

JAY WORTHINGTON & BLANCHE THORNALL

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Details of many long established Metuchen families: Thornall, Edgar, Freeman Campbell. Tales of Metuchen during Depression years. Establishment of one of first real estate offices in Metuchen by Fred Bates (Blanche's father)

Blanche's father, Fred Bates, established one of the first real estate offices in Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: Today is May 31, 1978 and we are interviewing Worthington and Blanche Thornall in their home in Clearbrook in Cranbury, New Jersey.

P. Bruno: I'd like to starting by asking you to just briefly tell us a little bit about your ancestors and when they first came to this country and where they settled.

Mr. Thornall: Well, the place where they settled is still one of the questionable things but they were somewhere in New England. I suspect they were up in Newburyport or New Dover, New Hampshire. But of course the records in those days were not too copious and it's pretty hard to find them out. But they did come down to Woodbridge because I have a patent from ___**Berkeley**___ Carteret for ninety-five acres in Woodbridge and the rent was two barleycorn per year.

R. Terwilliger: That's incredible!

Mr. Thornall: And the patent is dated in June of 1675.

R. Terwilliger: What exactly would that mean, two barleycorn per year?

Mrs. Thornall: It's like paying a dollar a year rent.

Mr. Thornall: It's a minimal amount of rent but they didn't take it in money, they took it in produce. And I'm sure it wasn't two individual barleycorns; it was probably two containers, whatever the unit of weight might have been, see? But that's the way they listed in the old patents. And it takes an awful lot of research to find out specifically what the unit was. You'd have to go back and go through the records in England because that's the way they used to charge them in the old feudal states in England. If you had so many acres from the

Lord of the manor or the Duke that had the estate, you paid it in produce. And barleycorn usually was the medium for payment.

R. Terwilliger: Your family that came over here and settled finally in Woodbridge, were they farmers?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, what they were in New England, I don't know. An uncle of Israel, who was the first one to settle in Woodbridge, gave to him his rights to lots in Woodbridge. And what they did - they'd deeded them a certain lot in town and then they would draw straws for meadowland and salt meadows, which they used to get hay for the cattle. And that's how he got the plot in Woodbridge and then he bought the ninety-five acres, which was granted to him by patent. That is, in effect, the old term for a deed. In fact if you go to the East Jersey Proprietors in Perth Amboy, which is still in existence, that's where I got the copy of the patent from. They went through their record books. The place is a little 2x4 building and it's got any number of vaults. Whether it's fireproof or not, I don't know. But the secretary of the East Jersey Proprietors lived in East Orange and I wrote to him and he gave me a photostatic copy for two bucks.

R. Terwilliger: That's great, really wonderful.

Mr. Thornall: And the first Israel was a rate collector, or in other words, they called him a rate gatherer then but he was actually the tax collector for Woodbridge.

Mrs. Thornall: Ain't that a popular man?

R. Terwilliger: Yes, I can imagine.

Mr. Thornall: Well, apparently so. He died suddenly either in September or October of 1688 and I don't think he could have been much more than about thirty-five years old. So, he probably got consumption or pneumonia or something like that and in those days they didn't have any way really of coping with those things.

R. Terwilliger: He was married and had a family at this time?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, he was married and he had seven children.

R. Terwilliger: Wow, by thirty-eight he was busy.

Mr. Thornall: And the line that I come from, his son - one of his sons - was named Israel. He died in 1722 and he had five children, one of whom was Benjamin. He was chairman of the Correspondence Committee for Woodbridge during the Revolutionary War and what happened to him – he had three children that I can document and I believe that he had two additional ones. I haven't been able to specifically tie them to him but one of his sons Israel, which is in my line, served in the Revolutionary War in the Continental Militia. And when the British and Hessians came through Metuchen, going over towards Plainfield, they picked up Benjamin, the father, and they captured Israel and they put the two of them over in the Sugar House Prison, which is over in New York City and for decades has been the spot on which the Mutual Life Insurance Company building existed.

Mrs. Thornall: That's on Wall Street. I worked there.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, she worked in the building before we were married.

R. Terwilliger: And you didn't realize any of this at the time? Well, they evidently were let go?

Mr. Thornall: Well, Benjamin died there and where he's buried I don't have any idea.

R. Terwilliger: Isn't that something!

Mr. Thornall: But his wife, Hannah, is buried in the Old Revolutionary Cemetery in Metuchen. There is a stone there that lists her as the wife of Benjamin Thornall, but what happened to his remains I have no idea. There were two notorious prisons and one prison ship in New York City that they put all the Revolutionary War prisoners in and the Sugar House was reported to be one of the worst. The worst one was the prison ship that was anchored off the Battery

Mrs. Thornall: How awful.

Mr. Thornall: And these guys had very small windows in the building, most of them had very few clothes – they didn't issue

them any clothes – and the food that they gave him would kill an animal, frankly.

R. Terwilliger: That's probably how he died.

Mr. Thornall: And many of the prisoners died there.

Mrs. Thornall: **I guess he was along in life. It was the father that died, wasn't it?**

Mr. Thornall: He would have been in all probability upwards in his sixties. His son was born in 1745 so that would make him somewhere around thirty-three years old at the time when he was captured. The other two children that I have not specifically been able to put here – and there is no block here but I have a file on them - one of them was a gal by the name of Hannah, which is the name of Benjamin's wife. And she is referred to in the New Jersey Historical Proceedings – I can't tell you at the moment the volume but I have it in the records - as Hannah Thornall and she married a Major Demun, D-e-m-u-n. He was a French Huguenot that lived up near Bernardsville and he was killed in the Battle of Perth Amboy after they got married. And she married the second time a chap by the name of Henerié, its' H-e-n-e-r-i-é with an accent, it's a Huguenot name.

R. Terwilliger: Oh sure, I've seen that.

Mrs. Thornall: It gets corrupted and many of the records show it as H-e-n-r-y, Henry. But the original record was spelled e-r-i-é with an accent. And the Revolutionary War Commission in Washington granted her a pension on the basis of Demun's death. But she lived up near New Providence. Now the will of Major Demun had as witnesses Benjamin Thornall, which would be the father of Israel, and a Bloomfield and I believe it was a Martin. Normally a witness to a will and the executors in those days were members of the immediate family of the deceased. And there is no other way that I can account for a Hannah Thornall up there, no other way that I could account for Benjamin's name being a witness, other than the fact that he was her father. And of course the British were always raiding the Metuchen Bonhamtown area. They ran off with all of Benjamin's cattle when they raided the place and caught him. So what probably

happened was – she would have been about twenty years old - and he probably in effect sent her inland to get her away from the area of hostilities so she wouldn't get molested by the troops and wouldn't stand a chance of getting killed. Another reason why I'm quite satisfied that that's what happened is there was a William Thornall who lived up in that area and was a farmer and died. And Henerié, her second husband, was the administrator of William's estate up there. So I am quite satisfied that she was his daughter and she was named after his wife who's name was Hannah also.

Israel, they released him and sent him back home and he farmed the old Thornall farm in Menlo Park.

R. Terwilliger: The one we were looking at the picture of before.

Mr. Thornall: And he married in 1769, he married Rachel Manning of the Manning family. In those days that area was part of Woodbridge. Now he had, let's see he had ten children. And the one in my line was Manning Thornall, named after his mother's maiden name. He was born in 1793 and he died in 1868. In 1816 he married Deliverance Freeman.

R. Terwilliger: Oh this is where the Freeman family comes in.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes.

Mr. Thornall: She was the daughter of Thomas Freeman and Sally Edgar.

R. Terwilliger: The Edgar family.

Mr. Thornall: And Sally Edgar belongs to the Edgar family that you've probably got in Metuchen's history and Thomas Freeman is one of the off-springs and in the line of Judge Henry Freeman who was the first judge in Middlesex County. He lived in Woodbridge and was one of the original emigrants from England to Woodbridge.

R. Terwilliger: Oh that's interesting, that's amazing.

Mr. Thornall: Deliverance Freeman – and that's why the Israel Thornall in later generations who lived at the farm and had two daughters and a son, Georgie Freeman, Dilly Freeman

and Manning Freeman. They were my aunts and uncle. Dilly Freeman is short for Deliverance. Actually she was named Deliverance but she didn't like the name so she always referred to herself as Dilly.

Mrs. Thornall: **Their middle names were each Freeman? Dilly Freeman. Manning Freeman also? I never knew that.**

Mr. Thornall: She was the principal of the Clara Barton school. Now Manning Thornall, he ended up being a farmer but he started off going to Hatboro, Pennsylvania as an apprentice for making hats.

laughter

Mrs. Thornall: **Hatboro was a hat-making place.**

Mr. Thornall: He spent somewhere between five and seven years out there as an apprentice and apparently didn't like the location because he ended coming back and manning the farm.

Mrs. Thornall: **Be careful of that background noise, I think you must be picking it up.**

Mr. Thornall: I don't think that will be too loud. ... *counting*... Manning had eleven children.

R. Terwilliger: My gracious, these were very prolific families.

Mrs. Thornall: **They must have been good healthy ones, not that many lived through it.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes, that's the amazing thing for that time.

Mr. Thornall: One of them was William Thornall who had three wives. He was a carpenter and ended up at the time he died he had arthritis.

Mrs. Thornall: **What the heck were his wives' names?**

Mr. Thornall: Well, one wife was **Canetta** Compton of Perth Amboy, the Compton family. The second wife was Anne Elizabeth Campbell and she came from New York and the third one was Olivia Hadden from Perth Amboy Woodbridge area, the Hadden family. The Hadden family

goes back to around 1624, they used to be up in Westchester County.

R. Terwilliger: Did most of these women died in childbirth? Was that a common cause of death?

Mr. Thornall: I suspect so. This second one, Anne Elizabeth Campbell, she died of consumption.

Mrs. Thornall: That was a common cause.

Mr. Thornall: She had one daughter. The daughter was born in 1844 and she died, Anne Elizabeth Campbell, died in 1853. That would be nine years after her daughter was born. The daughter didn't live long; the daughter died in 1853 also so I suspect the two of them died apparently at the same time or very close to each other and they probably contracted pneumonia, TB or some sort of an ailment.

Mrs. Thornall: Consumption.

R. Terwilliger: What was consumption anyway?

Mrs. Thornall: TB, I think.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, a form of tuberculosis.

R. Terwilliger: Let me check this tape, I'm timing it but I want to be sure. Okay.

Mr. T He had five children, one of whom was Isabel Seaman Thornall and she was a schoolteacher in the Jamesburg Reformatory, a woman.

R. Terwilliger: Wow, what year was this now, what are we talking?

Mr. Thornall: Well, he was born in 1862. I don't have her date of death here but I have it in the files out there. So there is early evidence of a woman schoolteacher in a reformatory.

Mrs. Thornall: That's not far from us here.

Mr. Thornall: No, that's true.

R. Terwilliger: That's right.

Mr. Thornall: The son - and William only had one son - was called William Manning Thornall and he was the one that was the first mayor of Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: Ah, there we are.

Mr. Thornall: He was born in 1858 and he married Jennie Force Williams, that was my grandmother, and she was a Force.

P. Bruno: How do you spell that?

Mr. Thornall: F-o-r-c-e. The Force family used to live in Oak Tree. And she was the daughter of Jeremiah Force who was a farmer out in Oak Tree and from all that I've read he was a real queer toady.

laughter

R. Terwilliger: What kind of farming did he do, do you know? What were most of the farms there?

Mr. Thornall: Well, they raised produce for their own consumption and basically most of them had cattle.

R. Terwilliger: Cattle, I wondered about that.

Mr. Thornall: And the rest of the farmland they used for grazing purposes and then they'd end up getting milk and they'd sell the milk. Which is what my grandfather, William Manning Thornall, did. He ran a farm; he had the only farm in borough limits of Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: Now was that the one where I remember years ago we used to go buy corn? Was that the old farm?

Mr. Thornall: That's right.

R. Terwilliger: Now who was the Thornall that was there?

Mr. Thornall: That was my uncle.

Mrs. Thornall: He was William Manning Thornall's son.

R. Terwilliger: He was a bachelor, right? He was kind of an eccentric, elusive kind of person – but his corn was good!

Mrs. Thornall: **Oh, it was! Iowa State University.**

P. Bruno: Where was the farm located?

Mr. Thornall: **Well, you go out Prospect, you go out Route 27, which is really at the point where it hits prospect was called Middlesex Avenue. You go down Prospect to the end and make a right-hand turn and that puts you on High Street. And he lived at the southwest end of High Street. You go down to the end of the road and the building still stands. At the present time it's about 75 feet from Route 287 and it's a flea market location right now.**

R. Terwilliger: We'll have to go back and take some pictures of it as it is now.

Mr. Thornall: **And that's the original building.**

R. Terwilliger: Now you never lived there yourself?

Mrs. Thornall: **You don't have any pictures of it as the farm, do you?**

R. Terwilliger: I don't think so.

Mrs. Thornall: **If we come across one or two we'll give them to you, because we do have pictures - pictures of the old barn and all.**

Mr. Thornall: **I have several pictures.**

P. Bruno: Is that the first farm or house to be electrified in this area?

Mr. Thornall: **No...ah...**

Mrs. Thornall: **That's a debatable question.**

Mr. Thornall: **It's reported by a lot of people that the Episcopal manse was the first one that Edison electrified but whether that's true or not I really don't know.**

P. Bruno: Because on the Litterst sisters' tape they mention Thornall Farm as being the first home that was electrified in the area.

Mr. Thornall: Well, my grandfather at one point had a grocery store in Menlo Park where Edison used to come in and buy bread and this kind of stuff.

R. Terwilliger: Was that right at the top of the hill there?

Mr. Thornall: It would be to the left of the memorial as you face the memorial, up on that little high ground up there. When I was a kid there used to be four old houses up there, one right after the other. And as I recall it he had the second house and it had sort of a little country store there for a while. So it's conceivable, Edison might have put in the electrification installation for three or four of the people that he was acquainted with – and done it for less.

Mrs. Thornall: But it wasn't the Metuchen farmhouse.

Mr. Thornall: To my knowledge it wasn't.

Mrs. Thornall: Well, there's also the talk that the first house to be electrified was on Graham Avenue.

R. Terwilliger: Which house would that be, Blanche?

Mrs. Thornall: The one the Grahams lived in.

R. Terwilliger: Oh really?

Mrs. Thornall: That's supposed to be the first one but it cannot be proven. [redacted] worked for Edison and as somewhat of a sensible thing, perhaps his house was it.

Mr. Thornall: At one point, Charlie Campbell, C.C. Campbell, who was my mother's stepfather, he and Louis Campbell, his brother, were bickering with Edison to sell him the Campbell lot that was next to my mother's place at one time. And he wanted to put up a small factory there. I guess there was probably in the area of 12 acres there. That's the land that would be as you face the Yelencsics Ford dealership there, that would be to the left of that building and it would run through from Middlesex Avenue back to High Street. But for some reason that deal fell through. So Edison was also familiar with Charles Croll Campbell, in addition to my grandfather, in addition to ...he knew a few people in Metuchen.

- R. Terwilliger: Now you didn't live at the Thornall farm we're talking about, the one up at the end of High Street there?
- Mr. Thornall:** No, we lived on Middlesex Avenue about 100 feet up the road towards New Brunswick from the Yelencsics automobile agency. The house is torn down. It's unfortunate because it belonged to – well, the Campbell family settled on Middlesex Avenue. My mother's house was owned by Charles Croll Campbell, and as you face the Yelencsics auto agency, to the left of the agency, there was a house there that was owned by **_Teddy_** Campbell, brother of Charles Croll Campbell. Then on the corner of Prospect and Middlesex Avenue, was where the old German guy used to live, **Theilmaster**, old man **Theilmaster** used to live there. And then next to him as you went towards Metuchen on the same side, was the one – and the house is no longer there – that would be about where the ...about where the ...
- Mrs. Thornall:** **Where the railroad tracks are.**
- Mr. Thornall:** It would be to the right of that railroad crossing. And it sat quite a ways back from the road up on sort of a rise. It was reported to have had the most beautiful stairway in town.
- R. Terwilliger: Now who was it that started to write her family history that lived up in that same area? She now lives up on Oak Avenue. Remember she wrote it out for us, she said she wouldn't be interviewed?
- P. Bruno: Lois Lord?
- R. Terwilliger: Lois Lord, yes. She lived up there.
- Mrs. Thornall:** **They lived in the next house.**
- R. Terwilliger: Right, because she describes all these houses all the way down.
- Mrs. Thornall:** **That was German family that lived in that big house there.**
- Mr. Thornall:** Originally it was Louis Campbell, Louis Campbell and it had one of these open circular stairways that made a half circle and then up in the top was the balcony area.

And therefore where the stairwell was, it was two full stories high to the ceiling.

R. Terwilliger: It must have been beautiful.

Mrs. Thornall: I remember that because Louise [redacted] a girlfriend of mine in high school, and that house at that time belonged to her grandmother. I can't remember her name. She was very German and I used to go there as a child to play on that stairway, etc.

R. Terwilliger: Oh gosh, it must have been beautiful.

Mr. Thornall: So the house that Charles Croll Campbell lived in and which he deeded to my mother actually was a tremendous sized house and they cut it in half. And sometime around the turn of the century they moved one half of it across the street.

- pause in tape -

He adopted my mother and that's where she lived up until the time that Charlie died. And when he died he deeded the house to her.

R. Terwilliger: Why did he adopt your mother?

Mr. Thornall: When my mother was about three years old, her father and mother died of consumption. And her mother was Jennie Freeman and Charles Croll Campbell's wife was a Jeanette Freeman, which I think would make her an aunt. So the uncle and that aunt adopted my mother. She was only about three years old.

R. Terwilliger: And she was the only left in the family when her mother and father died?

Mr. Thornall: Yes. Just her.

Mrs. Thornall: They were only like twenty-seven years old when they died.

R. Terwilliger: Oh gosh, that's terrible.

Mr. Thornall: So that brings me up to my grandfather who was the first mayor of Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: Now, at that time, did they have political parties, I'm sure they did?

Mr. Thornall: Oh yes.

R. Terwilliger: He was a Republican then?

Mr. Thornall: No, he was a Democrat.

R. Terwilliger: He was a Democrat back then? I can't believe that!

Mr. Thornall: Actually the town was part of Raritan Township.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, right.

Mr. Thornall: And he and the other individuals who were running at the time were campaigning to divorce themselves from Raritan Township and to create their own Borough. They didn't like the way taxes were going in Raritan Township and they apparently didn't like the way the Township was being run. So I guess it was 1890, wasn't it, that Metuchen ...

Mrs. Thornall: 1900.

Mr. Thornall: 1900.

R. Terwilliger: Right, it became incorporated as a Borough.

Mr. Thornall: Well, he was the first mayor after they incorporated. In fact I have, again out in the boxes out there, I have most of the copy of his first speech that he made to the city council.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my, that's incredible.

- pause in tape -

So Metuchen was incorporated in 1900 and your grandfather was the first mayor.

P. Bruno: Besides the taxes or the running of the Borough, do you remember any of the other pressing issues of the time.

Mr. Thornall: Well, the second major talk that he gave to the Council, he wanted to appoint a Sheriff. They apparently had too many vagrants or drunks in town and they had no place to incarcerate them and they didn't want them flopping all over the town. This was one of the recommendations that he made to the Council, that they appoint a sheriff who would keep the peace and if they set up some sort of a jail where they could put the drunks in town until they sobered up. And the other issue that was – I can't think of the name of it but was as I recall it the town name of New Brunswick was part of it – the power company that ran the streetcars, that was always a sore point. Apparently the service was miserable. You know they used to have the trolley car tracks go right down the middle of Main Street, Metuchen. I believe they went to Plainfield or at least partially to Plainfield; I never really went much in that direction. But they went to Bonhamtown and they went to Perth Amboy down through what we used to call the **Keasbey** Loop.

R. Terwilliger: Right.

Mr. Thornall: And my grandmother used to take me down there to have my teeth checked and we used to ride the trolley car, or what they called the Fast Line. And it was a wild ride through **Keasbey**, I tell you!

laughter

When they resurfaced Main Street, they just put the damned street right down over the trolley tracks. And if you ever dug up Main Street, at some point you'd come to the steel trolley track rails. They're still there as far as I know.

P. Bruno: Yes, they are.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, I think the road was in disrepair at one time and you could see part of them. They're not very far underneath it.

Mrs. Thornall: **Just the blacktop under.**

Mr. Thornall: But when I was a kid, Main Street was dirt and stones to start with. Then they put down what they used to call then macadam but we call blacktop today. And they used to have flagstone sidewalks and the town had on

Main Street - it was bordered on both sides with trees. I think they were maple and oak and they were quite old because the trunks – well the trunk on the one that used to be outside of Doc Ellis’s place which was right across from the old theater building which I think now is the Century 21 Real Estate office right now. The trunk on that tree was almost two and a half feet thick. So they were very old trees, they had been planted quite early.

Mrs. Thornall: **That was Dr. Hoefer’s office.**

Mr. Thornall: **I’m sorry, Dr. Hoefer’s place.**

R. Terwilliger: I thought he meant Dr. Hoefer but I thought maybe a Dr. Ellis had been there before Hoefer.

Mr. Thornall: **Ellis was over in the area where the Episcopal Church is, one of those streets. Ma used to have Doc Ellis for a while and then she had Doc Hoefer.**

R. Terwilliger: And how about Dr. Wittmer – wasn’t he another old one?

Mr. Thornall: **Yes, but he wasn’t as old as Hoefer.**

Mrs. Thornall: **I think he came to town about when I did.**

P. Bruno: Where was the mayor’s office located – did he have an office or when people had problems did they come to his house?

Mr. Thornall: **As near as I can tell, there was no specific office for the Mayor. It was in his home but the Council meeting always met in Robin’s Hall, which is now the Metuchen Hardware. They’d meet upstairs on the second floor.**

R. Terwilliger: That was kind of a ...

Mr. Thornall: **... focal point in town.**

P. Bruno: But there were also councilmen so was it a Mayor Councilman form of government?

Mr. Thornall: **Yes, they had some councilmen. I don’t recall how many, I don’t think there were anymore than six.**

But he only served one term. He ran for a second term but he got defeated.

laughter

R. Terwilliger: Do you remember who beat him?

P. Bruno: Well, Alexander Litterst beat him.

Mr. Thornall: Litterst, Alexander Litterst.

Mrs. Thornall: Litterst.

R. Terwilliger: I see, and was he a Republican?

Mr. Thornall: Alex, I believe, was Republican.

R. Terwilliger: That must be when the Republicans took over.

Mrs. Thornall: And they had it for quite a few years.

R. Terwilliger: Right, I know when we moved to Metuchen it was Republican.

Mrs. Thornall: It's traditionally Republican.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, that's why I was surprised originally it started with a Democrat. That's interesting.

Mr. Thornall: My grandfather had, as I said, the only farm in the Borough limits. He had thirty-five acres up on High Street, which included about six acres that was part of what is now Edison Township but then was Raritan Township. As a matter of fact he paid taxes to two municipalities. And he had thirty-five head of cattle and in later years he ran a dairy, Cloverleaf Dairy they used to call it.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I've heard that name.

Mrs. Thornall: Clover Hill.

Mr. Thornall: Clover Hill. In fact my daughter has one of the original milk bottles that has the name on it and we've got one out in the stuff out in the garage.

R. Terwilliger: Now that was a horse and buggy type operation, wasn't it, for delivering milk?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, he delivered in a horse drawn milk wagon. He had two of them. And he delivered to Metuchen and he delivered to Fords and Perth Amboy.

R. Terwilliger: Now do you recall ever going with him or did you ever take any part in this?

Mr. Thornall: No, I never went on the milk route with him. I used to milk the cows over there in the summertime. The hired hands and my uncle would milk one half of them and I'd take the other half of them.

Mrs. Thornall: He used to ride the calves too.

Mr. Thornall: We rode the bull one time.

Mrs. Thornall: The bull – right through the barn door.

laughter

R. Terwilliger: Now, you yourself did not live on the farm though.

Mr. Thornall: No.

R. Terwilliger: And did you like the farm? Did you go there often?

Mr. Thornall: Oh yes, I'd go over there generally everyday pretty near after school. I used to go to Edgar School; I'd have to walk from home to Edgar School. In those days in the winter time - they really had winters!

R. Terwilliger: That's what other people said, that winters were really bad.

Mr. Thornall: You had walk to school and you had to walk home. Now that's about a mile and a quarter roughly. And mother would pack my lunch and pack me up and put a shawl around my head and a pair of hip boots and I'd start off, you know. And if it snowed during the day real heavy, why she'd get dressed up in Pop's hip boots and come out and try to meet me halfway.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, what a good mother – that's great!

Mr. Thornall: A number of times I can remember – we still have the old - what a call a pipe staff. It's I guess really a hiking stick.

Mrs. Thornall: **A shepherd's staff.**

Mr. Thornall: It's about six or seven feet high and fairly stout and I can still remember her with a shawl around her head and that staff in her hand, piling through the snow to come and get me. Lots of times in the winter the snow would be up to my hips, when I was a kid. As I say, I can remember my grandfather had a buckboard sleigh and it would be about twenty feet long with double front runners and double rear runners. And you had to have two horses to run that. He'd break a bale of hay and threw it inside and my cousins and I would climb in and he'd whip up the horses and we'd take off cross-country. Many a time we used to ride the sleigh right over the fence posts.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, my gosh, that's incredible! Now, how many were actually in your family – sisters and brothers?

Mr. Thornall: Well, my father was William Roy Thornall, his brother was Leslie M. Thornall, that would be my uncle, and my aunt was Edna May Thornall. She married a Heaton from Tennessee. She had arthritis very bad. And Les, he stayed on the farm and my father, he worked for the Edison plant in Jersey City.

R. Terwilliger: Thomas Edison's plant? Doing what?

Mr. Thornall: He was working on the manufacture of light bulbs.

R. Terwilliger: I see.

Mr. Thornall: And he used to commute and that's how I got my first two names. The train would come from Jersey City, through Harrison and into Newark. And on the way between Jersey City and Harrison he kept passing this sign that advertised "Jay Tomatoes" so he liked the first name so I got tagged with the first name. And then of course when you get into Harrison, the Pennsylvania line goes by the Worthington Pump and Machinery Company. And he thought that was pretty good so I got named after a tomato can and a pump company.

laughter

R. Terwilliger: Oh, that's really something.

Mr. Thornall: There's nobody in the family that has those names – Jay and Worthington.

Mrs. Thornall: Speaking of your grandparents, I don't think that you gave the names of the three children that they had.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, I just did.

Mrs. Thornall: Oh, you just did – sorry, didn't hear it.

R. Terwilliger: That's okay.

Mr. Thornall: My father, he married Daisy Hamilton **Peyette** – the **Peyette** family was French Huguenot and came from [redacted] one time they lived in Highland Park next to the Conger family. Their house is at the top of the right hand side of the hill in Highland Park, before you go down and go over the bridge.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I know the spot.

Mr. Thornall: They have a large apartment complex there now but that was a fantastic looking house too.

R. Terwilliger: I'll bet it must have been.

Mr. Thornall: With these big Grecian columns out in the front. And when my mother's mother died – she was a **Peyette**, Freeman had married a **Peyette** – her father's name was Edward Hamilton **Peyette** - then she was adopted by Charles **Croll** Campbell. And actually I had three other brothers. The first one was Charles; he died within a day or two after he was born. There was myself and my brother Orville; he's out in Bakersfield, California.

R. Terwilliger: Orville? Was there anything to do with the Wright brothers?

Mr. Thornall: No. I don't know where they got it.

Mrs. Thornall: Off another can probably!

Mr. Thornall: And my youngest brother that was living then was William Roy Thornall, named after his father. He was the one that had three track records in Metuchen High School – the discus, the javelin and the shot-put. I guess he had the record for almost twelve years before somebody in the county broke the record.

Mrs. Thornall: One of his records is unbroken even to this day from what I understood a year or two ago from the high school. And of course, one of the reasons is they no longer have the sport. I think it's the javelin. He threw it something like 187 feet or some fabulous thing like that.

Mr. Thornall: I remember going to Princeton where they had a county meet down in the Princeton stadium – you and I went there – and watched him throw it. But he went on to Louisiana State University and he was killed out in Arizona. During the war he was training to be a navigator and he went out on the machine gun range at night, about thirty-five of them on a bus. And they crossed the railroad crossing for the Santa Fe Pacific Railroad and unfortunately a freight train arrived at the same time that they did. So the freight train went right through the bus and it practically killed all thirty-five of them that were one the bus.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my, what a waste.

Mrs. Thornall: **Within a week of graduation.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, isn't that an awful story.

Mr. Thornall: So, there's just myself and my brother Orville, out on the West Coast, that's left of the family. He has a son and a daughter. And I have a daughter and she's out in Pennsylvania. And that takes care of ten generations!

laughter

R. Terwilliger: Can we just go back a little bit about you as a young boy in Metuchen. Was it primarily a farm town then?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, basically, with a few commuters from New York. Of course the main line of the Pennsylvania goes through and in those days they were steam engines, you know. While it wasn't a delight, nevertheless it was always an

intriguing ride. In the summertime you'd have to open the windows and you'd get your face full of clinkers.

R. Terwilliger: I'm sure so.

Mr. Thornall: That's one of the reasons why I think the town grew so fast. In those days when I was a kid there were a lot of people that lived in Metuchen and worked in New York. Well, the clays, the Edgar's for example, they had the Edgar Clay Building there, which is in Pennsylvania Place right there in town. And they went back and forth to New York.

Mrs. Thornall: And Mr. Fairweather had his offices in New York, even in very early Metuchen.

Mr. Thornall: He was an architect or whatever you call it.

R. Terwilliger: This is Dr. Fairweather's father?

break in tape/sentence lost

Mr. Thornall: And the rest of them were local farmers, carpenters, masons.

R. Terwilliger: And your recollections of growing up in the town were pleasant, it was a nice place to live?

Mr. Thornall: Oh yes, when I was a kid the population of the town was about 3,000. You knew practically everybody on the street. Of course today you wouldn't. The mobility of the population and the turnover of the town is really substantial. You can go six months and go through town and you can hardly recognize the place.

R. Terwilliger: That's very true.

Mr. Thornall: And for grade school they had two schools – they had the Franklin School and the Edgar School. The Edgar School went up through the sixth grade and then after that you had to go down to the Franklin School and go on up and into high school.

Mrs. Thornall: The Franklin School also went all the way from kindergarten through high school.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, they went from kindergarten right on up.

Mrs. Thornall: Even where I lived, I lived on Grove, and I had to go to Franklin School.

R. Terwilliger: What was your maiden name, Blanche?

Mrs. Thornall: Bates.

R. Terwilliger: Bates. I thought that was it but I wasn't sure.

Mr. Thornall: Mother - my mother went to school in what she always said was the first schoolhouse in Metuchen. As I recall it that schoolhouse was supposed to be on the street that the A&P is on now.

Mrs. Thornall: It was on New Street.

P. Bruno: What was the name of the school?

Mrs. Thornall: Metuchen Academy.

P. Bruno: Metuchen Academy?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, Academy.

R. Terwilliger: Because we have some old pictures back in the library and Mr. Grimstead marked them as the first schoolhouse in Metuchen?

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, there were three or four buildings. There were two buildings right along side of each other on New Street, where Bonded Jeweler is today and New Pearl Laundry, I guess it is. Right there.

P. Bruno: But it was a public school? The name sort of sounds private.

Mr. Thornall: No, it was a public school. When she went it was a one-room schoolhouse.

Mrs. Thornall: I guess actually the Academy was the one over at the Presbyterian Church, wasn't it? That was the Academy. I guess where your mother went was Metuchen High School.

Mr. Thornall: Mom used to refer to it as the Academy building.

Mrs. Thornall: She graduated from high school in ... I believe the first graduating class of a high school in 1905, I believe it was.

R. Terwilliger: And that was the Franklin School then?

Mrs. Thornall: No, no. She graduated from one of these big buildings.

P. Bruno: Metuchen Academy?

Mr. Thornall: It was a weird looking building; it was three stories.

R. Terwilliger: Oh it was.

Mrs. Thornall: Three storied building, high foundation.

R. Terwilliger: It looked like it stuck out of the ground too far for those times when most of them were built low. It's an ugly building as I remember the pictures.

Mrs. Thornall: It became very ugly and very disreputable. It went down hill and yet families lived in it like a rat-hole really.

Mr. Thornall: Well, my grandmother – when she was young and lived down in Menlo Park, they had a school on the corner of Parsonage Road and Lafayette Road that was called Lafayette School. It was part of the Raritan Township school system. And the school was actually a one-room building. And as I recall from the old records there were four grades there and they taught all four grades simultaneously. And at one point she taught school there.

R. Terwilliger: Your mother was a ...

Mr. Thornall: No, my grandmother.

R. Terwilliger: Your grandmother was a schoolteacher? But she never went to college?

Mr. Thornall: Oh, no.

Mrs. Thornall: No, but she had an examination.

R. Terwilliger: Some sort of an examination that they would accept her as meeting the proper requirements. That's interesting.

Mr. Thornall: **That Lafayette School was right on the corner. You know where the theater is down in Menlo Park? Well, diagonally across the street is a professional building. That Lafayette School sat right on that corner where that building is.**

R. Terwilliger: It's incredible how it's changed.

Mrs. Thornall: **Yes, it's too bad.**

Mr. Thornall: **A one story one room schoolhouse.**

P. Bruno: I think Major Carman mentions that he went to the Lafayette School because his family lived right in that Menlo Park area.

Mrs. Thornall: **Yes.**

Mr. Thornall: **I believe he did. My grandmother's stepfather, Israel Thornall who had the farm down there, one of his civic responsibilities was road supervisor for the section of the road in that area. In addition to that he was also the secretary of the Raritan Township School Board and he had to sign the books for the Lafayette School at the end of the year. And in the book they would list the teacher, whoever was the teacher there, and they used to list all the children's names and in many cases the names of the parent and day by day would mark them in or absent. Every six months, and that included the end of the year, Israel Thornall had to certify the book and his signature is on the last page. All of those books for about fifteen years I turned over to **Jean Simons** because if people are tracking their forbearers down and any of them were in that area of Raritan Township, their kids' names will appear in those books.**

R. Terwilliger: That's incredible! They must be down in the Grimstead Room too then.

Mrs. Thornall: **They should be.**

Mr. Thornall: **There were about fifteen books there, including some old Raritan Township tax records where they used to**

advertise people who were delinquent in taxes and you could find out who lived in the area. You know, even if they were \$2 delinquent in the tax, they got listed each year.

R. Terwilliger: That must have been a good way to keep it under control.

P. Bruno: I didn't realize this information was available.

R. Terwilliger: No, no, I didn't realize that.

Mrs. Thornall: I guess you just have to spend a lot of time in the Grimstead Room. I don't know whether it's cataloged.

R. Terwilliger: No, this is the thing.

Mr. Thornall: That's the problem with so many of these things.

R. Terwilliger: It has to be. Someone has to take the time to really sit down and go over this stuff. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done there.

Mrs. Thornall: If we lived in town that would be a good job for him.

R. Terwilliger: He'd probably enjoy doing it too.

Mrs. Thornall: I know he would.

Mr. Thornall: Those books are about - each one of those books is about the size of a *Time* magazine issue.

R. Terwilliger: I wish sometime if you're in town maybe you could at least come down and show me where they are. Because other people have come in; Marty Jessen asked me about a book that was written during the WPA period. And he said there were records kept of the kind of jobs done in town and who ran them and all this kind of thing.

Mr. Thornall: I think it's a card file.

R. Terwilliger: It is?

Mr. Thornall: I know in the Trenton Library, the Trenton State Library, a lot of the genealogical records were copied by the WPA project. If you can find the cards down there and

it's marked who the individual was that did the copying, then that's a WPA project.

Mrs. Thornall: **That was what you might say was a “made” job but it has served a marvelous purpose. At the time they thought it just keeping people busy.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes.

Mr. Thornall: **Well you ask **Simons** in the library. It was only about a year ago that I took them down to her.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Yes, when we were moving.**

R. Terwilliger: I will. I will ask her. Maybe she'll know.

Mr. Thornall: **When my uncle passed away he left me all the family records that he had, you know. I have enough to fill five cartons. And that kind of stuff I took down to the library because if anybody is searching for their family records, this is one source that you would go to – old school registers. It even gives the age of the kids so you can approximate the birth date.**

R. Terwilliger: *(to P. Bruno)*
Do you have any more questions about his early childhood?

P. Bruno: I can't think of anything.

Does anything stick out in your mind – an event that happened when you were growing up?

Mrs. Thornall: **The size of the graduating class might be interesting.**

Mr. Thornall: **I had about thirty-two people in my graduating class. When my daughter graduated there were about 320 kids in the class.**

Mrs. Thornall: **I graduated six years after he did and we had 115.**

P. Bruno: Can you remember some of your classmates that are still around in Metuchen?

Mr. Thornall: **I had Kenny Waite was one of them, one of the Osborn boys was in my class. George Olmezer. Catherine Ayers.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Two of the Cobbs girls.**

Mr. Thornall: **The two Cobbs girls were in my class – one of them was Evelyn Cobb.**

R. Terwilliger: That's the black family?

Mr. Thornall: **Yes. I can't remember the other girl's name but the two sisters were in my class.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Humphries?**

Mr. Thornall: **No Bert was...**

Mrs. Thornall: **Wasn't Grace in there – no, Grace was in the first class.**

Mr. Thornall: **Grace was a year ahead of me.**

R. Terwilliger: Is that Grace Halsey?

Mrs. Thornall: **No, Humphries, the Presbyterian minister's children.**

Mr. Thornall: **Dick Edgar was a year ahead of me too.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Dick was a year ahead of you? Jean was then too?**

Mr. Thornall: **Yes, one year.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Who else was in your class?**

Mr. Thornall: **I really can't think of much else.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Any of the Edgars in your class?**

Mr. Thornall: **No.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Who lived on the top of Daniel's Hill? That ought to be recorded - the fact that that used to be a sliding hill.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, it has been.

Mrs. Thornall: **It has been, right.**

R. Terwilliger: Many of them have spoken of it. Even Grace Halsey talked about it.

Mrs. Thornall: **We even skied over there. I don't remember the family's name that lived on top of the hill.**

R. Terwilliger: Someone mentioned her name and the fact that she used to make hot chocolate for the kids.

Mrs. Thornall: **We used to ski all the way from her porch, down her lawn, down the incline across the road, down the big hill and then down the little hill all the way to the railroad tracks.**

R. Terwilliger: In fact we have some pictures of the toboggan chute they used to have there. I guess the boys themselves must have built it.

Mr. Thornall: **The only other thing I can think of if you want to fill the record out was ... my brother served in the Navy and when he got out he stayed in San Diego and then he moved to Stockton, California. And then he went to Chico, California and then he went to Mountain View and now he's at Bakersfield. He works for the Pacific Gas and Electric the utility out there. He's a division manager.**

R. Terwilliger: What did you do after high school?

Mr. Thornall: **Well, I went to New York University for four years and got out with a mechanical engineering degree and major in aeronautical engineering. Of course, the government wasn't buying any planes then.**

laughter

P. Bruno: Did you commute from Metuchen?

Mr. Thornall: **No, I stayed in during the week and came home on weekends. In those days you could live in New York City and manage on about \$10 a week.**

laughter

P. Bruno: I wish that was true today!

Mr. Thornall: But you'd have to drink a lot of malted milks and patronize the Chinese restaurants but you could make it on ten bucks.

Mrs. Thornall: You were not fed in the dorm?

Mr. Thornall: No. Then when I got out of there, I went to work with the Prudential Insurance Company in Newark.

R. Terwilliger: What happened to your engineering degree?

Mr. Thornall: They weren't making airplanes then.

R. Terwilliger: Oh I see.

Mr. Thornall: I got out in 1930 – the crash came in '29.

Mrs. Thornall: They thought airplanes had “bit the ultimate”.

R. Terwilliger: Really and truly - in 1930? Oh goodness. I see you're still interested. You're going to build a sports designed airplane?

Mr. Thornall: I still read a lot about airplanes.

Mrs. Thornall: He just built a glider.

R. Terwilliger: You know George and I have our own plane?

Mrs. Thornall: I know that, yes.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, I was talking with George I guess last year. I forget where I met him. My son in law flies sailplanes over in Erwinna, which is across the river from Frenchtown.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I know where that is. We've flown over there.

Mr. Thornall: So I still have an interest.

R. Terwilliger: That's wonderful.

Mrs. Thornall: He did use his education during the war, of course, in the Air Force.

R. Terwilliger: Right. Well, when did you meet Blanche then?

Mr. Thornall: In town. She was going to high school while I was in my – I guess my senior year.

Mrs. Thornall: No, you had graduated in June.

Mr. Thornall: I always claim that she got me on a piece of chewing gum.

laughter

R. Terwilliger: How did that work?

- break in tape-

Mr. Thornall: What you really better do is indicate that this is the second take.

R. Terwilliger: We'll mark the tapes themselves. But I will say that this is the second part of the Thornall's tape. And I think I left off where I was asking you how you met Blanche.

Mr. Thornall: Well, I belong to the Delphic Society in town – they used to give plays.

Mrs. Thornall: Have you heard of the Delphic Society before?

R. Terwilliger: They performed in Robins Hall – or was it the Forum Theater?

Mr. Thornall: No, the Forum Theater.

Mrs. Thornall: The Forum Theater and sometimes the auditorium in the school.

Mr. Thornall: And I was fortunate – or unfortunate enough to get stuck with the lead in one of their productions. And Blanche was in the ...

Mrs. Thornall: I guess you might say I was an extra in the chorus line. I was a dancer.

Mr. Thornall: I guess she sort of had her eye on me because at one particular point during the rehearsal one of the days, she wanted to know if I had some chewing gum. And we split a piece of chewing gum, you know, and she looked fairly interesting so I invited her out one night for an ice

cream soda or a banana split down at Costa's Ice Cream Parlor, which really doesn't exist anymore.

R. Terwilliger: That was right on Main Street where Contessa is now.

Mr. Thornall: Where Contessa was. It's too bad because that guy made about the best ice cream you could ever taste.

R. Terwilliger: I agree with you there.

Mr. Thornall: So we went one night – I guess it was a Friday night or a Saturday night.

Mrs. Thornall: It was the second night of the play. You said that if I give you gum, you'd blow me to a soda on the way home.

Mr. Thornall: So from that point on...

Mrs. Thornall: We've been stuck together.

Mr. Thornall: We've been stuck.

R. Terwilliger: It looks like it agrees with both of you, really.

Mrs. Thornall: That was in 1936 – that was in 1934, excuse me.

Mr. Thornall: '34.

R. Terwilliger: And when were you married then?

Mrs. Thornall: We were married in '39.

R. Terwilliger: You had a long engagement then.

Mrs. Thornall: Well, we weren't engaged, we were dating. And we were engaged just shy of a year, I guess. We were married on Armistice Day.

Mr. Thornall: I'm glad to see that they're coming back to celebrating Armistice Day on the 11th.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes.

Mrs. Thornall: We were married in St. Luke's Church. I was an Episcopalian at the time.

R. Terwilliger: And Worthy was a Presbyterian?

Mrs. Thornall: Presbyterian.

R. Terwilliger: And who was the minister?

Mrs. Thornall: Reverend Harold Dunne.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I remember him. And did you settle in Metuchen then at that time?

Mrs. Thornall: No there were no apartments to be had in Metuchen and we wanted a small apartment so we lived in Rahway, on Cherry Street – no ...

Mr. Thornall: Edgewood. Edge-something.

Mrs. Thornall: Elm, Elm Avenue. Then we moved over to Middlesex across from the Couse brothers.

Mr. Thornall: We spent about two years there and then when I went in the service she came back with her mother. And when I came back from four years in the service we bought the place down on Spear Street.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, and you used to be our neighbors. I wondered if that was your first home.

Mrs. Thornall: The first home we owned. It was the only one we owned up until now. We lived there almost thirty years.

R. Terwilliger: They were really lovely homes.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes they were. They are delightful starter homes, well built, beautifully built.

Mr. Thornall: They did a good job of putting those up. They may not be fancy but they are solid.

R. Terwilliger: They are solid homes. They stayed cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Mrs. Thornall: Very warm in the winter. Very little heat. When we first moved in there we didn't spend even \$100 a year on heat.

R. Terwilliger: I remember, even ourselves when we moved in there.

Mrs. Thornall: About \$90 a year as I recall.

R. Terwilliger: You have one daughter.

Mrs. Thornall: Just one daughter.

R. Terwilliger: And after you got out of the service did you go back into the insurance business, the same company, Prudential?

Mr. Thornall: Same company. Including the war years, I had almost forty-three years with the company.

R. Terwilliger: And was that working out of Newark then all the time?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, in the corporate office. I used to have to make field trips out to the Middle West but in later years my work kept me in Newark.

R. Terwilliger: And what was your final position then?

Mr. Thornall: Well, I was manager of the marketing unit in the corporate office when I retired.

R. Terwilliger: It's funny - I flew home from Missouri with a guy yesterday, with George, but we were in three seats and the other gentleman was with Prudential and just transferred to this area. I don't remember where he said he was from.

Mrs. Thornall: They are moving them around – it's decentralized now, they move all over.

R. Terwilliger: Well, is there anything else that you can think to tell us about the Thornall family that historically we might have missed along the way. They sound like they were a family of sturdy stock and hard workers.

Mrs. Thornall: Well, of course you knew his grandmother was the first president of the BIL.

R. Terwilliger: No, I didn't know that.

Mrs. Thornall: And she was one of the founders and was first president and all together served about four terms.

R. Terwilliger: It sounds like Worthy's family was interested in their heritage.

Mrs. Thornall: They were very civic-minded.

R. Terwilliger: Yes and very civic-minded people.

Mr. Thornall: She was a member of the DAR also, as was my mother.

R. Terwilliger: And you've done a beautiful job of your genealogy – that chart!

P. Bruno: I've never seen a chart quite like that.

R. Terwilliger: I wonder if there is anyway of spreading that out and taking three pictures of it so we could put it together. Or do you think it's too complicated to catch on camera?

P. Bruno: I can try it.

Mr. Thornall: The easier way would be to Xerox it section by section.

Mrs. Thornall: I don't know if they are anyway interested in antiques but I keep on display several things of silver that were wedding presents to Elizabeth Anne Bostock ...

Mr. Thornall: Boswick.

Mrs. Thornall: Boswick, when she married ...

Mr. Thornall: Robert Ross Freeman.

Mrs. Thornall: Robert Ross Freeman. It would be around 1850.

Mr. Thornall: About that.

Mrs. Thornall: It was one of the first silver plates – the condiment set, the jam set and the tea set.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, isn't that beautiful, Blanche. Oh my. Absolutely beautiful!

Mrs. Thornall: Those are my pride and joy from the point of view of the family relationship. The tea service is I believe what they used to call a lady's tea set. It's not very large; it

holds just about four cups. I use it in the modern ilk – I put the tea in one and coffee in the other. Back in the old days of course they put the hot water in the tea.

R. Terwilliger: Oh I see, that's why the two pots.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, because they made the tea strong. This is the way I hear it, I don't know. And they'd use the hot water to dilute it. And of course the sugar bowl in those days was three times the size of the pitcher.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, look at that. They must have had a sweet tooth.

Mrs. Thornall: Oh they had a sweet tooth. Isn't that a beautiful thing?

R. Terwilliger: Oh my, that is gorgeous. What would you use this for?

Mrs. Thornall: Well, actually it's a pickle jar – pickle and relish and you could delve into the pickles.

Mr. Thornall: Of course in those days the sugar was a lot better than it is today.

R. Terwilliger: This is not an old piece is it?

Mrs. Thornall: No, it isn't.

R. Terwilliger: It's a beautiful piece though.

Mrs. Thornall: I have many pieces of old silver flatware-that were family heirlooms.

P. Bruno: I like these plates.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, they're interesting. This is Minton I believe, yes. They're from the Freeman family also. I don't remember just what generation they were from.

R. Terwilliger: Is this about what you have left or what they gave you? Did they sort of divide everything up?

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, when his mother died we divided her home with Orville out in California. And he has many of her beautiful things. But Mom had given these to me long before - when she gave up her home and came to live with me. She lived ten years with us.

R. Terwilliger: I remember her.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, and she gave me these. And then when she did die we divided things with Orville. Actually we gave him most of the beautiful bric-a-brac because we kept the tables and things like that. I mean that Victorian table was Mom's. We kept that and we kept other tables, marble and brass tables and things of this sort. So he got most of the bric-a-brac.

R. Terwilliger: These chairs look they are old.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, they were Mom's. She gave those to me maybe about thirty years ago.

R. Terwilliger: Aren't they gorgeous – the woodwork on them! Do you know where they came from or anything?

Mr. Thornall: No, I don't. She had them ...

Mrs. Thornall: They were her parlor set. There was a couch to them.

R. Terwilliger: It was probably the love seat-type.

Mrs. Thornall: A loveseat, yes.

Mr. Thornall: They were up in the attic for years.

R. Terwilliger: Did you refinish these then yourself?

Mr. Thornall: No, I had them refinished.

Mrs. Thornall: We had them done many, many years ago.

Mr. Thornall: That's too much of a chore with all that filigree work on them.

Mrs. Thornall: I want to make needlepoint for them before they wear any more. They are about to go and I want to get needlepoint made before they go.

R. Terwilliger: They don't look that bad though.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, but you can see little signs of wear here and it's time to get busy, Blanche, before they go within a couple of years.

This is an interesting table, I think. This is very, very old and the vase is a very fragile piece of crystal.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious, really. It's so delicate and it's just so light.

Mrs. Thornall: It just weighs nothing. It's just as light as a feather.

R. Terwilliger: Isn't that a perfect place for it?

Mrs. Thornall: It is.

P. Bruno: It fits right in there.

Mrs. Thornall: Well, the piece was made for it.

P, Bruno: Oh, it was!

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, and it's always been in there. I cannot get it out for you unless I lift it out.

R. Terwilliger: Oh no, I'd be afraid of the humidity or something!

Mrs. Thornall: Oh, I can open it. I keep the door turned to the wall because of my grandson. He almost gave me a stroke once when he very, very young and I looked over here and he's got the vase in his hand.

R. Terwilliger: Do you have to pick everything up when he comes?

Mrs. Thornall: No. Only something like that you didn't dare to trust him. And with the other two coming along now, we just leave it turned in.

R. Terwilliger: You'll have a bouncing house. I'm going to turn this off.

Mr. Thornall: Don't turn it off yet. I got to tell you one thing.

R. Terwilliger: Okay.

Mr. Thornall: I don't know whether this was the only installation in town – well it was one of the earlier ones. In my mother's house, which Chares **Croll** Campbell originally

owned, up in the attic they had the connection so that you could take a bath. They had running water for baths. What they had was a very large copper lined tub up there that was edged on the outside with wood so that it didn't look too bad. And they used to pump water up there from the hand pump and then you could go downstairs in the bathroom and turn the faucet on and get cold water.

Mrs. Thornall: **It didn't heat?**

Mr. Thornall: If you wanted a hot bath, what you had to do was to lug upstairs to the third floor three or four large buckets of real hot water and pour it in there and then go down to the bathroom and turn on the faucet and you got hot water.

R. Terwilliger: I'll bet you there were many cold baths taken.

Mr. Thornall: **Well they didn't take too many baths in those days.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes, that's what I understand. There was really the Saturday night bath, right, and church on Sunday?

Mr. Thornall: **They must have been a real dirty bunch, that's all I can think of.**

R. Terwilliger: Can you imagine?

Mrs. Thornall: **Was it in the Sunday paper – was it in the New York Times on Sunday about the filthy generations ahead of us, or something?**

Mr. Thornall: **Yes, it was in this past Sunday's magazine section.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I'll have to read it. It's probably in the library.

Mrs. Thornall: **They said the limit was three baths a lifetime.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh no. That couldn't be.

P. Bruno: **I'm thinking about camp** – without taking any showers.

Mrs. Thornall: **That's for the twentieth century!**

Mr. Thornall: Well consider - if you wanted a hot bath you had to take about four large buckets of hot water up to the third floor, throw it in with the cold water in this tub which must have held easily ten gallons of water. And then go back down to the bathroom and turn on the water and take a quick bath before the water got too cold.

Mrs. Thornall: I'll bet they had servants around the house to do these chores too.

R. Terwilliger: Did your mother have any help at all?

Mr. Thornall: No. No. And as far as I know, Charlie Campbell and his wife Jeanette, at least when Mother was with them, I don't ever recall her mentioning any servants. He had a hired hand that took care of his horses and the buggy.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, outside.

Mr. Thornall. Outside - but nobody inside.

Mrs. Thornall: In later years your mother had a couple of women work for her.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, but that's not back when she was a kid in the early days.

Mrs. Thornall: Not when she was a kid, no, she was the hired hand.

R. Terwilliger: I meant when you were growing up in the house yourself, you don't remember anyone ever helping her?

Mr. Thornall: Not as far as housekeeping basically. She ran a tearoom for a while.

R. Terwilliger: Where?

Mr. Thornall: In the house.

R. Terwilliger: Oh really?

Mrs. Thornall: What was the name of it?

P. Bruno: Another tearoom in Metuchen?

R. Terwilliger: To give the Litterst girls competition.

Mrs. Thornall: **Yes, it was the same order as the Litterst girls, they were very good friends. What the heck was the name of Mom's tearoom?**

Mr. Thornall: **I can't remember at the moment.**

P. Bruno: How long did she have it for?

Mr. Thornall: **I guess about three years I think it was.**

R. Terwilliger: And was this just afternoon tea that she would serve?

Mrs. Thornall: **No, she served lunch.**

Mr. Thornall: **She served lunch.**

Mrs. Thornall: **When I was in high school I know she was serving lunches then to the schoolteachers.**

P. Bruno: Was this at the same period when the Litterst sisters had theirs.

Mrs. Thornall: **Yes, it was during the 20's and 30's.**

Mr. Thornall: **They were in effect somewhat competitors you might say.**

P. Bruno: I never knew that.

R. Terwilliger: It's funny they never mentioned it. We asked about their competition.

Mr. Thornall: **She used to call it The Bonny Nook Tearoom.**

Mrs. Thornall: **Bonny Nook.**

R. Terwilliger: Bonny Nook Tearoom. Oh, I'm so glad you mentioned that.

Mrs. Thornall: **Oh, her lunches were always full and then she served dinners to a select few that made prior arrangements.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you ever remember some of the select few who came, do you remember the names of the families?

Mr. Thornall: **Well, Buchanan came – I remember she used to come.**

Mrs. Thornall: Evelyn Crowell used to eat there regularly for lunch I know. And what was the one – Eva, not Eva Platt but ...

Mr. Thornall: One of the Platts.

Mrs. Thornall: Emily Platt. I know she and Evelyn used to come for lunch.

Mr. Thornall: And what was the family that lived on Graham Avenue, they had the swimming pool and a tennis court?

R. Terwilliger: The big house on the corner of Graham and Spring?

P. Bruno: Silzer, the Governor?

Mr. Thornall: No, no. Nope. Letson!

Mrs. Thornall: Oh yes, Letson, I thought you meant prior to that.

Mr. Thornall: Mrs. Letson, she used to come up quite frequently and have lunch.

Mrs. Thornall: There was quite a group that came. Girls that Mom played cards with used to eat lunch there and then they'd play cards in the afternoon.

Mr. Thornall: And the Beta Club used to come up there and have lunch and then have their business meeting.

R. Terwilliger: Did you tell me what your father did? He was basically a farmer you said?

Mr. Thornall: No, he worked at the Edison plant in Jersey City.

R. Terwilliger: Edison, right, oh yes.

Mrs. Thornall: He died quite young.

R. Terwilliger: Was this part of the influence of her running this little tearoom – for extra income?

Mrs. Thornall: To raise the children, right.

Mr. Thornall: Then he decided he wanted to do something of his own so he opened a garage on the corner of Bridge street

and Middlesex. In fact the original building that he had for a garage building is still there and it's a lumber company building. He used to gas through-trucks. That was basically his business. Today the trailer trucks go on the turnpike but in the old days they used to go on Route 27, there was no turnpike. And he had a bunkroom in the back and these fellows would pull in, gas up, park the trucks in the back, and go in and take a nap for two or three hours. They'd tell Mom when they wanted to get up and she'd wake them up and they'd climb back on the rig and go on to their destination. It would be nothing for him to gas 200 trucks a day there.

R. Terwilliger: Wow.

P. Bruno: That's quite a lot.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, they really worked.

Mr. Thornall: Between he and Mom they really put it in – she'd work a 12-hour stint and he'd work a 12-hour stint and she pumped as much gas as he did.

R. Terwilliger: She sounds like quite a gal.

Mrs. Thornall: She was quite a gal - a very, very marvelous person.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, she must have been.

Mrs. Thornall: I have always admired my mother in law. She was a perfect lady, an absolute perfect lady. She could take her place at the most high-society in town and yet she would do any kind of labor that was called upon to do and could do. She was always a lady.

Mr. Thornall: After she closed out the tearoom, she had the state police stationed at her place.

R. Terwilliger: You mean it was the ...

Mr. Thornall: It was the state police station.

R. Terwilliger: How did she get that? She sounds incredible! A woman?

Mr. Thornall: I don't remember how. They were looking for some place to set up a station in the area on Route 27 and

somehow she heard about it and thought about it and decided she'd ask them if they wanted to use her house.

Mrs. Thornall: **She needed about five or six bedrooms, which she had.**

R. Terwilliger: This was for them to sleep in between their shifts or whatever.

Mrs. Thornall: **And the living room was turned into their telephone and radio and so forth, whatever they had.**

R. Terwilliger: But she actually had nothing to do with the workings of it being a state police headquarters.

Mrs. Thornall: **Oh no, no. She just kind of rented her house out.**

Mr. Thornall: She kept the kitchen and one small bedroom upstairs and what in the old days you would call the living room. And their office was in what we used to call the parlor. In the old days you had the parlor and you never opened the parlor until you had outside company special that came in, see? But when they left you closed the parlor up and that was it. Nobody got in the parlor. You always stayed in the living room, which was on the opposite side of the hall.

Mrs. Thornall: **Today we call it a family room.**

Mr. Thornall: So she kept the kitchen and the living room and had a small bedroom upstairs. And at one time when my brother was still home, he slept up in the attic.

Mrs. Thornall: **So did Bill.**

Mr. Thornall: Yes, he slept up there too.

R. Terwilliger: She must have been quite a woman. How old was your mother when she died? She lived to be quite old.

Mrs. Thornall: **Seventy-four?**

Mr. Thornall: About that yes.

Mrs. Thornall: **I think she was seventy-four.**

R. Terwilliger: And her last - she lived with you about ten years?

Mrs. Thornall: I had her exactly ten years to the day.

R. Terwilliger: I remember her sitting on the porch over on Spear Street.

Mrs. Thornall: **She didn't sit very much.**

R. Terwilliger: No, I was going to say. I remember see her walking and walking.

Mr. Thornall: **I told her when she came with us I said, "Here's a key to the front door. You got the whole upstairs. What you do with your time is your problem. If you want to take off, take off. You don't have to ask me – there's the key."**

R. Terwilliger: That's wonderful. It's a credit to both of you that that worked out so nicely.

Mrs. Thornall: **We cooperated wonderfully, never a question, never a problem. When I needed help, she was there to help but she never interfered.**

R. Terwilliger: That's beautiful. That really is. There aren't many families that can have that kind of a workable situation with in-laws.

Mr. Thornall: **Now I think if you want to you can shut the tape off.**

R. Terwilliger: Okay, thank you.

You haven't had too much input into this, Blanche. So what kind of a business did your father do?

Mrs. Thornall: **My father was in the real estate and insurance business.**

R. Terwilliger: Bates, did you say?

Mrs. Thornall: **Yes.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I remember you. it must have been your father..

Mrs. Thornall: **... that sold you your home!**

Mr. Thornall: **Frederick w Bates**

R. Terwilliger: Right. He was a slight man wasn't he?

Mrs. Thornall: Very slight in his later years.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, I remember him.

Mrs. Thornall: Dad was in the real estate and insurance business for a good fifty years before he died.

P. Bruno: In Metuchen?

R. Terwilliger: I'm trying to remember where his office was.

Mrs. Thornall: Most of it in Metuchen. He did start his business in Fords and then he came to Metuchen and he was with Powell for a while. And his office was on the corner of William Street and Middlesex, right across from Hillpot. It's Runyon now, it was Hillpot then. He had the little small office that was built by Agnelli there, Powell built that and Daddy bought it from Powell ultimately. After the war I guess it was he put up that white building that's there now and my brother went in business with him. Dad didn't last too long after that. He'd been in business in Metuchen since about 1920.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, he saw a lot of people lose their property during the crash.

Mrs. Thornall: Well he lost a lot of property in the crash, my father being very real estate minded of course. As I recall the exact number, my father and mother owned seventeen rental units. Our money was invested in real estate – their money. And came the crash and he spent his time running from one house to the other, "Please, pay me some rent". And ultimately he lost the whole seventeen of them because they could not pay their rent.

R. Terwilliger: I know I remember my dad talking about when he bought that house for \$3000 it was because Mr. Ten Eyck had lost it because I guess his business had failed during the crash.

Mrs. Thornall: Where was that?

R. Terwilliger: This was on Middlesex Avenue, it was Russell Ten Eyck, Russell and Viola Hoffman Ten Eyck.

Mrs. Thornall: Where was that – around the Inn?

R. Terwilliger: Yes, just down from the Inn. It was a brown two-story natural shingle. I understand at one time he sold gas out at the road, Mr. Ten Eyck.

Mrs. Thornall: Yes, I guess he did.

Mr. Thornall: Yes, he did.

R. Terwilliger: And he also had, his father had, a milk business in Highland Park. It was called Oakland Dairy and he delivered to us for years. But I remember your dad showing us the house. We came from Elizabeth and my dad wanted us to move to the country. I remember walking around the house with your father.

Mrs. Thornall: He was a spry fellow – 65ish then.

R. Terwilliger: He was! And my parents I remember often saying that they wished so badly that they had had more money at the time because they wanted to throw the little yellow house across the road in for another \$200 or something like that.

Mrs. Thornall: Did my father sell them their house?

R. Terwilliger: The Ten Eycks you mean?

Mrs. Thornall: Yes.

R. Terwilliger: I don't know.

Mrs. Thornall: It possible because he sold an awful lot of property back there in the 20's and 30's.

R. Terwilliger: He probably did.

Mrs. Thornall: He was one of very few agents at the time.

R. Terwilliger: I'm sure so.

Mrs. Thornall: Fullerton was in business then, and Dad.

R. Terwilliger: Well I remember we got our mortgage through the old Building and Loan. Remember? Was it up on Railroad Avenue?

Mr. Thornall: Yes.

R. Terwilliger: I remember we used to go down and pay like a quarter of a month, you'd pay every week on it, in order I guess to make it easier on my parents

Mrs. Thornall: Probably, because that's how their income came in.

R. Terwilliger: I can remember my brother and I going down with the book and giving the money and they'd sign it and they'd stamp it, you know. But they were hard times.

Mrs. Thornall: They were miserable times.

Mr. Thornall: That was one of the problems with the banks in town, you know. We at that point had some of our savings in the Commonwealth Bank. Stelle Manning was the cashier, that was another cousin of mine from the Manning family. They had so much money invested in mortgage loans, as did the National Bank, that when the crash came and the run on the bank, they couldn't pay so both of them closed their doors.

R. Terwilliger: Really, I didn't know that.

Mr. Thornall: And about all we got back when they finally paid was about ten cents on the dollar.

R. Terwilliger: Oh how horrible that must have been.

Mrs. Thornall: I know the National Bank closed, I don't remember the Commonwealth. We never had anything to do with Commonwealth.

Mr. Thornall: Old man Litterst was president of the National Bank.

Mrs. Thornall: Oh yes, he was tight-fisted.

Mr. Thornall: They took him over the hills in town. They cussed him up hill and down because he had really sunk a lot of the assets into mortgage loans. And when the crash came, there's nothing more un-liquid than mortgage loans.

R. Terwilliger: Right, yes.

Mrs. Thornall: They were paying a grand 2% interest. That was why my parents dealt with the National Bank as compared to the

Commonwealth. The Commonwealth was paying 1%. Would you believe that today! And they are still paying a lower interest than the National Bank of New Jersey. They've always been traditionally a low interest payer.

R. Terwilliger: That was all maybe –I shouldn't say that on tape – I was going to say - **JR Appelgate**.

Mr. Thornall: I can't remember but it was conceivable that he was President of the Commonwealth Bank back then.

R. Terwilliger: I think you're right.

Mrs. Thornall: I think he's always been president, hasn't he?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, he had the bank business and he also had the automobile agency down in Perth Amboy.

Mrs. Thornall: Studebaker agency.

R. Terwilliger: I thought he sold Cadillacs, somebody said?

Mr. Thornall: No, Studebaker Packard, it used to be.

R. Terwilliger: Well, they were very difficult times but the town certainly has grown beyond anyone's vision, I think.

Mr. Thornall: I can remember the Commonwealth and when it first opened up they had one caged window. And Mrs. Perry's candy shop was to the right and to the left of it, as you faced the bank ... it was a shame they tore that down, that was a delightful building.

Mrs. Thornall: It was a fire-trap!

R. Terwilliger: You mean where Buchanan ended up upstairs and downstairs was the Schenck Agency, was that the candy store?

Mr. Thornall: Yes, that used to be Mrs. **Perry's.**

R. Terwilliger: I thought that was pretty building though too, Blanche.

Mrs. Thornall: Wasn't Sherwood Mundy in the back?

R. Terwilliger: Yes, he was in the back, right.

Mr. Thornall: But that was a delightful piece of architecture.

Mrs. Thornall: But a terrible fire-trap.

Mr. Thornall: Well they never maintained it.

Mrs. Thornall: You remember over the years, we've had dreadful fires on Main Street. They finally got rid of most of them.

R. Terwilliger: I know, which usually happens to all old historical buildings.

Mr. Thornall: So the new addition to the Commonwealth Bank actually sits on a spot where Mrs. Perry's candy shop used to be. We used to go in there and get a stick of licorice.

P. Bruno: For a penny.

Mr. Thornall: Right.

R. Terwilliger: What I wanted to ask you, Worthy, is some of the other people that we've interviewed that are probably about or near your age talked about gypsies that used to move through town.

Mr. Thornall: Oh yes, what they would do was to camp on the outskirts of town. For example, several times Mother has had them camp on her property. The lawyer, A. S. Arnold used to be next door. He was corporation lawyer in New York and between Arnold's house and Mother's house I guess there was easily 500 feet and it was fairly heavily treed. And of course they'd ask if they could camp there. And they'd end up by putting up three or four large tents and you might have thirty horses hanging around and..

R. Terwilliger: Do you remember any of this?

Mrs. Thornall: Sure.

Mr. Thornall: They used to come over to our place for water.

Mrs. Thornall: Well they traditionally camped on the corner of Vineyard Road, that was the real camping site.

Mr. Thornall: Up where the S&H ...

- end of tape -