

Charles R. Nielsen
Oral History Interview #2
Interviewed by Jean Klein

NIELSEN: **00:00:02** Fortunately, they had planned to introduce me, and after we had our meal, things seemed to be at a lull, so I thought it would be a great time to go to the men's room. And while I was in the men's room, they introduced me. [laughing]

KLEIN: So you never got a chance to—[laughing]

NIELSEN: My hour of glory turned into about five minutes of mess. [laughing] And apparently—

KLEIN: Isn't that the way?

NIELSEN: Apparently, these presidents of the Audubon Society are not adaptable. They couldn't work around it.

KLEIN: Oh, boy. [laughing]

NIELSEN: It's just as well, probably.

KLEIN: **00:01:00** What were you going to be saying? Do you remember?

NIELSEN: I don't know.

KLEIN: Things that came to you from the top of your head.

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: And that's the best way. Well, they missed something then, didn't they?

NIELSEN: Well, I was hoping that one of my granddaughters, whose fiancée, to whom she is getting married next month, just recently joined the Audubon Society—I was hoping they would be there, but she sings with the Hartford Chorale, and they were singing that night.

KLEIN: I've got to get a pen, because I always like to make some field notes while we're going here, Charlie. Just a minute. **00:02:00-00:02:38** [pause] Okay. There are too many things happening. So, when you go to Clinton, do you have an RV motor home or a trailer that you live in down there?

NIELSEN: Yeah. We have what is called a park-model trailer. **00:03:00** It's not meant to be towed over the road. It's forty feet long, and it has pullouts.

KLEIN: It's a semi-permanent—

NIELSEN: Yeah. So you leave it there permanently. It's large enough so that—well, it has a bathroom with a tub and a shower, and it has a full-size refrigerator and a gas range.

KLEIN: Boy. Terrific.

NIELSEN: It's air-conditioned. That's the part that we like.

KLEIN: You get out of your own house because it isn't.

NIELSEN: Yeah, and gas heat, so you stay very comfortable there. There are not many people down there right now.

KLEIN: No. Is it a good place to bird, too?

NIELSEN: Yes. It's got pileated woodpeckers there.

KLEIN: **00:04:00** Oh, wow.

NIELSEN: And they have a sweet tooth for ants' nests up in the cavities of trees, and that's where we'll see them. They'll be there cleaning out an ants' nest. Yeah, it's good. And we have the great horned owl and the barred owl. We have a lot of good birds there.

KLEIN: Nice marshlands and beach? Are you near the shore?

NIELSEN: Oh, I don't know. It's about four miles from Hammonasset.

KLEIN: Oh. Well, that's of course always a prime place.

NIELSEN: I'm not a shore person. My wife [Beverly Hunt Nielsen] isn't either, so—

KLEIN: Oh, just a nice breeze and it gets you away from the—it's hot. Oh, boy, the past few summers here have been so hot and so humid that it's not enjoyable anymore.

NIELSEN: I know.

KLEIN: **00:05:00** So it might be kind of nice just to tell me about—what was the fellow's name that made all of those fly rods?

NIELSEN: Johnny Jones.

KLEIN: Johnny Jones. Which house did he live in?

NIELSEN: He lived in this one right over across the street here, where I guess—it's Shay now.

KLEIN: Oh, right just across the street. Right on the corner.

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: Now, was he one of the—he must have been related to the Jones brothers that came in the late 1800s, early 1900s. They built a couple of houses up on—

NIELSEN: Yeah, he's from that family.

KLEIN: Van der Putten's house and the house across the street, and I guess he's related then to Albertus Jones.

NIELSEN: Yeah. Albertus was Johnny's brother.

KLEIN: Ah, oh.

NIELSEN: And he had another brother named Carroll, who moved to the Midwest and who's children **00:06:00** were artistically inclined, too. Somewhere I've got—I've got it put away—a copy of *Life* magazine that—a whole series on cavemen, and they did the artwork. They're an artistic family.

KLEIN: Oh, neat. Whatever happened to his daughter, Dorothy? Albertus' daughter Dorothy [Dorothy Burnham Jones]. I know she went to New York and became a commercial artist.

NIELSEN: I have no idea. They drifted in and out of life in South Windsor. They weren't particularly interested in it. There was the one that worked for Luxbaum & Green, too. Actually, he worked for Stevens Jewelers. That was a Jones.

KLEIN: Well, they came late to South Windsor, but then I guess they were **00:07:00** very successful tobacco growers and built about half a dozen houses here—at least four houses that we know about.

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: Did they also build the house that Albertus had? I know I met his—

NIELSEN: I don't know who built that house. Also, you know Everett Miller was their nephew.

KLEIN: Yes. I realize that.

NIELSEN: When I was a kid, there used to be a little house that sat right out here on the corner—a little ice cream house. Rollins' they called it, and it was where you could get yourself whatever sort of ice cream treat that they would prepare for you.

KLEIN: Well, they must have had block ice to keep it cold for refrigeration.

NIELSEN: I don't know how they did the refrigeration. It was only two or three summers that they operated that.

KLEIN: Did the Jones brothers or the Jones family—?

NIELSEN: One of the Joneses operated it, yeah, but John and Elizabeth used to go to Maine every summer. They had a place in Maine, and they'd go to Maine all summer long.

KLEIN: Right. Get out of this humid valley.

NIELSEN: But yes, they were related to the other Joneses and to the Dick Jones that was the police chief and early mayor of South Windsor and all stuff like that. Not an early mayor but in my lifetime. He had a brother, Oliver. When Oliver went in the Navy, the vessel that he was on was sunk up around Greenland, so Oliver never came home.

KLEIN: **00:09:02** Now, was it hit by a submarine, do you think?

NIELSEN: Probably.

KLEIN: We never realized how close those Germans got to our shore. Just recently, you're beginning to realize that—I know we used to go up in Maine. Of course, they had these radar towers or these sighting towers—what was left of them—and there were beaches that were still off limits back in the '50s, that I don't know whether they had—

NIELSEN: I don't know who could tell you about the Joneses anymore. Everett had a daughter, but she's—when he died, she sold his house, and she lives somewhere else.

KLEIN: I think she lives down south, and supposedly his neighbor, Brad Case, came in the day after he died and said, "You know, you're supposed to get all the paintings in his house." Wood Library. "And what will you do with them?" **00:10:00** And I said, "Well, we would be the caretaker. We'd probably farm them out to banks and public buildings so that they could be seen, most of them, and make sure." But she came up and took them all home. That was her prerogative so that—

NIELSEN: Nobody ever called Albertus by Albertus. He was just Bert. He had a boat, which he kept down in Hamburg Cove, so he didn't spend much time here in the summer either.

KLEIN: What was his—his wife was named Eva, I think. His wife was Eva. Was she a local girl?

NIELSEN: She could have been Eva. I don't know. But I don't know anything about his wife. I don't know anything about John's wife.

KLEIN: I came across a map **00:11:00** that Jane Gutt gave me—gave the library—where Pleasant Valley Road is called Love Lane. Did you ever know that? Now, this map was made—actually, it was a map that, off of Love Lane, which was Pleasant Valley Road, there was a little farm road that went in back of where the business, Lena's, is today. Do you remember that farm road?

NIELSEN: Yes. One of the Brant family lived up in there. Oh, yeah, sure. I remember that. I don't remember Love Lane. I do know that, at one period, Pleasant Valley Road was called Paper Mill Road because there was a big paper mill out there where Spring Pond Park is now. **00:12:01** And the roadway was, earlier on, the dam, which impounded the water and made a little pond so they would have water for processing the paper. And that was—

KLEIN: Now, is that pond where the old pond was—the old swimming hole was?

NIELSEN: No. The millpond was north of Pleasant Valley Road—on the north side. On the south side, that's where the paper mill was.

KLEIN: Ah, so it's completely gone today.

NIELSEN: Yeah. The paper mill—early on, it was owned by the Clapp family, and I don't want to get into the history of the Clapps because I don't know it that well, **00:13:02** and I'm going to make a lot of mistakes. Anyway, when the first Clapp came to South Windsor, I think he came from Coventry or Bolton, and he was loaded. He had four or five sons, and they didn't want to work as hard as he had, so they formed a group, and they hired a young fellow named Scovill to run the paper mill for them.

KLEIN: Did they build that paper mill? The paper mill was already there.

NIELSEN: I don't know. They might have been the first ones to have a paper mill there. The process for making paper was considerably different than it is now—much more elementary. **00:14:00** But anyway, the paper mill did not show a profit and continued to decline, and they went belly up, and poor Mr. Scovill was the only one that apparently got out of it with a clean shirt, because he went to Hartford, and you know what Scovill Manufacturing is nowadays.

KLEIN: The name is familiar, but no, I don't. What is it?

NIELSEN: Well, it was a very wealthy enterprise. But the Clapp boys wound up—well, a man named Church came down out of Springfield and bought the paper mill. The Church family was well known when I was a boy. They operated the paper mill. **00:15:01** It wasn't profitable. They unloaded it on some guy from East Hartford—a couple of fellas from East Hartford. But eventually, it went out of operation, and the Church family—Elsie Cowles was a Church. That was her maiden name.

KLEIN: C-O-L-E-S or C-O-W?

NIELSEN: I think it's C-O-W-L-E-S.

KLEIN: Okay. Now, what's the fellow that lives in that little house that I think was a paper mill house across from the—

NIELSEN: Henry Ordway?

KLEIN: Yeah, Ordway.

NIELSEN: Well, Henry Ordway is a Church. His mother was a Church and married a man named Ordway. He was, I guess, Elsie's nephew, **00:16:00** and he lived with Elsie. He grew up—she brought him up.

KLEIN: Oh, in that little house?

NIELSEN: Yeah, in that little house.

KLEIN: My neighbor across the street, Harry Pitcock, picked up a painting one time by a Church, and I'm not sure the name of the artist. But we've always—and it was a painting supposedly of Spring Pond—just a woodland scene with a pond in it. I don't think it has any buildings or anything. But because of the famous artist, Frederick Church, that was from Hartford, do you think there's any relationship between the real outstanding artist—?

NIELSEN: I don't know. There were a number of Churches in the area. I couldn't say. I just know that these Churches came from Springfield in the late 1800s.

KLEIN: **00:17:01** Do you remember the first name of that first Church?

NIELSEN: No. I've got it written down somewhere, but I wasn't thinking about that.

KLEIN: Well, I'm sure we could find it in a directory or something.

NIELSEN: The Church who lived when I was a boy and whose son was about my age and went into the Navy during World War II—his name was Hollis, but I can't remember what the previous generation was. He sold—among other things, he sold dynamite, which he kept in a shed up in back of where—well, I guess—who is it, Macy's now? Macy Distribution Center—that whole area up in there. **00:18:00** Well, at that time, what was in that area was a slaughterhouse run by the Pelton family, and they had the whole, overall area fenced in, and they kept pigs. They fed them the by-products from the slaughterhouse, and we were told as children never to go up there because those pigs would eat flesh. We could go anywhere we wanted all over town except up there. Stay away from there. And so this Hollis Church had a little shed that he kept his dynamite in, and it was right in the middle of that pig pasture.

KLEIN: Oh, boy. Nothing ever happened, ever exploded?

NIELSEN: Nope. Nobody would go in there. He was the only one. He would go in there, but he would always drive his truck in there.

KLEIN: Ah, so the pigs turned wild or ferocious.

NIELSEN: **00:19:01** Those pigs—yeah.

KLEIN: Well, that's almost in the area of the sand pits, isn't it? Where the brickyard has their sand pits—up in that area?

NIELSEN: No. Well, it's south of that, yeah. It's south of that.

KLEIN: It's the same kind of sort of brushy, sandy—is it in that area where they have the—oh, what do they call the birds that do their courting flights at night, at dusk?

NIELSEN: Whippoorwill?

KLEIN: No. Oh, gosh. Those ground birds that—

NIELSEN: Not the whippoorwill?

KLEIN: No, not the whippoorwill. I have never heard a whippoorwill around here. The nighthawks.

NIELSEN: Oh, the nighthawk. No, the nighthawks don't go— **00:20:00** nighthawks nest up on the tops of buildings.

KLEIN: Well, then it's not—what's the one that is in the—somebody said in an area where there's a sandpit today, you can go and at dusk they do this courtship—

NIELSEN: Oh, the woodcocks.

KLEIN: Is that what it is? Woodcocks?

NIELSEN: Yeah, the woodcocks.

KLEIN: Okay. Is that one of the areas you can see them?

NIELSEN: Yeah. Actually, you can see them anywhere there was a sand hill, and South Windsor was loaded with them. You could see them out there doing their little ritual dance. And then the—

KLEIN: Do they nest in the sand?

NIELSEN: To the best of my knowledge, they don't nest in this area. They simply get their eggs fertilized **00:21:00** and fly a little further north, and that's where they nest. Apparently, they don't waste any time.

KLEIN: Boy, that's interesting. I've never happened upon them, and I've seen where you can go on a walk or something.

NIELSEN: No, that's not a bird that I would consider a local resident. They just pass through.

KLEIN: But I've heard that you can see them here.

NIELSEN: They are not really an acrobatic flyer, and their long bill is heavy, and when they fly they fly with the bill hanging down, they fly about the height of the telephone and electric

light wires, and they hit those wires and break their necks. It's a sad but true fact with the woodcocks.

KLEIN: **00:22:01** Getting back to—now, in your day, was the *Usnea* moss that the little Parula warbler used for their nesting—was that still abundant here?

NIELSEN: The what?

KLEIN: The *Usnea* moss. It's like Spanish moss hanging from trees. They say that this area was covered with it. It looked like a bit of Florida.

NIELSEN: Sphagnum moss?

KLEIN: Well, it wasn't really Sphagnum. It was called *Usnea*.

NIELSEN: I don't know. I guess.

KLEIN: You don't remember?

NIELSEN: No, I don't remember. I wasn't particularly conscious of it.

KLEIN: That's what I've always heard, and they don't nest here anymore because all they used was that moss for nesting material, which was very sensitive to air pollution.

NIELSEN: During different phases of your life, your interests change.

KLEIN: **00:23:01** Exactly.

NIELSEN: When I was a boy, all I was interested in was candy, ice cream, and root beer.
[laughs]

KLEIN: [laughing] Homemade.

NIELSEN: Homemade root beer. Oh, yes. Yeah, we used to make up a batch and bottle it and put it out in the sun for two or three days and then store it.

KLEIN: Oh, I was going to get you a—not a swizzle—the harvest drink—the field drink that—I was going to bring you the recipe, and I will.

NIELSEN: The switchel?

KLEIN: Switchel. Right. I know it had cider and vinegar in it.

NIELSEN: Yes, it did.

KLEIN: With molasses and stuff like that. But I have a recipe. And as I say, this friend of Stephan's—they bottled it up in New Hampshire. I don't think anybody ever—but just to sell in a country store, I guess.

NIELSEN: **00:24:00** I can remember when I was a boy. I used to work for Watt **00:24:07** (???) (inaudible) when he harvested his tobacco, and a lot of men would work for him, too, because that was during the Depression, and they were hard up for money. The men, almost to a man, insisted on wearing those felt hats out in the broiling sun. Men would be out there spearing tobacco wearing one of those felt hats with the sweat pouring off of him, and I can remember several times when the men had heat prostration, and Uncle Harris' wife, Aunt Mary, would make some sort of a drink with ginger, but I don't think they called it switchel. But she'd make them something that would put them back on their feet.

KLEIN: Were the felt hats just the regular sort of derby-type of thing that they would—with the wide brim?

NIELSEN: Well, a wide-brimmed felt hat **00:25:00** They weren't stiff, like a derby. They'd wear them right out there in the fields. Golly, how hot they must have been.

KLEIN: Yeah. Why didn't wear one of those Panama hats? Straw hats. Well, as you say, those were local people that were working in the fields and the kids.

NIELSEN: Yes, they were.

KLEIN: Did they have imported workers, like the migrant workers?

NIELSEN: There used to be migrant workers. I didn't realize that's what they were, but they were. They'd come and they'd talk about when they left this area and the tobacco harvest. They'd go up into New York for the apple crop. **00:26:00** And eventually, they'd wind up in Maine picking potatoes—harvesting potatoes—and they would start down south along in the Louisiana area with the sugar cane and sugar beets and work their way up, all the way up to Canada, harvesting one crop after another.

KLEIN: Wow, the whole season.

NIELSEN: And I remember one fella, and they used to call him Wink. I don't know why. Wink came back every year, and in their family were others, that I don't remember, that would come back every year. When I was raising tobacco, I had a fellow. In the summer he worked as a caretaker at a girls' camp in the Adirondacks, and then in the fall he'd come back into the Hartford area and worked on the tobacco, **00:27:01** sorting tobacco. And I used to have him year after year. He'd come and work for me all winter.

KLEIN: Did you have your own shed and your sorting shed and everything?

NIELSEN: Yes, I had a warehouse.

KLEIN: Where was your field? What field did you own?

NIELSEN: Well, I never owned any fields. I always rented them from my aunt and from Johnny Jones. I rented the Johnny Jones farm, and I rented the Vibert farm.

KLEIN: Uh-huh (affirmative), down off of Vibert Road or in back of where you're living today?

NIELSEN: In back of where—yeah. Well, where I'm living today.

KLEIN: Oh. (laughs) Right on that plot. Those are new houses. That's right.

NIELSEN: That went right from Main Street right up to what is now Route 5, when they put it in. I remember when they were putting in Route 5, there were some houses that were right in the path of the highway, **00:28:00** and they told the house owners, if they could find a convenient lot, that they would move the house for them. So I remember that my aunt and my mother [Eveline Vibert Nielsen] sold the corner up there on Pleasant Valley Road, where it's now Lena's and all that stuff. They sold that to Steve Waddach, and the state moved his house over there and repositioned it.

KLEIN: That big white one that's on the—sort of right at the end.

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: Do you know anything about the other houses? I did get to meet Jane Gutt right at the very end—probably about ten months before she died. She was interesting. Jane Gutt.

NIELSEN: Oh, the little brick houses?

KLEIN: Yeah.

NIELSEN: Well, Steve was a thrifty man and a hard worker, and he had a feed and grain store there, and he saved his money. When his children—Jane Gutt and his son, Carroll—grew up, **00:29:04** he built those houses for them.

KLEIN: Oh. Now, she said that the design of them is Williamsburg.

NIELSEN: Oh, I don't know.

KLEIN: Yeah, the plans, I guess, are sort of a Williamsburg design that was—are the houses almost the same brick across the street? Was that also—?

NIELSEN: No. No, that was built much more recently by Johnny Nicholson, who was part of the Nicholson family. Their farm was where—well, where the skating arena is.

KLEIN: Uh-huh (affirmative).

NIELSEN: I remember Richard—Johnny's father, Richard—and he would get bored hanging around in his old age, **00:30:01** and he'd come over. I had a tobacco shed right up behind those little brick houses, and I got together with him and everybody concerned, and we moved that shed down over the hill and across the little brook there, down in back of—we put it down where—I don't know who lives in that brick house now. Bob Bossen built it, but I don't know who lives there. But anyway, we moved it all the way down there. Didn't lose a pole.

KLEIN: On the same side of the street, where that nice brick Bossen house was.

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: So you were very familiar with that little farm road that went through then, because you must have been right on there.

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: **00:31:00** Now, Jane was telling me—I haven't looked this up, which I could, but the Route 5 went in about what time?

NIELSEN: Mid '30s.

KLEIN: She said something about Roosevelt coming to that opening, but I can't jog that—

NIELSEN: I don't remember hearing anything like that. This is the period of time when our family lived in Vernon, and so I was out of the swim of things.

KLEIN: Before Route 5 went in—of course, I understand it was just by a fluke that they decided—because of a flood that came along just in the nick of time, they decided to put Route 5 up a little bit further east; otherwise, they would have put it on Main Street.

NIELSEN: Yes. They paralleled Main Street somewhat.

KLEIN: Was it really a plan to put it right along Main Street **00:32:01** and widen Main Street a little bit?

NIELSEN: Well, there again, I was in Vernon. I'm not really privy to what went on, but if that's what they say I'm sure that's correct.

KLEIN: How lucky the flood came at that point. You were going to describe what Main Street was like when you were a boy, and include the part about the highboy.

NIELSEN: Well, you know about the Hessian elms during the Revolutionary War. They didn't have prison camps, and they would take a soldier's—an enemy soldier's parole and board them with the local citizenry. And in this area in South Windsor, we had a lot of Hessian soldiers, and they were sitting around doing nothing, and they came up with the idea that they'd like to plant elm trees **00:33:01** all along—it was about four and a half miles—Main Street, from East Hartford to East Windsor Hill. So those trees—by the time I was a boy, those trees were enormous, and their limbs interlocked, and going up Main Street was like driving through a tunnel.

KLEIN: Gorgeous.

NIELSEN: So then, as the human race so often does, we made a mistake with nature, and somehow or other the Dutch elm beetle got introduced to this country, and when I was a boy, they were spraying those elms to save them constantly, all summer long, and the street itself and everybody's front lawn was copper colored from that spray. I've often wondered how much damage **00:34:00** we did to our health, and it didn't do a bit of good because the elm disease took all the elms out. You would be hard put to find an elm tree in this area.

KLEIN: Well, you know, you go down Vibert Road, and just beyond the brook, you take that farm road that curves around like this. At the end of that, before it curves back like this, I swear there's an elm right there.

NIELSEN: Probably is.

KLEIN: It looks like the old elms. It has the elm shape and everything.

NIELSEN: You're talking about an area where there used to be hundreds of them.

KLEIN: Oh, I know. They will root and start, but then they die off, because I've got some in my yard.

NIELSEN: On the east side of Main Street, all the way up from East Hartford to East Windsor Hill, was a trolley track, and the trolleys ran constantly and provided **00:35:00** transportation for a great many. When I was a boy, people owned automobiles. You only used them for state occasions. You would get your automobile out on a Sunday afternoon, if the

weather was nice, and go visit relatives who lived in another town. You wouldn't use it in town. Everybody walked to church. But those were the days.

KLEIN: There was more than Bossen's store along the way and, of course, a number of taverns. I think we talked about one.

NIELSEN: There were a number of taverns—

KLEIN: Do you remember where they were and the names of them or anything?

NIELSEN: —about as far apart as you could walk on a cold winter's night before you froze to death. **00:36:00** Every four or five houses was—yeah.

KLEIN: All that rye whiskey.

NIELSEN: Yeah. My grandfather's house, which is 905 Main Street now—I know that was a tavern.

KLEIN: It was?

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: CW's house there?

NIELSEN: Yeah.

KLEIN: That was a tavern? Do you know whose tavern it was or any of the names?

NIELSEN: HM King. H-M.

KLEIN: Was the configuration of the house different at that time?

NIELSEN: No, that's the way HM—that's the way it was built. It was built in 1845. I guess it was built by HM, Henry—oh, gosh. **00:37:00** Well, anyway, Henry M. King. And his brother, John, lived immediately north of that, where Crisaks live now.

KLEIN: That's a nice house.

NIELSEN: Do you like that little house?

KLEIN: Yeah. It looks like an 1845 house. It's got Greek revival—

NIELSEN: Yeah. Well, that's where John used to live before he built this mausoleum here, next to the library.

KLEIN: Oh, okay.

NIELSEN: He didn't build it next to the library. He built before the library, because I guess I told you. When I was a kid, I sat—there was a house that stood here, and they moved it back, and that's where Jim Dina lives now.

KLEIN: Who lived in that house?

NIELSEN: Jens Bossen.

KLEIN: Oh. What's the first name again?

NIELSEN: Jens. J-E-N-S. He was PE Bossen's brother. He lived there with his wife and a little adopted daughter, and his wife passed away, and he decided that he'd be better off living up above the grocery store. So he moved up there. The daughter was going to, I guess, some school in the hospital, so she became a nurse. She was hardly ever home, so he just moved up there. Who owned it before that I don't know. Well, yeah. I do know. It was John Newberry King. He built this house, and his son, Isaac, had the little house. Isaac—they used to call him Bull Ike. **00:39:00** He was a big man.

KLEIN: I just had a thought. Can you describe Bossen's store? They're different from stores that we have today.

NIELSEN:

It was a store and a post office. It was ingeniously put together. I don't know how anybody could hold that much merchandise in that small a space, but he did. It had previously been owned by the Parmelee family. They had been running the store there, and so he bought the store from the Parmelees. Immediately behind the store was, **00:40:00** at that time, a building which was the Baptist Church.

KLEIN:

I've seen pictures of that.

NIELSEN:

That went with the property, and he turned the Baptist Church into a stable for his—they delivered, you know, and so he had three or four horses to pull the delivery wagons.

KLEIN:

I never saw a picture of it. Did they change the contour of the Baptist Church when he turned it into a stable? It had sort of a tower on it, didn't it?

NIELSEN:

Not the outer part. I'm sure they renovated the inside.

KLEIN:

Yeah, the inside.

NIELSEN:

But yeah, he ran his grocery store from there and, as I say, the post office. The mail came in and was sorted, and local farmers would congregate, and about nine o'clock was when the mail was supposed to have been sorted. **00:41:00** And then they'd take their mail and their newspapers and go home.

KLEIN:

They'd already worked from sunup till breakfast time, I guess. They used to work before breakfast, didn't they, these farmers?

NIELSEN:

Yeah. Well, yes, but that's a little overrated, for my time. In my time, the tobacco farmers were doing well, and everybody had a hired man. So you'd put the hired man to work, and then you'd go down to the store and sit around and shoot the bull with everybody else until the mail was sorted. Then you'd grab a handful of cigars—buy a handful of cigars and go home.

KLEIN:

How was the mail delivered? By trolley or by private mail trucks?

NIELSEN:

I'd like to say I know, but I don't really know. [laughing] It probably came out on a trolley. Everything came on a trolley. I can remember **00:42:00** reading accounts of masons that would die in Hartford, or their funerals would be held in Hartford, and then they'd put the casket on the trolley and bring it out and bring it up and bury it behind Ellsworth. So they used the trolley for everything, so probably the mail came on the trolley.

KLEIN:

Right. Because there wouldn't have been tons of it in those days anyway.

NIELSEN:

Well, yeah. It wasn't really that big a deal. In South Windsor—in the whole of South Windsor, there was maybe 2500, 3000 people.

KLEIN:

Before we—mentioning cemeteries, I want to get into that, but before we get out of this Pleasant Valley area, Jane Goot was talking. Do you remember anything about the Waddocks? He had a feed and grain store.

NIELSEN:

Yeah, he had a feed and grain store.

KLEIN:

And she said that she—well, along with feed and grain, in other places they always sold liquor **00:43:01** for the farmers that came in—bottled liquor.

NIELSEN:

Possible.

KLEIN:

So she applied for a license and got it, so she opened what is still going there, the liquor store that's next to—

NIELSEN:

Well, we went through that period where the do-gooders—it was called Prohibition.

KLEIN:

[laughing] It just made things worse.

NIELSEN:

My father never in his life made any beer or wine until Prohibition, and the minute Prohibition was repealed, he stopped. He never made another drop. But everybody made their own home brew and their own wine—homemade wine—all through Prohibition.

KLEIN:

What did they make the wine out of in the old days, besides dandelions and maybe—what is that berry that they put into wine a lot?

NIELSEN:

They were big on grape wine.

KLEIN:

00:44:00 But they didn't have—now, for instance, I thought—oh, Bob, across the street here. I've forgotten his name—did a wonderful job turning that little area into a grape producing—I would never have thought—of course, you read about grapes, and you have to have special soil and rocky parts underneath. Here, he's got something going. The wine tasted pretty good. I had a sip of it, and there was not a rock underneath anywhere for miles.

NIELSEN:

It would probably never satisfy the wine connoisseur, but they made wine out of everything. When I was a kid, they made wine out of blackberries, grapes, peaches. Peaches—they made a—

in the fall when the peaches were ripe, everybody would pray for a bad storm. It would blow the fruit down onto the ground, and they'd get bruised, and then they'd sell the bruised fruit, and you could get it **00:45:00** for half the price of what eating peaches were. They'd stock up on that and make peach wine like mad.

KLEIN:

Brandy, probably. A little fortified. (laughs)

NIELSEN:

They were doing pretty well with the wine and the beer. Everybody had a batch of beer brewing in a crock, a batch that they had just bottled that they were aging, and the batch that they were currently drinking. (laughs)

KLEIN:

So these microbreweries have nothing new.

NIELSEN:

I remember there was one old fella, and he couldn't wait for his beer to age. So he drank it as soon as it was bottled, and everybody looked down their nose at him because he didn't have strength of character enough to let it age.

KLEIN:

It wasn't harmful, but at least—**00:46:00** I wonder what it tasted like before it aged.

NIELSEN:

Well, that was secondary—what it tasted like.

KLEIN:

True.

NIELSEN:

The fact that they were thumbing their nose at the government and they could get a buzz on in their own backyard—those were the two—

KLEIN:

Just as bad as the southern mountaineers.

NIELSEN:

[laughing] Yeah.

KLEIN:

And how about hard cider?

NIELSEN:

They used to make a little hard cider. At one time—

00:46:39 (end audio 1a)

00:00:04 (begin audio 1b)

NIELSEN:

Yeah, I can remember when I was a young fellow, the Republican Party—a fella named Charlie Andrulat was a member of the Republican Party, and Charlie Andrulat had a farm with a potato warehouse, and by midwinter, he'd sold all his potatoes, and his warehouse was empty. He always had a keg of hard cider in the corner, and every Saturday the Republican Party would congregate up at Charlie Andrulat's, and they would play cards, drink hard cider, and swap stories.

KLEIN:

Is that the same house that the Andrulat's live in today on Main Street?

NIELSEN:

No, no. Andrulat's was up—you know where South Windsor High School is, and then—

KLEIN:

Oh, way up on the—

NIELSEN:

00:01:00 Yeah, up in there.

KLEIN:

By Nevers Road?

NIELSEN:

Up in back. Well, yeah. The road that goes from the police station. Is that Nevers?

KLEIN:

Yeah, I think so.

NIELSEN:

Yeah, okay. Then it was up on Nevers Road then, yeah. Charlie was quite a character. He used to come in the summer when—everybody was raising tobacco, so he's working in the fields all day. He'd just get into his car and come down to the town hall here for a meeting in his overalls and barefoot. I remember it always used to annoy him, and I can see why, that they spent all this

money spraying the elm trees up and down Main Street. He'd say, "Out in Wapping, we've got elm trees, too, you know."

KLEIN:

00:02:00 What about this dichotomy? Even when I came to town in the early '70s, one of the first things I learned is that there's Main Street and then there's Wapping, and ne'er the twain shall meet.

NIELSEN:

All these years—two or three hundred years—the focus was on Main Street because this is where the farms were. So Main Street controlled the affairs of the town. Then the population shifted. It used to be once you went east of the railroad tracks, you were in no-man's land.

KLEIN:

But they kind of resented that, evidently, because it came down to the—

NIELSEN:

Of course, they did, and I wouldn't blame them.

KLEIN:

In the twentieth century and they were still—

NIELSEN:

Yep. What I say triggered Charlie's remark. We've got elm trees in Wapping, too. But it didn't make any difference. Ellington was just wasting their money.

KLEIN:

It was a try, anyway. In so many towns—I see pictures of East Hartford that were beautiful with the elm trees. My hometown had one surviving elm tree, which was big watering trough, and divided where the streets divided for the park.

NIELSEN:

I used to love the trolleys. I used to love it in the spring when they brought out the summer trolleys—the open-air ones. There were no sides, just a running board, straw seats. I used to love to ride the trolleys and go over to—go up to the north end of Harbor Street when they came into the circus—**00:04:00** Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey circus would be down in the freight yard in Hartford and unload.

KLEIN:

Did those trolleys start out with horse-drawn trolleys? Or were they always—they were electric trolleys, weren't they?

NIELSEN:

They were electric trolleys, yeah.

KLEIN:

So they had to run all the electric wires.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. Every once in a while, there'd be a kid who'd want to get his jollies, and he'd get off the trolley and, when his mother wasn't looking, he'd reach up and yank that trolley wheel off the wire and then run like mad. Of course, the mother would have to go back out and put the wheel up on the railing. Well, it wasn't a railing. It was a wire.

KLEIN:

I guess it wasn't a dangerous amount of electricity running through those.

NIELSEN:

I don't think so. I don't know. Something like twenty-four volts, **00:05:00** or something like that. But the trolley cars were ingeniously built. They were built with two motors so one would pull and drag the car in one direction, and the other one would drive it the other direction.

KLEIN:

You didn't have to turn it around.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. You'd just have to—you don't have to turn it around. All they had to do was get out and switch those arms with the trolley wheel up on the top of it. Take one off the wire and put the other one on the wire and then activate the other motor.

KLEIN:

Now, this trolley line ran. Did it go all the way to Springfield or even beyond?

NIELSEN:

Oh, yeah. Uh-huh (affirmative). They went everywhere.

KLEIN:

Did it go beyond? Did it go up into Vermont, New Hampshire?

NIELSEN:

Oh, I'm sure it did. I'm not familiar with the trolleys in Vermont and Massachusetts, even, beyond—**00:06:00** what's the park up there? They have a—

KLEIN:

Do you mean that amusement park?

NIELSEN:

Every winter they had bright lights.

KLEIN:

Oh, in Springfield?

NIELSEN:

Yeah.

KLEIN:

Yeah. I've never been there, but I—

NIELSEN:

Well, anyway, it went to Springfield. You could go—in this area, you could get on a trolley in Hartford and ride it out to Burnside Avenue over to Manchester up through Talcotville and Rockville up to Shenipsit Lake. And there, you met a trolley—another trolley—which went from Shenipsit Lake down the side of the hill into Ellington and over to Melrose and Warehouse Point. That one connected with the one which would be coming up here and going up to Warehouse Point. **00:07:01** You could get practically anywhere on the trolley.

KLEIN:

And then walk the rest of the way to the house or whatever it was that you were going to.

NIELSEN:

Yeah, and when you got off they'd give you what they called a transfer, which would entitle you to the basic ride on the next branch of the trolley that you were going to go on. You could go from—

KLEIN:

Did it run all the way up to Stafford Springs? Do you know?

NIELSEN:

Stafford Springs?

KLEIN:

Yeah.

NIELSEN:

Yeah, I'm sure they went up there.

KLEIN:

Was Stafford Springs a going concern when you were young? Did you ever hear about it as being a spa?

NIELSEN:

When I was young, it had seen its heyday. They still had the fairgrounds up there and the racetrack, and they would have—**00:08:01** once or twice a year, they'd have harness races up there and things like that. It wasn't—it was a pale shadow of its former self. It was somewhat eclipsed even by Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake was the recreational area in those days. They had two big skating—roller skating rinks.

KLEIN:

The springs were supposed to have had mineral waters that were advantageous to your health, and so they had—it was that kind of a spa, not an amusement park kind of thing. I didn't realize they had all that other. I know they still had a woolen mill there until a few years ago.

NIELSEN:

00:09:01 Oh, they did?

KLEIN:

Yeah. Again, I don't think we recorded the file, but he was a Jones. We started—we got off the track on the Jones. Tell me again about the fellow—the Jones fellow that made fishing rods.

NIELSEN:

Oh, Johnny?

KLEIN:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

NIELSEN:

Well, he developed a knack for making split bamboo fly rods, and he had his own design. He thought that the prevailing fly rods were a little too long and not quite stiff enough. So he would make these seven-and-a-half-foot-long rods, starting with trips of split bamboo, and he'd glue them together, he'd widen out the guides for the line **00:10:01** and put a cork handle on the end. He would sit there in his basement night after night making these fly rods, and he never seemed to run out of people who would be more than willing to buy them.

KLEIN:

Isn't that funny? Because the fly rod today—if we talk about fly rods, not just the drop lines—they are just the opposite. They're supposed to be flexible—long and flexible—so if you wanted to—you know. I haven't tried it myself. I like those shorter, stiffer ones.

NIELSEN:

Did I tell you John was a dyed-in-the-wool fly fisherman, and he fished this area, and he found that the conventional eight-and-a-half-foot-long fly rods **00:11:01** were a lot of trouble because of the underbrush that grew along all our streams. And so he designed one that he liked, and apparently, other people liked it, too.

KLEIN:

Well, that's the thing. First, you have to stand out in the middle of the river so you don't get your line caught on the trees on the limbs above you.

NIELSEN:

All the other tobacco farmers—when the tobacco business failed in South Windsor, he had huge stocks of tobacco, and he used to make his own cigars, and I never saw him when he didn't have a cigar clamped in his jaw.

KLEIN:

Which house did he live in?

NIELSEN:

This one right up here across from—

KLEIN:

Right across the street. Okay. He got it from his father.

NIELSEN:

00:12:00 As I say, John came from a talented family. His brother was—one brother was Albertus Jones, the painter, and another—gosh, I can't remember his name. But anyway, he moved to the Midwest—St. Louis, I think, but I can't remember. But anyway, his family was artistically talented.

KLEIN:

Right. Anything else you can tell me about the Waddocks or Jane Goot herself? She was an artist, and when I went to see her to do an oral history with her, I expected that she—her art—because she took lessons from Albertus Jones—that her work would look like Albertus'. Wow, it didn't. It was modern art, but a type of modern art that I really liked. **00:13:00** You could tell what she was getting at. She was really—of course, she never had time to really—

NIELSEN:

My mother and father had one of her paintings. I can't tell you much about her because I never really knew her that well. I know—

KLEIN:

She has a granddaughter that's living in that house now.

NIELSEN:

There is?

KLEIN:

Yeah. Well, not her house but the white house that's on the corner and who inherited everything, I guess. Then I guess she mentioned that her son had an accident or something, and then—but I never found out exactly what it was. He drowned, but I don't know.

NIELSEN:

Yes, he did. He drowned.

KLEIN:

Accidentally?

NIELSEN:

As far as I know.

KLEIN:

You know, you never can tell the way people say things sometimes. **00:14:01** I never did question her to—

NIELSEN:

I know absolutely nothing about it except that he was gone. Her husband, Eddie, came from down Glastonbury way, from the section, I think—what did they call it? Anderson? But beyond that, I know very little about them.

KLEIN:

I guess they must have bought that property from their grandfather or from **00:14:34** (???) (inaudible) anyway.

NIELSEN:

Yeah.

KLEIN:

Because they owned that whole—

NIELSEN:

Yeah. They owned that whole strip.

KLEIN:

Right. I think—I'd have to look it up, but I think she was wrong in saying that Roosevelt came to open the highway, because he died in '45, and I don't think the highway opened until the '50s—Route 5. Or did it?

NIELSEN:

That opened in 1935 or 1936.

KLEIN:

00:15:02 Route 5 did?

NIELSEN:

Yeah.

KLEIN:

Oh, okay. So he could have been here.

NIELSEN:

Oh, yeah. He could have been, but I don't think he was. I think I would have known about it.

KLEIN:

Yeah. That should have been a big whoop-de-doo.

NIELSEN:

I don't know. **00:15:15** (???) (inaudible) remember things, and I don't remember that.

KLEIN:

That would be a real occurrence to someplace like South Windsor.

NIELSEN:

Hell, if that's what they remember that's fine, but I think—I don't think Roosevelt would have broken his neck to get here because this was a Republican town.

KLEIN:

You're not going to get many votes no matter what. (laughs)

NIELSEN:

They used to say that on election day, if it rained, then the Democrats have a good chance of getting some candidates into office because all the farmers would be busy taking their tobacco down. **00:16:00** Things have changed.

KLEIN:

Yes. I just wanted to ask. Your brother had polio during that big epidemic.

NIELSEN:

Yes.

KLEIN:

Do you remember whether a lot of children in the area got that?

NIELSEN:

In those days, there weren't a lot of children in South Windsor. But in the greater Hartford area, yeah, there were a lot of children that got it. It was a very severe epidemic that year, and the medical profession had absolutely no idea what caused it or how to treat it or anything else. They told my father that they thought my brother might recover more rapidly if he didn't live in the Connecticut Valley in all its humid climate. **00:17:00** So my father bought a home out in Vernon, which I don't think had anything to do with his recovery. He was quite a boy, I'll tell you.

KLEIN:

Your brother?

NIELSEN:

Yeah.

KLEIN:

In what way?

NIELSEN:

They took him up to the Shriner's Hospital, and they operated on his leg. They transferred the cords from one side of the leg to the other to straighten his leg up and broke his arch so his foot wasn't like that. And they put him in a hip cast, and then they—well, I don't know. They put a boot cast on him after, finally, and he used to ride his bicycle and drag that boot cast on the road because it would leave a nice white mark, until he wore through it. One day, he discovered he was dragging his foot **00:18:01** on the road.

KLEIN:

It didn't hold him down then.

NIELSEN:

No. Then we were playing around the railroad tracks, and there was a pile of ties there, and we were playing king of the mountain or something like that, and he got knocked off, and he broke his elbow. He broke the rocker in his elbow, so the doctor said, "I'll set the arm up against his—so it'll be up against his side so it won't be in the way." So we got a lot of little apple trees— young apple trees—in our backyard, and we played Tarzan all summer, and by fall his arm was straightened out just like anybody else's. He was a rugged little fella.

KLEIN:

Is he older or younger than you?

NIELSEN:

He was younger. Two years younger.

KLEIN:

What did he grow up to do?

NIELSEN:

He grew up, he went to trade school, he learned how to—he learned electricity—to be an electrician. He worked a little while for Homer Lane, **00:19:01** and he worked around for several electrical contractors. Then he got together with GE and he became a salesman, and he used to sell—his route would go up through Massachusetts and Vermont and New Hampshire then head up to Lake Champlain. Then he sold electrical equipment.

KLEIN:

That was a good company to get attached to. Did he marry and have a family?

NIELSEN:

He married. He and his wife were childless, and they adopted two children.

KLEIN:

Oh, that was nice. Did he live around here?

NIELSEN:

He lived right next door to me when we first built—**00:20:00** when I first built my house. But then—

KLEIN:

Did he build? Did he own the one that's west of your house or east?

NIELSEN:

He built the little house where Bengston's lived.

KLEIN:

Oh, okay.

NIELSEN:

Actually, he didn't build it. **00:20:17** (???) (s/l bir-cow-ski) probably built it. But anyway, he got tired of the Main Street area, and he moved to Wapping. That's where they lived.

KLEIN:

And he's deceased now?

NIELSEN:

He's what?

KLEIN:

He died.

NIELSEN:

He's deceased.

KLEIN:

Well, it's interesting because everybody that I've known that had polio, when they get older, it kind of returns. They become lame and—

NIELSEN:

Really?

KLEIN:

Yeah.

NIELSEN:

Well, I was told **00:21:00** that both my sister and I had mild cases. I don't know how the medical profession knew because they didn't seem to know anything else. (laughs) But that's all right. Neither one of us had any impairment that I'm aware of—unless me and it was mental.

KLEIN:

[laughing] I don't think it worked that way though, did it?

NIELSEN:

No, I don't think so.

KLEIN:

Oh, and because the daughter—they were the daughters of CW, just to get a little idea of these girls that became so active in the early bird study club—what your mother's personality was like and what your aunt's personalities were like—

NIELSEN:

Aunt Francis was interested in the birds. She had, it seemed to me, two abiding interests—the Hartford Bird Study Club and the DAR.

KLEIN:

Oh? (laughs) **00:22:00** So she traced her antecedents back. She became interested—she joined the DAR, so she must have—

NIELSEN:

Yeah, she was in that chapter over across in Windsor.

KLEIN:

Oh, okay. The early founders of Windsor?

NIELSEN:

Yeah. Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth Chapter.

KLEIN:

Yeah, that chapter. Who did she marry?

NIELSEN:

She married Peter Bossen.

KLEIN:

Bossen. She was a Bossen. Okay. And did they have children?

NIELSEN:

One. One daughter. But when she married him, he had already had two children by his former wife, so she raised them, too.

KLEIN:

And so he lived right here on Main Street then after that.

NIELSEN:

Oh, yeah. They lived right there in the store.

KLEIN:

So then there was Francis and then there was—was she the oldest?

NIELSEN:

No, Emma was the oldest.

KLEIN:

How about Emma?

NIELSEN:

Emma was older. CW was in no hurry to have his children. They were several years apart, and Emma was enough older so that she didn't have the same—any of the same interests that my mother had and probably not as many of Aunt Francis'. I don't know. She married Harry Dean, who was the son of Doctor Dean, who used to live up there **00:24:00** where Bobbie Peck lives. And they went to Hartford to live and raised their children there, and transportation in those days being what it was, we didn't get together all that much except on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

KLEIN:

What did that Harry Dean do?

NIELSEN:

Harry Dean worked for the United States Post Office.

KLEIN:

The other Dean that just died recently—was that his brother? No. It must have been his son.

NIELSEN:

The Dean that just died recently?

KLEIN:

Yeah. Well, within the past ten years. What was his name?

NIELSEN:

Phillip Dean?

KLEIN:

Maybe it was. Phillip you said?

NIELSEN:

Phillip. Yeah, that was one of their sons. They had three sons.

KLEIN:

00:25:00 Phil Dean. I guess that was it, yeah. He used to—well, I knew him when he was—

NIELSEN:

He lived up on Main Street?

KLEIN:

He used to paint the fence.

NIELSEN:

Eddie Styers' father.

KLEIN:

Okay. It gets very complicated. I can't even keep my own straight, and then you find that everybody is related to somebody around here.

NIELSEN:

That's right. Yeah, that's Edie's father, and he had another brother named Donald, who lived—he was in World War II. He was not a young man when he went into the service either. He lived until just recently.

KLEIN:

In South Windsor, too?

NIELSEN:

No. He lived in—

KLEIN:

Phil is the only one that I've heard of.

NIELSEN:

Yeah.

KLEIN:

What did Phil actually do?

NIELSEN:

Phillip? I don't know. **00:26:01** Like me, he's a Jack-Of-All-Trades master of none. I know he worked for the post office for a while, and for quite a while he and his family went and lived in Vermont. So actually, if you wanted to find out about them, you should talk to Edie.

KLEIN:

Yeah, that's right. Well, somebody else has put her on their list to do an oral history with. I've forgotten who it was.

NIELSEN:

But you have to remember that when I was little, transportation was a lot different than it is now. We didn't get together all that often.

KLEIN:

Right, unless you were very, very close family.

NIELSEN:

Of course, then my Aunt Francis lived right here in town, and I was up to the store all the time.

KLEIN:

What was your mother like?

NIELSEN:

My mother?

KLEIN:

Yeah.

NIELSEN:

She was very motherly.

KLEIN:

00:27:00 [laughing] Now she was the one—or was it Francis—that became—was the officer? They were program chairmen and they were—at least two of them had lots of official titles for the Hartford Bird Study Club.

NIELSEN:

I don't know. I know—

KLEIN:

What was your mother's name again?

NIELSEN:

Eveline.

KLEIN:

Eveline. Right.

NIELSEN:

Eveline was—as I say, she was the youngest of CW's children, the youngest—there were—I think my mother told me that there were either one or two sons who died in infancy. But I know nothing about that. I don't think they even were given names. I don't know. **00:28:00** I guess she was a wonderful mother, and she was just like everything a mother should be to a small child.

KLEIN:

I wanted to ask you, too, about the cemetery and the cemetery association.

NIELSEN:

Yeah, people are dying to get into that.

KLEIN:

[laughing] Well, when I came to town, all we heard about is Clapp—Dudley Clapp—who had been digging the graves for ninety years. I guess I can find this out someplace else, but there was a—it became an independent association—independent of the town, independent of the church. Is that true?

NIELSEN:

The cemetery association?

KLEIN:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

NIELSEN:

Yeah, it was organized, I guess, upon the request of the town, who didn't want to be involved in all the nitty gritty of maintaining cemeteries.

KLEIN:

Right. Or dealing with the people that they have to deal with in a hurry.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. You know how often it would have been for the town to administer a cemetery, and it couldn't make a decision until they had a town meeting and all stuff like that. So yeah, they asked members of the church if they would consider forming an association to administer the cemeteries. **00:30:02** And I've got the history, but you can get it from Paul St. Jean.

KLEIN:

Right. I'll look at that. When we get a chance to look at all of that, we'll take a look.

NIELSEN:

Maybe Elsie William has copies of it. I don't know.

KLEIN:

Well, it sounded like everything's together, and they have it in a vault someplace in the bank or someplace like that.

NIELSEN:

Could be. But the town had placed in our charge four of the cemeteries. The one that people know the least about is the one up by the Rice Street Park. It's a very small cemetery—not very many graves.

KLEIN:

They were saying the other night it was more of a pauper's, I guess. Is it still used for people who have no money to—a pauper's grave? **00:31:01** They were talking about a pauper's cemetery for the poor.

NIELSEN:

To the school?

KLEIN:

No, pauper's.

NIELSEN:

Oh, pauper's.

KLEIN:

Is it still a place where you can be buried for nothing?

NIELSEN:

I don't believe that they've used that cemetery up by the Rice Street Park. I don't believe that they've had a burial there in my lifetime. I don't know. Maybe early on, but in the last fifty years, I know it hasn't been used. Paupers were—we had a pauper's field in the one in the back of the church. That is now shock 'n lock full.

KLEIN:

Are they unmarked?

NIELSEN:

Yes, they're unmarked. They're not in vaults, and they're just shoved in there just as tight as you can get 'em.

KLEIN:

Whereabouts is that located in the field?

NIELSEN:

It's over on the south side of the cemetery, **00:32:00** over near where—I don't remember his name—went up there and built the house on the meadow hill, up in that area. There's a fairly good-sized piece of ground there, which has nothing on it. And for all intents and purposes, it would look like a lot of free space there. That's where all the paupers are buried. They don't do pauper's burials anymore.

KLEIN:

Several summers ago, I went with Joe Vibert with this thing. I guess maybe I told you. He carried the mike, and I carried this, and he talked about what he could remember in front of each gravesite. But then we were going to transcribe it, and then he was going to go back and fill it in. You probably know as much about some of those people that are buried there as Joe did.

NIELSEN:

00:33:00 I don't know. I know prior to our modern age, you bought a plot in the cemetery, and from there on in it was your problem. You had a burial. You buried the casket wherever within that plot you wanted to bury it, and you set up a stone over the gravesite wherever you wanted to set it.

KLEIN:

And you had—you hired somebody yourself or did it yourself. You're saying you dug it yourself?

NIELSEN:

You dug it yourself or—yeah. And there were no—there were wooden caskets and no vaults, and four or five years later, the grave would sink in, and it was up to you if you wanted to level it off and re-grade it. In other words, **00:34:00** the maintenance of the plot was entirely up to the family.

KLEIN:

And some looked good and some didn't.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. So back when Franklin Roosevelt was first in office, they came up with a WPA, and one of the things that they got involved in was—at that time, they were just starting to use machinery to maintain the cemeteries, and the gravestones helter skelter was a pain in the neck. So the WPA would come into a cemetery and rearrange the stones in a nice orderly way, which sounds great. But over in Wapping, I am given the impression that what they did was they pulled up all the stones **00:35:00** and piled them in a pile, graded the cemetery, and then just put the stones back wherever they thought they ought to be.

KLEIN:

So probably all these old cemeteries that look nice probably had the same thing happen to them.

NIELSEN:

They probably have, and what happened was that, in Wapping—and I can show you right behind the church itself—a husband and wife with twin headstones, not even in the same row. He's here and she's over here.

KLEIN:

They weren't very careful.

NIELSEN:

No. No, apparently they didn't prerecord the location of the stones, and then they just sort of—well, it looks like this one ought to go here. Dudley was the sexton up here, and he talked them into refusing the WPA's offer to come in, and he said, "I'll take care of it." And for that, I am **00:36:01** very eternally grateful to Dudley because he made an orderly arrangement of the headstones and didn't lose the continuity of the whole thing. He did a good service there. Beyond

that, I don't know, and you'd have to talk to Talcott. I was young, and cemeteries were not one of the things—like my mother used to say, "Not one of the things I am fondest of."

KLEIN:

[laughing] Right. Is CW up in back of the church?

NIELSEN:

Yes. CW's up there. Actually, he's in an eight-grave plot with his father and mother—he and his wife, CW and Mary Elizabeth—then Walter, the middle son, and his wife, and Horace, the youngest son, and his wife. So there's eight of them there in that plot, and that's over on the south side, up in the—sort of—almost up in the southwest corner, but it's not too hard to find because the stones—the little headstones are all the same and the center stone. So they're up there. Walter never had any children, and Horace had four children. He had two daughters and two sons. So beyond that, I guess you'll have to go to the correct families to find out about them.

KLEIN:

Right. And his original house is the one—or one of his—his last house was the one that Edie lives in now?

NIELSEN:

Horace's?

KLEIN:

Yeah.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. Horace built that house.

KLEIN:

00:38:00 All right.

NIELSEN:

I used to love to go to my Uncle Walter's house because my Aunt Ida would take us up in the attic, and in the attic in the chimney—originally there had been built so you could put—apparently put a stove up in the attic, and there was a flue hole. And she'd take the plate off, and you could look in, and you could see the chimney swifts on their nests. Those nests are all made of sticks. They're all glued together with some spit and mud, and she'd take us up there and let us look—watch them.

KLEIN:

Ah, neat. Now which house did she live in?

NIELSEN:

She lived in the one just this side of Bossen's store, between Bossen's store and Vibert Road.

KLEIN:

The nice one. The one that—oh, what's his name? **00:39:00** Anyway, the one right on the corner of Vibert Road.

NIELSEN:

Right. Yeah. Right on the—

KLEIN:

Oh, yeah. It's a Greek revival, 1840-ish or something like that.

NIELSEN:

It could be. I don't know. I know my—

KLEIN:

The one that Edie—Edith and Watson Vibert ended up in.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. That's where my great-grandfather and grandmother—one of the homes they lived in in South Windsor when they came to South Windsor. They also, for a while, rented the house up there on the corner of Newberry Road.

KLEIN:

The brick one. Now, as I remember from what Joe said, they were going to run a mill of some kind with that little tiny stream that runs down there through the meadows and comes up. But you look at that today, how could they ever think there was enough waterpower **00:40:01** to have run a mill?

NIELSEN:

I don't know. That is debatable. But you know, up where **00:40:13** (???) (s/l kuh-shay-duhs) live up there now—where Stoughton's brook was—

KLEIN:

Right. Where it goes like this? Yeah, it's very picturesque.

NIELSEN:

The road at that—in colonial times, the road was a dam there, and there was a gristmill and sawmill there operated by Thomas Stoughton.

KLEIN:

Oh, really?

NIELSEN:

Yeah. And then they had a period of drought. It was three or four years. They didn't get any rainfall hardly, and they couldn't run the mill. So they went out of business.

KLEIN:

So probably what they were thinking of doing is damming up above and damming it, and then they would have water. But there's such a small slope.

NIELSEN:

Well, you'd be surprised. These colonists from England were—**00:41:00** that's the kind of water they were used to over there in England—little streams—and they could do amazing things—run gristmills, sawmills. They even—up in Somersville, they even ran that textile mill by a turbine. They didn't use a water wheel. They had a—it's not the kind of turbine that we use nowadays, but somehow or other they channeled the water through this turbine, and there were veins, and it spun around. They finally had to stop using the mill because they couldn't find anybody that could repair the turbines. Nobody had any parts anymore. But then that's another story. The Scantic River is an amazing little stream.

KLEIN:

Tell me about it.

NIELSEN:

Tell you about it?

KLEIN:

Yeah.

NIELSEN:

00:42:00 Well, it starts up in Massachusetts—Hampden, Mass.—and that's where the headwaters are, and nowadays the Massachusetts Audubon Society has a little park and museum up there. It is the home—it contains the home of Thornton Burgess, who used to write the children's books. And they still have a lady who will—they will rent the place out for people to—for kids to have birthday parties and stuff like that, and there's a lady that will put on a costume and come dressed as Mother West Wind.

KLEIN:

Oh, neat.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. So Thornton Burgess was a personal friend of my grandfather's, and he used to visit him frequently. And when I was a boy, I used to read his books, and I'm told that at one point, I complained because he had no character **00:43:00** in his books named Charlie. So he put a

Charlie Chipmunk in there for me. So if you read Thornton Burgess and you come upon Charlie Chipmunk, he was named after me.

KLEIN:

Oh, how great. What a great story. Did he give you a book—an autographed copy?

NIELSEN:

I don't remember that he did, now that you mention it. [laughing] But anyhow, you come down out of Hampden, and into Somers, and from Somers into Enfield and the millpond of Somersville and all stuff like that. Well, between the millpond—north of the millpond in Somersville—somewhere up in that area in colonial times, they had an iron foundry, and the source of the iron was the **00:44:00** bog iron that got dug out of the ground in all the swamps, and it was so low grade that, I think, I was told that they made cannonballs for the Revolutionary War, but they couldn't—it wasn't good enough to make cannons or muskets. They made nails and hardware and wagon tires and stuff like that. But it wasn't high-grade iron ore. And then you come down a little further on the Scantic, and you come to Hazardville, which was where they made the gunpowder. And at one time, they made—they produced, I believe, it was about two-thirds of the gunpowder that was consumed by the British and the Russians—they sold to both sides for the Crimean War—and quite a bit of the gunpowder that was used in the Civil War. **00:45:00** But with the advent of smokeless gunpowder, nobody wanted that black powder anymore. It was too awkward to handle. But the powder mill itself was composed of a series of buildings about a quarter of a mile away from each other so that if one blew the other one wouldn't. And I've seen slide presentations on this. The buildings were framed with enormous timbers, and then the siding and the roof were just tacked on, so if there was an explosion it would blow the roof and the siding off, but in two or three days you could have the siding nailed back on, and the roof, and be back in business again.

KLEIN:

Oh, neat.

NIELSEN:

And they were connected by a railroad. The rails were made out of wood so that they couldn't strike a spark. The buildings were connected by it. **00:46:00** As far as the personnel were concerned, life was cheap. You could always find somebody else.

KLEIN:

No hazard pay.

NIELSEN:

Yeah. And they had numerous—there were numerous periods when the powder mill blew up.

KLEIN:

I was going to ask if you remembered.

NIELSEN:

And the last time—the one that put them out of business—Watt Vibert's had been—

00:46:30 (end of audio 1b)

A

air pollution 12
amusement park 27, 28
Andrulat, Charlie 24
apple trees 33
artist 4, 9, 29
attic 43
Audubon Society 1, 2, 45
Aunt Francis 35, 36, 38
Aunt Ida 43
Aunt Mary 13
automobiles 18

B

bamboo 28
barred owl 3
beaches 6
beer 22, 23
bicycle 32
Bird Study Club 35, 38
birds 3, 10, 35
bog iron 45
Bolton 7
boot cast 32
Bossen, Bob 16
Bossen, Jens 20
Bossen, Peter 35
Bossen's store 18, 20, 43
Brant family 7
breakfast 21
brick houses 15, 16
brickyard 10
British 45
brother 4, 6, 19, 20, 29, 32, 36, 37
buildings 6, 9, 10, 45, 46
Burgess, Thornton45
burial 40, 41
Burnside Avenue 27
business 7, 44, 46

C

cannons 45
cards 24
caretaker 6, 14
Case, Brad 6
casket 21, 41
caskets 41
cavemen 4
cemeteries 21, 39, 40, 41, 42
cemetery 39, 40, 41

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| cemetery association..... | 39 |
| Charlie Chipmunk..... | 45 |
| children | 4, 9, 15, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 42, 45 |
| chimney | 43 |
| chimney swifts | 43 |
| church | 18, 39, 40, 42 |
| Church | 8, 9, 20 |
| Church family | 8 |
| Church, Frederick..... | 9 |
| Church, Hollis | 9 |
| cigars | 21, 29 |
| circus | 25 |
| Civil War | 45 |
| Clapp family | 7 |
| Clapp, Dudley | 39 |
| colonists | 44 |
| Connecticut Valley..... | 32 |
| Coventry | 7 |
| Cowles, Elsie | 8 |
| Crimean War | 45 |
| Crystal Lake | 28 |
| CW | 18, 34, 36, 38, 42 |
| D | |
| dam | 7, 44 |
| damming | 44 |
| dandelions | 22 |
| DAR | 35 |
| Dean, Harry | 36 |
| Dean, Phillip | 36 |
| delivery wagons | 20 |
| Democrats | 31 |
| Depression | 13 |
| dichotomy | 25 |
| doctor | 32 |
| drink | 12, 13, 24 |
| drought | 44 |
| Dutch elm beetle | 17 |
| Dyna, Jim | 19 |
| dynamite | 9 |
| E | |
| East Hartford | 8, 17, 18, 25 |
| East Windsor Hill..... | 17, 18 |
| elbow | 32 |
| election day | 31 |
| electric | 11, 25, 26 |
| electricity | 26, 33 |
| Ellington | 25, 27 |
| Ellsworth | 21, 35 |
| elm tree | 17, 25 |
| Enfield | 45 |

England 44
epidemic 32
explosion 45

F

fairgrounds 28
family 4, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 29, 33, 37, 38, 41
farm road 7, 16, 17
farmers 21, 22, 29, 31
farms 25
father 16, 22, 29, 32, 37, 42
feed and grain store..... 15, 21
felt hats 13
field 2, 12, 14, 40
fields 13, 14, 24
flood 16, 17
fly rods 3, 28, 29
freight yard 25
funerals 21

G

GE 33
Germans 6
ginger 13
Glastonbury 30
Goot, Jane 7, 15, 21, 29
government 23
granddaughters 2
grapes 22
graves 39, 40
gravesite 41
gravestones 41
great horned owl 3
Greek revival 19, 43
Greenland 6
gristmill 44
grocery store 20, 21
gunpowder 45

H

Hamburg Cove 6
Hammonasset 3
Hampden 45
Harbor Street 25
hard cider 23, 24
hardware 45
harness races 28
Hartford 2, 8, 9, 14, 21, 25, 27, 32, 35, 36, 38
Hartford Chorale 2
harvest drink 12
harvesting 14
Hazardville 45

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| headstones | 42 | |
| Hessian elms | 17 | |
| Hessian soldiers | 17 | |
| highway | 15, 31 | |
| hired man | 21 | |
| history | 7, 29, 37, 39 | |
| horse-drawn trolleys | | 25 |
| horses | 20 | |
| <i>I</i> | | |
| ice cream | 5, 12 | |
| infancy | 38 | |
| iron foundry | 45 | |
| iron ore | 45 | |
| <i>J</i> | | |
| Jones brothers | 4, 5 | |
| Jones, Albertus | 4, 29 | |
| Jones, Dick | 6 | |
| Jones, Johnny | 4, 14 | |
| Joneses | 5, 6 | |
| <i>K</i> | | |
| King, Henry M. | 19 | |
| King, HM | 19 | |
| King, John Newberry | | 20 |
| <i>L</i> | | |
| Lake Champlain | 33 | |
| Lane, Homer | 33 | |
| Lena's | 7, 15 | |
| library | 7, 19 | |
| <i>Life</i> magazine | 4 | |
| liquor | 22 | |
| Love Lane | 7 | |
| Luxbaum & Green | | 5 |
| <i>M</i> | | |
| machinery | 41 | |
| Macy Distribution Center | | 9 |
| mail | 21 | |
| Main Street | 14, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 34, 35, 36 | |
| Maine | 5, 6, 14 | |
| maintenance | 41 | |
| Manchester | 27 | |
| map | 7 | |
| Massachusetts | 26, 33, 45 | |
| mayor | 6 | |
| meadows | 43 | |
| medical profession | | 32, 34 |
| Melrose | 27 | |
| merchandise | 20 | |

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| migrant workers | 13 | |
| Miller, Everett | 5 | |
| millpond | 7, 45 | |
| mineral waters | 28 | |
| money | 13, 15, 25, 40 | |
| mother | 8, 15, 26, 29, 34, 36, 38, 42 | |
| Mother West Wind | | 45 |
| motors | 26 | |
| mountaineers | 23 | |
| muskets | 45 | |
| N | | |
| nails | 45 | |
| Navy | 6, 9 | |
| nest | 3, 10, 11, 12 | |
| nests | 3, 43 | |
| Nevers Road | 24 | |
| New Hampshire | 13, 26, 33 | |
| New York | 4, 14 | |
| Newberry Road | 43 | |
| newspapers | 21 | |
| Nicholson, Johnny | | 15 |
| nighthawk | 10 | |
| nighthawks | 10 | |
| O | | |
| Ordway, Henry | 8 | |
| P | | |
| painting | 9 | |
| paintings | 6, 29 | |
| paper mill | 7, 8 | |
| Paper Mill Road | 7 | |
| Parmelee family | 20 | |
| pauper's grave | 40 | |
| paupers | 41 | |
| peach wine | 23 | |
| peaches | 22 | |
| Peck, Bobbie | 36 | |
| Pelton family | 9 | |
| pigs | 9, 10 | |
| pileated woodpeckers | | 3 |
| Pitcock, Harry | 9 | |
| Pleasant Valley | 7, 15, 21 | |
| Pleasant Valley Road | | 7, 15 |
| police station | 24 | |
| polio | 32, 34 | |
| population | 25 | |
| post office | 20, 21, 37 | |
| potatoes | 14, 24 | |
| powder mill | 45, 46 | |
| Prohibition | 22 | |

property 20, 30

R

racetrack 28

railroad 25, 32, 46

railroad tracks 25, 32

rails 46

refrigeration 5

relatives 18

Republican Party 24

Republican town 31

Revolutionary War 17, 45

Rice Street Park 40

Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey circus 25

river 29

Rockville 27

roof 45

Roosevelt 16, 31

Roosevelt, Franklin..... 41

root beer 12

Route 5 14, 16, 31

Russians 45

RV 2

rye whiskey 18

S

sand pits 10

sawmill 44

Scantic River 44

Scovill 7, 8

Scovill Manufacturing 8

sexton 42

Shenipsit Lake 27

shore 3, 6

Shriner's Hospital 32

siding 45

sister 34

slaughterhouse 9

smokeless gunpowder..... 45

Somers 45

Somersville 44, 45

sons 7, 36, 38, 42

South Windsor 5, 6, 7, 11, 17, 21, 24, 29, 31, 32, 37, 43

spa 28

Spring Pond 7, 9

Spring Pond Park 7

Springfield 8, 9, 26, 27

springs 28

St, Paul. Jean 39

stable 20

Stafford Springs 27, 28

Stevens Jewelers 5

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----|
| stories | 24 | |
| Stoughton, Thomas | | 44 |
| stream | 43, 44 | |
| streams | 29, 44 | |
| Styers, Edie | 37 | |
| summer | 5, 6, 14, 17, 24, 25, 33 | |
| summers | 3, 5, 41 | |
| swamps | 45 | |
| swimming hole | 7 | |
| switchel | 12, 13 | |

T

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Talcotville | 27 | |
| Tarzan | 33 | |
| taverns | 18 | |
| textile mill | 44 | |
| timbers | 45 | |
| tobacco | 5, 13, 14, 16, 21, 24, 29, 31 | |
| tobacco business | 29 | |
| tobacco growers | 5 | |
| town hall | 24 | |
| towns | 25 | |
| trade school | 33 | |
| trailer | 2 | |
| transfer | 27 | |
| transportation | 18, 36, 37 | |
| trees | 3, 11, 17, 25, 29, 33 | |
| trolley | 18, 21, 26, 27 | |
| trolley track | 18 | |
| trolleys | 18, 25, 26 | |
| turbine | 44 | |

U

| | | |
|---------------------------|----|----|
| Uncle Harris | 13 | |
| Uncle Walter | 43 | |
| underbrush | 29 | |
| United States Post Office | | 36 |
| <i>Usnea</i> moss | 11 | |

V

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------|----|
| vault | 39 | |
| vaults | 40, 41 | |
| Vermont | 26, 33, 37 | |
| Vernon | 16, 17, 32 | |
| Vibert farm | 14 | |
| Vibert Road | 17, 43 | |
| Vibert, Edith and Watson | | 43 |
| Vibert, Joe | 41 | |
| Vibert, Watt | 46 | |
| votes | 31 | |

W

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Waddick, Steve | 15 |
| Waddocks | 21, 29 |
| Wapping | 25, 34, 41, 42 |
| warbler | 11 |
| warehouse | 14, 24 |
| Warehouse Point | 27 |
| water | 7, 44 |
| waterpower | 44 |
| whippoorwill | 10 |
| William, Elsie | 39 |
| Windsor | 17, 18, 21, 35, 43 |
| wine | 22, 23 |
| Wood Library | 1, 6 |
| woodcocks | 10, 11 |
| woolen mill | 28 |
| World War II | 9, 37 |
| WPA | 41, 42 |