Tales of Cape Cod
Joshua Nickerson Oral History
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Interviewer: BR – Betty Richards
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Betty Richards: This is the property of the Tales of Cape Cod Incorporated. It cannot be reproduced without the right of consent of Tales of Cape Cod Incorporated. October 19th, 1977. Today, I'm visiting with Joshua Atkins Nickerson. Mr. Nickerson, can you give me your present address?

Joshua Nickerson: Well, I got my mail in Chatham. P.O. number 251 RFD 1, Chatham.

BR: What was the date of your birth?

JN: March 24th, 1901.

BR: Where were you born?

JN: Chatham or Chatham, you know what I'm saying?

BR: [laughter] Are you a Mayflower descendant?

JN: Yes.

BR: Can you tell me anything about your ancestors?

JN: I've never taken the trouble of tracing them. My brother has. Consequently, that's how I know that I am.

BR: Do you remember your great-grandparents at all?

JN: No. As a matter of fact, I only have a clear memory of one grandparent, my mother's father. Mother died before I can remember. My father's mother, I have a very hazy recollection of her. She must have died when I was around 6 years old. So, my grandfather, Nickerson, died on Christmas Day, 1915, when I was 14 years old. So, I have a very vivid memories of him.

BR: Do you remember his full name?

JN: (Lauren Jensen?).

BR: Did you know the date of his birth?

JN: 1833, but I forgotten the exact date.

BR: Do you remember any stories that might have been passed down?

JN: Well, there are always lots of stories actually at the time like that. Because, see, when I was a child, we didn't have any radio, TV, no movies. The only amusement we had aside from reading, going to church, and listening to the choir was storytelling and yawning. I remember as a child, I was fascinated to listen to my uncles and aunts talking about their experiences and the stories they had because that was a major pastime. I was never quite sure how true some of the

stories were –

BR: [laughter]

JN: – but at least they make good guns.

BR: Can you tell me what those stories are?

JN: Oh, I just gave you some material that it has. Some [inaudible]. But one thing I have hanging in my kitchen, I have a paper, which I framed on the wall. This was found among my grandfather's effects after he died. It reads as follows, "This to certify that Mr. Steven Nickerson returned one art of white mug, which was meant to oblige the mean fellow who borrowed it," signed (Rogan Brown?). The exact date is obscure, but the year is clear, 1792. I think there's quite a story behind that. Heaven knows what it is, but I'm sure that – I can well imagine that Mr. Steven Nickerson borrowed a white mug carry to some back in the vessel. The man, when he borrowed one, the captain or whoever it was, got to get it back. There must have been some arguments in that. If he demanded a receipt, this is what he got from him.

BR: Any other stories you can tell me?

JN: Well, what kinds of stories did you have in mind?

BR: Well, you see, this is an oral history.

JN: Yes.

BR: It will be kept on. So, any story, (interesting video to you?), I think that's enough.

JN: How come you had me go like that? It's a little hard to bring one to mind. Particularly, there are all kinds of stories, or stories we usually write personally, anecdotes of what had happened.

BR: Yes. That would be interesting.

JN: Well, one of the stories, as you know, they used to get salt hay down in the Eastham [inaudible] bay on each side of the beach and loaded on schooner on top of ranks between a couple [inaudible], which were latched together. They brought it up into little (round coals?), which is right near around the bunch of [inaudible]. Just above the shore, subtly slope on the hill, right around Cove was an area called the hayfield. It wasn't called the hayfield because they got hay there. It was called the hayfield because that's where they put the salt hay to dry and cure before putting it in the barns for the winter. Of course, they fed that salt hay to the cattle, the ones giving milk, because if you fed salt hay to milk cow, the milk tasted [laughter] much like salt hay. But there was one story about the two men who had been down there. They've been there all day. Rowing back, I guess they'd been working on the switchel jug during the day.

BR: On the what?

JN: Switchel jug, mixture of molasses and water, but sometimes have a little rum in. One of them was named (Higgins?). I don't remember the other one's name. They were rowing up (until dawn?). All of a sudden, they could feel that – in the bigger sound, they knew they could start to shore. I guess Mr. Higgins was rowing, so the other fella said, "You keep (this sit in?), Mr. Higgins. I'll haul us ashore. Why don't you step over the side and make right down out of sight? Good choke." But what actually happened was that they ran up on a big mass of little grass off in the middle of the bay, and I didn't realize it. One of the stories they used to [inaudible] was about Billy and Steven Peter. Billy Peter and Steven Peter were brothers. They lived in East Harwich. I think that they probably were a high percentage of Indian blood. That has nothing to do with what I'm about to say next. They weren't too sophisticated. They weren't too [inaudible]. But they were both good craftsmen and worked very well with their hands. Billy Peter used to come around when I was a boy. My father was running a lumberyard in Chatham. Billy Peter used to come around and command harness in the little box he carried with him with all his equipment. He usually manages to arrive late in the afternoon. My father had known him all his life. So, he was a good kid, Billy Peter. We teased him. I can remember Billy Peter saying to my father – his name was Oscar – "Oscar, you too damn big for britches. Your pants' too tight." But of course, Billy Peter really had in mind was looking for a place to spend the night. He wanted my father's permission to sleep in the hay mound in the barn where the horses were kept. Well, dad always gave him permission. But he insisted that if Billy Peter was going to smoke his pipe, he made him promise that he would smoke it outdoors instead of in the hayloft, for obvious reasons. One of the stories about Billy and his brother Steven was about the time they went out in Pleasant Bay. I think it may have been around cold, spearing eels through the ice in the winter. As they arrived there, there was another fellow who was also doing the same thing. He had a sled with a box on it. So, he suggested that he and the two Peter boys go together and put the eels in the box, and then they got them ashore. They could divide them up. It'd be a lot easier than lugging them across the ice without having a sled. Telling about it afterwards, Billy Peter said he didn't quite understand what happened. He named the other guy. His name escapes me at the moment. I can't remember. He said, "He did the dividing. He divided them up fair and square. When we got ashore, he did it fair and square, but somehow he seemed to have more than either one of us when he got through." So, upon further questioning, one of his interrogators said, "Now, show us exactly how he did it. How did he exactly do it? How did he divide these up?" "Well, it's fair to square." He said, "He counted them out one at a time. He said, 'Here's one for you two and one for me too. One for you two, one for me too.' But somehow, he seemed to have more than we did." Now, that's the kind of half-joking, half-serious stories I used to get a lot of fun out of. Then there were the stories about the previous generations. For example, my father had a brother, Ernest, who was, I think, two years younger. They had an uncle, Jonathan, who lived across the street and across the swamp (across the Cedar Swamp?). My father was born in 1866. My Uncle Jonathan had fought in the War of 1812. I guess he'd probably been taken by the English when they were – what do you call it – not commandeering, seizing American sailors off the ships, and making them join the British Navy. Anyway, the two boys will go over on a Sunday to see Uncle Jonathan sometimes. Uncle Jonathan would say to them, (go to my father?) – Oscar Clinton, that's my father's name. Ernest Carlton, that was brother's name. "Couldn't your mother think of any decent Christian names out of the Bible for you boys? Where did she ever get those names?" Uncle Jonathan, by that time, was pretty well along in years. Every Sunday, he would take down off the wall a flintlock

musket, which he had up hanging above the fireplace, and clean it, polish it, and make sure it's in good working order. The boys would say to Uncle Jonathan, "Why do you take such good care of that musket? You never use it. You don't use it for hunting. It isn't good for hunting. Why do you take such good care of it?" Well, he says, "You want to take good care of the musket. I got to keep one eye on old England." He was always suspicious of whatever England might be able to do to us. Let me see if I can think of any others. I'm not sure if this was Uncle Jonathan or not, but he had a windmill for grinding grain just about where they would [inaudible] now around the shores of West Bay. Dad said the boys would go over there. As the arms of the mill turned around in the wind, they'd grab onto him and ride all the way around, which was, of course, very dangerous because we're at the top. They were head-down. Uncle Jonathan would come out and (steal them and drive them off?). To get even with him, they'd hide themselves up above the millstones in the top of the mill. Uncle Jonathan was sitting down at the bottom of the mill, below the millstones, where the ground mill was coming out. He would be feeling it with his fingers as it came through from the millstones to check the consistency of it and whether it was being ground too coarse or too fine, and so forth. The boys would get up above there and drop a few nails down through, when the nails went between the millstones, they got it red hot. So, when they came down, my Uncle Jonathan, [laughter] he'd burned his hands and yelled [laughter]. He'd yell a lot. What the British were doing, the English were doing at that time was stopping American ships on the high seas, seizing the men on board, and forcing in the British Navy. I think that's what happened to them. Though, I'm not sure. There was another ancestor, Joshua Atkins, and I have hanging on – he was my great, great grandfather. I have hanging on the wall in my house a pen and ink and watercolor picture of the schooner Morning Star of Chatham, Captain Joshua Atkins, departing from the port of Naples. The (Silvius?) is in the background. (I know Naples it is?). There are several stories about him. One of the stories was about him being captured in the Mediterranean by one of the Barbary pirates. (This is what I'm going to refer to as the tiny thing?). I don't imagine that he was any bigger than one of the average-sized trawlers that go out here, where they're dragging the fish probably over fifty feet, the most maybe sixty. But anyway, he'd been trading in the Mediterranean and was returning. He had quite a lot of gold on board from the proceeds of his trading when he was captured by the Barbary pirate. They couldn't find the gold. They knew that he had gold on board because he was [inaudible], at least had finished his trading. So, finally, they latched him to the muzzle of a cannon and told him that if he didn't tell him where the gold was that they were going to blow him to kingdom come. He actually said, "Well, the gold isn't mine. Therefore, I can't tell you. It belongs to the widows and orphans of Chatham in Massachusetts. I'm not going to tell you where it is." Just as the man was about to touch the dollar hole in the gun, the pirate captain ordered him cut down because he said that he was a brave man to die in that way. There's also a story – I never took too much (knock in?) – that the reason that he cut it down was not because he was so brave a man, but because he had given a Masonic sign of distress. The pirate captain was also a Master Mason, and this was one of their return [inaudible] [laughter]. Anyhow, he finally made it home. I think his vessel was capped off in Nantucket somewhere the last time [inaudible] British. This would have been about 1812. He'd been away for a year or two, I guess, a long time anyway. Among his crew was a young boy, about 10 or 12 years old. The story is that one evening, when his wife, who was in bed, she heard a tapping of the window of the house. (It was him because he had driven back at home?). He lost his ship. He lost all the money they had. When his wife met him at the door, he said, "Here I am." Her name was [inaudible]. "Here I am, [inaudible]. I've lost everything. I lost my ship. I've lost the cargo. I

even lost the boy. All I've got in this world is what's in this bandana handkerchief I've got wrapped up here. That isn't much. That's all I've got." She said, "No. You still got me." [laughter] She said, "And I got you, and I don't know [laughter] whether I would ever get another man like you." But that's one of the family stories.

BR: Do you have any other story?

JN: Well, there probably are a lot of others, but I just can't happen to think of them at the moment. Yes, there's one about Uncle William.

BR: Uncle William, (I don't see his name?).

JN: I guess his name was Eldridge.

BR: How is he related to you?

JN: Well, I'm not quite sure. But I think he was related on my father's side. The Eldridge's and the Nickerson's were related. Anyway, this is a story that my father told me about Uncle William. It seems Uncle William was a big, powerful strapping man, by way of illustration as to how rugged he was. There was a story about the time they were clearing the swamp, which is what they did when they cut out the cedars in the swamps and replaced it with cranberry bogs, or maybe they just went in to get the cedars out on the (posts, nest post in fast rates. You may know the cedar?). The story was that a couple of men were struggling with a cedar log, trying to get it out, had a little difficulty with it. Uncle William, who was the young man, was standing there. So, he marched over to where they were and said, "Get out of my way now." He picked the log up, put them on his shoulder, and marched out of there. He threw it down on the ground and said, "There." It was summertime, and he was barefoot. He reached down and pulled a sharp [inaudible], which is stuck right through the bottom of his foot, and come up through the top of his toes, pulled it right through, and threw it down. He took his 200 back out, [inaudible], and walked off [laughter]. Well, anyway, my father told me that when he was about 10 years old, Uncle William came back from the west. He, my father, sat at the top of the stairs most of the night, eavesdropping on Uncle William and my father's father, my grandfather, talking. It seems that Uncle William – well, he was not himself at the moment. He went out with them to Salt Lake City. He described the experiences they had in traveling across the plains. Of course, everybody is familiar with this story about the gulls eating the locusts and saving – he described that thing. Incidentally, my father had some correspondence with some Eldridge's up in Salt Lake City back in fifty, sixty years ago. In one of those letters, this Eldridge, who lived in Salt Lake City at that time, described the events that led up to the gulls arriving and saving the crops by eating the locusts, and added the comment at the end that this is something I would hardly be able to believe where it not that my brother and I saw it with our own eyes. But anyway, the hardships of the moments were quite unusual. They had set themselves up in Salt Lake. I guess that's about 1845 or thereabouts. To the nearest civilization in one direction, it was 1,000 miles, and the other was 800 miles. They obviously dreamed of setting a whole new domain for themselves. But they did have some trouble in-house. One of the things that Uncle William allegedly described to my grandfather, which he overheard, my father, was their trouble with the Indians. The older men in the Mormon group were the ones who had the authority to decide

what should be done as a matter of policy, but the younger men were the ones who had to execute it. So, there was a conflict between the generations even then. But anyways, in this particular situation, they'd have a bad time with these Mormons – with these Indians. They devised a means of attack. They surrounded this Indian settlement and built sort of a portable wooden shields to protect themselves from the arrows and moved in. Most of the Indians, apparently, they were not very proud of this episode. But it was one of the things that apparently happened. Uncle William was very proud of the fact that he walked across the plains all the way to Salt Lake City and, in his lifetime, came back in the [inaudible]. There are numerous other stories about the Mormons leading in. They're rather vague in my mind. But there was apparently quite a Mormon colony, a Mormon group [inaudible].

BR: What year was that?

JN: I don't know, in the 1830s or [18]40s. Some of this group were about to go west. Of course, before they went to Salt Lake City, they went from New York to somewhere in the middle of west on the Mississippi River. I forgot the name of the town. They were driven out of the [inaudible]. Some of them (people devoted on?). But anyway, there was a group going here. They were sailing from wherever it was – (I didn't get to it?) – and then they were going to join the rest of the party later on somewhere at the coast. Among the people that were going to leave was a young girl. There was a schism in the family between those who wanted her to go with them and the other members of the family didn't want her to go. So, they grabbed the child – the ones that didn't want her to go – hid her in a ditch until after the boat had sailed. That's how she didn't go. These stories are all sort of vague in my mind. I'm sure there must be some degree of authenticity to them, even though I don't think [inaudible] any ways accurate. But there was a story about Captain Hiram Harding in Chatham who traded – I don't know (if these were willing?) or traded. But anyway, he had occasion to go back to the Sandwich Islands, now Hawaii, frequently. Now, this obviously had to be in the 1800s because Captain Cook, James Cook, when he visited there, the Hawaiian Islands around 1770, he was killed there. There were no traders or people going there regularly. So, the story was Captain Hiram Harding brought back this Hawaiian princess. I don't know what her name was. It may have been [inaudible]. It may have been [inaudible] or whatever her name was – (as a girl to Chatham?). They kept her there for some time – two or three years – while she went to school and then took her back when she was still a child or a young girl. How much truth there is to that? Well, this is one of the stories (through the town?). So, I think there must have been some truth.

BR: Were these stories passed down from your ancestors through just time?

JN: Well, the one I just told you, for example, it couldn't have been passed down very far because it couldn't possibly have happened until the early 1800s. So, that is very far. Well, they used to tell various stories about the experiences they had when they went to sea and troubles they got into, some of them their own making.

BR: One great, great grandfather was a sea captain. Is that right?

JN: Oh, I guess they all were.

BR: They all were?

JN: I wouldn't say they're all sea captains, but they all went to sea.

BR: They all went to sea.

JN: What else was there for them to do? I remember as a child, Captain Oliver Eldridge in Chatham told me that when he was 10 years old, he went to sea as a cabin boy to help the cook on a bunker going to the Grand Banks. My father went to sea when he was 14 with a very few boys.

BR: What sort of a ship did your father sail on?

JN: He was on coastal, and coastal schooners was [inaudible]. Except in the last few years, he was wanting to go – went yachting, as they used to say. He was the captain of a yacht that belonged to (Old Man Fabian?). (He made his fortune through copper?). I think, at that time, the control of the copper mining in this country was largely in Boston. That's where it came from. But among the guest who had attained frequently on board was Grover Cleveland, who was then president, at least I think he was at that time. He was before, and it was after. But I think it was [laughter] [inaudible]. I think he was. It was a much simpler, simpler time.

BR: Do you remember the name of that ship?

JN: No. That wasn't a ship. It was a steam yacht.

BR: Pardon?

JN: It was a steam yacht.

BR: Steam yacht.

JN: But I'm trying to think of something that might be of special interest. Without having a list of something and not having it ahead of time, it's hard to remember. We were talking about the age at which men went to sea. My father, for example, went to sea when he was 14. Then, of course, he came home. The children all went to school in those days in what they call a district school. This included everybody, from the youngest, the young men of 18, 19, 20 years old, studying navigation. They all started in the same room. It was customary. In fact, it was almost a requirement of the schoolmaster that he be able to physically beat any boys that might be in his money as scholars, as I recall. (So, there was always a question of whether they'd be a schoolmaster or not?). But anyway, when dad was 18, he got a telegram while he was at school one day, asking him to go as a maid on a small schooner, which he did. When he was 21, he got his captain's papers. When he was 29, at my mother's urging, he quit going to sea and came ashore and started a lumber business [inaudible]. His older brother, the one named Joshua Atkins – I have the same name. I was Joshua Atkins II. He told me that when he was a boy, he went to sea. On the ship that he was on, there was another boy about his age. The captain insisted that they learn to cypher, which means do arithmetic. I always called it ciphering. The

way he did it was to have the boys holystone the deck on a pleasant day. The captain would lay out the problem in charcoal on the deck. The boys would solve the problem to the captain's satisfaction. Then when that had been accomplished, they had to holystone the deck again to clean up the charcoal marks off the deck. That, Uncle Joshua said, is how I learned the cypher.

BR: [laughter]

JN: But he told me about this captain. He said, "This captain was a very proud man. One of his proudest boasts was, 'I never went to school one day in my life, but I can write my name so other people can read it.'"

BR: [laughter]

JN: I think that's quite appropriate because I noticed that today, many children in school are not being taught to write anything so other people can read it. Penmanship was very important in those days, you must remember, because they had no typewriters. Legible penmanship was an absolute must if there were to be any communication other than oral. Today, young people I come into contact with (seem to discard?) penmanship and think that they should depend entirely upon mechanical devices or written communication. I don't agree with it at all. They seem to think they should depend upon computers instead of their own brains to do simple arithmetic.

BR: Well, I want to get into the origin of the Nickerson and companies, eventually how it all started. But before we do that, do you have any stories you want to tell me?

JN: You were thinking about the origins of the Nickerson mother company. In March of 1895, my father bought out Eldridge and Kelly Lumberyard in Chatham. According to his records, they paid less than $4,500 for the business. All of that was borrowed money. He borrowed most of that money. In those days, they were bringing lumber into Chatham by small schooners, which came into Stage Harbor. Of course, all the framing lumber, (that is the dimension that they used?) for the framing the houses, at least most of those was eastern spruce from Maine and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It wasn't until after the opening of the Panama Canal many years later that West Coast lumber appeared here in the Atlantic Coast in many quantity. Although we did have, during that period, especially in the cities where they had heavy timber construction for mills, a lot of yellow pine. But we didn't have much of that out here. That too came by water. So, in the first year, the first entry in a little, red-covered notebook that my father kept, financing book, it reads as follows, "Kept no account of sales in 1895, but had fairly good trade. Sometimes I've been tempted to show that to the internal revenue agent people who complained of the inadequacy of some of our records at time in the past. During those years, the earliest in late 1890s and early 1900s, every winter, there were shipwrecks along the coast here. Particularly the longest one is bound from the maritime provinces on Maine to the New York and Philadelphia markets. The cargos from those schooners were usually salvaged to some extent, at least by local boatmen and fishermen. The lumber, [inaudible], shingles, and such like were piled up on the shore and were auctioned off at a sale held by the underwriters to recover the money from the insurance company. Well, dad occasionally was the successful bidder on some of those auctions. When he was, he shipped the material by rail from Chatham to Boston or wherever it might be going. So, he shipped out as well as in. But the lumber he shipped from

here didn't originate here. It originated maybe in Nova Scotia. Speaking of the railroad, the Chatham railroad was built in 1887 and extended from Harwich to Chatham. It is a separate company. The largest stockholder in the company was the town of Chatham. I think my father was one of the officers of the company, my uncle was another one. It's a local company. They made a lease to the Old Colony, or maybe it was the New Haven Railroad, which guaranteed that the property would be returned to them in its good condition as when it was taken and all these other guarantees. But they didn't know how to do a damn when, finally, the thing happened [inaudible]. In just fifty years after the railroad was built, that is, in 1937, they ripped up the tracks then proceeded to sell the right of way. While right of way stayed here, the tracks, the new rails were sent to Japan for scrap. The Japanese returned those beginning in December of 1941 at the Pearl Harbor for the next few years. So, we got the rails back in a way. Speaking again of the railroad, I remember going – in 1910, the Provincetown monument was dedicated in Provincetown. I remember going with my father on a morning train from Chatham to Harwich. There, we met an excursion train coming down the gate, transferred to that, and went from Harwich to Province and got there in the midmorning. I recall that we climbed up on top of the ship on the dock there on the walls to get a better view of the parade. Of course, in those days, the passenger trains back right out onto the dock. I just barely remember some of the events. But the one that I remember most vividly is after the ceremony in the afternoon, before we had to come back on the train that evening, going out with my father onto the battleship Connecticut, which is one of several battleships anchored in Provincetown Harbor for the occasion, and being so impressed with the bright uniforms of the Marines who are on duty on the battleship. It was not over a couple of years later, probably, that I had the good fortune of being invited by some neighbors who had an automobile and who had a son who was not my age, to go with them to Provincetown in their car. It was a cattle axe, at least that's what I thought they said. But it was obviously a Cadillac. There's a touring car with rear seats, some are higher than the front, a canopy that folded back from over the seats, leather straps to hold that down, and acetylene gas lights with a gas tank on the running board. The handbrake and the gear shift were outside the body of the car. Of course, there was no self-stop. You had to crank it to diverge just for a minute. This was a much more modern and better automobile than the first Cadillac I ever saw, which I can just vaguely remember standing on the street in front of my father's house. This was a Cadillac owned by a man named Adams, who had a little repair shop, machine shop, on the main street of Chatham. You steered with a tiller from the rear seat. You cranked it via a hand crank on the side. Well, to get back to the [inaudible] car, it was an all-day trip to Provincetown back. Well, it might be because this being about 1912, not all the roads were paved. But between about 19, I guess, 9 and 10, somewhere around there, and 19, say, 14, all the main roads were paved – most of the main roads connecting the towns here in Cape Cod. Now, the paving was not anything like it is today. The old Harbor Road between by my father's house, which was paved before this time, let me see now, when I went to the active school, there was a boy who was a [inaudible]. By the time I went to grammar school, it was paved. But it was a macadam road, which they laid layers of stone. The larger ones first, and then smaller and smaller then finally go to the dust. That was bound together with water and rolled with steam rollers. Shortly after that, they put oil on the surface to cover the macadam. But for the most part, the roads were simply made with hardening. So, there was mixture of clay and not much sand and then given a coat of oil and then they shovel sand on the top of the oil. So, you had a very thin coating of hardening or oil on the surface and not the kind of black top that you have today. Speaking of this, going to school, everybody walked for the obvious reason that there was no other means of

transportation available, except perhaps a bicycle. The idea of anybody keeping a horse and carriage simply for their convenience and comfort and getting around was hardly accepted except, of course, for such people as the doctor or some of the athletes and some of the others. But if you had a horse and carriage, you're expected to use that same horse, which is usually a light horse, for other purposes. It would be too wasteful to have a horse just standing for pleasure. The idea that any individual would have personal transportation such as we had today was completely unheard of, or even thought of, until along came we got a mobile on the paved roads. Just prior to this period of road building, road paving, there was one road I remember. It was very popular for the people, but (light carriage honestly doesn't like to go over there and try to put the harnesses?). That was the road between Harwich Center and East Harwich, which is now a part of Route 39. This was called the shell road because it was made from oyster shells. It had a very high, smooth surface. It was one of the few places where there was no sand on the roads.

BR: That was very nice.

JN: Between Harwich Center and East Harwich. Not East to East Harwich, no. Actually, I think it ran from the junction of Route 39 and Queen Anne Road into about the junction of Route 69 and Bank Street today, something about Brooks Park. One of the customs of that time was to have what they called an (old homeland?). In the various towns, they would have a celebration during the summer of a week with various events and athletic events and sporting events and so forth. This was a time when the sons and daughters of the community who had gone away were hopefully expected to come back and renew their acquaintance with the community and visit neighbors. I remember some of the older people that participated in this, where they got a great kick out of seeing people they hadn't seen for a long time and just meeting them again, what they call the old homeland. The ways of getting the household needs taken care of in my childhood were completely different from what they are today. Today, people get in their automobile and go to the supermarket and pick up their stuff, lug it home. In those days, that wasn't practical because the people didn't have the means of transportation. They didn't have the vehicles in which to transport their supplies. Consequently, the stores came to the people. They depend on us. The food and supplies came to the people house to house. For example, I can remember two or three pack peddlers. A man who went on foot with a pack, which they strapped on their backs, and visited from house to house selling needles and threads, whatever they could carry. There was also a tin peddler with a wagon. He came around once or twice a year and sold pots and pans and mended. There was a scissors grinder who carried his grinding equipment on his back and walked from house to house and ground scissors and knives and saw. In the summer, there were the two men who hauled a (hoodie goodie?) that had handles on and the shafts like you had for a horse. But these two men had it. They had handles on it. They had straps. They pulled that along these roads and played music. There was an organ grinder who came around with a monkey on a string with a tin cup. There was a junkman, a man who came around with a wagon and picked up junk. We saved bits of copper and such other things as the junkman showed some interest in. They would pay us a few pennies for copper, [inaudible], steel, or whatever I had and take it away. These same junkmen – there were two of them that came from Orleans, I remember. One of the name was (Simon Payne?), and the other one, whose name I can't remember at the moment. But anyway, in the fall of the year, these same fellas came around, the wagons loaded with apples, which were raised in Orleans and Eastham and used to

sell these apples in Chatham. Speaking of apples, it reminds me of other vegetable products. As recently as the 1920s, asparagus and turnips were a major money crop in Eastham and Orleans. Acres and acres and acres in Eastham and in Orleans were devoted to the raising of asparagus and turnips, the big white turnips, which in my opinion are far superior. These yellow turnips you get today are coated with wax. They ship them out by color. The asparagus was shipped out in refrigerated cars. Every night, they try to pick up – oh, from the Orleans, they pick up, during the season, two or three kinds of asparagus. Of course, Eastham asparagus, so-called, which was raised in Orleans as well as Eastham, was the first to get out of the Boston Market. But this was wiped out completely by the (advent of include transportation whereby?) they got asparagus from southern points, I think Delaware. Of course, the quick freeze process, which was developed, put an end to the local asparagus business. I think probably the people will no longer connoisseurs of the delicacy of the special flavor of these damn asparagus. There's one episode that I recall from my childhood, which took place when I was probably around 12, 13 years old, and that was the building of the Marconi radio station in Chatham Port. That station was completed just about the end of July 1914. It had, I think, six 400-foot steel mass, which were used in the process of communication. One of the problems was that these engineers had to arrange these in such a way that they lined up directly in line with a similar situation in Potsdam, Germany. This station was intended to communicate to German. The reason it was such a problem was that there were so many columns in that Chatham area that they had a tremendously difficult time getting them all lined up with the proper distances from each other and to keep it so that at least [inaudible] in the pond. You can see the traces of it now where the cement anchors [inaudible] to which they stay. The cables were fascinated with how the mass was falling over. Well, anyway, the materials for that station were brought into Chatham by rail and transferred from the Chatham railroad station up to Chatham Port entirely in horse-drawn vehicles. There were no other vehicles available. The station was completed, as I said, about July of 1914. Germany declared war in the first week of August of 1914. Consequently, the station was never used for its original purpose of direct communication with Potsdam because, immediately, the United States took over the control of the Marconi station in Chatham. They had marine guards on duty there all during World War 1. By the time World War 1 was over, the need for these six 400-foot steel column had ended because the message was that it was an obsolete procedure. So, they tore down all, but I think one fairly soon. Ultimately, they tore down even that one. So, there are now no 400-foot column standing. In those days, when I was 12, 13, 14, 15 years old, we had no boy scouts. But some of us did something which may have been unusual at the time. There were maybe four or five, half a dozen of us boys, who liked to go fishing in the ponds just west of Red Hill, Henry's Pond, White Pond, Black Pond, South Pond, Alcoa, Lover's Lake, North Pond, Alcoa, something else. I don't know what it's called. We used to invite our schoolteacher to go with us. One of the most popular schoolteacher that went along with us on these Saturday expeditions, it was a Ms. Riley who was a wonderful teacher we had, who later, I think, was head of the personnel guidance programs in the (law schools. I think Lawyer Alliance of Massachusetts was actually the name?). This was a big deal. We'd go up there. We'd build a little fire, put some bacon on a green stick, and maybe we have those fried in a frying pan, cook some fish if I'm lucky enough to catch them, and that sort of thing. There was one custom in those days, which I think is pretty much forgotten nowadays. That is the hanging of May baskets. What we did, a group got together and took the pasteboard box usually, like a shoe box or something even larger than that and fixed it all up with crepe paper and ribbons and so forth, filled it with some goodies like candy bars and what have you. The children would take this

basket and put it in the house of the person whose home is being han. We call it hanging neighbors. Ring the bell, I pound on the door until the person came. When that person came and saw that they had a May basket, they were supposed to run and catch each of the people that had participated in this thing, get him in the house. Then we all joined and consigned whatever was in the basket. Of course, and playing games. One of the most sophisticated games, for example, was the game of (pause doc?), which I don't believe is played now, at least not as such. This was a local country custom. We used to hang May baskets for our teachers. I used to hang May baskets for my mother and uncle. My mother's birthday was the 6th of May, and so was my uncle's. Joshua's birthday is the same day, so I had to hang two May baskets then. My mother is chasing me and catching me some distance away. As I look back upon it, it was a pretty unreasonable thing for a kid to do and make a man of his advanced years, he must have been [inaudible], chase me off that far [laughter]. The celebration of holidays was quite different. Halloween, for example, was not a big deal. There was almost no vandalism, and not any, I guess, in this area. I learned about that sort of thing from talking with friends or other boys who came from some of the cities. The idea of pulling up picket fences and [inaudible] change generally was completely foreign to our celebration of Halloween. We used to go around with pumpkin lanterns and made a tic-tac-toe [inaudible] and cutting notches in it, wrapping a string around it. Then taking a nail, sticking it through the hole in the [inaudible]. Then by holding it up against the window and pulling, sharping on the string, you could make a noise on the window. Of course, when you did this to the maiden ladies who lived next door and all that sort of thing, they were probably surprised and shocked. But there was no trick or treat ever. One thing, there was some vandalism and general hellraiser. It was a celebration of the night before the 4th of July. This was a really big deal. You must remember that we had –

[end of transcript]