

## **Louise and Elizabeth Litterst**

Date: April 6, 1976  
Interviewer: Trevor Wright Jr.  
Transcribers: Janena Benjamin, 2004 and Laura Cabbage-Draper, October 2019  
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Abstract: The Litterst sisters, Louise “Lou” (1888-1991) and Elizabeth “Elsie” (1891-1984), were the daughters of Alexander Charles Litterst and Charlotte (Lee) Litterst. Their grandfather, Alexander Litterst, moved to America from Germany in 1850 and settled in New York City where he established the Litterst Company that manufactured dental files. In 1882, their grandfather and his three sons moved to 36 Middlesex Avenue in Raritan Township. Their father, Alexander Charles Litterst (1855-1953), became involved in local politics serving on the Raritan Township Committee and the New Jersey Legislature. Following the formation of the Metuchen Borough in 1900, Mr. Litterst served as its second mayor for one term in 1902. He also founded the Metuchen Building and Loan Association and the Metuchen National Bank.

Louise C. Litterst and Elizabeth R. Litterst, who both never married, were born and raised at their family home at 36 Middlesex Avenue. Both were educated at the Franklin School and were members of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. The sisters ran the Ramble Inn (with the slogan “The Tea Room with the Homelike Atmosphere”) from their home for thirty-two years from 1933 to 1965. They sold their property in 1965; the house was demolished and the barn was converted to a nursing home for several years before being demolished.

In this interview, the Litterst sisters discuss their family background including their father’s move to the area in 1882, which is documented in their father’s letter. The Litterst sisters also talk about their family home, their grandfather’s file business, their schooling, their father’s political endeavors, memories of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church and the Hunt family, and their Ramble Inn business.

Interview note: Excerpts from their father’s letter are indented in the transcription. In addition, there are several moments during the interview when the participants talk over each other; the intelligible parts of those exchanges have been transcribed, but repetitions have been omitted where necessary for the sake of readability.

*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.*

T. Wright: This is Trevor Wright Jr. on April 6, 1976 chatting with the Litterst sisters (Lou [Louise C. Litterst] and Elsie [Elizabeth R. Litterst]), both of whom were born before the turn of the century at their family homestead on [36] Middlesex Avenue, and who,

for the past few years, have resided here at the Redfield Village Apartments [in Metuchen]. [recording paused]

Well, I believe you ladies told me your grandfather [Alexander Litterst] came over from Germany around 1850. Is that correct?

**E. Litterst: Yes, 1850.**

T. Wright: And where was that in Germany?

**L. Litterst: In Offenberg; from Offenberg.**

**E. Litterst: Schwarzwald [Black Forest].**

**L. Litterst: Schwarzwald.**

T. Wright: It was a long trip on a sailing vessel, right?

**E. Litterst: Fifty-five days on the sailing ship.**

T. Wright: Oh dear. And he had a friend<sup>1</sup>—is that true?—from Germany who had moved down into the Metuchen area.

**E. Litterst: Well, he came—the friend came after Pop or after Grandpa [Litterst]. But he came about that same time, but he located right in [New] Jersey. Pop, of course, Grandpa was located in New York and Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. Then he came back again to New York and had a handmade file business down there—dental files he made.**

T. Wright: Dental files, right. Now how about your father [Alexander Charles Litterst]—when was he born?

**L. Litterst: He was born in [18]55.**

T. Wright: That in New York City?

**L. Litterst: New York City, uh-huh.**

**E. Litterst: Hester Street! [laughter] The worst street in New York—in the world, I think!**

T. Wright: That's a movie<sup>2</sup> or something now, isn't it?

**E. Litterst: We used to tell dad, "Don't tell anybody you were born on Hester Street—that's horrible!" He said, "It wasn't horrible when I lived there."**

**L. Litterst: Not in those days.**

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<sup>1</sup> He is probably referring to Francis B. End, grandfather of Charles F. End. The End family were close friends with the Littersts and Francis B. End emigrated from Germany in 1851. He owned a farm on the west side of Talmadge Road just north of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Raritan Township.

<sup>2</sup> *Hester Street* was a 1974 period film, which was adapted from Abraham Cahan's 1896 novel.

- E. Litterst:** He said, “We lived in a little cottage right on the street that had a picket fence around it, and a peach tree in the front yard, and grape arbor in the back where we used to have our coffee klatsch [coffee chat], and a puppy that learned how to open that picket fence and even turn on the water. It was constantly dripping after he went for a drink.”
- T. Wright: Smart dog. [laughs]
- E. Litterst:** The dog didn’t turn it off. [laughter] But it took a change from those days. Hester Street now—I don’t think it’s as bad now as it was thirty years ago when we were talking.
- L. Litterst:** No. They’ve been working on it, I think, in New York City now.
- T. Wright: And I understand your dad as a little boy came here [to Metuchen] with Grandpa, and that was quite a lengthy trip, right?
- E. Litterst:** Yes, he used to—their holidays, they stayed out.
- L. Litterst:** From 83rd Street in New York walking across the city itself, you see, to get down to the ferryboat. He took the ferry across [Upper Bay] and then the train across Staten Island [New York], landed in Perth Amboy. Then came up from Perth Amboy to Metuchen, walking.
- T. Wright: On foot—a shanks’ mare. [laughter]
- E. Litterst:** On foot—a five-year-old!
- T. Wright: That was a long journey. And, what, you said this friend [Francis B. End] used to live down about where The Pines [Pines Manor at 2085 Lincoln Highway, Edison] is now.
- E. Litterst:** In back of The Pines. He had a nice farm, a berry farm.
- T. Wright: A berry farm. I think you told me on one of these visits that they saw something unusual at the Metuchen Station or at the railroad station.
- E. Litterst:** Oh, you mean when [President Abraham] Lincoln was assassinated.
- T. Wright: Right. Yeah.
- E. Litterst:** Everything was being draped in black.
- L. Litterst:** In New York, this was.
- E. Litterst:** And Grandpa said, “Something terrible has happened!” And he said, “Run over and get me a paper. I want to see what it was.” The paper was all outlined in black: *Lincoln Assassinated*. That was the Easter holiday, you see. They were coming out to Metuchen for the Easter holiday.
- T. Wright: Was that in New York, they saw that?
- L. Litterst:** In New York, yeah; right in the city.

- T. Wright: So that was the day, huh?
- E. Litterst: Now when we have a pause like that, does that use up the battery [on the tape recorder]?**
- T. Wright: It doesn't hurt it.
- E. Litterst: Or should we keep right on talking? [laughs]**
- T. Wright: No, you can relax. [laughs] We're just going to chat, right. Well, I think you told me you had an interesting letter that you got your father to write, what in the thirties, relating his history.
- E. Litterst: Nineteen-thirties. [laughs]**
- T. Wright: Nineteen-thirties, yeah. We have to be careful!
- L. Litterst: We wanted him to write his impression of coming to Metuchen, and how he happened to decide to locate in this country town.**
- E. Litterst: Outlandish state.**
- L. Litterst: Then it was Menlo Park, you see. It wasn't Metuchen yet<sup>3</sup>.**
- T. Wright: That's right.
- L. Litterst: It wasn't Metuchen, but we were not in it. We were on the boundary there [between Menlo Park and Metuchen].**
- T. Wright: So Lou, do you want to read some of that to us and we'll see what questions develop from there?
- L. Litterst: This?**
- T. Wright: Sure. Take your time. We can stop whenever you want, if you want to stop and rest. Don't be afraid to speak up.
- L. Litterst: This is the Menlo Park side of Metuchen in 1882 by Alexander C. Litterst:**

**Looking in 1882 for a place larger than a single lot of 25 x 100 on which we lived in the Yorkville section of New York, which by the way was a section of Manhattan Island lying between Central Park and the East River from about 70th Street just south of the Harlem section, we were directed to a farm of ninety acres near the Menlo Park Station and the Pennsylvania Railroad, then having come into fame as a scene of Thomas A. Edison's wonderful achievement with electricity. This lot we occupied on East 81st Street had been a part of an orchard on a farm in the early 1800s, nearly 150 years ago. And when the horse car was established and Harlem along Third Avenue, a land boom ensued and the land**

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<sup>3</sup> The Litterst farm at 36 Middlesex Avenue was incorporated as part of Metuchen when the borough was formed in 1900. Before that time, the farm was considered to be in the Menlo Park section of Raritan Township.

was laid out in streets and a very pretty suburban village made its appearance in the old orchard, and each lot had an old peach tree in the front yard. The one we bought had a cherry tree in front and a peach tree in back of it—the largest peach tree I have ever seen with a dull red cheek maturing late in September and early October—juicy freestone [peach] with a delicious flavor, which I found described in Thomas' phrenology as the Morrisania peach.

Leaving New York one beautiful June morning on the eleven o'clock train and arriving at Menlo Park a few minutes past noon—the same Philadelphia accommodation being still on the train schedule of the Pennsylvania Railroad and as slow as ever—I found myself in the country. There were five houses in sight besides the station [Menlo Park Railroad Station]. To the west of the station was the Woodward house and farm, at the head of the stairs leading from the north platform of the station stood on the right a hotel run by one Sawyer.

**E. Litterst:** Imagine back then, a hotel in Menlo Park!

**L. Litterst:** Yeah.

**T. Wright:** That's Menlo Park, isn't it? Right. [laughs]

**L. Litterst:** On the left, a structure in which was a country store and a post office, and across Essex and Middlesex Turnpike, now the Lincoln Highway, stood on a knoll a house occupied by Frederick Thornall and family [I. C. Thornall house at northwest corner with Frederick Street], and which by the way was the first house wired and lit by electricity (a demonstration of the electric lighting by the Edison system), still standing and owned by the [Frederick B.] Peins family in 1930. On inquiring at the post office where the [Holloway W.] Hunt farm was that I [Alexander Charles Litterst] wanted to visit, I was directed towards Metuchen on the turnpike. This was a wide country road without any stone covering and dirt rounded up in the middle and no traffic—not the Lincoln Highway now, never without some cars in sight, and at times, 500 or more passing in an hour.

**E. Litterst:** That was in 1930. I don't know how many there are now.

**L. Litterst:** I don't know what they are now, but I bet there are plenty.

It was a lovely, sunshine-y, June day, with the roadsides covered with wildflowers, and the birds, and bees, and butterflies singing and buzzing. What a delightful change from the city! To make a long story short and snappy, I was captivated by the scene, saw the Hunt place and farm [at 36 Middlesex Avenue], and came out the next day with my father [Alexander Litterst], and that very afternoon that place became ours. We worked so fast for fear of somebody snatching the place away before our very noses [laughs], and actually paid the price asked for without a hagggle as an attempt to beat down the price. I'm sure in that transaction, if we had not been in such a fever to acquire the place, we could have at least saved a thousand dollars. [laughter]

Well, there we were, in what was then called a part of Menlo Park. We had bought the Holloway Hunt home and farm of ninety-odd acres with a farmhouse

on it occupied by the farmer, Thomas Smith, whose son Oscar Smith lives on [40] Linden Avenue, Metuchen.

This is in back in 1930.

The Reverend [Holloway W.] Hunt, who had retired from the ministry of the [First] Presbyterian Church in Metuchen in 1855<sup>4</sup>, whose pastor he had been for a number of years—an unmarried Englishman who had during his ministry married the daughter [Henrietta Mundy] of a parishioner named [Ezra] Mundy and whose property the daughter and the minister's wife inherited. Our late, beloved Alonzo [Clark] Hunt was the grandson of the Reverend Hunt.

**E. Litterst:** He wasn't alive when you came here.

T. Wright: No, that would have been too late.

**L. Litterst:** Directly opposite our place was the home of the grandfather of the late Dr. Charles [Manning] Freeman, later owned by R. C. Kennedy [Robert C. Kennedy]. This home was built by the grandfather to retire to after the active life on his farm that is now covered by a lake in Roosevelt Park, just below the new hospital [Roosevelt Hospital], which overlooks the valley of the [south] branch of the Rahway River. Now on the hill between our hill and Menlo Park hill, there were three houses on Lincoln Highway. The one on the north side with the columns in front was built by a Jersey City merchant to retire to, the grandfather [Melancthon Freeman Carman] of our fellow citizen, Charles [Bloomfield] Carman. On the south side of the road, two cottages were built and occupied by Theodore [Frelinghuysen] Carman [father of Charles Carman] and the other by Martin Force.

**E. Litterst:** Theodore Carman is the home of Charlie Carman when he was a boy—that was right opposite the big one.

T. Wright: Oh, is that right?

**L. Litterst:** From our house towards Metuchen along the turnpike, Lincoln Highway, there stood on the north side the house once occupied by [Russell] Ten Eyck and owned by Cephas Waite. Prior to that, it was occupied by Lawyer Browning and his family. Then came the Corbin homestead into which Charles L. Corbin had moved in about 1879. Then came Woodwild Park, it had just been sold by Mr. [Thomas W.] Strong to the Connor (John M. Connor), a hat manufacturer of New York. Then came the [St. Luke's] Episcopal Church and Rectory. Then what is now the Metuchen Inn [at 424 Middlesex Avenue] was occupied by the Willmont family. And there was nothing from there to the corner of Main Street where the Borough Hall now stands and where stood the house occupied by Ross Freeman and family. The house has met with strange doings; first being bought and moved to where the library [Metuchen Public Library] now stands and then moved up the hill [to 231 East Chestnut Avenue] by Charles C. Mook, the owner [Mrs.] Upjohn.

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<sup>4</sup> Incorrect date. Holloway W. Hunt remained as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church until 1844.

Coming back from Main Street along the highway [Middlesex Avenue] there was first at the corner of the country store run by the fine old gentleman named [John James] Clarkson assisted by [William O.] Craig and [Eugene] Noe. You could get anything you wanted, I guess, in that store to wear, to eat, to work with, except for pajamas for there weren't any as such in those days. [laughter] And when you had farm products to sell or trade, this was the place to take them. This old store was moved from the corner and now stands next to Danford's [at 507 Middlesex Avenue] and is occupied by the bicycle shop.

**E. Litterst:** Is that still there? I think they have an antique place there.

**L. Litterst:** It says here in parenthesis "now an antique shop."

T. Wright: Yeah, that's it.

**L. Litterst:** Coming east now on the side of the highway [Middlesex Avenue] stood the Old [Franklin] Schoolhouse [at 491 Middlesex Avenue], the oldest in Metuchen, now the Borough Improvement League [building] and a very attractive clubhouse. This occupied by the family of [Thomas] Markey, the shoemaker, who had three gangly sons. Alongside was an old dwelling [at 455 Middlesex Avenue], since then turned and modernized and occupied by the Greenwald family, now owned by [R.] Van Winkle. There was nothing then until you struck the house now of the Sisters of Africa, opposite Woodwild Gate, and then occupied by the Lawyer Browning.

That's gone too now.

T. Wright: That's right.

**E. Litterst:** I guess they put a whole flock of old houses—nice houses in there.

T. Wright: That became a development [along Stirling Court], yeah, with a lot of houses.

**L. Litterst:** That's right.

Then came open fields again until you struck the house of the shoe manufacturer of New Brunswick, Mr. [Egbert S.] Peck, and his three sons—Louis [Lewis Thomas], Bert<sup>5</sup> [Egbert], and Fred [Frederick Clarkson]—at the corner of [280] Grove Avenue, then known as Dark Lane.

**E. Litterst:** Is this too long-winded?

T. Wright: No. Take your time. We got lots of time. [laughs]

**L. Litterst:** A small workman's cottage [at 191 Middlesex Avenue] came next, occupied by Tom Anderson, later by the [John W.] Mundy family. This was later remodeled and owned by architect [Clement Wilson] Fairweather.

**E. Litterst:** That's still standing.

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<sup>5</sup> Egbert Peck died in 1905 when he caught yellow fever while helping construct the Panama Canal.

**L. Litterst:** Yes, that's still there.

And then the knoll alongside the Reading Railroad, which at that time (1882) had not yet been built, here stood the home [at 125 Middlesex Avenue] of [Robert] Bruce Crowell, active on the school board, and later owned by St. George Kempson. Let me repeat the names of the dwellers along Middlesex and Essex [Turnpike].

Do you want me to?

T. Wright: Sure. Yeah, I think that's interesting because many people remember these.

**L. Litterst:** Now the Lincoln Highway, ninety years ago, beginning at the Menlo [Park] Station to Main Street, Metuchen: Frederick Thornall [I. C. Thornall], A. B. Cornish [A. H. Cornish], The Company House, where the railroad workmen lived, and then M. Carman [Melancthon Freeman Carman], Miss Carman, Martin Force, Mrs. [Ellis] Freeman, A. C. Litterst, [Robert] Bruce Crowell, Charles L. Corbin, [Egbert S.] Peck, Browning [coughs; side talk], [Thomas] Markey, and [John James] Clarkson. I want to leave the impression with my hearers that the section was really rural farming, and all over the line—

**E. Litterst:** Decidedly rural.

**L. Litterst:** —although mostly by this time (1882) by city farmers. To show that it is farming, each place had a horse or horses, cows, pigs, chickens, flocks of turkeys, each field with corn grain and pastures and with real orchards and vineyards. Adjoining the Litterst farm of ninety-nine acres towards the north and onto Grove Avenue, now facing James Street, was a farm occupied by Mrs. [Enos] Mundy and family, which was a model farm and perfect picture of a farm—everything in place and a place for everything. I could sit by the hour on our dividing fence talking out possible problems with Enos and enjoy the farmland picture.

Now you said skip?

T. Wright: Yeah, we just go to the next page. We'll come back to that.

**L. Litterst:** Now back to Main Street and Middlesex. Now going along Main Street from Middlesex Avenue towards the [Pennsylvania] Railroad and Amboy Avenue, first [John James] Clarkson's Store and the corner [with Middlesex Avenue], then a tinsmith and then a drug store, where old Dr. Andress had his office. Then the hardware store with a porch all across its front run by the man by the name of [Benjamin D.] Ford, who sold the business sometime after, moved to the South and after some years came back and started a hardware store again in the building at Amboy [Avenue] and Highland Avenue and Main Street. Then the whole block between Highland Avenue and Hillside Avenue was occupied by the fine country home of Nathan Robins Sr. [later Hillside Inn<sup>6</sup>]. Then at the corner of Hillside, there was a small store later owned by [Gregory] Costa with candy, cigarettes, bananas, papers, beginning in 1900. And next came the general store

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<sup>6</sup> It was also known as the Metuchen Inn (although it was a different building from the Metuchen Inn at 424 Middlesex Avenue). The building burned down in 1925.



run by Ma and Pa Frank [Charles & Clara Frank at 418 Main Street] with the atmosphere all of its own.

**E. Litterst:** This kind of an atmosphere. [laughter]

T. Wright: Is that right? A few smells, huh? [laughs]

**L. Litterst:** Nothing from there to the Pennsylvania Railroad except an old rail fence. Main Street crossed the railroad at grade and at the corner of Woodbridge Avenue was the home of Alexander Ayers.

That's where the post office [at 360 Main Street] is now, you know.

T. Wright: Right.

**L. Litterst:** And alongside, the wheelwright shop of the same. And by the way, he [Alexander Ayers] was also the undertaker of the village at that time, and succeeded later by his son, Clint Ayers [Clinton Ayers]. The Fisher house (now an apartment house) [at 336 Middlesex Avenue] came next and then at the corner [with Amboy Avenue] was the [Thomas] Eggert Feed and Grain [Store] establishment. On the opposite corner was the general country store run by [Freeman] Edgar, and on the third corner was a three-story building [John Robinson Grocery Store] with a large room on top story, and the fourth corner was the building owned by John Hampton, Esquire [at 280 Amboy Avenue], later office of Dr. [Sol] Gurshman.

**E. Litterst:** That's the one that's just been remodeled beautifully by [Martin] Jessen.

T. Wright: That's the one we had on the house tour last year and I was there. It was beautiful. I spent some time; it was really great. They left the original walls uncovered and the beams. It was a beautiful, yeah.

**E. Litterst:** Beautiful job.

**L. Litterst:** Coming back on Main Street on the west side, all the present buildings were there, the only solidly built-up block in the town.

**E. Litterst:** There was a store in the town, solidly built of brick, all that whole big row.

**L. Litterst:** There was a store run by the man by the name of Lane on the side of the [Pennsylvania] Railroad down to the [Centenary] Methodist [Episcopal] Church. The only brick building was Robins Hall [at 401 Main Street], where all the gala parties were held with minstrel shows and high school dances and the lower building had a grocery (Rogers) followed by mail store. Then came Ed Kramer's Department Store and Townsend's Plumbing [phonetic] [at 449 Main Street] with his three Irish Mikes—Mike O'Brien, Mike Ronnan, and Mike Green.

**E. Litterst:** That was funny, wasn't it?

T. Wright: Mike, Mike, and Mike, huh? [laughs]

**L. Litterst:** Now there's something missing there again. Shut that off for a minute. [recording paused]

**This is rather a prosy paper, but I want to close with the following story: I [Alexander Charles Litterst] was a young man, born and brought up in New York City, all my friends and attachments were in the city and my club and choral society there. My returns to the city were frequent and my friends could not get over the wonders that I moved and seemed to like to live in New Jersey. They said, "Anything except New Jersey, the land of the mosquito, malaria, chills and fever. How could you do it, Alexander?" My reply was, "Of course, I made a mistake choosing such a disease- and insect-infested part of the country where the couple that lived in our home celebrated their Golden Wedding two years ago, where the couple directly opposite celebrated their Golden Wedding a year ago, and the couple living on the next hill east of us enjoyed the Golden Wedding a year ago. The Carmans, the Freemans, and the Hunts. So of course, where I live now is a diseased and insect-infected place, and a hell of a place for me to have selected."**

**A. C. Litterst, who wrote this in 1930 at the age of eighty-seven and lived to be ninety-eight years old.**

**T. Wright:** Very good. That's great. [recording paused]

Well, I think as I mentioned you're very fortunate to have had your father write all these things down and I am sure you treasure those as a good memory and certainly a good personal view of the town. He tells us of the families and the stories.

**E. Litterst:** **Dolly Buchanan is always at us, "Save those precious clippings!"**

**T. Wright:** Oh, you should. You better have these down for the historical society [Metuchen-Edison Historical Society], right? They'll take good care of them.

**E. Litterst:** **Well, I'm sure we'd just as soon have them, them have them as we have them in our desk here, especially the ones where we have double.**

**T. Wright:** From your dad's description, is that the way you first remember Metuchen, you think? That few number of houses?

**E. Litterst:** **It had grown considerably. But no, it was very country when we were little kids. When we were little kids, it was very—**

**L. Litterst:** **When we first started, yes. We had a farm up there, you know. We had horses, cows, and pigs. We had eighty pigs at one time, can you imagine?**

**E. Litterst:** **My cousin and I used to love to go and open the door and let the little piglets come out and then the farmer would be furious because he had to get them back in again. [laughter]**

**T. Wright:** How about horses? You had horses?

**L. Litterst:** **We had four horses.**

- E. Litterst:** We had a team—a carriage horse and then Uncle George [W. Litterst] had a riding horse. He was in the Spanish American War and he bought one of the horses that he rode in the war.
- T. Wright: From the Army?
- L. Litterst:** Yes.
- E. Litterst:** Yeah. A black, a beautiful black [horse], but a devil. [laughter] So we weren't allowed to ride that one.
- T. Wright: The Army generally picked those kinds of horses, right? [laughs] They were mean and rugged.
- E. Litterst:** But then afterward, the barn was burned, and all the horses burned, all the cows, all the chickens.
- L. Litterst:** Can you imagine? [Eighteen]-ninety-eight, we had a fire. The man, our help on the place, set the place on fire.
- T. Wright: Oh dear.
- E. Litterst:** In the hayloft right over the horses. And our darling Daisy, the horse that had taught us how to drive, she could go alone without being driven so we were allowed to drive her every place. She broke loose and got to the door, but you couldn't get near it, the flames were coming out—
- T. Wright: Couldn't get the door open.
- L. Litterst:** Oh no! No.
- E. Litterst:** And we didn't have a fire company. We had a—
- L. Litterst:** We were in Menlo Park anyhow. [unclear] Metuchen. [laughs]
- E. Litterst:** We had a fire wagon and Arnett Smith was the chief of police—chief of the fire company [Washington Hose Company]—and when he heard the Litterst farm was on fire, he said, “If they send the horses down, they can have our truck.” Well, they send the horses that burned! Yes!
- T. Wright: But you couldn't get the horses? Oh dear!
- L. Litterst:** The whole thing went. That was [18]98.
- T. Wright: What, you lose the rest of the livestock too?
- E. Litterst:** We had an old—the original farmhouse stood in back of our house and that got on fire a couple of times and they put that fire out. And then after that fire, that house was torn down. They weren't going to take a chance. But the farmer lived in it—the workman on the place, you know—so I don't know where he went after that. We didn't have him in the house, did we?

- L. Litterst:** No.
- T. Wright: How about all your pigs and chickens?
- E. Litterst:** **We fixed the shop up. Oh yes, remember? We put an extension on the file shop.**
- T. Wright: Was that kind of in the back? That was your grandfather's shop, right?
- L. Litterst:** **Yeah.**
- E. Litterst:** **That's a picture of it [showing picture]—that's the front of it.**
- T. Wright: Oh, that's your painting, right. Mrs. Halvorsen did, right?
- L. Litterst:** **Roslyn.**
- T. Wright: Roslyn. That's great.
- E. Litterst:** **They made files from a quarter of an inch, dental files. Your father would have been in that.**
- T. Wright: My father's a dentist, yeah.
- E. Litterst:** **I bet he would have been interested in that.**
- T. Wright: Are those were all made by hand?
- E. Litterst:** **All by hand.**
- T. Wright: Did he learn that trade in German?
- E. Litterst:** **In Germany.**
- T. Wright: Yeah, that's a great painting that Roslyn's done.
- E. Litterst:** **It's a little rustic building. And when we were selling the place, all of our friends who knew how to paint were sitting there taking sketches.**
- T. Wright: Doing their sketching and painting, I can see why.
- E. Litterst:** **That's the one Roslyn did.**
- T. Wright: So that finally disappeared?
- E. Litterst:** **Yeah. Oh yes. People were stealing it. They were handmade bricks, you know.**
- T. Wright: Oh really?
- E. Litterst:** **Yeah, handmade bricks and all the paths in the back from the house down to the shop—**
- T. Wright: Were all laid with those bricks?

- E. Litterst:** All with these handmade bricks. And the people were just digging them up, pulling them out, you know. And the windowpanes in that thing were that—what do they call those things? It isn't clear glass, you know—they get—grotesque if you look—
- T. Wright: Yeah. Well, that's the old glass; it had the wavy lines in them, yeah. That's the old handmade [glass].
- E. Litterst:** Yes. And people tried to buy it, but we weren't taking it apart to sell them. So they just came and stole it instead. [laughs]
- T. Wright: Stole it piece-by-piece, right?
- E. Litterst:** Got it cheaper! And it was fascinating when people began to know that we were leaving the place, a young man by the name of Cusher [phonetic] lived down in one of the houses down on Metuchen, just on the hillside, and he used to come in and say, "Please tell me something about that shop." He said, "That should go down in history. There aren't any more like that. Tell me about it. What do you know about it?" I said, "All I remember about it was when you went in the front door there was a cabinet there, it had a drawer in it, and I would go in there and open that drawer because my grandfather always put some candy in it. That's all I remember." [laughter]
- T. Wright: That was it?
- E. Litterst:** Yes. He said, "Oh no, you must remember something about it!"
- T. Wright: You don't remember him working in there at all?
- E. Litterst:** Oh yes, but not till I could tell anybody that really wanted some information.
- T. Wright: You didn't pay any attention, right? Yeah, you were just children. It didn't mean anything.
- E. Litterst:** See, there were four big, full-length windows. And in each window, there was a seat like this that had a leather covering on it, and in front of it was a stump. And on the stump was this thing that had a strap where the file was stuck in. And then all the hammers weren't straight like this; they were curved. We still have some [unclear] show them.
- T. Wright: Oh, that would be interesting to see.
- E. Litterst:** Yes. And they would be like this and that would fascinate me because they played a regular tune. They'd hold this thing and every time they'd hit it, it would hop. And then of course, the little things that they would do wouldn't be half as fascinating to me as these big, big rasps, I think they call them. And they had a rattail.
- T. Wright: Yeah, those were round.

- E. Litterst:** Yes, they were round, and then they had the big rattail. And what was the one that I used to think was such a funny name?
- L. Litterst:** Have you any idea?
- E. Litterst:** Like an illegitimate—
- T. Wright: There was a bastard file.
- E. Litterst:** Bastard file! [laughter]
- T. Wright: That's the one I thought you were thinking of. [laughter] I was going to let you say it first! Yeah, that's a common name and I forget where that came from. That has some history.
- E. Litterst:** And I said, "Where they get such a name for a file!"
- T. Wright: It's an unusual—well, it's not a uniform name.
- E. Litterst:** So he would dig this—this young man would dig and dig and dig, and he finally got enough to write up, and he took pictures. Are you looking for that Lou, the pictures?
- L. Litterst:** I'm looking for the pictures and I don't know—
- T. Wright: You don't have to worry about it today, right.
- E. Litterst:** That wooden box up top.
- L. Litterst:** That's what I thought.
- T. Wright: Well, did he have people working for him?
- E. Litterst:** Yes, there were four file men as a matter of fact.
- T. Wright: Did they live around Metuchen?
- E. Litterst:** Oh, they lived all around, yes. And they sat at these windows.
- T. Wright: It must have been a tedious, tedious job, yeah?
- E. Litterst:** And I would go in and go to this drawer and pull out, see what I was going to get. Then you'd go down the flight of steps into where the forge was, and you can just see the remains of the old brick chimney there, way down at the end. And I never could quite understand how—is this thing [the tape] going?
- T. Wright: Yeah. Don't worry about it.
- E. Litterst:** Oh my goodness, and I'm just talking through my hat.
- T. Wright: That's great. [laughs] Don't worry about it. We got lots of tape.

- E. Litterst:** There was this forge and the man would stand, pumping the pedal and forcing–
- T. Wright: Oh yeah, the bellows.
- E. Litterst:** Yeah, the bellows. And there was a big tankard of oil and a big tankard of water. And that I liked because, you know, get it red hot and plunge it in–whew!
- T. Wright: Stick it in, right? See all the steam come up. Well, did that business stop then, when Grandpa–?
- E. Litterst:** Well, dad never cared very much for it.
- T. Wright: Your dad was never in that business at all?
- E. Litterst:** Well, he stayed. He was in it for a number of years, but then he got into politics. And he was interested in lawmaking of the township [Raritan Township] and getting in the [Metuchen] Building and Loan [Association] started and the bank [Metuchen National Bank] started. And he was down in the [New Jersey General] Assembly and he didn't care about file making. So after his father gave up the business, then Grandpa thought the boys would do it but Uncle George had taken up law and he had gone to Columbia [University in New York]. He didn't care about it.
- T. Wright: They were not interested either. So the business just ended?
- E. Litterst:** It just dwindled. It just folded up.
- T. Wright: Nobody bought it or anything?
- E. Litterst:** No, nobody bought it. And for years afterwards, we got orders from different big file–dental people. White, do you remember White?
- T. Wright: Oh yeah, S. S. White<sup>7</sup>.
- E. Litterst:** They supplied him with almost all of his files.
- L. Litterst:** I don't know where it is. [still looking for pictures]
- T. Wright: Yeah, that was a big dental–well, don't worry about that now [unclear].
- L. Litterst:** I'll have that out the next time you come.
- T. Wright: Sure. So that was the end of the file business.
- E. Litterst:** That was the end of it.
- T. Wright: That's a shame. She said, "It would be a museum today." It could have been a little museum, right.

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<sup>7</sup> Samuel Stockton White founded a tooth factory in 1844 that would later become the largest dental manufacturing company in the world.

- E. Litterst:** That's what this man said. He finally—he wrote it up and took pictures of the tiny little files to these big rasps.
- T. Wright: The great big one, yeah.
- E. Litterst:** Yeah. And then he went to Trenton; they have a museum down there where they were interested enough to give him a display. And he had a display there, and then he went to the World's Fair in—that was the last year [in 1964].
- T. Wright: Over in New York or Chicago?
- E. Litterst:** No, no, New York. And he had a place there, and he showed the files and gave the history of how it was made. And I have one cousin up in Newport [Rhode Island] who said, "We should get in touch with [Henry] Ford because it was the same time that he was interested in [Thomas] Edison, and Edison was a friend of dad's."
- T. Wright: Oh really?
- E. Litterst:** Yes.
- T. Wright: I was going to ask you. Did you girls ever remember—well, your dad probably knew—Grandpa and your father probably knew [Edison]?
- E. Litterst:** Yes. Somewhere or other we have [unclear] letters. Pop and Edison were very good friends, yes. He wasn't very outgoing, Edison.
- T. Wright: I gathered he was probably an eccentric fellow. Was that electric car, or whatever it was, running around—did you see that?
- E. Litterst:** He had an electric car, yes.
- T. Wright: I mean was there a railroad or something out there too? Was that anywhere near your farm?
- E. Litterst:** Yes, down into the copper mine [Mine Gully], there's a mine down there. As kids—high school kids—we used to go down in the copper mine.
- T. Wright: Whereabouts is that?
- E. Litterst:** You know where you go, going to Rahway, in under the culvert?
- T. Wright: Yeah.
- E. Litterst:** Well, if you turn the other way that takes you into this mine. And it's still there. The old tracks are in there, but they're all rusted by now. This was when I was in school; that's about sixty years ago, seventy years ago! [laughs]
- T. Wright: The track's gone?
- E. Litterst:** They were there, and the old broken-down freight cars that would go in. And we'd go snooping into the mine, then we'd be scared, wouldn't go very far.



- T. Wright: Which road was this on?
- E. Litterst: Mine Gully Road, it's still there. It runs off--and I can't give you directions--Lou knows all the directions better than I do. It goes up on the Oak Tree Road, you know, it comes up there.**
- T. Wright: Oh yeah. I know where Oak Tree is. So it was up in that section? There was--actually they had copper up there?
- E. Litterst: That's where the mine [was]. I think it must still be there. I don't know whether it's gone or not.**
- T. Wright: They probably built something on top of it.
- E. Litterst: They had no copper to get enough for the filaments in the electricity.**
- T. Wright: So they used that as a source of copper for Edison.
- E. Litterst: Yes. And Alfred always said, "That should be connected with Edison's displays because that's history-making."**
- T. Wright: Now it's a lost art now probably. They're all done industrially, right?
- E. Litterst: Yes, and that's what this fisher kept saying, "Oh, it's a shame to let this business go to pot and nobody ever know anything about it. Will you let me write it out?" We said, "Sure, you can write anything you want. We'll give you what information we have, especially my candy finding in the--"**
- T. Wright: [laughs] That's the part you remember the best, right?
- E. Litterst: I was only about seven years old, you see. Ninety-one, I was born in [18]91. This was in [18]98 that they closed.**
- T. Wright: Is that when it stopped? A long time ago.
- E. Litterst: Yes, yeah. We have the files still the way they were packaged, wrapped up and tied.**
- T. Wright: Better hang on to those, yeah.
- E. Litterst: Little packages. We sold a lot of them at our auction.**
- T. Wright: They'd be collector's items, yeah.
- E. Litterst: We have some now that are corn files. They're the most wonderful things if you have a callous around. Oh, these things take care of it in no time flat.**
- T. Wright: Oh really? I've never heard of those. They must be very fine.
- E. Litterst: No, they weren't so fine.**

- T. Wright: Were they courser?
- E. Litterst: Yeah. Well, they were course on the top and the finer on the—and then on the side, they would sort of file too.**
- T. Wright: You mentioned Franklin School. That was the original Franklin School [built in 1872]—was that a wooden building?
- E. Litterst: Wooden building and never burned. That’s amazing.**
- T. Wright: You said they had a wooden fire escape. [laughs]
- E. Litterst: Wooden fires escape, yes. We used to have our picnic lunches on it.**
- T. Wright: Doesn’t sound like a very safe arrangement, right? Fortunately, you never had a fire. [laughs]
- E. Litterst: Fortunately.**
- T. Wright: And that building, you say, was dismantled and made into housing?
- E. Litterst: Yeah. Torn, separated, and moved [to New Street].**
- T. Wright: Then they built, what, the original building of the present Franklin School [along Middlesex Avenue].
- E. Litterst: Yes, then they got this new school [in 1907].**
- T. Wright: Now in all those days, that school was everything, wasn’t it? From elementary school right through the high school as far as it went.
- E. Litterst: Oh yes, yes, kindergarten through the—well, I couldn’t have made it last year. The last grade is twelfth grade.**
- T. Wright: That was the first year that it started.
- E. Litterst: Yeah. I graduated from the eleventh year—my class—and then presumably we would move either to New Brunswick or to Perth Amboy to finish that—**
- T. Wright: To take your last year.
- E. Litterst: And the township would send us. And of course, when they had the—then that year they put the—**
- T. Wright: You lost out. You would have lost out.
- E. Litterst: Yeah, and I really—I felt so badly about Pop, “Well, that’s all right. If you want to go to the school that Lou went to, why I’ll pay that tuition.” So I went. Five of us went out of our class, went down to Perth Amboy together. We had a lot of fun.**
- T. Wright: You’d ride down and catch the little trolley in Metuchen and then go catch the other trolley, and you would wait for you to get to school on time.

- E. Litterst:** That's right. Oh, was it cold and the awful smell on that trolley car!
- T. Wright: Did they have any heat?
- E. Litterst:** Well, they had a stove, a potbellied stove. And the foreigners would be chewing gum, you know.
- T. Wright: They'd spit or else they'd chew tobacco and spit on the furnace. That was a pretty good ride. What did it take—a fair amount of time?
- E. Litterst:** About three quarters of an hour.
- T. Wright: By the time you made your connection.
- E. Litterst:** By the time you made it and then walked to the school. It wasn't very far. But we had a principal, and my German class started exactly at nine o'clock. And the principal was our German professor—he was German—and he was so strict. And of course, the trolley would be late sometimes. Well, he wouldn't allow that as an excuse.
- T. Wright: That wasn't an excuse, right? [laughs]
- E. Litterst:** No! When the school started was nine o'clock, you were supposed to be in there. And I can see myself yet going into class and it was in progress, and I'd hardly sit down and he'd say, "Miss Litterst, continue." I wouldn't know where they were.
- T. Wright: [laughs] He knew you didn't know where you were.
- E. Litterst:** This one would tell me, and this one would, and they'd whisper and whisper and whisper. "No whispering," my [unclear] would say. I could have kicked him.
- T. Wright: He didn't give you any preference for being German, right? Maybe that made him the other direction, right?
- E. Litterst:** Oh no! Stricter.
- T. Wright: Yeah. A little more tough, right?
- E. Litterst:** He was a wonderful teacher though. I learned more in that one year of German than having had it at home. You see my grandfather spoke German to us, wouldn't even speak English to us. He wanted us to speak German, but he never corrected us. He thought it was cute when we made a mistake.
- T. Wright: Really? Oh, when you made a mistake?
- E. Litterst:** Yes. He thought it was kind of cute, which is too bad because I still speak broken German.
- T. Wright: You remember your mistakes from childhood, right? [laughs] Well, school in Metuchen, how many children do you think were there with all those grades? Still wasn't very big, was it?

- E. Litterst:** Oh mercy, I don't know. Our class only had twelve in it.
- T. Wright: Your graduating class?
- E. Litterst:** Graduating class. And Lou, when she graduated two years before, there were ten.
- T. Wright: Golly.
- E. Litterst:** Ten girls, no boys in her class
- T. Wright: No boys at all?
- E. Litterst:** No. No boys, ten girls. And we had twelve in ours.
- T. Wright: So really, the school was pretty small, wasn't it?
- E. Litterst:** Yes, they were small, yeah.
- T. Wright: So you'd be talking not much more over 100-125, maybe.
- E. Litterst:** I wouldn't know. I suppose the lower grades were fuller, yes.
- T. Wright: This may happen because a lot of them, you didn't have to finish school in those days, right? Some of the boys would go to work, wouldn't they?
- E. Litterst:** I guess so.
- T. Wright: They didn't go to the higher grades. So I think you told me sometimes you could sleigh ride down to school in the winter, right?
- E. Litterst:** We always had a big sleigh ride for evening outing from the school.
- T. Wright: Did they?
- E. Litterst:** Oh yes. [background noise] I think we're going to whet our whistle– [recording paused]
- T. Wright: We're off. This is okay.
- E. Litterst:** Is that better?
- T. Wright: Well, why don't we touch on your father's career. I understand he was the second mayor of Metuchen (1902 to 1904) and the first Republican mayor. What was his political career before that?
- L. Litterst:** Now let's see. He was down in Trenton in the [New Jersey General] Assembly.
- T. Wright: The Assembly.
- L. Litterst:** The Assembly.

- T. Wright: How about freeholding? You said he was a freeholder before that?
- L. Litterst: Oh, he was a freeholder too.**
- E. Litterst: What are some of the offices that people run for? He was in most of them. I don't know what they are. Is that thing [the tape] on? Is that on? And we're talking so silly?**
- T. Wright: Oh yeah. That's okay. [laughter] It's real. Well, he got interested in politics at an early age.
- E. Litterst: He got interested when he was in New York City, and then he discovered how crooked the Tweed Ring was.**
- T. Wright: "Boss" Tweed [William Magear Tweed]?
- E. Litterst: "Boss" Tweed<sup>8</sup>. And he was so upset about that, that he thought if he could ever get into politics, he'd like to straighten him out. [laughter] So when he got out here and there was a chance for him to get into small offices, he began. And eleven years later, Uncle George got up in the voting age, and he and Pop—he used to boost Pop along, you know, "Alex, why don't you do this, or that, or the other?" I don't know if Uncle George ever had an office. He was on the Tree Commission, I know.**
- L. Litterst: No, I don't think he was.**
- E. Litterst: But I don't think he ever got into politics at all.**
- T. Wright: Who was the one—didn't you have one [a relative] that was sheriff or something there?
- E. Litterst: That's a cousin.**
- T. Wright: A cousin, down in New Brunswick?
- L. Litterst: Over in New Brunswick, yes. Cousin George.**
- E. Litterst: He was George Litterst too.**
- T. Wright: And they were opposite parties, right?
- L. Litterst: They were, yeah. One was a Democrat.**
- T. Wright: Your father was a Republican
- L. Litterst: He [George Litterst] was a Democrat—and they both won, at the same time.**
- T. Wright: That was the newspaper you showed me, that 1896, yeah?

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<sup>8</sup> Tweed was the "boss" of the Tammany Hall, the New York City Democratic political machine. He formed the "Tweed Ring" which openly bought votes, encouraged judicial corruption, embezzled money, and dominated New York City politics. The Tweed Ring was subsequently tried and sentenced to prison.

**L. Litterst:**        **Yes, right.**

T. Wright:        So, he [Alexander Charles Litterst] was, what, a freeholder first and then went to the Assembly?

**L. Litterst:**        **Yes, yeah.**

T. Wright:        Did you ever visit the Assembly?

**E. Litterst:**        **Oh yes, when we were little kids, Papa used to take us down there and he say, “Here’s the chair, this is the chair, this is where I sat when I was in the Assembly.” So we’d have to sit in it, Lou first and me next. [laughter]**

T. Wright:        Go by seniority then. [laughter]

**L. Litterst:**        **That’s right.**

T. Wright:        Well, how about the campaign, what, Mr. [William R.] Thornall was the first mayor, is that right? He was a Democrat?

**E. Litterst:**        **Yes, he was a Democrat.**

T. Wright:        In 1900, it would have been, I think.

**L. Litterst:**        **The Borough was formed in 1900.**

**E. Litterst:**        **And the next election, when Pop was running, he ran against Kelly–Ed Kelly [George Edward Kelly]–Evelyn Kelly [Thompson]’s father. And Pop would tell us about, “When I was walking along Main Street,” he said, “with Ed, electioneering, we’d stop in every store and stick our head in, and we’d say, ‘We’re running for mayor!’ ‘I’m the Democrat,’” Ed would say, and Pop said, “And I’m the Republican running, and we’d like to have you come out and vote for one or the other of us.” And then they’d go into the next one, all up and down the street–**

**L. Litterst:**        **Main Street [laughs]**

**E. Litterst:**        **–arm-in-arm, they’d go up and down doing that.**

T. Wright:        A little different than the campaigns today? [laughter]

**L. Litterst:**        **Oh, I should think so.**

**E. Litterst:**        **Didn’t cost as much! [laughs]**

T. Wright:        And they’re all good friends, right? Arm-in-arm down the street?

**L. Litterst:**        **They all went to the Metuchen Club, to all the dances together.**

T. Wright:        Now was that a social club?

**E. Litterst:** Oh yes. That's all it was—a social club.

**L. Litterst:** That's all it was.

T. Wright: And they held those affairs in Robins Hall?

**E. Litterst:** No, no in that clubhouse.

**L. Litterst:** The clubhouse on [483] Middlesex Avenue, which is now the Elk's—

**E. Litterst:** The Masonic

T. Wright: The Masonic Lodge [Mount Zion Lodge No. 135], right.

**L. Litterst:** The Masonic Lodge building, that's right.

**E. Litterst:** Well, there was charming little clubhouse there before it caught fire though, and burned down. And all that was left of it was the bowling alleys. And I think they rescued them ... [recording ends]

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

T. Wright: Yeah, I believe with that club, you told me your father helped design the new one after the old one burned from a fire.

**E. Litterst:** Yes, that's right.

T. Wright: When was that?

**L. Litterst:** I can't place that year. Do you know the year?

**E. Litterst:** The whole old clubhouse burned to the ground—darling little old clubhouse—except the bowling alleys. And they rescued them and I think those were the ones that they installed in the [new] clubhouse after that.

T. Wright: Now wasn't there a golf course across the street? Was that part of the [unclear]?

**E. Litterst:** Well, the golf course was all around that section. That was all golf course.

T. Wright: In front of St. Luke's [Episcopal Church]?

**E. Litterst:** Opposite St. Luke's—that whole Woodwild Park section. They bought the building though.

**L. Litterst:** Is this [tape] on?

**E. Litterst:** Is this all going on now?

T. Wright: Oh sure, you're on the air. [laughter]

**E. Litterst:** This is inappropriate then.

T. Wright: No, it's okay.

**E. Litterst:** Well, the Building and Loan bought the whole piece of property across from the—did I tell you this before about Frank Smith and his remark?

T. Wright: Tell us about it [unclear].

**E. Litterst:** Is that in there? Should I tell it?

T. Wright: No. Sure.

**E. Litterst:** Well, the Building and Loan bought that whole piece of property that they called Strong. [Thomas W.] Strong was the owner of the place out there. And the whole thing had to be settled so the Building and Loan got it at a good price, and they had visions of making a lot of money across [unclear]. And Frank Smith, the Main Street barber that every old-towner and timer in Metuchen knew, he came over to Mr. Litterst and said, "Oh, A. C., I don't think you should develop that place." He said, "That's a beautiful place for a 'cemetery.'" He said, "It's all hills and hollows and if you break it up into building lots, it will spoil a nice 'cemetery.'"

T. Wright: [laughs] "Cemetery," huh? You had a lot of stories about him.

**L. Litterst:** Oh yes.

**E. Litterst:** Oh, everybody has them.

T. Wright: How to murder the King's English, right? Well, we mentioned St. Luke's there a bit. What are your early recollections of St. Luke's? You said, who was the rector? Father [Hibbert H. P.] Roche<sup>9</sup>? Is he the first man you remember?

**E. Litterst:** He's the first one I remember. I remember him because he had a very attractive assistant. And Uncle George thought she was pretty nice. We thought maybe something would come of it, but nothing did. What was her name, Cecelia? Wasn't she a pretty woman? As a little kid, I thought she was such a pretty person.

T. Wright: You had a story on Lou about that, when she met the Father, right? When your mother [Charlotte (Lee) Litterst] took, yeah?

**E. Litterst:** Oh Father. Oh yes.

T. Wright: Why don't you tell us that one again?

**L. Litterst:** You don't want to hear that, do you?

T. Wright: Sure, let's hear that one again.

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<sup>9</sup> Father Roche served as rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church from 1887 to 1896.



**E. Litterst:** Well, the first time I ever remember Father Roche was the first time we went to Sunday school, he was there. And Mama took us in, and he met us at the door and greeted Mama, we greeted each other. And Mama turned to Lou and she said, “Say good morning to Father Roche.” And Lou looked askance at her, and she said, “Say good morning to Father Roche, Lou.” “He’s not my Papa!” [laughter]

T. Wright: Took “Father” literally, right? [laughter]

**L. Litterst:** Father.

**E. Litterst:** That’s the first time we ever had a Father in the church. [laughs]

T. Wright: Now they’re all Fathers, right? [muffled response] You said Father [C. M.] Dunham<sup>10</sup> was about that same time.

**E. Litterst:** Father Dunham came right after that, yes. He was a charming man.

T. Wright: And then Dr. [John F.] Fenton<sup>11</sup> I guess spent the longest time at St. Luke’s.

**E. Litterst:** Well, he was our minister.

**L. Litterst:** We really hardly remember the others.

T. Wright: You probably were little girls, weren’t you, when those other men were there?

**E. Litterst:** [crosstalk] As we grew older, Father—and we had—and Dunning [phonetic]—

T. Wright: You had Dr. Fenton and Harold [Wall] Dunne<sup>12</sup>. That covers a pretty good span of years—about fifty-five years or so. What, Paul Fenton and his brother and sister, you think, were born here in Metuchen, right? When their father [John F. Fenton] was here?

**E. Litterst:** I think Paul, Arnold, and Elizabeth [Fenton] were all St. Luke’s babies. I can’t be sure of that.

**L. Litterst:** Born in the rectory.

T. Wright: Probably the same with Mr. Dunne, no?

**E. Litterst:** No, I don’t think those children were born here at all. Were they?

T. Wright: They were much younger, yeah.

**L. Litterst:** They must have been.

T. Wright: Yes, they were because when he left, none of them were twenty-five and he had been here for twenty-five years.

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<sup>10</sup> Father Dunham served as rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church from 1897 to 1899.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Fenton served as rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church from 1899 to 1930.

<sup>12</sup> Rev. Dunne served as rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church from 1930 to 1955.

- E. Litterst:** Oh really, I didn't realize that.
- L. Litterst:** Yeah, I think so.
- T. Wright: Yeah. So that would probably be two St. Luke's rectors' families in a row. So you've seen as many rectors since Mr. Dunne left as you saw before.
- E. Litterst:** That's right. More!
- T. Wright: I always remember John Molineux who told us when we first met him that he only knew two rectors like you said—Dr. Fenton and Mr. Dunne—until Mr. [William Hugh] Fryer came. “So this is only the third rector I've known in that church,” he said, “I've been here over fifty years.” [laughter] So, it was quite a change.
- E. Litterst:** And three different men—three people couldn't have been more different than those three.
- T. Wright: Well, I guess that's what keeps us going, right? You need some variety, right?
- E. Litterst:** They're almost opening the Fryer—
- L. Litterst:** Oh, the room.
- E. Litterst:** Dr. Fryer's room. They're going to open it shortly. They're getting it all fixed up very prettily. Today, it's real nice. They got the curtains up today.
- T. Wright: That's a lovely portrait. That looks very real [unclear].
- L. Litterst:** Yeah, a lovely portrait. It's going to be awfully nice.
- E. Litterst:** And Walt's so proud of himself, he just goes in there and basks [unclear].
- T. Wright: [laughs] It will be a nice addition. Well, to get back to your home, I guess we didn't discuss before, but I remember from previous conversation with you that that home was built as an exact copy of the Old Presbyterian Manse down on Main Street.
- E. Litterst:** Yes.
- T. Wright: Which now is the Catholic Sisters house, “Hallelujah House.”
- E. Litterst:** Is that what they call it? Really? Never heard of it.
- T. Wright: So that those were really twin houses, right? Copied exactly.
- E. Litterst:** Same little porch on the back.
- T. Wright: And the man who left that was the retired minister from the [First] Presbyterian Church. So he copied his manse—what had been his manse, he copied?

- E. Litterst:** **Dominic Hunt, Dominic Hunt<sup>13</sup>.**
- L. Litterst:** **That's right.**
- T. Wright: And his name was what, Reverend Hunt?
- E. Litterst:** **Reverend Hunt.**
- T. Wright: When did he build that house?
- E. Litterst:** **When was that built?**
- L. Litterst:** **Fifty-five; 1855.**
- T. Wright: So it was a little less than thirty years old.
- E. Litterst:** **That was built the same year that father—my dad died. That was the same year that Pop was born.**
- L. Litterst:** **The house was built.**
- T. Wright: Is that right?
- E. Litterst:** **Yeah, 1855.**
- T. Wright: So it was fairly new when—
- E. Litterst:** **When they bought it in [18]82.**
- L. Litterst:** **In [18]82. Yeah, [18]55 to [18]82.**
- T. Wright: Right, it wasn't thirty years old.
- E. Litterst:** **No. And one of the sons [Dr. Theodore Whitfield Hunt] was a professor in Princeton [University], and every Christmas, he would come to Metuchen to spend Christmas with Dr. [Alonzo Clark] Hunt. Did you know the Hunts?**
- T. Wright: No.
- E. Litterst:** **Where the [Metuchen] Foodtown is now, the Hunt house [at 625 Middlesex Avenue] was.**
- L. Litterst:** **That was a Hunt place.**
- T. Wright: Oh really?
- E. Litterst:** **Yes, and that was one of the sons who lived there. And he, this old professor, would come up to our house first before he'd go to see his nephew and niece.**

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<sup>13</sup> She may possibly mean Holloway W. Hunt, who was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and the original owner of 36 Middlesex Avenue when it was built in 1855.

- L. Litterst:** Every Christmas morning.
- E. Litterst:** And we would always have had a big twenty-five-guest dinner the night before and exchange of presents, and of course, tissue paper and ribbons and everything all around. And when he'd walk in, the place looked in shambles. And we were so ashamed!
- T. Wright: Embarrassed?
- L. Litterst:** Yes, we were. We were young enough to be embarrassed in those days. [laughs]
- E. Litterst:** Oh yes, because as soon as he got in, he'd begin looking around and he said, "May I go in here?" And he'd get into the dining room and he said, "Oh yes, that old fireplace. Many a breakfast I've had in front of that fireplace." But he said, "We used to eat most of our meals in that big kitchen. May I go in the big kitchen?" he said. [laughter] Then he'd come out the other way, "And here's the pantry. Here's where we'd have our cookies and we'd swipe them in here," he said. Then by golly, he'd always want to go upstairs too. The beds weren't made and, oh boy, were we ever embarrassed! [laughs] Didn't bother him any.
- T. Wright: Would he come back every year just to reminisce?
- L. Litterst:** Every year. It was regular.
- E. Litterst:** Every year. And then he would write us a nice poem about our gracious hospitality in his old, old home and all this business. He was very charming, a little old man.
- T. Wright: Sounds like an interesting guest.
- E. Litterst:** He wasn't as old as we are now.
- L. Litterst:** No. [laughter]
- E. Litterst:** But we thought he was awful old. [laughter]
- T. Wright: Sounds like he became an institution on Christmas Day at this house. Only came on Christmas?
- E. Litterst:** Yeah, right, every Christmas. Well, I imagine he came to see the Hunts more often.
- T. Wright: But that was the only time he visited your house?
- E. Litterst:** But he only made us an annual visit, yes.
- L. Litterst:** It was an annual visit to the old homestead.
- E. Litterst:** And the same stories he gave—one brother choked to death on a prune pit. "Are those trees still out there, those prune trees?"
- T. Wright: Choked on a prune pit?

- E. Litterst:** On a prune pit. “Now this was my bedroom,” he said. “There were four beds in here, a place for four people—two big double beds. And this was the girls’ room, and my mother and father had this room.” We knew all the history.
- T. Wright: You got a repetition every year [affirmation; laughter], so you learned it by heart. It’s not hard to forget when you get a repeat every Christmas Day, right?
- L. Litterst:** He was a dear little old man.
- T. Wright: Well, you ladies became famous in the later years in that house as the Ramble Inn?
- E. Litterst:** Very famous!
- T. Wright: When did it become the Ramble Inn? When did you name it the Ramble Inn? When you went into the business?
- L. Litterst:** Nineteen-hundred-twenty-one.
- E. Litterst:** We didn’t want them to scramble out; we wanted them to ramble in! [laughs]
- T. Wright: Was this after you had been to Bermuda? You got back—was that 1921?
- L. Litterst:** Yes, we got the idea down in Bermuda. They had a darling tea room down there; they were only open from three to five in the afternoon just serving English tea, you know. And well, we came home and of course we were full of it—we wanted to open. Dad said no, but we insisted and we opened the tea room. We ran it just from one o’clock to five. That’s all we were open.
- E. Litterst:** One year. We were only going to have it the one year just to see how much fun it would be!
- L. Litterst:** We were just going to do it, see if we could do it.
- T. Wright: This just during the week, or did you do Saturday?
- L. Litterst:** Yes, just during the week.
- T. Wright: Monday through Friday?
- L. Litterst:** Because Bishop [James Edward] Freeman of Washington, DC [District of Columbia] used to go over that Lincoln Highway. It was the only highway in those days. We didn’t have Route 1 or the turnpike [New Jersey Turnpike] or any—
- E. Litterst:** The Garden State [Parkway] and all—and he went by and read our sign “Open Weekday Afternoons.” Bishop Freeman, he said, “This is a place I want to eat.” He said, “They revere the Sundays. They don’t serve on Sundays.”
- T. Wright: So he came in, right?
- E. Litterst:** And he came in. And every time he went by, he came in.

- T. Wright: So he became a regular?
- L. Litterst: Yes, son. Oh boy! [laughs]**
- E. Litterst: And he used to make his family so mad because he'd make them wait. No matter what time they were going through Metuchen, they would have to wait till—**
- T. Wright: He waited for tea? Teatime!
- L. Litterst: Yes, they have to “ramble in” to eat.**
- E. Litterst: They have to eat. And they would want to eat lunch around twelve o'clock, not in the afternoon.**
- T. Wright: Not after one, right? You became famous in the early days then, right?
- E. Litterst: He had a daughter Elsie [D. Freeman] too. He was very well known in Washington.**
- T. Wright: Now you said that was just for fun, what, in the twenties—this 1921? How many years did you stay?
- L. Litterst: Three years, three years.**
- E. Litterst: Well, we had it the one year.**
- L. Litterst: Then it got so big, we said, “Oh!”**
- T. Wright: You dropped it?
- L. Litterst: Society girls running a tea room just for afternoon tea. [laughter]**
- T. Wright: Just for something to do, right.
- L. Litterst: Just for something to do.**
- E. Litterst: You know, that first year—and this was a story that Pop always interfered with my telling—that first year we made enough money to take a trip down through the Calmaris [phonetic]—that was the name of the motorboat—through the Caribbean. And what was it, a four-week, a three-week tour?**
- L. Litterst: We went to Cuba.**
- T. Wright: Really, a cruise?
- L. Litterst: Three weeks, yeah. Well, we took three weeks, I don't know.**
- E. Litterst: And we ended up in Panama and oh, that was delightful!**
- L. Litterst: We had the time of our lives.**

- T. Wright: That was the profits from one year's operation?
- E. Litterst: The profits from one year. Pop said—the way they got the profits though—he would interfere with this story—he said, “I had a garden, and they reaped all my garden produce in their lettuce and tomato and cucumbers and pickles and all this business. And all the rest of the stuff bought in the groceries, I paid the bills! So their profits were what they took in. That was all profit!”**
- T. Wright: Did he go on the trip with you?
- L. Litterst: No.**
- T. Wright: You didn't even take him? Using all his garden products?
- E. Litterst: No. We used his money, but we didn't take him along! [laughter]**
- L. Litterst: This friend that was also a friend of [J. Lloyd] Grimstead, she went with us. The three of us went down.**
- E. Litterst: Mollie Campbell. She wasn't such a friend of Grimstead as she was of Pearl [Grimstead, sister].**
- L. Litterst: Well I know, but he knows [J. Lloyd] Grimstead. He doesn't know Pearl.**
- T. Wright: So then, what in [19]23, that was the end of it? You dropped it?
- L. Litterst: Yeah, that was the end of that.**
- E. Litterst: It had grown so big we couldn't keep it the way we wanted it—informal and—**
- L. Litterst: No, they wanted lunch. They didn't want to come in for a cup of tea.**
- T. Wright: You just still stuck with the tea in those days then?
- L. Litterst: Oh yes, that is all we served until the Blue-Plate [Special].**
- T. Wright: Well, then you had another chapter after the Depression came, right? That wasn't operating for fun, then?
- L. Litterst: No, that was for real.**
- E. Litterst: We did break down to this much of a change of our plans. When these people would come in, you know, say—**
- L. Litterst: From Philadelphia, they'd come in and then they would want something to eat with their chauffeurs and everything else. It was high hat in the twenties—you know, [19]20, [19]21.**
- T. Wright: It was a long, long drive too. It wasn't an easy trip.
- E. Litterst: So this would go on for long enough; “Don't you have something you could make a hearty sandwich of?” or something like that. So we finally said, “Well, let's**

plan a nice dinner for ourselves and anybody who wants something hearty, we'll serve dinner."

T. Wright: That'll be the meal of the day, huh?

E. Litterst: And that will be the meal, and we'd call it the "Blue-Plate Special."

L. Litterst: That was ours.

E. Litterst: Which we did. And at the same time that we opened, the Metuchen Inn opened [at 424 Middlesex Avenue], which is still the Metuchen Inn, but it isn't open like that.

T. Wright: A little different.

L. Litterst: A little different.

E. Litterst: And Mr.—what's his name?—Holstein, Mr. [Harry] Holstein used to get so annoyed of people coming in telling him that they'd been up at Ramble Inn, and he couldn't see why they couldn't come to him. And so he wanted to come up to see what we did that was different from his. So he came up one day and he said, "Are you serving?" We said, "Yes, we have afternoon refreshments." "Oh, don't you serve anything else?" Well, we said, "If anybody insists on running a real substantial meal, we'll serve our Blue-Plate Special." "Well, what is that?" We said, "It changes every day."

L. Litterst: "That's what I would like to have."

E. Litterst: He said, "Well, I can have that." So he did. And he was very polite and very complimentary. And the next thing we knew, Aunt Molly [Mary E. Litterst] and Uncle George, who lived right next to the—they built a little house—the [Metuchen] Inn was their home, then they built—when they sold that, they built this little house and lived in the next one on Linden Avenue there—and they would go in there [the Metuchen Inn] for dinner almost every night. And they came up to us that Sunday and they said—

L. Litterst: In those days, dinners were fifty and seventy-five cents.

E. Litterst: Eighty-five cents was high for a dinner! And they came up this Sunday and they said, "Well, Mr. Holstein, he said he'd been up here and he had a nice dinner." We said, "Yes, he came up, had a lunch." And they said, "Well he's taken the idea from you. He's serving a Blue-Plate dinner down there." We said, "He is? What color plates is he having?" And Aunt Molly says, "On a green service!" [laughter]

T. Wright: You had real blue plates? You had blue china you bought, didn't you?

L. Litterst: Yeah, we had blue Canton china.

T. Wright: Right. Yours really was a "Blue-Plate Special."

E. Litterst: Yes, might as well. So he thought us was selling it!



- T. Wright: So the Blue-Plate Special at the Metuchen Inn was on green china. So that developed, what, how many years you said you were in that? My goodness.
- L. Litterst: It was three years.**
- T. Wright: Yeah, well I mean when you got into the real business after—you had to go in because of financial problems with the Depression.
- E. Litterst: After the banks closed. Everything closed down.**
- L. Litterst: The bank closed. [laughs]**
- T. Wright: Well, your father was in, what, Building and Loan and the banks? And everything was in pretty sad straits at that time, right?
- L. Litterst: We lost everything.**
- T. Wright: Except the house?
- L. Litterst: Fortunately, he had put the house in our name. That's all that saved it.**
- E. Litterst: In the twenties, he did that.**
- L. Litterst: Thirty-three?**
- E. Litterst: He put the house in our name in the twenties.**
- T. Wright: Good thing he did that.
- L. Litterst: That's another story.**
- E. Litterst: Yes, a friend of ours had a—I don't know if he wants to have that on [the tape].**
- L. Litterst: You don't want that on there**
- T. Wright: Sure.
- E. Litterst: Can you cut it out if you don't want it in?**
- T. Wright: Don't worry about.
- E. Litterst: Well anyway, how we got the house turned over to us—**
- T. Wright: That's important!
- E. Litterst: Yes. We were visiting some friends in Brooklyn [New York] and they were very upset because their friend's father had just remarried. She was his second wife and Eda [phonetic] was up in the thirties when her father married this very nice lady. Eda [phonetic] and she were very good friends and they made a very nice family group and always enjoyed the opera seats and all the business together—the three of them. And Mr. Arbuckle up and died leaving a lot of money—the**

Arbuckle coffee people, you know. And in the will, he left it all to his second wife and didn't leave anything to Eda [phonetic], the daughter who had been a very devoted daughter to her mother and father. And these Brooklyn friends of ours were terribly upset.

**L. Litterst:** Furious, if you can imagine!

**E. Litterst:** So when we came home and we told this to Pop, and he said, "He's a damn fool! How could he have done such a thing to his daughter?" Well, we said, "He didn't think. He thought Eda [phonetic] would marry and have a lot of money." I don't know how he did it. Well, he [father] said, "I can't imagine a father doing a thing like that!" So the next morning, he went down to the bank.

T. Wright: Make a will?

**E. Litterst:** And went upstairs—Uncle George had his office, the lawyer office upstairs [of the Metuchen National Bank Building at 404 Main Street].

**L. Litterst:** It was the lawyer's office.

**E. Litterst:** He said, "George, I want you to draw up a—" What do you call it?

T. Wright: Will?

**E. Litterst:** It wasn't a will. He was turning the property over, transferring, "transfer of the property to Lou and Elsie." And he [George Litterst] said, "What, today? It's Saturday. You want me to do it?" "Now!" Pop said, "I don't want to wait another minute. I want it done right away." "What's the rush?"

T. Wright: Well, bless his heart.

**E. Litterst:** And then Pop told him the story, he said, "I don't want that thing to happen to me. I might go out of my head," he said, "and not let the girls have anything."

T. Wright: It was very fortunate.

**L. Litterst:** Wasn't that lucky?

T. Wright: Yeah, because look how your lives would have changed if that hadn't happened. And you had, what, thirty-five years with that tea room? Almost, what from [19]33 to—

**E. Litterst:** Thirty-three to [19]65.

T. Wright: Sixty-five; thirty-two years, yeah.

**L. Litterst:** Well Pop died in [19]53.

**E. Litterst:** But we kept the tea room

T. Wright: You kept the tea room.

**L. Litterst:** Oh yes.

T. Wright: I remember eating there. We first came to Metuchen, well, late in [19]53; I remember eating there about [19]54-[19]55. Didn't know you then, but my wife Nancy [Wright] may have known. [laughs] Yeah, I can remember being at the Ramble Inn. You were quite an institution.

**E. Litterst: Well, we loved it. Of course, it was our home and we tried to have it like guests. We didn't like to have a business arrangement. When people came in, they were our houseguests, you know.**

T. Wright: I think that really was the atmosphere.

**L. Litterst: Oh, surely. For sure.**

T. Wright: You never thought of it as a commercial place really.

**L. Litterst: We really closed in the right time because we would have had to have liquor.**

T. Wright: Yes, the competition would have driven you out, right.

**L. Litterst: Well, the competition was too great in [19]65. So it really was very fortunate that this man came in and said, "I want to buy your place," just out of the blue.**

T. Wright: Well you had quite an experience when, what, you had an auction, didn't you?

**E. Litterst: Oh yes, we had to have an auction. We had to get rid of the whole thing.**

T. Wright: The barn was full of things, the house was full, everything was full.

**E. Litterst: Everything was full. The attic was full, the cellar, and finally–**

**L. Litterst: The apartment is still too full. [laughs]**

T. Wright: You have some lovely things here. I can take care of these.

**E. Litterst: Open any of our closets and it's like–**

T. Wright: Fibber McGee<sup>14</sup>?

**E. Litterst: Fibber McGee! Everything falls out! [laughter] Well, when the auctioneer was there and we had shown him the shop and the garage, and he'd been up in the attic and we had a beautiful old antique wardrobe–what do they call them?–they have a fancy name for them. And he said, "Why do you got this up here?" "Well, we can't get it in the ceilings of the rooms downstairs!"**

T. Wright: Too tall.

**L. Litterst: Where the heck would we put it downstairs!**

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<sup>14</sup> From the radio show *Fibber McGee and Molly* from 1940 to 1959. In several episodes, the door to an overstuffed closet would be opened and the contents would spill out.

- E. Litterst:** So then he thought he had seen everything. And he said, “Well, I’d like to see what—have you anything in the cellar for sale?” And we said, “No. Well, we have files down there,” we said, “because Tex [phonetic] had thought that it wasn’t safe to leave them down in the shop, the ones that were nicely wrapped.” So we had made shelves in the cellar and had brought them and put them there. “We have files.” “Oh,” he said, “well of course, you want to sell those handmade files.” So we said, “Okay come on, we’ll show you.” And when we got down there, here was a whole row of wine barrels, about six or eight of them.
- T. Wright:** Oh really?
- E. Litterst:** And he said, “What are those?” We said, “Wine barrels.” He said, “Any wine in them?” We said, “No. Vinegar is in them.” “Vinegar!” he said, “then they are still sound?” Well, we said, “Sound as we know anything about it.” So he said, “Well, that’s a fine and you weren’t even going to tell me about it,” the auctioneer said. [laughs] So he found these old wine barrels, he said, “Oh my! They’ll be popular, but they haven’t been advertised. That’s a shame; they should have been in the advertisement.” They sold.
- T. Wright:** You sold an awful lot of things then.
- L. Litterst:** Oh boy, we sure.
- E. Litterst:** He said he’d take a day, take a day, and by the end of the afternoon he came back—
- L. Litterst:** By four o’clock, why we weren’t nearly sold out.
- E. Litterst:** He said, “I’ll have to come back [unclear] another day.”
- L. Litterst:** “I’ll have to come back tomorrow, which was too bad because it hadn’t been advertised or anything.” So we didn’t get what we should have out of [unclear].
- E. Litterst:** You know all of our curtains, drapes, fixtures in the whole house, he sold them all for nineteen dollars.
- L. Litterst:** In the whole house, he sold them in one lump.
- T. Wright:** Really, oh dear.
- E. Litterst:** Some of them didn’t amount to much but some of them, the older drapes were very, very nice.
- T. Wright:** You saved several lovely pieces here in your apartment. So you’re fortunate in that.
- E. Litterst:** Yeah, we saved. We picked out the things that would be the most comfortable in the apartment.
- L. Litterst:** We took the apartment in May and we didn’t come in until August because we thought we would move gradually, you know, bring the things down.

- E. Litterst:** We had all the rugs cleaned and sent to Ramble Inn—or to Redfield [Village Apartments]—and the furniture done over and returned here so it didn't go back to the house after once it looked like somebody's old barn that we were living in for about a month. [laughs] Well I guess that's about all we have to tell.
- T. Wright: That must be a strange feeling to just see an empty place. Well, there's a bank building there, the drive-in bank [present-day Wells Fargo bank]. Wasn't that where your home—is that exactly where your house was?
- L. Litterst:** That was where the parlor or the sitting room was.
- E. Litterst:** That where the kitchen was. The drive-in bank was the kitchen.
- L. Litterst:** The bank is where the kitchen was, yeah.
- T. Wright: I would think that would be rather a sad thing to see.
- L. Litterst:** We never let it affect us at all. We didn't allow it.
- T. Wright: I think you were wise. You moved out, you're here, you're settled.
- L. Litterst:** Yeah, we got out before it happened though.
- E. Litterst:** It hurt though.
- T. Wright: Oh sure.
- L. Litterst:** We drove by there the minute that bulldozer came.
- T. Wright: Oh, I wouldn't want to see that. I don't think I could stand that.
- L. Litterst:** Oh, it was terrible.
- E. Litterst:** And then when they came and leveled the whole hill off.
- L. Litterst:** We didn't know it was going to happen, but it just happened as we were driving by.
- T. Wright: As you came.
- E. Litterst:** Then when they took the whole hill off, you know
- L. Litterst:** All those beautiful trees, a hundred years old, 150 years old.
- E. Litterst:** A shame. It's a shame.
- T. Wright: That's a shame, isn't it? Just to make it open so you have a driveway and a parking lot. That's a shame.
- E. Litterst:** The only thing that's there right now—because the barn was made into a nursing home [Middlesex Nursing Home at 34 Middlesex Avenue] and the nursing home

**was absolutely demolished just a couple of years ago. The only thing that's left up there of the Littersts is the old well. And that's still standing there.**

T. Wright: Where is that?

**E. Litterst: That was the most marvelous well water.**

T. Wright: Is that next to—I see that in the picture there. Where is that with relation to the bank—the well?

**L. Litterst: Right alongside of it almost.**

T. Wright: I was going to say, it's fairly close.

**E. Litterst: Just beyond the front of where the nursing—it was still on the nursing home property. So they had to take and close it all off, and they put a big cement thing there because it wasn't safe with the old people. They might have drowned in the well.**

T. Wright: Would your property have gone on down where the diner is now?

**E. Litterst: Yeah, yeah.**

T. Wright: So that is there and of course the hospital, JFK Hospital [John F. Kennedy Medical Center at 65 James Street], now would have been part of your property also?

**E. Litterst: That was in our woodland, right in the middle of our twenty acres of woodland.**

**L. Litterst: That's the part that we lost in the Depression.**

T. Wright: Good heavens, that's what was lost in the Depression, right?

**L. Litterst: For the taxes. Elsie and I couldn't swing that too.**

T. Wright: Just for the tax money? Is that right? It was just the price of the taxes? Just the price of the taxes that you lost that on really, wasn't it?

**L. Litterst: They got it for taxes so they could easily give it to the—**

T. Wright: Think what that's worth today.

**L. Litterst: They value it now for \$500,000, just the property.**

T. Wright: Just the land that the hospital is on.

**E. Litterst: That's the hospital, not all the rest of it, you see. Ninety-seven acres we had, and they have twenty of it, I think.**

**L. Litterst: Something like that.**

**E. Litterst: No, fifty—oh, I don't know.**

- T. Wright: Didn't you say that James Street used to be Alexander Avenue?
- E. Litterst: Alexander Avenue when we laid it out.**
- T. Wright: Now is that Grandpa or Pa—which Alexander?
- E. Litterst: Well they were both Alexander. Both. The honor could go to the one who wanted it. [laughs]**
- T. Wright: The one that had seniority then, right? And what you said the new mayor or somebody out there changed it. It didn't mean anything to them?
- E. Litterst: Yes, Jimmy Forgione.**
- L. Litterst: James Forgione. He [unclear] mean anything.**
- T. Wright: So does that James add his name? He's the James.
- L. Litterst: The property only went through to a certain place and then the Forgione property was beyond that. And when he became mayor, they cut this road through.**
- T. Wright: Oh, they made the street? So when it became a complete street, Alexander became James.
- L. Litterst: Alexander changed it to the James.**
- E. Litterst: Alexander [Avenue] went to the end of our property and James Street, you see, connected Grove Avenue with Alexander and then they eliminated Alexander and continued James Street out to Middlesex Avenue again. Is this [the tape] running all the time? [laughs]**
- T. Wright: Yeah, we're on the home stretch now, right. No, I did seriously want to thank you very much. You've been most helpful to me. This is my first experience and I have certainly enjoyed it, both chatting with you and seeing the pictures and seeing the items. And I hope you have.
- E. Litterst: Well, it is fun going back over all the things that we've almost forgotten ourselves.**
- L. Litterst: It's funny how one little thing brings forth another.**
- T. Wright: That's right. And it's the beauty of a tape recorder really.
- E. Litterst: Well, we haven't gotten into too many personal things.**
- L. Litterst: Well, some time I'd like to hear that tape recorder.**
- T. Wright: Well, you may hear a little bit tonight. [laughs]
- L. Litterst: Yeah, okay.**

T. Wright: But I think particularly that you got your father to write down [unclear] and realizing now it will be saved. I think this should be a thrill to you or a comfort to you, really.

**E. Litterst: You mean the transfer of the property?**

T. Wright: Well yeah. Well, where he wrote the first article about—remember you got him to write in his later years about Metuchen and his recollections.

**E. Litterst: Oh yeah.**

T. Wright: Because that is tremendous. So thank you very much again.

**L. Litterst: [crosstalk] Well, we've enjoyed it.**

**E. Litterst: Yeah.**

T. Wright: It was my pleasure, so very good.

**E. Litterst: [crosstalk] Reminiscing.**

**L. Litterst: Chat [unclear] talk about the past.**

**E. Litterst: Now let's hear some of it.**

[END OF INTERVIEW]