

William Steere: This tape is the property of Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated, and cannot be reproduced without their permission. The date is October 31, and today, I am speaking with Mary Hinckley Crane of 2730 Main Street, Barnstable. Mrs. Crane is sixty-three years of age. Mrs. Crane, could you tell us about your ancestry on the Cape here?

Mary Hinckley Crane: My tenth great-grandfather was Governor Thomas Hinckley, and he came to this country as a boy of twelve in the ship *Hercules*, sailing to Scituate with his father and his mother and brothers and sisters. They stayed in Scituate a few years and then came down to Barnstable in 1639. And his father, who was, I suppose, my eleventh great-grandfather, took up land here near the Great Pond. The family remained here, have remained here ever since, and, of course, married a number of other families, some of whom, like the Cobbs, came at the same time and others who arrived in Barnstable later. I think of myself as being primarily descended from the Hinckleys, but of course, they were only a small section of my ancestry. But most of my father's family were from here, or certainly from the Cape.

WS: Wonderful. You had an interesting story to tell about this house here in the Village of Barnstable.

MHC: Well, the house I live in is called the: Allyn House because it was built by another one – it was built by the grandson, probably, of another one of those first settlers, whose name was Samuel Allyn or Thomas Allyn – I'm not sure which. It is a house which my father bought from the last Allyn and where I now live. It was built about 1700, plus or minus. Perhaps a little earlier, perhaps a little later. But it is very definitely haunted. It's the old saltbox house, number 2730 Main Street now. Sometime about the middle of the 18th century, according to Amos Otis and a few other references, there was a maidservant here who was the daughter of a woman named Liza or Lizzy Blatchford. She had a nickname, actually, which turns up in other stories, Liza Tower Hill, because she is supposed to have come from the Tower Hill District of London. She was thought to be a witch, although there is a good deal of uncertainty about it. But this daughter of hers felt that she was not well treated by the Allyn family, who were employing her, and she complained about this treatment to her mother when she saw her. So, it is said that the witch, her mother, sent her familiar, a black cat, to torment the Allyn family in order to revenge herself upon them. This black cat is supposed to have suddenly appeared in the Allyn house and knocked furniture over and turned the milk sour and upset things generally in the kitchen and the pantry, and generally made a nuisance of herself. The funny thing is that ever since that – ever since my family has owned the house, there have been curious manifestations of black cats. Black cats appear suddenly. In my mother's story, one came out of the door from the cellar when the house hadn't been open or hadn't been used or even opened all winter long. Since I've lived here, I've seen a black cat walk in from outside through the open door, upset some milk, and walk out another door and never be seen again. So, for what it's worth, there's the story of a haunting of this house.

WS: It would appear that a black cat remains with the house through various owners.

MHC: It's funny, but it always seems to be that way; either my tenants own a black cat, or somebody comes visiting with a black cat. Or obviously, if I ever acquire a cat, it has to be

black. But there is a pretty strong preponderance of black cats in the neighborhood for some strange reason.

WS: Do you own a black cat now?

MHC: No, I don't. But my tenant who lives in the house – the little house behind this one – owns a black cat who loves to come into this house and tries very hard all the time to get in whether or not she gets fed. Sometimes she does, I will admit.

WS: Well, that's an interesting story on Halloween Eve today.

MHC: Right, exactly. [laughter] The right day for it.

WS: Well, growing up, you lived in the house next to this one here.

MHC: Yes, I did. MHC: t the house that has been known for about fifty years now as Packet Mail. My parents and I spent every summer and many weekends and most school vacations from 1914, when I was born, to at least 1940, when my father had just died, and my mother was soon to die. The house is called Packet Mail because it was built by my great-grandfather, Matthias Hinckley, who was the master of one of the packets that sailed between Cape towns and Boston. This one was the Mail, M-A-I-L, which was built in Sing Sing on the Hudson, curiously enough, and built in order to be the swiftest sailing sloop of them all. When it was put in the water – after it was put in the water, they did race the packet from Yarmouth, and they raced several times and came in first, generally, arriving at Long Wharf in Boston. It took anywhere, I'm told, from about eight hours to three days to get from Barnstable to Boston. So, as I say, we call the house that my great-grandfather built Packet Mail, and it's been in the family ever since its building in 1929.

WS: Your father grew up on the Cape. Could you tell us about him?

MHC: Yes. My grandfather died in about 1870, I believe. His widow, my grandmother, became ill about maybe ten years later. In those days, of course, it was customary for one of the children to come home and take care of the parent who was ill. In this case, my grandmother was the only one of the family who was able to arrange to be at the house here and take care of her mother. So she moved down from Boston with her little boy, my father, and lived in Packet Mail for a number of years after that. My father grew up here during his – oh, the years from about nine or ten to nineteen or so. He went to school, first at the Pond Village school, which is about a half a mile or a little bit less along the route to the west, the other side of the railroad track, and right next to the present – just beyond the present house called the Lamb and Lion Guest House. The school, I suppose, went up to the sixth grade or perhaps the eighth grade. He never told me about that. Then after that, he went to high school in Sandwich because the only Barnstable high school was, by that time, in Hyannis. It was difficult, if not impossible, to get to Hyannis from here. It could only be done by horse and cart, and it would take far too long to go every morning to school and back. So he took the train to Sandwich, which seems rather a long way around, but in point of fact, it probably took him not much more than fifteen or twenty minutes on the train. He got all his high school education that way.

WS: Where would he get the train?

MHC: The railroad station was at the end of Railroad Avenue, and he would walk down, probably through – probably run down to Jail Lane and run up to the railroad track and down the tracks to meet the train at the station. That was always the way I used to go to meet him or to take the train myself if I had occasion to. A little quicker than going all the way down to Railroad Avenue in the Village and up to the station. The station now actually is the Boy – it was moved up to the end of Jail Lane and made into the Boy Scout headquarters. I'm not sure if it still is or not. But at any rate, that's where he would take the train.

WS: So he would attend school in the town of Sandwich?

MHC: Right. I suppose there was some arrangement between the towns. I think most of – I think the boys from this side of the Cape – the boys and girls – would do that, go into Sandwich. He grew up with people like Thornton Burgess, the author of many delightful children's books, and also with Thornton Jenkins, who became quite a distinguished Massachusetts educator who was headmaster or principal of the Malden High School for quite many years. He used to write Latin textbooks with Professor Kittredge. So there were a couple of men that he knew and always kept up with after his high school years.

WS: So, did he leave the Cape as a young man?

MHC: Then he went to Boston, as almost all of the ambitious young men did. He went to law school, of course, and first – curiously enough, going directly into law school. He never went to college at all. It seems to have been possible to do that in 1890, which would be about when he went up to enter law school, perhaps '89. He went to law school, and then he practiced law in Boston all his life, first as a – for a time, he was a partner, or he joined with my mother's brothers, Joseph Henry Beale and Arthur M. Beale, both of whom were lawyers. They had a – actually, they had a small office down here in the village, but I think they only staffed it during the summer, perhaps. They also were in Boston, too, for a very few years. Joseph Henry Beale, my uncle, became a professor at the Harvard Law School, and my uncle Arthur went in as a lawyer for himself, as did my father afterward.

WS: These boys were all raised on the Cape?

MHC: My mother's brothers grew up in Dorchester and went, I suppose, to Dorchester High School. I don't even know that. No, they went to Chauncy Hall, which was a boys' school in Boston then. That's right. I'd forgotten that. Then I think they both went to Harvard.

WS: Well, how many brothers did your father have on the Cape?

MHC: My father had no brothers or sisters. He was an only child. I began talking about my mother's family to show that they were – it was close-knit, and my father was welcomed into my mother's family, or vice-versa.

WS: Well, he was quite active on the Cape here.

MHC: Yes, he always remained very much attached to Barnstable, and he inherited – he and his cousin inherited the house, Packet Mail, and then I think there was an arrangement. He bought my cousin out, or his cousin out, and owned the house from then on and did quite a lot to it, to enlarge it a bit.

WS: He would spend his summers?

MHC: He would come for the summers. He himself would not be here all summer long. He would take usually a couple of weeks' vacation. But usually, he would come out every weekend, while my mother and I would stay here from June to September. He would take the train down every Friday and go back on Monday morning.

WS: Then he would walk to the house?

MHC: Yes. Exactly the same way.

WS: Even in foul weather?

MHC: Oh, I guess so.

WS: Well, he was quite the inventor, wasn't he?

MHC: Well, he did have some interesting ideas. One of the things that he was most afraid of was the possibility of the house being broken into because – since not only had my great-grandfather lived in the house, but my great-uncle had inherited it from his father and had lived in it for many years while my father was younger when my father was just a boy or even before – this great uncle, Frank Hinckley, was a sea captain. He would go to India or to the East Indies or to China for voyage after voyage, and he brought back a great many things which my father thought were very valuable. In point of fact, I know that they were not necessarily works of art, but they were the kind of Chinese souvenirs that one can see in almost any seafaring family: pottery, vases, china ornaments, and pottery garden ornaments, seats and flower pots, and the like, as well as dinner services of rose medallion china – we had one of those – and all that kind of thing, which of course by the time I was growing up, was already – they were already antiques. Anyway, my father knew that they had a certain monetary value, especially if anybody broke in and carried them off and sold them.

WS: He was quite concerned, even at this time –

MHC: Yes.

WS: – with breaking and entering on the Cape?

MHC: Yes, the danger apparently has been long established. One of the things that he thought was that it was a poor policy to allow anybody to come and look in the windows and see what

was inside because you could easily spot old furniture or antiques of various kinds. The Cape did – there was a habit here on the Cape of people putting up newspapers in their windows when they went away, so nobody could look in. But that seemed to him almost an advertisement that the house was empty. So he devised these – oh, I can't remember what we called them – in any case, they were sheets of very heavy, very heavy cardboard, almost like wallboard, which he had cut to fit each window, from the sill to about three-quarters of the way up. He had the window frames fitted with clips so that they could hold these screens, these heavy cardboard screens. Then he had the screens painted dark, matte black.

[Recording paused.]

WS: We were discussing the invention of the –

MHC: The invention of the screens for the windows, yes. I was saying that he had them painted matte black because if you looked at – as anyone looked in from the outside, say from the street to the house, one would see only the black windows, which looked as though nothing was there. But if someone ill-intentioned went up to try to look through the windows, he would find himself foiled, to say the least. So my father felt a little safer about that, and the result was that we would spend about an hour every Friday, and another hour every Sunday, taking the screens down for the weekend and putting them up again before we went away.

WS: Was the house ever broken into?

MHC: No. [laughter]

WS: Oh, wonderful.

MHC: Not yet. I don't put the screens up anymore. Well, the house has been occupied by tenants or by me for a number of years now.

WS: Wonderful. Well, your father told a story about the neighbors here.

MHC: Oh, yes. Well, being a lawyer, he was often consulted by people in the village, and he also felt himself a bit in the position of telling people really what they should do, whether or not he was consulted. In fact, he was quite famous for this. One day, he used to – always laughed at himself or at other people in a very cheerful manner, and not at all with any ill will – but he used to tell one story about a man who was one of a very large family of several brothers, each of whom had their own families and households, but who all lived together in a very small area just below the Allyn House, therefore quite close to Packet Mail. These were rather shiftless people, who tended not to be very sensible about the money they made, or the lives they lived, and my father was rather given to telling them so. One day, he spotted one of these brothers, who I must say was perhaps the least unthrifty or thriftless of all of them, but he found him bowling along the road in front of the house with a new horse and a wagon. It wasn't exactly bowling, but anyway, he had a horse and a small wagon and what looked like a very good turnout. My father, who knew he really didn't have a steady job, certainly not one that would require this, stepped out and said, "Frank, what have you got a horse and a wagon for? What do you need that for?"

Frank just looked my father in the eye and said, “Well, it’s very handy to go get hay and grain with.” My father was [inaudible]. [laughter]

WS: Well, you had some other interesting neighbors. You had the (Harrises?)?

MHC: Right.

WS: Where were they located?

MHC: Well, they lived next door to Packet Mail, and it was said that the brother and sister built the two houses. In other words, my great-grandfather Matthias built our house, and his sister Polly is supposed to have married Jabez Nye – or did marry Jabez Nye, and they built the house next door. It’s a little different shape architecturally, but it’s very similar motifs and layout inside actually, too, so it’s very likely that the two houses were built about the same time. Polly and her husband Jabez apparently were given to saying exactly what they thought in very few words, and their descendants, my cousins who lived next door while I was growing up, used to tell stories like Jabez reminding Polly that they hadn’t had gingerbread for a while, and couldn’t they have gingerbread for supper. Polly produced the gingerbread, and they sat down, and Jabez took a piece and looked at it and said, “Butter, Polly?” Polly said, “Good enough without, Jabez.” Jabez looked at her again and looked at the gingerbread, and said, “Better with, Polly.” Also, I think it was about Polly that the story was told that one night when they had company, perhaps for supper or perhaps after supper, and the company stayed a fairly long time – it probably wasn’t much after nine o’clock – they overstayed their welcome a bit. Polly took care of that very easily by simply saying, very politely, to her husband, “Jabez, let us go to bed and let these good people go home.”

WS: Well, could you tell us about other people in the village?

MHC: Well, let’s see. Diagonally across from Packet Mail was a very, very neat house owned by a Finnish carpenter named John Polto, a man with many children, most of whom grew up to become very leading citizens indeed. Then, next to that was a nice old house where the gardener of one of the big summer cottages that was built around 1900 or so lived, and he and his wife were English.

WS: What’s the summer cottage that he worked in?

MHC: Where was it, or what was it?

WS: What was it? Or where was it?

MHC: Well, I’m trying to think. Priests. It was down the long driveway, which is now labeled Windsong, led to it. It was a rather big sprawling house on the hill built on the ridge overlooking the harbor. One of the earliest of the big summer houses, built – and built just for summer – and I think it was built by some people named (Astley?), and then it was owned by the Priests. The Priests’ gardener used to – Mr. Frances used to take care of. Mrs. Frances used to bake bread

twice a week, and all of the children along the street would be sent to buy Mrs. Frances's bread. She's the only one I ever knew who made shredded wheat bread.

WS: Shredded wheat bread?

MHC: Shredded wheat bread, which was absolutely delicious. Very like what developed into Anadama.

[Recording paused.]

WS: We were discussing the members of the Barnstable community.

MHC: Like, in our neighborhood, there was also, just below the Franceses of bread fame, there was a family of Mrs. Hartwell and her daughter, Mildred Hartwell. Mildred Hartwell had been engaged to a young man who had polio just after they got engaged. He was in a wheelchair, and he refused to have them get married because he was crippled. But he used to come and spend almost every summer with the Hartwells. He eventually, I think, came to live here with them. He was a cobbler and very good person to repair –

WS: What year was this?

MHC: Oh, this would have been around 1920, '21 – in the '20s. One thing he did, which was a delightful thing – he published a small newspaper called the Pond Village News. He used to type it, and then it would come to us, several typed sheets, in that purple ink, in that old manner of duplicating. I don't know what it was called, but I think you spread your copy out on gelatin, and somehow, it came off purple, but it was an early form of duplicating. Quite a far cry from a Xerox, but that same idea. So a great many of us used to subscribe to the Pond Village News, which I think cost twenty-five cents a year or something. It would come out at intervals and would describe what was going on in the neighborhood, who had played bridge with whom, what church supper had been held, and things like that. It was quite fun. There's still a few copies of those around.

WS: Would this just be the Village of Barnstable?

MHC: It would just be Pond Village. It was just our neighborhood, just the people that this man knew within half a mile perhaps of his – of the house, and it consisted mainly of the – we'll say from the Harrises whom I've already spoken of, up to the Seaburys at the other side, which was barely a quarter of a mile.

WS: What was Pond Village?

MHC: Well, it was the old name for this particular locality, sort of taking it from –

WS: Section of the Village of Barnstable.

MHC: Section of the Village of Barnstable, yes.

WS: Do you know how it got the name?

MHC: Well, just because it was the houses around Great Pond. Sometimes called Great Pond, sometimes called Coggins Pond, sometimes called Hinckley Pond, but it's the same pond, down here, between my house and the railroad track. Right, you can see here. The houses that grew up around it were called Pond Village. It is supposed to have been the first – the place where the very first houses were settled, but it wasn't – it had nothing to do with the Pond Village name.

WS: I see. So he'd put out this newspaper about the local Pond Village news.

MHC: Very local. Very local. It was almost like one of those children's papers that sometimes children get out.

WS: But it had advertising?

MHC: No, I don't – it was just a column. Just a column of chat, of news of the people, the neighbors.

WS: Wonderful.

MHC: What a wonderful thing.

WS: Yes.

MHC: That reflects a life, very long gone, of going to people's houses for supper or taking rides in the car. Some people used to – he was able to get out in their cars, and people would drive him around and people dropping in to bring food or exchange pleasant greetings.

WS: Did he live alone?

MHC: No, he lived with this – with his fiancée, as it were, and her mother. But they were – when I knew them, they were – well, they must have been – they were both in their fifties, and the mother was eighty-some.

WS: But they weren't married.

MHC: No, he never would marry her, apparently, because he didn't think it was right for her to marry a cripple. I think maybe she would have been willing to.

WS: What was her official title in the house?

MHC: I don't know. I never asked.

WS: How would he introduce her? Do you remember that?

MHC: Well, he was the guest. He was always the boarder, as it were.

WS: Oh, I see.

MHC: It wasn't his house. It was their house. It was her house or her mother's house.

WS: So he would be referred to as the boarder?

MHC: I think so. That was a fairly common practice in any case, quite apart from this more friendly relationship that they had, but a great many single women or family of women would take in a boarder. It might be an old woman; it might be an old man, or it might be a middle-aged man. But nobody thought anything about it. This was a way of making ends meet, actually.

WS: I see.

MHC: Pooling resources, as it were.

WS: Well, would this be a type of living together relationship, as we refer to it today, or was it – ?

MHC: Oh, no. No.

WS: No?

MHC: It wouldn't be that. No.

WS: It would be a business relationship.

MHC: It was purely a business relationship. I'm quite sure. I don't think – I don't think I'm mistaken about it. I could be wrong, but I don't think so.

WS: Well, let's talk about your activities as a girl on the Cape.

MHC: I was here all summer.

WS: And specifically in the Village of Barnstable.

MHC: Yes, well, there would be – in the summer, there would be – well, of course, a lot to do with the water. As I grew up and learned to swim, I'd be – I would go swimming nearly every day and sometimes sailing. We did have a boat for a time, a sailboat, and my friends would sail. My uncle taught me how to sail.

WS: What type of boats did you learn to sail?

MHC: Well, I learned in a very unfortunately large and tippy boat called a – it was practically a canoe – but it happened to be one of a class of boats that people in Barnstable were anxious to establish here as a class, and so several of my father’s friends, or the fathers of my friends, bought them, and so did my father. They were called Rainbows; they were German boats. But of course, soon after that, they began buying – people began getting Baybirds and now Beetlecats and other kinds of boats that children learned to sail in.

WS: They were very heavy iron –?

MHC: The Rainbow boats were really awfully hard to handle for anybody except a man or a couple of boys because the centerboard was of iron and the rudder was of iron, and it took all you had to haul them up or to set them in to attach the rudder. They were Marconi-rigged with a mast that looked as big as a redwood tree to me. They were very fast but, as I say, rather tricky to sail.

WS: Where would you sail with them?

MHC: The present yacht club, Barnstable Yacht Club, which is, as you may or may not know, a very simple sort of club now. It was at that time even simpler, and it was called the Pier. It actually was the Beale Pier because my grandfather on the other side, my mother’s father, Joseph Henry Beale, owned a good – had bought up a good deal of land when he began coming here in the summer. He bought up land, including the present where the club is now, quite a lot more land. He built a bathhouse, which was simply a boathouse to store a boat in, with little cubicles on the side; I think there were six or eight of them, mostly to accommodate his rather large family and their friends. Then eventually, that was – he built a pier, a small pier, on a float. Eventually, it was incorporated first as the Pier Association and then finally as the Barnstable Yacht Club. This was on the edge of the harbor with its entrance, which is now called Beale Way, the road leading down to it. That was – when I was in my teens – where I always swam and sailed with other girls my age. There weren’t many boys, but there were several girls. When I was a child, before that – before I really wanted to be with people my own age, I would go down, my father and mother and I, down through our own fields and to our own boathouse on the edge of the harbor and swim there. I barely remember that because that was when I was quite small.

WS: Well, other activities were –

MHC: Then, of course, I was – as a young child, I spent a lot of time roaming around in these fields because, at that time, almost all the land between – in many cases on both sides of the road, but particularly between the present 6A and the harbor, they were all hayfields if they weren’t gardens for truck farming, they’d be mainly hayfields. They were all open so that you could have a very extensive view everywhere. [inaudible]

WS: Well, you would arrive on the train?

MHC: Yes. We would come for – I lived with – we spent the winters in Dedham when I was a child and Boston when I was a teenager. We always came by train. In the case of coming from

Dedham, we had four changes of – not the MTA [Metropolitan Transportation Authority], but there were two trolley cars and an elevated train – two elevated trains to get to the South Station and come by train from there.

WS: How long a ride would it be by train to Barnstable?

MHC: I can't remember exactly. I think it would be about probably a couple of hours because they stopped everywhere.

WS: How would you get from the station to your home here on Main Street?

MHC: Oh, there was always someone who met the station. Let's see. The man I remember was Freeman Ellis, and he had a rickety taxicab. I don't think I quite remember Cyrus Smith, who was very famous for this, because he had a horse and a wagon with benches which would hold six or eight people, but I only remember the automobile that Freeman Ellis had.

WS: The taxi?

MHC: Yes.

WS: Would he have a set fee, or did he have a meter?

MHC: Oh, he didn't have a meter. I have no idea what my father paid him. Probably as much as a dollar, perhaps. I don't know. But you could always get him to come and pick you up from the train. He would always be at the station to meet every train.

WS: How would you get around on the Cape?

MHC: Well, sometimes we would take a train if we had to go to Sandwich in order to pay a visit or something like that; we might go by train. Mostly I remember riding, as it was called then, in an automobile belonging to one or another of my parent's friends. It was a very favorite pastime. Let's see, we are now in the very early '20s or late – I can just barely begin to remember, about 1920 or so. So, say from '20 to '25 or '26. I would often go, perhaps with my mother and friends of hers, in an afternoon. Perhaps they would go for luncheon at some tea house, or they would go for afternoon tea at a place like the Sign of the Motorcar in Dennis, which was on the bank looking over Scargo Lake. Very favorite place for tea. We used to go there and have tea afterward with – all I can remember is having tea and cinnamon toast, although I assume there were other things to eat, but I can't remember anything but cinnamon toast. Or they might go to luncheon at the Old Thatcher House or the Old Mill Restaurant in Sandwich, which was another very favorite place to go.

WS: The Old Mill in Sandwich?

MHC: The Old Mill, yes.

WS: Where is that located? Or is it still there today?

MHC: Well, it's still there. It's at the old mill at the edge of Shawme Lake, just as you – when you are driving through Sandwich, and the mill is right behind and beside the town. On Main Street.

WS: Is it the same building today?

MHC: It's the same building, but when I was growing up, there was a very enterprising, very pleasant person named Harvey, Mrs. Harvey, who ran a very nice tea house, really. I don't remember that she had lunch or not. Tea was very important, and there were tables out on the stone terrace above the mill race. So we would do that. Sometimes they would –

WS: When you say tea – excuse me. When you had tea, it would be a very light lunch. Or would you go for meals there also?

MHC: I think they would be meal – there would be luncheon served. I doubt if it were – there were any dinners – but it would – luncheon might be from twelve to two perhaps, or at a suitable time, but the teas would be from half past three to five or something like that. It really would literally be tea and small sandwiches or, as I say, toast and slices of cake or something like that. People didn't worry very much about eating too much.

WS: Do you remember them being crowded or a small turnout at the tearoom?

MHC: Oh, I don't imagine there were more than perhaps ten or twelve tables in these places.

WS: So they would be very small places.

MHC: A very small place. There might well be – I don't even know whether we reserved places ahead. Probably we did, or my mother did. But they would entertain sometimes there. They would invite their friends to go to tea. It would be like having people at your own house for lunch or things as a way of entertaining.

WS: What other activities would you do on these rides?

MHC: Oh, well, the women would often go antique shopping. There were several antique places along – antique shops along 6A and also across the Cape. I can't remember actually where any of them were, except I know there were several in Sandwich because of the Sandwich glass, which attracted my mother, for instance. She used to collect cup plates, which you probably know what they are.

[Recording paused]

WS: Well, we were talking about the great summer activity of riding on the Cape.

MHC: Yes. Of course, this would not normally be done by the children so much as by the adults, but because I was an only child, I would go along with my mother, and we would go, as I

say, out to tea or lunch sometimes, and otherwise antiquing or perhaps going to see somebody's garden, or somebody's – we would go to see something that happened that was very much in the news, like the time a school of black fish came ashore in Brewster and these poor creatures were stranded on the beach. Everybody wanted to go see them. That was a rather nasty sight, but we went. And I think that was in the winter, actually, one of the weekends we were down here. Another winter weekend I remember was an eclipse of the sun that I think could only be seen in Woods Hole. That was the edge of the shadow. And I remember going over very, very early on a very cold day and seeing this actually – seeing the eclipse of the sun. I don't think it was a total eclipse, but it was enough to be very clearly visible. I remember smoking a glass, holding a sheet or pane of glass over a candle to get it all smoked, and then carrying it carefully, although I understand that wasn't – it wasn't very healthy to do that, but we did it.

WS: Yes. You'd also traveled to –

MHC: Then we'd see, as I say, see various gardens, like somebody's rose garden, or there was a Japanese garden, I remember, in Cotuit, I think, that was quite famous. One would go over, usually being introduced by a friend of some sort, or going to see the azaleas along Bumps River Road that were very famous at a certain time in the spring.

WS: Bumps River in Osterville?

MHC: In Osterville, yes. Again, this was all what we did while we were riding, as it were. Although we didn't – my family never had a car. We always were very fortunate in being invited to go ride with these other adults who did. As I grew up a little more, my cousins and I would do another kind of ride, and we would go over to Hyannis and sit on the main – park right on the main street, and nobody thought anything about it. We usually just sat in the car and watched people walk by, and we were not molested in any way.

WS: This would have been in the summers?

MHC: This would be in the summer usually, probably summer afternoon, and I would have been about twelve and my cousins about fifteen and sixteen. We went over in a green Ford roadster with a rumble seat. [laughter] That was all. It was perfectly harmless.

WS: Where would you park on Main Street? What section of town?

MHC: I remember about in the middle, or it may have been up toward the west end, where the more fashionable shops were. Hyannis being, of course, very different now, but there were a number of small shops, mostly. Mostly separate and not big box stores as they are now.

WS: What type of shops were there in town?

MHC: Well, there was, say, a branch of Filene's, and there was a shop of Best's clothes, children's and women's clothes. There was Pearlstein's on the corner, where Haskell's is now.

WS: What did they sell?

MHC: They sold clothes. It was sort of dry goods and clothes. Mrs. Pearlstein had graduated into that corner store from a cart that she used to travel in and stop and sell at people's houses along the way. For a number of summers, she came and sold ladies' – sold the ladies' notions.

WS: This would be on Main Street in Hyannis.

MHC: No, this would have been – she used to come through here in Barnstable.

WS: Oh.

MHC: Like so many people that sold from door-to-door. Then eventually, apparently, she made so much money that she opened her own store in Hyannis.

WS: This was when you were a little girl?

MHC: This was when I was a little girl. I can still remember. I remember her coming to the house, and then I remember when the store was built. Which – although it was a long time ago – it must have been about 1921 or '22 or something.

WS: I see. So she would visit basically the summer people –

MHC: She was a peddler, to begin with.

WS: She then established a shop named what?

MHC: No, that was her – it was her name, Pearlstein's.

WS: Pearlstein?

MHC: Pearlstein's.

WS: In the west end of Hyannis?

MHC: Well, this was on the corner of the Hyannis – of the Barnstable Road, right opposite the Idle Hour Theater, where we also sometimes went to the movie theater.

WS: Well, you had some other people in Barnstable here. Grace Sawyer played quite an important role.

MHC: Oh, yes. Grace Sawyer used to come to the house nearly every week in the summer to help us do – to help with – or to do the laundry. Then I can't remember whether she'd do the laundry in the morning and iron in the afternoon. I think so. That was perfectly possible; she would hang out the clothes in the clothes yard. She wouldn't come if it was raining, I'm sure. She would take the train from Yarmouth because she lived in a little house very near the station there in Yarmouth, and she'd take the train, get off at Barnstable, and come up. She was very,

very short, and she was part – she was always claimed that she was mainly Indian, but she probably had some Negro and some Portuguese blood, perhaps, in her. She was not a very – she was not beautiful by any means, but she was a perfectly delightful little person when I knew her. I suppose she was in her – perhaps in her fifties because she died not too long ago, and I know she lived to a very old age. But she would come to talk all the time, so I can just remember hearing her voice go on and on and on and on. She would wash the clothes first in what was always referred to as the laundry, which was the shed behind the kitchen of Packet Mail in what we called set tubs of soapstone. And she would scrub them on a scrubbing board and then take them out and hang them on the line in the backyard.

WS: How would she get her hot water?

MHC: We had a copper boiler, a hot water boiler, in the kitchen, which was heated from the stove, I think. To tell you the truth, I'm not absolutely sure. She probably also heated supplementary water out on top of the stove. I know in this house, the only hot water for a long time was that which was heated on top of the stove in the kitchen. But in Packet Mail, I think we had a boiler. Oh, I know, the coils, yes. The water ran through the stove in the tube. A very small pipe ran around the firebox in the kitchen stove, and that heated it.

WS: I see. So she would –?

MHC: So, Grace would come and do the laundry, as I say, in the morning and then iron in the afternoon. I think we always had an electric iron. I never remember the house, Packet Mail, without electricity.

WS: Well, she would do this for a living with other people –

MHC: Yes.

WS: – when she came down here?

MHC: That's right.

WS: The next day, she would visit other people in the Village of Barnstable.

MHC: Yes, I think so. Because I can remember Mother talking with her friends about what Grace had said, or Grace was full of stories, which I can't remember any of, I'm sorry to say.

WS: The telephone would play quite an important role in the community.

MHC: Well, yes, because – at least for my mother, who had no car, she had to order all of her food, all her groceries by telephone, and of course, she would also talk to her friends. They were always calling up about bridge parties or taking rides and whatnot. But she would always call her order in, in the early morning, to Fisk's Store, which – Fisk was up in West Barnstable and was a very nice man. She would order things like a pound of tub butter, flour, sugar, and milk and that sort of thing. Mr. Fisk then would deliver them, and I think he delivered every day, as I

remember it. Otherwise, you were simply waiting for people to come along, like the butcher with meat, the fish man with fish, or the vegetable man with vegetables.

WS: Throughout the town?

MHC: Throughout the town, yes.

WS: They would deliver right to the door.

MHC: Right, right. I don't think I really remember a horse – yes, I do remember a horse and cart, I think, for the vegetables. But Mr. (Coburn?), the butcher, had a very fancy butcher truck – meat truck.

WS: Can you describe that to me?

MHC: Oh, it was closed in with a flap in the back or a gate that let down. There was a hole from underneath. He simply raised it up –

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Molly Graham 10/15/2022