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MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

Contact:

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library
181 South College Avenue
Newark, DE 19717-5267
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>
askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

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2/2/77

This is an interview with Harrison Davis at his home in Odessa on the second day of February, 1977. Earlier Mr. Davis, you had described Rodney Sharp's interest in Odessa and his providing employment and a new kind of endeavor in it.

Q. Could you tell us some of the earlier history of the Corbit house when the Corbits lived there and what it was like.

A. Well, there was a store in the front yard that had been torn down years ago. Mr. Sharp removed the iron fence around it and had machinery come in and grade it down to the street, you know. And then the topsoil was put back on and grass was seeded. Now, the old stable and carriage house was destroyed. The Corbits in their day, they had depended on it, you know--for eggs, and pork, and chickens--they raised their own. There's no trace of that now. There were old willow trees that the boys would climb up on the fence and cut wood off of for to make whistles in the spring. And then they would bring the wood back and throw it in the rain barrel for seasoning for a week, and then pull it out and beat it around and make their whistles.

Q. They had to be wet, then, to make the whistle good.

A. They had to be soaked in water and then they had to be tapped around to loosen the bark, and then the bark could be pulled off and shaped for the whistle. Now, one time Mr. D.W. was coming down the street from the Post Office, which he rarely did because he had help to get his mail, and I saw him coming on the other side of the street and I had a whistle that was known as a mocking bird whistle. You know, you made it so it would slip out, it would vary the tone. And I was blowing it and the old gentleman

looked up the tree. Well, I knew he thought it was a bird so then I played to imitate a bird. And he would walk along a few feet and he'd look up in the tree and then he'd look at me. He suspected me. Well, I didn't want to get caught so I tried to keep it out ^{of} sight. But I think he went home still doubtful.

Q. What about their store? What did they sell in their store? Was it right in front of the house?

A. It was a general store as all the stores were in those days.

Q. About what time would that have been, early 1900's?

A. Well, Mr. Corbit was born I believe in, oh, between '60 and '63 and it was within his lifetime. And he said that--things came in wooden boxes in those days and the storekeeper would pile the empty boxes between the Corbit house and the store and the boys would steal 'em and--before Halloween--because on Halloween they made a big bonfire. (Where?) I don't know, probably in the road. Now, I forget who kept the store. There was a Beaston, and somebody. And of course he had the store also where Mr. Sharp later made into the garage next to the Pump house.

Q. Well, D.W.'s daughters were Mrs. Curtis and Mrs. Doer.

A. That's right.

Q. Did Mrs. Doer live in the Corbit-Sharp house when Rodney Sharp came and saw it?

A. No, she had moved to Wilmington--I believe it was Wauwausett. But that was some time after Mr. D.W.'s death. But nobody was living in the house when it was bought by Mr. Sharp, is that right? Just a caretaker?

Q. Well, you could call it a caretaker. At first the secretary of

the old Electro Company and the Postmistress, added together.
And then later Mr. Whittington and his family moved in.

Q. They rented it, then. They rented the house.

A. I suppose they did. They had it at very low rent or no rent, I don't know which. When Whittington was in there, at one time, there was a snake up the big buttonwood tree on the side and there was a porch there which has since been taken away, and a fellow came out on the porch roof and they came over to get me to shoot the snake. Well, I told the fellow to go back in the house because if that snake dropped down he was liable to jump off the roof. So I had a 22--or a 410 gauge gun and I shot the snake in the head and down he came, a'tumbling.

Q. You sound like a good marksman.

A. I'm not a good marksman--hardly hit a barn.

Q. Well, you hit him right.

A. Yes. It was a stationary target.

Q. It was a big black snake and the Whittingtons weren't used to them around here, right?

A. Well, there's very few people that would like snakes for next-door neighbors.

Q. But we do have a lot of them around here, in the trees in the summer.
(Yes) Well, have you been a hunter?

A. With very little success.

Q. Were there any famous hunters around the early 1900's around here--good hunters that people talked about?

A. Yes, my uncle George Davis, he was a fairly good shot and Mr. Dell Davis. And then there were the Hellers who lived in--I'd call it

the Heller house--I think Mrs. Warner called it the Thomas house. Thomases were her ancestors. And she was responsible for having the figures--the date made by a blacksmith and installed on the house. And I believe that was so with the Wilson Warner house, too.

Q. Now who was she? Who was Mrs. Warner?

A. She was a younger sister of Mr. D.W. Corbit. Now Mr. D.W. was always spoken of as Mr. D.W. and Mr. Dan was Mr. Daniel Corbit.

Q. Were they brothers, or father and son?

A. Mr. D.W. was an uncle of Mr. Daniel Corbit and Mr. Alek, who was Mr. Dan's older brother.

Q. Did Daniel and Alek spend their lives in Odessa, too?

A. They spent their whole lives in Odessa.

Q. Did they have any sons in this generation or any grandsons in this generation?

A. Neither one of them ever married. Now they were the sons of Mr. John Corbit who was a leading man of his day and he and Mr. Daniel Corbit looked exactly alike, because the bank had pictures of him as the first president--of course I knew Mr. Daniel.

Q. Well, who was the father of Mrs. Curtis and Mrs. Doer?

A. Mr. D.W.

Q. I thought you said he never married.

A. No. Mr. Daniel Corbit, a nephew of his, never married.

Q. They had many farms around the area, is that right? The Corbit family?

A. They had farms from here to Dover. Now most of them were on the east of Route 13 and they got progressively poorer. Now, there was one man that Mr. Corbit thought of as an especially good farmer and he

told me at one time that the University of Delaware sent a man around to advise the farmers to use lime--the soil, you know, was too acid for most crops. Well, this farmer thought he would try it out so he took a couple of acres and he bought lime at his own expense and spread it. Well, the crop increased so that the next year he proposed to Mr. Corbit that they lime the whole farm, you know, on shares. Mr. Corbit refused because his grandfather hadn't done it. You could go down the creek and look at his farm buildings and you could tell which ones were Corbit's because the roofs weren't painted very much.

Q. They didn't manage the farms very well, then, I guess. They might have left it up to the individual farmer too much--the tenant.

A. Mr. Corbit said that he had an agreement with each of these farmers that he would buy them a hatchet and nails if he would do the nailing. Once, you know--there were still some of the Roses around and one worked for him and he applied for a raise and Mr. Corbit said, Bertie, I know that you talk to the women in the kitchen and the time you take off to go blackberrying--No.

Q. Did he work directly for him in the store and the house or was he one of his farmers?

A. No, he was a carpenter.

Q. And he did his repair work?

A. Yes, and you know he also owned the mill at Smyrna on Lake Como.

Q. Mr. Rose or Mr. Corbit?

A. Mr. Corbit. Now it had come--he had inherited it. I don't know--from the Spruances, because they were related to the Spruances--

Q. And they were a Smyrna family--Spruance. (Yes) My aunt Ethel--

or Aunt Evelyn--is a Spruance--Aunt Evelyn Poole.

A. Well, I can't--Sruance is just a name--I don't know.

Q. That was his mother's family, was it--Sruance?

A. No, his mother was a Peterson and they were a Philadelphia family that had made their money out of tanning. Now Mr. Alek, he was the oldest and my uncle called him Pete for a nickname.

Q. This was your Uncle George.

A. Yes. And I asked my father why does Uncle call him Pete? Well, he said, because his middle name is Peterson--Alex Peterson Corbit. And then he called me Pete, too. Well, there was no reason for that besides I was just a kid and it was just another nickname.

Q. Your middle name is Vandergrift. (Yes) And the Vandergrifts were very early Quakers, is that right? They came here very early?

A. They came here years ago but I don't know whether they were Quakers. They were Presbyterians in my time.

Q. The Corbits were Quakers, weren't they?

A. The Corbits were Quakers. The Corbits got a lot of their farms by inheritance. The older Corbits would marry one wife, then after a few years she would die, he'd marry again, and he always had his eye on what she'd inherit. So he ended up with it all.

Q. What were another family besides the Spruances? Did they marry into the Cochrans? Did they ever marry a Cochran?

A. I don't know. Now, Miss Spruance kept house for Mr. Corbit

Q.
until her death. Who was she? Was she from Smyrna?

A. She was originally from Smyrna and she had a brother who I believe was a dairy farmer. And of course there was the settlement on the

edge of Smyrna known as Spruance City.

Q. That's gone now, isn't it? Is that gone now?

A. I really don't know. I heard Mr. Corbit speak of it often, but of course Mr. Corbit's been gone for about forty years--or very near it. Now Mr. Corbit, when he was younger, he weighed around 225 pounds.

Q. Was he fat, or just heavy built?

A. He didn't exercise, he had somebody to do everything for him, and I believe he had done some running in college. Now, when he went to Haverford College later--but first he went up to some school on the old Delaware Raretan Canal--I've forgotten the place. But he often said that he was sent away to school when he was 12 years old and he stayed away through college. Now during college he boarded with his grandparents, the Petersons, in Philadelphia and they had a nice house--I think it was on Arch Street, and he inherited it. And when he was filling out his tax return one year he came to my father for a little advice, and he said that the area had deteriorated and that while he still owned the property he rented it for a cheap rooming house, and that it was assessed for something over \$100,000. Well, of course, we could hardly believe that in Odessa.

Q. Did he have any interest in the cannery--or the canneries? Did you have two in Odessa?

A. We had two. One belonged to the Baker family and Mr.--he was known as Old Man Billy Baker--had started in the canning business years ago. At his death it descended to his son who was Mr. Hollis Baker. And he ran it until his death and it descended to his widow who

married Mr. Walter Smith who was also of a canning family.

Q. Where were the canneries located?

A. The Baker cannery was where my father called the lower store.

Now that was down on Mrs. Callaway's property. Now that had been occupied, the same ground, by Lord and Poke earlier. The property was first occupied by a granary, then Lord and Poke who were a fertilizer manufacturer. Now they got in phosphate rock from the Carolinas by boat and they also got in sulphuric acid in quantity. And my uncle was the salesman. And then in time they joined--merged with a larger company, and when Edwin broke it took Lord and Poke with it. They were doing all right but they couldn't survive--and then in time Bakers' cannery inhabited the same site.

Q. When was that--the Bakers were in business--early 1900's?

A. Yes. Now the Baker cannery had in the first place been around behind the creamery, but in a high tide they were sometimes flooded out there, so they moved their factory to further down the creek.

Q. They got their supplies by boat?

A. They got their cans--they never made them.

Q. Now did the other cannery make their own cans?

A. The Watkins cannery, it made their own cans.

Q. Where was the Watkins cannery?

A. It was on south Main Street right at the foot of the hill on the left-hand side and they had a husking shed across the road. Now Mr. Watkins had started out as the owner of a boat and a store. Now he canned plum puddings to begin with, and he canned peas, and I believe tomatoes and corn. Now in time he found the plum puddings

didn't pay and he let two local men use the cannery for that in the wintertime.

Q. Who were they--the two local men?

A. Mr. Echols was one of them and I forget who his partner was. Now Mr. Watkins had been successful but later they had a batch of puddings that spoiled on 'em before they were canned, you know.

Q. Did that ruin the cannery?

A. That ruined the plum pudding business. They went out of that operation. Now, the older men have spoken about 'em canning peas. They would plant peas and they would be harvested by hands--there were no viners in those days and they'd be brought into town and let around to different ladies for shelling.

Q. Now, when would this have been? Before the first World War?

A. I can't tell you the year, but from the age of the men it had to be after the Civil War and before World War I.

Q. So people would do the shelling in their home.

A. Yes, labor was cheap in those days

Q. How did they take care of the tomatoes and corn?

A. Well, I can only tell you what happened in my day around the first World War. There was much more hand work in the cannery in those days. A boy worked for 10 hours for 75¢ and it was no trouble to get them. There was two boys both of them about two years younger than I am, both of them still living, that worked there. And my father wouldn't let me work in the cannery till I was 14 years old, and that kind of hurt my feelings, but he wouldn't. Now, they were two years younger and they had started in the cannery two years before I had--that would have made them four years younger--

they were either nine or ten years old.

Q. That was in the summertime, when all the food was harvested.

A. Yes, the Watkins cannery had come down to corn only by that time.

Q. Was that after Mr. Frank Watkins died.

A. No, before. Now the cans were sealed by machine, they were soldered shut. The irons were heated by gasoline. And of course the Watkins made their own cans until it was more economical to buy them from the American Can Company. And until the sealing machines came into use. Now they cut the steel plate out by hand, soldered the sides and the ends, and Mr. Dell Davis used to tell of the man who worked making cans with him that was so much faster, but he said that when the cans were used then the difference showed up. The other fellow's cans weren't tight--he had taken time to seal his and the other fellow's had leaks in them. And I remember when we were labelling after the season every night we'd have a couple of baskets, at least, of swell-heads to throw out.

Q. When did the Watkins cannery stop?

A. Well, it last belonged to Mrs. Frank Watkins and her son-in-law, Mr. Smith, he operated for several years.

Q. Was the Bakers' cannery still in business when the Watkins' was?

A. Yes. Now, I kept on working for the cannery and Mr. Smith said to me that he would give me a job processing. He said what am I going to have to pay you--how does thirty dollars a week look?--and thirty dollars a week in those days looked like more money than I'd ever seen. And I said, fine. And I think some of the other boys maybe got ten dollars more. Well, if he'd known he could have beat them down, but he didn't.

- Q. About how many people would they employ at the height of the season when the corn was coming in very fast?
- A. They got help from Baltimore. Now, the local people called them Bo-hicks and I think that came from--originally they'd been Bohemians from Germany, but in later days Bakers went to Poles.
- Q. Why didn't they employ the black people?
- A. Well, now, Watkins did. They got theirs from down in one of the counties in Virginia--you know, Delmarva Peninsula.
- Q. They didn't have local black people, in the cannery?
- A. Oh, they had some but--
- Q. But they needed a whole lot more, then. What were the brand names? You said the Owl brand was Watkins, what was Bakers?
- A. The Baker family had been left the rights to the Baker brand but it had been split up between different families--different grandchildren. Now I understood that the Baker whole grain corn went to the coal-mining regions greatly, it was popular there. Watkins' went to Thomas Roberts and Company who was a Philadelphia house and they canned under their Owl brand which was their own or under one of Thomas Roberts' brands and they had several brands.
- Q. Are any of our present canners offshoots or were any of them the buyers of like Roberts, for instance? Like Heinz or Campbells. Did they buy some of those small canneries?
- A. No. Now, Campbell canned tomatoes from around here and there was some went to Baltimore, I don't know who--by boat. There would be four or five boats anchored at the creek at one time waiting because they couldn't all get up to the wharf to load.
- Q. That was taking the canned goods down to Baltimore? They shipped

to Baltimore, and of course Watkins shipped to Philadelphia, didn't they?

- A. Yes, by the old Clio originally. Bakers had a wharf on the creek and of course Watkins did, too.
- Q. Had the Bakers been a local family, too? Had the Watkins come here from their store in McDonough?
- A. Mr. Watkins was the son of Mr. Gassaway Watkins.
- Q. And he and his brother John ran the cannery, was that right?
- A. They had the cannery. Now Mr. John had started out as the captain of the Clio and later he went to Smyrna as captain of the Brady-- the boat out of there. Then I believe he didn't come back to Odessa until his father's death.
- Q. And that's when he started the cannery?
- A. No. The cannery was going--the old gentleman started it. Now Mr. Corbit, you know, he said Mr. Watkins got a start from money left by his wife's relatives, the Zelaphros. Well, I don't know anything about that, but they were related.
- Q. Who were they--the Zelaphros?
- A. Deed I don't know who they were. They were a family of around here, say in the 1840's or '50's, before the Civil War. Now, Mrs. Watkins, she had been a Whitby. And they were related to the Blaccistons-- Mr. Frank's name was Mr. Francis Blacciston, his mother was Frances, and I don't know but I expect she was Blacciston, too--Whitby (or Woodby).
- Q. Do you know where the Blaccistons came from?
- A. I have no idea. But you know, down off Tanzin and Smyrna towards the Maryland line there's a little place called Blacciston's Crossroads and I have an idea that was named for them.

- Q. How long did the Bakers continue in business? Did they continue past the Watkins' time?
- A. No. Mr. Baker was the second husband of Mrs. Hollis Baker and he ran it for a couple of years and then Mr. Baker's daughter came up and her husband--she had married a young fellow by the name of Terry--now he later moved to Newark, too.
- Q. Oh, did the other Bakers move to Newark?
- A. They were an Aberdeen family .
- Q. Were the earliest settlers of Odessa the Corbit family? Or were there other families as well?
- A. Oh, there were other families.
- Q. Where did the Corbits come from? England?
- A. I don't know. Now, down at Thomas's landing there were several graves on the farm with little headstones and they went back into the 1700's, and probably they've been plowed over by now, I don't know.
- Q. And these were early Corbit graves?
- A. Now Mr. John Corbit, he bought shad, but he refused to pay more than 25¢ for a nice fat row of shad.
- Q. Did you get them in the Appoquinimink?
- A. Occasionally, but most of 'em were caught in the Delaware. The river wasn't so polluted in those days and fish were caught up off of--above Port Penn.
- Q. Do you remember fishing for shad?
- A. It took more equipment. Now there were boats known as shad skiffs-- they were perhaps under twenty feet long and most of them had a

center board and a place to set up a mast. And then they got gasoline engines and the earliest ones I believe were made in Chester--cast and they were single cylinders, most of them and they made about 500 revolutions a minute which is a long way under what the more modern ones make, and they were usually under five horsepower.

Q. When did they start to fish for the shad, in March or April? Or May?

A. I would say April and May would be the principal months.

Q. And Mr. Corbit offered you 25¢.

A. Then later Mr. Dan would go to Port Penn to meet the boats and he went on weekends because the boats that brought the shad didn't come in on Saturday, he would go because you could buy the fish at your own price practically then. He'd go with a farm wagon but he complained that he made nothing by it because he met so many of his friends on the way home that wanted the shad. And the women on the farm complained because they had to clean and pickle shad on Saturday afternoon.

Q. They pickled it, did you say?

A. Why, sure.

Q. Oh, I thought they were going to cook it.

A. He wanted to keep it for winter.

Q. Oh. What does a pickled shad taste like?

A. Well, it's brought out of the barrel and washed in fresh water, of course, take as much salt as possible out of it. This freezing of pork and all that's been done in recent years--you know all the pork used to be pickled. Now some of it was dry pickled but all of it came up very salty.

Q. Were there some people whose table was known as very good--very good cooks--when you were growing up?

A. Yes, the last good cook around here was Rebecca Watson and she said she'd learned to cook from Mrs. Alonzo Whittick.

Q. This is the black woman you're talking about. (Yes) And who did she cook for?

A. She had cooked for Mrs. Whittick to begin with but usually the blacks themselves, you know--they had to learn to cook in a white kitchen and from a white woman.

Q. What would be Rebecca's specialties? Like what would be a good kind of food that we might not do now? Like scalloped oysters, for instance? They made their own breads, didn't they? They made Sally Lunn, for instance--hot breads? Well, my mother used to make corn pone, you know. Local millers ground corn meal and when it had an egg or two mixed with it and a little milk--and some people made hot cakes with just water--

Q. Did they call them corn cakes? Did anyone in Odessa make Maryland biscuit? With an axe?

A. A number of people. You know, we've got the old biscuit block that my grandfather had made for my grandmother and she had a lighter ax to beat 'em with. Now she didn't beat 'em in my day-- I beat 'em a time or two and she bossed the job.

Q. Did you make those and keep them for quite a while, or were they made quite often?

A. We didn't think they had to be used in a day or two, but we didn't make them weeks ahead

Q. What were some of the other cooking things that we might remember?

People did make their own hotcakes for breakfast, didn't they?

They tended to have hotcakes and sausage? For breakfast? (Yes)

They had big breakfasts.

A. Yes, we had a big breakfast.

Q. Flannel cakes. Tell people about flannel cakes. Weren't they a Delaware thing--didn't we do flannel cakes for breakfast?

A. We didn't--the biggest part of the time for breakfast we had cornmeal cakes and they were thin, you know.

Q. And very good.

A. Yes. And sausage and scrapple.

Q. What about eggs? Were they served, too?

A. Every family had their own chickens and they had fresh eggs.

Q. What about flannel cakes? Do you remember them? Because I remember them at my grandfather Poole's and Hattie was their cook--Hattie Spencer--she made delicious flannel cakes, and they were fat, they raised up--and buckwheat cakes, don't forget them.

A. Well now, I didn't know about buckwheat. Now, Uncle George got meal--buckwheat meal from a mill in Pennsylvania but locally they didn't grind it.

Q. That is supposed to make very good hotcakes.

A. The Corbits ate buckwheat cakes, but we never did.

Q. You're talking about the Davises, now--your Uncle George--the Davis

A.
family. (Yes) You're not talking about the Vandergrifts--you're

A.
talking about the Davises. The Vandergrifts were such a large family, I couldn't talk about 'em--I didn't know most of 'em.

Q. What would you have for lunch in those days?

A. Probably scraps left over from breakfast.

- Q. What would you have for dinner? It was heavy on the pork side, wasn't it, for meat?
- A. The beef was so tough you couldn't chew it, the biggest part of the time. Now, we had two local butcher shops and they slaughtered their own meat.
- Q. You made your own scrapple, and sausage.
- A. Our sausage was bought from a farm and our scrapple would be bought in town very often. Now, it would be made in a ten-pound pan, a large pan, and then it would be coated all across the top with grease, and that was to make a layer over-top that could be scraped off and discarded when it molded.
- Q. And it didn't hurt the meat itself?
- A. It didn't hurt the scrapple. They coated it over the top so the mold could be scraped off. And their sausage was taken to the third story--the attic--and stored on a couple of clotheslines, cotton clotheslines, and they would have one on each end--pieces of stiff cardboard that a hole was pierced in to fit over the clothesline to guard against mice, because the mice would go up for a taste of sausage.
- Q. But the attic kept it cold enough.
- A. It was unheated. And here my uncle took out the sash in the north window and let the wind blow in.
- Q. Oh, that's so interesting. You had wind-blown cold cuts.
- A. Sausage. And, you know, Margaret said the same thing--in the spring the sausage got a peculiar taste and I always said--it got a soapy taste. And I suppose that was from the fat in it, probably.
- Q. But it didn't make anybody sick, did it?

- A. We ate just the same and seemingly stayed healthy.
- Q. What kind--where did you store your pork--your ham?
- A. We didn't have it. You know, when we had ham, we'd go to the store and buy it. Now I remember when they had butcher shops and the one in Middletown, they would have the door open except the very coldest days in winter, and the carcasses of hogs and sheep and a quarter of a beef hanging up on hooks on a rack.
- Q. What kind of cooking was Rebecca Watson famous for. You could name her as one of the best cooks so you must have heard about it from other people.
- A. Her grandmother was Hester Watson and she had come up from down in the lower counties of Maryland or Virginia, I don't know which. And she brought up the recipe for oyster pie, and that was very good.
- Q. Was that made with a pie crust?
- A. Yes, it had a top crust and a lot of oysters in between that and the bottom. And it was very filling.
- Q. You remember having it?
- A. Yes, I certainly do.
- Q. You would go over to Whitticks and--
- A. No, she also worked for my mother and my grandmother.
- Q. And she really could cook.
- A. She could cool. And Rebecca got it from her grandmother, Hester, and Mrs. Whittick.
- Q. Do you remember what she might have put in the oyster pie? I never heard of an oyster pie before.
- A. You never tasted--
- Q. My grandmother Poole used to make a scalloped oyster with cracker crumbs--a casserole--that was very good. They were called scalloped

oysters.

- A. Well, we would have oysters every way. We would have scalloped oysters and they were good. It didn't matter how you cooked 'em, an oyster was good.
- Q. What about the oyster pie, did you cut it at the table? Was it like a regular pie?
- A. Yes, you'd bring it to the table and cut it into sections and scoop it out.
- Q. Was it mostly just oysters and seasoning and pie crust?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And didn't people have hot rolls for dinner a lot? Didn't they make their hot rolls? Not so much bread but hot rolls?
- A. Yes. We also had, you know the sweet rolls they called rusk. Now Mrs. Ennis was great for making them, and other people, too.
- Q. They were delicious.
- A. Now, in those days they made chicken salad and it wasn't made out of Wesson Oil or Mazola, it was made out of olive oil. My grandfather always kept a gallon of that setting around the house.
- Q. Well, it's the only way to make a good dressing.
- A. Well, I agree. But of course it's too expensive nowadays, and they've learned about cholesterol. Now, grandfather had a cough and he would go and get a spoonful or two of olive oil and take that for the cough. And mother would give me, if I got a cough she'd give me some. Well, I dare not let Mother see that I liked it, so I'd make a face and pretend that I hated the taste of it. And she did. And she would often add a little salt to it, but I liked the olive oil. And she'd give me a big spoonful and then turn her back so she wouldn't see the face I made.

Q. Before we end this tape, Mr. Davis, could you tell us something about Old Drawyers Church and your work there, and your family, at Old Drawyers?

A. Well, the Vandergrifts and the Asprells, who were connected-- if you look in the graveyard you can see the connection--and my grandfather had a lot there. My brother was buried there in 1912 and my grandmother in 1925 and my grandfather in 1931. And then later my father and my mother. But my great-grandfather, who was Isaac Hyatt Vandergrift and his wife and most of his children had been buried there years before.

Q. Who was John Hyatt?

A. He was president of the Friends of Old Drawyers, oh about 1935. And he got into a squabble with the rest of the board and he appointed me to take care of the grounds. At that time Mr. James Shallcross had charge of it and I went to Mr. George Janvier and I asked him about it. And he said disregard it. Well, Mr. Hyatt had not thought to ask me, he just told me that I was appointed. He said that Mr. Janvier said ignore it. So I did. Now, Mr. Janvier was a great friend of my father's so years later Mr. Mather said that I should be on the board. So I agreed. Now, my earliest recollection--the lots were taken care of by each lot holder, paid old Enoch Wiggins who mowed the cemeteries my hand--and his son William--came around just before Christmas and collected one or two dollars from the lot holders. But after that the Friends of Old Drawyers took complete charge of it and they got perpetual care on the lots. Well, for some years I paid them every year. I think they charged two dollars a year. And then I said, well I'm not

going to last forever so I'll pay them the perpetual care. At that time that was \$100--you paid once. Well, of course, there's a lot of families had moved away over the years or the last remaining members had died out and they pay nothing, and the cost has gone up so in recent years from \$2000 to \$4000 a year. Well, in my time the bumblebees had bored into the wood frames of one of the upper windows and loosened the hinge so that when the wind blew the whole shutter would come down, and that could be serious, so Mr. Collins and I bored through and drove a pin through the hinge so it couldn't come off. And then the hinge broke. Well, we found a blacksmith shop and had it repaired. And Mr. Collins was very interested in the cemetery and kept it in good shape. Now, I think he had worked for the cemetery for about 28 or 30 years, but then he was a retired farmer and his rheumatism got to troubling him some and his wife died, so he was forced to retire. The next man demanded twice as much money and was given it. Times change. They stole a couple of panels out of the front fence, it was pipe and post, and they found out it was cheaper to take the fence down.

Q. Than to replace that, you mean?

A. Yes. They bought the posts and then never put them in. You know, even oak posts, they won't last long unless they are pressure-treated. And then somebody with a truck and stad bumper ran into one of the cement posts of the north gate and pushed it over. And Mr. Collins got his son-in-law and mixed up a little mortar and repaired the gate. Well, he wasn't paid extra for that.

Q. Who is taking care of it now? Who took Mr. Collins' place?

A. Mr. Maiers--his wife works in the bank, you know. But he's got

one of these campers and a boat and he works for one of the horse farms mowing grass the rest of the week. It's really only a part-time job with him. And he has no interest in it.

Q. Coming back to the bank again, I thought I remember something about-- was there ever an attempt on the bank, there wasn't, was there?

A. No. The burglar alarm went off one night and my father backed up-- and my mother--went out to inspect it from the outside. But they found nothing. The bank later bought a Colt-45 automatic and a 38-Smith and Wesson revolver, but they were kept in the bank. Father had this old pistol that he'd been afraid to pull the trigger on--

Q. Was one of your ancestors one of the formers of the bank in Odessa?

A. Yes.

Q. What was his name?

A. I know his name well enough but you asking me has driven it out of my head.

Q. Was it your great-grandfather?

A. My great-grandfather, yes. Of course, the Corbits and the Watkins-- another was Mr. Carrsoner. I think he was your great uncle, wasn't he--lived there, that farm.

Q. I don't know that name.

A. He built the house where your uncle Clarence lived in your day.

Q. Monterey-- (Yes) at McDonough.

A. Yes. Now, he was supposed to have spent--overspent--and he lost the house and Mr. Poole was there and he'd made money, through the Civil War partly, and he bought it.

Q. Was Mr. Clarence Poole on the board of the bank?

A. Mr. Clarence Poole, Mr. James Shallcross--there was always a Corbit, the President. Now first Mr. D.W. Corbit in my time, then next

Mr. Alek Corbit the next oldest, then Mr. Daniel Corbit.

Q. There's no Corbit on the bank board now?

A. There is no Corbit.

Q. When did they move the money from Philadelphia?

A. Now, the first president of the bank was Mr. Charles Tatman.

Q. I remember that name, Tatman. (Yes) But you kept the money in Philadelphia--the major investment of the bank was in Philadelphia?

A. Yes. Sometimes their investments turned out well, sometimes they didn't. And of course the depression knocked all that in the head. And my father, because of the advancing age of Mr. Brown, he often had to go up to clip coupons.

Q. But were the major funds in the Philadelphia bank? That's what I understood you to say. Not just investments, but did you have to go up to the Philadelphia bank--were the major funds, the reserves, up there, for the Odessa bank?

A. Through the Federal Reserve System. You know, they were limited in the things they could invest in and I remember when there was a Mr. Gray--he was the son of Judge Gray that had been a national figure.

Q. Was that George Gray? I think his name was George Gray, Judge George Gray. There is a George Gray school in Wilmington and then George Gray Sarrong was a Chief Justice of the state. I think it was the same family.

A. Yes. That's probably it. Now, this man, oh he was in his fifties at least. He would expect to sell Mr. Corbit and he would be entertained at lunch by Mr. Corbit--he was a diabetic, and then he would come over to the store later for a piece of candy.

Q. Now, what relation was he to the Judge Gray?

A. A son. Now, I think he had at least one brother who was a

well thought of lawyer, but this man was a salesman for Laird, Bissell and Meades I suppose, but I don't know that. And I'd be behind the counter and peer at the gumdrops and finally he'd select one gumdrop that he wanted, and only one. Of course I'd be disgusted, but he was a diabetic--

Q. So he couldn't help it--he wanted one gumdrop.

A. Yes, and he'd pick out usually a green gumdrop. But he would attend the Directors' meetings and try to sell them some stock first, and then he'd, with the President, Mr. Corbit, he'd have lunch, and then he'd come over.

Q. What were some of your favorite, best-selling candies in the store?

A. Well, there were the pillows which were little hard candies in the shape of a pillow, and they came in several flavors--peppermint, wintergreen and various others. And of course most of the others were jelly beans, peanut brittle--

Q. What about those small Hersheys--remember those small Hersheys that were just a penny, and those small peanut bars that were--we used to buy those, I remember--two of those little Hersheys and a peanut bar and eat them together. They were not expensive then.

A. Well, I never remember any Hersheys that small, but later there was a Kleins bar--peanut bar after the manner of a Hershey. I used to buy Hersheys in kisses in 25-pound lots and then after the store was closed bag them up in pound bags and sell them for a quarter. And I'd do the same with jelly beans, and sell them for 10¢.

Q. It was nice to be able to have your own candy and ice cream, wasn't it?

A. Yes, but the candy gets tiresome after awhile. My uncle gave me free run of the candy case--

Q. Was that your Uncle George.

A. Yes, that was the one. And he had a marvelous assortment of candy. He was the agent for years for Lamneys. Now you never heard of Lamneys.

Q. I think I have. Candy.

A. Yes. And then later he was the agent for Whitmans--both their line of boxed goods and their loose candy. He had 5-pound enameled tins that set in the showcase, about ten kinds, and a different kind in each. There was one kind called Montevideos and they had half an English walnut on each one.

Q. With a chocolate covering or a candy covering?

A. They were a creme filling with a half a nut on the chocolate of each.

Q. I remember those. They were like a fondant with a walnut. The creme filling I think was called a fondant.

A. It may have been, I don't know. Then he would have Jordan almonds, he would have burnt almonds, and he would have chocolate almonds. Then there would be a piece known as chips, a kind of a hard molasses filling--

Q. With holes in it.

A. No. The sponge--that was a separate piece. The almonds sold for a dollar a pound, and the other candy for 80¢. Then the boys were making good money off of muskrat hides in those days--and he would go up around Christmas to Philadelphia and then a shipment of candy come in--500 pounds. And that for us, a little store, was a lot of candy.

Q. How long did it take to sell it?

A. Well, around Christmas he would want to get rid of some kinds--

now there would be black walnut candy and that was just a shallow pan of black walnuts glued together with (syrup) syrup--yes--

Q. And it was good, too.

A. And I think it sold for around a dollar a pound.

Q. They weren't really cheap as things went--those candies were pretty high priced.

A. No. Other things were so low in those days that that was a lot of money. I remember ^{Rainer}~~Baker~~--he liked the black walnut. He came in and asked me for a chunk of it one day and I cut him off some and I was going to charge him a dollar a pound. Well, as far as I had ever heard that was the price of it but it was after Christmas and Uncle George had wanted to get out of that kind so he had cut the price down to 80¢. Well, I hadn't heard anything about it, he hadn't told me, so Rainer said that he would buy no more candy from me.

Q. Well, thank you very much.