watson.

DPB: Well, hearsay, I guess. It seems he was bit of a snob. That's maybe—that popped up a few times.

MB: Well, he was very wealthy and well educated. Would that have separated him from farmers in the community—that made him appear to be a snob?

DPB: I don't know. I don't know. Maybe he had a bit of a disagreeable streak in his personality, in general. I don't know. I really don't know.

MB: Okay.

DPB: But he did make peculiar remarks that— except, who kept track of all those remarks? I don't know. Handed down information isn't very good if you can't find it in writing.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: So, I don't know.

MB: Well, sometimes it gives you a start— someplace to pursue. Now, John's relationship to Edith and Amelia was what? Their father was Reed, [Watson] I thought.

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DPB: Yes. And Reed's father was Henry. And Henry's father was Don.

MB: Okay. And they all lived in it at some point, in what's now referred to as the Watson House?

DPB: Yes, probably. I'm not sure. Oh, yeah. I don't know. Henry did have a new house across the street, south of the post office. But, when his parents died, he moved back to the big house. And I don't know how old. I'd have to look in genealogy to see how old little Reed was, to figure out when Reed got his own house. But, Reed would have probably been raised in his father Henry's house, south of the post office.

MB: Okay. Well, I've heard a story. Actually, I think I read it in your book that there is a window in the Watson house that where someone scratched on the window, Reed died today.

DPB: Yes, it was probably his mother sitting there in her chair scratched it because she would be thinking about it. It's her baby. It's her boy.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: Reed died today.

MB: Okay. And while we're talking about the Watson house, I know a lot of changes have happened to the house in more recent times. And Jean was very interested in hearing a description of the inside of the house, in the period of time when Hildred Raymond lived there. She was especially interested in the library.

DPB: Well, the library was there all along. When I father bought the house, I believe the library was installed by Mr. Goodwin, a past owner from West Hartford.

MB: Was he related to the Goodwin's that are still on the street?

DPB: No.

MB: No, different family? Mr. Goodwin must have had a lot of books then to put in all the shelving that was in there.

DPB: I know, but it's a neat job. It wasn't intrusive. It's almost as if the bookcases were built on their own and simply sat in there. They're not jammed into the wall. They didn't displace anything or saw into anything. You could very easily take them out without destroying a thing in the room.

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MB: Oh, okay. Now, the books were— Hildred í

DPB: Oh, no, Maxie [Green] í came along. He was the next owner after Goodwin— recollected books and newspapers and everything. He took 7 dump truck loads of newspapers out of that house when the house was sold.

MB: Wow. What a fire hazard.

DPB: From Maxie Green—. And Kathy Kelly— Kathy McGrath Kelly was our paper girl.

MB: Oh, okay. í

DPB: í all those newspapers.

MB: Now, they took them out and just disposed of them or did they— ?

DPB: Oh, yeah, because what are you going to do? Seven dump truck loads went to the dump.

MB: Wow. And it was all local í

DPB: They were in the attic, on the third floor. They were stacked— you know— all over inside the house.

MB: Does anybody know why he saved some— ?

DPB: Just a fanatic. He saved newspapers. Some people do. They're just literary--literary inclined and they're into newspapers.

MB: So, did he have them organized in some way so he could revisit something he'd read?

DPB: I don't think so. Look at Mrs. í , saving clipping every day, out of the newspaper— any article relating to South Windsor, which now— did Sally [Edlund] take them over to the little school house— I think. And they've been cataloguing them all over there.

MB: Wow. That's wonderful.

DPB: She lived to be 107.

MB: Oh, my goodness.

DPB: But she clipped newspapers every day.

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MB: Wow. What a find, though.

DPB: She usually was doing it. And it's neat. She just clipped South Windsor stuff.

MB: Wow.

DPB: Yeah.

MB: Now, this is Mrs. Moulton?

DPB: Yeah, Sally's mother.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: Sally is mother's no, grandmother.

MB: Okay, Sally's grandmother.

DPB: I forget my generations.

MB: Now, is she related to Connie [Moulton]?

DPB: Connie's grandmother-in-law.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: Connie is Sally's sister-in-law.

MB: Oh, okay. Now, do you remember anything else about the room?

DPB: Which room now, the library?

MB: The library's the library. Jean seemed to think there was a table in the middle of the room?

DPB: There was a great, big table.

MB: And how did Hildred use the room?

DPB: I think Hildred brought the table there.

MB: Okay.

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DPB: I think she bought it at Railroad Savageô happened to be a handy, big table.

MB: Did she use it as a workspace?

DPB: Yeah, yeah. She í table in the middle of a floor so you just put your books down, put your stuff down, pull up a chair, do anything.

MB: Yeah, okay. Were there any other furnishings in this room?

DPB: Yeah, there wasô nothing antique like. Maybe Maxie Green's vintageô you know the sofas that had the fringe hanging on the edge, down near the floor.

MB: Right. Is there a fireplace in that room?

DPB: Yes, 13 fireplacesô no, 12 fireplaces in that [Watson] house.

MB: Okay.

DPB: One room didn't have one.

MB: Now, that's the house that also has the story about the tunnel that supposedly went from the house down to the Scantic River and was part of the underground railroad that they hid slaves during the day, and then helped them escape through the tunnel at night down to the Scantic and out to the Connecticut to go further on, on their route. Do you know anything about the tunnel or where it might have been, or if it was?

DPB: I don't really know because I just have always heard all the stories other people have heard. And, there again, it's just stories. There's no documentation. And Hildred, as an owner and a resident, didn't believe that any of it was really true.

MB: So, she didn't believe there really was a tunnel?

DPB: Well, when you look at the topography of the land, you can't quite envision it. That house is a long way above the Scantic River. And to go out the cellar and go down, down, down in the ground to get as far down as the Scantic, is quite an excavation. And if it went out under the back porch kitchen area, as they think, it would have crossed í backyard, which she had to totally dig up to put in her own septic tank and her swimming pool. And they didn't bump into anything doing both excavations. So we don't know. They don't know.

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MB: Okay. Well, I was telling you Jean has she couldn't remember the gentleman's name when she told me, but he came to Wood and put the story in writing and signed it. But, he said that he visited the Bancrofts in the Watson house, when they owned the Watson house, and played he entered the tunnel in the basement. And then he remembers vividly because he was scolded so harshly for having done that because they felt the tunnel was unsafe. And then Jean was wondering if the tunnel was closed at that point or obviously if Hildred didn't believe in it, then it was closed when she got contact with the house. Was she immediately after the Bancroft family or was there somebody in between?

DPB: No. No, there were the Goodwins and Maxie Green.

MB: Green, in between. So maybe one of them could have closed it off if it has existed or ?

DPB: Yes, but I question whether a man in our generation could have played with a child who was born in 1850.

MB: Okay, I don't know í

DPB: ô Mr. Bancroft got married in about 1850. That's when his kids would have been born. And that's 157 years ago.

MB: Okay. So, that time doesn't seem yeah, yeah. So, I don't know. How long was it in the Bancroft family? Could this have been a descendent of ô ?

DPB: ô look up in my title searching. I don't remember now.

MB: Okay. All right. But, as far as you knew, Hildred ô

DPB: Oh, í when he died. When he died is when it went out of his family.

MB: When Ted Bancroft died?

DPB: No, this is Theodore, an older person. Teddy's our generation.

MB: Oh, okay. And he never owned it then?

DPB: No.

MB: Now, he was born, Theodore, in what year?

DPB: Wait a minute. Theodore, he got married in 1853.

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MB: Okay.

DPB: So, he was born inô

MB: Well, they knew him when he wasô

DPB: He was born in 1827.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: 1927, 20, 27.

MB: So, it does seem improbable thatô

DPB: We're 20 years short of 200 years, when he was born.

MB: Okay. I don't know when this gentleman visited Wood. I don't know that this was any recent event. This could have beenô

DPB: I know but, remember Jeanô

MB: Yeah. Still, that doesn'tô that doesn't seem to make sense.

DPB: Jean didn't start working in the library until quite recently, really.

MB: Okay. Could he have been confused? Did the Goodwin's have children in that houseô the Goodwin who lived there, or Maxie Green?

DPB: No, no, they didn't.

MB: Okay.

DPB: Oh, wait. I want to see when Theodore died. Theodore, comeô why doesn't it say when he died.

MB: He, maybe, was still alive whenô

DPB: When this book got published, he was maybe still alive.

MB: Yeah. That's conceivable.

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DPB: Married Elizabeth Moore, daughter of Sam and Lydia. Let's see when she died because the widow always got to live in the house for a while. She may have been settling his estate. He kind of died insolvent. He had owned almost everything on the street, and by the time he died he was in debt. That happens every generation, I think.

MB: I think that information even would give Jean an opportunity to review the authenticity of what he's saying, if she realizes the time period. You know, while we're talking about the Civil War, underground railroad there, there's another house on the street, the Abner Reed House. It's where Mr. Leland lives now. And that house has a story about being part of the underground railroad too. Do you know anything about that?

DPB: No, never heard that story, never.

MB: Oh, okay. The story that

DPB: I've been to church on that house. That was a parsonage.

MB: Well, it supposedly has a hidden space next to the center chimney that's big enough for a person to stand up in.

DPB: Abner Reed?

MB: Yes.

DPB: Never, never heard. You better ask Joe Vibert.

MB: Joe Vibert, okay.

DPB: Because Irene lived in that house and he's never mentioned it. And Joe is absolutely the town historian. He knows everything.

MB: Okay. Well, I know Jean is doing his oral history, so maybe they did talk about that story.

DPB: Maybe.

MB: Well, have you ever heard about any connection to the underground railroad? you know, it always made sense to me, when I heard those stories, that being right on the river, we could have been part of the underground railroad because this would have been a good route for them to follow.

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DPB: I know. And that's something recently I don't remember where I read it, but, there was a lot of activity we were absolutely unaware of. And it's very possible they were so secretive about it, that there may be some things. I don't know. I don't know.

MB: Okay.

DPB: I often thought that, at the Watson house, I can see where people might people's imaginations might have gotten into underground railroad because I Watsons oh, boy, I've got to look this up too a daughter married a reverend Brown from out west, like St. Louis or something. And he, out there, was involved in the underground railroad.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: And so when it's that family and you hear a tidbit of this and a tidbit of that, you can put quite a picture together.

MB: Yeah, yeah misinformation, maybe, that gets passed on.

DPB: Yeah, I don't know. How can we know now? We have to find something in writing. Stories grow and stretch.

MB: In your slides and pictures that you have, are there any historic pictures of the inside of the Watson house? Would there be a picture of that library that exists somewhere?

DPB: No, I never saw one. And, there again, aren't we negligent. All the years Hildred owned it, we could have been taking pictures of everything. And nobody ever thought of it.

MB: Yeah, before it was changed.

DPB: The library, it's just another room in the house that just happens to have one wall with this built-in book shelf arrangement that, absolutely, was built and then put

MB: Put in there.

DPB: Oh against the wall.

MB: Okay.

DPB: It's not built in, so to speak I nailed in or whatever you call it.

MB: That may be what she was interested in knowing, when it was put in there.

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DPB: And, as a matter of fact, when Hildred when they cleaned out the house, the blueprints for it were rolled up inside the cupboard doors underneath.

MB: And what happened to those?

DPB: Got thrown out, I guess.

MB: Oh, no. Oh.

DPB: í .

MB: Okay, we're back on again. Doris, I asked you to think about stories that didn't make it when you did your research for your first book, *A Country Mile* stories that didn't make it into that book that you'd like to share. And you did think of one that was connected with Benjamin Bissell, if you wanted to share that for us.

DPB: Yes, I thought it was interesting that Main Street and South Main Street gets personally connected to the í on Deerfield in 1704, because Benjamin Bissell's widow Benjamin died in 1796. And his little widow, 7 years after that raid in Deerfield, married for her second husband, the reverend John Williams who had been the cause of the raid in the first place. The Indians raided Deerfield to kidnap reverend John Williams. And they took him and his first wife and his 6-year-old daughter and a little boy, I think, to Canada. After 7 years, they let him free and he came back down here. And he met Abigail Bissell and married her. And they went back to live in Deerfield. But that little 6-year-old daughter, from his first wife, who incidentally had been a descendent of John Timothy Edwards and Jonathan Edwards oh, God, I'd have to look that one up too. But, anyway, the 6-year-old daughter never came back to America. She grew up with the Indians. She married one and she chose to stay there. She came back once to get with the Indian husband, to get her inheritance when some relative died took their money back to Canada with her. Interesting, at 6-years-old to get re what's the word for it?

MB: Relocated or

DPB: Re-indoctrinated into a whole different culture and people. And you grow up that way.

MB: Now, what happened to his wife who was kidnapped with him? Did she die en-route or die ?

DPB: Oh, they killed her, en-route, because she was too weak. She couldn't make it and she was a hindrance. Well, they had practically taken her out of bed from child birth. And they just start walking. And the baby that had just been born, they bashed against a tree.

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MB: Gee.

DPB: They were brutal. But, we were too.

MB: Now, there is a book that's about a girl that was kidnapped and went on that trip to Canada. Is that connected to this family?

DPB: Yeah, I think it's about her. That's where I got my information.

MB: Oh, it's about the

DPB: í

MB: The book is at Wood. And I can't think of what the name of it is, offhand, either.

DPB: Good. í

MB: But I know there is a book about that. So, it's appropriate that they have it at Wood.

DPB: In my kind of searching, I had come across John and Abigail Williams. And I puzzled over them because it said they moved off to Deerfield. No, no, their children—oh, God, he had some—maybe he and Abigail also had some children because it was much later a John and Abigail sold the nice, little brown í house lot across from í school. She and Benjamin Bissell had owned that land—no house, land.

MB: Okay.

DPB: And when Benjamin Bissell died, she kept that land. Then, years later, she married this reverend Williams, so her name would appear on the new deeds as Abigail Williams. And she sold the land later in life, after the second marriage. And I wondered when I saw the word Deerfield, if they met the Deerfield section of Windsor. But, I just í because it didn't relate to dating a house or anything. And then when I came across this book and learned about John Williams and the Indians and his second marriage and everything, I thought, oh, my God, that was her and him.

MB: You said he was the cause of the í that they kidnapped him. Why did they want him specifically?

DPB: It had to do with religion and us having missionaries. It was something—something—I never knew before, which means we're not teaching it in school.

MB: Yeah.

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DPB: We're just teaching about the horror of the Indians raiding Deerfield. But, there was a reason. It had to do with our religion and our white man's ways. And this preacher was somebody they were going to get in ransom. They thought we'd pay for him to get him back.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: And they got carried away up here, burning the houses and killing the people and taking them captive because they meant business. But, he came back 7 years later and picked up being a minister, had a second wife and she was ours. She had been here.

MB: Now, if you had to pick out, of all the things you've written about the street, the most interesting thing, what would be your thing? What would be the thing that you think would be the most interesting thing about this street, the houses or the families or an event.?

DPB: I don't know. I'd have to think about that a long time because when you go down the street, going 200 feet at a time and you find something interesting every foot of the way, it's too overwhelming. It's just awesome that so much relates to this particular street in the great big country.

MB: Yeah, connects us to national history. It is, it is. Okay. Well, maybe we can talk about

DPB: It's even more than Windsor has to offer. And we were Windsor. But, you see, I don't know how to explain that. The second generation jumped right across the river and started living here. And that's where all these interesting people showed up in that next generation. The parents who stayed home in Windsor, in the houses they had built, weren't adventurous anymore. They had done their bit by just coming here and hacking down some trees and building the first house.

MB: Well, that was quite a bit.

DPB: I've never title searched over there and looked things up. But we are very fortunate that this Mr. Henry Stiles took a trip of east of the river and took the time to put those 2 books together because without them we just wouldn't have all we have to work with. People complain often about the mistakes he made. It's nothing compared to the volume of material he did produce. And you can find the mistakes as you go and find them.

MB: Now, what other sources do you use besides Stiles? I know you've used the land records, but I mean are there other books or ?

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DPB: Ah, yes. I've í I'm always running across books. I just got a book last week that I've never seen beforeô Connecticut River Valley Towns.

MB: That's the one I loaned you. That's my book.

DPB: Oh, that's yours. Oh, my God.

MB: ... on its way to Wood and I loaned it to you because you were interested in í

DPB: í because there's one big whopping big chapter on John Fitch, every last detail of his life.

MB: Right. And I read that part and it made Fitch sound like a much better person. Always before, I got the impression he was sort ofô

DPB: Kind of slobbery and í

MB: And had a drinking problem. But the other thing he wrote in there was about Timothy Edwards. And apparently, he wasn't as fond of Timothy Edwards and thought he was sort of an arrogantô

DPB: He was stern, stern.

MB: And didn't have as a high opinion of him as he didô

DPB: But those seem to be the only 2 he credited our town with.

MB: Yeah. Now that book, we have a copy at Wood. But the copy we have at Wood is very old and in very poor shape.

DPB: Well, I tell you, you've got to be careful of this one. This one looks clean and sharp, but when you touch the edge of those pages, they will snap. They're dry. They're ready to crack. They'll break.

MB: Yeah, should be kind of controlled.

DPB: They can't be handled, time to reprint. That's what friends of the library are supposed to do. They're supposed to raise money to promote and sustain the library. And out of that fund of money, they could be repairing books.

MB: That's true. That's true. They should be repairing some of the old books.

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DPB: But they have their own agenda. They want to be a thing that they've dreamt up. And they're using the í to do it.

MB: Well, they stick pretty much to the mission, Doris. And the mission

DPB: They made the mission. They made their mission.

MB: I shouldn't have said the mission. The mission statement was based on what was in the original setup. And the way William Wood set it up I don't want to quote it, but there's a paragraph where our mission sort of came from that, about providing education on scientific and historic culture.

DPB: í because we were a very small town then.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: And where else could it happen?

MB: Yeah. But they are providing a lot of services there. But they haven't forgotten the preserving of the history. They are really working hard on that. I'm glad you're enjoying that book. When you're done, just take it down to Wood.

DPB: ô a couple months ago. And I thought, now who left this book here.

MB: I brought that to you.

DPB: I've got to put a note on it. Oh, my God. I almost thought it was that man ô that man who comes and does pictures and stuff for me ô Peter Holden, the man who made all our slides 30 or 40 years ago for 10 cents a piece. He's old and retired and he looked me up. He came down and gave me 2 carousels of slides that he had made ô copies of slides he made for us. He brought some back to me. He had one whole carousel. Too bad it got stored in a wet place and they all got ruined by water. But you can still look at them. And they are pictures of inside of í house, when they were working on it.

MB: Oh, wow.

DPB: Too bad. They were in color, too ô all water stained. They were in the cellar and water poured on it, the carousel.

MB: Now, there isn't any way that ô ?

DPB: He didn't know of any way to restore them. The í in the film just ran.

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MB: Oh, all right. Yeah.

DPB: Can't let slides get wet.

MB: I know. I know. I was just thinking if there's some way you could put them in the computer because you can clean up things on the computer. You can take things out of the pictures and stuff, but you couldn't clean up running colors or whatever.

DPB: Pretty bad.

MB: Now, he's the one that you were telling me about that's working on it ?

DPB: He's made me some DVD's.

MB: Oh, good.

DPB: Oh, he made a cute little one of East Windsor Hill that's only 8 minutes. It's a quickie. It's delightful to watch. It really is, if you ever come across some session where you need an 8 minute fill-in. He's the narrator and he has music in the background. It's just adorable. He's doing it but he hasn't done it right. He's got to work on that. I've got to get him to finish it before he dies. He's old. He comes down from New York State about every 2 weeks.

MB: He drives down?

DPB: Oh, yeah because he's into this big time now. He's into photography like crazy.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: As it is associated with computers and things. He and a friend are working on some new thing they're doing with the computer with pictures.

MB: Oh, wonderful.

DPB: I didn't understand it because I don't know anything about this new business in our lives.

MB: I bet Wood would love to have copies of it

DPB: I Wood to know he's out there. They could use him.

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MB: That would be wonderful because there are people who would love to sit and watch 8 minutes of East Windsor Hill.

DPB: He's doing a new thing that'll help you sort out

MB: Are you going to get it?

DPB: No, I don't know if he had a picture of a real shack that he knew where he took that picture of. And he brought it down when he saw my if because we wondered if it was the same little shack. But it wasn't. Now we puzzle over these 2 little similar shacks, 1 door, 1 window, wash tubs.

MB: Okay. And her name is Mary Johnson and she was a local washer woman? And you think this was on East Windsor Hill—this picture?

DPB: We don't know where. Let's see. Where did we cut out it could of

MB: Well, she would have been on someone else's property, you think—this house?

DPB: That's what we're trying to place, that little house. We're trying to place it. I'm still thinking about it. Could have been up Route 5, the other side of the Scantic, I'm not sure. But they have a description of a little house like no other with 1 door on the southeast corner and 1 window facing the street. So, we're sitting in the study. Here's a door that could be a southeast corner. And here's a window facing the street. But, there's another door. And the description said the chimney was on the north side, against the building. Well, there's no chimney; there's a stove pipe. And this is a stove pipe. So, it may not be that house. We don't know where this house is. Anyway, he's got another picture of a little house. And he knows his little house is on Abbe Road in East Windsor.

MB: How did you know that the woman you see in the picture, the wash woman's name was Mary Johnson?

DPB: Because my mother knew her.

MB: Okay.

DPB: My mother knew that's the lady that did their washing when she was— as a child at East Windsor Hill. And when she told us where this little thing was, she said, "Oh, it's out back here." And I said, "You know the way your mother talked, how you know where out back here meant?"

MB: Yeah.

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DPB: Which way was she sitting when she pointed out back here? So I don't know. Does it matter I don't know?

MB: No. It's interesting.

DPB: And Mary [Johnson] did washing for people in East Windsor Hill. And she lived in a new house.

MB: Well, and she's a black woman so the only other black resident I ever remember anybody talking about was the one who was a doctor. He was trained in Windsor, I guess.

DPB: Oh, yeah, but he's way back in the Revolution. This lady was 1903.

MB: I know, but I don't I was just commenting because I don't remember any

DPB: Oh, yeah, some dark faced people. Who do we have?

MB: I don't remember, that's why I wondered. She must have been connected, maybe, with some property owner to have her own place on their property.

DPB: People were a lot more lenient in the old days about letting people live in little out buildings on their property. Sometimes, there was no rent involved. It was just you can stay there.

MB: Well, maybe she did their laundry

DPB: in everybody else's too. I don't know if she went to other people's houses to do their laundry, or did she carry it all home and then carry it all back? I'd bet she went to their house and did it.

MB: That would make sense.

DPB: There wasn't much carrying of baskets full of wash, when you don't drive.

MB: That's true. That's true.

DPB: We can't find out any more about it. My mother's gone. I'd bet everyone in my mother's generation is gone. Yeah, my father would be over 100. They're gone, those people. They could tell us something.

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MB: Well, that's why we're doing these oral histories so that we get to hear from people's memories before they are gone and don't have recorded all of them. We can find out about them and what they knew.

DPB: That's what Peter does. He made these photographs from a slide.

MB: And this is a slide you have.

DPB: And a slide is a little, tiny thing.

MB: And there's not that picture doesn't appear I mean that house doesn't appear in any other slide where you could see something near it that would help you locate it.

DPB: That's the slide.

MB: See, every time we talk we find out more things.

DPB: I know. Talk, talk, talk and we don't get anything done.

MB: Oh, we're getting a lot done, Doris. We're getting a lot done.

DPB: I'm very frustrated about not getting books done. That's bad.

MB: Well, I'd be happy to help you. Before we stop today though, I did want to ask you about your artwork. Because I think something else you've contributed to this community is your artwork. And I brought a picture today of the town seal because I thought maybe you could tell me how that came about about how you got involved in designing the [South Windsor] town seal.

DPB: The town had a contest. That's all. That's how it happened.

MB: Okay. And this was in 1969, I think?

DPB: Yes, or '68 or '68 maybe. I don't know.

MB: Now, why did the town feel they needed a new town seal?

DPB: Everybody else all the towns seemed to have town seals.

MB: Okay. Now, how did you come up with this particular design? Do you know what the different parts of it mean?

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DPB: Oh, yes. I decided that í because we're so rich with Indian history. And we had í and Whitney here overpowering us. That was our major industry. And so I made a makeshift racquet or something in the back to represent that. And tobacco had been, for years and years, the major industry, although it isn't an industry. What would you call it? Our economy was based on the crop of tobacco.

MB: Okay.

DPB: But I put the shield of the State of Connecticut to show who we belong to. And I put the í flowers. Why did I do í ? I don't know. But they bloomed faithfully April 19th every year. And we had a lot of them here near in town. Don't know if many people even recognize them because they haven't heard about them. And I thought, maybe, people would learn about our í flowers.

MB: Well, did it have something to do with the river because you've got the fish in there too.

DPB: Those are for the river, yeah, because

MB: And it's just fishing net that you have there or

DPB: Well, it looks like fishnet, but it also is on our í furniture, you will see that funny little fret work on the tops of things on the tops of the highboys up where the pediment is there's a crisscross latticework of wood.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: It's one of his hallmarks.

MB: Okay.

DPB: And so I thought, since we had all this fishing on the river and it was very important in our early history. People had fishing rights on the river. And they sold their fishing rights and they sold 99 year leases to neighbors and spots on the river to go fishing. Fishing was so important. So, I thought the fishnet looks like Mr. Chapin's furniture motif. So I put that for the background.

MB: I never heard that before about 99 year leases to fish on the river. But I imagine it was a source of food. Was there an industry involved with that? Did they sell the fish?

DPB: Maybe they made their own industry out of it. I don't know where they sold all their fish. They did a lot of fishing.

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MB: Yeah.

DPB: They had a place they called the fish island down here a little ways, maybe just off the out in the river, behind Pat Dillon's. Down there somewhere there was an island called the Fish Island must have done a lot of fishing on it. Oh, they cut up the fish on it. I don't know what all they did. They did things with their fishing. Up at the Scantic, they gave a lot of people leases to fish at the mouth of the Scantic. And I wonder if their heirs still have that legal right.

MB: I don't know if 99 years and if they know they're still within the lease.

DPB: They're up on Strong Road. The pond is gone because they undid that damn so the water ran down the brook. But we used to go ice skating there when we were kids beautiful pond for ice skating right behind Ed Sunderland's house. But nobody damns it up under the road now, so there's no pond there. But, John had a sawmill and a mill and everything just south of Strong Road. And he had a 99 year lease to flood everybody's land up there when he needed the water for running his mill.

MB: Oh my.

DPB: I wonder if his heirs still have that option.

MB: I don't know.

DPB: Interesting.

MB: It is interesting. Well, see, now that led us somewhere good, talking about the town seal. You also did the illustrations for the book, *Lawn Hill* didn't you do them or?

DPB: Yes. Yes, Jean and I did *Lawn Hill* book. And my husband, Jack [Burgdorf] and I did illustrations for the *Country Mile*.

MB: Are you planning to do that too for the new book?

DPB: Yep.

MB: Oh, good. Now, if we were looking for your artwork, besides the town seal and those 2 books, have you illustrated other things in town? I know that they have some brochures down at Wood that have illustrations in them that

DPB: Jack did my husband, Jack, did most of those.

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MB: Okay.

DPB: They have a touch of humor to them. He's kind of a cartoonist.

MB: There's a cute one of the quilters.

DPB: Yeah, with the bowtie aprons.

MB: And I know you did the map for me. There's a wonderful map of Wood library that you did for me.

DPB: I'm not a real artist. I don't need to be an illustrator. I was a commercial artist. So, I worked all day in an office drawing stuff that's not really artwork.

MB: We appreciate what the art that we have seen.

DPB: Yeah, few little things.

MB: Okay. Well, I think we've covered the questions that I had to ask today. So, I think we're done.

DPB: Okay.

MB: Oh, which is kind of scary. But I think, after Jean reviews the notes and the tapes, they may generate from people who know more than I do, some other questions. So, we'll bring those back to you. And you will get copies of the tapes and the transcript when the transcript is done, so you can look at what we've done.

DPB: Yeah, maybe you should interview June Cook too, seeing as how she did so much interviewing the last time. And she had a tape of Ruth and one of my mother. And she might remember all this stuff that she learned back then when she was doing it.

MB: Okay. Well, that would be good.

DPB: She was a South Windsor native, really. She just happens to live in it.

MB: Okay.

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