

Male Speaker: So, let me just check. Actually, there is a wider angle. Let me just see where the wider angle is.

MS: The second camera.

MS: We see your hands.

MS: We see your hands. In the wider shot, we see your hands.

MS: We have two different cameras here.

Nancy Call: Okay.

MS: Looks good.

NC: Well, I'll turn these around.

MS: Okay. All right. Are we ready?

MS: Yes. We have speed.

MS: I will give you the hard question first. Please say your name and spell it.

NC: Nancy Banning Call.

MS: That is pretty easy.

NC: [laughter]

MS: If you do not mind, may I ask you what year you were born and where you were born?

NC: I was born in Los Angeles in 1925.

MS: Okay. Terrific. Now, we are here to talk about one of the most important men in the history of the harbor, Phineas Banning. Could you tell us what you know about Banning, how he came here, who he was, how he got to Los Angeles, what kind of man he was?

NC: Well, of course, I can't remember him personally. But lots of stories and lots of information have come down through the family. He was a boy from Wilmington, Delaware.

MS: Since you never heard my question, you say, "Phineas Banning was."

NC: Oh, okay. Are you ready for me to do it again? Phineas Banning came from Wilmington, Delaware. When he was, oh, I think about 20, he walked to Philadelphia to work for his brother, William Lowber Banning, in his law office in Philadelphia. I think from the stories that the family tells, that was where he had an opportunity to be at the port there and on the docks and

understood the great importance of transportation across the water, as well as across the land. So, when he had the opportunity, a merchant was coming to the California coast with his merchandise that he would manage – he hoped to sell. Phineas was invited to go along with him as a helper. When they got to San Pedro Bay, it so fascinated – and they came on a ship. It so fascinated Phineas Banning that he decided to stay and not go on up north on the coast. So, he did.

MS: What year are we talking about? You have to say, "Phineas Banning came here."

NC: Oh, Phineas Banning came here in 1851.

MS: From what you have heard or what you have read, this port was not a particularly impressive place. What was the port that he saw when he arrived in 1850s?

NC: Yes. Well, hardly an impressive port, but Phineas Banning saw nothing more than a muddy tide flat. When the ships came, they had to stay in the roadstead off the sea, anchor, and bring their cargoes ashore in lighters of one kind or another. The goods from the community really or the Southern California region, at that time, were mainly hides. They had to be brought down the cliffs and loaded onto canoes and little boats, rowboat types, I would guess, out to the ships. So, when he came, that was all that he saw. But he was a very enterprising individual. With his background in Philadelphia and shipping, he thought that this could be made into a real seaport, a deepwater port that would service the town then, the Pueblo of Los Angeles.

MS: This is great. You are doing [laughter] exactly what we need.

NC: Am I?

MS: Yes.

NC: Oh, good.

MS: Tell us, in 1851, what was this town, this Pueblo of Los Angeles, what was it like? What was here then?

NC: Well, not much. It was...

MS: You have to say, "The Pueblo of Los Angeles."

NC: The Pueblo of Los Angeles wasn't much at the time of Phineas' arrival in Southern California. A few thousand people, some small buildings, dusty roads, and according to Horace Bell, in his book, a wild town too, with lots of shooting and carrying on. But also in that town were some wonderful Spanish, American, Mexican families who had done a great deal in their ranchos in Southern California. But the town wasn't much. But Phineas Banning, like the Yankees often did, visualized the future. He had a vision. He had energy. He had determination.

MS: Now, Los Angeles in 1851, also, for people who do not know their history, had just become – California had just become a state. Los Angeles had just become an American city. If you could tell us that too. Just repeat back what I said.

NC: Now say it again.

MS: Not exactly, but the idea that California had just become a state and Los Angeles had just become...

NC: Oh, was then...

MS: In 1851.

NC: Okay. Of course, at the time that Banning came here, California had just recently become a state. He saw the possibilities and...

MS: That is good.

NC: That enough?

MS: Yes.

NC: He saw the possibilities due to the fact – now, we are going to erase all this, aren't you?

MS: Yes, we edit. That is okay. You can start again. Start from the beginning, "He saw the."

NC: He saw the possibilities with California becoming a state at that time. That was probably one of the reasons he left the ship and the employ of the man who brought him here from the east. Because he felt, with the sea here and with the pueblo – there was some distance in those days. It was just a dusty, flat plane from the water into the pueblo. But he saw the potential.

MS: Now, when he got established here, he started to work with wagons and ground transportation early on. Is that not the case? How did he start to realize his dream?

NC: Well, Phineas Banning's dream, I think, was to be a part of developing a transportation system between the sea and the Pueblo of Los Angeles. He saw that there had to be improvements in this muddy tide flat to get the ships in and not just have to stand out there in the roadstead. But he did that for a while with small vessels that went from the sea-going ships to the shore, these lighters. He also saw that something had to be done between the sea and the pueblo that it couldn't just be the very romantic, picturesque wagons or the *carruajes* with the big wooden wheels. It would have to be something better than that. So, he went into competition with a couple of other stagecoach companies to cover the distance between the harbor and the pueblo. Then he saw the possibilities of fixed rail and the railroad that would go from the sea to the pueblo. It was the combination of – he thought, "We can deepen this muddy tide flat into a deep-water harbor. We can get the cargo more quickly to the pueblo than our competitors if we start a town," which became Wilmington, which was 6 miles closer to the pueblo than was the

San Pedro landing.

MS: Let us go over that again. Talk about the founding of Wilmington. First, that was not its first name. Was it? There was another name for it.

NC: New San Pedro.

MS: Give me that story again about how he founded Wilmington. What is its history?

NC: Well, [laughter], let me see, John. [laughter] What can I say about that? Do you want to give me some clues as to what you want me to say?

MS: As I remember, it was known as East San – how did it get its name?

NC: Well, I think I said about the 6 miles closer. He was in competition to get cargo. He, Phineas Banning, was in competition with a couple of other men who had small companies, (Tims?), Sepúlveda, and some of the other wonderful people. They were all wanting to go the fastest and get to the pueblo the fastest with the cargo. So, he decided that off of this muddy tide flat, there was a location where he could start a little town. It was 6 miles closer to the pueblo. Therefore, he could get the freight and the cargo faster into the pueblo than from San Pedro. So, he first named this small modest settlement, New San Pedro. Later, he decided to name it after the town of his birth, which was Wilmington, Delaware.

MS: Perfect.

NC: How's that?

MS: Good.

NC: Okay.

MS: Perfect. Now, the Civil War had a great deal of effect on Los Angeles and San Pedro and the harbor and everything and Phineas Banning. Talk about the impact of the Civil War on the port and on Banning.

NC: A little bit later on after the initial stagecoach runs by these different companies, the Civil War came along, which was going to have an economic effect on the area because the United States government decided to have a troop depot here, which, of course, is the Drum Barracks, so-called now. The government decided to bring several thousand troops here to deploy to wherever they might be needed. Phineas Banning took advantage of that. With his enterprising nature, he decided that he would build – he and Benjamin Wilson gave the land to the government for \$1 to build the Drum Barracks, which they did. They had, as I said, several thousand troops here, which, of course, brought economic stimulation, which naturally, any enterprising Yankee wanted to do with that what they might. So, that war affected the growth in the area, Los Angeles and the harbor area, a great deal because the traffic for the military and the military themselves created a great temporary boon for the area.

MS: Perfect. We have a picture of a camel outside of the Drum Barracks. Do you know the story of that?

NC: [laughter] Don't bring that into [laughter] – well, that one, I've got to remember about it.

MS: There is a guy named Beale. They thought camels were a good way to get across the deserts of the southwest.

NC: It was a total failure, of course. Yes. Do you want...

MS: If you do not feel comfortable talking about it, that is okay. But I just thought if you knew about it...

NC: Well, that was during the Civil War?

MS: Right.

NC: Okay. One episode during the Civil War, which anyone who reads about the history of Southern California remembers the incident and the story about the camels. They were brought here with the idea – someone in the military thought they would be neat pack animals for the cargo and the freight. So, they brought them here. They were seen wandering around a little bit. But it was a complete and total failure. Then I guess there were some that were let loose. They were seen on the desert in Arizona, I think it was, and California as well, wandering around. But it was not a successful economic venture. [laughter]

MS: We are going to change tape.

MS: Okay. We are going to change tape. This is great.

NC: I'm doing this. [laughter] How many...

MS: Well, we have done almost 120 interviews –

NC: Oh, my goodness.

MS: – averaging three or four a day. So, you can figure is pretty much a month.

NC: Are you doing this for the Harbor Department?

MS: Yes. They are the ones who are sponsoring it. We are ready to go. I will explain it afterwards. Talk about the railroad and one of the first railroad in Los Angeles and why that was important. What was Banning's role in that?

NC: The development of the railroad, in 1869, it became apparent to Banning that a more efficient mode of transportation than the stagecoach and the wagon trains had to be developed in

order to support the influx of cargo and freight and the outgo from the pueblo and the surrounding areas to the harbor, to be stored aboard the ship. So, he realized that the railroad had become a very important aspect of transportation throughout the United States. He was the major catalyst for the building of a fixed rail from the port to the Pueblo of Los Angeles, which allowed for, of course, economic expansion in the area and really put Los Angeles on the map.

MS: That is a great story too. Can you tell us anymore? One of the trains was built in San Francisco or came down the coast. The other one was built in and is connected to New York, and the names, the San Gabriel and the Los Angeles.

NC: Did he bring those? I think he did.

MS: Yes.

NC: They were the...

MS: The first little train was called the San Gabriel.

NC: The engine was.

MS: Yes, the engine was.

NC: Just the engine.

MS: Yes.

NC: The other one?

MS: Was the Los Angeles.

NC: The San Gabriel and the Los Angeles.

MS: Yes.

NC: The first two engines that were imported to chug up and down on the new fixed rail were called the San Gabriel, and I think it was the Los Angeles or Los Angeles, depends on how you want to pronounce the name of our first city. [laughter]

MS: What is even funnier is that when they did it, they misspelled it. They had Los Angelos. They had it corrected.

NC: That's right. They did. Yes. I read that recently again. Yes.

MS: So, Banning then built a very famous house. Talk about this house that he built and where he built it and its importance in the history of Los Angeles and the harbor.

NC: Phineas Banning, when he came here, was a young man with very little economic means. He lived in a very modest house near the muddy tide flats when he first arrived. After he had developed his businesses and helped to create the railroad and learned how to deepen the water and the harbor, which was quite a feat at that time with the tides. They called it riprap. So, he had contributed considerably to the growth of the area. He built in Wilmington, which he had named for Wilmington, Delaware, his home, a very handsome, Greek Revival house. The architecture was Greek Revival. There he was able to entertain his personal friends and his business associates. All business leaders understand the importance of social intercourse between one another when they are creating and developing business and economic advancement. His house was to serve that purpose and also to raise a family. He had two wives. Rebecca, she died at a fairly early age, but she had managed to give Phineas quite a number of children. Then he married Mary Hollister from Northern California. There was a town named for her family as well. By Mary, he had three daughters, one of whom died. So, in all, I think it was eleven children. So, he needed a big house.

MS: I want to go back to the Civil War for a second because he was a very staunch union sympathizer.

NC: Yes.

MS: One of the reasons why the military was here is that Los Angeles had a lot of southern sympathizers.

NC: Right.

MS: The military was here to keep an eye on those Confederate sympathizers. Talk about the politics of the Civil War going on in Los Angeles and his...

NC: Do you remember about the newspapers? The *Star*? I'm not sure that I have it. Then there was another newspaper. There were two editors – publishers.

MS: Yes. The *Star* was a Confederate paper. The other one was *El Clamor Público*. That was the other one?

NC: No, not that. That wasn't it. But there was one that was a southern sympathizer and one that supported the northern cause. But I don't...

MS: Right. You can say, "There were two newspapers." You do not have to name them if you want to talk about them.

NC: Yes. Then what is it you wanted me – to draw out of me? [laughter]

MS: The reason why Drum Barracks was there was there were no battles of the Civil War taking place. But there were a number of Confederate sympathizers in Los Angeles.

NC: Yes.

MS: So, they were there to keep that under control. But at the same time, Banning was a very outspoken union advocate and spoke on behalf of, in speeches and...

NC: Oh, very much. Well, let's see. So, how should I start that? How would you like me to...

MS: During the Civil War, Los Angeles had a number of Confederate sympathizers.

NC: Okay. Good.

MS: That is why the Drum Barracks was brought here.

NC: Yes. During the Civil War, there were many southern sympathizers. Banning was in support of the north and the unity of the country. Amongst other things, later on, he supported the Sanitary Fund, which was a – well, out of that, came the Red Cross. He raised money for the wounded soldiers on both sides for the Sanitary Fund. Now, tell me what more you want.

MS: The reason why the Drum Barracks was there in the first place.

NC: Therefore, the reason that Drum Barracks was established here in Wilmington was because Phineas Banning was a patriot. He supported the nation. Therefore, they felt – they, meaning the United States government – felt they needed a depot here in case – although there never were any battles of the Civil War here. They thought there might be. They thought that Banning and Wilson's property, which they gave to the government for \$1 in order to give them the land near the sea to develop a military establishment to protect the Southern Pacific Coast.

MS: Good. After a while with Banning's railroad, he also faced – both, he was benefited by and faced competition from the Southern Pacific Railroad that was beginning to move into California. Do you know the story of how they were going to sort of bypass Los Angeles entirely?

NC: Oh, yes. I can talk about that.

MS: Okay. Go ahead.

NC: Now, about the railroads and the big four who were bringing the railroad down the country, down the state, and across the nation. It appeared as if, in their enthusiasm to get a transcontinental railroad going, they felt that going from Northern California, San Francisco, and the activity up there, they would go directly across the country. The leaders of business in Los Angeles understood that Los Angeles would never develop without a connection to their transcontinental rail. So, they lobbied. Phineas Banning was one of the leaders. They had big meetings in Downtown Los Angeles at the then Bella Union Hotel. It was a great issue. One of the newspapers here – and I wish I could remember the name – was in favor of the South and the division of our country. The other was in favor of the North. Phineas Banning, at the time, had one of the newspapers. To demonstrate his sympathy with the nation, he brought it temporarily from New San Pedro, Wilmington into Los Angeles to demonstrate his support of the nation. Of

course, we all know the answer, that the railroad from the harbor to the pueblo was the negotiating piece that convinced the Southern Pacific group that they should come south in the state to Los Angeles and to the sea. Because it would be much easier for them to transport their equipment, the rails themselves and the machinery to build the railroad and the fixed rail, much less expensive to bring it by water from Northern California to Southern California. So, they understood that that railroad from the sea to the pueblo would give them that advantage. So, Phineas Banning went along with that. It was a loss to him personally. However, he felt for the good of the Los Angeles development that it should be done, and it was.

MS: Perfect. Okay. Now, the family, you can tell us a little bit about how did Phineas Banning die?

NC: Phineas Banning was still a very active man. Are we running this?

MS: Yes.

NC: Oh, sorry. Phineas Banning was a very active man until he died in 1885. At the time, as I recall, he was in his fifties. He was still a very young and vital man. He stepped off of a streetcar – so the story goes, and I think it's accurate – and was hit and was badly injured and went to the hospital and was brought again home and died. He died here, as I recall, in his home. I'm not sure that's right.

MS: No. He was hit in San Francisco. He came back down by train.

NC: But did he die in San Francisco?

MS: No. I think he died here. Well, let me think about that.

NC: See, that's what I'm not – and I don't like to say...

MS: I will cut that out. If it is not true, I will cut it out.

NC: I'll say, shortly after the accident, getting off the streetcar and his serious injuries, he did die.

MS: Good. Now, the family went on, however. One of the most important – as they continued on in transportation. You can talk a little bit about that, how the family continued in the transportation business. But also, one of the famous offshore attractions of the harbor is Catalina and again, the relation between the family and Catalina. So, you do those two sections, how the family continued in the transportation business and also got involved in Catalina.

NC: Yes, primarily shipping.

MS: Shipping.

NC: Yes. Phineas Banning's sons mostly. Because Phineas Banning's children, the only ones

who survived to full adulthood were three sons and two daughters. After his death, his sons took over the transportation business that belonged to his father and his father's associates. They continued that on through their lifetime. Part of that was they wanted to use the shipping aspect of the business, which was the primary one at that time, to use them in a productive manner. So, they decided that the island of Catalina came up for sale in the Lick Estate. So, they purchased it with the idea that they would make a tourist mecca there and that their ships would take visitors to the island by ship, on the Banning ships. So, that was how the sons of Phineas Banning continued his business.

MS: Now, let us talk a little bit about yourself. Do you have any memories of the harbor or any memories of coming down here and what you saw? Or just anything connected to the harbor or Wilmington?

NC: My personal memories of the harbor area are primarily because of my father who loved the sea, loved the harbor, and was a vice president for Matson Navigation Company, in charge of freight in Southern California. So, I would come down to the harbor with him, to his office, and it intrigued me very much. I remember one day he took me to one of the fish canneries. I had a marvelous time. I didn't like the fragrance there. But one of the very nice men – I believe he was Japanese – stepped out of the manufacturing line. They were making tin cans – the part that I'm speaking about now. He handed me one of the tin cans that had been all sealed up empty. He put a slot in the middle. He handed it to me. He said, "This is for you to save your money in." So, it was a bank [laughter]. I kept it for a long time. I have very wonderful memories of coming to the Port of Los Angeles and seeing all that had happened and was happening and still is.

MS: What year was that visit to the canneries, roughly?

NC: Well, let me think. It was probably about 1932, three, right around in that era.

MS: Now, the canneries were very interesting. Of course, your father was involved in Matson, a very important company here at the Port.

NC: Yes.

MS: Tell us more about that, your father's activity with Matson and the importance of Matson in the port.

NC: Well, let's see. Matson, of course, was one of the principal shipping lines, at that time, out of Los Angeles. There were others. I think there was the Grace Line and – I don't remember which all the companies were, but there were several. I've lost it.

MS: The Matson Company, the freight that they were carrying that your father was...

NC: Oh, yes. My father was in charge of the freight business for Matson Company here in San Pedro, Wilmington. As I recall, their docks are actually in Wilmington. Perhaps some in San Pedro, but I don't really know about that. Matson – I can't get that.

MS: It is okay. Wonders of editing. Who was the freight Matson was carrying?

NC: Well.

MS: Was there not a lot of shipping to the East and Hawaii?

NC: I don't really know. You better not ask me that because I'm...

MS: That is fine. Now, any other impressions that you had as a little girl even later on about the – that is a great story about the cannery. Were you impressed by the big ships? Did you go and look at them? Did you go on the docks?

NC: Yes.

MS: What were your impressions when you came down there?

NC: Well, it was intriguing. The harbor, the port, the docks were very exciting, intriguing places with these huge ships tied up to the docks and the cargo going on the ships and cargo coming off the ships, great activity here, and also, passengers. In those days, in the [19]30s, and I guess as I recall, the early [19]40s, I'm not positive, the Matson Company had beautiful passenger ships, the *Lurline*, the *Monterey*, the *Mariposa*, the *Malolo*, that carried passengers in a very, very elegant way to and from the Hawaiian Islands. Their port there was Honolulu. The diving boys would be swimming in the waters. The ships would come in. The passengers would throw coins in the water. These wonderful Polynesian boys would dive down and get the money off of the harbor floor. The water in those days was so clear over there. You could actually see the coins winding their way to the bottom. Then see these active, strong, young boys diving down and picking up the coins, and of course, the leis and the music. It was a very glamorous scene. Matson owned the Royal Hawaiian Hotel which was the place to go when you went to Honolulu.

MS: When you came back and you came back into the port of Los Angeles, what was that return trip like coming back home?

NC: Nothing much to tell you about that. [laughter] Just sorry to be coming home.

MS: That is right. After having a good time, right?

NC: Yes.

MS: Well, Banning had this incredible vision which really in many ways has come true. Can you talk about Banning's vision and how it has come true after all those years? He saw what this port is and what it became.

NC: Well, the muddy tide flat that was out there – and I've been asked to speak about Phineas Banning's part in the development of the harbor and the development, actually, of Southern

California. There is no question that Los Angeles would not be one of the five, perhaps great cities of the world that it is if it hadn't been for the development of the muddy tide flat into a deepwater port with a transportation connection from the sea to the pueblo. There is no major city in the world that has been developed that doesn't have an outlet to the sea. Los Angeles did not have that outlet. But it was through the vision of a man, Phineas Banning, and of course, there were others that were very important and involved. But I've been asked to speak about my great-grandfather. But he did have the vision, but not only the vision of what it might be to Los Angeles. He had the will and the determination, in spite of difficulties and problems that would continue to come up, and competition and people who were against doing the things that he and other men did. But those qualities are so definitely qualities of the American spirit. They come from different parts of the world, the American spirit, that come here and make this their country. But they understand that. That's why so many people have come here, because of the opportunity. But then you've got to have the determination, the will, the energy, and the vision.

MS: Boy, you cannot get any better than that for an ending.

NC: [laughter] Okay. Well...

MS: Are there any other notes that you wanted to talk about?

NC: Well, if I looked at my notes, I could think of...

MS: Well, look at your notes and see if there is anything else.

NC: I spoke earlier about the fact that – and I challenge anyone to say it's not true – that no city has developed into one of the major metropolitan cities of the world without transportation. I meant to also say that the other factor that a town or a small city must have to become a major metropolitan area is water.

MS: Good. Well, actually, let me look at your notes and if I see anything, I will spin them back to you.

NC: Okay. Let me see how I'd say it to kind of go with other things.

MS: I will lead you into a question. You rolling?

MS: Yes. We have speed.

MS: Tell us about what is known as the Free Harbor Fight. What was that?

NC: The Free Harbor Fight is an interesting aspect of the history of the Port of Los Angeles in that the leaders in Southern California, or Los Angeles actually, wanted the harbor here in the Los Angeles area, and it would become a free harbor. The Southern Pacific interests, who had control of the port in Santa Monica, wanted the port to be in Santa Monica. There was a deepwater canyon there, a natural one. Earlier on, there was a man who also wanted Santa Monica because there was already a deep canyon there. But the ingenuity and the determination

of the men in Southern California on that earlier attempt to switch the focus from Los Angeles to Santa Monica failed. Then again, came this problem later on with the Free Harbor Fight between the Southern Pacific who wanted Santa Monica, which would be under their control, and the business leaders in Los Angeles who wanted Los Angeles Harbor to be a free port of entry.

MS: In the end, Los Angeles won.

NC: I beg your pardon.

MS: In the end, Los Angeles won.

NC: Yes. In the end, Los Angeles won.

MS: Perfect. I think we got it. Anything else you can think of?

NC: No, I can't.

[end of transcript]