BACK OVER THE YEARS

Reminiscences of Mattituck in the early years of the Twentieth Century

VOLUME IV

Friends of the Mattituck Free Library

1986

CONTENTS -- Individuals Interviewed

CONTENTS

MAPS, PICTURES

INTRODUCTION

We must explain where the material contained in these volumes comes from.

In 1978 the Friends of the Mattituck Free Library undertook to record an oral history of Mattituck. The project was carried on under the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). It was begun by Richard Mack and then developed by John Traversa, and it was intended to bring up to date the 1906 History of Mattituck written by the Reverend Charles Craven, Pastor of the Mattituck Presbyterian Church.

The work began with the recording of interviews with Mattituck citizens who recalled life in the early years of the century. Unexpectedly, work had to stop when the local CETA support was terminated.

The Friends were unable to carry on the project, and it became apparent that our goal of a history could not be achieved in the foreseeable future.

Into our files went the taped interviews, unedited and many incomplete, several hundred slides and a series of audio-visual tapes of groups and individuals. Some years later the Friends decided to make the contents of as many of the taped interviews as possible available as background material on the history of the community.

The tapes contain the voices of Mattituck citizens speaking about a time and a place they knew intimately. The authors of the tapes found it pleasant "... to look back and think back over the years", and the Friends are offering these plain spoken, sometimes humorous or touching accounts of 'how it was in those days'.

The material has been transcribed just as it was given to the interviewers with only repetitious and non-pertinent matter omitted. We have added a few notes, some information from conversations with the authors,

and have included several written pieces. Where pictures were available we have reproduced them together with articles from the Suffolk Times.

We express our gratitude to the authors whose interviews are recorded here as well as to those whose interviews we have not yet been able to transcribe. Our thanks to our volunteer proof readers, Nancy Duryee and Mary Flanagan, and to those who graciously loaned or gave us old photographs.

Many thanks go to our typists, Dorothea Delehanty, Kathleen Reeve and Rose Costello, who were dedicated in their efforts to transcribe the sometimes difficult recordings. And heart-felt thanks to the Mattituck Free Library whose Directors and Staff have been consistently helpful and patient as we carried on our work in their midst.

The Friends of the Mattituck Free Library
Katherine Lascelle, Project Co-ordinator

July 1986

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Contents of tapes Nos. 22-RHB:JHS-1
22A-RHB-1

Friends on the Creek

Table of Contents

Tape No. 22-RHB:JHS-1

Changes in the Creek over the years.
Herb Conklin's oyster beds, 'Mattituck Oysters'
Effect of insecticides and dredging
Crabbing
Decline of oyster business
Fishing, lobstering
Indian history
Prohibition
How Jules came to Mattituck
More changes on the Creek

People and places mentioned: Bailey's Beach, Charlie King, Pete Wycoff, Old Mill, Anchor Inn, Captain Tuthill, Mrs. Kruse , Dick Northridge, Westphalia Road bridge, Herb Conklin, Braun, Tony DeMora (spelling?), Goddard of the Archeological Society, Stanley Naugles, Steven Bassford, Billy Lascelle, Northville Oil Company.

Tape No. 22A-RHB-1

Cappy Tuthill's place
Herb Conklin, his boat, his kindness
The 'swing bridge' at the Old Mill
Shipping oysters
The dike on the Creek
Pete Wycoff's bistro
Boatmen, Charley King and Jimmie (Tide) Kominsky
Story about Dan Young

Pictures and newspaper clippings

Autobiographical Sketch

MAPS, PICTURES

/

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Contents of tapes Nos. 22-RHB:JHS-1
22A-RHB-1
Oral Authors: Richard H. Bassford
Jules H. Seeth
Place of Interview:
No. 22 -- Home of Mr. Seeth
No. 22A -- Home of Mr. Bassford

Interviewers: John Traversa, 1978. Katherin Lascelle, 1985

Dates of Interviews: No. 22- Spring of 1978. No. 22A - December 1985

Friends on the Creek

At the beginning of this interview, the men were looking at a map, but we don't know what map they had. They were talking about the area around the former bridge at the Old Mill. In a subsequent short interview and conversation, December 1985, Mr. Bassford identified some places and people mentioned in the original interview. The map included here has numbers indicating places mentioned in the text. Mr. Seeth lives at No. 18.

Note that the men always spoke of the Creek. This is what is now called Mattituck Inlet (1985)

J: You see there's no bridge there anymore.(1)

R: This road (Mill Road) now stops . . .

J: Ends right here.

R: This would go down to Charlie King's down here, wouldn't it?(2)

J: This is Bailey's Beach. (See map)

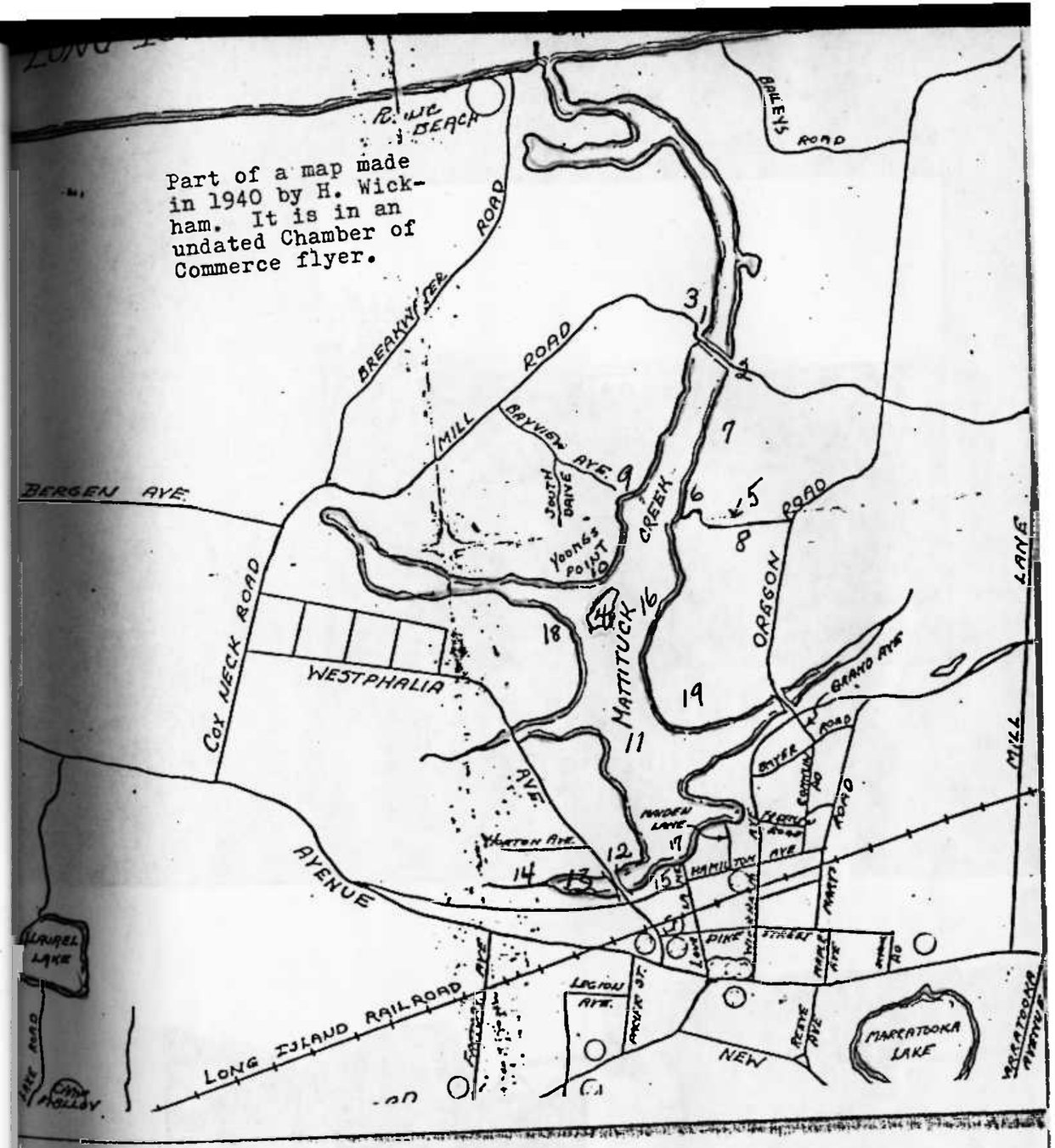
R: The bridge is gone. Now Pete Wyckoff's bistro was right here. (2) That would be the Old Mill. (1)

J: Right here is Anchor Inn.

22-RHB:JHS-1 and 22A-RHB-1

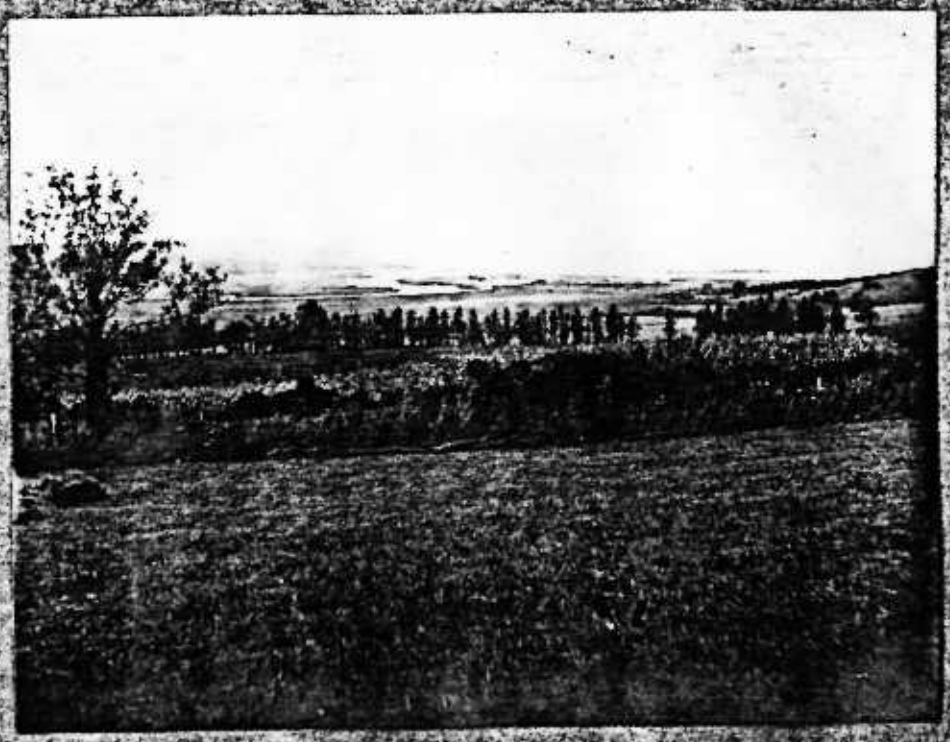
MAP OF MATTITUCK CREEK

(1) The Old Mill
(2) Site of Charlie King's Place and Pete Wycoff's Bistro
(3) Site of Anchor Inn
(4) The Island is a large mat of grass
(5) Knollwood Lane
(6) Turn-a-round, Cappy Tuthill's place
(7) Area owned by Mrs. Kruse
(8) Mr. Bassford's home
(9) Road-end where they had a dock
(10) Richard Northridge's home
(11) The Creek was dug out end to end
(12) Westphalia Road bridge
(13) Filled in area
(14) Baptist Church
(15) Approximate area of Conklin's Oyster House
(16) Conklin's Oyster Beds
(17) Town dock at the end of Love Lane
(18) Jules Seeth's home
(19) Brower's Woods

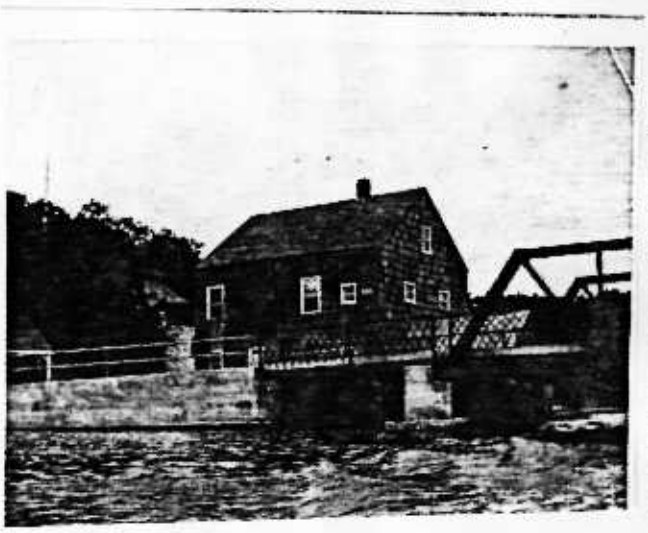


Part of a map made in 1940 by H. Wickham. It is in an undated Chamber of Commerce flyer.

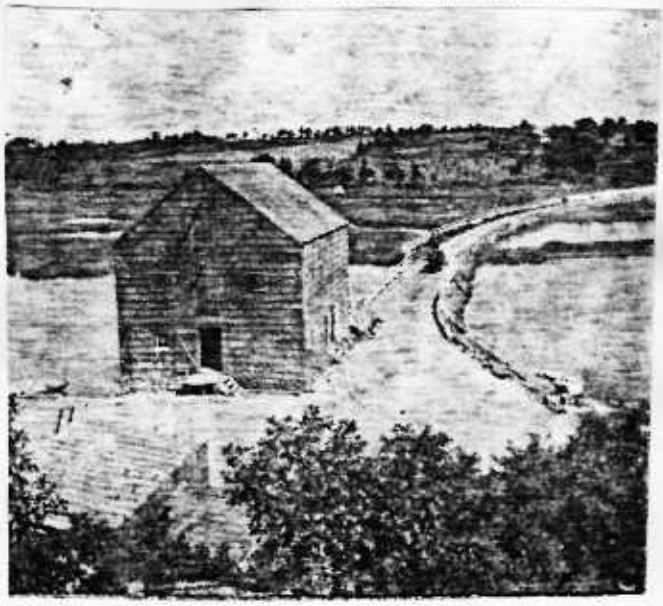
Photos kindness N. Duryee



Mouth of the Creek in distance.



Old Mill and Swing Bridge



Old Mill, early picture. Was the Mill still running? Is this the dike mentioned in Tape 22A?

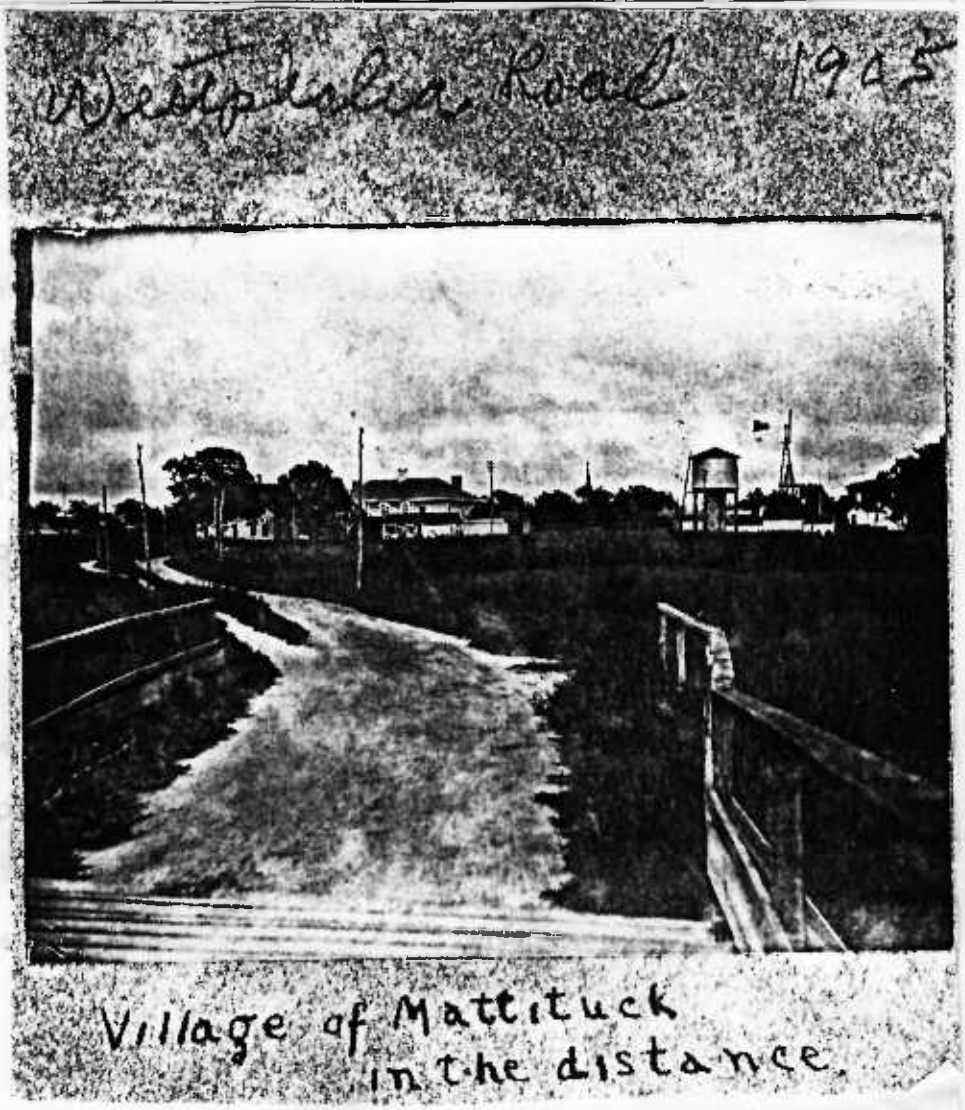
View of the Old Mill and Mill Road

Crossing the Old Mill Bridge

R: The Creek has changed several times since the old days when it had different channels out here, and it's been dug out several times. Now it's got a big reef out in here, and it's carrying sand all along here. It's got to be dug out again. Now here, you see, this shows the island that was out there. (4) Now this is the road where I live, (5) comes down here to a turn-around. (.6) And this property is still there. This was old man Cappy Tuthill's place. (unclear) This was on the east side of the Creek and there was a swale in here. It was all wetlands up in through here. This was a natural run-off, see. All This property here belonged to Mrs. Kruse. (7) She bought it a long, long time ago, seven acres in there. And then another side in here, this is another natural run-off. And that is just below my property. (8)

But anyway this is a natural run-off down here, with bog, and well, just sort of an island out there, grass and so forth. And all this in here was all mud flats until you got out there, and then there was a secondary Creek running here that emptied out into the original big Creek out here. Now as you come here, this was right down in front of where Jules and I came down with our car and we park right here and we have a dock in here. (9) This has all been dug out. Now, all there is left is this island, right in this area there. Dick Northridge's right on that side there. (10) Dick Northridge's, the point there, and the Creek comes around in there and this Creek runs way up to the road.

Photos kindness
N. Duryee



PICTURES FROM 1900

Road going up to Meday's

Bridge looking east

And this island here has been there and they didn't take it out because they didn't want to take out all the wetlands. And the other part you see as you go north, this is the area that they dug out. (11)

I: Where is your house?

J: Right in here. (8)

(Unclear passage)

J: And up in here Westphalia Road used to cross this, (12) and you can see in the picture here. Now the bridge is out and that is all filled in. (13)

This is where the Baptist Church is. (14)

(Unclear passage)

R: Now as you came up here, here was nothing but a ditch and mud flats down in here. And this down here was where Herb Conklin had his oyster house. (15) But he used to have his oyster beds down here. (16) Herb Conklin was his name, and he had oyster beds along the Creek for years and years. They would be on the east side. He had about a thousand feet in there. The Creek continued up to the Mattituck town dock (17) there where they brought the potato barges. Herb used to send the oysters in to Gage and Tollner in Brooklyn and some place on Fulton Street. It was a restaurant there. What the devil was its name..? Well anyhow, Mattituck Creek oysters used to be famous all over.

J: They'd put it right on the bill of fare, 'Mattituck Oysters'.

R: (Unclear) Transatlantic steamers and on the Baltimore and Ohio railroads and in different restaurants and in New York. His was a small operation. They used to bring the oysters in the spring on what was an old schooner. It was called the Seacoast and they brought the oysters from the Connecticut side where they grew in the mouth of the rivers, but they weren't fit to eat. They were green.

I: Green?

R: The meat of the oyster was full of copper, and so forth and the oysters were green. So, they'd put in about three thousand bushels of oysters. They'd come down the Creek with scoop shovels. They'd shovel them over to one side. Then they'd turn around and they'd come back the other way and shovel them over to the other side.

J: They used them for seed.

R: Planted them in the channel here on Herb Conklin's oyster beds.

I: Did they have to prepare the beds in any special way?

R: No. It was a small operation. He had a little flat bottom boat with a one-lung engine in it and he had a little barge. And he'd take the barge up there and he had two men, Herb and another man, I forgot his name.

I: And his oyster house was . . .?

J: Yeah, the foot of Love Lane. There was a bulkhead there and that's where at high tide the potato boats used to come in

there and load potatoes, and take them to Connecticut. His oysters used to go out on boats too, didn't they, sometimes?

R: No, they mostly went by truck.

I: When was this?

J: Oh, way back in the twenties. I bought this place here in 1929, and the operation was still going in 1929, Conklin was still alive then.

R: Well, in those days, all these banks around here were loaded with oysters. The banks were white with naturals see, from the seed oysters that he put in. And you could come down here and walk around the banks and you could pick up any quantity of oysters that you wanted. But now they are all gone, and they are gone because since they have dug the Creek out the natural run-off from the farms has brought all the insecticides into the Creek. In a hard storm, this Creek would turn just like coffee. And it has killed off all the seed and a lot of the marine growth that used to be in the Creek. There used to be hard shell crabs, eels, flounders and fluke, most anything you wanted, hard clams, soft clams. It was a marvelous place. And, I've spent many and many a day on this Creek and got anything I wanted out of it, And I used to go nights with a jack light and spear eels, and sometimes I've found as many as up to seven fluke on the flats, and I'd spear them. I've seen stripers in in here that would go, oh, fifteen or twenty pounds. They'd go right between my legs. I'd stand on the back end of the boat

with the light, and I had an eel spear and I've seen stripers come, four or five of them come right with the light. And in those days we didn't know what stripers were. Striped bass, and well, this was a fabulous Creek, and since they've dug it out and since it's been modernized and so forth, now it's nothing but a waterway, a place for boats. The real old Creek is no more. There's practically no crabs. Here and there is one. But they've just gradually disappeared and disappeared. I used to go out at night and catch possibly seventy-five pair, that would be a male and female, blue claw crabs. And also spear possibly thirty or forty pounds of eels.

But the blue claw crabs in this Creek were always very, very prime, you might say. This was during the depression times and I used to have to do something, so I used to go out nights on the Creek and spear eels, catch crabs. And then I'd sort the crabs into a car which had a division in it, and I'd put the females in this car and every day I'd sort them from one side to the other. Now, the hard crabs, I'd put them in another car and keep them just to sell. But the females, they ripen, what they say 'ripen'. When the male sexes up he carries her. When they are ready to breed, he turns her over and she has to shed first see. And when she is soft then the male crab has two little feelers that he inserts in the pocketbook, and he fertilizes the sperm or the eggs or whatever. Now it's a very strange thing, but the female crab, when she isn't ready, the pocketbook is

like a diamond, see and when she sheds this last time the (unclear) changes from a semicircle to round. Now when this male crab has carried her for, oh a couple of days possibly, he will turn her loose. She will get to be a paperback. The shell has hardened up. Now as this happens, then she is what we call an 'old lady'. She is a pregnant crab. And she will develop a sponge underneath that pocketbook that's almost as big as your hand and will have thousands and thousands of eggs in it. Now why I took these crabs was because I could take them and every day I'd sort them from one side of the car to the other, and under the end of the shell they'd crack see. When they were cracked they were called a 'buster'.

J: Just before they shed?

R: Then I would put them in a shedding car and I would have to attend them two or three times during the day. Sometimes I'd go down two o'clock in the morning, take them out. Otherwise than that, the others ... in fact they were cannibals. See, they'd eat them right up. So, I used to get anywheres from four dozen of the most beautiful soft crabs you ever wanted to see. And I'd take tomato baskets, which were eight quarts, and I'd stand the crabs on edge in the tomato basket, put a little bit of green kelp on top of them that was moist, and crabs would stay in there and would bubble, bubble, bubble like that.

I: They were under water?

R: No, no. I took them home and put them in the cellar where

it was cool. The only thing you had to be careful was to not let them dry out, because if the lungs dried out then they had a bad smell to them and you know you wouldn't want to eat them.

The kelp was wet with salt water and that kept the crabs happy for about a week. I used to sell them from the house. People used to come from all over to get those crabs. I used to sell them for $1.25 a dozen. Now you would pay, I don't know what you'd pay.

J: $1.25 for one.

R: That was during the depression.

I: Was that enough to keep you going?

R: Well, I used to sell oysters. Braun's had an oyster place too. He still has a place in Cutchogue. And he had an oyster company and I used to buy some from him. They were $1.75 a bushel. Herb used to ship his oysters to the city. There are two and a half bushel in a barrel, and he used to get something like $9.00 a barrel for them. For the smaller ones, he'd get an extra dollar. That's for the half shells.

I: The oysters you said Conklin had in the twenties, when did they dwindle away?

R: Just before World War II. Insecticides. After Herb died, we didn't have the beds anymore.

I: Was he the only one who was interested in that business?

R: No, there was Braun's, Braun's Oyster Company.

I: Did he work for Braun?

R: No, Herb was an independent, and he came from way back. He had the oyster beds here as long as I can remember, and that was when I came to Mattituck in 1922. And he had the oyster beds for years before that.

I: He died, and what happened?

J: That was it. Nobody continued.

R: Braun did.

I: How do you spell his name?

J: B-R-A-U-N, Braun.

R: I tried to buy Herb's oyster beds, you see, because I had some money, but it was during the time of the depression and my money was tied up in the City, and I couldn't get it, see. So, I tried to borrow some money but I didn't succeed. But then I got up a petition and had a lot of people sign it to allow me to rent a piece of bottom which I did. And I rented from the town six hundred feet. It was a little over two acres, and I went in with Braun. He bought the oysters, and I was to get a certain percent of them. Then, that was the year of the 1938 hurricane. And the hurricane covered all of the oysters up with the kelp and mud and everything like that, and we lost the works. We lost all the oysters that we put in there, which was close to three thousand bushels. They all died, smothered. And I had apart of it and so I didn't continue on with it. I went into the carpenter business. But anyway, that was the end of that. But Braun carried on with the oysters, and we used to

find sometimes natural oysters.

There would be spawn that would sit on the edge of the Creek. And right over here on this point, I found oysters there one time. They were about as big as silver dollars and they were thick. So I had an old pair of tongs and I was just fooling around. So (unclear) I'll forget about them for a couple of years. So I went back in a couple of years--I used to be on the Creek all the time--and I had my tongs and I tried them, and I brought up the most beautiful oysters you ever saw. They were as big as that, and the shells were just like porcelain. And they would open up five quarts to a bushel which was more than the ordinary oysters would do because ordinary oysters, the shells are thick. I'd take out a couple of bushel or so, and then people from New Suffolk, they found out about it and they come over and cleaned out the whole business. They took out something like four hundred bushel of oysters right out of that point there.

I: Where is it, east of the Island?

R: Yes, They cleaned up the business. Then they sold them to Braun for $1.00 a bushel.

I: People from New Suffolk just cleaned them out?

R: They were just people that were fishermen from New Suffolk. They were clammers and whatever. They found out about the oysters and they came here and they just loaded up.

J: They were all in one area so that it was easy to clean them out. Dick and I, we used to be able to pick them off the beach, didn't

we, Dick?

R: Yeah.

J: At low tide we'd go down there at low tide, and you'd pick them off. They'd be fastened onto rocks and gravel and stuff on the bottom there. But they are all gone too, aren't they?

R: Yeah, there 's practically nothing left.

I: Were there any regulations to keep people from cleaning out a bed?

J: No.

I: There aren't any now?

R: There's no limit.*

(*Note - The men were mistaken in this. In 1966, the Town of Southold began controlling the taking of shellfish from its waters, and now together with the State Department of Environmental Conservation, regulates the size and number of shellfish taken, granting permits for non-commercial residents, for commercial residents and for temporary residents.)

I: Doesn't that seem crazy that somebody can just come and clean out the bed completely?

R: Unless the beds are privately owned, that's a different deal. But these were natural oysters and I happened to discover them. So I would take a couple of bushels and open them up and sell a few quarts, you know, and I intended to just sort of string it out, you know. But these people were interested in a quick dollar and cleaned them up.

J: They figure that if they don't get them, somebody else will.

R: There were always oysters on the shore, but after Herb's beds were gone, well then they gradually disappeared, and as the insecticides, at the time DDT, you see, as that came into the Creek, that knocked off all the seed and natural things. Now the Creek, a good part, you might say is sterile. A lot of it is just polluted. You can't take anything.

J: Down there, you saw where the drains came out. The one drain that Tommy Reeve (Dock Master) was telling about, the drain that comes through the town, picks up all the...

R: Oil and stuff, salt that they put on the roads.

J: Yeah, not only that but the germ life from the cesspools in the village.

I: After the hurricane, there were no more oysters in your bed?

R: Well Braun, he kept on for a few years. After the hurricane was over, why then the next year you could start them all over again. I still kept my lease, you see, and Braun planted more oysters. But he had to keep a watchman there on a boat, and the man had to stay there so he could watch the beds so people didn't steal them. And so finally he gave it up. It got too expensive for what you make out of it.

I: Who would steal them?

J: Well anybody.

R: People come along and help themselves for that matter and they'd take out ten or fifteen bushel and take them home. Nobody

was there to watch them.

I: Were they marked in some way?

R: Oh yes, he had stakes to mark out the extent of the beds. It was six hundred feet this side of the bridge.

J: The Old Mill Bridge. When Mildred (Mrs. Seeth) and I were going south, we used to go to Florida by boat, and going through some places in North and South Carolina you'd see in one of the little streams, you'd see "Joe Brown's Oyster Beds. I will shoot anybody I catch poaching on my bed." He would too, sit there with a shotgun and see anybody come poaching on their bed, they'd shoot them.

R: Well, they had regular wars down there.

I: Has anything like that happened here?

J: No, we don't have any.

I: Did the watchman carry a gun or anything.

J: No, he didn't have to. He was just there to warn anybody off.

I: Was it local people?

R: Sure, sure. And sometimes a lot of summer people would come, you know, and they'd always go out clamming or something, why then they'd help themselves. But I might say in passing, that the oysters, the clams and the soft clams, the crabs anything that came out of this Creek was superior quality and there's no comparison between (unclear)

J: There are fresh water springs that come out underneath the

Creek here, and it's the combination of salt and fresh just like down in the Chesapeake. In the Chesapeake, there's a lot of fresh water that comes into the Chesapeake and their oysters are very, very good, so fat they were just like pork. And they had a distinctive flavor. They were kind of a nutty flavor. You could tell them every time.

I: So Braun's bed got too expensive?

R: Well, they didn't have a big enough operation.

I: When were these pesticides used?

J: Right after World War II, I'd say, wouldn't you?

R: Around World War II, they had the DDT and so forth, and then they made a law that they did away with DDT. But as the DDT was drained in the Creek ... You got a quick thundershower, and there'd be a lot of run-off, you see. And it would bring any large quantity of insecticides into the Creek The Creek would turn just like coffee from the run-off, and that would effect the spawn. Now, they have, it's not DDT, but still there's stuff there, and there's plenty of things that I used to see in the Creek that I don't see anymore. Like small mummies that we used to catch and use for bait.

J: And killies.

R: And the eels aren't as plentiful anymore. And we've had fish kills in the Creek here.

J: Tommy (Reeve) told you about them. The red tide come in

here and took all the oxygen out of the water.

R: We used to have plenty of stripers come in. Now we don't have them anymore.

I: What kind of bugs were the farmers trying to fight with the DDT?

R: Potato bugs. Potato beetles. There are thousand and thousand of acres of potatoes here. It's one of the biggest growing areas in New York State.

I: Was there ever any kind of confrontation between the farmers and the fishermen?

R: No, there was nothing you could do.

J: There were ten farmers to every fisherman.

R: There was never any real fishing industry here, except for the oysters, was all done by just sportsmen and people that lived here. No commercial enterprise at all.

R: Except for the oyster beds. And now we have people who come in from Rhode Island who are lobstermen. And they bought property up here, and they have been lobstering for several years, and now the lobsters are petering out. We have several commercial draggers, right up by the bridge. They own property there.

J: They drag in the Sound but they load and unload opposite the Old Mill, on the east side. They go over toward Connecticut and they go maybe ten miles east and ten miles west.

R: The lobstermen, they set their pots to the west about twelve, fourteen miles, and they'd up to two or three thousand lobster

pots out there. I've been out with Jimmie King (Charlie King? Jimmie Tide? Ed.) and brought in six hundred pounds of lobsters in one day's haul. They'd sell for $1.10 a pound right over at the dock there to the buyer. And now they bring over $2.00 a pound. But they have diminished greatly. Now they are getting into trawlers and in fact they're building a new trawler right down here, and one of my friends, Tony DaMora has just bought a new trawler which he has paid $150,000 for. It's a Sparks and Stevenson and it has a big three hundred fifty horsepower catepiller engine in it. And then there's a fellow we call Jimmie Tide and he paid well over $100,000 for his.

J: He paid almost $200,000.

R: He had his built in the South, down in the Carolina's.

J: Down in St. Augustine.

R: They're going in for fishing more and more out here, and they're growing the lobsters on the side, but not as the main thing.

I: What kind of fish?

R: Well, the main crop would be the porgies.

J: The yellow-tailed flounders.

R: Not yellow-tails. The black back flounders. Flounders would be first, and then the porgies. And then there'd be weak fish. Sometimes, the weak fish come in here so heavy that they load the boat with tons and tons of weak fish.

I: Why are they called weak?

J: Because their mouth is very delicate. And if your catch them on a hook, you have to be very careful or they'll tear loose and go away.

We use very flexible rods so that it doesn't put too much of a strain on their jaws.

R: They are beautiful fish. Are they of the trout family.

J: No. They are of the drum (?) family, I think.

R: But they grow anywhere from, well we catch them on an average of a pound and a half up to seven or eight pounds. The average catch is three to three and a half pounds up to four or five pounds. We catch them sport fishing. Squid. They catch a lot of squid out here. Squid spawns out here in the Sound.

J: Yeah, whenever we want squid, we go down to Jimmie Tide and get ten pounds of squid, put them in the freezer, and use them for bait. I have eaten them too. They are good to eat.

R: I still got some in the freezer.

J: I have some of yours too. I got so much fish this year that I had to buy another freezer.

I: What time do you have to go?

R: I can get home by noontime.

I: Tell me what you know about the Indians.

R: Well the Indians, these names of all these towns and different places around here are all Indian names. Now like

the Cutchogues and Mattitucks.

J: It was a tribe.

I: Mattitucks was a tribe?

R: They were names of tribes. There were how many thirteen tribes of Indians on Long Island? There were the Patchogues. And then there were Indians that used to trade across the Sound. And then on the South side they still have a reservation over there. Anyway, the Indians had a portage right here at the end of this Creek.

J: They'd portage right across to the other side.

I: Bay Avenue?

J: Yeah, where the marina is. The Word 'Mattituck', I understand, is Indian and means "to portage". They used to go over to James Creek.

R: Well, there was an Indian fort down here on John Down's property. It's half way between Mattituck and Cutchogue. (Along New Suffolk Avenue. Ed.) He owned a farm there, and he was our assemblyman, Assemblyman Downs.

I; What did he represent?

J: Southold Town.

R: And he had on the lower part of his farm, there was an old Indian fort. It was earth works that were thrown up, and in my time, when I was a kid, you could still see the out line of it. I worked for him during World War I. I went to work for him on the farm as sort of a patriotic duty and I used to hoe corn and

things down in the lower lot there. And I have picked up as much as a double handful of Indian arrowheads and things down in there. And there were fireplaces where there were stones that were all burned and everything, where the Indians had their camps. They used to cook a lot of shellfish. And then Mr. Goddard -- what do you call him?

J: He was the Mattituck Archeological Society. (New York State Archeological Society, Ed.) Goddard, G-o-d-d-a-r-d.

R: He used to find pots and all kinds of Indian relics. And he even found skeletons. This is very rich in Indian lore, down as far as Orient, and then Franklinville* and all down the Island.

But I was going to tell you, if you wanted to hear, about the time of prohibition. It was after World War I. Where the Old Mill is now, right next to it, Stanley Naugles and his brother built the Anchor Inn. Well, now the rum-runners used to come in Mattituck Inlet and bring their rum in here. They'd come from off the ocean and they'd come down the Sound.

I: Were did they come from originally?

R: Mostly from Canada.

J: Schooners would bring it down.

R: Sometimes, the rum-runners used to lay off Montauk, and then small boats from here would go out there and load up. And the rum-runners were a lot of local people. They had boats, big fishing boats. Some of them, they had Liberty Motors in them.

* Franklinville area runs from Laurel on Rt. 25, south to the Bay.

J: The big V-12 that they used to use in airplanes in World War I.

R: It was after World War I that they were developed, you see. And they put these big motors in these boats and these boats were up to about eighty feet long. They were nothing but a hull and then they'd stack them in with cases of Golden Wedding. Golden Wedding was the name of the liquor, but of course, there was other stuff. But they used to come in the Creek here, and Stanley had an airplane, Stanley Naugles. And he used to circle around up on top there, and he'd spot the Coast Guard. And he would drop flares to let the men that were running the boats, the rum-runners, know when it was safe to come in. And one time there was a storm, and five of them went ashore down here to the west of the Breakwater, and there was five wrecks up there on the beach. They were small boats, anywhere form thirty feet to a little bit bigger. And they had built a road down through the farm where they could unload their liquor upon the trucks and take it out. But one time, there was one of these rum-runners who got caught by the Coast Guard. He came right in the Creek and smack underneath the bridge. The tide was high, and it took the whole top of his boat right off. He went up here and landed his boat up on the shore, and it was all full of bullet holes. Those were the things that happened, you see. They used to take sheet iron and put around the pilot house so if they were shot at they had some kind of protection. And my wife's father

used to go gunning down here in these woods where that road is.

I: Who is your wife's father?

R: Jim Gildersleeve.

J: He used to go hunting rabbits.

R: And he was down through the woods there, and he heard people talking. And so as he went along he caught up with these people and they were people he knew. But they were unloading whiskey and so forth. And so they gave him the pockets of his gunning coat, he came home with all kinds of bottles of liquor. He put them in a closet, and they stayed there for years. He never drank. But that was just one incident, you see. Well, I think I'd better go. So, it was good to meet you. I hope I haven't bored you to death.

I: Not at all. I found it very interesting.

J: Forty years together.

R: Jules, he's a retired pilot.

J: His son was one of my apprentices.

I: What's your son's name?

R: Stephen Bassford. He's a top-notch pilot now.

J: We're real proud of him. The first ship he had in on his full license was the QE 2.

R: Well now, the last one he brought in, it was a big tanker. It only drew about forty-five feet, but she was nine hundred and ninety feet long.

J: Her capacity is 250,000 tons. The Queen Elizabeth was 83,000 tons, so you can imagine 250,000 tons is quite a big ship. The Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary, they were about a hundred foot beam and drew about forty feet. These things are about one hundred fifty to one hundred seventy foot beam and they marked up to sixty five feet. But of course, this one wasn't loaded.

R: Well, I have to go. (unclear) catch some more fish this spring when we get our boat in the water.

J: Yeah.

I: Thank you again. I found it very interesting.

R: It was kind of fun to look back and think back over the years. Things kind of come to you. Well, take it easy.

(The interview continues with Mr. Seeth)

I: You weren't born here?

J: No. Of course, I'm practically a native now because I've been here since 1929. My father bought this place originally, and it was just a shell and didn't even have a bathroom. That porch in the back, we closed that in and put the bathroom there and put another bathroom over here and built that extension on it and finished it off inside, put heat in, put a cellar under it. That was in 1929. My father had bought it, and when he died, I bought it from his estate because I came out and visited him and I liked it. I've been here ever since. It was a summer home until about twenty-five years ago.

I: When was your first time in Mattituck?

J: Probably around 1927, 1929. I bought it in November 1929. And then the only heat was this fireplace and I had to build a new one because in the hurricane there was a tree along side of the house there, and the hurricane took the chimney down. We left the house just the way it was except that we finished it off. Ah, I love Mattituck. I love the people.

I: Why?

J: I don't know, the people are so friendly. And well Dick and I, we got together, his family and my son sort of grew up together in the summertime here and that's how I got Stevie into the pilot business too. Mildred's brother was my first apprentice, then my son was my next apprentice and Stevie was my next. Then Billy Lascelle from Camp Mineola was next. He wanted to be a pilot.

I: Where did you work out of?

J: New York Harbor.

I: How far out did you go to get the ships?

J: We went out to Ambrose Light Ship. That's where the station is for the pilot boat. When a ship came in there, we'd put a pilot aboard and take this ship up to the dock, and when the ship sailed, why we'd get aboard at the dock and take it out to Ambrose. Ambrose is about twenty miles from the Battery, out on the ocean between New Jersey and Long Island.

I: While you've been here, how has the Creek changed? You said

it was dredged several times.

J: Yes, it's much deeper now. This was mud flats at low tide. Now there's seven feet of water out there at low tide. It was only dredged once inside, but the entrance keeps changing because every heavy storm we have puts sand in. It makes a bar across the entrance so they have to dredge it out again. In fact, there's a bar there right now. They have to be very careful, the draggers, when they come in because they are big. We used to have little oil tankers come in here where the tanks are down by the (unclear), but they haven't come in since Northville has progressed because it's so easy for a truck to go down to Northville and load rather than bring it up to here. And Northville is cheaper too, because they load out of super tankers down there. Northville is a big complex. The tankers that used to come here drew about ten feet. They'd come in at high tide. They were just practically nothing more than, well, a hundred feet, a hundred twenty-five feet long. They were just little things. The tankers that go to Northvill can take sixty foot draft. They can take big super-tankers loaded in there. They build an island, an unloading platform, and they tie up to that. It has a pipe that goes ashore.

I: They couldn't have done that here?

J: Not enough water. They had to find the deepest place along the Sound. The water there is sixty-five feet deep in less than

a mile off. No, they couldn't bring sixty-five feet within less than a mile here.

I: Speaking of the tanks, are there any local feelings or attitudes about having those big tankers?

J: Not as far as I'm concerned. They've been very careful. We've had a couple of spills, but they've always taken care of it and cleaned the beaches up after them. In all the time they've been there, I haven't had any ... I can't see anything wrong with it.

END OF TAPE

Ahoy Constable Bassford

Sept. 16, 1971

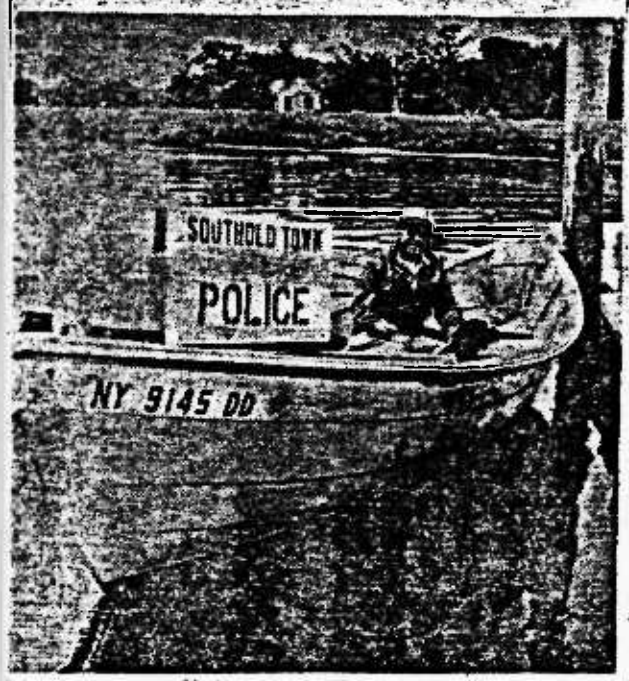
by Tim Stalker

Mattituck - At last Dick Bassford can go fishing. He hasn't had the time to drop a line over the side of his boat since June 15 when he tacked a sign on his bow with Southold Town Police painted on it.

He says he guesses it was trying meet his "civic responsibility" that made him accept the job as constable of Mattituck Inlet. Evidently a group of the regular people around the creek petitioned the town to hire someone to keep certain other people, many of them young, from disturbing the natural tranquility of the inlet. The town knocked on Dick Bassford's door.

Mattituck Inlet's new constable, who, by the way ends his summer law enforcement stint this week, is quick to tell you, "I've tried very hard not to make an arrest. I'd rather give 'em hell than give 'em a ticket."

The sight of Dick Bassford putting along in salmon-colored Banks Dory is one thing. Add the sign and his dachshund, Rusty, who frequently accompanies him and you have a combination that has made many a would-be bad-guy-on-the-water take notice.



Constable Bassford and Rusty on the inlet.

"Most everyone's been very cooperative. There's a lot of people that like to do things like fishing and swimming and those things in the inlet. Now they don't have other people climbing up their backs at 30 miles-an-hour," said Constable Bassford one morning recently as he journeyed up the creek.

It takes 22 minutes to travel the length of Mattituck Inlet if you obey the five-mile-an-hour speed limit, according to Constable Bassford and even he's quick to realize that the tide sometimes goes faster than that. He makes allowances like any good law enforcement officer. He doesn't mind if someone pushes the throttle up to six and nearly seven miles-an-hour.

When he took the job, he didn't know that "civic responsibility" could wipe out a man's fishing life, but that's exactly what happened. "I put in six days a week and sometimes another. They (officials of Southold) thought it would be just a matter of showing the sign around, but you gotta be here, or they'll run away with it."

The summer has had its effects on the man, you can see that and he's quick to admit, "I'll probably miss it." He's quicker yet to say, "But I'm going to go fishing next year. Let someone else take it over." And, who can bleme him?

Like so many people, Dick Bassford does something in his spare time that probably very few people know about. He makes guitars. Very beautiful ones.

Photos kindness R. Bassford

The friends out on the Sound fishing in 1974. Dick and Jules in Dick's boat.

Dick Bassford in May 1980.

Oftentimes news travels slowly. Here's a busy summer gone by and we just learned that the Mattituck Inlet (Creek) had had a Police Patrol, whose duties were completed after Labor Day. The officer was "Dick" Bassford, Sr. who put-putted up and down the winding waterway seeing that the area speed limit was maintained. He enjoyed the job, which had one drawback—no time for fishing. Dick, a retired carpenter, is an ardent fisherman, and also makes guitars as a side hobby. He turns out excellent ones.

SECOND SECTION
The Suffolk Times
March 11, 1976

Retired Master Pilot Retains Love Of Sea

by Jean Marriner

How do ships get in and out of the busy harbors in the world? As all neophyte boatmen know—anyone can maneuver a boat in open water. The difficulty lies in successful docking and maneuvering in treacherous currents and narrow, crowded channels. Throughout the world, harbor pilots are called on to perform these difficult tasks for the large vessels that carry passengers and cargo across the oceans.

In New York, the Sandy Hook Pilots are the group who maneuver ocean liners, tankers, freighters and defense ships in and out of N.Y. Harbor. Their training to become Master Pilots capable of handling any tonnage takes 14 long years. The North Fork can lay claim to several of these special men who daily risk their lives in performance of their duties. And one of the most "special of the special" is a long time Mattituck resident, Captain Jules Seeth (Ret.)

Over the dining room mantle in the Seeth home on Mattituck Inlet hangs a framed photo of the nuclear submarine, "Nautilus", autographed by the captain. The photo is one of many mementos of a life at sea collected by Master Pilot Seeth. It represents one of the many unusual days in the life of a New York harbor pilot.

From hanging on ships' ladders over crashing seas waiting to leap onto the pilot's gig to piloting a tanker loaded with gasoline in a pea soup fog without radar, it was all part of Jules Seeth's daily work. He spent 45 years bringing the big ships in and out of New York and New Jersey berths. Anyone surveying navigation charts of the N.Y.-N.J. waterways will readily see that to maneuver a large vessel through the many rocks, shoals, and narrow channels requires great knowledge and skill. Captain Seeth was approved for "red letter" work—a special designation approving his piloting of vessels through the Perth Amboy Cut. The Cut is a very narrow channel where tankers and freighters with 100 ft. beams pass each other coming and going, requiring the utmost in piloting know-how. Not only was he singled out for this difficult pilot's chore, but he was also the pilot who brought the Queen Elizabeth into her New York pier on her maiden voyage, March 7, 1940.

Jules Seeth was born on Feb. 27,1897, in Brooklyn, N.Y., the sixth child of a Sandy Hook Pilot. His own early association with the sea began on Sheepshead Bay sailing a small sloop. His father, George Seeth, had arrived in America from Denmark at a time when N.Y. Harbor pilots used schooners powered by sail. His sailing skills landed him a job with the group who later founded the Pilots Guild.

The Guild became known as "Sandy Hook Pilots" because the pilot boat which transfers pilots to and from the large vessels entering New York Bay is stationed off Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Growing up with a sea-going father, the Seeth boys aspired to follow in his footsteps. A pilot apprentice has to be sponsored by a licensed pilot and Jules' older brother was taken first. This meant that for seven years, until the brother received his first license, Jules' father could not sponsor another pilot. So Jules, after graduating from high school, went to night school to become a naval architect and was apprenticed to the firm of Cox and Stephens.

World War I intervened and Jules enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, spending the remainder of the war in pilot training. When the war ended, his job at Cox and Stephens was waiting but so also was a letter from the Harbor Pilot's Association telling him he could begin training. Feeling obligated to the firm which held a job for him, Jules went back to Cox and Stephens, only to discover after a few weeks that he was not cut out to work indoors.

In 1919, Jules Seeth became an apprentice Pilot and in due course received his first license. Through the next several years, he passed all the subsequent reviews and licensing steps and received the highest license from the U.S. Coast Guard for a Merchant Marine Officer: "Master of Pilot,

Jules Seeth

Steam and Motor Vessels of Any Tonnage—Good for the waters between Fire Island, N.Y. and Barnegat, N.J., including N.Y. Bay and Harbor, Hudson River, East River, Staten Island Sound, Raritan Bay from Sequient Pt. to Wards Pt."

During World War II, the increase in wartime shipping put a great demand on qualified Sandy Hook pilots. Captain Seeth took eleven aircraft carriers through the treacherous currents of Hellgate in the East River and innumerable cargo ships in and out of N.Y. Harbor. Pilots are always "on call" and the more ships, the more the pilots work.

New York Harbor, the largest and busiest port in the world, presents enormous challenges to Harbor Pilots. In his 45 years at sea, Jules only had one close call—and that time he almost sank the pilot boat! It all happened on an early winter morning during the height of the U.S. involvement in WW II. A thick fog hung over the N.Y.-N.J. coast, but because of the urgent need for supplies in combat zones, Captain Seeth was piloting a tanker loaded with aviation gasoline plus a deck-load of fighter planes to open water so the ship could join the waiting convoy. The tanker had no radar and the fog was so thick that the foc'sle head was barely visible from the deck house. Jules was proceeding very slowly into open water after having successfully maneuvered the narrow passageways of the inner harbors—when suddenly—a mast appeared dead ahead at the same time the collision occurred! The tanker hit the pilot boat which was not on station but drifting. Fortunately the speed of the tanker was so slow that it just nudged the pilot boat and the impact did not trigger an explosion.

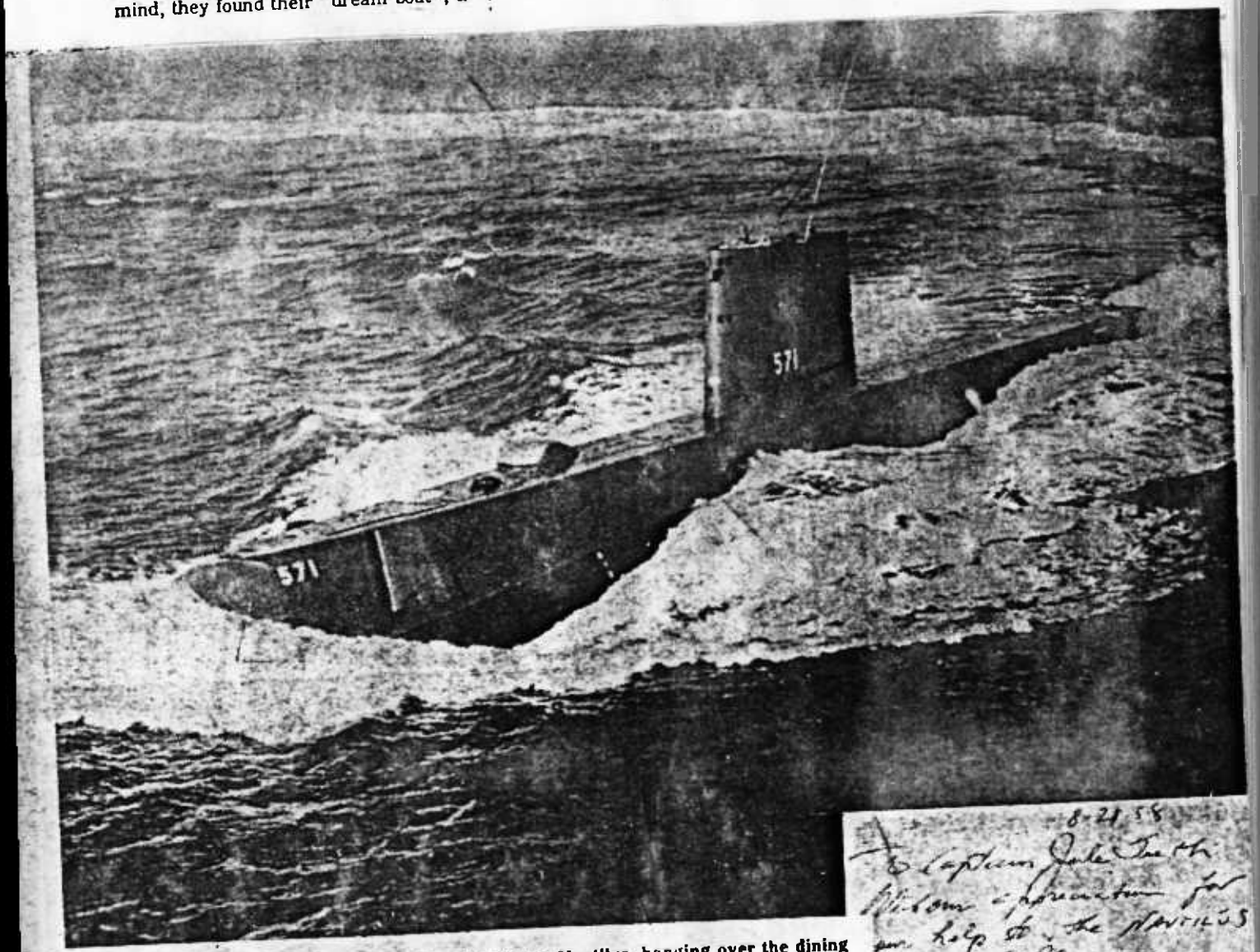
One of the most memorable incidents in a long career took place on August 28, 1958, when Captain Seeth was asked to take the nuclear submarine "Nautilus" from the Brooklyn Navy Yard (where she had been re-fitted after her polar cap expedition) into New York Bay. After leaving the Yard, the Submarine captain received word that Hurricane Daisy was 100 miles offshore and the sea at Ambrose Light (where the pilot boat was waiting to take Jules off) was twenty feet high. The sub captain informed Jules that instead of going home that night he was on his way to New London and that on the way they would submerge under the hurricane and do some testing. The "Nautilus" steamed past Ambrose and Captain Seeth turned the helm over to the sub captain. One hundred miles off-shore they submerged with Jules in the prime spot for observing. After the stint under water, the sub arrived safely in New London and Jules was given the autographed photo of the "Nautilus" which hangs in his home.

Jules Seeth retired from piloting other people's boats in 1963. But his life on the water is never ending. A true sportsman, he particularly enjoys water-related activities—sailing, cruising, fishing—all shared with his much-loved family.

Jules and Mildred Seeth were married in 1928 after meeting the year before at a church supper. The following year, their son Doug was born and Jules bought a summer cottage on Mattituck Inlet. The Seeths spent summers in Mattituck where Doug took to sailing as his father and grandfather before him. Mildred also became a sailor. Jules revived his interest in naval architectur when he and Doug built Doug's first Comet, "Knockdown", which was well known in Eastern L.I. racing circles. Doug grew up and became an excellent sailboat racer and—a Sandy Hook Pilot!

During the summers spent in Mattituck, Mildred and Jules Seeth grew more and more enamoured of the east end, spendin many happy hours fishing and cruisin They decided to move to Mattituck pe manently in 1950, with Jules commuting t his pilot duties. In 1958, with retirement i mind, they found their "dream boat", a ft. staysail schooner which they nam "Scot Free," when Mildred, describing th choice of sail over power to a friend sa "The wind doesn't cost anything. It's s free."

Together in "Scot Free" they cruised t Atlantic Coast for five years and when Jul retired in 1963, they took the boat to Flori for the winters, returning each Spring t their much loved eastern L.I. waters. The discovered during the cruises to Florida tha most of their time was spent under powe and decided to look for a larger mor comfortable boat. Doug cautioned his mother, "Don't let Dad buy another old boat." But, as Jules often said, "I have ar affinity for old boats," and thus h discovered on the Chesapeake, a beautifu old yacht—originally built for Marjori Merriweather Post of Post cereal fame.



A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH of the nuclear submarine Nautilus, hanging over the dining room mantle in the Seeth home, bears the signature of the ship's captain with deep appreciation to Capt. Seeth from the Nautilus and her crew.

photo by Scott Harris

Contents of tape No. 22A-RHB-1 Interview on October 31, 1985 by Katherine Lascelle at the home of Mr. Bassford.

B: I'm talking to Miss Lascelle and we're talking about Mattituck Creek. This is the 31st of October, 1985, and we're gonna talk over some of the things that we talked over before with Julius Seeth and myself which is Dick Bassford. There, it's all recorded.

L: Good. At the foot of Knollwood here there used to be an old house. It was empty.

B: That was Old Cappy Tuthill, (6) grandfather to Monsell's wife, and he had a place down here. I can remember coming down, with my Grandfather Moore. Used to have like sickle pears and grapes and like that. We used to come down and get them. That was way back when I was a child, I must have been about six or seven years old. I was born in 1902, so November 7, I'll be eighty three years old.

L: Congratulations! That's wonderful. My family had a cottage on the Bay and we were down here every summer. In the Twenties we kids sometimes went over to that old house to play around the edge of the Creek. We used to say that the house has haunted.

B: That used to be the place where they got those little oysters. Used to be just all over the edge of the Creek. They were all natural oyster beds down a little bit further (16). The island (4) is on the other side, right down there between the piece of woods here, what do they call it...

L: Browers Woods? (19)

B: Browers Woods, yes and Herb's oyster beds were right there and he put in about a couple thousand bushel in spring. He used to have an old bay boat, and he'd bring oysters from Connecticut. What was the name ... Seacoast, the Seacoast and they used to come with a load of oysters and they'd go along and shovel the oysters off on one side and they'd come back and they'd take them off on the opposite side. They'd put in about three thousand bushels of oysters in the early spring and they'd take them out in the fall. They'd get fat here and they had a market in the City. Mattituck oysters were very famous and he had, let's see ... anyway he had 'em on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and trans-Atlantic ships and... if I can think of it, Rings Oyster House at 122 Fulton Street. He used to ship them to (unclear) have a place where people came in and have an oyster stew and open oysters and have them on the half shell and so forth. Herb used to have his oyster house down the end of the Creek and he'd tong 'em down and pack 'em in barrels. Now a barrel held two and a half bushels of oysters and he used to get approximately $9.00 a barrel. And he'd shake 'em down like that. Had a piece of concrete and he'd set the barrels up, he'd shake 'em down and cover them up with a piece of burlap and put a thing over them and ship 'em then to Rings Oyster House in the City.

He had an old man working with him for years and I can't think of the name. Herb was a very nice kind of person. I come by, I was only just married, you see, and I come up with my little rowboat and I had a 1 HP Evinrude motor, and I'd come along and Herb would always say, "Come over", and I'd pull up beside his float and he'd take a great big scoop shovel and dump a great big shovel of oysters in my boat for me. That's the kind of fellow he was. He was very kind hearted. I knew him for a long time. He lived in Mattituck. If I'm not mistaken, he lived in the six sided house down there....

L: The Octagon House?

B: Yes, the Octagon House and then he come up on the road just this side of the railroad track where John Ashton lives. And Dolly Bell lived back there. He lived in that house there. Then after his wife died, the Hamiltons, he boarded with the Hamiltons who lived at the end of the road there.

L: You mentioned Pete Wycoff in the other interview. Tell me about Pete Wycoff. His house was...

B: Just opposite the Mill (2), the east side of the Creek. As you're going down, on the right hand corner and then you continue right across to the Mill. That was a swing bridge. You had a man that operated the swing and he had to put (unclear) a big handle and turn it and turn it and that turned the bridge around and then folks could go through. Stanley Naugles was in there

and then there was the Old Mill which was very famous for people coming in there from across the water from over the Connecticut side. And the beams were all exposed, great big beams and they'd carve their names up there and they wrote things you know. And the man that owned it at the time was.. I can't remember his name but it was a long time ago and they had all kinds of animals, like you have a tame crow and you have a fox and a racoon and maybe a possum or different things like that, more or less an attraction for some people to go out and look. And sometimes it was kind of stinking. But that was quite a famous place and they served meals. But that was way back. But a little bit before that, I don't know just how many years, before that they had what I'd say is a dike so the tide came in and went over, but when the tide went out it blocked the water from going out all the way, so it kept the water up into the south end of the Creek at the same level. But they had to do away with it because it didn't let the water clarify and I think that somebody got . . . some kind of disease they get from polluted water ... Hepatitis(?). So they had to do away with it. There was a rise and fall of the whole Creek of about six foot. Now they have got so many marinas up here that they (unclear) the boats and now this Creek is condemned. You can't take clams or things anymore, which is very sad because it used to be very productive. There used to be blueclaws eels, oysters, clams, soft clams. I used to go out at night and catch crabs by the bushel and come home with maybe forty, fifty

pounds of eels. And we seen stripers that was, oh anywheres three foot long and they'd run in schools of a half a dozen or more. And I'd see 'em and I didn't know what to do about it, didn't know anything about catching the stripers. Old Cap Smith, Emmit Smith's father, and his wife used to go out on the Creek in the rowboat and troll with a worm or something and they used to catch a lot of stripers. This was long ago, now must be forty years ago (unclear) way back. Emmit (unclear) his father had a boat, it was called the Pow (?) and used to go fishing out in the Sound, you know, party fishing, and Emmit had a boat which was a little boat and I had a small boat that was called the Viking.

(Tape recorder broke down. Conversation followed.)

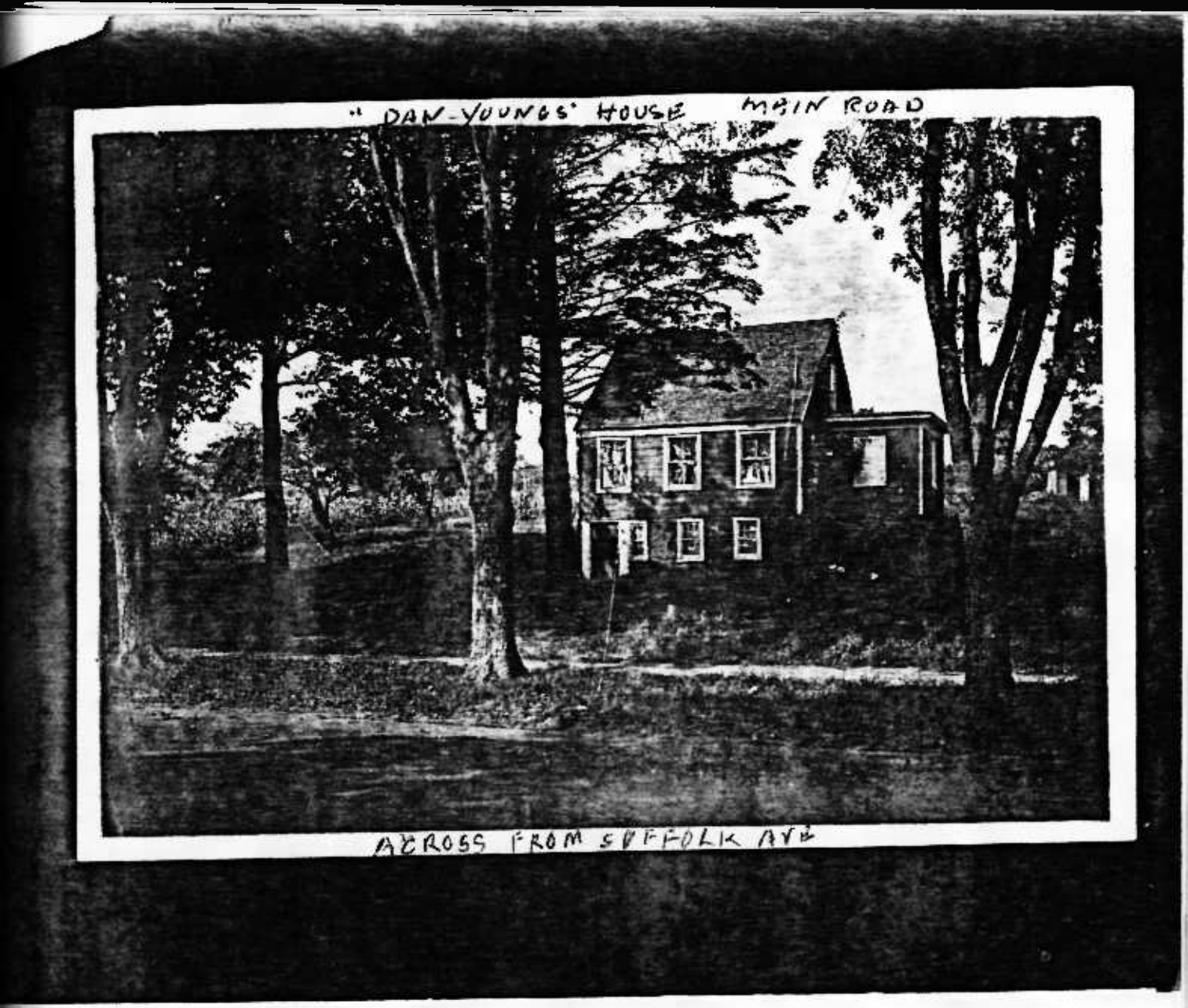
Mr. Bassford told the Interviewer that the 'bistro' was across from the Old Mill, on the south side of Mill Road, and word got around that ladies of the evening could be found there. The Old Mill was a well known restaurant. When boats put in from Connecticut, men would always stop at the Old Mill. The ceiling had a big uncovered beam and men carved initials there.

Charlie King was a boatman and had his dock across from the Mill (2) (formerly a grist mill). Jimmie Kominsky also tied up along there. Jimmie named his boats Tide I and Tide II, and he was called Jimmie Tide. He had a lot of lobster pots out in the Sound and made good money lobstering.

(See the picture of the Dan Young House [now gone] on the west side of Route 25 at the foot of New Suffolk Avenue)

Mr. Bassford described Dan Young as 'a real character'. They were members of the Carpenters Union and Dick Bassford wanted to be sure Dan paid up his back dues because Dan was near to retiring and would get a small pension. Dick called on Dan and found him in his long johns, but ready with a hearty welcome to his visitor. Dan poured a very large mug of coffee for each and brought out a store-bought cake. Then he talked and talked and it was an hour before Dick Bassford could get away. Dan Young did pay up his dues. (Later the Lighting Company used the house. It is gone now [1985] but two immerse sycamore trees on the property survive and were mercefully undamaged in the hurricane of October'85. Ed.)

END OF INTERVIEW.


" DAN-YOUNGS' HOUSE MAIN ROAD
ACROSS FROM SUFFOLK AVE

Obituaries

Richard H. Bassford

Richard H. Bassford, a lifetime resident of Mattituck, died May 23 at Central Suffolk Hospital. He was 83.

Born in North Carolina on Nov. 7, 1902, he was a carpenter employed by Harold Reeve in Mattituck.

Mr. Bassford is survived by his wife, the former Esther Gildersleeve; two sons, Richard of East Patchogue and Stephen of Merrick; two daughters, Sarah VanRyswyk of Vermont and Carol S. Patterson of Maryland; eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held on Tuesday, May 27, at the DeFriest Funeral Home in Mattituck, with the Rev. George Gaffga officiating. Interment was in Cutchogue Cemetery.

Mattituck History Project

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

33

name Richard Bassford 22-RHB:JHS-1

birth date Nov.7 1902 place Hendersonville, North Caroline

father's name Richard Bassford) Both from Cutchogue

mother's name Moore family)

childhood Richard's family came from Cutchogue where his grandfather Moore had a large house at the top of Manor Hill, right hand side going east. At one time his grandfather ran a laundry business in a building separate from the house. Richard's father had TB and the family moved to North Carolina where Richard was born. After his father's death, the family moved back to Cutchogue.

education

job training

work Boatman on the Creek dealing in clams, oysters, crabs. Carpenter. Constable on the Creek, 1970

official positions

member of

special activities, projects, hobbies Maker of guitars

spouse's name Married in 1922 to Esther Gildersleeve, daughter of James Gildersleeve.

children's names Stephen, Sara, Carol, Richard

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

The above information was furnished to Interviewer, December 1985.

for me, Mattituck was

Mattituck is

I'd like Mattituck to become

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

name Julius Henry Seeth

birth date Feb. 27, 1898 place Brooklyn

father's name George Seeth

mother's name Henrietta Brown

childhood

education Manual Training High School, School of Military Aeronautics at Cornel

job training Apprentice 6 years of Pilot Service 1918 - 1924

work Aeroplane pilot World War I. Marine Pilot New York Harbor 1924-1963

official positions

member of New Yor Sandy Hook Pilot Association

special activities, projects, hobbies Boating, fishing

spouse's name Mildred L. Martin

children's names Douglas Stuart

Three grandsons, Paul, Randy, Donald

major turning points in

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
	4	4
	5	5

for me, Mattituck was a country place to live

Mattituck is fast becoming less rural

I'd like Mattituck to become stay as it is

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape 10-KL:AMcD-1

Oral Authors: Katherine Lascelle
Arabella Stack McDermott

Summer People - Two Views

Table of Contents

Persons & Places Mentioned: Reeve family, James Creek, Judge Howell, James Rambo, Eddie Schuler, Mr. Dickie Gildersleeve's Store, Duryee's Store, Presbyterian Sunday School, 'Old' Mr. Duryee, Library Hall, Jim Gildersleeve, Mr. Boucher, DePetris, 'Pop' Sontag, Jack Zenzius, Art Woodward, Bob Muir, Ruth Phillips, Irma Reeve and Ralph Tuthill, Deephole Creek, Lawyer Wickham, Jack Rose, Hank Drum, Terry Tuthill, Grabies Appliance Store, Mrs. Phillips the Librarian, Camp Mineola Association, Sigsbee Road Association, Beachwood Association, Mary Wood, Tommy Reeve, John McNulty, Harold Reeve, John Lenahan

McD

MAPS, PICTURES

MATTITUCK HISTORY PROJECT

Contents of Tape 10-KL:McD-1 September 27, 1978
Oral Authors: Arabella McDermott Interviewer: John Traversa
Katherine Lascelle

Summer People - Two Views

I: When did you come to Mattituck and why did you come here? What part of the town did you settle in?

L: Well we came out in 1922. My mother always said that she had lived within sight and sound of Lake Michigan, and she wanted a place on the water. My father was a fisherman, and loved duck hunting. So when a friend told us that there was good shore front property available, the two families came out and we took the last two plots on that particular piece of property. That was in the Spring of 1922. It was a very large farm field, belonging to the Reeve family, and it was divided into ten plots. It's just east of James Creek. Beyond the meadows and James Creek comes a little strip of woods and then was this big farm field. All the crops were in that spring, so we were asked not to disturb them, which we didn't. Behind our house was the asparagus bed, and the asparagus still comes up in three or four places every year. The front of the property is right on the water. The plots are from forty feet wide to two hundred feet wide, different ones, and they run back over three-hundred feet, long narrow pieces of property.

M: Is this Camp Mineola?

L: Well the first ten houses were called Camp Mineola. Then

in twenty-three & twenty-four another ten or fifteen houses were built to the west of us which was also part of Camp Mineola. So Camp Mineola is really in two parts. We each have our association and each call ourselves Camp Mineola Association. We get on very well. We have a long private road that has to be paved, and I guess electricity, too, was involved. It was called Camp Mineola because the man who made the arrangement was Judge Leon Howell from Mineola. The first people who took property there were people from Mineola, and people who took property later were from Mineola.

I: Ara would you like to tell us the same?

M: Well I've been coming up here one way or another since my grandfather brought the boy scouts up here in the early 1900's on his boat. Then my mother and father spent most of their honeymoon on the Mattituck Creek at the Old Mill. That was in 1911, September 9, 1911. For years their name appeared on the clapboard of the Old Mill there. Everyone who had been there always put their name there and the date. People who ventured inside left their name and the year they were there.

Well in 1924 my mother and father had a yacht built and they took the five kids, and a helper, and a young man called an engineer, and we went touring from College Point, Queens, eastward to come around into Peconic Bay. We layed in Mattituck Creek, my father came out that weekend. He took us through the gut, we layed in Greenport. Next weekend he came out, and we finally wound up in Jamesport with a friend of his. Now when it was time to go home, after about six weeks, we reversed our course and when we came back into Mattituck Creek again, my

The Old Mill

The McDermott name must be there!

little brother, four years of age fell overboard. His name was John Stack. My father happened to be on board that day, and he jumped over, and he said that he could just see the towhead going down in the whirlpool and he dove for that. So they went home and sold the boat.

The following Spring they came out here looking for property. They found property and after they had purchased property in the real estate office, my mother said could the realtor find somebody who would build what she wanted. So there was a gentleman in the office and he said, "Young lady I would be interested in what you would like." She said that years ago Father had taken her to the Maine woods to a log cabin. She felt with five kids that she would like a log cabin, she wouldn't have to worry too much about the woodwork in that. So this man said to her, "Well if you've got the money, I have the cabin." They came down here to the log cabin and came in the front door and she turned to him, and she said, "Oh Dan". And he said to James Rambo, "OK we'll take it." That was it. Then they had to resell the property they had bought in Jamesport.

Well that summer was the first summer we were here, five kids, and mother and Aunt (?) Anna. And my Dad came out on weekends, and for a while he came out Wednesday nights. We came here mostly to get away from the pollution on the East River, on which we lived. The garbage from Rikers would come in on the tide and it was just filthy. My mother believed in fresh air and sunshine for kids growing. We had the experience in

Jamesport of the clear, clear water. At that time we were able to read a newspaper in ten feet of water, at least the headlines of it. So that's why they decided on the area, and that's why we came out.

I: What were some of your first impressions of Mattituck?

L: The first time we came out to stay there was no house here. My father had been out the day before and had a carpenter who laid a foundation. We arrived the next day--the rest of the family--my mother, my brother, and I, with two friends, two high school friends of my brother. After the carpenter had gone, my father and these three boys built the house. It took about three days. The first day they put enough roof on so that we could sleep under it; and then finally it was finished. My first impression of Mattituck is being carried from the car to the platform of the house, because the place was one field of poison ivy. So the first thing my mother did was to clear the poison ivy because I was highly susceptible. Then I could get back and forth. They pounded a pipe into the ground, and put a pitcher pump on it. That was where we got our beautiful water, better even than now. We had a privy outside. I guess during that summer they started the garage. We didn't get electricity for several years, and at first there was just a large porch, and a large living room, and two very small bedrooms. Then after a couple of years when we did get electricity, we had a pump, an electric pump, and had running water. They put on an addition on the back of the house. We had a toilet and more bedrooms and what was so nice, they put a sink in every bedroom. When

we had a lot of people, there wasn't that much pressure on one bathroom.

The place to us was merely like an extension of our life in Westbury, because we always had people from Westbury. About twenty-five years later one of my brother's friends was out and he looked up in one of the rooms and said, "That's the wall I built." The whole first two years all my brother's high school friends worked on the house, worked on the outside, and worked in the garden. Then my mother and father had a huge garden, part vegetable and part flower garden. That was another thing that they wanted. And my brother built a tennis court. The ground there is so full of clay that he was able to make an excellent tennis court. My father would come out on Friday night, he'd get out of the car, go into the house, leave his little bag, and go out fishing. He would pick up bait on the way, he would go out fishing and before dark he would come back maybe with a tub full of fish. He caught Porgies, and Lafayettes and Kingfish - quite a lot of Kingfish, and Bluefish in season.

M: Did you ever hear the story about the Lafayettes? Somebody said they only came every seven years.

L: No I haven't. We didn't get too many, but we'd get them, maybe it was that we would get a lot at one time, but I remember them. Then there was wonderful clamming right in front of the house and scallops, you just went out with a bucket at low tide and picked them up. We set eel traps; my brother would go spearing for eels with a light on still nights. James Creek at that time was beautiful. You would get blue crabs up in the lake part. Later on we got mussels. I'm told you were not really supposed to eat that kind of mussel, but they really are delicious. The Bay in front of our house is

very shallow; even at high-tide you have to go all the way out to get over your head. So the boys built a springboard up in the creek, a place where it was very deep, and we would go up there.

M: And I used that many times.

L: You did?

M: Yes I did.

L: That was beautiful swimming, too, at high-tide. We would come out weekends as soon as it was warm enough, but of course we had to turn all the water off in winter. We would always come out once in the middle of winter, just for a day, because it was too cold; but there was always that trip just to see that everything was all right. Early in Spring, Easter vacation, we would come out and manage somehow. And after that it was every weekend. And then as soon as school was out, my mother came out and stayed all summer with my brother and me. My father didn't take a regular vacation but he could take long weekends. So we were out here for the whole summer. But I can remember my mother saying, after we'd been here seven or eight years, that she couldn't remember a single summer weekend that we had been here that we didn't have company. We had anywhere from four to ten people every weekend, beside our selves, and that seemed to work in those days. We had a couple of navy hammocks, a lot of folding cots, army cots. All the children went out on the porch.

M: Did your mother have a theory like my mother did? My mother said never invite anyone for a weekend, Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. She said that all they do, they eat and they sleep. And so you never got to visit with them, you

were just feeding them, and they were sleeping the other times. So she used to invite them for a week, because by day three they would begin to liven up and be able to talk. Their appetites had simmered down and they had caught up with their sleep.

L: This is no theory, this is true. People about the second day they were here would get so sleepy, they would--the adults--they'd just all take naps. We said it was the salt air. I think it is the salt air, the relaxation, and the bathing, and being on the beach in the warm sun. We had some bad cases of sunburn. At least seven years, I could count back, I had a friend who came out, and stayed a whole month every summer with me. My mother would have her sewing club out often. There were seven or eight of them, and they would come out for the day. But my father loved company, and he kept my poor mother cooking in the kitchen for them.

But he fed us all on fish. We had wonderful fish, and there was so much fish in those days, you could just go right out and get it. When they'd come in with a big washtub of fish, he and my brother would go down the beach and distribute them. We couldn't use them all. We didn't have freezers then, and he'd go way down the beach until he had gotten rid of them all.

M: We had ice boxes in those days, we didn't have freezers.

I: Ara, do you want to tell us your first experience in Mattituck?

M: Well, I was twelve years old, and the eldest of the five kids and the one chore that was more or less eliminated, was the fact that I didn't have to look after the kids that much. The water was so shallow, they could just play around in it. They were apprehensive enough so as not to venture out, so they

stayed sort of put. And we had neighbors all around us, but our family was five kids, and you'd think it was Cox's Army when we came by. The other families had one or two children, and maybe three children. But we all played together. My brothers were somebody else's brothers' ages, and sister and I were other people's ages. So we had a great old time, and did a lot of swimming, and went out in the boat. And then when Eddie Schuler was old enough he was allowed to take the family boat out. And because the water was so shallow we'd take it out in the middle of the Bay and dive off it.

I: Do you have any specific recollections of the area, how it was different from what it is now?

M: Well in those days we had a preponderance of trees, there was no grass to speak of, pine trees and oak and the pine trees would drop their needles. And in the beginning of the summer it used to hurt your bare feet, but after a couple weeks you hardened up, and you had no trouble walking on oyster shells or anything else. The front lawn was about thirty-feet more in depth towards the Bay, and the beach proper had a lot more depth to it. Of course, that was all before a bulkhead was put in. We had three and a half bathhouses on the beach until we built the bulkhead. And then the bath houses were moved up and Mr. Schuler took his half of bathhouse. But my mother had a boys' and a girls' in her bathhouse. (unclear) and then later on, my father put a shower down there, so we just had the boys' and the girls'. Somebody always had a boat, and everybody shared with everybody else. There was a family named Dickie, who came from New Jersey, and Mr. Dickie had a

sailboat called the Samosset, and of course the big thrill was if Mr. Dickie invited you out. He was a very fine gentleman, and he had a son Paul, a very inventive kid. He made a paddlewheel out of their rowboat, and everybody would come from all around to look at the paddlewheel.

We would have beach parties. My mother was a great one for less work and more fun, so we would have supper on the beach. It was either hamburger and rolls, or frankfurters and rolls and sauerkraut, and dessert was always watermelon. After this feast on the beach, my mother would organize games, and we would have the time of our lives. She would always have a different kind of game but the one I remember was the Honeymoon Relay. She had one sachel full with boys' or mens' clothes and the other filled with girls' and of course the thing was to pick up your sachel, run a hundred feet on the beach, and open the sachel and get dressed. And as it turned out the girls had the boys clothes, and the boys had the girls clothes--much laughing, falling down. We just had the greatest time. My mother would sit on the beach with one of these seagull feathers in her hair, and a braided thing around her forehead. She had what she called an Indian blanket, had a lot of, like teepees on it. As it started to get dark and we'd have the fire going, she would sit there and tell us some ghost stories, and we'd go to bed thoroughly frightened. But we had quite a time.

I: What were your first interactions with local people?

L: Well, of course, we bought everything in town. I remember Gildersleeve's store, and remember Donald Gildersleeve as a

young man working in the store, and his mother . It was either his mother or his aunt, but it was an older woman Gildersleeve. We loved Gildersleeve's store, and we loved Duryee's store. The first few years we went to the Presbyterian Sunday School, because there was no Episcopalian Sunday School here. We all came to think a great deal of Mr. Duryee, 'Old Mr. Duryee', who was superintendent of the Sunday School.

M: He was a great man.

L: And of course we did go to the doctors in town, but we didn't make any contacts in town. We were always so busy out here. We were what they call now, the 'summer people', who drive in and out. We always had so much going on of our own at the beach. Beyond that, I don't think we went to the movies very much, but we did go to the Library. And when they would have plays here, a company would come in with perhaps two professional actors, and then they would recruit local people. I think for several summers in a row they had that play, and I remember going to that. That was a great thing. That was in Library Hall.

I: Do you remember any of the plays specifically, or any of the local people who were in them?

L: No, I don't remember. There is one person that I meet from time to time, Lois Gildersleeve, meet her in the Post Office or the A&P. We met her through Sunday School. We never really socialized with her. This was true of most of the people up and down the beach. There was one family who were down really more than we were, I think, and they knew a few people in the village. But most of us had our weekend people who were our guests, and we were right down there on the beach all the time.

I: Ara?

M: Well I guess the contact with the local people started when we got to more or less teenagers. The only contact we really had was when Jim Gildersleeve came up in his pick-up truck to take the order for groceries one day, and then he would bring them back the next day. And Mr. Boucher who doubled carting the garbage and also had a vegetable truck that he would come with fresh vegetables. We did not have a garden that I recall. When we got to be fourteen, fifteen we were permitted to walk to town, and usually be a group of us. And as we got a little older we were permitted to walk to town to go to the first show at the movies. The big thrill was to walk to town and get the ice-cream soda or whatever at DePetris. They had a fruit store and an ice-cream counter there. That used to be the big hang-out.

I don't know what I thought I was doing; I used to wear a midi-blouse, I got it from my uncle who had been in the Navy. He also gave me the pants, and I always walked to town with two of my neighbors, two boys, and I thought nothing of this. I had a very short hair-cut because I loved to swim, and one time walking on the main street, one of the locals said to the other one, "Which one is the girl?" And the other fellow said, "Well let's cuss and see which one blushes." I never got over that. Pop Sontag was the barber, and we'd come out early in the summer and we'd all get this very short haircut. The boys would get the real G.I. thing, and I got the manish bob, I guess you would call it. I was in there this day, and I was getting my manish bob, and Ole' Pop was cutting away,

and one of his customers came in, and the customer said, "Don't let Pop put on any of that herbicide. That takes the hair off your head and puts it on your belly." And with that Pop Sontag rushed him into the back room, and must have said, "This is a girl, don't talk." But we always behaved ourselves in town.

The other contact we had was with the stable. Jack Zenzius had the riding stables. So we all got to know Jack Zenzius pretty well. But of course the big thrill, as Kay said, was Gildersleeve's General Store and Duryee's Hardware Store. They were really something. I have a set of china that my mother bought from Gildersleeve's. And I had that wrapped up for years, I just unveiled it this spring. Of course not one dish, not one cup was broken until I unveiled it, and I promptly took the ears off three cups. We had no great contact with the people at that time. However, when my brothers were in their teen years and old enough, one brother Dan worked (unclear) Freddy (unclear) Auslinger and Art Woodward were the bosses. My brother John worked in Barkers as a soda jerk. In later years my brother John went into the Water Safety Program under Bob Muir.

Well, continuing further about having to do with the towns people. When my father was disabled he had to retire early, and they went to Florida in the winter time. They left about the day after Christmas. Until the time they went to Florida my brother John and my brother Dick attended High School here in Mattituck, and when my folks would return from Florida first part of May or so, the boys would pick

up their classes (in Mattituck again). When they graduated High School they were the only two fellows who had two High School diplomas, one from West Palm Beach, Florida and one from Mattituck High School. My brother Dan was just enough older that he was already in college when this had happened, that my Dad had to retire. So the boys knew an awful lot of the local fellows, and they used to date the local girls. In fact my brother John's first wife was a local girl named Ruth Phillips. Of course they finished college and they were off trying to make their way in the world, and eventually married. And the only one who stayed here in the area besides myself was my brother John who is residing now in Mattituck.

My sister is still on Long Island, but I have a brother in Wisconsin, and a brother in California. But they come back to the log cabin every opportunity that they can possibly. They were here three years ago when the family had been in this area for fifty years. We had a huge school bell, a great big thing, I don't know where my father got it, somebody said that it was taken from a school that had been wrecked; and we had a double tree growing, and my father mounted it on that tree. I figured it was up there about forty-eight years. And after forty-eight years the chain wore out, and the bell fell to the ground. This was the Sunday after Thanksgiving one year. I made a date with the family that in July we would have a bell raising and celebrate the fifty years that we had been coming. The boys came in, my sister came, of course we were here, my children were here, some of the boys' children were here, we had quite a gathering. We had

arranged three nights, Friday night was the immediate family, Saturday night we had a birthday party. Because three of the people in the family had birthdays in the winter time, and we were never around to have a party for them. Then on Sunday we had all the cousins. Each night we sat down with close to thirty for dinner, and on Sunday it was forty-two for dinner. I was tired for about two weeks after that. Everyone we knew on the bluff came, and they all re-uned and recounted, "remember when we did this." We had a lot of laughs.

I: You say that you never felt that you were summer people?

M: No...when we were young, even though we were here first in the summer time, we were too young to know that there was any kind of feeling toward us. But when we got older, with the boys working up there in the stores, and then going to school, it sort of felt like we had been on a vacation and came back. Everybody was so happy to see everybody else.

I: Would you say that the turning point with the local people was when you brothers became teenagers and started going to school here?

M: Yes. That persisted even through my own family. I had two sons, and they both worked as life-guards, having taken the water-safety program with Bob Muir. I sent my children up here to the enrichment program in the summertime because they were attending the Catholic parochial school in College Point, Queens. I thought it would be a marvelous opportunity for them to find out what the public school was

like. They just thought it was the greatest thing, to have that man up there and the woman up there teaching. The one kid took chemistry.

I: You mean lay people as opposed to clerical?

M: Right. It was quite a thing. My kids all feel as though they live here, and of course I still feel as though I live here.

I: Kay, can you tell me if there was any turning point in your involvement, or your parents' involvement with the local people?

L: Well for me it was definitely when I came to live here in 1972. During the forties we rented the house for a number of years to other people and mother had come out while I was working somewhere else. So I was away from Mattituck, except for occasional visits, from about 1932 to 1953 or 1954, and then when I came out it was only for the summer. It was a very hectic time, my mother was quite old, but she insisted on coming out. She died in 1968, she was 97 years old. So the last ten years I sort of was worried a good deal of the time.

In fifty-six or fifty-seven she could no longer stand the noise and so forth of living with my brother and his two children in the summer. It was just too hectic for her. So he had the old house taken away. They took it away on skids. She built another house with two duplex railroad apartments, one side was for my brother's family, and one side

was for her and for me. This has worked out very well. In 1972 I retired and came out permanently.

But the picture is so different today. When we were here in the twenties we had what was called a Seaford Skiff. My father used that for fishing. It was a very flat boat, very seaworthy, and marvelous for fishing. It had room all around, and he could take six and eight people out in that boat if he had to. We had a float, and we had a dock which we put in, and took out every year. My father made an aquaplane for us, and we rode behind his motor boat on an aquaplane. When the water got too hot on the bay, which it does in the summer, we'd go over to the sound, to the inlet, and that was wonderful swimming. One or two years we rode horses too, with Jack Zenzius. And Zenzius worked for Dad too.

Then when I came back--my brother had started coming more regularly in the early fifties--it was all sailboats. My nephew had a sailboat, and he was active in the yacht club, Mattituck Yacht Club. Then my brother got himself a motor boat. He wasn't interested in fishing as my father was. And then came water skiing. The whole picture is changed now.

And the beach, the water now at high-tide comes up almost to the bulkhead. It used to come at high-tide, at least 20 feet beyond, so the beach has changed. We have been more fortunate then the other people because the little thin bulkhead, which has been reinforced, is still in a safe position. That's not threatened yet.

When I came back during 1972 to live, I knew no one in town. Something happened to me which happened before. Our family had always lived in Westbury, and I was away from Westbury working for about twenty-five years. When I came back to live in Westbury, most of the friends I had known were gone, a few of them had become rather remote. The only people I became acquainted with in Westbury were people who had come within the last ten years. They were all new people. When I came to Mattituck the first person I met was someone who had worked at the same place I had in Nassau County. Then the next people I met all had come within the last ten or fifteen years. They were not the older people. The friends I've made now are new people in Mattituck.

This is very true of the Friends of the Library. There were a few people there from the older families when I had joined. I think Irma Reeve, and Ralph Tuthill are the only two left. And all the rest are people who started as summer people, and are coming out now either part-time or living here all year round.

Since I have been here since 1972, I really had a chance to learn about the country, to go out to Orient and Orient Point, and to go out with the Audobon people and really learn about our beaches and our wetlands. I enjoy the farm country now. The second year I was out here I found myself, as I would drive along anywhere, I would look around and say, "Oh it's so beautiful." And what I was looking at were potato fields,

or cleared fields or fields planted with winter wheat, but to me it all had a glow. I still think it's beautiful. It was a beautiful experience to suddenly become acquainted with it, and to have the leisure to go around. I see them coming out now weekends, and I think, ah, they have packed in a hurry at home, and rushed out here, and traffic is much worse now. They are going to rush through all the things they want to do here this weekend, because now there is so much to do. And they are going to rush back in all that traffic Sunday. I'm so relieved that I'm living here quietly. I look at young people and I think well you have a hard row to hoe. I am kind of glad that now I have gotten into what you call the golden age, and I can sit back from the road, from all the traffic and the rush.

I really enjoyed the summers here. Oh I had been to the beach before, went to the beach Sundays on big picnics, but I had never learned how to clean fish, open clams, skin eels. It was a whole new life. We had always had a garden in Westbury and we had chickens, but I didn't know anything about the shore. I didn't care too much about fishing, but I was willing to clean the fish when they brought them in because I do like fish. We went clamming up in Deep Hole Creek, and got tremendous, beautiful clams, just beautiful.

I: This was in the twenties you're talking about, right?

L: Yes--They were the soft clams.

M: How did you dig the soft clams?

L: At Deep Hole we wore bathing suits, and went in to almost our hips, and then dug them from the bank under water with our

hands. For years I had to be very careful of this finger which is the thimble finger, because I had gotten such a deep cut from a soft shell clam.

I: Do you have any memories or impressions that would exemplify local peoples' attitudes towards summer visitors?
L: I had only one incident. It wasn't until I became a permanent person that I really saw the difference. The incident has always stayed in my mind. I had to go down the road and canvass the houses for something. I came to a house, and we discussed a new road that had been paved, and speed bumps had been put across it. I remarked that they are so annoying, and why do we have to have speed bumps. And that man said, "That's to keep the summer people down," in such a dreadful way that I was astonished. It was like a shock to realize. Then I began looking at the young summer people who did fly up and down those roads. They came out on Friday, and you dreaded it, and back and forth they'd go. I didn't hear it from anyone else in that tone of voice. The man has since moved away. I guess he didn't like the neighborhood. But since I have been out here, I have mentioned it to other people who have just moved out in the last number of years. Our feeling now is--now that we are here, it's so nice after all those summer people go home and the traffic is gone and we are not so crowded.

That was the only really unpleasant reference that I had gotten to summer people. But it showed me that there was a

difference, and of course now I realize it, just by the traffic in the stores, and the sense of relief in fall that the beach isn't so crowded. We had for a month ten people living next door in four rooms. It's my nephew with six kids. They all wanted to be in there together. They sleep on the couch, the floor or anywhere...And they're all out on the beach. My neighbor always had members of her family visiting, one or another. Now with the years, of course there are fewer and fewer, but slowly the younger generation comes. But not as many as used to.

Speaking of things that last, when we took these pieces of property, our friend who had known about it in the first place had the first choice. He chose a certain piece because he loved the tree, a beautiful oak tree. He lived in a tent that summer because there was a cottage on the property already occupied. The following year he built, and he built around the tree. His daughter now lives there, and she has a tree man every year. It's becoming thinner and thinner. The man says it's still in good shape, he's braced it, and they check the house, and they fertilize this tremendous oak.

M: What part of the house is it in?

L: It's not inside the house. It was at the edge of the porch, and then I think that they had to do something about the part above the porch that was really house. They have a drain around there and they had to cut away a piece. It shades the whole house, it shades our house. We were so worried through the hurricane. It came thru beautifully. Two

tremendous oaks three houses down went during the hurricane, and they couldn't be recovered. This year they died completely.

I: Ara, what about you on local peoples' attitudes?

M: Well I always enjoyed the local people very much and I got to know a lot of the local people one way or another. I can remember writing to someone, I think it was the Lawyer, Wickham, and saying, "I'll be out in two or three weeks, and then you will know that Spring has really come." Always could never get out there early enough. One time I came out here with the four kids for Easter Vacation. Well it not only rained for seven days, I'm sure the farmers prayed hard for that, but I nearly went bananas. Then the kids, one after the other came down with the German Measles. So by the time I went home the whole four of the kids had German Measles. I was ready for the Booby Hatch.

But I think there is a difference where a family has given of itself to the community. I think the acceptance is a little broader. Whereas Kay had been strictly a weekender a long time, well she had been there summers when she was young, but it isn't until you get up there with the teenagers and start with the cars. When you could drive up to town and that sort of thing, where you get involved with the local kids. I remember a lot of kids. I'm a little older than they are, but the kids that I remember were Jack Rose, Hank Drum, Terry Tuthill. They were all natives here.

We were a pretty wild gang. We loved to dance, and De Petris closed out his store on Love Lane, and where presently we have Grabie's appliance store, that hugh place, De Petris opened that up. He had a soda fountain, and he had

booths in there, and he had a juke box. We would go up there and we would dance all night. I can remember doing something called the sugar foot stomp. I don't even remember how it went. I can remember, that was it, dance our legs off, and sleep until nearly noon on Saturday.

I: Approximately what year was this?

M: I guess that was between 1930 and '35. I went to work when I was about seventeen, and then I would be dying to get out here weekends. And I was glad I had been as athletic as I was, because I could run like a deer. And I used to utilize that ability on Friday nights. I worked for Bell Telephone Laboratories on 463 West Street, and I had to run over to 12th Street and 7th Ave. and get on the subway and go uptown to Penn Station, and make that train. It was the 5:23. You never saw legs fly faster than mine. I would just slide on the subway train. I would knock everybody over getting off, then I would run down the stairs from 7th Ave. and across the station, and just slide thru the gate as it was closing. The gang would meet me at the station, and I'd get a ride home, and I'd have supper and give my parents about five minutes of my time. Then the horns were going. Then fifteen of us or twenty of us were down at De Petris' again, and we did that for years.

I: How long did it take you on the train?

M: Well better than you do now, about two hours and forty minutes, because that was the Shelter Island Express. That was a good train. I think they still have the Shelter Island

Express, but it doesn't make the time that it used to make. Never caught my breath till about Ronkonkoma. You wouldn't have to change on that train. As we got older, and we were over that first stage, we had prohibition, and of course everybody was very interested in liquor, because you were told not to have any. And then some of the wise-guys had to find out where there was a speakeasy, and there were a couple of them around, one place in Southold. They would make the safari down there, and you had to have the password to get in and the whole bit. I could never drink in those days and I guess it's just as well. Somebody had to drive home. We had a pretty lively existence. After many years I got married and started to have a family and your whole "modus aperandi" changed. You were more into diapers instead of dancing.

I: Did you do quite a bit of dancing with the local boys at De Petris?

M: Well, I can't remember any local boys that I danced with. We were just so much of a gang. The gang was half and half. We were all there at De Petris, and we were all having our sodas and ice-cream, and somebody put the nickel in the juke box, everybody got up to dance. It was just a free for all. It wasn't disco either. Later on they built the High School, and they had dances up there occasionally. When my daughters were young they went to the sock-hops up there. My youngest daughter went to a prom up here. She had met the local boys by attending the enrichment program during the summer. So it's gone, and now I have my grandchildren coming here. They have been up to the swimming instruction already,

and Muir keeps saying, "Which one is this, which generation?"

When my family had grown, and my husband and I were coming out here weekends alone, sometimes I would stay for the week, and he went back to the city. I became involved in the Historical Society, and then I really got to meet some natives. That was around 1970. I had always been an avid reader and I remember so well Mrs. Phillips, the Librarian in Library Hall. I remember the move from Library Hall up to the new building, and Mrs. Phillips' retirement. Now I'm involved with the Friends of the Library. So happy to meet all of them and help anywhere I can.

I: When did you start with the Friends?

M: Well I had been on their mailing list for many, many years, and this was the first year that I had the opportunity to attend one of their meetings. I said that I hoped that they wouldn't give me anything to do. They seemed to be so busy. I have enough to do to adjust my life now to retirement. I wasn't sure how I was going to portion my time. And then they introduced a young man named John Traversa, and he said that he needed a typist. So all of a sudden I had something to do, and I have enjoyed so much working with John.

.....

L: I just might make this comment. When the place where we had our property started, there were ten houses and of those original ten, all but two have been winterized and two are now occupied by retired people. It looks as if there are

a number of other people there who are looking forward to retiring. Five out of those original ten are still in the same families that started in 1922. The group is not socially cohesive. But something like the road comes up, the Association becomes active and we take care of the road. For the first number of years I don't believe there was such a thing, and then back in the fifties there was an issue of multiple housing on New Suffolk Road right next to our entrance road. All the people on Ole Jule Lane, and all the people on our beach were very upset about it. Some organization was formed. I came down for a visit at that time and I found myself typing manifestos and letters and so forth. I don't remember just why the project was dropped. I wasn't out here much at that time. A little later, the Association got together and took care of the road. It functions when all the people are interested in a particular item, and the rest of the time it lies dormant.

A: Which in a way is a good thing

L: Yes. There are officers. The president was not here when the issue of the road came up again. It was during the winter. So my brother who is living here now, he was treasurer, and the secretary, also living here, took care of it. There probably won't be an election of officers until some of the officers decide they just don't want to be anymore. But it does function when we need it and the same with the twenty or so houses in the other part of Camp Mineola.

M: There are other organizations I know of. One is the Sigsbee Road Association, and about the only thing I ever heard about them is that they have a big blast once a year down at the water's edge, a cookout, and they've even had a band and things like that. And the other place is over at Beachwood. Beachwood is out on New Suffolk Ave. It lies about a little bit west and south of where the golf course would be cutting in, Moore's Lane. There's an Association there.

L: Well, Sigsbee Road has to take care of their beach, police their own beach.

.....

L: When we have all this traffic in the summer time, and I can't get across the road from the Library, I say to myself, that our merchants need this, and I put up with it because our local industry is such that we have to have this summer traffic to get along. The organizations I belong to are mostly organizations whose leaders were not people born and brought up here. That's the League of Women Voters, Custer, Audubon Society, Library...I've just joined the Historical Society, and I don't really know who is there. There seem to be a number of older people there, older families. That would probably indicate that my interests are not with the organizations that would have the original Mattituck people in them.

This is something that has interested me very much, how a place changes, how a community changes. We come out here for a nice bucolic existence, and we bring something which

militates very much against a nice bucolic existence. We are the ones that are changing this lovely farm pattern to a great extent.

I: Could you give me an example of that?

L: This isn't an example but it indicates the way people look at living out here. People living back in Nassau County or New York say, "What do you do all winter? What do you do out there?" I find myself just as busy in winter as I am in the summer, and the choices here -- there's hardly a weekend that you don't have to make choices as to what you might want to do.

M: That's true.

L: And this is as true in winter as in summer. There are things going on all the time. The Custer movies program, the musical programs. Sometimes the League of Women Voters brings in an interesting speaker. Not just Mattituck, of course, but the whole North Fork. People may think of this area as a place where you would go and vegetate, and it's anything but that. You could if you wanted to, I guess, but I don't know anyone who just sits down.

M: I agree on that score. I think as long as we are mentioning organizations it's important to note that a lot of local people are in the Lions Club. They have the Strawberry Festival in June and they pick the Strawberry Queen. People come from all over. Certainly brings them in, My word! The Fire Department has the block party, and

they have the dance one night in the street down there on Pike Street or in the yard of the Fire House. I think we owe a lot to the Fire Department because they are the local fellows, and they have attained a degree of efficiency and expertise that I think is commendable. They have my vote of thanks because they have done so many wonderful things...They'll get a little line in the paper--there was a brush fire down on the Boulevard or something, but they've done other things. My neighbor down here, Mary Wood, had fallen and broken her hip, and she was jammed in her kitchen and Ray Nine had come to pick up her garbage, and heard this moaning. He started to enter the house, and she began to cal "Ray, Ray" and by the time he reached her she went into shock. He got the Fire Department there, and he administered first aide to her. Just Bing, Bang, Bing! They're a great group. We have the North Fork Play House. If you go there you can recognize some people. They put on fantastic shows, Fiddler on the Roof last year, I think that was fabulous. And the churches all have their organizations, and they all do their own particular things, do a great job.

I: What about the Protestant and Catholic relationship? Because the Catholics are rather new comers to the area.

M: For years we were the only Catholic family on this part of the bluff here, and we used to go to church in I think it was a dance hall, above Duryee's where the Hardware Store is. Then they built the church, Our Lady of Good Council in Mattituck, and we attended there. Then the Catholic Camp,

Camp Immaculata was only a few doors to the west of here, and they read mass every day, and my mother would parade the whole five of us up there. She never asked anybody but she brought a cardboard box with a nail and a hammer. On the front of the box it said, "Offering." And she nailed it on the tree just before you went under their lean-to arrangement where we heard Mass on Sundays. I never joined any of those church organizations because I wasn't here that long, and now I feel a little bit past my peak for joining. I know they have very active Knights of Columbus, and Our Lady of Fatima. They have the parochial school in Cutchogue, and they have a parents club for that, as an auxillary to supplement moneys they get to run the school.

I never went to any functions at any of the other churches, but my daughter had gone to the Fellowship at the Presbyterian Church, and as I said she attended the enrichment program up at the high school, and she met the local boys, a lot of them were going to that Fellowship. My son Timmy I believe went there with young Tommy Reeve a few times and Timothy also worked up at the Playhouse one summer. We didn't know what was going to happen after that, but I found out he was hammering the scenery together so we didn't have to worry about him becoming a Thesbian.

I: Did you feel at all strange being a Catholic in this community?

M: My father made it very clear to the family, and he would remind us on occasion that we were the only Catholics in the vicinity, and that people would judge the Catholics

by the way we behaved. So he encouraged us to mind our business, and to keep our noses clean, and to be good boys and girls. We have all been into scouting and all, and I never felt any particular strain. There are some people who are biased, and you recognize them as biased, but if you keep trying hard enough and long enough they find out you're all right, no different than they are.

I: Did you have any contacts with local people that particularly impressed you?

M: When my oldest son announced that he would like to have a job as a life-guard, he had been swimming for St. Francis Prep in Brooklyn and he was qualified. He had taken the lifeguard's senior test and all. I went to see John McNulty, and he suggested that I talk to Harold Reeve, and he was just as nice as he could be. And he said that the local boys would get preference, but they would have to take the exam, and whoever was best would get the job. Both of my sons worked as life-guards, they were a product of that Red Cross Water Safety Program under Muir, and had taken the thing from beginners swimming right through to Senior life saving, which was about six years of summers. I think the thing that impressed me was, when I petitioned Mr. Reeve that he was so very gracious but had me understand the local boys were gonna come first.

L: ...John Lenahan, it was probably in the early fifties. He came down to four or five of our houses twice a week during winter to check, because then we had gotten furnaces in. He was the one who came down and dug our neighbors out, old people. They were down here for the winter. They

depended on him that year. He was a very fine man.

M: I would like to say what a small world it is. When my son started teaching at Ohio State University in the Department of Architecture, he was counsellor for a couple of young fellows, and one of them was Lenahan's son. All the way from Mattituck to Columbus, Ohio.

Kay was saying about the bucolic existence and all that. Well my youngest brother Dick Stack lives in Appleton, Wisconsin, and he used to come in around my mother's birthday. He acquired an airplane, and he would park the thing at Mattituck Airport. Well, on weekends he would like me to fly into Flushing Airport with him, pick up my husband and my mother's secretary, and I'm telling you as you said about the farms, all the potato fields looked to me like one huge green and brown carpet as we flew over, and it was just terrific. I loved it. And the funny part of it was this, it took us about twelve minutes from Mattituck Airport into Flushing Airport. Coming back we had a tail wind, we were back in Mattituck Airport in eight minutes. After traveling for hours, when we first came out here, five hours was nothing. My father was in the automobile business, so we always managed to have two cars. He drove one and my mother drove the other. Middle Country Road was just two ruts in the sand running among the blueberry bushes and the scrub pine and scrub oak. You very rarely met anybody but if you did you'd both be looking for a place to inch over, and very cautiously pass each other. That took us five

hours at least. That was 1925.

I: When was the way of getting here improved?

M: I don't know when that happened, but they started in Nassau County with Jericho Turnpike, and over the years they extended it eastward until it came into Riverhead. You didn't even go on Route 58 in those days. You went down and around into the town proper, and came out on Route 25 all the way, two lanes and the sections had the creosote in them or tar or something. You went along kerplunk, perplunk, kerplunk. I think that has been one of the biggest influences on the Eastend, Mattituck in particular the advent of the car due to the new roads. It certainly opened up this end of the Island.

L: For instance you can't go straight from Westbury to Mattituck on the train, never could. You had to go to Jamacica first.

M: I want to tell you small kids love trains. That used to be the event. One time as a big joke I took fifteen kids up in the station wagon and I said, "Now when you see Mr. McDermott come off the train, everybody yell, "Hi Daddy." Well the assemblage up there about died.

End of tape

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

433

9-GPM-ASMc-1
10-L:McD-1

name Arabella Stack McDermott (Mrs. John)

birth date 6/24/13 place College Point, N.Y. 11356

father's name Daniel James Stack

mother's name Angelica Julzbach Stack

childhood Summered in Mattituck since June 1925 after visiting area in 1924

education Business School

job training Stenotypist

work varied, from technical reporting by stenotyping through secretarial

official positions ~~Brooklyn Diocesan Church of Catholic Women~~

member of Brooklyn Diocesan Church of Catholic Women

special activities, projects, hobbies

spouse's name John James McDermott

children's names Raffi(J.J.jr.), Marg. Hozza Alona, Timothy, Kathleen

major turning points in:

	Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

for me, Mattituck was Great

Mattituck is Home

I'd like Mattituck to become Stay as it is

(feel free to expand on any of the above;-your opinions are welcome!)

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

10-L & McD-1

name Katherine Lascelle

birth date Apr. 21, 1910 place Westbury (Nassau County) New York

father's name George William Lascelle

mother's name Adele D. Wiehe

childhood Spent in Westbury. After 1922, the family spent every summer in Mattituck.

education AB Mount Holyoke, OTR Columbia University

job training

work Occupational Therapist

official positions

member of

special activities, projects, hobbies

spouse's name

children's names

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

for me, Mattituck was

Mattituck is my retirement home.

I'd like Mattituck to become a community living within its environmental limitations

(feel free to expand on any of the above;-your opinions are welcome!)

MATTITUCK ORAL HISTORY

Contents of Tape No. 48-CRB-1

Memories of Early Mattituck
by Clarence Richard Bennett
known to us as Chippy Bennett

Table of Contents

RH

MAPS. PICTURES

Contents: Tape No. 48, CRB-1 Date: December 6, 1983

Oral Author: Chippy Bennett Interviewer: Dorothea Delehanty

Memories of Early Mattituck
By Clarence Richard Bennett
known to us as Chippy Bennett

I: Chippy, could you tell me when and where you were born?

CB: I was born on Sound Avenue next to the Power Plant in an old farm-house in 1912, March 14, 1912. I lived there about three years. My Father was building the house about a mile away, and my Mother used to wheel me in the baby carriage over to the house that my Father was building, and then we moved into that house in about three years.

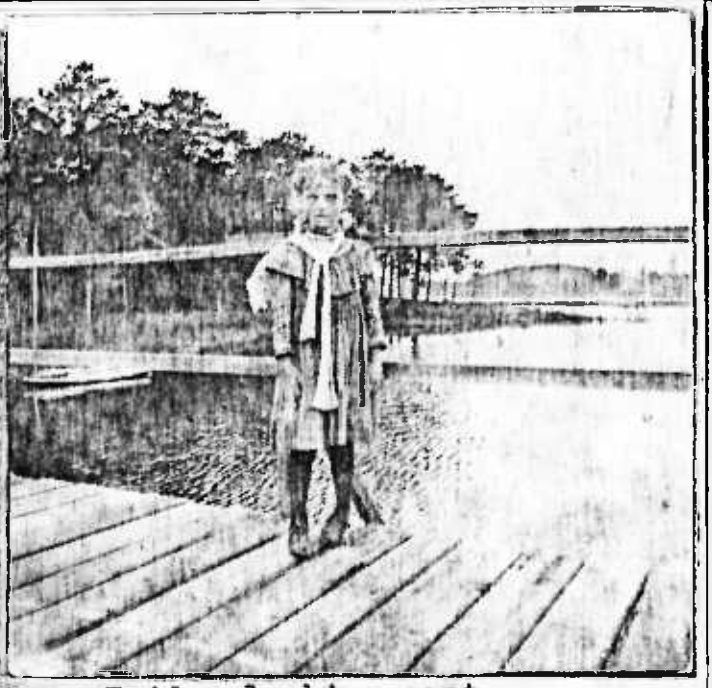
I: Where was that house, the new one?

CB: Well, that was what they call Westphalia Road today. At that time there wasn't any Westphalia Road. It was on a right of way that was used by Medays, and that came out onto Sound Avenue, was a private right of way and Mr. Meday had this big home on the Creek there, and it came down to our property on Sound Avenue and it was used, then they put Westphalia Road through and my Father worked on it as part of his taxes. In those days you could work for the town, and they cut the trees down, and the road was named after Westphalia where Mr. Meday came from after the famous Westphalia hams of Germany, and that's how the name Westphalia was given to the road. Mr. Meday donated some of the land for the road too at that time. The house is still standing, it was quite a well built house in those days.

I: Where is the Meday house now?

CB: It's on the creek, right opposite where our old house is, a short ways.

Road going up to today's



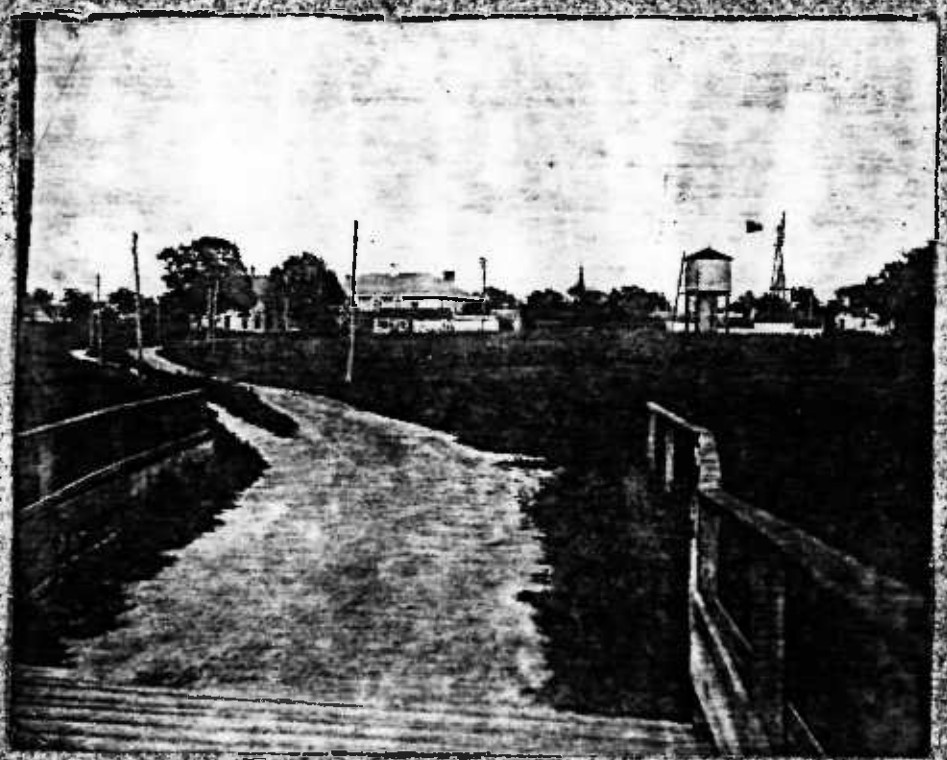
Bridge, looking east

(Was this little bridge at the western end of the Westphalia branch of the Creek?)

PICTURES FROM 1900

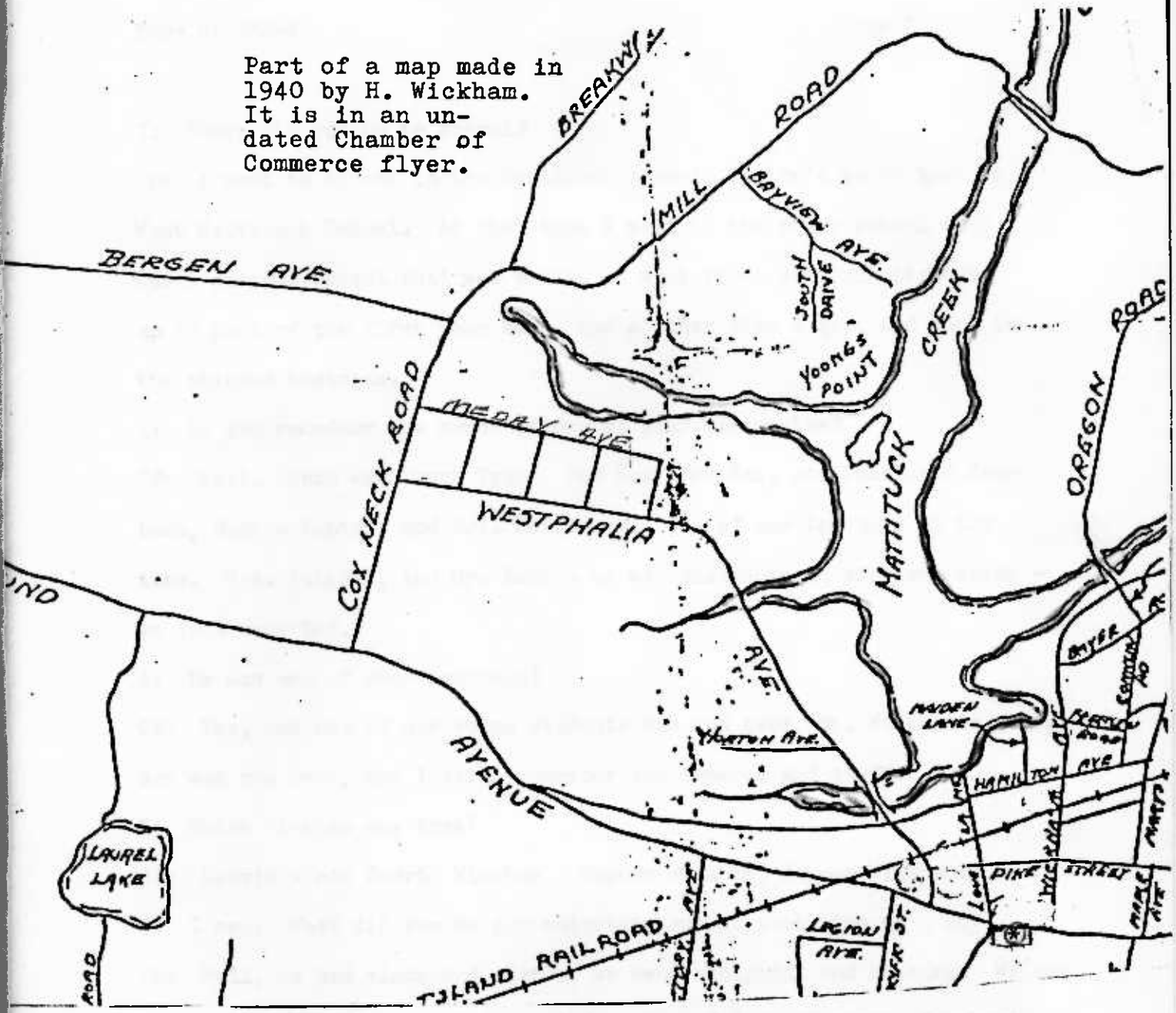
Photos kindness N. Duryee

Westphalia Road 1905



Village of Mattituck in the distance

Part of a map made in 1940 by H. Wickham. It is in an undated Chamber of Commerce flyer.



⊛Site of North Fork Wrecking Co.

I: Where did you go to school?

CB: I went to school in the Mattituck school, I didn't go to East or West Mattituck School. At that time I went to the other school that was a central school that was built. I went right straight through up to part of the first year high, and at that time I quit and went into the chicken business.

I: Do you remember the names of any of your classmates?

CB: Well, there was Frank Tyler, Bob Cox, Ben Cox, and Charlotte Zomback, Mugsie Lupton, and Mrs. Sherman was one of our teachers at the time. Mrs. Tuthill, and Mr. Mott - he was killed in an airplane crash - we felt very bad.

I: He was one of your teachers?

CB: Yes, and one of our young students was run over, Mr. Wickham's young son was run over, and I still remember the funeral and stuff.

I: Which Wickham was that?

CB: Cedric - not Cedric Wickham - Raynor Wickham, Raynor Wickham.

I: I see. What did you do for entertainment at that time as a boy?

CB: Well, we had sleds and skates, we went sleighing and skating. We had a lot of skating in the winter, sleds. We had lots of games, Parchesi, cards and all types of games, and you were outside, and as I got older I was given a B.B. gun, and then as I was older I was given a 22, and I probably hiked many, many miles chasing squirrels out of trees and stuff, but today I wouldn't shoot any of them, but at that time I thought it was a lot of fun.

I: Were you into trapping with your Father?

CB: My Father had about, when he was trying to work in the winter, there wasn't much work, he cut wood and all, and he had about 300 traps, trapline, and he caught quite a bit, and he used to catch foxes, skunks and possums and muskrats, and at that time they were quite plentiful. Then when I got up into I guess about 12 years old, then I started trapping too, and I caught quite a few muskrats, skunks and possums and some racoons.

I: What did you do with the pelts?

CB: Well, I used to take a shingle and cut it, and then I would skin the animal and slide the fur, the pelt, over the top of the shingle and hang it up to dry, scrape all of the fat that you could as you wanted it dry, and I used to ship it into the city. There was a man in Riverhead, and one in Patchogue that used to buy them. I got $3.00 to $4.00 for a muskrat skin.

I: Was that considered the best skin, muskrat?

CB: Well, muskrat was a very good fur, and there was a lot of them around at that time.

I: Were there skunks around at that time? There are not any now.

CB: Yes, there was lots of skunks and --

I: Did you keep that fur, or wasn't that used?

CB: Yes, yes, but there was lots of problems with skunks. My cousin and I tried to capture one one time and we got sprayed, and he had to throw away all his clothes because of the smell. It was very strong, and I had a few as pets for awhile. I put them - we used to catch them with horsemeat that we used to get the horses to feed to the chickens, and then we

would set the traps. We put the meat up on a stump and then we'd set the traps around the stump, and then when they went to get the meat why we would catch them, and then we would throw a crab net over the top of them and put them - I had put pipes down, stove pipes down into the ground - and they would go down into there and live as pets and all, yeah.

I: What were your chores on the farm as a boy?

CB: Well, you had to get up early in the morning. We didn't have any horses that I can remember. We had one or two cows. We had lots of chickens, and you had to get up and feed the chickens, milk the cow and all, and there was firewood to be brought in, and ashes to take out. Lots of times I went down to my Uncles, why we would get up at four o'clock in the morning and feed the horses, and then you would use the corn sheller to get the corn for the chickens, throw the corn you know, the ears of corn into the sheller and turn it, and then you would take and get the corn off of the ear, and then you would feed that to the chickens. Then you would go back in and have breakfast about five o'clock or six and then go out again, but you had your cows and that.

I: And then firewood?

CB: Well, firewood, during the winter you went out with a two-man saw and a good axe and you would cut down, two people, two men, either my Father and I used to do it, we used to cut down about eight to ten cord, and then we would cut it up into six to eight foot lengths and then we would put it on, - we had an old truck - and we would bring it up and put it in a heap and then we had a gasoline engine that we would cut it up with a buzz saw.

We would cut it up into about 12-14 inch lengths to use in the furnace and all. A stove, a cookstove was used, and that had to cut up quite small in the cookstove. After the cookstove then we had the kerosene stove and all.

I: I understand you found some Indian artifacts?

CB: Yes, lots of times as I was working in the garden or on the farm, hoeing corn and things after a rain, I would find lots of arrowheads, some paint pots and things as I was hoeing and all or cultivating. I found quite a few around.

I: And you no longer have these?

CB: No, I gave them to the school at the time.

I: What about ice houses?

CB: Well, there was one ice house on our property. They were round, they were quite big and they were about twelve feet deep. On our property there was an ice pond that was dug out and the ice was used to put into this ice house and they were made out of bricks and they had a round, they were a round building and the roof was even round and as I said then they put meadow hay, they put the ice in cakes, packed it in, and then they used this salt water hay that was in the meadows to cover it with, and they had ice right up into July, this right up on into the summer and all.

I: Can you tell me where some of these ice houses were located?

CB: Well, one was up around Cox's Neck, - Cox's Neck up by Bergen Avenue was one that got ice out of a pond up there. One was over on our property, it got it from Bennett's Pond, and there was one on Penny's property. Some of the big ice houses were on Marratooka Lake here, and we used to go

over and watch them cut the ice and put it in the ice houses there. Marratooka Lake was quite a place, there was quite a bit of ice harvested there, probably one of the biggest places that they did, these others were small places more for personal ice, then they were, and they sold it and all.

I: You lost your Mother at a tender age. Could you tell me a little bit about that, and the fact that you were quite poor at the time.

CB: Yes, it was quite sad. I was twelve years old, my sister was about ten and my Mother was quite sick for quite some time. She carried on but she had tuberculosis, and in those days you had to sleep they figured out, in the open on an open porch or so, and they didn't have the medicines they have today, and I remember the night that they told me to come and say goodbye to my Mother that she was going to go to heaven, and it's still very clear in my mind of going up and kissing my Mother and saying goodbye to her, and it wasn't a very happy life. My Father tried to make a home for us and we had housekeepers and all, and it's not quite the same not to have a Mother when you're a younger person, and I miss her very much.

I: When you were a teenager, what did you do for entertainment?

CB: Well, movies was one of our big entertainments and the ice cream store, you had the ice cream store where you could have a soda. That was where you usually ended up after you went to the movies and, -

I: Who owned that?

CB: Well, Harold Duronde owned it at one time, and there was one in Greenport too, but you went to the movies, and then you went and had an ice cream soda or so, or a sundae. Swimming of course, there was swimming, and we had

you know lots of water around. You always went swimming. Boating, crabbing, you went crabbing and all.

I: I understand there was a lot of entertainment at Mechanics' and Fishers' Halls?

CB: Yes, that was the family entertainment. There was suppers and scallop dinners and one dish suppers and some dancing and cards, and everybody knew everybody and it was one big gathering. At that time it was where you went, where the family went most of the time.

I: What year did you get married and to whom Chippy?

CB: Well, I got married in 1945 in December 31st, and married Loretta Stelzer of Southold.

I: And you have --?

CB: Two children, Sara Lorraine Bennett and Roseanne Bennett.

I: Then at this time were you in the chicken business, or was that prior to this?

CB: No, I was in the chicken business from 1929 to 1938.

I: You had 3,000 chickens I recall, ducks?

CB: Yeah, 3,000, I had 3,000 layers. I also had 1,000 Indian Runner ducks. The Indian Runner ducks were something new around here. They laid very well, you had to get up very early in the morning, because they laid the eggs anywheres that they happened to be standing and they would freeze, they would freeze in the wintertime. You got very high production, but the big demand was around Easter for the duck eggs, and they did make extremely rich cakes and they were in quite some demand for bakeries and all, but the ducks ate more feed than the chickens. At the time I was

asked by the Beacon Milling Company to try the pellets which was something new that was coming out. There was duck farms around, but it was a mash that was mixed with water and fed to them as a wet mash, and the pellets you just put them in the hopper and they ate them at any time they wanted. So I was one of the first to feed pellets to the ducks, and I also used to sex, used to sex ducks which I learned through the farm bureau and all, and as for the chickens, well I used to raise broilers. The Old Mill Inn which was quite popular at that time, the Old Mill which is still standing, at that time they used to take about 300, three-four hundred broilers on a weekend, and I used to take them up there and then when the 1938 hurricane, it blew most of my buildings down.

Blew them apart, blew them up over the top of the trees, blew the chickens out into the woods. It did not kill too many of them, but it blew them right out into the woods and the chickens clung right on with their feet, right on to bushes, trees, anything and they weren't hurt but I didn't have any houses for them to go in. We didn't have any lights, which they had lights. We used to fool the chickens, give them a twelve hour day to make them eat more, and they'd lay more. There was no lights and some of them went into a moult which means that they shed their feathers, and when they shed their feathers and get a new coat of feathers, they don't lay any eggs, and so we had quite a time from the hurricane, and —

I: Would you describe the nature of the storm?

CB: Well, it was a very bad storm. It had rained about three, four days prior to the heavy winds, and the ground was very, very soft. The wind started in the southwest and it blowed and blowed, and then it shifted to

the south. Well, when it shifted to the south it started blowing quite hard and it blew some of the windows out of the chicken houses, and my Father and I tried to nail them back in again. We succeeded pretty good in keeping some of the windows in. Then it shifted to the east, and then the wind picked up and we couldn't, the gusts of wind were so strong that sometimes you didn't even move. Tops of trees started to break off, especially the pine trees, up maybe fifty, seventy-five, one hundred feet away, and we just couldn't keep the windows in the houses, and then the roofs went right on up. One house in particular was twenty feet wide, by one hundred feet long, and the roof went up in one section, up over trees that were oh twenty, twenty-five, thirty feet high and came down on the other side of them, and the back went out, and the front came in, and the chickens went out into the woods. We were lucky that we didn't get hurt, I mean, but we saw there wasn't anything we could do, so we just went up into the house and stayed in the house.

At the time we had about three hundred trees that were blown over on, we had about ten acres, and we had about three hundred trees that were blown over on the property every which way. Now out on the road all of the telephone poles and the light poles which the telephone and light poles were used together, all fell down and the trees crisscrossed the road. We had no lights or anything for about six weeks. We had no water, we luckily had a pitcher pump and we used that to pump water. We had these Coleman lanterns and kerosene lights, and we used those, and as for food, well we had food. In those days you canned quite a bit, oh we always canned about

three hundred cans of food, fruit and peas, carrots, corn and all that. There was peaches, pears, and usually the relatives came up and helped you shell the peas and lima beans and so, and then bread, you baked your own bread and you had cows so you had your own milk, so foodwise we were pretty good.

Now over on the oceanside which was extremely bad, that was bad and when I, after the storm and I, and my buildings, - I had to get a job, we tried to put some of them together but just couldn't, so I got a job with the North Fork Wrecking Company at the time, and that was in 1938 and it was about a month after the hurricane, and then we were over on the south side and the tidal wave over there, some of the houses had gone up to the second story of the homes. So the tidal wave was way out in the ocean about a hundred miles, and they told the people that there would be a tidal wave, but they wouldn't listen, and when that hit some people were drowned and all, and some of the houses were washed right into the Bay, and we were in the wrecking business at that time, and tore quite a few of those houses apart and cleaned them up, and very little salvage because the furniture had all come apart and everything and we took and, you couldn't salvage anything. You couldn't get the salt water and the sand out of the rugs. They had oriental rugs and stuff you could not get them. One instance was funny, there was a man going through with a hearse and they seemed to think he was going through too often, so they stopped him and they found that he was carting furniture and things, and valuables out with the hearse instead of bodies of people and there was some looting and all, but it was a pitiful thing. Course being in September, a lot of the city people weren't there, so that

was a godsend and all, otherwise there would have been a bigger loss, a bigger loss of life. Even to this day, they have the big storms and they break through over the Dune Road, and at that time and, but this tidal wave which came in, I forget, I think it was three or four hours later, came in and did most of the damage.

I: You mentioned, that Mr. Nugent in Riverhead used to kill the horses and you fed them to the chickens.

CB: Yes.

I: And the horseshoe crab?

CB: Yes, in the Fall there used to be the horseshoe crabs which were very plentiful along the Bay, and we used to go down and walk along in the water. The horseshoe crabs were coming up onto the beach to lay their eggs, and we would grab them by their tails and plop them on their back as many as we could, and then we would cart them home and we would take a knife and cut them around their big shell, and they were solid full of eggs, and the chickens would eat the eggs. As for the horses, well the horses they needed a place, some of the horses were real old, and they were brought to our place and they were slaughtered, or shot at that time, and then they were skinned, and Mr. Nugent who was in the business took the skin, and we were given the rest of the horse, and we used to put it in a great big iron pot that you used to scald pigs in, and we took and would cook it up and feed it to the chickens at that time. It was good protein and all.

I: Now back to the Wrecking Company. Who owned the Wrecking Company?

CB: Mr. Wasson, yeah -

I: James Wasson?

CB: James Wasson and Mr. William Scholl were partners together.

I: How do you spell Scholl? Remember?

CB: S-c-h-o-l-l I think, yeah.

I: Scholl? I don't recall Mr. Scholl.

CB: Yeah, he was in the office with me, yes.

I: Could you tell me what famous houses were torn down by the North Fork Wrecking Company?

CB: Well, I worked for the North Fork Wrecking Company for thirty-two years and in that time, some of the famous houses that were torn down were King Zog's of Muttontown, that was one of the big ones, Henry Ford's, Southampton, the Hotel Maginaw, South Jamesport, part of the Prospect House of Shelter Island. And there was other big mansions that we tore down, some were out of stone, some were brought over piece by piece from Europe and rebuilt over here.

One of the interesting places we tore down was an old farmhouse on Sound Avenue just a little bit past where you turn onto Northville Turnpike on the right hand side. As we were tearing it down, we found a room up in the attic that did not have any door, that you came up in between a partition and we found out that that's where the slaves that had come up from the south hid when there was anybody looking for them, and we thought that was quite interesting, that they came up here and were working on the farm and were being paid and they could go there and feel safe and all.

We tore down most of the railroad stations from Amagansett, right up through Center Moriches and all, which I felt quite bad because they were quite attractive some of them, and they don't make them like that anymore. Today

you just have a sort of a little stand to get under out of the rain. We, well we didn't really, we torn down lots of old homes. Some we begged the people to take them, move them away. We offered to give them to them if they would move them but there was no money allotted to take these homes and keep them up, so we torn them down. Some were made out of hand hewn beams, and felt quite bad because we did not salvage very much lumber that could be used again, and it would have been very good to have around to show how they constructed homes out of wooden pegs and homemade nails, and some of the beams were chestnut that was from Syosset. At that time there were big groves of chestnut at Syosset. It all died out on account of some kind of disease, and most of the smaller homes were made from the lumber in the trees that was cut right on the Island here. Some was brought down from Albany by barge on the wealthy places and all.

I: Some of this material has been used in the restoration of houses, hasn't it?

CB: Yes, our Wrecking Company, we took some stuff up west to - it was used for restoration of a lot of homes up at Syosset and up at Setauket and different places. A man by the name of Mr. Tyson who built quite a few houses out of the old lumber, made reproductions, and it was a place where people came to browse and get old boards and things. Some of the boards, the floor boards was as wide as 28 to 30 inches wide and they were white pine at that time. They possibly came from up in Albany, up around Albany, those extremely wide ones at that time.

I: When I first moved here Chippy, I recall buying a lot of very nice old furniture at the Wrecking Company. Many of the houses had the furniture still in it when you tore them down, didn't they?

CB: Yes, when we would go to tear a house down we would sometimes find that the old folks died, and it was quite pitiful. In the attic you would find letters, you would find graduation cards, you would find little corsages all aged, and love letters and all sorts of little pieces of cloth and things all wrapped and tied up in little bundles that were kept by the owner. Down in the rooms you would find that the heirs to the property had taken the bureaus and dumped the drawers of all the valuables and all this stuff right on the floor, and they picked out what they wanted and you felt that there was quite a history, quite a bit of feeling and stuff behind these letters. The first corsage that some young lady had received, some of the letters, the graduation, and some of the different things, and at that time all pieces of material were saved. But up in the attics it was so hot during the summers that the paper and all -- It was my job to tell the men in our company what to bring to our yard in Mattituck and most of the paper goods and the paper items and things would fall apart when you tried to handle them because of the terrific heat in the attics over the years. So a lot of it was lost. Postal cards were all right, some of the old postal cards. Some of the stamps we saved and we did find some letters and postal cards that we did sell, at the time.

The furniture, we had lots of little cabinets. Some of the hotels that we tore down were completely furnished at the time. We found some dolls and things and parts, - we had people that were interested in. We would call

them up and they would come to our yard and pick up the different items as we found them on the job, and we were glad that they were saved instead of being throwed away.

I: I recall meeting some famous people in your Wrecking Company. One in particular was Hurd Hatfield the actor. I spoke to him personally and was surprised that he was there, and he said "Why not? I come here all the time." Were there any other people that you can recall?

CB: Well, we had quite a few, none of the names. Some were dancers, and some were instructors and things, and I don't have really any names. They came in big cars with chauffeurs and all kinds of furs, and at that time they came with you know, they were dressed and all. They were from Southampton, and on the North Fork we hadn't seen this type of costume over here and it was quite a thing to us, and we were sort of well, shocked or impressed a little bit by the way they dressed and all. We had one wealthy woman that used to come, very, very wealthy, and she used to pick up items, and she would carry them back out to her big car and I asked her husband who was going to be paying for these items, and he said "Well I'll take care of it." She had a habit of picking up items. I had other people as I sold that would fill a bureau up with items and then buy the bureau and I'd have to empty the bureau drawers out. They were full of all kinds of funny items some people would take, and you'd have to say what do you have in the other pocket? All in all, people were pretty good and all, but I had one person that used to collect little screws and things and he, I'd pick up a light fixture and it would fall apart and after he passed away, God bless his soul , his wife invited me to buy some of the things, and I went to her

house, and found that all the little screws and little parts were all lined up on the table in the basement, all very neatly and all, and I felt kind of bad.

I: The North Fork Wrecking Company was a wonderful institution, everyone enjoyed it and it served a very useful purpose, recycling lovely old artifacts and architectural items, and it's a loss to this area because now everything is being balled down. There is no way to save anything at this point and it is a shame, so I feel that the Wrecking Company deserves a lot of credit for the fact that it saved so much of the historical nature of this area.

CB: Yes, yes it did.

I: Now Chippy I'd like to get into your relatives, starting with your Great-grandfather.

CB: Well, my Great-grandfather took and had a horse farm up in Arshamomaque on the North Road (on the site of the present San Simeon Home) and I heard my Father tell about it, and I heard my Mother talk about it some, but mostly my Father. My Mother of course, I was pretty young. My Father told about the barns and the trotters that my Great-grandfather had, and one of the famous trotters that he had was "Rarus" who ran the fastest mile, I think it was 2:11 - 2:12, and the fastest trotter in the world at that time. My Great-grandfather had taken, he was in the fish business in New York, he had taken the horse that he had seen on one of the fish wagons and mated it to one horse that he had bought and "Rarus" was one of the offspring, and we are quite proud. "Rarus'" picture is one of the Currier and Ives that you can see today.

My Grandfather was quite a man, my Grandfather he went around with "Rarus", they used to travel by freight train. They went to California.

My Grandfather was a Veterinarian, and he used to travel all around, and he became very good at it, and he took care of the horses and all, and my Grandmother, they were quite popular, and they had lots and lots of company for a long, long time. Their house is on the right hand side just as you go into Greenport today, just a little bit past the Greenport School, with a cupola on. A Mr. Van Tyl at this time owns the home. I used to go up in the cupola.

In this house of my Grandfather, my Grandmother, they had a parlor, and I was only in this parlor four times. Once to a wedding, and three times to funerals. The curtains were always drawn and the drapes, and in this big parlor there was big pictures, there was birds under glass and all, and to this day it's very fascinating. There was a family Bible and it is something that you don't see anymore. We had another parlor that we used all the time and all, but that parlor was just used for special occasions. My Grandfather was a Veterinarian and was quite good with horses, cows and when the new Veterinarians came around, were doing dogs and cats and things, Mr. Fisher of Southold and all, and they had a call for a horse or a cow like that, why my Uncle and my Grandfather was called on and to help them, and he did that for quite some time and all. My Grandmother, well I enjoyed going down there on Easter, and Easter when you have Grandparents is quite a thing with the Easter eggs all hidden around the place, and all holidays are special, and not having a Mother it was something to me to go down to my Grandmother's and Grandfather's.

I: Could you tell me what their names were?

CB: Well, it was R.B. Conklin and Kate Conklin, "Katie" we called her, Aunt

Kate, Kate Conklin, and they were two fine grandparents, and now on my Father's side, (this was my Mother's side) on my Father's side was a descendant of Barnabas Horton who came over on the Mayflower which we're quite proud of. On my Father's side they was Sarah, wait a second, my Grandfather on my Father's side was Albert Bennett, and my Grandmother was Susan Horton Bennett and they were good to me too, but they both died when I was very, very small, and I don't have too much recollection of them at all. My Uncle Frank who was one of the children, I used to go down to his house when I was 12-14 years old and work on the farm, and I had quite some experiences at his house. We used to get up at 4:00 o'clock in the morning and feed the horses and then the cow, milk the cow and all, and then come back in, have homemade bread for breakfast and all.

I: Where was this farm?

CB: At Greenport - Greenport. My Uncle worked a farm for a rich man, in those days you farmed and the rich man had a summer estate, and he took and got half of the profits. He furnished the seed and the money for the fertilizer and all, and you did the work. On this farm we had a Polish man that came over from Poland. He had a room in the back of the house with his own stairway and all. He had pictures, very religious pictures, they were very, very pretty, and we used to go up to his room and look at his pictures and all. I had some good times. After we were out on the farm we would ride the horses. In those days you cultivated and plowed and all with horses, and we used to ride the horses bareback back to the house and out to the fields again, and we found that the horse when he got to the end of the row would make a better turn than you could so you let the horse go ahead and follow the rows himself and all. After we finished work we usually went to the Sound and went in

swimming, which cleaned some of the dirt off you, which in those days you were quite dirty from going barefoot and all in the fields and all.

I: Where was this farm located?

CB: On the North road just along Herrick's Lane it was about 45 acres, and it went on up to the Sound on the north, and there was a big mansion up there. There was hedges and lawns to be kept, flowers and stuff that my Uncle was expected to take care of, and when the gentleman that owned the farm took and came out for the summer we mowed the lawn and took care of the flowers and all, and then closed the house up when winter came. We had lots of fun. There used to be a custom in the old farmhouses of a cookie jar, and in this cookie jar money would be kept, and if you wanted to go to the movies or anything, you took and went to the cookie jar and took out what was needed to go to the movies and all. It was a very friendly house, anybody was welcome, the door was always open and people came and went, and we had motorcycles and old model T's that we would ride around on and we played games together, football and baseball and I had very happy times down at my Uncles.

I: Can you recall any interesting incidents? It seems to me you mentioned something about a bomber plane that came down.

CB: Well, down at my Uncles they was a plane that landed in the field down there, a great big plane which had problems and landed in the field, then took off again the next day. The plane that you're talking about was during the war years. I was down in the village by Library Hall when I heard this terrible roar and I was sitting in my car and the whole village was as light as

day, and I heard the terrible crash and I went up Sound Avenue up to Aldrich Lane, and I went down Aldrich Lane and across the lots and I found parts of a plane of the bomber that had hit the ground and blew up. It was a terrible sight, pieces and parts of men and people were up in the trees and all around, and there wasn't anything we could do. There was a terrible snowstorm at the time, and the plane was lost and probably was trying to get to Westhampton Airfield and when he found out where he was landing, he took and opened the plane wide open but he did not have power enough to pull the plane up out of it and crashed.

I: Everyone who knows you Chippy, knows that you are very civic minded and you have devoted many years to your community and have served in many capacities, some of which are as President of the Mattituck Historical Society for three years, and I know you have been devoted to the Fire Department. Could you tell me how long you have worked or volunteered for them?

CB: Well for the Fire Department about forty years. I've been most of the time a Captain, Captain and have gone up the steps which would be a First Lieutenant and then a Captain, and then back again two years and all, and I have had that. One year I was named Fireman of the Year, I was voted by the Department, Fireman of the Year for my activities and what I had done for the community and for the department at that time which was I considered it quite an honor. I had my picture taken and I received a plaque. I am very proud to have been a Fireman.

As for the Historical Society, I was a Trustee. I was Vice-President for quite a number of years, and then I became President for three years, and I

was also one of the members when it started and it is one of my favorite organizations, and I have put quite a bit of time in, down on the Main Road in what we called Tuthilltown, and Tuthill's old farmhouse, and I am very happy to have a home for our organization. *

I: Could you tell me what the village was like when you were a boy?

CB: Well, I remember Gildersleeve's store was one of the stores my Father used to bring eggs down and exchange it for coffee and groceries and things. You could buy pretty near everything that you wanted. Upstairs was boots and other items and coats and things. Then you always had samples and you sat around the big stove, coal stove in the back, The coffee was ground and there was molasses and all, and I remember going down with my Father and it was very nice. One of the other stores was Reeve and Hall's Meat Market and you just had to tell him who you were and he knew just what your Father wanted, what type of meat and all and he would cut it.

There was the Post Office. We had one Post Office on the corner where the Bank is now, on the corner of Love Lane and Pike Street, and we had one that is farther down just a little bit up this way where Barker's is, and then on the top of that Post Office there was the Telephone Office which was very fascinating. You were allowed to go up there, you knew the operator and she would show you what she did which was quite interesting. We had the old phones that you would crank in those times. The Mattituck Hotel when I went to school was a massive big hotel on the corner of Sound Avenue and Love Lane. It was quite a famous hotel, quite a few famous people had stayed there. It was taken down about in the 20's. That was where most people stood

when they raced from Riverhead up Sound Avenue and back to Riverhead again. That was a race down the King's Highway and up Sound Avenue and back up to Riverhead.

The Octagon House was across the street, on the other corner, was quite a famous house. There is only about six of them in the State of New York at that time when I started to working at the Wrecking Company. It had a porch on it and all, and it had a Widow's Walk up on the top, and Dolly Bell, our famous painter, lived there at the time, and we were fascinated because there are very few Octagon Houses around. People came from all over to look at the Old Mill and the Octagon House.

Every town had an ice cream parlor, and that was a favorite place after the movies. Restaurants, well Greenport had Claudio's and they was a few others in Patchogue and all. Out here you usually had big family gatherings on holidays at Grandma's and Grandpa's. The poorer people didn't go to the restaurants very much, they went to one dish suppers at like the Mechanic's and all, and you just didn't go out. Some of the coast places you stopped at once in the while.

We had stables, there was Riley's Stables and one other stables, the Zenzius Stables and there you would put your horse. You would come down to town and you would put your horse in the stable to keep him from the weather with the wagon and all while you went to Church. There was quite a bit of people that went to Church on Sunday night, which seems to be coming back again. We had DePietri's Fruit Market which was out of this world with all the different fruits and things. It was quite an interesting place for young people. We had Library Hall in which we had plays and movies later on, it was fascinating, we had well, we had - -

I: I would like to bring up at this time prohibition. I am sure you have some comments to make about that Chippy.

CB: Well, at the time across the street from where I lived there was a man that used to bring in, he was called a rum runner in those days, he had a couple boats it had airplane engines put on them. They were very fast and whiskey was put in burlap bags with a float on it and it was dropped overboard if they were chased by the government men. These boats were very, very fast at the time. Also we had along in the creek, Mattituck Creek was quite famous, there was a lot of coves and trucks would come and back down. They were loaded, and then on the way into the city at different spots along the way bottles and cases had to be left off at certain spots so that the truck could continue on its way. It was a very unpopular thing and it wasn't obeyed very well out here. Greenport was noted for its rum running and boats were off Montauk and all, but I remember going down to the Creek and wading out in my boots and lifting up these bags. They were full of bottles and they were just kept there like bags of clams, and they would be put on the boats and taken out and all. My friend used to go to bed early and then he would get out and he used to go up to the Sound. You used to get $20.00 and you would help unload the boats, and one night they were shot at and he decided that he didn't want anything more to do with it, but they was highjackers and that was very dangerous.

I: Could you tell me about the wildlife that existed in this area when you were a boy?

CB: Well, they was lots and lots of ducks in Mattituck Creek, there was herons which there is a few today, they was black ducks and they was mallard ducks most prominent. There was all types of eels, there was crabs there was

oysters, oh loads of oysters. You used to take the oysters that were up in the grass and move them down nearer the channels so that they would fatten.

I: Could you tell me why we don't have any oysters in the creek now?

CB: Well I guess it's pollution. I mean there seems to be a lot of mud coming in from off the farms and chemicals, and oysters haven't thrived, and boats and things. My estuary was going to be filled in and I didn't want that, and I find that some of them have come in there and have multiplied, some of the eels and some of the herons and the ducks and stuff, come in there.

I: Muskrats?

CB: Yes, I have some muskrats and all, and some of the soft clams have come back, but they're polluted and not fit to eat, so it isn't like the old times. We used to have quite a few foxes around. I have seen four or five foxes. I have even seen a Mother fox with four or five of her babies going up the road or playing out in the back, years ago. I havn't seen anything lately. Skunks used to be all around. Crows used to be late in the afternoon. They would go for hours to a nesting ground up in Middle Island, and then in the morning they would fly back again. They seemed to fly down along my gutter there, or estuary, and I have seen a few of those back again.

I: How about turtles?

CB: There was loads of turtles, loads of turtles. They are very, very scarce now. We used to find turtles all the time, there was big turrops (snapping turtles?) too that used to be up in the ponds and stuff. I havn't seen any of those lately. They used to be quite plentiful too, big turrops and all..I didn't see any,

well only once did I see any deer, although there is deer up at the Sound, and up by Laurel Lake. I did see deer in my travels up in Middle Island and around there, and over on the south side.

I: Did you ever swim in Laurel Lake or go there as a boy?

CB: Yes, yes I have enjoyed Laurel Lake. I did not swim in Marratooka Lake but I did swim in Laurel Lake. Laurel Lake is about the same as it was that I can remember as a boy. It's quite deep, it's very deep. There was talk of it being an underground waterway to Connecticut, but I don't think there really is.

I: No basis for that assumption?

CB: I don't think so, I don't really think so, although it is still being talked about.

I: How about birds?

CB: Well, we used to have a lot of hawks. We had chicken hawks, fish hawks and all the different hawks, and when I was in the chicken business why we had the different hawks which would snatch up a chicken every once in the while, a small chicken you know as they were growing, and then we had the fish hawks and they are very scarce now. The herons, well as I said I have seen some of those. The ducks are not like they used to be.

I: Can you tell me something about trains?

CB: Well, we had quite a few trains when I was going to school. We had the big freight trains, we had the early morning train, the mail train. It was fascinating to see them pick up the mail on the go, and we used to watch the freight cars. There was as many as 120 freight cars from all different parts of the United States, and we used to read the names and all, very, very fascinating. There was steam locomotives, very powerful. Engineers were always very

friendly. It was very interesting to see them down by Sound Avenue. There was a water tower, and they would fill up with water down there, then they would come in the station and we would go in the station. There was a great big pot-bellied stove there, always burning in the winter time with benches all around, and we had good times.

Then there was the snow plow, the rotary plow, and the regular snow plow that would come through. Lots of times they got stuck down in Peconic in the cut they called it, and they had to back up and all, they couldn't get through.

We had the famous train wreck up at the Pickle Factory up west and I went up there with my Father, up at Calverton and it was a terrible thing to see the cars and to know that a couple of people were killed. One man was drowned in a vat of salt and stuff.

I: What caused the accident, do you recall?

CB: A switch, a switch was turned, and as the train was coming in it was diverted over to a siding which led into the Pickle Factory, and it wasn't anything that could be done at the time. They could not stop in time so it plowed right into the Pickle Factory and all.

The rotary plow used to take and used to throw the snow way out into the fields, it was quite fascinating. The engineer would always spin the wheels and then he would put some sand down on the tracks, but he did it we think for our benefit and we were fascinated. They were the friendliest people and always waved to us and we had lots of trains, lots of people rode on the trains in those days and - -

I: Did you ever go into the city on the train?

CB: Yes, that was quite an experience to go into the city on the train in

those days. It was quite a ways into the city and you didn't go in if you had a car. You usually went in on the train, they had some excursions which were very reasonable and we all take advantage of that.

I: Were there other civic organizations to which you devoted your time?

CB: In the early 60's I helped with the Peconic Scout House which was on the hilly* road in Peconic. I picked out and gave lumber from the North Fork Wrecking Company, and I also gave other things. I was awarded a cup for being the best Father by the Scouts.

In the middle 60's I gave many hours helping and chaperoning activities and dances of the Mattituck Youth Group. At a dinner at the Fisherman's Rest, I was awarded a plaque for giving the most hours of service. I also served the Mattituck Presbyterian Church in many areas for about thirty-five years. Recently, after a serious heart attack my Minister asked me if I were ready to meet my Maker, and I said no, I had too much to do.

I: In conclusion Chippy, is there anything you would like to say for posterity?

CB: I hope we can leave something of the natural beauty of this area for future generations, that you people listening to this tape will strive to accomplish this goal.

I: Thank you for your time and helpfulness in this project.

* Perhaps this is Mill Road?

End of tape

In 1984 Chippy wrote the following account of his life.

I was born on March 14, 1912 in Mattituck in my grandfather's house on Sound Avenue. This house is still on Sound Avenue and is now owned by Mrs. Meryl Kaffery. My father was Clarence Albert Bennett, a carpenter by trade, and my mother was Sara Conklin Bennett. They had two children my sister Vernette LeValley and myself Clarence Richard Bennett. I was named after my father and my Uncle Richard Conklin. He was called my little Uncle because he was only nine years older than I was. I played with him in my childhood as a big brother.

My mother was very ill and died when I was ten years old. I would run home every noon from school to see how my sick mother was and give her a drink of water. The school I went to was situated where the present library is. I loved my mother. She gave me two birthday parties a year. One on my birthday and one on my sister's birthday. After my mother's death, my father was both mother and father to my sister and I. We raised a large garden and canned vegetables and fruits, made jellies, jams and pickles. My father made bread once a week. I made my school lunch at home and many times I had homemade bread sandwiches. The other school children liked my sandwiches too. One day someone stole my school lunch. I screamed, yelled and layed down on the floor and kicked. I wanted my lunch. I was hungry then and I am still hungry. There were no school cafeterias when I went to school. My father made fat boloney curls for my sister. He used my spit because he said it was more sticky and her pretty blond curls would stay longer.

I was in the poultry business when the 1938 Hurricane hit. This destroyed everything I had. It was a big total loss to me.

I married in 1944. We have two children, Sara-Lorraine and Rosanne. We have two grandchildren Loretta and Amy Marshall.

I worked for the North Fork Wrecking Company for 33 yrs. Then I went to work at the County Center. I worked here until my retirement in 1981.

I have been a fireman for about 40 years. I was an officer as either Captain, 1st Lieutenant or 2nd Lieut. in the Hose Co. for at least 36 of these years. I am presently Capt. of the Hose. I was Fireman of the year in 1968.

I am a member of the Mattituck Presbyterian Church. I have served in some Church office for over thirty-five years -- a deacon about twenty years, an elder twelve years, a liaison officer to Trustee Meetings, treasurer of Men's Club for many years, liaison officer to Christian Education Meetings, second grade Sunday School teacher, Chaperone of both Jr. and Sr. fellowship groups to Red Gate, Denton Lake and Minden. I served on Church committees too numerous to mention.

In the early sixties I helped with the Peconic Scout House. I picked out and carted lumber for it. I was awarded a cup by the Scouts for being the Best Father.

In the middle sixties I gave many hours helping and chaperoning activities and dances of the Mattituck Youth Group. I was awarded a placque for giving the most hours of service.

One of my biggest joys is being a member of the Mattituck Historical Society. I am a charter member. We started with absolutely nothing, not even a place to meet. I have been an officer in this group since the beginning either as a trustee, corresponding secretary, vice-president twice and president three times in 1977, 1978, 1979. We have come a long way since the beginning. Each year had its important events and each person has been very important to its sucess.

I was a member of the Mattituck P.T.A. for over 12 years. I was Vice-president twice and President once. In 1968 I was made an Honorary P.T.A. member of the National P.T.A.

My grandfather was Albert Bennett born 1844 and died at the age of 75 in 1919. His wife my grandmother was Susan Francis Horton who was a descendent of Barnabas Horton who came over on the Mayflower. My grandmother Bennett was born 1850 and died 1920. They lived to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. My grandfather Bennett was a Civil War veteran. He went into Service at age 16.

My grandfather R.B. Conklin lived in Greenport with his wife the former Kate Lawless. My great-grandfather Conklin was the owner of Rarus, the famous race horse. Rarus was a winner horse many times. My great-grandfather was the owner of a mansion type home in Greenport that was situated where the present San Simeon Nursing Home stands today.

I worked hard all my life. I prefer this kind of life to any kind of retirement.

I am now retired. I do not recommend retirement to anyone. I prefer working where I am happiest.

NOTE: Material on Barus and his owner, pictures and newspaper clippings, are included in the original copy of the 48-RCB-1 transcript.

Mattituck History Project

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 48-CRB-1 532

name Clarence Richard Bennett -- Chippy Bennett

birth date 3/14/12 place Mattituck See also author's account of his life

father's name Clarence Albert Bennett

mother's name Sara Conklin (1884-1922) Stepmother, Carrie Bangett

~~Note:~~ His father raised seed corn for the Lupton Seed Company.

education Mattituck, first year High School

job training Life on a farm

work Chicken business. Foreman North Fork Wrecking Co., Department Micrograph & Photostat, County Center, Riverhead.

official positions President Mattituck Historical Society, Captain Fire Department, (Fireman of the Year)

member of P.T.A., Leader Youth Group and Boy Scouts. Mattituck Presbyterian Church (35 years). Fire Department (40 years).

special activities, projects, hobbies

spouse's name Loretta Stelzer from Southold

children's names Rosanne, Sara Loraine

Grandchildren. Loretta and Amy Marshall

major turning points in:

Mattituck	my life	my field of interest
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

for me, Mattituck was

Mattituck is

I'd like Mattituck to become

(feel free to expand on any of the above;-your opinions are welcome!)