

Betty Richards: Do you remember your grandparents, Mr. Nickerson?

Otto Nickerson: My grandmother.

BR: On which side of the family?

ON: On the Nickerson side.

BR: What was her name?

ON: She was [inaudible] Young Nickerson.

BR: Do you remember what year she was born?

ON: Well, I figured out, she was eighty-eight when I was sixteen. We celebrated and that was the last year that she witnessed celebrating a birthday party for her and for me. I was sixteen and she was eighty-eight.

BR: She was seventy-two years old when you were born? How many were in your family? I How many [inaudible] Nickerson have?

ON: Well, I think she have one, two, three, four...

BR: Now, Youngs are Mayflower descendants. Are they not?

ON: Yes.

BR: Can you tell me how many generations they go back?

ON: Ten or eleven.

BR: Do you remember her telling you anything about her family?

ON: No. I don't recall her talking much about her family. She was often away nursing. She was a practical nurse. In the years after her husband died, she just did that [inaudible] birthing babies into the world. Family wealth was the primary [inaudible] the vessels are made from an old cedar swamp. We'll see the swamp over Cape and cut down the cedar trees. Under those cedars was this wonderful, we hear today, the moss, the sphagnum moss and the survival of [inaudible].

BR: Peat?

ON: Peat moss, cedar swamp. The cedar trees were growing to those size because most were fed by all this good stuff underneath them like today in most places. But then they would cut down the cedar trees so that's the whole thing and then put so much sand right on top. It was beautiful. So, it was pretty wise and then we'll get [inaudible] was to be done by hand because it

meant that they were scattered all around. Then this logger holder [inaudible] the men that will pick the scoops. They had scoops that I think about ten teeth in a scoop in the old-fashioned environment. You see now with the magazines they have them all the way from ten teeth up to sixteen, I think, was about ten rounds as [inaudible] to do it. So, they just stood by and as fast as I filled up a scoop, they will take it to the barrel and pour it in. I filled the barrel in eight minutes which is supposed to be quite a record for that time.

BR: How old were you then?

ON: I was sixteen.

BR: What year did they start using the scoop?

ON: I think back to the first cranberry bogs.

BR: How often did you have to replant it?

ON: They really never were replanted or sanded off. I recalled they were replanted as they were given the care that they had to have. In those days, they did weed and then [inaudible 00:04:20] going around too much. So, many of those bogs [inaudible] nothing but bushes and trees.

BR: Tell me about sanding them.

ON: Sanding was done usually in the winter and there were planks laid down from the sand holes [inaudible] cranberry bogs and shovel the sand and build our own. Then planks were laid to the bog and out on the bog as fast as they went. [inaudible] bog down and someone else's scatter the sand around so they're fairly evenly placed. Although, most of the settling of the sand was done by water in the winter. The bog flows with water most of the time.

BR: [inaudible] flooded?

ON: Flooded, yes. So, many of the bogs were built very close to a palm their size and then when they needed water to hold upon the cranberry bog in the winter, it became a skating area with kids. The water was also handy for a sudden frost in the spring or fall to keep the bog from being frozen. The narrows that was in the fall was very anxious about freezing and in the spring, they blossom in about the first of June. So, we all are very careful about frostbit because it takes months.

BR: After the cranberries are picked and put in the barrels, where were they taken in and how?

ON: One of the barrels were taken into the homes of the people who owed the bogs and there they were poured into screens, as they were called, crosswalks, and the women of the family gather around and sit there and screen them. The barrels were pulled in from the barrels right into the big screen and then the screen was tipped a little bit to constantly run down. In the middle of the screen was a box made and throw all the rotten berries and the dried berries. Then all those equipment have separators, as they were called, which they would pull them first and

that will separate all the dirt, all the twigs, and grass and anything else that had been scooped up with the [inaudible] at the time. They had the regular barrel heads that would fit in the [inaudible] in the crate. Then there's W.W. Benjamin Companies, a very common market boss, in which [inaudible] began to get smaller and smaller.

BR: This was something I meant to ask you about the cranberries. Do you remember spraying them?

ON: Yes, the spraying had to be done at least twice a year sometimes often depending on bugs that were around that time. There was always spraying done in the spring when the plants have the blossoms open. They would spray at that time to keep them. So, at least two sprays, sometimes more depending upon the weather. This might be around that time in those days and probably more bugs and flies and all that sort of thing, so much sprays than we have today.

BR: Did you eat enough cranberries as a child?

ON: No, I don't think we did.

BR: Was your mother a Mayflower descendant?

ON: Yes. [inaudible] My mother was a Rogers.

BR: In this team, there are three of the Mayflower passengers that were buried in the cemetery here. Do you remember if Rogers was your ancestor?

ON: I don't think Roger was the name, no. It's now Hopkins.

BR: Was Hopkins then relative? Well, then you had to pick up all the pupils around different areas of South Carolinians.

ON: They really follow the main roads and children have to walk from the home. If they weren't in a place where they will be picked up.

BR: How many horses do these barges?

ON: Most of them have two.

BR: Pardon?

ON: There was one smaller bus. It used to be called the little bus because it accommodates for a few years so then it's small and there's one horse there.

BR: What were the roads like?

ON: I think sandy and rocky and you know the rest. [inaudible] go in the morning train.

BR: That was high school?

ON: That was our transport. It was in the same building with the [inaudible].

BR: How many years were you there?

ON: Just two.

BR: What did you do after that?

ON: Two years I worked. Then in the meantime, my sister graduated from high school and went to normal school at Hyannis and she encouraged me to come over and take the exams at a normal school with her. She went in the 1950, rather than the 1960.

BR: What do you mean by normal school?

ON: It's a teacher's college. Two of the buildings are still there now in Hyannis. [inaudible]. I taught for three years, and I want to get away so, I taught in [inaudible] for two years. While I was there, I had the chance to go to Newton the next year. So, Newton, I taught there for a year. Then while I was there, the next spring, I went to Eastham committee asking me if I would come back and teach for them. And I said, "Possibly," and didn't know it was less than I would be getting in Newton. I was taking up [inaudible]. I stayed on then for the rest of my teaching.

BR: What year was that that you came back to Eastham to teach?

ON: 1924. They called 1918 and I taught in 1919 and [19]20. That's where I teaches. That was when actually schools had been moved at one time in Eastham at three separate school. One on northeast, one in south, and one in the center. The idea of consolidation or reorganization, as you heard this day, came up. Eastham moved in the south to join this setup. Then the north school joined to center. They put the three of them together and then we have three school buildings.

BR: Do you teach the same grade in the north school?

ON: Yes, I taught the same grades for a number of years until [inaudible] started his junior high school. But before this time, of course, the high school in Eastham has town halls and they started the junior high school idea taking the seventh and eighth grade. They moved from Eastham and then I have just the sixth grade. Well, I was walking down the path toward the berries and perennials and annuals and everything under cultivation in those days.

BR: You had your garden here and cranberries?

ON: There's a college down there. People are still there. They came the 25th of May and they're still there. Up until the day before yesterday, we hadn't had one holy rainy day all summer until that time hoping that the weather will come back to warm the day so they'll be able to be on but they want to stay on as long as they can. I'd like them to enjoy each other.

BR: At one time you worked at some of the camps.

ON: Somewhere in the late teens, I started there. I was there for probably 20 years ago.

BR: What did you do there?

ON: I'm in charge with the dam. They raised all their own vegetables. All the vegetables where everybody can [inaudible] that tried to do. They had their own cattle and most have their own milk. They had their own poultry. They had their eggs and they had their own vegetables. So, it was [inaudible] slope in front of the bunkhouses is what they would call them. It's just one big [inaudible] who took over the camp.

BR: After camp concept?

ON: Yes.

BR: How about Camp Valley?

ON: Camp valley was in between. I went to Camp valley from Camp [inaudible]. I don't think it was five or seven years. I went, too, as a counselor. Then I was the director of the camp for the next five years. When I came home from camp last year, [inaudible] here was running because there's a polio scare in New York City. Parents didn't want the offices coming back and asked as much as the camp to go on for two more weeks. It go on for four more weeks. So, they stayed on. I knew her and she asked me if I would be the counselor for her in those two weeks. She really enjoyed it there so much.

BR: That was in the summer?

ON: Yes, in the summer. I had to work in the summer because I didn't get paid in the summer. Those days, you just submit [inaudible].

BR: Were you married then? You drove back and forth then?

ON: Yeah.

BR: I see. Do you remember any shipwrecks?

ON: Not particularly. On the day, though, you could see that my house is sitting across the bay. It was not so high because in those days, you can see all the other things in between, all the sites we have today. I remember about that was in the paper. The offices of shoes and blueberries, I believe, was a normal thing when it came on the ship and it came ashore. It was supposed to be unloaded and taken to all these depots. The ship [inaudible] area and then come off to the beach. There were several haystacks that have been cut up pretty good and piled up and on the load that hadn't been taken in. So, haystacks become the hiding places for boxes of shoes and old paper and boxes of fruits and all sources for all those loads.

BR: Tell me about the first car you remember.

ON: The first car I remember was the one that [inaudible] had. It was a Buick Roadster with a seat in the back and it goes 20 miles an hour, which in those days, quite a speed. My first car was an old Model T. There's a brand-new Model T, but I bought [inaudible]. I always had the inner tubes times all the times being punctured or at least shot stones or something else along the way. So, it is common occurrence to see cars pulled up in the side of the road somebody driving by saying, "Get a horse. Get a horse."

BR: Tell me about that stretch of road, a pleasant day there, the hill, and the cars used to get stuck in there. How'd you get them out?

ON: As much of the staff as they possibly could on the present-day side to try to make that hill to get over, to get to [inaudible]. Some of them doesn't. Some of them didn't. So, we had to pull the people by the horses and that rig that would come forward [inaudible] pull it back whichever you want to do.

BR: You were in a school system prior a number of years. Can you tell me any stories about that school years ago?

ON: About schoolwork?

BR: When you first started teaching school in Eastham, can you tell me stories about them?

ON: She had the first and second grade. Some years, she had first, second, or third that was in the northeast. He hit the nail on the head when necessary and one of those questions used to be was look out, the wind ceased today. He was more or less on his toes.

BR: What did it mean?

ON: [inaudible]

BR: Yes.

ON: They need to be careful about. It's one of those days where the superintendent came around to see us. Usually, he goes once a week or once every two weeks, at least. He was Lauren G. Williams of [inaudible] in his jurisdiction. [inaudible] That's what you call a real big lunch that she used to make. Potato soup as a special thing which he used to make and sandwiches for Friday and hot cocoa.

BR: What year did they start hot lunch?

ON: Some ladies in town used to come in afterwards started to work on projects and take over things.

BR: The mothers were coming in and make the hot lunch?

ON: Yes.

BR: Who would pay for the hot lunch?

ON: The children, somewhat.

BR: What sort of heat did you have back in the nineteen?

ON: Each room in the old buildings has stove. In the spring and the fall, there is heat or fire from the stove. But as the weather get colder, that's what we wanted. The first one was one of the old, it was called, the old default stove, the old pot boiled stove. Then that was replaced by a fancier looking eco stove, the old eco stove times. [inaudible], the council was supposed to open things up while we get in greeted by "Well, if you want a fire, you can build it." It's warm right at night.

BR: Did they have taxes on the cars like excise tax? Is it called the Nickerson Clan Association?

ON: I think you'd better get it from someone else that's really had more to do with that.

BR: Mr. Nickerson, would you tell me about your hobby, racing squab? How did you get started in it?

ON: I always had pigeons around the hall. I had a field there. then when I got my own place down here, I decided to have some here. So, I kept working on. So, I wanted to get a squab that larger than usual. So, it was crossed and recrossed and swapped, bought, and so forth until I got birds that will produce squabs that had no down on them. Most birds have feathers and then underneath is a down that sometime is very, very hard to get off. [inaudible] on and off. So, they kept on crossing, recrossing the pigeons or others. I had found one or two that had that quality of not having any down on it. Then I cross for size as well because most of them was very small squab and really, in a way, isn't enough for one person. That is enough for a meal for one person. There's meat on the breast and not very much anywhere else. So, I've bred crossed with larger varieties particularly the height kings until I got the birds so that they were they were coming without a down and weighing up, not just palm and a half a piece which is ideal to squab. Most squab are about three-quarter pounds. Finally, I had a flock of 100 pairs doing business [inaudible]. I enjoyed doing it and involves the chance of getting a different one, a new one, or a larger one or some small type of some different color. I had no trouble selling as well. They're expensive.

BR: They are very expensive.

ON: Of course, the other side of that was it tends to be very expensive, too.

BR: They are dark meat. Are they dark meat?

ON: Yes, all of them.

BR: You talked about cross-matching and did you have like a pair that you crossmatch on all the time?

ON: I take a male of one side.

[end of transcript]