

Lillian M. Peters Gutekunst

Transcript of the oral interview with Lillian M. Gutekunst conducted by Marcia Ticknor on July 21, 2000, at Mrs Gutekunst's home in Saline. Mrs. Gutekunst and Ms. Ticknor reviewed the transcript. Corrections are reflected in the transcript and additional comments are italicized and inserted between brackets [like this].



Interview Summary

Lillian M. Peters Gutekunst was born in Clare County, Michigan. She came to Ann Arbor in her teens with her family in 1926. She went to Saline High School. She married Walter Gutekunst and they had two children. She lived around Pittsfield Junction and remembers the trains and the station, which had a big waiting room but no water or toilet facilities. She remembers the East family's muck ground where they grew onions that were loaded onto boxcars for transport to market.

She was active in the Sutherland PTA when her sons were in school. She was also a member of the Pittsfield Grange and the Extension group. She remembers when they were building the Grange Hall on Saline-Ann Arbor Road, and she remembers the dances. She also worked at the Ann Arbor News and she worked on the election board.

Mrs. Gutekunst remembers a muck fire that burned all summer, the road gangs that came to work on the railroads, when almost all the roads including State Street were dirt roads and very bumpy, and the neighborhood farm families in the area.

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Lillian M. Peters Gutekunst Interview

I

R Interviewer (Marcia Ticknor)

I Respondent (Lillian Gutekunst)

I: [July] 21st, 2000, and I'm going to interview Lillian Gutekunst. We're at her home at 6385 Lodi Lane, Saline, Michigan. Would you give me your full name?

R: Lillian M. Gutekunst.

I: Okay. And probably now would be a good time to talk, repeat today's date, it's July 21st, 2000. Okay. What was your spouse's name?

R: Walter.

I: Walter Gutekunst.

R: Yeah. Uh-hm.

I: And where were you born?

R: In Clare County [Michigan].

I: Okay, so ...

R: Michigan.

I: ... about the middle of the state.

R: Uh-hm.

I: And did you grow up up there?

R: Well, I lived there till I was about fourteen.

I: Okay.

R: So we've been ... my father moved ... we moved from there to Mears, Michigan ...

I: Okay.

R: ... which is near Hart. And while he was working for that company they transferred him to Ann Arbor, and that's how I ended up in Ann Arbor.

I: Okay. So that was about 1926?

R: Yes. Uh-hm.

I: And so when you came to Ann Arbor ... Well, first of all, did you have any siblings?

R: Oh, yes. I am the oldest of seven children.

I: Oh, wow.

R: And I had three brothers and three sisters. I have only one sister living as of this date.

I: Okay. And what's her name?

R: Zella Polliely.

I: Okay. And where did you live in Pittsfield Township?

R: Where did I?

I: Yes.

R: 14 Payeur Road. Right at Pittsfield Junction.

I: Okay. I believe one time you told me that you lived on Marton Road at the farm?

R: My father lived on Marton Road at the farm where my sister Zella now lives.

I: Okay. That was ... that was ...

R: ... before I was married, yes. Uh-hm.

I: Okay. So did you ever live there on the farm then too?

R: Yes, I was there for about a year or longer.

I: Oh, okay.

R: Uh-hm. And then my father moved back up north again.

I: Okay. So he wasn't down here for too long then.

R: No. He moved down here a couple times. One time he worked on the Ann Arbor Railroad and the other time he was farming on the farm out on Marton Road there.

I: Oh, okay. Where did you go to school at when you came to Pittsfield Township?

R: I went to Saline to school.

I: To Saline?

R: Uh-hm.

I:

R: So that would have been the big brick building downtown?

I: Yeah. Well, yeah, where the one is right on Saline-Ann Arbor Road downtown. It was a different school then. They tore it down and rebuilt. They have a new school there ...

I: Okay.

R: ... to what I went to school in.

I: Okay. And what ... I know on your letter here you said your work experience was some factory and some office clerk. Where did you work then?

R: Well, I worked at the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Office in the County Building.

I: Okay.

R: Oh, maybe four or five years. And I also worked at the Ann Arbor News for quite a number of years inserting the inserts into the newspaper.

I: Well, that kept you busy.

R: Yeah. Yes, it was part-time job, but ... and you were on call, you know. But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed working with the people.

I: Uh-huh.

R: And it was nice to work there at the Ann Arbor News. My son [Walter] had already been working there for a long time. [He retired from the Ann Arbor News in 1993]

I: Uh-huh. Okay. Well, let's go back to when you lived on Payeur Road. Now you lived ... you moved there when you got married then?

R: Yes. Uh-hm. My husband's parents lived there and we lived with them for a short time, and then his mother passed away and we still lived there with his father for about four years. And after the father passed away we bought the place from the other brother and sister and continued to live there until 1950.

I: Oh, okay.

R: That property had been in the family from 1913. Then my son bought it after we left, after we moved he bought it, and he lived there till 1959. So the property was in the family for a long time.

I: I guess so. Now you said your husband's mother and father lived there first. Could you give me their names also.

R: Ah, his name was John and her name was Christine and of course Gutekunst.

I:

R: Okay. And now this was by Pittsfield Junction?

I: Uh-hm.

R: Can you tell me any memories of living by the Junction?

I: Well, my father-in-law was station agent there. I can't tell you how many years because my husband used to tell me that he quit grade school at the eighth grade to work at the Junction in his father's place because his father farmed on some property that they owned also in Pittsfield Township. So he filled in the job there for his father and the father continued to hold that job. Oh, I think he only retired maybe two or three months before his death.

I: Oh.

R: And, well, I don't know how interested you are in the Junction, but that used to be a very busy place. They used to have passengers change from the New York Central to the Ann Arbor Railroad there. They had a big waiting room there, and then there was a small office where my father-in-law worked. And then there was another small building where there were several levers that he had [to operate] when a train would come on the New York Central, he had to change those levers to let them through because the Ann Arbor Railroad had the right of way.

I: Okay.

R: So any time that a train came through on the New York Central he had to move those levers. Later on they installed electrical equipment that would take care of it, but while he was still agent, he always had to throw those levers. There were, oh, maybe eight or ten big levers that he had to pull back and forth.

I: How did he know a train was coming?

R: Well, he had to be ... he had to be there at the station most of the time and he knew the times when they would be coming.

I: Okay.

R: And of course he only had to watch for the New York Central because the Ann Arbor could go any time.

I: Uh-huh.

R: Incidentally, there were two passenger trains a day on the Ann Arbor Railroad at that time. And you could go there and there was a post with a chain and a flag, which you would pull that flag up and the train would stop and pick up a passenger and take you into Ann Arbor for about 15 cents, I think it was at that time. I did it more than once. I would get on the train there at Pittsfield Junction and go in Ann Arbor and come back the same way.

I: Oh.

R:

There was a train. A morning train went north and the afternoon train came south about 3:30, something like that. So it gave you a nice time in Ann Arbor to go shopping.

I:

So there were two trains a day that came through? Passengers?

R:

Well, passengers. There were many freight trains, but I think there were two regular passenger trains a day. And I also remember that John Feigel and Sam Morgan, Sr., used to bring cream over in like a five-gallon can and put it on the train, and that went on the passenger train to Toledo. It went down in the afternoon.

I:

Oh, okay.

R:

Uh-hm. The Easts, of course, always raised onions. They had a muck farm. And they would have a car, they'd have a railroad car put in there on the siding, and load that car with onions and ship them out of there.

I:

Okay.

R:

And different people would have bale ... hay come in. They might have hay come in on a carload, and they would have to unload it and take it out of there. So there was a lot of activity at that place.

I:

Boy, it sounds very busy. Where did the East ... where was the East Farm at?

R:

Up where Avis Farms is now.

I:

Oh, okay.

R:

Up in that ... back down in ... toward ... away from State Street.

I:

Down Lavender Lane there.

R:

No. They were up farther. They had their own ... They weren't on Lavender Lane. They were up farther [north].

I:

Oh, okay.

R:

Off of State that they had the property.

I:

Okay.

R:

See, Easts lived on ... I think it's Ellsworth Road where their old house is. But they owned a piece of muck ground back down in there, and they had their own land. There were two brothers. One of them was married and the other was not married. And they worked that farm and raised lots of onions and in the fall they'd ship those onions out. I don't know where they were shipped to, but I do remember cars being pulled in there for them to load.

I:

They'd load a whole car, train car, or what [a boxcar] ...

R: I assume they did.

I: ... of onions.

R: Otherwise they wouldn't have had a car pulled in probably.

I: Wow, that's a lot of onions.

R: Yeah.

I: So you ... you actually took the train into Ann Arbor then for the day at different times and ...

R: Oh, yes.

I: Did other neighbors do that also then? Was the train station a gathering place for the neighbors at all?

R: No. The people ... they ... there was no toilet, no water facilities. And there was a toilet out back across the railroad tracks where the switch was, you know. And some people that lived over there where Don and Evelyn [Ticknor] used to live (laughs), their toilet facilities gave out and that lady would go over and use this toilet that was there with the railroad property. I do remember that. Yeah. My father-in-law, when I ... when he first ... when I first was around, he had a little hand car that he put on the railroad track that had two wheels on one side and one on the other, and you had to pump it to make it go, but once ... I think once a week he had to go to these signal lights down the railroad tracks, oh, maybe two, three blocks each way and fill those lights with oil.

I: Oh.

R: Later on they became electric and were automatic too. But at the time that ... when I was first living there, that was a job he did once a week.

I: So did they burn all the time then?

R: Yeah.

I: Oh, okay.

R: See, when he would throw the levers for the other railroad, then a signal would come down that would have an arm sticking out and a red light showing so the train knew it had to stop back down the railroad a-ways.

I: Oh, okay.

R: Then when he would shift the levers, they got a green light and they could go.

I:

Okay. And now those are all automated. Because I know they still have the colored lights out there.

R:
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, there's ... everything is automatic there. I don't know if there's any trains go through on that New York Central anymore. Do they go up to 84 Lumber? I think they do.

I:
They go to ... they go to the Ford Plant. They go down to the Ford Plant in Saline.

R:
Oh, do they?

I:
Uh-hm.

R:
I didn't know if the train still came.

I:
That's as far as it goes, just ...

R:
Uh-hm.

I:
... to the Ford ... I think they may service some of the other bills, businesses in the [industrial] park over there.

R:
Oh.

I:
On ... off of Woodland, behind the rec center.

R:
Oh.

I:
I know they used to do Crosset Foods, but Crosset has moved.

R:
Oh, uh-hm.

I:
But there are some other buildings over there and they may ... they may ...

R:
Well, they do still come in there.

I:
But they do come into the Ford ...

R:
Uh-hm.

I:
... Plant and bring things there.

R:
Yeah, that's interesting.

I:
So that's very interesting to hear about the Junction. Since I grew up in that neighborhood too, I have some memories of the foundation, but that's ...

R:
Uh-hm.

I:

... that's the only memories I have.

R:

They were going to tear the building down and some fellows that worked for the railroad bought it. They wanted that wood. Well, they came down and worked one Saturday or Sunday and they didn't even make a dent in tearing it down. Well, my husband was interested in the wood too. And he made them an offer and they wouldn't take it. So by the end of the day they were so disgusted that they'd made so little progress tearing it down, they said, "If you want it for so much money, whatever the figure was, you can have it." They went home and never came back anymore. So my husband and friends came and tore it down, and they took it home and it was pre-cut and we hauled it up North. Morgan McCalla hauled it up north with a big semi, and we built the building up north, a hunting cabin, but it was all pre-cut.

I:

Uh-hm.

R:

They had decided the size of the building they were going to make and the rafters and the side rafters and everything. It was all pre-cut. They saved hauling all that extra lumber they didn't want.

I:

Uh-huh.

R:

And there was some part of it that Harry Payeur wanted. He was in the construction business at the time, and he wanted some ... certain things that were in the building and he offered Walt something. So he came out and did that building for almost nothing.

I:

Good!

R:

And we hauled it up north and built a building up there with it. Yeah.

I:

Good. So your husband worked there, took his dad's place different times to work in the Junction.

R:

When he was young, before he was married. Yeah.

I:

Oh, okay.

R:

Uh-hm. I don't know how many years, but his father ... see, the father owned some property on Morgan Road and along the Ann Arbor Railroad track. They owned 40 acres up there and part of that was muck. So he also raised onions and celery and chinese cabbage, and that's what he did when Walt would take over at the depot.

I:

Okay.

R:

So I think probably ... I think probably [his] father was able to do the job in the winter months. Maybe my husband just worked there when he was busy on the farm down there.

I:

Oh. But nobody has a picture of the Pittsfield Junction before it was torn down.

R:

Isn't that funny? Yeah. It is.

I: And what's really interesting is that I come across some information from the original historical society back in the early 80's.

R: Uh-hm.

I: And there was a little notice in there, We're looking for a picture of the Pittsfield Junction Train Station. We do have pictures of it being constructed.

R: You do?!

I: Yes. But it's not ... it's not a full picture. It's just part of the building.

R: Uh-hm.

I: And the signal arm by the building, but we don't have all of it. Tell me some more about some of the organizations that you were involved with in Pittsfield Township.

R: Well, let's see. I ... we had a Sutherland PTA when my sons were in school there at Sutherland School.

I: Okay.

R: We were very active in that. We used to have a potluck supper once a once, and usually had a program. Sometimes the group would choose up sides and we'd put on a play even. We even had contests to see which side could do the best with the play and then the side that lost had to treat the other side to a dinner or something like that. And then of course I was in the Pittsfield Grange almost 50 years. When I joined if you were a 50-year member you got your dues paid free. But they later cut that out.

I: Oh.

R: They didn't do that anymore. But I think I was ... oh, I was about four years short of being a 50-year member when I dropped out. And the main reason I dropped out was I didn't drive at night and my husband was no longer living. We'd both belonged to the Grange. So I would have had to drive over there at night alone and come home, and since I don't drive at night, that's why I dropped out.

I: What ... what did your involvement with the Grange ... I don't know a whole lot about the Grange and ... Could you tell me a little bit about the Grange.

R: Well, the Grange started out as a farm organization and it was kind of like a farmers' union. And they contacted different businesses and if they would buy from this particular business, that business might give them a ten percent discount. I know they had an agreement like that with Hertler Brothers for binder twine for the binders. They had an agreement like that with Wanty, the shoe store.

I: Okay.

R:

Because I did get a pair of shoes there at one time at Wanty's and because I belong to the Grange I got ten percent off or whatever. And I think there were other ... there may have been grocery stores I don't know. But it was kind of like a farmers' union and they honored us for that. I don't know too much about the Grange. The fellow who started it, his name was Oliver Hudson Kelly, and he was a Mason, and the Grange ritualism is very much taken after Masonic ritualism.

I:

Oh, okay.

R:

And then we would have ... at that time they had a county Grange meeting, and the state Grange. Once a year, you had a big state convention. And delegates were sent to the state convention. My husband and I went a couple of times as delegates to a state Grange. And when you were there you might get put on a committee. They had resolutions and you'd work on those resolutions to try and get them through and then if you got them through the Grange, then they'd present them to the state, you know.

I:

Uh-hm.

R:

In fact, when I first knew the Harwoods, they were building the Grange Hall because I can remember Mr. Harwood, that was Webb's father, used to bring his team and come over there and help dig the basement ...

I:

Oh.

R:

... for the Grange Hall.

I:

Okay.

R:

And of course the Grange used to put on dances. They made a lot of money over the years with those dances. And they had a time when the Grange members could get in free and the public had to pay to come to the dances. And I think my husband and I joined at the time that the Grange members could get in free. Well, then we later on became on the committee that run the dances. I don't know how many years we would work. They had three committees and two committees had to work every Saturday night.

I:

Hm.

R:

Then they always served the lunch downstairs. The kids could buy hog dogs and sloppy joes and I think they usually had cake to sell, and coffee. I don't know if they had pop or not. I think maybe they did. I'm not sure. But that went on for many years. It was hard to get people to work on the dance committee, because you were tied down. You see, you had one free Saturday night and then the next two you were always busy.

I:

Right.

R:

So you had to plan on being there, that's all.

I:

R: Right. And so did you do other social activities besides the dances for the community? Maybe ...

I: Oh, yeah. We ... there was some kind of a contest even in the Grange for community service. The Grange that did ... well, they would judge them at the state Grange level and then the Grange that had done the biggest community service usually got an award for doing that. Which was ... but, oh, I've just forgotten different things that we used to do for community service. Can't think right now.

R: Oh, that's okay. Ah ... and you ... oh, I see here that you worked on the election board?

I: Uh-hm. I worked on the election board in Pittsfield Township two or three times I guess before I moved into Lodi.

R: Oh, okay.

I: And I worked after I moved over in Lodi too on the election board. I think Ray Ticknor was chairman of the election board at one time that I worked [in Pittsfield].

R: Hm.

I: Forgotten who are some of the other people. We ... seemed like we worked at Carpenter School at one time.

R: Could be. I know Carpenter School is one of the precincts now.

I: Uh-hm. Well, I worked there one time and we worked somewhere else. I've forgotten where the other place ... Could have been a school house too. I don't remember where.

R: So you were ... you were living there when the Township Hall was over on Morgan ... on the corner of Thomas Road then.

I: Yeah. Uh-hm. Sure.

R: And so is that where ... that's where you went ...?

I: That old town hall? Didn't Harold and Losey buy that?

R: I think so.

I: Yeah. He did and he had bees. He kept bees there.

R: Uh-huh.

I: Yeah. Yeah, I think I did that. I remember going over there to vote.

R: Uh-huh.

I: You know.

I: And then they built the ...

R: Beg pardon?

I: Then they built the [new] hall down on State.

R: Uh-hm. Yeah. And I went there to vote because I lived in Pittsfield Township until, oh, 1965 is when we moved here, and all those years I lived in Pittsfield.

I: That's a long time. Oh, we have down here that on some of the significant events in Pittsfield, the muck fire that burned all summer ...?

R: Well, that was on this 40 acres that my father-in-law owned. My father-in-law was ill. He couldn't take care of it, and my husband and his brother and my father and his father-in-law, the four of them would go down there and in order to contain that muck fire, they had to dig a furrow down to the clay, all the way down through the muck to keep that from spreading because the muck would burn and the trees would burn. They were in that area, and then they'd fall, and if they fell they were into an other area, it started another fire. So every day I had to go down there and check to see that no trees had fallen across this area where they had dug it up, like a furrow all the way around. Uh-hm. Yeah. That lasted all summer and until the rain came in the fall, that put the ...

I: Right.

R: ... put the fire out. But many, many trees fell down and were burned. Just ... it just burned the whole area there. The muck all burned up in it.

I: And this area was on ... along the railroad tracks? Along Morgan Road you said?

R: The 40 acres fronted on Morgan Road and along the Ann Arbor Railroad, and I think it was what you'd say a long 40, because it went way back down behind what used to be the Steere farm.

I: Okay.

R: It was a long narrow 40.

I: Okay.

R: And that's where the muck was, way back on the back end of that 40.

I: Okay. So along ... along there where O'Connors lived at one point?

R: Who were the O'Connors?


I: They lived in that long drive off of Morgan Road that went back. Their property came ...

R: It was a north?

I: Yes.

R: It could be when we sold the property, we sold it to Limebaughs. Do you remember Limebaughs being in there?

I: I remember that name.

R: And Limebaughs sold it to somebody else. I don't know, and then they developed  well, they got a factory back there or I don't know.

I: Yeah. There is now.

R: Uh-huh.

I: But is that the area that ...

R: Yeah.

I: ... that it was in?

R: Yeah. Uh-hm.

I: Okay.

R: We had long narrow 40 and it went way back through the woods and back to the muck farm.

I: Hm. Okay.

R: We had an old Model T Ford, didn't even have a starter on it yet. I had to crank it. (laughing) And we used to laugh at the way I drove that old Model T Ford. They said I drove it so fast the tailgate stood out straight behind it (both laugh). But, oh ... that's ... why, I don't know that ... that Model T Ford was just nothing. It's a wonder it ever run. It was like a pickup truck, way back in that time, you know. But it always started and always run for me.

I: I think that was back before they had so many gadgets on them.

R: Well, at that time, our other car, the car that my husband drove to work, had starters and was quite modern. This was a real old ... but it run and so I don't even remember how we got the old thing.

I: Huh.

R: We bought it. We bought it from somebody but ... it was a miracle that I could get it started and drive it down there.

I: You also said something about steam engine running off the rail road tracks.

R:

I: Well, of course that was after I ... that was even after my son had moved away from there.

R: Okay.

I: We were just talking about that the other day, and that was ... we were in Florida at the time that happened. Nobody ever knew why it ran off. But they ... he said the other day that when the cars left the track, one of them went sideways and the other one, instead of falling, it went up in the air. He said if it hadn't been for the car stopping it, it would run right into that house here in the corner, you know, where ...

R: Right.

I: ... where we used to live.

R: Wow.

I: There used to be what they called road gangs come to ... on the railroad. They'd have a, oh, four or five cars. The fellows would sleep in the cars and they had a cook and ate their meals there, but they would all work on the railroad track and build ... build a stretch of the track while they were ... and they'd be on the sidetrack there at Pittsfield Junction. Be nothing to have 35, 40 men staying down there in those railroad cars like that.

R: And then would they go out on little handcars or something?

I: Well, we had a big handcar.

R: Okay.

I: And that was run with gasoline, I think. That would ... that would run. It wasn't a pump, but it was run with gasoline. Those guys would get on that car and go to wherever their job was.

R: Replacing ties or ...?

I: Replacing ties or building the track, whatever was necessary, but their cars were pulled in on the sidetrack there and they sat there for maybe two, three weeks while they were working in that area.

R: Hm. So that made a lot of people in that area then.

I: Well, they didn't ... they didn't bother anybody. You knew they were there, but ...

R: So they were quiet, they weren't ...

I: Yeah. They were down south of where we lived a-ways. And, oh, they might walk up and down the track in the evening and you knew just to get out, but nobody ever ... nobody ever bothered at all.

R: Well, that's good. Well, we also said something about the Meyers House burning.

R: Well, I couldn't ... I can't pinpoint when that happened either but ...

I: Where was the Meyers House?

R: On the corner where Marian Rowe used to live. [corner of Payeur & Marton]

I: Oh, okay.

R: That house burnt down.

I: Oh, and then it was rebuilt?

R: Yeah. After ... I guess after Meyers sold the property. Mr. Meyers died and maybe she did too. They have a son by the name of Ted. And they must have sold the property. I don't even know how the place caught on fire. It burned at night and I guess they lost everything they had. So ... everybody in the neighborhood knew this Mr. Meyers. He was a German man, and he couldn't talk very good English, but, well, he used to pick up tools and different things that didn't belong to him and take them home and they said after the ... after the fire, they burnt ... neighbors went in there and bought tools that they knew were their own tools. They bought their tools back. Yeah.

I: Guess he saw it, he thought he needed it, and took it home.

R: Yeah.

I: Well, tell me about your family, your children.

R: My children?

I: Yes.

R: Well, I have two sons -- Walter whom everybody in Pittsfield knows, I think. He was on the volunteer fire department for many years over there. And then I have a younger son, Jerry, and he lives in Saline. He's an electrician. And he's married and has no children. Walter has two children. He has Douglas and Sandra, and they're both married and Sandra lives out by Bridgewater, and Douglas lives over near Jackson.

I: Okay. And both of them were born while you lived in Payeur Road?

R: Yes. Uh-hm.

I: Okay.

R: Yeah.

I: Because after you left Payeur Road you lived on ...

R:

State.

I:
... State Street, and you were ... Were you still in Pittsfield Township then? I think you were, weren't you?

R:
State, yeah. That was still Pittsfield Township. Yeah, that was up by Edwards Brothers, you know.

I:
Right.

R:
The house is still standing. That buff-colored brick house ...

I:
It's a ...

R:
... that we built.

I:
... dentist office or something now. I think it's a dentist or something now?

R:
It could be, I don't know.

I:
But you, you built that house?

R:
Uh-hm. Yeah. Harold Schenk was our contractor. We knew the Schenks or should have known them. They lived on State Street. They were Pittsfield people too. Oh, and then I used to ... you asked about ... different thing ... I belong to a Pittsfield Extension group for a few years.

I:
Okay.

R:
Erma and Julia Schenk were in that. Retha Lavender. Mrs. Lavender, Retha's mother-in-law belonged. Oh, Caroline Stump. Trying to think who else? Ada May Harwood I think.

I:
Okay.

R:
And then they had a Pittsfield Lady's Aid and I belonged to that at one time (laughs).

I:
Oh. What did the Lady's Aid do?

R:
Oh, we might sew and make quilts or ... I don't know. Just kind of a social get-together. We met once a month. We quite often went over to the Gilbert House in Ypsilanti.

I:
Hm.

R:
You know where the Gilbert House is in Ypsi? Or ... I think a like a retirement home now. But at that time it was a big old vacant house and you could reserve it and hold meetings there.

I:
Oh!

R:
A real old, old house.

I: I know it's an old house, and I've heard of it, but I don't know exactly where it is.

R: Uh-hm. I can't remember if it's on River Street or not. But we used to go there about once a month and ...

I: And what did you do with the Extension group?

R: Well, pretty much the same that everybody does today. We had lessons. They taught you little tricks on sewing and you'd have cooking lessons. And there was even classes on upholstering or slipcovers. I slipcovered a chair and a davenport through the Extension. I took my chair and davenport down to the Masonic Hall and this woman came there and she would teach us how to do that. That was about the most important thing I ever got out of Extension. But it was a social group. We always enjoyed getting together. You belong to the Extension now, don't you?

I: No.

R: Don't you?

I: I never have.

R: Oh, you never did.

I: No. I'm a 4H leader, but not ...

R: Oh, yeah. Well

I: Which is also through Extension but ...

R: Uh-hm. I know that. Yeah. Well, I belonged to the Extension for many, many years. Well, when I lived on Payeur Road and all the ... I guess until the time I went to work when I lived on State Road I belonged to Extension. Then when I went to work at the Ann Arbor News, I dropped out because I couldn't be sure of attending the meetings. I was on-call at the Ann Arbor News.

I: Well, I do know that Ada May had a lot of information on Extension and she turned that over to the Bentley Historical Library.

R: Uh-hm. Oh, yeah.

I: Books and things.

R: Uh-hm. Well, I later on belonged to the Saline Women's Club here in Saline, and we turned over ... we disbanded too and we turned over our information on that to the Bentley Library so ...

I: Well, that's good.

R: Well, I was secretary of that for quite a few years.

I:

Hm. What ... Okay, what about health and health care? Where ... Did you go to the doctor? Did the doctors come to the house, or ... ? If you needed healthcare?

R:

Well, once in a while a doctor would come to the house, but the majority of the time you had to go to the doctor's office. I remember when Walt's mother became ill the doctor came to the house and it was terrible weather, winter. He could hardly get there, you know. But he made it to see her, and of course she passed away almost right after he had been there. And then when we lived on State Street we had a doctor that would come to the house once in a while. But most of the time we always had to go to the doctor's in Ann Arbor. Walt worked in Ann Arbor so I didn't know a soul in Saline until after Walter passed away.

I:

So you did mostly everything in Ann Arbor then.

R:

Oh, yeah. Our dentist and our doctor and the hospitals and ...

I:

Everything in Ann Arbor.

R:

I always went to Ann Arbor.

I:

What do you remember about the effect of the Depression on Township residents?

R:

Well, mostly just personal things I guess. I don't remember too much about the other events. I remember there was one week my husband went to work and the whole week long he only made eight dollars.

I:

Ooh!

R:

That wasn't much but he worked at a shop and if work came in he did it. So he wasn't out of a job, so he was there at the shop. If the work came in he got ... he got ... money, he got paid for it. If it didn't come in, he didn't make anything. And I do remember making clothes from feed sacks. We had chickens where we lived, and we bought the chicken feed and these fancy colored sacks and I made several dresses for myself. And we were just laughing recently, this older son of mine needed shorts. We couldn't buy boys' or men's shorts, and I took one of these plain-colored white flour sacks or chicken feed sacks and made a pair of shorts for him. And he was glad to have them (laughs).

I:

I can imagine.


R:

Yeah. I had never made anything like that, but I had a pattern, I got a pattern for it and I made them and ... had to put the buttons in the button holes on top and didn't have gippers of course at that time.

I:

Uh-hm.

R:

But I made lots of aprons and lots of shifts, as they call em.

I:

What about World War II? What kind of an effect do you think World War II had on the Township residents?

R: Well, what can I say? I knew some of the boys that had to go, of course. I do remember that Harrison Harwood, that was Bill Harwood's son, volunteered to, and they wouldn't take him. They said he had a heart murmur.

I: Hm.

R: So then later on he was drafted and they did take him, and he was down ... I'm not sure of the place. Seems like Newport News ... Virginia or something, where the injured fellows were coming back from the War and they said he couldn't take it, and I do remember that he came home -- I shouldn't repeat this maybe -- he came home and committed suicide. He couldn't go back.

I: Hm.

R: He came home visited his parents and he went down ... there's a low land below where the overhead bridge is?

I: Uh-hm.

R: Then he folded up his uniform and he laid down, put his ... I don't know if he took medication or if he froze to death. It was in the winter. That was a very, very sad thing because he had tried to get in and they wouldn't take him.

I: Uh-hm.

R: And ...

I: Do you remember any of the other people in the Township that were ... that went to serve in World War II?

R: Hm. Well, my old[est son] Walter was drafted but he never had to go overseas. Benny Payeur did, too. Benny Payeur was overseas.

I: Okay.

R: Who else could I think of? I don't ... I don't know of any other young men that had to go at that time. I'm sure there were others around there. I: Can you tell me about the neighborhood when you lived there? Was it one where people were willing to help people?

R: Oh we were quite a close and friendly group. And ... uh different people would be expecting a baby and they'd have baby showers for them. And if there was a wedding coming up, they'd have bridal showers for the girls. I remember when Al Payeur and his wife were married 25 years, their boys asked me to organize a party, and we did have a party for Al Payeur and his wife. That would be Benny's father and mother, you know. Yeah, I think we were a pretty close neighborhood. If someone was sick, Side 2:

R: Well, I don't know much else to tell you anymore.

I: Oh let's see. How about traffic?

R: (laughs) There wasn't any traffic in those days.

I: What kind of roads how what kind of condition were the roads in?

R: All dirt roads. State Street was dirt road, Morgan Road, and uh what's the road that, uh Stone School Road. All of those roads were dirt. And I can remember in the wintertime we usually traveled Stone School Road. It was a better road than State Road at that time to go into Ann Arbor. But in the wintertime Morgan Road might get filled in with snow and then we would go in State Road. But there was a place on State Road where it always drifted in, and we would drive out into Jake April's field and go around, and come back into the road to go into Ann Arbor. I do remember that, but there was no paved roads around. I don't think ... I don't think Packard Road was even paved back then. Packard Road was a dirt road for years.

I: Uh-huh. What kind of condition? Did they keep the roads so that they were driveable condition?

R: Well ...

I: Or were they pretty bumpy?

R: In the spring, you know, when the frost went out, they'd get pretty bumpy. And Payeur Road, of course we lived on Payeur Road, it was nothing to get stuck on that road. It seemed like it was a bad road. I got stuck there one time, and a fellow going along on State Street came down and helped me get my car out. Otherwise I would have set there till somebody else come along and help me.

I: It was pretty muddy then when it rained.

R: Oh, it was then muddy. When the ... and I don't know whether the frost was there longer or what the situation was that made it so ... you just, you could go right down in it, you know, the frost ... when the frost went out. There ... well, the other road was traveled and it kept packed. I think that was it. But Payeur Road didn't have that much traffic on it, so ...

I: Right. There weren't too many houses on Payeur Road either.

R: Um-um. No, there was a house where Meyers that we said burnt down.

I: That was on the corner of Marton and Payeur.

R: Uh-hm. Then there was nothing between there and the place where we lived which was on the other side of the railroad track. And then, oh, in about -- let me see -- I can't tell you, maybe in 1931, Payeurs came out there and Al Payeur built his original house up there on Payeur Road.

I: Right. The big square house.

R:

Yeah. And then from there, there was nothing from there till State Street at that time. Then later on they built other ... but those other houses were not there. There's the house where Don and Evelyn [Ticknor] lived. That was built before we moved, you know. But all those other houses were built in after we left.

I:

Hm.

R:

So they were built in after 1950. That's when we moved away from up here.

I:

Were there many farms in the area?

R:

Oh, everything was farms at that time. Everything was farmed. Harwoods and Codys and Sutherlands had big farms. And, let's ... the property that the Payeurs took over I think was owned by Morton -- Morton brothers from in Ann Arbor. And Cody even owned that land across the New York Central Road over in there that the Payeurs used to have a sugar place. You know that ... that Payeur used to tap those trees for sugar. But I think Cody owned the property. You know, Codys that lived on Saline ... or lived on Textile [road].

I:

Uh-huh.

R:

They also owned maybe 80 acres over there across the railroad track and I think maybe Payeurs got permission from them to tap the trees. I don't know, but they had ...

I:

Okay.

R:

... they had quite a big thing going there to make sugar.

I:

Well, I know Fred Rowe used to do that.

R:

Yeah. Well, I think Payeurs did it before Fred Rowe did it.

I:

Oh, okay.

R:

Yeah. Because ... and, oh, and Al and Joe, I've got pictures somewhere here of Joe when they had the sugar thing over there. But they had a big thing built to cook the syrup in, you know, and ...

I:

Uh-huh.

R:

So ... well, Fred Rowe moved up there later. I think Payeurs built their house where Fred Rowe lives.

I:

Hm.

R:

See, there were three Payeur brothers when they first came out here. There was Harry and Alfonse. And another brother, Amy. Well, Amy lived up on Morgan Road. Harry and Al both lived in the big house on Marton Road. Then Al built a house over there on Payeur Road and lived over there. Then eventually Fred built the house that they had down there on Marton Road.

I: Okay.

R: And of course then later on the boys, Joe and Benny built and Donald.

I: Uh-hm.

R: And Irene Swanson, they had a house over there. They sold and they live over here by me on Pitt ... on Weber Road now.

I: Hm, okay.

R: Do you know Irene?

I: Uh-huh.

R: Uh-hm. They live down here on Weber Road now. But Mortons owned that farm where Zella lives too. See, Mortons were ... I don't know if they were in real estate I think. And they bought up some of these farms and then the Depression came and they sold them to other people I guess very reasonable in order to get rid of them.

I: Okay. Do you remember a house on Textile Road between the railroad tracks and where we live?

R: No, I don't think I do.

I: I just wondered, when ... as a child I remember all the lilac bushes down there, and ...

R: Oh, it was old tumble down, nobody lived there. There was an old shack like and the lilac bushes were ... I think that. But as far as a house, you wouldn't have called it a house, I guess.

I: Oh, okay. I just wondered if there was a house there in the 20s.

R: I don't know. I don't have any idea who would have ...

I: Okay.

R: ... had that.

I: How do you think the Township has changed in the last 75 years?

R: (laughs) Well, I would have to say it's gone very commercial. That's about the only thing I can say. It's developed and it's gone residential. There's not too many farms left, I don't think. There are a few farms left but ... I was saddened to hear, to know the Sutherland farm, which is a centennial farm. I knew Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland who lived there, and I was saddened when that had to be developed into homes, like it is today.

I:

Uh-huh. Can you think of anything else that we haven't talked about, about Pittsfield Township? I'm sure there's many more things, but ...

R:

Well, it's hard to ... to think right now. I should have written things down as they come to mind, I don't know. Oh, this ... this little three-car, three-wheeled thing that my father-in-law used to ride to go and fill the lights with the oil -- my husband said he and a friend pumped that thing into Saline to go to the movie one time at night. The two fellows rode on that little handcar and pumped it into Saline and went to the movies, rode it back again. Maybe that was before he had a car or maybe he couldn't get his dad's car, I don't know what the deal was, but I do remember him saying they pumped that thing to Saline and back to go to the movies. You could go to the movie up to Saline for 10 cents I think.

I:

Uh-huh.

R:

Yeah.

I:

Uh-hm. And they got their exercise doing it.

R:

Yeah.

I:

I would imagine that would take a little bit of work to go ...

R:

Well, it went along pretty smooth once you got it moving, the pumping, you know. The wheels went along pretty nice on the railroad track once you got moving. I don't think I ever rode on it. I don't remember that I did.

I:

Somebody at one time was saying that there was a store out there in the area by the Junction?

R:

That's what Walt used ... my husband used to tell me, that there was a store in that corner across from where the Junction was. It was long gone before I ever was there.

I:

Okay.

R:

But just a little general store I guess that had magazines and maybe knickknacks and stuff like that to sell.

I:

And where would this have been?

R:

Beg pardon?

I:

And where would this have been?

R:

Well, as I understood it, it would have been directly across the New York Central, inside of the New York Central and the Ann Arbor on the north of where the Junction stood.

I:

Okay.

R:

But I wouldn't ... I don't think there's anybody that I would know of that's living that could tell you of that. There's a Mrs. Webb. Do you know her?

I:

I've seen the name in some of our historical things.

R:

They've been around Pittsfield a long time. She might know ... she might have some history too for you.

I:

She'd be another good person to do an oral history on.

R:

Very good. Yes. And she's a well-educated person. She would ... she may have kept some records or things like that.

I:

Okay.

R:

Uh-hm.

I:

I'll pass that information on. Do you know ...?

R:

You know, I think their farm is on ... what would that road be up to ...? Platt Road?

I:

Okay.

R:

Platt and Morgan maybe. As you go across Morgan, there used to be a big white farmhouse there.

I:

The only one I can ... would it have been on Morgan Road?

R:

I'm not sure whether they went in from Morgan Road or from ...

I:

Because I don't remember ... I know ...

R:

I believe now ... I believe the name of the family is Geddes.

I:

Okay, yes.

R:

Yeah. That's who I'm trying to think of. Not Webb.

I:

Okay.

R:

Her name was Geddes, yeah.

I:

Okay. Yeah. Marie Geddes. Yes, they live there.

R:

I don't know her first name.

I:

Yeah. Yes, they do. They live on Platt Road.

R:

I: Is it on Platt? I don't ...

R: Uh-huh. Way back away from the road. Right.

I: Yeah. Uh-hm. That's right. They might have some good information. They ... she maybe knows more than I do because I think she was born and raised in Pittsfield. They've always lived there anyway.

R: And she's one of the people that we have on our list to interview.

I: I think you'll get some good information from her. I do have an old Platt book here of Washtenaw County, oh, 1874 or something.

R: Hm.

I: It shows the property that my husband's grandparents owned, and that was up on Ellsworth Road. I think they had a 40-acre farm up there where John Allen ... you know where John Allen ... Well, I can't tell you. It would be ... it would be east of Stone School Road up the hill.

R: Okay. Up on the top of the hill there?

I: Yeah.

R: There was a farm there and there's a couple of houses there.

I: Uh-hm.

R: A big old tall farm build❖ ... house.

I: Uh-hm. Yeah. This is all developed now, and there's like housing of some sort there now.

R: Right.

I: But that ... that is where they originally, the family ...

R: Okay. Wil❖ ... that would have been William and Margarethe.

I: Mar❖ ... Margarethe .

R: Okay.

I: No, Wilhelmina, wasn't it? ... I think the ... I think the grandmother's name was Wilhelmina. [actually, it was Margarethe]

R: I'm not sure. I know the grandfather was ... at one place it was Wilhelm, and then it was also William.

I: Uh-hm.

I: Wilhelm is the German for William I believe.

R: Well, she became a widow. Her husband was killed or something happened to him, and she became a widow and John and Christine lived with her and took care of her. Because I didn't ... I gave it to Jerry, but I did have a bill that where John and Christine paid her funeral expenses. How much they were, maybe 250 dollars or something like that. And also in that bill was a bill for caring for the mother. I don't know how long or what, but a bill where John's wife had cared for the mother when she was ill. Because John had another brother and I suppose the other brother maybe tried to come in for some of the money if there was anything left, I don't know.

I: Okay. Well, this has been very interesting.

R: Well, I just rattle on.

I: That's okay.

R: It ... I think the things and go back to them when I should have told you as we were talking about that particular thing, but ...

I: But that's okay, because it gets there.

R: Yeah, well ...

I: And sometimes it's, you know, you think of something later.

R: Uh-hm.

I: So if you don't have anything else, I think I'll go ahead and stop this now. Is there anything else?

R: I guess not.

I: Okay.

The End