

DORIS PELTON BURGENDORF Oral History Interview #2, 7-17-07
Administrative Information

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Interviewer: Maureen Bourn
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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 second interview of five, Doris talks about members of the early Pelton family, beginning with John Pelton's arrival in Dorchester in 1636, and the family's eventual move to the South Windsor area. Doris describes her own life in an extended family of eight, growing up in a single family house with electricity and a furnace, but no indoor bathroom or running hot water. Her grandfather Oliver ran a slaughterhouse and when he died Doris's grandmother joined her family. Doris's father began a hay business, purchasing it from out of state and trucking it into farmers in the area. The children worked in tobacco. Bossen's Store delivered needed groceries; the fish man, the Polish rolling store, and ice man delivered additional supplies.

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Transcript of Oral History Interview

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Doris Pelton Burgdorf
Oral History Interview #2
Interviewed by Maureen Bourn
July 17, 2007

Maureen Bourn: Let's begin with some family background. Doris, what can you tell us about the early Peltons and when they came to South Windsor and where they settled?

Doris Pelton Burgdorf: Well, in 1636 John Pelton came to Dorchester from England, and his next generation moved down to Mount Hope, Rhode Island, and the next generation went on to Essex, Connecticut, and the next went up to Portland, and then they moved on to East Windsor, and then came back to South Windsor.

In East Windsor oh, boy. Way back in Essex, Ithomar Pelton built a church, which is still down there, and Ithomar and Nathaniel are brothers who ended up in East Windsor. One of their houses is still out on Rye Street, but Nathaniel's son James came down to South Windsor because he married Betsy Wolcott Bissell, who owned her parents's Wolcott's Farm at the juncture of Governors Highway and Main Street, the Ephraim Wolcott property.

Enoch Pelton, the son of James Pelton from before that marriage, bought that Wolcott Farm from his half-brothers, Betsy and James's children, and that man Enoch Pelton raised broom corn, traveled all around the country going west and then south, and in Kentucky, he was awarded a silver tea set for raising a certain crop of tobacco. After his wanderings, he came back to South Windsor.

I don't know which house he lived in. Enoch Pelton he got married and lived in the old Wolcott saltbox that was on that property, but in 1898 he had the new house built, which stands there today and is now owned by a descendant this is complicated

MB: Is that the one that Elsie's [Pelton Woolam's] son owns?

DPB: Yeah. Elsie good lord it's Oliver, Bayard, Elsie, Kevin four generations removed from Enoch, Kevin Woolam now owns that 1898 house [Main Street?].

MB: And that's the house you grew up in.

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DPB: Yup. And it was Oliver's son Bayard—oh, you'll have to ask another question—I'm going to get so confused. My father was Bayard, and we lived in that house.

MB: Okay. Can you describe growing up there in that house with your brothers and sisters? How many of there were you?

DPB: Yes, how shall I describe it? How shall I describe it? We did not have a bathroom in that house until probably 1936, and then we didn't have running hot water in the bathroom until 1948. We did have electricity, and we had a furnace, so it was warm.

MB: You had an outhouse.

DPB: We had an outhouse.

MB: Now that house—there were you and your mom and your dad, and your four—your brother and your three sisters.

DPB: Yeah. And a grandmother.

MB: And a grandmother lived with you too. Wow. That doesn't look that big, that house. Did you—as a child did you share rooms, the kids?

DPB: Two kids in one room—two kids in one room, two kids each had a single room, one kid had a room in the attic, and the grandmother had a room, and the parents' bedroom was on the first floor. So—yeah—one, two, three, four, five, six bedrooms. Eight people! No bathroom.

MB: Wow. That made life interesting.

DPB: Washday was Monday, ironing day was Tuesday—

MB: And did you help with those tasks—the girls helped in the house?

DPB: We sometimes had to hang the wash out on the line, because the washing took all day. The kitchen floor was covered with the piles—the sorted piles, and you just kept running that washing machine and hanging out, until it was all done. And then you unhooked them and brought them all in when they were dry. And you did this winter and summer. In the winter sometimes it was hard to get the frozen sheets in the back door, because they wouldn't bend.

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MB: Okay.

DPB: And then you would finish drying on the radiators, because these houses had free-standing radiators. Not like the baseboard and et cetera that we have today.

MB: Okay. Now, did you have a garden?

DPB: While the grandmother was alive we had a garden, because she mostly did the garden.

MB: Now was this your mom's mom or your's?

DPB: No, my father's mother.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: That's in a way why we were there, because the grandfather, Oliver, had died and the grandmother could not take care of a farm alone, so the son, Bayard, had to come home and run that farm, and so he came with [his] wife and two kids, and added three more. That's how we came to live there.

MB: Uh-hunh [affirmative]. Okay.

DPB: The death of the grandfather. And the grandfather died as a result of having been hit by a trolley car in front of the house. It's just interesting because it brings up the subject of the trolley cars that used to run up and down the street. It doesn't seem possible that he couldn't have gotten out of the way of a trolley car, because I don't think they traveled as fast as automobiles, but he got hit by it. It was night-time, across the street was part of the farm that's where the calf pasture was, and so he went across the street every night to check on gates and be sure, and the cattle and in his going back and forth, one night he got hit by the trolley.

MB: Hmm. And when is it I don't have any experience with trolleys. Were they noisy, or would he have heard it maybe not seen it at night, but?

DPB: It would be noisy.

MB: It must have had a light on it too, or something.

DPB: He just misjudged. I don't know.

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MB: ô or expected it to stop. Was thatô

DPB: I don't know why he got hit by that trolley.

MB: Gee.

DPB: I can't figure that one. Unless you're so used to just running across, that he just ran and he didn't judge rightô

MB: ô and he didn't have enough time. Yeah. Yeah.

DPB: He didn't die right there and then, but it caused injuries that popped up laterô internal something, I don't know.

MB: Okay. Now what were you producing on that farm? Did you have aô you said you had cattle. All right. Did you have a cash crop or were you selling the cattle, or what did your dad do there, or your grandfather?

DPB: Grandfather Oliver had cattle, because he also ran a slaughterhouse, which was where Filene's [Department Store] exists today on Route 5. That was a big slaughterhouse complex.

MB: Uh-hunh [affirmative].

DPB: And so that's why he had cattle, because there was a lot ofô all the things involved in a slaughterhouseô the meat cutting rooms and all thatô wereô I don't know what was out at the slaughterhouse, but I know that they hung meat on our farm in one of our outbuildings. You have to remember I was only a year old.

MB: Hmmm.

DPB: I don't know much about their cattle and slaughter business. Oh, they slaughtered a lot of pigs at the slaughterhouse, because the pigs are what cleared the land between Main Street and Ellington Road. After cutting down the trees and distributing the wood, or whatever, they would turn the pigs loose to root out all the tree roots. You see, today we have big equipmentô big powerful plows and stuff that just chop everything up, but back then in the 1930s, the pigs did it, and when their job was done, they went to the slaughterhouse, and then we ate them.

MB: And then your fatherô did he continue the cattle business, or did heô

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DPB: Yes, he did.

MB: Okay.

DPB: He continued being a cattle dealer. He bought and sold. Cows came and went daily. And in the meantime he milked them and the milk was sold.

MB: Okay. Now, you said that he got an award in Kentucky for tobacco. Did he

DPB: That's the grand—the great-grandfather, Enoch.

MB: Okay.

DPB: Enoch Watson.

MB: But they never brought tobacco to South Windsor. The farm wasn't—it was never a tobacco farm.

DPB: Oh, yes! Yeah—that's the great-grandfather. He did raise tobacco here.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: When he came home at age 44 from his wanderings, he bought additional land—he owned—and raised tobacco. They may have had 400 acres of tobacco.

MB: Oh, wow.

DPB: I don't know what became of all that, but the Depression came around 1929 and they lost a lot of things, because at the same time there were bad tobacco years, from hail, and there would be a whole year or two with no profit. They always had to borrow money in the spring to buy the fertilizer, and then if they got hit by hail, there was no cash for the crop, and they couldn't pay the fertilizer company, and they lost things. Bad times for a lot of people.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DPB: And then that guy died. That was Enoch. He was living in the old saltbox house [on Main Street?].

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MB: Okay. And then they went with the cattle—when did the hay business start?

DPB: My father started that. Besides storing—milking the cows for the milk check, and buying and selling the cows, he decided he had to diversify—he needed a little more cash commodity, and then he went selling hay because all the people who had cows and horses needed hay.

MB: And that—survived right up to this day.

DPB: He didn't make the hay. He bought that from out of state and elsewhere, had it trucked in, and sold it to the farmers.

MB: Okay.

DPB: By then, all the land was in tobacco. Nobody had spare acres to raise hay.

MB: Oh. So that was very clever of him.

DPB: Tobacco was a cash crop.

MB: Now do they still do that now? They truck in the hay from other spots, or do they grow it?

DPB: Little Billy [Pelton] does that.

MB: Okay.

DPB: Yep. He does.

MB: Okay, I notice there are cattle there now, too—is he going to expand into a cattle business or—

DPB: No, those are a few—for his children for 4-H.

MB: Okay.

DPB: I think when the children are all through with 4-H the cattle will be gone, because it's just a lot of work.

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MB: Yeah. Yeah. They are. They are. As a child, did you help on the farm, in addition to helping in the house, having chores in the house?

DPB: As a little child, we did not have too many chores, because our mother was very capable and insisted on doing her own work. She did not let us wash the dishes. She didn't want any of them broken. As we got older, we were allowed to wipe dishes. We were paid a penny a week to make our bed.

MB: Oh! An allowance.

DPB: And as soon as we were eight years old, she sent us down the road to go to work on tobacco.

MB: That young?

DPB: Yes.

MB: Okay.

DPB: When you're little, you can handle tobacco. All you have to do is keep bending over.

MB: Hmmm.

DPB: Walking all day and bending up and down.

MB: Oh, and the adults appreciated you doing the bending.

DPB: Well, we got paid! We got paid. We learned to get paid. At eight years old. Three dollars a day. It was good money for a kid.

MB: Yeah. That is. And where did you spend your one cent for the housework and your three dollars?

DC: Well, I don't know where those pennies went. They seemed to have gotten lost, because there was nowhere to spend them anyway. Unless we put them in our little banks. We all had a little Society for Savings bank that we put coins in. When the little banks were full, they got taken into Hartford and deposited.

MB: Oh. Now was that in a family account or all the children had

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DPB: No. Everyone had his own little bankô

MB: Oh. They taught you good habits early.

DPB: The little Society for Savings made those banks. They were metal, and they had the picture of their doorway on it, and their nameô I mean, good promotional material to make a generation learn to save.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: We still have those little banks. They were sturdy. And they could only open it at the bank. We didn't have a key for it. They had a little key thingô a little place in the bottom that the bank had the key. So you went to Hartford with your little banks, they opened it, counted the money, and put it in your little bank book. You came home with your bank and filled it up again.

MB: Gee. We mightô

DPB: It's not a bad system!

MB: It isn't a bad system, and it's something we probably should be teaching our children today.

DPB: Well, that brings to mindô the Rockville Savings Bank had an excellent program, when we were young. 1936 is when I started school, and we would take ten cents a month into school to the teacher, and it was deposited in each of our own accounts at the Rockville Savings Bank. The bank sponsored this program of getting those nickels and dimes out of the little kids in grammar school, and to this day I have a savings account in the Rockville Savings Bank with my original savings account number, given to me from first grade.

MB: Wow.

DPB: Maybe I have the oldest account in that bank. I don't know.

MB: You could probably ask. They would be able to determine that, wouldn't they?

DPB: It's interesting because about 25 or so years ago, I was in there doing a CD and the lady in the bank said to me, "You don't want to cancel this account, do you?" and I said, "I don't know," and she said, "You have such an old number, it would be fun to keep it." And I said, "You're right." She saved me from closing that accountô

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MB: ô the account. Wise woman.

DPB: She thought of it. Interesting. Maybe I'll get a prize for it someday for having the oldest number. Who knows?

MB: Well, now you said there weren't places for you to spend money. Where did you get groceries and things like that?

DPB: We had Bossen's store. But Mr. Bossen himself came to the house every Tuesday morning with a pad and pencil and wrote down your order, which you had prepared in advance.

[Phone rings, recording ends]

Maureen Bourne: All right. When the phone rang, we were talking about Bossen's store, and him coming to the house

Doris Pelton Burgdorf: ô and him coming to the house to take your order, and in the afternoon, or right around noon, they delivered it, and that was your weekly grocery shopping. We shopped once a week, period. And that's how it happened. And on that dayô in the summer when we were home from school, we all hung around the house waiting for those groceries to get delivered, because that's the day we got new cookies! And those cookies, believe me, were gone in about three days. We had to wait until the next week to get some more.

MB: Now when did you pay for the groceries? Did you pay when you made the order, or did you pay when they were delivered, or did you have a running tab?

DPB: You could pay whenever you felt like it, and I have a funny feeling in our house we paid once a year.

MB: Oh.

DPB: We paid Mr. Bossen once a year. Now that man had to be one good businessman to hold everyone's accounts various lengths of time.

MB: I guess so. I guess so.

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DPB: I don't know why we did it that way. We could have paid more often. Maybe some years my father paid twice a year! Or whatever. But for the most part, we just went along and some day somebody would say, "Hey, it's about time we paid Bossen's," and they'd go to the checkbook and write him a check.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative). So he had to be a good business man to operate that way, I guess.

DPB: But we never—our groceries were only ten dollars week.

MB: Oh, yeah. Wow.

DPB: Ten dollars. Fifty-two weeks is \$520. To feed a family of eight for one year.

MB: Wow. Gee.

DPB: 1936 to '40. When the war happened, things were different, because we had to have stamps for meat and sugar.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

DPB: Maybe the prices went up. I don't know when prices started going up. Butter was sixteen cents a pound.

MB: Now I grew up on a farm too, but we raised all our own meat. Did you raise— you were talking about pigs earlier, and your father was a cattle dealer—

DPB: He had the slaughterhouse but we didn't— we didn't use our own—

MB: Okay.

DPB: —we sold all that. We lived on hamburg and hot dogs from Bossen's store.

MB: Oh, okay. And the garden too. You said you didn't have a garden after your grandmother, too.

DB: I know. Too much work for my mother to be bothered. It was a big family. You would have to have done a lot of food.

MB: And she didn't do canning or making her own jam or jelly or any of that?

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DPB: Nope.

MB: No.

DPB: She washed milk pails and milking machines, and she sold milk by the bottle from the house. All day Monday was wash day. All day Tuesday was ironing day. There really^ô one woman can^ø do everything.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DPB: She abandoned gardening early.

MB: Now were there other places that you could^ô that came to the house selling things, besides the^ô

DPB: Well, the rolling store came by but we didn^ø buy from them. They mostly had Polish food and it was all the Polish neighbors who waited out at the end of the driveway for the rolling store. They would get kielbasa and things like that.

MB: Now was that somebody local who ran the rolling store^ô

DPB: No, I don^ø know where he came from, but he wasn^ø from here. I don^ø know where he came from.

MB: Did you have a baker and a milkman?

DPB: A fish man. For a while a fish man came on Fridays. He would ring a bell so that you could run out and stop him if you wanted to buy some fish. And the he would get used to houses stopped him, and then he^ø drive in your driveway and toot his horn. Everyone had to figure out how to do his own business, you know?

MB: Yeah.

DPB: There was a bakery that did the same thing. Once they got used to where they could make a sale, they would drive in.

MB: We had an ice man, too, but we had a sign we^ø put in the window^ô

DPB: When you wanted^ô ?

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MB: ô when you wanted ice, so he would know to stop when he was going by.

DPB: I think they did thatô well, no. I don't think we bought ice because we had an ice house in the back yard.

MB: Oh, okay. You had the room.

DPB: They cut ice in the winter up on Strong Road, where you don't see a pond anymoreô right by Sunderland's house there was a lovely pond, and they cut ice on it, and you went up and got your wagonload of ice and brought it home, packed it in sawdust in your icehouse. And that would last allô oh, well into the summer. That's where you got your ice.

MB: Okay.

DPB: And we did have an icebox standing in the dining room, because it was more like a piece of furniture, and there was a big tray under it, and you had to remember to empty that tray every day or the water would spill over on the floor.

MB: Hmmm.

DPB: You carried your block of ice in the back door and into the dining room, plunked it inô

MB: Uh-hunh. I remember the icebox at our house, too. Uh-hunh.

DPB: Do I remember when we got our first refrigerator? I'm not sure. But it was small. And it was mostly filled with milk, because we were selling milk from the kitchen. The milk was brought in from the barn, and it had to be put in something to be kept cold, so we needed a refrigerator for the milk we were selling, and anything else you could squeeze in, okay, but mostly three shelves had trays in with milk. Oh, and we had to separate the cream from the top of the milk, because some people would buy cream, also.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative). I remember buying milk in bottles, with the cream was on the top.

DPB: Yeah. It would settle andô

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

DPB: ô but waiting in the pans, you scooped it off with one of those tin things with the holes in itô a skimmer, yeah. Skimmed the cream off and dumped it into its own jar.

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MB: So those wereô that was another job your mother would have had to sell the milk.

DPB: She was in charge.

MB: Yeah. So. I remember you talking about the rag man coming to the house.

DPB: Yes, he just came walking down the road. And you never knewô he didnø have a regular schedule. You never knew, but you could hear him coming from almost an eighth of a mile away. Calling ôRags! Get your rags!ö and our parents would threaten us, if weød been bad, they said they would give us to the rag man.

MB: Oh!

DPB: And then we got to calling him the boogeyman. Yep! If we heard that rag man calling and we were all sitting at the dining room table eating lunch, and somebody had been bad, my mother would say, ôYou better shape up or weøre gonna give you to the boogeyman! Heø's coming!ö

MB: And you listened and shaped right up.

DPB: Well, we were a little afraid. After all, how many people come wandering down the street hollering in a strange dialectô and carrying a big bag on their back? A big bag! What was in it? A little kid?

MB: So you gave him your rags, thatô that he would later sellô

DPB: Well, we sometimes had rags. We kept a lot of rags at home. We needed rags too. You needed rags for cleaning everything.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

DPB: But when there was extra, weød send them out to the rag man.

MB: And then what did the rag man do with them?

DPB: He must have sold them in Hartford. Sold them to some place that takes the rags to make paper or do things with.

MB: Okay.

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DPB: Another lost industry? Another self-employment gone?

MB: Now was there anybody else who had a job like that on the street, where they were selling things on the street, or I remember growing up where people would stop at my father's farm and want to do jobs for him, and then they would sleep in the barn, before they moved on.

DPB: That's mostly in the Depression, in the hard times. Many people stopped to ask for a dime or could they do something for a dime. And they would sometimes mow our whole lawn, with the hand-push mower, for ten cents, just to get on the bus to ride to Hartford.

MB: Wow.

DPB: The price of the ride to Hartford. And also, some would just stop to ask for a sandwich. And if it looked like we didn't have a free sandwich, they'd ask if they could mow the lawn for a sandwich. Very hard times in the Depression.

MB: Yeah. Now, see, that would be not

DPB: '29, '30 up to '33 even yeah. I don't know how long that depression lasted.

MB: Yeah. You would have been very young then, or even just being born, right?

DPB: Yeah. Okay, I went to school in '36 was the Depression over then? I remember the sandwich people.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: For a sandwich.

MB: Do you remember any of the neighborhood families, and the friends that you might have played with?

DPB: Yes, I remember all of them, but so many. So many! Every name you can think of. There were kids in every house.

MB: If you could remember some names of families that lived here or that you played with, because then someone might want to follow up on those names too, that have been here for a long time.

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DPB: Well, Barry, Dillon, Gibbons, Grant, Vibert, Cavanaugh, Lashetski, Karkowski, Smith, Reed, Phelps, Johnson.

MB: Your family was pretty large. Were all the families have that many that many children? Now, a family has two children, or were they mostly large families, where there would be lots of children, different ages?

DPB: Yes, I guess so. My best girlfriend was a one-child family. That's the only one-child family I know.

MB: Okay. And who was that?

DPB: That was Barbara Wynant.

MB: And what did you guys all do for fun?

DPB: When we were little kids, we played house all summer in the back yard and all our outbuildings. I converted them all to makeshift apartments with orange crates and things for furniture, and forced my brothers and sister to play with me. They mostly demanded their apartments. "When are you going to get my apartment done?" Let's see and then the neighbors would come and there had to be an apartment for the neighbor that's gonna come and play. Made a lot of apartments, one in the icehouse, three in the chicken house. When someone wasn't there, someone else used their apartment. It's the kind of playing we did around the yard.

MB: Well, that was pretty creative.

DPB: We didn't go anywhere. We had to do things at home.

MB: And did you have things like bicycles or sleds, wagons?

DPB: Oh! We had sleds and we had a lot of them because and we kept them when winter started we kept them out in the back shed handy to the back hill, because all kids in the neighborhood came to slide downhill on our hills. We were the only ones who had good sliding hills. And they knew where the sleds were, so everybody would have a sled. They'd use everybody's anybody's sled, as long as there's enough sleds to go around.

MB: Hmm!

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DPB: Yep. We did sliding. We had a lot of snow in those days and at the bottom of the hill of sliding, there was a little pond and that's where we ice-skated. And all the kids would come for the ice skating. That's winter. All the various things that provided activity for us were the church, which we could walk to; the school, which we went to on the Connecticut Company bus, or we walked to. When the old Baptist church abandoned its building and the town made it a community hall, there became a bowling alley in the basement, so we had that on our street, and the Boy Scouts met there, and every spring before Memorial Day you could hear from a mile away the Boy Scouts down at the community hall practicing their drums and things for marching in the parade.

MB: Okay!

DPB: A wonderful sound for in the evening after supper. We'd say, "Oh, the Boy Scouts are practicing!"

MB: And you could hear them way up here?

DPB: Yeah, we could. Girls Scouts. Our Girl Scouts always met in the Scout leader's house.

MB: Were you ever a Girl Scout?

DPB: Yup.

MB: Okay.

DPB: And our leader when we were children was—I can't think of her first name at this minute. She was a Stone and lived way down the street in the house Terry Keiss lives in now. Marian Stone! Lovely Girl Scout leader.

We had Pilgrim Fellowship at the church, but we didn't—we went to the lady's house who was in charge of Pilgrim Fellowship instead of using the church itself. That was—that meeting was generally a Sunday night, and that lady was pretty super. She always ended the meeting with a spooky story and then we walked home in the dark! But we looked for it. We wanted to know what's going to be the spooky story tonight? Pilgrim Fellowship.

Oh, and on Saturday nights, we had square dances at the old town hall, which is now gone. That was on our street and only a mile away so we could walk to that. Some parents got together and organized that to give all the teenagers something to do on Saturday night. Of course, all the adults came too. Square dancing is fun.

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We had bicycles, and a lot of us had horses. And then we had work. When we were old enough, we all went to work on tobacco, and I think every child wanted to, because you didn't want to be left out from the gang and if everyone is out working on tobacco, you want to be where everyone is. So everyone worked on tobacco.

MB: Okay.

DPB: And the best farm was Marshall Bidwell's. That's Arline Bidwell's husband. He was just a nice, calm, easy-going old guy and he just loved having the kids around, so his entire crew were children. He didn't hire any adults.

MB: Now where was that farm located along the street?

DPB: It's that big red house past Newberry Road on that side. I can't think of his name.

MB: Big red house. Where the Lelands lived?

DPB: Yes! Where Lelands used to live.

MB: That was the Abner Reed house [on Main Street?].

DPB: Yeah.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: That was it. The high school boys hung out did the hanging in the sheds, and that's a very mature job, and those boys were very proud of themselves to be considered hangers. They climbed up in those three-story tobacco sheds and balanced their feet on two beams, bent over, lifted up that 60-pound lath of tobacco and raised it up to the next guy to hang out kids did that then. Today, a parent wouldn't allow their child to go do it.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

DPB: What chance does a child have to mature?

MB: Yeah. Well, they grow strong. I mean that would have been

DPB: They were strong, those kids.

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MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DPB: I remember Tommy Heinz. He ended up being a lineman for SNET—Southern New England Telephone. He had good practice!

MB: True. True.

DPB: I know. Anyway, those were very good days. We built character then.

MB: And did you ever do any—have any part in the sorting [tobacco]? I remember reading about women doing the sorting.

DPB: I didn't do that, but in high school there were girls in my class who did. I think children didn't do that because you must use your brain a little. Those leaves have got to be sorted correctly, or the buyers aren't gonna buy from that farmer next year.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

DPB: Two holes go in one bin, one hole goes in another bin—it's got to—I don't know. I don't know all the classes of the different grades of tobacco, but you have to know what you're doing.

MB: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

DPB: I know of one young couple—a boy and his girlfriend—who were both hired by [inaudible] of tobacco farms out here, simply because of the girl—she was so good at it, they wanted her in that warehouse, and the only way they could get her was to take her boyfriend too. They really didn't want him at all, because he was not good at it. He could care less.

MB: Hmmm.

DPB: But they had to take him to get her.

MB: Well, that was a good deal for him!

DPB: So there were some girls that were very good at it.

MB: It was an important job, one of the more important ones, I would think.

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DPB: Maybe a lot of people got arthritis from working in those damp, cold places, but those days are gone now too.

MB: Are there any what they used to call the sorting barns are there any of those still on the street?

DPB: Yes, Franny Bordua runs his own, right up the street. That big red barn north of Strong Road.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: At the far north end of it is the sorting room, and he sorts all his own tobacco. He may be the only farmer left sorting his own tobacco.

MB: Okay.

DPB: They're shipping it out of the country to be sorted now.

MB: Oh, I knew they did that

DPB: The price of labor.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: But Franny he's got a big enough family to draw on for help, plus a few Spanish whatever.

MB: Workers, yeah.

DPB: And he sorts his own.

MB: Okay, and he's the only one left on the street? Wow.

DPB: Waldrons used to, and then a Waldron ran this warehouse out on Governors Highway, but it's closed now. It's for sale. That was the last big sorting facility we had. It's empty.

MB: Yeah. Times change.

DPB: Hope Franny well I don't know what age Franny is, but and I don't know if any of his kids will keep doing it.

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MB: I had his sons [in my classroom]. He has a wonderful little one well, he's not a little boy anymore, Nathan [Bordua], but

DPB: He's got two boys. I forgot the oldest one's name. The little one is Nathan.

MB: Nathan's the one I had. And he's a smart little boy and a good kid.

DPB: Yeah. They'll probably ask him they'll probably tell him to be a lawyer or something.

MB: Well, if he liked it if he liked growing up on the farm, you never know. There may be a real interest there.

DPB: I don't know. And look what tobacco is, really. It's just a weed, and it's a bad weed.

MB: Hmm.

DPB: But it earned a lot of livings for a lot of people. Yep.

MB: So.

[Recording ends]

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