

Renee Magriel: This tape recording is the property of Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated, and may not be reproduced in any manner without written permission from the Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated. November 14, 1977. I'm in the home of Dr. Carlton Crosby on Orleans-Harwich Road in East Harwich. Can you tell me what your earliest memories are of the Cape?

Carlton Crosby: Well, shut it off. [inaudible]

RM: It's pretty good.

CC: It was said that I was first brought to the Cape at the age of six months. Whether this be true or not, I certainly have been a long-time visitor to the narrow land, and my remembrances cover a period of more than seventy years. Early rising, I'd catch the 7:30 train from South Station in Boston, the arrival at Buzzard Bay, where a kindly man wearing a handlebar mustache came aboard the train to sell fresh donuts while we waited to be detached from the cars that were going over the Woods Hole branch. We were shortly headed down the Cape, the next stop of importance to us being Harwich. Excitement grew as we waited here briefly to be transferred to the Chatham branch if the summer schedule was not in effect. This was the last ten to twelve miles of the hundred-odd-mile journey from Boston. As we puffed through the woods, rounded familiar curves, and increasingly sensed our approach toward the sea, we knew that South Chatham, our destination, was close at hand. We arrived about 11:15, before noon. As always, there patiently waiting was Mr. (Emmons?) and the mail team, his ancient white horse drawn up by the station platform. The conveyance, termed a carry-all, I believe, was a curious coach designed for all-weather service. It was not the best [inaudible] in the world. Tightly buttoned in on all sides, fair weather or foul, one's view was limited to what might be seen directly ahead. Mr. (Hiram Emmons Nickerson?), better known as Mr. Emmons, being a man of few words, offered a bit of a problem to get from him the news of local interest that had happened since we last visited the Cape. It must be understood that these were the days before the automobile and before between-season trips to the Cape were easily accomplished. No, sir. Back in the early 1900s, when the Cape house was closed in September, it remained closed until late May or early June the following year. Then possibly, Father, Uncle Ben, and I would come down for a long weekend to mow the grass and sweep out dead hornets upstairs and, in general, correct any winter ravages. It was an exciting time for a youngster of seven or eight years. So many things to rediscover. There were summertime friends who were native Cape Codders to contact and the shore to visit. A little early for barefoot operation, but just think, in less than a month, school would be dismissed, and the family moving to East Harwich house for the long summer vacation. Long, so it seemed then, summer did not seem – excuse me – summer did seem long in those days. Really endless. What a difference the passage of time into adulthood does make in one's perception of time flight. Summer arrives, July Fourth has come and gone, and as Mother often said, "Summer is gone now that the Fourth has passed." In a way, Mother was correct. As the season seemed to burst forth on the famous holiday, then comes Labor Day. Before we realize it, school is about to open, and the grand exodus back to the city begins. Arriving the last of June, always the day after school closed, I hastened to shed my shoes and stockings, not to be worn again except for church socials and the like until the dreaded return to the city and school in the fall. The first week may have been a bit of agony, but the soles of my feet [inaudible] rapidly. Soon, I could run across newly mowed hay stubble with ease, then undress was also the order of the day, usually consisting of a pair of short khaki pants and a

sleeveless jersey. As I recall those summer days, another thing impresses me. We were never ill. Winter was devoted to fighting repeated colds and sometimes double bronchitis, which at times, I'm sure, drove both our parents and our kindly family physician to despair, were replaced by a summer season of complete health. Neither wet bathing suits nor the elements, in general, appear to have had any ill effect. In those days, we had not heard of vitamins. It was undoubtedly the combination of abundant sunshine, fresh vegetables, fresh milk, clean air to breathe that turned the trick. I sometimes wonder whether I should have reached adult life without these health-reviving interludes on Cape Cod.

RM: Just a minute.

CC: What did we do for entertainment? What didn't we do, may be better asked. I am amazed that the youngsters of the present era are so easily bored and have to be constantly entertained. Those summer days on Pleasant Bay were completely occupied. Indian raids by our ferocious tribe and camp house on the beach in nearby woods. There was also berry picking, never too popular as it smacked somewhat of work. And, of course, swimming and boating at the nearby shore. Heavens, the days were not long enough to do all the things that we had in mind. When the weather was uncooperative, the gang retired to what was always referred to as the "open chamber." This was a more or less spacious area on the second floor of our old Cape home, built in 1819. I was fortunate enough to own a miniature electric train, and I expect, I am sure, that I was the envy of all the local children who came in to play with us city slickers. Anyway, I never recall anyone being bored. As I look back with fond recollections, it was indeed a golden era of childhood, free from care and worry, and for which I have my parents to thank.

Surely, Father put in some periods of concern when we were playing around the shore. I would spot him sitting on the edge of the bank, quite unobtrusively watching our activities. We all did survive, grew to manhood, developed our own concerns and worries, and so are able to look back with a better appreciation of what our fathers, mothers, and various loving aunts endured. [Recording paused.]

RM: Before, when you were talking, you mentioned that your grandfather was Albert Crosby's cousin.

CC: Yes.

RM: And he was from Brewster?

CC: Yes.

RM: Do you remember going to that house and meeting Mr. Crosby?

CC: I remember going to visit Cousin Albert in Brewster with my aunt and mother. I was very young, but I remember him being such a dignified gentleman. And Mr. Frank Horgan took that property over a number of years ago and turned it into a restaurant called the Gold Coast Restaurant. He did a fabulous job of refurbishing the place, and I was over there to dinner with an aunt who remembered Albert Crosby, and Mr. Horgan spoke to us. He said, "I found a photograph up in the attic when we were cleaning up the place, and I'd like to have your aunt

identify it.” He brought it out, and it was a picture of Albert Crosby, and I could remember how he looked.

RM: Do you know when he passed away?

CC: I have no idea when he passed away, but the property came into the hands of his daughters. He has two daughters who lived in the Midwest somewhere, and they sold it.

RM: So it passed out of the Crosby family?

CC: Yes.

RM: Do you know anything about your ancestors in Brewster? What was your grandfather’s name?

CC: Josiah Crosby.

RM: Josiah Crosby?

CC: I’ve never been able to find Grandfather’s grave. In the old Brewster cemetery where the Albert Crosby lot is, there's quite a lot of stones there. I found the gravestone of Grandfather's grandfather, who was also Josiah Crosby. But Grandfather died a comparatively young man, I guess because I never knew him, and Grandmother Crosby lived for years and years after that. So it’s very possible that he passed away at some place down the coast, you know, where he was working. In those days, it wasn’t so easy to transport remains, so he could be buried almost anywhere.

RM: Do you know what he did for a living?

CC: He was a ship’s fitter.

RM: A ship’s fitter?

CC: Yes.

RM: And that was installing? Or outfitting?

CC: Well, it was when they built sailing ships, they had to be rigged and caulked, and all of the [inaudible] ship’s fitting.

RM: I see. Did you know your grandmother?

CC: Oh yes, Grandmother – father’s mother – very well.

RM: What was her name?

CC: Cynthia.

RM: Cynthia?

CC: Cynthia Crosby. Cynthia Hayden Crosby. She was a Hayden who came from Orleans. She had two brothers who lived in Orleans I used to visit as a youngster. Uncle Caleb Hayden and Freeman Hayden.

RM: Do you remember the brothers at all – Caleb and Freeman Hayden – and what they did for a living?

CC: Freeman? Uncle Freeman and [inaudible]? [Recording paused.] Oh, yes, that was one of our pilgrimages in the old days. Of course, we had to travel by horse and wagon to go down to Orleans to visit Uncle Caleb and Uncle Freeman. They lived side by side. Uncle Caleb was a skipper to a Banks fishing schooner, and when Father was quite young, he went to sea with Uncle Caleb as his cook, I think.

RM: Do you know the name of the ship?

CC: No, I have no idea. Just [inaudible] schooners, these small ships.

RM: What about Uncle Freeman?

CC: Well, I don't know much about him. I suppose he followed the sea some too, but he was, of course, an elderly man when I just was there in Orleans. They all worked around the shore. I think they had lobster pots and things like that.

RM: Can you remember your grandmother? You said you knew her.

CC: Oh, yes. I knew my grandmother Cynthia Crosby very well.

RM: What was she like? How did she spend her time?

CC: Well, she lived with my youngest aunt, Aunt Elizabeth, who taught school in Lynn, and they lived in Lynn.

RM: I see.

CC: We used to go down there and visit them sometimes. But she was a widow for a great many years and managed to bring up the family.

RM: What was it like when you were spending your summers here on the Cape when you were young? You were a young boy.

CC: Yes.

RM: How did your parents spend their time? What did they do?

CC: Well, we didn't go far abroad in those days very much. As I say, when we went to Orleans and then we had the relatives in East Dennis, we had to hitch up the horse and wagon, which was quite a chore in those days. It's not like it is now where you hop in the car and go to Orleans and Chatham and around. So we stayed around here pretty much. Mother was interested in local things, the church, and she knew some women around here, so there was some social life. But most of the social life revolved around the church.

RM: So, East Harwich as an area was very distinct from, say, Harwich Port?

CC: Oh, yes. In those days, it was. You just didn't travel that much. I can hardly remember going to Chatham as a child until later years when I got old enough to go to dances and things like that, but we just didn't travel far, that's all. There seemed to be enough to take up our minds around here.

RM: Did you know any old-timers when you were growing up? Were there any people who lived around here [inaudible]?

CC: Well, yeah. As of now, well, the country is full of old-timers, but we took them more or less for granted. I mean, we didn't – of course, as a youngster, I wasn't particularly interested in history, and so we never talked to them or anything. But I remember we had Uncle Freeman Hayden, one of the uncles who lived in Orleans, up here for a visit over one weekend. And I was interested in things electrical, and I was explaining to him about some gadget I was working with. I was only probably around ten years old. When I got through talking, he said, "Ay, he's told me more about electricity than I've ever known before." [laughter]

RM: How did you come to the Cape?

CC: Oh, we came by train; as I said, it was only yearly. Got an early start out of South Station and caught the train about 7:30, and then we got out at South Chatham, which was the nearest railroad station to this part of East Harwich. East Harwich had a so-called mail team that met the train, the mail trains, which came down before noon and again at night and brought the mail over to the East Harwich post office. [Recording paused.]

RM: So the mail –

CC: What was that?

RM: The mail team met the train?

CC: What's that?

RM: That you would be picked up in South Chatham?

CC: We were picked up in South Chatham. The mail team brought over passengers, too, for twenty-five cents a ride and twenty-five cents extra if you had a trunk. And they brought us down to the house here, and here we stayed. Our horse was brought over the road, driven over the road from Brookline. Every spring and would go back in the fall. We had a hired man who drove the horse up.

RM: I see. So that when you got here, you had a horse to use?

CC: Yes.

RM: Was the garage a barn?

CC: Oh, we had a barn here. Yes. A big barn which burned down. A so-called horse barn, where the horses were stabled. Yes, that burned down in 1925, and this garage barn was built.

RM: What sort of carriage did you use?

CC: Well, we had a surrey with a fringe on top. Too bad you can't show pictures in here. [inaudible]

RM: Yes, there it is. Are you in this picture?

CC: No, I'm not in that picture.

RM: You said that you have been a ham operator or radio operator for quite a while.

CC: Oh, I've been a ham operator. I had the – I was first interested in radio when I was in the ninth grade of grammar school. I had my first official license – I got my license in 1912. And then, I was in the Navy in 1918 – 1917, 1918 – as a radio electrician and operator. And then after that, I went to school.

RM: Radio was sort of a new thing then, wasn't it?

CC: Well, of course, it wasn't radio in those days. It was wireless.

RM: What's the difference?

CC: Well, there isn't any difference, but they just called it wireless, that's all. You were a wireless operator, but they had no broadcast in the old days or anything. Matter of fact, in England, they still call it the wireless. The British call it the wireless.

RM: So, you would use the wireless to communicate with other operators.

CC: Yes. Locally. Of course, the distances we covered in those days were just within the city, you might say. Nowadays, the radio communication – amateur communication covers the world. Those were very elemental days as far as wireless was concerned.

RM: What differences do you see in the way that kids are now and the way that you remember your childhood?

CC: Well, as I said in this little piece that I read, I think that it's too bad the kids of today are so easily bored. I mean, they don't seem to be able to entertain themselves as much as we did. I may be wrong, but we had the people coming to the shore to visit, and so on and so forth, and they seem to have to be entertained. When we were down here on the Cape in the summertime, the days weren't long enough to do all the things we wanted to do.

RM: Do you think that you were satisfied with simple things?

CC: Probably that's true. Probably that's true. I mean, they had no movies.

RM: No expensive games?

CC: No place to go. I mean, when you became older and could go to dances and things like that, that's a different story. For smaller youngsters, we had to entertain ourselves. And the family was too busy getting three meals a day and taking care of the house that there wasn't a lot of time for entertaining the children.

RM: How did your parents get their food?

CC: What?

RM: Where did the food come from that they ate?

CC: Oh, that was very simple. There was a grocery man and a baker man, and a butcher man that came periodically every week by the house to sell their goods. The grocery man came on Mondays and took your order and delivered on Wednesdays. Mr. (Fisk?), the meat man, came by every week. And then, of course, there was the fish – the fish salesmen that came by with his team to sell fish, which you could go right down to the shore here and buy fish from the men who went fishing every day. So there was no problem there. We really had no occasion to leave the property except, as I say, on special occasions to visit and things like that.

RM: You said that you visited Brewster with your aunt? What was her name?

CC: Her name was Aunt Elizabeth.

RM: Oh, that was the same one who lived with your grandmother?

CC: Yes.

RM: And was her last name Crosby?

CC: Crosby.

RM: Did she –?

CC: She was a schoolteacher in Lynn for many, many years.

RM: Did she ever marry?

CC: No.

RM: Do you remember any other of your relatives from the Cape? [inaudible]

CC: Well, no, I don't. We didn't have many relatives on the Cape. It was these uncles over in Orleans [who] really were the only ones. The folks that we used to visit in East Dennis were sort of adopted relatives. They weren't real relatives. I always called them uncle and aunt, but they weren't really. They were old-time friends of the family. [inaudible] too many relatives, I think it's safe to say. Immediate relatives, I mean.

RM: You said that this house was built around 1819?

CC: As far as we can tell, it was 1819. It may be older. Mr. Isaac Dillingham – you've heard of the Dillingham House in Brewster, which is a very old and historic place – used to come over here with his wife because she was a patient of mine. He would sit and talk with my former wife about the place. Of course, he was pretty much an authority on old property, and he asked her when it was built, and she said about 1819. And he said, "Oh, no, it's older than that." Well, I think the reason he thought that is because years ago, long before my day, there was another old house that was down back here a ways, and I think that some of the material from that house was put into this property, which would perhaps make some of the things that Mr. Dillingham was looking for appear older than it really was. But oh, given five or ten years, it was 1819. The reason I know – the house was built by Captain Ezra Kendrick, who was Sylvester Kendrick's father. Sylvester Kendrick was my father's uncle by marriage. We know how old the old gentleman was when he died. We know that he went to sea. We know about when he retired, and we assume that when he retired, he built the house. So by the process of figuring it out, we arrived at 1819. Of course, there's no way to identify it exactly because the old, old deeds were lost when the Barnstable County courthouse burned down years and years ago. So it's kind of a guess [inaudible], but it's not far off. Might have been 1800.

RM: Can you describe the house?

CC: Can I describe it?

RM: Yes.

CC: Well, it's a typical Cape Cod farmhouse. They all have got pretty much the same floor plan, with a large chimney in the center and four fireplaces, and then a Dutch oven beside one fireplace. There were three rooms upstairs and an open area, which we always referred to as the open chamber – unfinished. There was a bedroom downstairs, a small room off of the main



living room, which they always called the morning room. I supposed that it was referred to that because it was down here where the house was good and warm, and the children being warm and wanted to be kept comfortable. Then the sitting room on the left side of the house. Plus, since I've lived here permanently, I've made a lot of changes to the house and tried to keep the basic plan undisturbed. But we built on a wing and put a bedroom on the west side and turned the old bedroom into a dining room, put up a partition in the morning room, and made this one the large living room. Upstairs we finished the open part, and we have two bedrooms upstairs. So it's much more of a house than it was in those days.

RM: Yes. What did the kitchen look like when you were –?

CC: Well, when I was a youngster down here when you'd go out of there, what is now the front door here, you went into a porch kitchen. That porch kitchen was attached to the house, probably – oh, probably seventy-five years after it was built because I never remember any kitchen but that and the cookstove out there. Probably in the old, old days before the porch was built on, cooking was done in this room here because there's a fireplace here, and as I said, the Dutch oven on the side and so on and so forth. But I imagine by 1850 or '75, why they built on the porch because that's when cookstoves became popular.

RM: Did you have a well?

CC: We had a well. We had a dug well outside of the kitchen here, and then we had a driven well out in the yard here. That was our main source of water. We still have a well. We don't have town water here now because we have an electric pump for water.

RM: Do you remember when electricity came to the Cape?

CC: Yes. It came to the Cape around 1920. It became available on the Cape because electricity was installed in this house around 1925. The telephone came through the Cape in 1915, somewhere around there.

RM: Is there anything in your mind that stands out in relation to your experiences on the Cape?

CC: Well, nothing in particular. I suggest that you borrow this book and read it.

RM: Okay.

CC: Because the very things you've been asking me are covered in here, and you can either read it on the tape or do what you want to with it. But I just urge you to be sure you get it back to me because it's the only copy I have. Of course, the pictures won't do you any good, I suppose, because they're – [inaudible] for posterity very well – but you take the book and look it over, because the whole story is in there, right from the introduction which I read to you, right through to the conclusion which brings you up to my time of going to school when I went to school.

RM: Thank you.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 10/13/2022