

## **Barbara (Moss) Rice**

Date: October 26, 1992  
Interviewer: Phyllis Boeddinghaus  
Transcriber: Jennifer Warren, November 2021  
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Abstract: Barbara Jean (Moss) Rice (1922-2003), the daughter of Joseph Lafayette Moss Jr. and Ruth C. Moss, was a lifelong resident of Metuchen. Her great-grandfather was Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Lafayette Moss, a Civil War veteran who was shot off his horse during a skirmish, broke his leg, and was discharged from the Union Army a month later. Following the war, he became a stock broker in New York and settled in Metuchen along Homer Place. He also helped establish the Mount Zion Lodge No. 135 and St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

Ms. Rice was raised at 83 Spring Street in Metuchen alongside her three brothers: Theodore, Donald, and David. Her father graduated from Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken and worked as a mechanical engineer. Ms. Rice graduated from Metuchen High School in 1940, and later married Alfred Hoag Rice (1920-2011), a design engineer for DuPont in Parlin. They settled at 223 Woodbridge Avenue and had four sons: Alfred Jr., Laurie Donald, Gerald, and James. Ms. Rice was a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and a Boy Scout leader. She is buried at Hillside Cemetery in Metuchen.

During this interview, Ms. Rice discusses her family, including her Moss ancestors who settled in Metuchen during the mid-nineteenth century. She also talks about Metuchen being the Brainy Borough, the Edgar Brothers Clay Company, and the Indian watering hole at Thomas Pond. She concludes the interview by discussing the tragic death of Reginald Crowell, who was trampled by a horse frightened by a train whistle.

*Disclaimer: Please note that all oral histories presented by the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society are unaltered. The language, comments, and thoughts contained therein are solely those of the individuals interviewed. Our goal in presenting them is to make the personal recollections of these individuals available, to be considered within both their historical context, and during the time the comments were made, as a part of the historical record. The content and language of these interviews should not in any way be attributed to any of the past, current, or future members of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society Board of Directors, or to the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society membership as a whole.*

P. Boeddinghaus: [recording begins mid-sentence] ... interview and an oral history done by Barbara (Moss) Rice on October 26, 1992 under the auspices of the Metuchen[-Edison] Historical Society. Barbara is being interviewed by Phyllis Boeddinghaus in an informal way. The date is October 26, 1992. The interview is taking place in the Grimstead Room of the Metuchen Public Library. [recording paused]

This recording is done in an informal way at the Metuchen Public Library in the Grimstead Room. Barbara (Moss) Rice is being interviewed by Phyllis Boeddinghaus under the auspices of the Metuchen Historical Society. And the date is October 26, 1992. [recording paused]

This is a test to make sure this machine is working in the Grimstead Room. [recording paused]

Hello Barbara, and I'd like to follow a format that I have here and I'd like to know where you are born and where your family is from.

**B. Rice:** Well, as far as I know, Metuchen, Metuchen. [laughs] I was told that my father [Joseph Lafayette Moss Jr. (1887-1970)] was born in Metuchen and his father was born in Metuchen. And his father's father came from Philadelphia [Pennsylvania] way, way back before the Civil War. At any rate, when I was born and grew up with my family, I lived at the house at the corner of Spring [Street] and Lake [Avenue]. Back of that was called Tommy's Pond [Thomas Pond]. It was a mudhole! [laughs]

P. Boeddinghaus: That identifies the neighborhood, yes.

**B. Rice:** Uh-huh. In fact, as I grew older, married and had four boys, we found out about the Indians and that was called—Thomas Pond was called the watering hole for the Indians—oh, what was I going to say—Appalachian Indians? Lenape? Lenape!

P. Boeddinghaus: [loud noises in the background] I'm having trouble with the door. [laughter] We have company. [laughs; closes door] I didn't realize about that noise.

And then, was your mother [Ruth C. Moss] from Metuchen also?

**B. Rice:** No, as a matter of fact, my mother was from Arcadia in Canada. Arcadia, near—let's see, I want to say Nova Scotia. Yeah, Arcadia was a small town outside of—what was the name? [laughs] I had that piece of paper. Yarmouth. Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

P. Boeddinghaus: And where do you suppose your parents met?

**B. Rice:** Well, when my mother and father met through the courtesy of, shall we say, Thomas Truck in Jersey City. [laughs] Yes, she came down with her brother. Her whole family came down to Jersey City [in 1903] from Nova Scotia by way of Boston, I was told, and found that they would like to move out of the seafaring area, which Nova Scotia was, and all their relatives were seafaring people. And they wanted to move down to a better income, I assume, where there was better choice of businesses. And our whole family came to Jersey City. From there, she became a stenographer and went to work at Thomas Truck. I know my father had just graduated from Stevens [Institute of Technology in Hoboken] in 1908 and went to work for Thomas Truck as an experimental engineer working on the bettering of these trucks. And if you look in your library, you'll find Thomas Truck was in the encyclopedia of *National Geographic*, one of the first trucks to be on the assembly line, something like Ford. Did you know that?

P. Boeddinghaus: No, I didn't. That's very interesting.

**B. Rice:** I happened to peak at one of those old encyclopedias. So he was a mechanical engineer and an experimental engineer for Thomas Truck; [he] met her there. And a stenographer—whew, that's a full—well, absolute secretary in those days!

**They had to do everything. They met there, they were married, they lived in Jersey City two years. After that time, of course, they came to Metuchen regularly, especially on weekends. Families always did that in those days, didn't they?**

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, they did, yes.

**B. Rice: Had get-togethers and big dinners and joke and tease. But I do recall Mother saying, "Joseph Moss' family lived on Woodbridge Avenue in quite a good-sized house." And they said, before the bride joined the family (Momma joined the family), "This girl talks funny. What is she saying? Let-tenant?" And grandfather [Joseph Lafayette Moss (1851-1941)], that's my father's father, said, [mimicking stern voice] "Stop that, young men! Don't you be impolite to her! She is quite correct in Canada where she comes from. When you say let-tenant, that's lieutenant and she is quite correct. Enough of that teasing!" And he put them in their place. And I think that everyone respected fathers in those days. And fathers had the most wonderful effect on my father.**

**And one of the things I remember so much about Grandma telling about Grandpa, when he came off the train—oh, by the way, he worked in the Stock Exchange in New York. That's why great-grandfather came down to the same area. Now great-grandfather [Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Lafayette Moss (1823-1905)] bought the house on Homer Place, that's diagonally across from where my father lived on [223] Woodbridge Avenue, three houses up. There were only three houses on Homer Place. [laughs] And this gentleman came to Metuchen, I understand, the great-grandfather, 1865, came to Metuchen because it was sort of an hour outside of New York City. And his father from Philadelphia had said, "Joseph, please go in this area and get established. You have a family now and this is the most up-and-coming area of the United States." This gentleman's name was John Moss and he was a stationer in Philadelphia. A stationer makes not only letterheads for new companies, but I think they were printing. Originally, he was a quill maker—I found this out through—I better not jump ahead of my story. [laughs] But the people of Philadelphia knew that New York was quite a busy place where new businesses were starting.**

**So the young Joseph L. Moss<sup>1</sup>, that's the second one, came to Metuchen, left his son, a ten-year-old son, and his wife on Homer Place about 1865, went back to the Civil War, back to Philadelphia to fight with his group. He was a second lieutenant in the cavalry and as the story goes, he went back to fight, but his fighting was—let's see, he was—you might say [unclear]—on horseback, go back the trails, he was coming up. And when he came back with the most important information that Stonewall Jackson [Confederate general] was coming up with heavy artillery, his superior officer said, "Absolutely impossible!" And the preceding morning certainly proved to be quite exact as lieutenant colonel had specified—bang! There were all kinds of a foray, which eventually the grandfather**

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Lafayette Moss (1823-1905) was a Civil War Union Army officer born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was commissioned as major, field and staff, 5<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry on August 10, 1861. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on November 1861, which he served until he resigned on April 30, 1862. He was then commissioned lieutenant colonel, field and staff, 12<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry on October 18, 1862, serving until he was discharged on July 25, 1863 following an injury in a skirmish. He is buried at the First Presbyterian Cemetery where a special veteran's plaque was erected besides his grave by the Moss family in 1985.

or the great-grandfather, his horse was shot out from under him and he got a broken leg. And he survived to come back to Metuchen.

When he did get back, he was carrying through what his father had taught him to do, go to New York, find out what was going on. And the strange and interesting background of this, they (my great-grandfather and my grandfather and his sons) would go to New York and work the Stock Exchange. But the original grandfather, the great-grandfather on Homer Place, was according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, one of a thousand men that put in, I think, they said a thousand dollars. A large group of men at the end of the Civil War put in their money to form—and as I say, my research is poor—it’s either the New York Exchange or the—what’s the other one? Oh dear, I just blew it. [laughs] There were two; there’s a New York Exchange and the—I can’t think of the name! [laughs]

P. Boeddinghaus: So that brings us up to date then.

**B. Rice:** Yeah, but two stock exchanges. This is the [New York] Curb Exchange. That’s the original group that started the Curb Exchange; they put the money, the building, and I think one is the New York Exchange and one is the Curb Exchange. What’s another name for that? The American [Stock Exchange] and the New York Exchange, that’s it.

P. Boeddinghaus: Did he commute by train?

**B. Rice:** Every day they commuted to New York. And even my grandfather, and then even [Walter] Russell [Moss] (the oldest brother), the oldest of the boys of my father’s generation, went in and tried it. But Russell went for a while; Irving [Reed Moss] didn’t like it at all. That’s the one that married Mildred [(Barr)] Moss. Hibbert [Moss] went off on his own way; he became an ensign during World War I. [laughs] He’s the one that met this lovely girl, [Edward] Allen Burrough’s sister [Mary Ruth (Burroughs) Eby], fell in love with her and took her to the ball in Annapolis [Maryland]. And there, she met this lovely—no pardon me—this delightful, handsome young man that happened to be Hibbert Moss’ roommate. [laughs] She was swooped away by this handsome young man and married [Ivan] Eby, and poor Uncle Hibbert had to go back hunting again for a wife. He eventually found a very lovely woman [Sophie Moss], who was a schoolteacher, and they produced Hibbert Jr. and Lois and Clifford. And one of them was a minister.

P. Boeddinghaus: Interesting names.

**B. Rice:** Yes, and the daughter became a teacher. They all did what they enjoy best. But the exciting part that I was always interested in, all [of] my father’s brothers were interested in the curiosity of something new, and it ties in with my knowledge that Metuchen was called the Brainy Borough. And at the time that my father graduated from Stevens Institute of Technology in 1908, his thesis was “Is the gasoline or the [unclear] engine more desirable for this up-and-coming automobile?”

P. Boeddinghaus: Very interesting. It’s very timely.

**B. Rice:** And I went with my son and my father to Stevens when my son was old enough and wanting to go to Stevens. [laughs] And here we find this thesis, and the man that's running the library said, "Oh, Mrs. Rice, by my guest, take this and copy it." I said, "But it's crinkly. I don't want to ruin it." He said, "We're delighted you're interested because we have such wonderful people who graduated and went on to do wonderful things." And Metuchen was known by so many well-known people like—Dad would say, "We went up to see Tommy Edison today." [laughs] And of course, Mr. [Henry] Ford came and visited [and] all the people that made the different parts of the automobile and the newer life. And the extreme desirability of creating a better home, electric lights were introduced, the telephone was introduced. And all these people found that this area right around here was sort of charged with this special enthusiasm because that—Dad would talk about going up there to see what Tommy Edison and the boys were doing. And he said, "Yee Gods, you should see, they have even an electric train and it goes a couple miles." They had a test run. You heard of it?

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, I heard about that.

**B. Rice:** Getting back to Metuchen property, they also had the Alden men—no, the Stevens men. The Stevens men [artists] that lived on Chestnut Street [formerly located at 153 East Chestnut Avenue]. There were Aldens<sup>2</sup> too that were very influential bringing interesting people to Metuchen to visit the Stevens and him. And they lived right next to the Halvorsen house that I knew, Sylvia Halvorsen and her mother [Roslyn C. Halvorsen] on Chestnut Street [formerly located at 141 East Chestnut Avenue]. Uh-huh, and I'll never forget the lovely, generous-sized property they had. And I had the pleasure of visiting the Stevens property once when I was so young that I don't remember it too much except they had a great, big summer house on the side. And it went in the side entrance, it led up into a circular staircase, it went up into the kitchen, and they had quite a few helpers around the house. [laughs]

P. Boeddinghaus: Now is that house existing now or has it been torn down?

**B. Rice:** No, it was torn down. And two—what do you call—bi, double-door duplexes took the place. But I spoke with Sylvia Halvorsen, and she and her mother were so pleased and so loved their property that to this very day, this is 1992, Sylvia sold that house with the positive reassurance they were not going to subdivide it and that they would keep the house a house and not tear it apart like they've done so many of the beautiful homes in Metuchen.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, I think people have. They've restored it somewhat. I noticed Michael passed the Halvorsen house. They have repainted it and they are trying to keep it up, restore it.

**B. Rice:** One of the sad things though about some of the houses, I live on [223] Woodbridge Avenue, Metuchen. I can look out my kitchen window and see what was Washington School [Mildred B. Moss Elementary School at 16 Simpson

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Mills Alden was the managing editor of *Harper's Weekly* for fifty years and was often referred to as the "Dean of American Magazine Writers." In his capacity as editor, he naturally came into contact with many writers and his magnetic personality drew them to Metuchen. According to the *History of Metuchen* compiled by the Metuchen High School Senior Class of 1931, Mr. Alden lived on Chestnut Avenue in the long, rambling red house near Plainfield Avenue where the Stevens brothers, artists, later resided.

Place] where I went to school and all the wonderful people I went to school with like [Sterling] Elliott Mayo and—I don't think Dick Hale [Richard Hale] graduated with me. But when we graduated from high school [in 1940], it was Dick Hale, Elliott Mayo, or Horace Orr, Lloyd Kornblatt. There were so many people that stayed right here in Metuchen and made a wonderful life for themselves and gave much happiness to many, many people. And we are still working his ear off. [laughs] And oh, Barbara is such a pleasant girl, I worked with her in PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] and in—I think there was scouting, the Evening Woman's Club.

By the way, I must mention one of the wonderful things about Metuchen. You've heard of BIL? My grandmother was one of the original starters or the original members of the BIL. And what does it stand for? Borough Improvement League. And this is one of the stories my dad told me—

P. Boeddinghaus: Now what was your grandmother's name?

**B. Rice:** Grace Reid Moss. In fact, I just got something from my cousin in Fort Worth, Texas, telling when she was married. And she was married in my house where I live now. She was an only child of, you can say, a sad marriage. [chuckles] She came to Metuchen when she was ten years old with her grandmother. Her grandmother was the wife of an educated man who was in, I guess, what is now Columbia University [in New York]. They didn't call it that at that time—brought this child there. The mother had died, and Mrs. Reid brought the child up at 223 Woodbridge Avenue. And guess who was diagonally across on Homer Place? [laughs] This family called M-o-s-s. And the thing that I had never mentioned before, the great-grandfather was Joseph Lafayette Moss. And his son was known—the little ten-year-old boy that grew up and met this pretty little girl over here that was ten years old when she came to her grandmother's house—that pair, that second Joseph, was Joseph Lafayette Moss. They never took a second number, or you know Junior or whatever. And when my father was born, his name was Joseph Lafayette Moss. But he was not called Third, he was called Junior during the time his father lived. But see, the great-grandfather died when my father was getting out of college. And I guess he wasn't too active toward the latter part of his years. But boy, he sure was a goer.

Getting back to the great-grandfather and Homer Place, he was the first grandmaster of the Masonic Order [Mount Zion Lodge No. 135] in Metuchen. I think it started in Robins Hall [at 401 Main Street], the get-togethers were, um-hm. They formulated the Masonic Temple, which is now still standing on [483] Middlesex Avenue. He was the first grandmaster of that. He was also with the group of men that came to the [First] Presbyterian Church and said, "We would like to start the Episcopal Church. May we have shelter here and have a meeting place until we get thoroughly organized?" And the powers that be said, "Please be our guest." And they were so nice. These men, the vestry, the newly-formed vestry of St. Luke's [Episcopal Church] went to New York and viewed buildings they thought would be suitable and came back with "This is the kind we want built right here." And it was built on [17] Oak Avenue off Middlesex Avenue, Metuchen.

P. Boeddinghaus: There are some very nice photographs here in this room of St. Luke's.

**B. Rice:** We have some, yes, yes.

P. Boeddinghaus: And just to interject, the historical society has done a video, and the churches are depicted in this video: the churches, and the schools, and the different businesses.

**B. Rice:** I saw a map at St. Luke's. I went to St. Luke's Church myself by the time I got old enough to walk. When we first were little children and we lived on corner of Spring and Lake, my three brothers and I, we didn't have money for a car. I mean that was Depression time. And so we walked to the nearest church, which was the Dutch Reformed Church [formerly located at the corner of Amboy Avenue and Graham Avenue]. [laughs]

P. Boeddinghaus: That's right. I did the same thing. [laughter]

**B. Rice:** You know that's the most wonderful part of Metuchen. Everybody knew everybody. I'm bouncing around with ideas, but one of the ideas that I found so interesting, and why I was interested in talking with you—do you know Metuchen was basically a town that had an income through—such as the Edgar family? Edgar Clays—did anybody do a write-up on the Edgar Clays<sup>3</sup>?

P. Boeddinghaus: It has been mentioned in some of the oral histories, but that is very interesting to me. I know that this area is very rich in clay. But did he bring his clay from the South to this area to be work on? Or was the clay in this area that he developed?

**B. Rice:** Have you ever heard of Keasbey? That's clay! [laughs] Now I cannot tell exactly what clay he used, but Edgar Clays were people who formed—I try to call up on the telephone and ask somebody that I get the exact answer, but it was minerals in something or other.

P. Boeddinghaus: Is that Englehard Minerals & Chemicals<sup>4</sup> [Corporation]? Was he connected with that? Someone else told me that, yes.

**B. Rice:** Yes, yes, that's it. You're right, you're right. Yes, that's it! Because it was in Metuchen. If you were to go down from where I lived underneath the Pennsylvania Railroad and you get up to Pennsylvania Avenue where the taxi stand is, going east to the end of that street is a big brick building. That was Edgar Clays [Office at 10 Station Place].

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, that's where the office was.

**B. Rice:** And that's where the whole business started.

P. Boeddinghaus: And he [Charles Smith Edgar] was instrumental in donating property for Edgar School and the—

**B. Rice:** YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association at 65 High Street], athletic field.

P. Boeddinghaus: And the YMCA in the early twenties, yes.

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<sup>3</sup> Also known as the Edgar Plastic Kaolin Company or the Edgar Brothers Clay Company.

<sup>4</sup> The Edgar Brothers Clay Company merged with the Englehard Minerals & Chemicals Corporation in the 1950s.

**B. Rice:** As a matter of fact, that's how my father got the house at [83] Spring Street because the tie in was they were good at real estate. I swear they must have owned more than half of Metuchen, those Edgars. [chuckles] There were Edgars and Martins. There were quite a few families that were interrelated because Aunt Mildred said, [mimicking accented voice] "My father, my dear," she said, "I am a Martin." [laughs] She sure did have a Martin in her—at the top of the hill on [60] Spring Street was one Martin [John C. Martin]. He was the nicest gentleman, oh! Then there were another two brothers [Carl and Gilbert Martin] that were up—what was the name of the street by the Reformed Church?

P. Boeddinghaus: Franklyn Place?

**B. Rice:** Yeah, [28] Franklyn Place. Two other brothers lived up there, Martins. I knew them because we used to go and pick apples in their backyard. Another interesting family was Crowell. Now Mr. [William A.] Crowell had a feed store [at 389 Main Street]. And if you know, you will have observed anything about Metuchen in the good old days, everybody had a chicken yard, just about. They had deep pieces of property and fruit trees; they were practically self-contained. But Mr. Crowell had the feed store. Now Mr. Crowell lived at the top of [63] Spring Street and that house still stands with a big, round front porch. Have you ever seen it?

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, yes.

**B. Rice:** The porch is most unusual. It also has a side entrance to a full apartment on the top floor. Now Grandpa Crowell had a daughter, Mrs. [Mildred (Crowell)] Komp who lived down in Maryland and would always bring her daughter up to live next door to Ted Riddle [at 67 Spring Street]. [laughs] And we would take them down to Morgan. [laughs] We had a summer place at Morgan and that's another one of the delightful things of Metuchen, people always invited people to wherever they had something special. I remember taking Dolly down, [Gertrude] Dolly Burke, my best girlfriend that I went to school with, graduated in 1940. We always went down to Morgan on the weekends. Later on, she took me down to visit her aunt's place down in—oh dear [laughs]—after Point Pleasant—Seaside Heights, yes, yes. And we just always seemed to help each other. I was asking my father, "What was it like in those days before Morgan?" And he said, "Well," he says, "I remember Aunt Margaret, my sister, she was a bit older than me and she had problems with her eyes. Both dad and Aunt Mildred were going blind as they got older." Aunt Margaret was given a pony because everybody had a barn in their backyard.

Oh, I started to say about Mr. Crowell's feed store—it's very important! [laughs] That was important part of Metuchen.

P. Boeddinghaus: And where was that located? On Amboy Avenue and Main Street?

**B. Rice:** No, we're talking about whose house? The feed store?

P. Boeddinghaus: The feed store.

**B. Rice:** The feed store was—oh gee, did I ruin a bunch of stories, dear, didn't I? The feed store is—all right, you know where Metuchen Post Office is now [at 360 Main



**Street]? All right, if you were on Woodbridge Avenue, you would go down Woodbridge Avenue until it hit Main Street, and then on the right-hand side is the railroad station and the left-hand side is our present post office. But if you went under the railroad north on Main Street, and as soon as you came out on the right-hand–no, the left-hand side was the feed store [at 389 Main Street]. It was an enormous building!**

P. Boeddinghaus: I heard this before, yes.

**B. Rice: But any rate, and the real post office that I remember first was, if you go toward Edgar Clays, there was a little itty-bitty post office there [at 3 Pennsylvania Avenue]. And the post office had those little bitty boxes, pigeon holes. [chuckles]**

P. Boeddinghaus: I've seen pictures of it, yeah.

**B. Rice: It was a small one!**

P. Boeddinghaus: And Mrs. Eby, whom I talk to, she said that her father owned the building [Burroughs Building at 396 Main Street] and he rented the space to the post office.

**B. Rice: Isn't that something?**

P. Boeddinghaus: But in listening to different oral tapes, I realized that the post office had several locations over the years until its present location on Main and Woodbridge. But getting back to the Crowells, where did the family live that had the horses?

**B. Rice: Oh, they had their own backyard. Grandpa Crowell, at the top of Spring Street, he had a great big barn that set way back almost as far as Tommy's Pond. It took a portion of the depth of where it went out toward Tommy's Pond. And they always had a great big apple tree there, and eventually that became a park and I think [unclear] apple tree. But then as he grew older, the barn became what was the last barn in Metuchen that had horses. I am sure!**

P. Boeddinghaus: Were there ever any Crowells out on Durham Avenue, out that way that would have a pony or horse?

**B. Rice: Not that I know of.**

P. Boeddinghaus: My husband [Jack Boeddinghaus] remembers riding horseback out that way. He thought his friend that owned the horse [was] named Steve Crowell. Maybe that's a younger generation.

**B. Rice: Steve Crowell? No, Reg Crowell [Reginald Crowell] went to school with me. He was about two years younger and let's see—one of the sad stories about horses in the era of the train—Mr. Crowell that had the feed store had a son—I wonder if his name was Reginald Crowell too? But anyhow, he had a son and the boy that I knew on Spring Street going up—we were at the corner of Spring and Lake, but the second and third house were Crowells. Edith lived with [Helen] Louise Crowell [at 73 Spring Street] and Louise had a boy [Reginald], same age as my brother David. David is two years younger than me. Oh, by the way, I was born in 1922. [laughter] David was born in 1924. And I have an older brother, who**

**was five years older than me, that was Donald. He became an architect. And Ted became a machinist during World War II.**

P. Boeddinghaus: [unclear]

**B. Rice: Who me? [laughs]**

P. Boeddinghaus: Are you in between the boys then?

**B. Rice: Yes. I had four brothers; one was younger than me. David was two years younger than me, then me, then five years after me, after Barbara, was Donald, and two years after that was Ted. Ted was the oldest. I'm doing it backwards, aren't I? [laughs]**

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah, you did it both ways.

**B. Rice: Yes.**

P. Boeddinghaus: But getting back to the Crowells, what happened? Did something happen at the feed store?

**B. Rice: At the feed store, it was only a driveway between the feed store and the train [Pennsylvania Railroad]. And if you had a sudden train going—whew! And they went choo-choos then, I mean with smoke spewing out all over. Mr. Crowell's son had come down, I believe his name was Reginald<sup>5</sup> too, the same as the boy that I grew up with, Reg Crowell. That horse threw him off back—now the man had gone down from Grandpa Crowell's house on Spring Street, where there was a barn, gone down to see his father.**

P. Boeddinghaus: At the feed store.

**B. Rice: And the horse reared up as this train came flying through Metuchen. It threw the man off and when the horse came back, down off his—his front feet crushed the man! And it was the most-sad thing that ever happened in Metuchen. But that family did amazingly well. Mrs. Crowell, Louise Crowell, became the most wonderful caterer. She catered to anybody, anybody's parties; she had the most delightful way of having parties. Her sister [Edith Crowell] was a librarian. Louise, I think that was Louise Crowell.**

P. Boeddinghaus: Now where does Evelyn Crowell fit in? You pointed her out to me in the yearbook.

**B. Rice: Oh, that's a different family, different family. But Louise Crowell was the librarian in Perth Amboy Library<sup>6</sup> and that woman had the most fantastic way with flowers. They had [unclear] and the most gorgeous—I always remember the two cherry trees. And I was allowed to climb the cherry tree. Can you imagine when you had to be awful little and awful light? Cherry trees don't like to be climbed on. But I remember Louise, I believe her name was Louise. She would show us how to take care of the bulbs in autumn. See we're in autumn now, you**

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<sup>5</sup> His full name was Reginald Edward Bulkley Crowell. He was trampled by a horse and died in 1926.

<sup>6</sup> Louise Crowell's sister Edith Hall Crowell was the head librarian of the Perth Amboy Public Library for fourteen years.

are supposed to dig up all the dahlias and the tubes and whatever. You wrap them in straw and you put them in the baskets and take them in the garage, and don't let the frost get to them. But my mother had a garden and I swear to goodness that seeing other people make such beautiful backyards and take care of their flowers, I hate to say it, but TV [television], you miss a lot when you're missing around with TV when you have the most gorgeous mother nature in your backyard. [laughs]

And if you were to go down today now, and to look into that hollow [Thomas Pond], that area called the corner of Spring and Lake, the whole area, no fooling, they said during the time of me studying Indians with the boys and going through scouting, they said that was an Indian watering hole. And the people of Metuchen protected that watering hole until 1929 when Luther Edward Riddle III [laughs], I mean Ted Riddle's father, became the first, I think the first—what do you call it? He was in charge of the park [Thomas Park], first park that we had really somebody take care of. They put the cement outlet, it was just a mess before and the kids would always mess it up some more. But they had money put aside to make a proper—what do they call it that way—overflow.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah, there's a drainage pipe or there's something there.

**B. Rice:** It was more than that. It was a cement form—

P. Boeddinghaus: Culvert?

**B. Rice:** Culvert. But it was—I can hear my husband [Alfred Hoag Rice] saying, “For God's sake, Barbara, what happened to your tongue?” [laughter] Because everybody knows that water comes in one way at the springs and would flow in the direction of down and out and it would go toward Lake Avenue within about five feet of the sidewalk. And then it would go down and they had the drain connect with the road drain [unclear] underneath and go under Lake Avenue and down by the Lehigh Valley Railroad where there were natural streams.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes. And I think at this point, they've been putting culverts. You know Mrs. Eby always tells me about how much water there was around Metuchen. She always reminisces about that.

**B. Rice:** But dear, I don't think that it is really as bad as you think. All the time I was in scouting, we would take walks with the boys and we'd go along at Lehigh Valley [Railroad]. I mean of late, it just went to—there's no trains on it, so we could follow it. And there was always a nice clear stream with water crests growing. And that Lehigh Valley Railroad, according to my father, was the first we say something transit between Perth Amboy and South Plainfield. They had a trolley, he sat on it. I saw something in one of these things that said that was the train station and I said, “There was a train station on the Lehigh Valley.” There really was [at Amboy Avenue and Lake Avenue].

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes. I kind of recall that as being discussed by other—

**B. Rice:** Yeah, some of the things, I think some of the pictures get a little mixed up or identifying what was what. Oh, I should go on and on.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, this is very interesting.

**B. Rice: You better point out what's more interesting than other things.**

P. Boeddinghaus: I hope we got all this [on tape].

**B. Rice: Ran out?**

P. Boeddinghaus: No. [recording paused]

Okay. Now you were going to tell me Barbara about the Whitman estate. I've always heard that was so lovely.

**B. Rice: It really was. We had some pictures of it and if you have any [unclear] of them, what?**

P. Boeddinghaus: Now that was at Lake and High Street, the Whitman estate?

**B. Rice: Lake Avenue came up from the Memorial Park, from Route 27, came up and as it hit High Street, on the right-hand side, the right and the far side [was] Whitman estate. That was—it's like three-quarters of a block ... [recording ends]**

[END OF INTERVIEW]