

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

MABEL GRAY

Interviewed by Catherine Jones
4 August 1988 and 30 March 1989
OHRC accession #88-81-1,2,3

INTRODUCTION

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my oral history interview with CATHERINE JONES,
Interviewer (please PRINT)
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<u>Mabel L. Gray</u> Donor	<u>3/30/89</u> Date
<u>Catherine A. Jones</u> Interviewer	<u>3/21/89</u> Date

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<u>Mabel L Gray</u> Donor	<u>2-23-91</u> Date
<u>Catherine Jones BT</u> Donor	<u>2-23-91</u> Date

PAOLI PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

Biographical Data Sheet

I. INTERVIEWEE/NARRATOR DATA

Full Name: Mabel Grey
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Address: Gray's Punpkin Center, on Tater Road, S. East of Orleans
IN 47452

Phone: 723-2432

Date of Birth: 1911 Place of Birth: Washington CO, near Salem

Sex: F Ethnic Origin: _____

Education: Eighth grade

Occupational History: in early years, helped on the family farm; after
marrying, she and her husband Add, operated the famous PUNKIN CENTER, a
country store

Special interests, hobbies, etc.: _____

Father's Name and occupation: farmer ?

Mother's Name and occupation: _____

II. INTERVIEWER DATA

Full Name: Catherine Jones
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Local address: 211 S. Grant 331-0158
and phone

Permanent Address: 11705 Eden Glenn Drive, Carmel, IN 46032
and phone

Date of Birth: 8/58 Place of Birth: NY

Association with the Paoli Project: graduate assistant

Subject of interview: the store and changes in it and the area through
the years (Millersburg and the surrounding area)

Number of Tapes: 2

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

INTERVIEWEE: Mabel Gray
INTERVIEWER: Catherine A. Jones
SUBJECT: History of Paoli
DATE: August 4, 1988
TRANSCRIBER: Paul Russell and Norma Olmer

Jones: Let's see. OK, I'm Cathy Jones, and I'm here with Mabel...

Gray: ...Gray.

J: ...Gray. I'm sorry, it's the heat. [both laugh] Mabel Gray and we're at the Punkin Center, which is about 2 miles from Millersburg--I mean, from...?

G: Two miles from 56.

J: From 56, yes. And today is July 4, and we're working on the Paoli project.

G: Not July the fourth. August the fourth.

J: August, August. Jeez, the summer's gone already. Hey, do you know you have money down there?

G: Yes, that's our wishing well [cold air duct for furnace].

J: [laughing] Does it work?

G: Yes. Yes, about anybody that comes, they'll throw in some. If they have a pretty good time.

J: Well, like I was telling you, I've heard so much about this place, particularly from the people that live out in Millersburg, and....

G: Now, that, that lady that sat over there [lady visitors], she lived out in Millersburg. Her husband passed away there--no, he didn't pass away until they moved to town [Paoli], but he had a heart attack--and they, and they lived where Bethel Cornwell lives now, if you was out to Bethel's.

GRAY

J: Oh, yes.

G: That's where she lived. And this other lady over here, Miss [Alice] McCoy, her, she was raised up above Millersburg, and she married a man down at Jasper, so she lived at Jasper until he died, just, he's been dead about four years.

J: That's the one that was sitting far away, on the...

G: No, that's the one that was sitting on this side.

J: Oh, I _____

G: And that other one, sitting on the other side, I'm not too well acquainted with her, because she comes from Jasper.

J: The one, the one that married the husband in Jasper, does she live back here now, since he's...?

G: No, she [Alice McCoy] lives in Jasper, but she goes to Florida in the wintertime. Yes, but she was raised up here at Millersburg.

J: Well, is this considered part of Millersburg?

G: No, this is not. This is always, it always just been. There's never been anything else here but this store. There's been some trailers set in here. There's a trailer set over there; and then we had one set out here in the back yard, we had a hired hand or two in it. But outside of that, it's never been no bigger than just the family that lived over there in the house. Population was five and 1/3. Well, you see, see, that was me and Add and Bert and his wife, and their daughter; and my mother stayed here a third of the time. She had three children and she stayed here a third of the time, which made this five and a third.

J: [laughing] Oh. Well, just out of curiosity, not, -- you know, now there's the highway, but if someone, say, when people still used horse and buggy, if someone from Millersburg were to come here, how long would that have been? Is that like a couple of miles?

G: Oh, it's not over three miles. Four. Might be, you'd have to go out here, go to the highway, and then go about that far on up over the hill to Millersburg. No, it's not...

J: ...too far. How long...

G: Yes. And they used to be two stores in Millersburg, and a

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long time ago, there was a brewery and the stores--I don't know how many stores there was.

J: There were two stores in Millersburg?

G: Yes, yes.

J: Oh, I didn't know that!

G: Yes, yes.

J: Well, when did they close down? Because I mean, now, there's nothing.

G: Oh, they've been closed down a long time.

J: A long time?

G: Yes.

J: Well.... This place is amazing, and after we're finished, I'd like to go ahead and look out there if I could, because I haven't seen very much out there [in the storage room].

G: No, you see, when Add started this back in 1922, there was a store down here by the name of [pronounces something like "Sorry"].

J: Sorry?

G: And...S-Y-R-I-A. And there was a church down there and there was, they had a huckster wagon. And they traveled everywhere around. Then up here about--well, I'd say they was just about four mile apart--there was a store up here by the name of Bromer. [Church too]. And they had a huckster wagon. And they dressed turkeys and chickens and done a lot of things like that. And Add started this in between them two stores. He and...and he was just a young fellow out of high school. And him and his dad...and after he got--he graduated in '21, and in January '22, he started this. And then, in the fall of '22, they got that truck up there, and then they hauled their stuff from here to Orleans in the truck, which they'd been hauling in the wagon before. He went to testing cream, and at one time, his was the second-highest store-testing cream in the state.

J: Wait. Now, he...he...he didn't work at the creamery testing his cream?

G: No, no, he had a cream station of his own. They brought cream to him, and he tested it, and then, he took it to Orleans

GRAY

and shipped it.

J: Oh, I see what you're saying. OK.

G: He shipped it out to a big creamery.

J: I see what you're saying. Now, was this...his name is Add-- A-D-D, Add?

G: Yes, A-double D.

J: Was this Add or his father [Bruce] that you're talking about?

G: Well, see, his father helped him on the start, but he didn't help him very long. And then, he was out of it.

J: And I meant to ask you, what's a huckster?

G: Well, that's a peddling wagon.

J: That's what I figured, yes. And they're called "hucksters"? [laughs]

G: A lot of people don't know what a peddling wagon is, but they'd load it up with sugar and beans and maybe canned stuff that they had, and would go around through the country and trade it for eggs and maybe some of them would have chicken and whatever the farmer had that they wanted--butter--and whatever they had that they wanted to sell to get something that they had on the peddling wagon.

J: Now, just out of curiosity, if you know very much about this huckster wagon, when those people were making the rounds, would they like spend the night out somewhere, at someone's house? Or would they just do a trip in a day? Or...? I'm just curious.

G: I never have heard them say too much whether they stayed out. I don't hardly think they did. I think they usually tried to come in, because see, by the time the day was out, why, they'd be mostly out of what they had. I don't think that they'd have enough stuff left to stay out too long. I think they'd just maybe go for the day. They might stay overnight somewhere if they had like...now, that, there was a man down here at Paoli that, he was -- like, had spices and vanilla extract and pepper and stuff like that, and now, he would go, he would stay for weeks at a time out, you know. And he'd go, knew just about where he could --- where he could stay, who he could stay with. And they'd feed him and bed him down and then he's get up and go the next day.

GRAY

J: Well, you know, when you think about it too, for the people that lived out there, you know, it must have been kind of a nice form of, you know, entertainment or diversion or something like that.

G: Yes, they were glad to have company, you see.

J: For sure, yes.

G: Find out something was going on somewhere else. Yes, it was interesting to them.

J: Well, before we start talking about the store, and I guess I'm also curious about why he thought he could make a go of it if there weren't that many people around here.

G: Well, you see, he didn't know whether he could make a go of it or not when he started the store, and Add always wondered what people thought about him starting a store here and him just a young fellow and maybe didn't have too much to start with and they bought 325 dollars or something like that of groceries to start with, and tobacco and stuff like that, that you know.... Well, these young folks just commenced to coming in here from everywhere, and there's a family down here that had traded at Syria all the time that they lived down there, they quit trading down there and come up here and went to trading. And never did go back down there to trade and they always just traded up here.

J: Well, when -- OK, in 1922, I mean, how many families...was it still like it is now, just five and a half people out here, or five and a third? I mean, were there more people out here?

G: Well, there was a lot more houses around. It was like...a lot of these houses have been torn down. But they had little farms and everybody had cows and chickens and they had enough kind of to make a living on themselves, but they still had to have sugar, and they had to have salt, and they had to have coal oil, and things like that. There's things that they had to have, you see. And they'd go to the store and get that. And they'd trade what they had got, their eggs or their chickens, and for what they had to have.

J: Well, just out of curiosity, and I'm still, you know -- kind of, we're talking about 1922 or at the very beginning. How many people or houses, anyway, would you...can you just off of the top of your head...?

G: Oh, they was quite a few houses around here.

J: Like 30 or 20 or 10 or...?

GRAY

G: Oh, I expect there were probably 20 houses around.

J: About 20?

G: Probably that scattered around...but they come a long distance, too.

J: Well, now, why, I mean, why did the store take off so well, then?

G: Well, he tested that cream and they all said they could get a better price of him. Now, I don't know whether...who he bought of. But he could pay a little more, but they all thought they could get a better price for the cream of him.

J: So, would they come in and sell their cream to him?

G: Yes.

J: He would test it and buy it, and so while they were here....,

G: Yes, yes. Then they'd take their check and they'd cash it and buy their groceries. Yes. They'd bring eggs, and I'd get out there and count their eggs and put them in the egg case, and then, when they traded, I'd pay them so much for their eggs. I've got a thing up there that they're figured up by the dozen, all you had to do was just look and see how much...now you talk about your computers today, there that card is up there where I could just look and if they's 25 cents a dozen, so many dozen was so much.

J: Oh, I see what you're saying. Yes, yes. Well, in those early days, did you all use cash or would it just be trading? They'd you know....

G: Oh, there was some cash changing hands. They most usually had a little cash coming to them...

J: Well...

G: ...for what...

J: OK, sorry.

G: ...for what they brought in. They'd usually take home some cash.

J: Well, I guess I should ask where were you and Add from? Were you all from here? Or how'd you all end up here? You're

smiling.

G: [laughing] Well, now that's...

J: Is that a long story?

G: ...that's a long story too... His sister married my uncle. But I was, I come and visited them and then, they'd bring me down here, and in 1929, my uncle [Irvin Standish] died with ptomain poisoning, and they had the sale...he had a lot of stock out. I forget, we milked over 50 head of cattle that night before the sale down there, and they brought in, you know, the cattle, and they had to be milked the night before, so they didn't milk them the next morning, when they went to sell them. So, I helped with that, and I was down there, and Add had the, like the dinner for the sale...they fixed sandwiches and had lunch before they had the sale. And I helped with that. And that was in August, I reckon, about '29--we went together about three years before we was married. And I guess that's kind of how we got acquainted. And then, my...his sister's boy drunk acid; they was testing...see, they had a store up at Millersburg, his sister did, and she had her cream acid in a little pitcher. And had it setting on a table in there, and this little boy was about, oh, I guess he was about two and a half years old. He was just barely talking. And he was down here [Punkin Center] and they stayed all night down here, and they took him home, and there'd been a man--let's see, I don't know if it was a man or a woman--hung themself, and there'd been a tragedy or two right that last day or two, and they took this little boy home [to Millersburg], and he just went in a back room and picked up a pitcher and drumom's uncnk that acid, and that just ate his throat out, and now they put a tube in his throat, but he died anyway. But, they brought...course, see, that was Mom's brother, and we was all family together then. And Add took this little boy in the car from our house to Louisville, to the hospital that night. And of course, he died, and then they brought him back the next day. So, from then on, we kind of went together. And we went together about three years until we was married in '34.

J: Tragic way to have brought you two together.

G: Yes. Yes. So that was...and...

J: And that was...you lived where then? Was it around here or...?

G: I lived up in Washington County. Almost up toward Salem. Up on 56, that's toward Salem.

J: OK. Would that be...did you live like in a town or

_____?

G: No, no. Just out in the country.

J: Out in the country.

G: I was raised in the country.

J: So he married him a country girl.

G: Yes, we was married June the ninth and we went to Chicago to the World's Fair, and we was up there, and when we up--we went on Sunday and come back on Wednesday. I went to work and I've been working ever since.

J: Ever since? Wow! [both laugh]

G: I've not been out a job since.

J: Well, so, when you married him, I guess, you said '29 or something, 1929?

G: No, we started together in '29.

H: And then, so '32 or something like that.

G: We was married in '34.

J: In '34. So, at that time, the center'd been going about 12 years?

G: Yes, he's older than I was. He had this longer. Yes.

J: So, when you first came here, can you kind of, you know, describe what the center was like, what the neighborhood was like when you first, you know, moved out here? When you were married? In 1934? [G chuckles.] And you were how old at back then, at the time?

G: How old was I?

J: Yes.

G: About 22, I expect.

J: OK. And about how old was Add, then?

G: He was about 32, 33.

J: OK. So, you're newly weds and you've just come out here.

OK.

G: Yes, we lived over there with his mother. And he had this already built, and I didn't know it, and he built the upstairs, fixed the upstairs in it. It's got a place -- full house upstairs. Living rooms and bedroom--two bedrooms--and kitchen and...and we was going to live upstairs then. And he went to Louisville one day, and I'd been down here, I expect three or four months. Me and his mother moved our beds and things over here while he was gone to Louisville. He come home that night, and he says, "Well," he says to his mom, "What's the matter? Have I quit paying my rent?" So, that hurt her feelings pretty bad. [J and G both laugh] But that's the way we moved over here.

J: [laughing] Oh, dear!

G: So, we've been here ever since.

J: Wow. Everyone who's mentioned the center to me, you know, talks about how, I guess particularly for the men, it was a place, you know, where people would come, or the men would come around, the liar's bench, you know.

G: Yes, we had benches in here, see, and the men sat over on this side, and the women sat over on that side. And the women, a lot of times, they'd crochet, or...and the men, they'd cut wood and thrashed and done all that kind of talk over here on this side. And then, when canasta come along, they played a lot of cards. Well, rook, too. The men would play rook, and then we got to playing canasta, and they'd be a bunch come one night, and maybe they'd be another bunch come the next night. We was up every night, when they'd play cards, play canasta.

J: So people who would come to, I guess, well, like when the farmers came, would it be the husband and the wife? Would the whole family come, when...?

G: Yes, the whole family'd come. Yes.

J: And would they come like just was it Saturdays? Was it...?

G: No, they'd come through the week.

J: Yes, I guess what you're saying....

G: Yes, they'd come through the week, and some of them come every night, and some of them, just they'd come every other night or come every two or three nights.

GRAY

J: And then, the kids would, like the kids would come and play too, and...?

G: Well, yes, the kids, they'd play together whenever they'd come, but it seemed like there wasn't too many of the kids, there was more just older people that would come.

J: Was it that way from the very beginning?

G: Yes. Yes, there was always, you could advertise something here and you'd get a crowd just about any time. See, I guess about the first, we had them little vaudeville shows, and like a couple would dress up and black themselves up, you know, and have.... And there was them that come, like the medicine shows, they'd sell candy, and then, they'd sell their, like their linament or whatever they...

J: Their cure-all.

G: Yes. And then, they got to having cheese suppers [Kraft] out here. Every year they'd put away cheese for the next year. Let it age from one year to another. And then they'd give cheese and Kool-Aid and they was supposed to be giving it to their customers, you know, the patrons to the cheese factory. And there got to be so many come and they'd come so far away, why they couldn't hardly afford to do it. So, I don't know how many years--probably eight or ten years, they had that once a year here. And they had a dance platform they put out there, and they'd let them dance. And had music. One year Barney Arnold was out here, and one year Sleepy Marlin came. And they had, and they was a bunch around here that played music, and after they quit having that, then the WPA came along, where they let them have like music parties.

J: Yes, Owen Stout, I remember, I guess, taught on that. Yes, that's right.

G: And they'd gather in here, and they was supposed to be some many taking music lessons, and instead of that, they'd come in and have their square dance, and every twice a week, Tuesday and Friday nights, they'd have square dances here. And of course, that drawed people, you know, from everywhere. No, they's always been a crowd around here.

J: Is it...did most of the country stores at that time, you know, tend to kind of be that way?

G: Not too much, no.

J: Well, I didn't think they did, to the extent that...

GRAY

G: No, not too much like that.

J: Well, what was, I mean, why was...why did you draw such a crowd here?

G: I don't know. It was just...it just turned out to be that way. I don't know why it was...

J: Do you have any guesses or did you ever, do you wonder about it? Or...?

G: Oh, what I was going to tell you while ago, Add had always wondered what people thought about him starting a store here in-between them two stores. And he got a letter from a lady that was 80 years old, and she was young at that time, and she said she could remember people talking and saying he'd never make a go of it, it never would amount to nothing. "But, she says, you're still there and the other stores is gone."

J: [laughing] So we know who was right and we know who was wrong.

G: The other stores was all gone. So, and there's no store at either place. They've got grain bins up here at Bromer now, which'll keep it on the map for a while. But down here at Syria, there's nothing down there except the man's got, he feeds stock down there. He's got cattle and he feeds them, but....

J: And each of those two places was about two miles away, you said?

G: Two miles each way.

J: Yes. Yes. Wow. When you married him, did you know you were getting into this or...?

G: [laughs] No, I was not going to be the last one sitting here.

J: Oh, -- I...I guess that you never know. I meant, just coming out and, you know, having a store, and having so many people around, all this partying and stuff like that?

G: No. No. No, I never thought it'd be like this.

J: Sounds like it really has been a...

G: Yes, we've really had a good life here together. It's been something going about all the time.

GRAY

J: Well, has it slowed down...OK, I guess one thing I wondered too is, like in Millersburg, you know, those stores aren't there anymore. I don't know when they died out. But I think, I think...I'm trying to remember what Gerald [Jackson] told me. I guess he must have gone...there must have been one when he was growing up, because he went with his dad, but it hasn't been there for say, 25 or 30 years.

G: No, it's not been there for a long time.

J: What was I going to say? I guess my idea has been, you know, so people got cars and they started driving here, here and there. When did that kind of stuff, did that start happening here?

G: Well, I reckon along about in the '70s, and we quit in the '70s because there got to being so much cereal and so much washing powders, all different kinds, you know. And you couldn't have them all. If you got a case of one, you'd sell two or three out of it, and then you'd have the rest of them left on your hands. And everybody wanted to try every new one, you know. I was always in the habit if they called for something, well, I'd get it. And along about then, we quit the store, and then, Wheeler Fouch went out at Orleans, the wholesale house went out at Orleans. And we was going to be in the bracket where we'd have to buy either two or three hundred dollars worth of groceries at a time. And they had to come from Dale [Indiana] down here, down to Jasper. And if we forgot something, they didn't come on every two weeks. But if you forgot something, to order something, you was out four weeks before you could get it, see, because you'd have to wait till they come back to order it the next time. So, that was out, and you had to order, I think, two, three hundred dollars worth at a time. So, that was when, about the time we quit. Because we didn't want to do that.

J: Had business started, you know, slowing down a bit, just because the area changed?

G: Well, I guess it slowed down some, because a lot of people go to town to pick up stuff at town, and if they forgot something, why then they'd stop here, and aim for us to have it, you see. And that was kind of aggravating, so...Add's mother had a stroke. She lived over here in a little trailer, and she had a stroke, and they took her up to his sister's which was right up the road here. And we'd go up there every night to see her. And then I'd help in the daytime if they needed any help for anything, help with washing or anything. And she laid for 18 months. So, along about that time, we just sold our groceries out with a percent off, and let them take out what they could use. And just left

GRAY

the rest of them, and there was another man had a store up here, and he took what was perishable and sold it out. And mainly, we just...what we had left, we just left this stuff back here, now that ought to been done something with, we just left it set.

J: And that was about when?

G: That was about 1970.

J: OK. Alright.

G: So, that was kind of when it went into a museum and we just left it like it was. We took everything down and painted these ceiling and sidewalls and just put the antique stuff kind of back up in it and left it like it was. Got rid of our ice cream cabinet and our meat case, and....

J: Were you sad to see it stop--not that it's stopped, because _____ or were you tired of...?

G: Well, really it didn't, because the people just kept coming. And really it didn't stop. It just kept going on and on. Of course, now, when Add, he'd sat here and talk and tell...there'd be, about every day, there'd be somebody come that wanted to know where somebody lived, or who somebody was kin to or...

J: Oh, you mean even after that time, even after like when you started slowing down. Yes. Yes. Wow. So would you keep on having, like the square dances and stuff like that?

G: Not any more. No, we're not having none of them for a long time.

J: Well, when did you all start collecting these antiques?

G: He's got a pencil back yonder that's got 1917 on it.

J: This is amazing, it really is.

G: So, you just don't never throw anything away, you have a collection like this.

J: But I mean, it's not just regular stuff that you have around the house. There's a lot of real fine stuff here.

G: Well, you see, what we got, we tried to leave it like it was, so people could see how they used to do, what they had to do with. And just, we never fixed up anything too much, other than just to keep it from falling apart.

GRAY

J: Yes. It's amazing. It really is incredible. I should go ahead and turn this, because it's about to stop.

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE]

J: I guess back in the older days in the beginning time, you know -- I guess that would be '39 you said? No, it wasn't '39.

G: '34 is when I come down here.

J: OK. Alright. First of all, in those beginning years, I mean, there wasn't even electricity here then, was there? Or was there?

G: No, we had a Delco back when we first started. We had the...and it set down in the basement, and if it run out of gas of a night, Add could always hear it. He knew when it run out of gas. Time for you to fill it up. It took about five gallon of gas every day. And you had to carry that in and put it in. And if it run out of gas, he could hear it in the night, he'd hear the thing stop.

J: Well, I guess -- he needed that for the cream?

G: We had Delco lights, and we had Delco iron, and had a Delco fan, and anything that we had to have electricity, we used that Delco. I forget, '40, we put in the pump in '41. I don't know how long we had electricity before we put in the pump. But we had it a while before we put in the pressure system.

J: That's what I was going to ask, is when the electricity came out.

G: It was a little before '41, I don't know, about 1940, I expect.

J: OK. OK. Did many people, I guess, were people, most people having cars by that point?

G: Yes.

J: Yes?

G: Yes, about everybody. Of course, we had about the first television come around.

J: Oh, you had a TV here?

G: Yes, we've had a television...it set up there in the corner, and people would come and watch that television.

GRAY

J: Did a lot of people come?

G: Several. Till they began to getting their own, you know.

J: Yes. Wow. Do you remember what people were first saying about it? You know, whether it'd stick around or whether it was just...?

G: No. Nobody could understand, you know, hardly, how it worked. No, I don't remember too much about it. And we had the first radio, too. They had it in the old store, and that was back in...that was before '33. And they got their ballgames on the old radio.

J: So would the men--I guess the women, too; I guess I think it's probably mainly the men, sit around and listen to that.

G: Yes, mostly the men.

J: Well, you know...go ahead.

G: See, I never helped in the old store. I didn't come down here till after he built this one in '33, during the Depression. And his customers thought he needed a store building, and they helped him and paid their store bills.

J: Oh! Well, that was a great idea.

G: Yes, that's how he got the store.

J: It's huge too. Well, I was just going to ask, where was the old store? I must have forgotten.

G: It was right north of here, just a little. Right out, right next to us.

J: OK, right. So, it was just....

G: It was just a two-room log house. And they just made it into the store.

J: I guess...and again, what people have told me, like Bethel and whatnot, you know, that, I guess her father used to come up here...

G: Oh yes.

J: -- you know, and sit. And I kind of got the idea that it was more -- and like Gerald said too, you know -- for the men it

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was telling the yarns, and philosophizing and stuff like that.

G: Just a gathering place, a gathering place, and they all knowed what the other fellows are doing and everybody knowed everybody, and it was just a gathering place.

J: Would that kind of stuff go on, the men telling yarns and stuff like that? Was that just sometimes, or all the time or...?

G: All the time. There'd be somebody come in with a new something to tell, or something to say. Yes, there's....

J: Do you miss those times? Or....

G: Well, I will now.

J: Oh, yes. Yes.

G: Because they'll not be as many come as like that, because everybody knowed what each other was doing, and what they were going to do, if they was going to put hay or if they was going to plant corn or what they was going to do the next day.

J: Wait. And that's what you miss, you're saying? That's what you miss, is...?

G: Yes, they'll not gather in here and tell what's going on. Of course, they've all moved away, now, there's not too many to come like they did, but the men would come and talk with Add, you know. And they'd know what, if they was selling their cattle or if they's selling hogs or what was going on around.

J: And, OK, that's what I thought you meant, since your husband's gone now, then, then the men at least won't be stopping by as much.

G: They'll not be that many...they'll be more like these ladies here.

J: Yes, yes. So even up to just very recently, it's been the same way? I mean, it sounds like it never really stopped?

G: No, it never did stop, none of the time. We got so on the last _____, maybe, we'd go more. We wouldn't be at home as much. And if we was gone, somebody'd come, why they'd say, "Oh, they're not there any more. They're gone." But we wasn't going, only just for the day. Because we never, never was gone, only just that day. And it's...if somebody come and visited with us, and if they had company come, they'd bring their company and come back, because they thought they had a good time and enjoyed it,

and I hope they did, anyway.

J: I'm sure they did.

G: And that-a-way there'd just be somebody different here all the time. Now, then, ones that don't know Add's gone, why they come and then, I hope they come back. I...don't want them, just because he's not here, not to come. But...

J: Did you two ever talk about those days? You know, miss them or -- I guess that's a stupid question because what you're just saying is it never really stopped.

G: No, it never really stopped. We just kept going on and on and really he thought he'd get home from the hospital this time but...

J: Yes, it's still going on.

G: But he kept getting a little worse ...

J: Yes... yes... (deep pause)
You must have a ton of memories.

G: Oh yes, there's a lot of memories. Besides knowing where this stuff all comes from and then how we got it, and all, there's lots of ... (deep pause) memories.

J: Are there any pieces here that have -- you know -- a lot of sentimental value. That you like a lot for their ...

G: Oh, I've got pieces that was handed down in the family and then there's pieces that means more than others because of the way we got 'em.

J: You know, you were talking about how, up until your husband's death -- and even now too -- you know, people stopping by, the men stopping by and start talking about what they're going to plant and harvest and, I guess, the drought and stuff like that. Would it mainly be the older people? or...

G: Yes. Mostly. There's not too many children any more, see. All of the farms that have been bought and made into one which -- used tothere used to be a lot of little farms. And, of course, that takes the children, you see and quick as the children are old enough to get a job, why they've got places to go, so there's not too many that come any more.

J: Has that been a gradual change? Or has that...

G: Yes. There's always been a bunch of small children come. A bunch get together and come. Well, they grow up and then...you think...well they've grown up, and then there'd be another bunch come. No, there's been children coming about all the time but, you know, they'd be just a different bunch. The bigger ones, they'd got married and gone, and some of the bigger ones would come back once in a while; most of them have gone. They don't come back. Then, of course, families have moved away, you see. All of the older ones and the ones that've moved in that we don't know; they've all got jobs and go to work. They don't loaf the way they used to do. There's somebody here ... there's just two or three of the older ones left to come to ...

J: Yes. Come to socialize with that way.

G: Yes.

J: When did all that start changing? --- This chair is so comfortable. I'm sorry I'm all slouched all over the place, but it's so comfortable. Is this an old scale?

G: No. It's just an... Add had made them. He made quite a few of them and he sold some.

J: God, they're so comfortable.

G: He promised a man one the other day and he didn't get it made for him.

J: It's funny 'cause when I first sat down I thought "I'm not sure how comfortable that's going to be." (Both laugh) It's made basically of just iron and this rod...

G: And this leather.

J: God, it's wonderful.

G: Yes, this rod and the leather. The Amish man had that leather.

J: God, it's wonderful; it's great.

G: Yes. Add sat in it a lot.

J: Did he?

G: Yes.

J: You can swing back and forth as much as you want to.

GRAY

G: He said he could turn around and he could have his nose in everybody's business at once.

J: (Laughs.) He sounds like a delightful man. But, you were saying, I think, when all that stuff starting changing a bit... you know, kids not going on into farming and...

G: This gradually changed. There's still a few children who come. There's no little ones around the neighborhood now. These folks moved in over here and they had two teenagers and now one of them is driving a car. You can see they're not little any more. And there's some that live up the road that's younger and they come but They're just about all gone.

J. Yes. I guess I'm kind of surprised because I thought you said there were maybe twenty families or something like that. And now there's just five and a half people.

G: Yes.

J: Yes. Wow. [Pause.] Millersburg, -- it sounds like from what Gerald said, at least I guess during his lifetime, I guess he's still pretty young, he's about forty or something. -- I guess that during his time Millersburg has been pretty steady; about thirty-five people I think.

G: (Laughs.) And the funny thing around here is there's more widow-women than anything else. And all Millersburg's just about widow-women. So there's not -- the families are gone from up there too.

J: Yes. So the husbands have died and the kids are out.
(Pause) So what's going to happen?

G: I don't know. I don't know what's going to happen. They just keep dying off; there's less and less.

J: It sounds like ... I guess I'm imagining that their kids have gone on to some town or city or something?

G: They got them a job, you know. They're in the city or they've got married and moved away. Now, there's not very many of them stayed on a farm.

J: Yes.

G: There's one boy down here, he's married and got a family. And him and his Dad, they've got two farms and their boys stayed on a farm. And there's another man down here, his son is helping him and they've got the farm together (which will be the younger

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one's.) But there ain't very many younger ones staying on the farm.

J: Well, is that because... Why is that; because farming is so hard?

G: It's too hard for a farmer to make a living anymore. They have to have so much machinery and the farms are so high that a young boy couldn't start out farming.

J: I guess I wonder -- and I don't know if you can -- I wonder if the kids would even want to, would they like to stay and farm or do you think...

G: Well, once in a while you'll find a boy or a girl who likes to stay on a farm. But most of them they want to get away from the farm. And there's just not enough made on the farm for them... And they can't stay on the farm unless their Dad's got the machinery for them to... Now the Amish, they buy these little farms -- they're so many acres. If they buy a big farm they divide it between the two and make two farms out of it. And, of course, they've all got families, you see. But now, I don't know what they're going to do when their families gets so they've got to buy more land. You see, these others have all gone in and made big farms out of them and they won't want to buy a big farm.

J: These big-farm people, are they local people who've just done well?

G: Yes. Most of them are from around here.

J: Local farmers.

G: Yes.

J: When did the Amish start coming out this way?

G: I think about '68.

J: Oh. That recent.

G: Yes. They've not been in here too long.

J: I thought... did...

G: They just come in a little while before we quit the store.

J: During the time that you were both here, would they come in?

GRAY

G: Yes.

J: Just out of curiosity, did they mix with the other customers very much? Would they sit and talk...

G: They would come in and talk to them, but they'd never sit down. They never had time to sit down and have a... They'd make a conversation but to just sit down and visit with them, they didn't have time.

J: Yes.

G: If they'd come after anything, they got what they came after and they'd be on their way.

J: Just out of curiosity, where do you go to do shopping and stuff now. Now that you can't buy from yourself anymore.

G: Just wherever I happen to be. If I happen to be in Salem, if I happen to be in Paoli, if I happen to be in Orleans or if I happen to be in Bedford, well I...

J: You get around pretty well, I take it.

G: Yes. I get to about every one of them.

J: Yes. Yes.

G: Yes, my mother's in a retirement home in Salem and if she lives 'til March she'll be a hundred years old.

J: Wow.

G: So, I have to go to Salem maybe about once a week or sometimes two weeks anyway. And then I'm over in Bedford a lot with Add. And I've got to go to Paoli some and just wherever I'm at. French Lick. A lady took me to French Lick for dinner Sunday.

J: I heard you telling those ladies that story there... So you really get around a lot, it sounds like. (Long pause) Well, looking back, are there any -- you know, like -- special things that happened or do you have any important memories or things you really enjoyed.

G: I'm not very much to remember what happened, I'm generally just...

J: ...tend to what's going on right now?

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G: Yes. There are people who come in and say, "Do you remember doing so-and-so," and I say "No, I don't remember that at all." (Laughs) It just happened and I forgot that. So, I'm not much to ... unless it's something special. I don't think of anything right now that...

J: Yes. Yes. It sounds like it's been all real good. You've had so much going on. Sometimes when there's so much going on, it all just kind of seems altogether more...

G: Yes, it just happens and goes on.

J: Yes. I don't know. (Long pause) It's funny. I mean... I guess ... I grew up in a larger town -- and what-not -- and so this kind of way-of-life, you know, people stopping by and just sitting and talking and stuff like that, it's not something I've grown up with. And in fact, I remember when I first met Gerald and he was telling me about going to the country store with his Dad -- and you know -- and all this stuff, I thought " I can't believe that that went on." It's really something.

G: Yes, that was the way it was back in that -- Gerald's Dad and Mom come over here and they come to trading and his Dad, I can remember him setting here on one of the benches setting here, and he'd sit right there on that bench and he'd laugh at everything that was said. He was a jolly fellow.

J: Yes.

G: And there was another old gentleman lived up the road here. His name was Shelby. They called him Uncle Shelby Cornwall(?) and after he got older, he wasn't able to do too much; he'd come down and sit on that bench. Now, if I knew then what I know now, I'd love to talk to him more and found out more. But then, I was busy and I just let him sit here and visit with the ones who come in. And, you know, you think you don't have time...

J: I know... And then what seemed so urgent at the time, you kind of think, it really could have waited a minute or two.

G: It could have waited; it didn't have to be done.

J: Yes. Yes. (Pause) Well, it strikes me too... May I ask, when were you born? How old are you?

G: I was born in 1912.

J: 1912. So you're...

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G: I was seventy-six just the last day of July.

J: (Laughs) Oh, happy birthday, then.

G: I'll not be seventy-five no more.

J: (Laughs) Right. Not for the last week anyway. And your husband was eighty-six? I guess...it occurs to me that you really have talked to maybe... I'm a bit tired today and not talking too clearly here... but you've talked to generations within one family, you know. Known the kid, but known the kid's parents and grandparents too?

G: See, he knew the older ones better than I did. And, of course, this was new to me when I come down here and I hadn't been acquainted with all these people down here till I'd been down here awhile. Now, then, after we got older, why then he could tell more about the older people that was here before I ... We had a friend that lived in Salem and he'd come down and visit with us and we got to be real good friends. And he'd say when they'd tell something, "Was that before Mabel come or after?" (Laughs) So really, Add being older than I was, why he knew the older ones and then, of course, I was coming on up with the younger ones. And we could talk to both...

J: Yes. Yes.

G: Generations.

J: Yes. Right.

G: The difference in our ages never did make any difference. We always got along...

J: ...just fine, yes. Yes. I guess you both worked together too?

G: See, he had a truck fifty years and he sold his truck after he had it fifty years. A big two-ton truck and he done a lot of trucking. And he trucked livestock to Louisville and brought back trade, and we never did let the wholesale house bring their groceries out here. We'd always go down there and pick them up. And he'd take the truck and go down there, and about the time I'd get the things put up on the shelves, he'd come out with another load of groceries. So I never run out of a job. (Laughs)

J: Oh, so, he'd be the one to go out and...

G: ...oh yes, he did all the trucking and a lot of times he'd be going, you know, and I wouldn't know when he was coming in.

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J: I was going to ask about that.

G: And he hauled pumpkins to Scottsburg. He'd be out all night some nights. He'd get in line and wouldn't get back till... And he hauled ... When they took the pigs to Louisville, why he'd go down there and he'd stay until he got them unloaded before he come back, you see. And he'd be gone... I never knew when he'd be coming in. And he hauled coal. He'd be gone overnight then. And he'd go coalmining and stay till he got loaded and then come in with a load of coal.

J: So, was he gone a lot?

G: He was gone quite a bit, yes.

J: Quite a bit. (Pause) How'd you like manning the store by yourself?

G: Well, we never did have too much help and I done most of it myself.

J: That's what I figured, yes. You must have been real busy.

G: I didn't run out of a job. (Laughs)

J: I guess, you know, what people were telling me the way business was done then, someone would come in and, I guess, you know, tell you what they needed. Was that the way it was done?

G: Yes. It wasn't self-service. We never did make this into a self-service because they said that, if we did, they wouldn't come back. And I'd be behind the counter and they'd stand there at the counter and they'd give me their bill or I'd write out their bill, they'd tell me what they wanted and then I'd fill their bill and then they'd pay me.

J: How long would they be sitting down talking to people here, and...?

G: Well, they'd give me their bill; I'd copy it off -- or if they wanted to tell me, I'd write it down. Then when they got through they'd sit down and talk and visit and I'd fill their groceries and either put it in a box or a basket or sacks and they'd carry it out.

J: No wonder they didn't want it to be self...

G: They said they wanted to talk and visit, they didn't want to come, be hunting groceries and...

J: ...and hurrying out. Yes.

G: We never did make it into self-service because that's the way they wanted it.

J: So how long would someone stay?

G: Sometimes they'd come stay all afternoon or come stay for the morning and get home in time to get their dinner. And we just never knew when anyone was coming. If I cooked any, I would cook in-between times, and if Add was here and we'd eat, why I'd fix it on the table and we'd sit down, maybe somebody'd come. If they'd come in a hurry, we'd get up and wait on them and let them -- they'd usually sit down and stay until we got through eating. [Once Add got up seven times at one meal!]

J: Yes. Yes.

G: We'd go back and finish up our meal. But we were just here of a-morning or here of a-night, whenever they'd come, you know, why we was always open. And we never had no closing or opening. And we would just wait on them when they come.

J: Of course, like you were saying, you knew everyone and...

G: Sometimes we had a schoolteacher come through here. I think she taught over here about twelve years. She'd come of a-morning before six o'clock. Well, you know in the wintertime, six o'clock was dark. And we'd get up and open the gates. As soon as we got up we'd open the gates and I'd go ahead and get our breakfast. And if she'd come, she'd come on in and she'd talk to Add and she'd tell him her troubles and (laughs) he'd tell her his. And I'd get breakfast ready. Well, we'd just go ahead and eat our breakfast 'cause she'd already had hers. And then when it come time for her to go -- she'd do her own janitor work -- she'd go on over to the school, see. She knew when she got here she was close enough she'd get on to school that day. But if she started from home, if her car wouldn't start or something, why she knew she wouldn't get here.

"Howdy do?" (Sound of door opening, customer enters the store, a stranger looking for antiques.)

J: We've got company. (Turns recorder off.)

[END OF SECOND SIDE OF TAPE ONE.]

G: ...road here, and they just lived down there a little while and they moved up here on this farm. And then they lived in an

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old house back over here in the field. And in 1908 or 09, they built this house over here and the rest of the children was born over here. So, Add's brother -- who got the homeplace -- he lived over there till his hip got to bothering him and he couldn't take care of his farm and he sold his farm. And then he sold the house and the ground over here and he moved to Paoli and he had his hip operated on. And they operated on Friday the thirteenth and he died on the next Thursday. So, Add always depended on him more or less to remember things that happened and how they happened and he could remember and tell things better than Add could, but then Add was always good...him, and there's a man who lives up the road here by the name of Grant Cornwell and he's the oldest one now around here. And they'd talk and tell each other about what somebody'd ask them, and then they'd laugh about it and said "We could just tell them anything we'd want to now, 'cause nobody's here to prove it by. We're the oldest ones." ---

J: People have to take our word that this is what happened...

G: ...so now then, Grant's left. So, there was an old gentleman lived here and -- he wasn't such an old gentleman at the time, but anyway -- he lived here and helped in the store 'fore I come down here. Then after I come down here, why then, he decided to move to Arkansas and he never was married. But his mother and father lived up here, but his brother lived in Arkansas, so he moved down there but he didn't live but a year after he moved down there. So, here sometime back-a-piece, Poe, his name was Poe, Jim Poe, they come to find out about Uncle Jim. And they didn't know whether Add was living or whether he wasn't, and when they come in they said, "Well, I guess you're the man we're looking for. Aren't you Add Gray?" He said, "Yes." So they was tickled and said that it felt like they'd found a long-lost relative.

J: Yes.

G: And they stayed and visited with us for quite awhile; thought they had an awful good time. And one man and woman was from Arkansas and the other man and woman lived down in Kentucky. And, so they been back past two different times and didn't get to see us -- we were gone. And, so then, when I called them, or when they found out about Add, why, they was awful sorry they didn't get to see him.

J: Yes. Yes.

G: Then there was a sister to them that lived in St. Louis. And her son lives in Arkansas, so he was visiting her and they called from St. Louis to know if they could come and see us. And I told

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him he had to come ahead and see us; that Add was gone and I'd tell him what I knew. So, there's a man lives up here on the farm where their Uncle Jim lived. And when he got married, there's an old house on the place, and he tore this old house down and built him a new house. But the barn and the warm(?) house is still standing.

J: Yes.

G: So they got to go up and see that place...

J: Oh!

G: And then they got to see where their Uncle Jim was buried -- which is down here at Stampers Creek So, I got a letter from those folks down here in Kentucky a day or two ago and they even called Add, "Uncle" Add. And they said they was, of course, sorry to hear about it; sorry they didn't get to see him the last two times they come by here.

J: Yes.

G: So, that's one that come... them folks come from St. Louis.

J: Wow. Well, I mean, you-all do have quite a reputation out here. You know you...

G: See, if one comes and has a good time they tell somebody else. And then they bring somebody else. So that keeps it going.

J: Yes. It's pretty neat. (Pause) How far do you think you're known?

G: How far what?

J: That you're known. You know, like all...

G: That book [visitor's book] has got in it from Alaska and South America and Switzerland and Germany ...

J: And they've all just heard word-of-mouth from some...

G: Yes. Them exchange students come here from Germany and around, so they ...

J: Oh. Like if there's exchange students living anywhere around here, then someone will bring them here, and...

G Yes.

GRAY

J: Oh, has that been nice -- meeting people from all different parts...?

G: Yes. Some of them you can talk to; some of them you can't understand.

J: Yes, I was just thinking of someone from the Bronx or New York coming in here and ...

G: I've got a third-cousin married a Korean girl.

J: Yes. (Pause) Did you-all belong to the Stampers Creek...

G: No. No. Add was still on the Stampers Creek Cemetery Association Board. He helped them with the cemetery; but, no, we belonged to the Church of Christ itself.

J: Oh. Well, wasn't that a far drive when you ...

G: Yes. But we went several years up there, but then when Add got so that he couldn't climb the steps, well then we didn't go no more. So it's been a few years since we went. Since we've went to church, really.

J: Yes.

G: But... (Long pause)

J: Well, what I was going to ask is, about the men and the way that they tell stories? I guess, and again I'm going back to Gerald -- poor guy, I'm always going back to him. But, when I was talking with him -- I interviewed him twice, I've gone back twice now -- I'm always struck by what a great talker he is. You know, just the way he talks. You know, kind of like "get's going, get's going" and ...

G: He was going to stop and talk with Add to find out some more things he wanted to know but he waited too long.

J: He waited too long, yes. Yes. Was that...and the way Gerald...it sounded like he learned it at the Miller's ---you know, he learned it going to the country stores with his Dad. You know, was that...is...I...what am I trying to say? I'm wondering, was that something like just maybe Gerald ...just with him or within his family or was that a more common way of

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G:Whenever they went to the store they usually took the children with them. And they would go out and play or they would sit around and entertain themselves. Then, of course, Gerald went with his Dad...

J: Yes.

G: ...And...(long pause)

J: I guess it just seems like it was...

G: Did Gerald tell you where he lived?

J: When he was growing up, you mean?

G: Yes.

J: Why, I thought it was right there in that house. Maybe... where?

G: No, he lived right over here at the foot of this hill. There's a house on the ...

J: I'm sure he did tell me but I've just forgotten.

G: _____ school over there and then, he lived right over back around the drive in there ... to the house back there...

J: Yes.

G: And that's where they lived.

J: I guess it just seemed like, when I was listening to him, he seemed like...I hadn't heard anyone talk like that.

G: Well, of course he probably was at Millersburg, was right there, and of course Punkin Center over here.

J: Yes.

G: And... (Long pause) Now he didn't live in Millersburg till, oh My uncle and aunt lived there _____. If you went back to the house there, my uncle and aunt built that.

J: No kidding. That same house. When did he live in that house then? When he was older?

G: Well, let's see. He's not had that too long. They bought this up here and lived up here a right smart bit... (Long pause) I wouldn't want to guess when they moved up there, but she died

in '71, and it had to be before that.

J: Yes.

G: Probably '67 or '8 along there.

J: Yes. (Long pause) Right, right. So when he was about eight or nine or something; nine or ten?

G: No, he was older than that when they moved up there.

J: '69? Oh yes, you're right. He was about nineteen or twenty then, yes. OK.

G: But he's never lived anywhere but right around here.

J: Yes... Was there any competition between Punkin Center and Millersburg for customers?

G: I don't know, it just...

J: It seemed to work out alright or...

G: Yes.

J: Who would go there and who would go here? Just the people who live close by there or ...

G: Really, I don't know who went up there. (Laughs)

J: Maybe that's why it died out.

G: I was working here and, just as they come here, and I don't know...

J: Yes. Yes.

G: No, I don't... No, my uncle _____ had that store up there and then they owned that property there and they owned the property right there on the corner there in Millersburg. So they owned a right smart of that at one time.

J: Yes. Yes.

G: That was Add's sister.

J: Yes. Oh. (Pause) Well, if I can just ask -- this will be the last question. I'm sorry if I'm a little bit wandering back and forth. I guess I'm more tired than I thought I.... my stomach thing really got to more than I thought it had. But --

GRAY

looking back, you're seventy-six and you've been here about forty years or so? Is that about right? No, no, no, that's not right. You've been here about fifty years.

G: I've been here fifty-four years.

J: Fifty-four years, OK... How would you describe --- the _____ is not about Punkin Center right here but about the area, you know? How would you --- has it gone from being ...is it dying out, is it progressing or what?

G: It seems like everybody's leaving. (Laughs)

J: Everybody's leaving.

G: It don't seem like there's anybody left around anymore.

J: Yes. Do you...

G: More of the people that come here come from away from here.

J: You're talking about people who want to live out in the country and...

G: Well...

J: Commuting and things like that?

G: When they come to visit, like that lady that just came in here [a stranger antique-hunting] and them other ladies you see, they didn't live around here.

J: That first group?

G: Yes.

J: Yes.

G: And

J: Well, do you ever think like this way of life is just...

G: Will be gone one of these days.

J: Yes, do you think that?

G: Yes.

J: Well, when you think about it what....How does it make you feel just thinking about it?

GRAY

G: Bromer is only just the name, and them grain bins up at Bromer, there's nothing down there.

J: And Millersburg is gone?

G: Millersburg is nothing.

J: I don't know if there's any kind of country store in Livonia any more.

G: Well, there's no store. There's a sandwich shop and they have a sale every Saturday night up there. Yes, there is one store up there yet. Yes, there is one store.

J: But its not...

G: At one time that was a big ... they had a fair up there.

J: At Livonia?

G: Yes. (coughs)

J: Bless you.

G: Talking too much.

J: (Laughs) Talking too much.

G: No, they told at one time that the ladies kept talking about going to town and they got to wondering where they was going, and come to find out they was going to Livonia, because Livonia was the biggest town around. It's bigger than Paoli or ...

J: Really!

G: Yes.

J: No kidding!

G: And they had a fair there at Livonia. There was a flour mill and two or three stores -- hardware stores.

J: Bigger than Paoli?

G: Yes.

J: The town or the fair?

G: The town.

J: I've just driven by it in just no time-at-all. I mean, it's just...

G: It's just all gone. Its...

J: There's nothing. I mean, there's like one cross-road and that's it. When was it so busy and what happened to it?

G: Oh, that was way back, that was before 1900.

J: Oh.

G: That's when my great grandmother was...

J: Oh.

G: So, you know, that was a long time ago.

J: Well, I wonder what happened to it.

G: I don't know, it's one of them that didn't grow.

J: I wonder if Paoli did because it's, well, it's "The Cross-roads" [of Southern Indiana] right now. I wonder if that has something to do with it.

G: Yes, of course it ___ just -- gets started and then...

J: Wow! That's amazing.

G: More to do and more to ... Paoli was on a kind of standstill there awhile.

J: When was that?

G: Just a few years back. About the time the hospital come in there.

J: I can't believe we haven't talked about Paoli. That's one of the things I wanted to talk to you about. Did you-all go into Paoli very much?

G: No.

J: No? Did...why? Just not the need to or...

G: There was just no need to go to Paoli. There wasn't... didn't do too much there...

GRAY

J: Have you started going more since you-all closed down your store, you know, in the '70's? And like you mentioned, you go to the Bedford sale...

G: Do a little more business down there, I guess I'd have to say. Be there a little oftener probably.

J: ...So Paoli really hasn't figured into your life very much at all.

G: No, not too much.

J: Not too much.

G: We had a float in the centennial when they had it in 1950. We had our truck decorated... had a big float. Had a lot of antique stuff on the truck and...

J: Oh.

G: People dressed up in their old clothes...

J: It must have been great.

G: Yes, we had a big time that day.

J: Was that a big deal, that centennial?

G: Yes. When Paoli had their sesquicentennial -- or centennial. The picture is back yonder somewhere.

J: OK. I'll try and see if I can find it, although I can't promise myself too much. I guess I'll have to look for it. So, are you very much aware of the changes Paoli has gone through or...

G: Not too much.

J: Not too much?

G: No, it's...

J: Like in the square and stuff like that.

G: They're trying to save the courthouse which I think ought to be saved. But, instead of that they went and built a jail and a courthouse down off of the square. And if they had just spent and kept the old courthouse the way it was, I think it would have been a lot better.

J: When was that?

G: Oh, about five or six years ago since they built the jail.

J: And they started to build a new courthouse?

G: Well, they didn't build a new courthouse, they just took the business out of the courthouse and put it down there in the... where the jail was, they built extra rooms down there.

J: Oh, I see what you're saying.

G: But they left the courthouse kind of like it was, course they got to fix it up if they keep it.

J: Yes. Yes.

G: That was a pretty house.

J: Would you miss it? I mean, would it take away from Paoli...

G: Yes, if they tore it down, it would.

J: You think ... Yes. Yes.

G: They've got a pretty courthouse in Salem too.

J: I guess I haven't seen that one yet.

G: My grandfather helped work on that.

J: Oh!

G: About 1880-something. Eighty-eight or something.

J: And what did your folks do?

G: Farm.

J: Farm? Small family...?

G: We had pretty good farm.

J: Was it cattle or...

G: Yes. We milked...

J: So you were raised a farm-girl and then you got into commerce...

G: Yes.

J: Did you ever miss farming? I guess you guys didn't have time to keep...

G: No. I come down here and, of course I...

J: Got right to work.

G: Yes. Changed...different job, but still I like this. Always did like it and never missed the farming too much.

J: Yes. And how about Add's folks? His Dad worked in the creamery?

G: No. He never did help him too much. He left him before...

J: Yes. (Pause) The last thing we'd started to talk about was just, you know, I mean, if this way of life is dying out -- you know what I mean -- people just stopping by and talking and --- you know what I mean -- how do you feel about that?

G: Well, I don't think the younger generation cares what happens. I think the younger ones... well some of them that's interested in this antique stuff but most of them have got their jobs and they've got their homes and I just don't think they ... they don't ... Well, all the older people go to nursing homes and if you want to talk to any of them you've got to go to nursing home to find out what any of them... So, I think the younger generation's going to have their own homes and families and are going to forget about the past.

J: Does that bother you? or... you know what I mean.

G: Oh, no. It's just naturally come about and its ... (long pause) I just don't think too much about it.

J: Yes. Yes. Yes. Well, is there any last word on Punkin Center or anything at all?

G: No. I don't know what will happen to Punkin Center if this...

J: Yes.

G: I wish it would go on. It needs to be made into a museum.

J: I was just going to suggest that. Yes.

G: I don't know how it could ever ... the younger ones don't

GRAY

care for it and the older ones are not able to take care of it, so it looks like ...

J: You can't believe all the young ones feel that way.

G: Well, maybe they don't all, but they're more interested in what it would bring and what (laughs)...

J: Yes.

G: ...Than saving it or preserving it.

J: Yes. It's just such a wonderful place, it would be a shame. I think. I think it would be a shame.

G: Yes.

J: I think it would be a loss to the area. ...Well, it's a hot day. (Laugh) I thank you very much.

G: OK.

J: I really have enjoyed myself.

G: Hope you get something that you can do something with.

J: I have.

G: I'm not a very good talker and...

J: Oh, no, you're a wonderful talker.

G: I'm just sorry Add wasn't here to talk to you, 'cause he would really got a had a good time.

J: Well, like I said, I really regret that I didn't come and speak with him when I first started to think about it -- which was a long time ago. I really regret that.

G: Yes, we never know. We put things off and ...

J: Yes. Yes.

G: We get to think we can't -- and we could, but...

J: Yes. Yes. (Sighs) Oh dear. (aside: Might as well turn that thing off.)

END OF INTERVIEW

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

INTERVIEWEE: Mabel Gray
INTERVIEWER: Catherine Jones
SUBJECT: History of Paoli, Indiana
DATE: March 30, 1989
TRANSCRIBER: Norma Olmer

[Second interview: first interview, August 4, 1988]

Jones: I'm Cathy Jones, and I'm here with Mabel Gray at the Punkin Center, a few miles from Millersburg. Today is March 31st, 1989, and we're here talking about Punkin Center, Millersburg and Paoli.

One of the things I wanted to ask about was... in the interview, you mentioned that you didn't go up to Paoli very much?

Gray: Yes.

J: And, I guess, what I wondered is: Can you tell me how often would you go though and...?

G: Well, at one time and... in 1950 we had gone to Florida, and there was a... Aetna Company was wanting to take over a filling station that was down there, and they wanted to buy some ground... or wanted us to buy the ground and an old house that was down there, and they wanted the filling station. So we bought the house, tore it down, and built two houses out of it. And then there was a garage there that we made into a restaurant.

J: Yes.

G: And then, later on, there was a... the man that run the cheese factory -- _____ the cheese factory, his name was Wright. And he wanted a house in Paoli, so Add always liked the store because it was made out of those blocks that come from up at Brownstown...

J: Yes.

G: ...and so, he said, "Well, they'd just build.. we'd build another house down there from those blocks from Brownstown." So we built that, and this man rented it and lived in it as long as he was president of the cheese company. And that made us three houses and a restaurant in Paoli.

J: Wow.

G: So we never did have the filling station, and that was about three lots there in Paoli. So we rented them all out. Of course, the renters got so... we had trouble renting them and so, not too long ago, we sold them all.

J: And so, would you go into Paoli very often?

G: Well, we did then. Pretty often to see about renters... of course, there was always somebody wanting something done. But for business, we didn't do any business much in Paoli 'cause we went to Orleans for... to pick up our groceries. And Louisville to get all... we got groceries and bottled gas and things like that down there. And Add would bring them back in the truck when he come back from Louisville after taking stock for farmers to stockyards.

J: Yes. Well, why would you do shopping in Orleans instead of Paoli?

G: Well, see, there was no wholesale house in Paoli.

J: Oh, that's right; that's right.

G: And the wholesale house was in Orleans, and they never did bring our groceries out here; we'd just go down there and pick them up. And whenever we'd run out and need something real bad, why, we'd go down there and get things that we needed and bring them out.

J: OK. Well, what were your impressions of Paoli? Or what was Paoli like in the '50s? What do you remember about it?

G: Well, it was a pretty good town. Course, I imagine it's... they've got more going now down there; they've got new restaurants down there. And then they've got that ski lodge which brought in a lot of extra.... Of course, the year before last, I think, was better than this past winter; I don't think they done too good this past winter (laughs) because it wasn't cold enough for them to do too much. But...

J: Right.

G: ...no, I think the ski lodge has helped out Paoli quite a bit.

J: Yes.

G: And, of course, they're getting their parks and their pools

and things like that to entertain the children, and they built onto the schoolhouse. And they had a good ball team this time and festivals and parades now.

J: Yes.

G: ...they went pretty far in playing ball.

J: Yes. Did it seem... does it seem as busy now as it was then? or does it seem less busy? or...?

G: Well, of course, there's always something going on in... they've done quite a bit of business. They had their feed store, we bought feed, yes, that's another thing. We did buy feed down there; they had a feed store down there. Add'd go down there and pick up feed a lot of times. Magic Feed Mill.

J: Yes.

G: Of course, he didn't get no groceries in Paoli.

J: And you mentioned that Add knew quite a few people in Paoli because he'd gone to high school....

G: He went to high school down there, and he helped the man test cream when he was going to high school; and that's what he liked to do. So when he started the store, he started in testing cream and selling groceries too. He went to Central Normal, got teacher's license, no school.

J: Yes.

G: In the winter when they had the big snow, he went in the buggy --he drove a horse and buggy-- and stayed with the folks down there. His aunt lived in Paoli. And he had to walk when the snow was on; and he walked from Pumpkin Center to Paoli.

J: Wow. But... so, for you, when you went to Paoli, you didn't know very many people, did you?

G: No, I didn't know as many people as he did; and then, I didn't get acquainted with them too much down there on account of being in the store. If they come out here, well, I'd get acquainted with them and . I come from Washington County or near Salem, Indiana.

J: Yes. So, like you said, it was more... you knew the people who came here and not....

G: Yes.

J: Well, so, did you enjoy going into Paoli? or would you...?

G: Oh, yes, I liked to go to Paoli. But back then, we didn't go together much. He went, I tended to customers at store.

J: Oh, because of the store?

G: What?

J: Because of the store and having to have...

G: Yes.

J: ...one person out here.

G: I had to stay at the store most of the time. And if there was any going, why he'd go do the trucking as hauling for other people and produce to Orleans. Cream and eggs to be shipped at depot Orleans, Indiana.

J: He'd go.

G: We done our banking at Lepsic when we first started, and then we had to go to Campbellsburg when the bank ran out at Lepsic; and I'd always go to the bank with the checks. Of course we'd cash quite a few of the checks, you know; people would come out with their checks. We'd take them to the bank and.... No, I've done my phase at the store and Add's done the trucking. Add tested cream customers would get check for cream. Then they would buy groceries.

J: Trucking. And actually, how... it sounded like, you know, he hauled coal, and he hauled livestock and pigs to Louisville, and stuff like this. Was that a major enterprise of his? or was it just kind of a smaller thing that he did on the side? I got the impression that he hauled a lot. He hauled anything customer's wanted hauled--wasn't many trucks those days.

G: Well... He asked me one day; he said, "Did I ever..." Somebody had asked him if he ever went to... didn't go when he promised to go, and said, "Did I ever promise anybody to go take anything, like, to Louisville? or to market? and not go?"

And I said, "I don't remember you ever not go whenever you promised."

And he'd always load the truck... and brother said that he overloaded every time. He'd have to put some on the double deck or... he always promised to take more than he had room to take. (both laugh) He always had a load going down and coming back too.

J: So, was he gone very often?

G: Well, he'd go nearly every week. And then, of course, when he was hauling them hogs --that was when they was selling pigs; the government was buying them-- why, he'd just take one load and go back and take another one as fast as he could take them.

J: Yes.

G: He didn't even stay at home; he took his cot with him. And if he could sleep, why, he slept on that cot while he was waiting to get unloaded.

J: Wow.

G: One of those camp cots, you know, like they have in the camps.

J: Yes. Yes. Would that be for just a few days or would it be, like...?

G: No, it didn't last too long, you know. It was along about... I reckon it was war time; I forget kind of how it was, but he hauled hogs down there. And then, of course, it was in the fall when he'd take pumpkins to Scottsburg and haul them up there. And, of course, that was in canning season and they'd just take a load... he'd take a load up and stay till he got unloaded and then he'd come back and they'd load him again. And then he'd be ready to go right back at one time he was 50th in line.

J: Yes.

G: And as long as the canning Punkin season was in, well, that's... And then, of course, when he'd go get coal, he'd go to the coal mine and he'd stay till he got loaded, and then he'd come home with a load of coal. And he'd get someone to help him unload it, and he'd go different places and take that coal. When he got home, he could stay at home awhile; I mean, he could...

J: For awhile.

G: ...take a nap or whatever, when he got in, but he'd never know what times he was going to get back.

J: Yes. Wow.

G: No, he... anybody'd come and want any hauling done, or wanting... even moving people; he moved people. We went three

or four trips; he brought Amish brides back from... he went to Iowa and got one. I went with him to Missouri, and then he went up in Ohio and got them.

J: Wow, that's wild. Well, do you think it would have... this is one more thing about Paoli. Do you think it would have affected... now, how can I say it? Has Paoli... how important has Paoli... how much has it figured into your life here, at the Center?

G: Well....

J: If it hadn't been there for some reason, or something had happened to it, would it...?

G: No, I don't think it's that... we didn't do too much business for the store here in Paoli. Just owned property. It was... we started having them houses down there, is about all -- other than buying feed -- is about all we ever done in Paoli.

J: And I know you said Add had... knew people there, but like, did he have good friends there? and relatives?

G: Oh yes, he knew a lot of people. His granddad lived in that hotel there, that....

J: Oh really? The Landmark?

G: Yes.

J: Oh! Wow.

G: Yes, he was... I think he lived there... well, he lived there about the time we was married because he come down and stood up with us when we was married.

J: Hmm. Wow. So then, was Paoli kind of important to him, since he had relatives and friends there.

G: Yes, he had some relatives there that lived in Paoli. (long pause)

J: I guess one of the other things that I wanted to ask you about again is... or something that we could talk about is: When you were mentioning the changes in this area here, moving from Paoli to here now.... You know, there used to be like about 20 homes around here, and now there's....

G: They just now tore down a landmark down here, where people that come up here when he first started the store, the boys...

there's one of them that he could fiddle and that he had... they made music and come about every night and have music and they lived down here and.... But a man bought the farm just the other day and he didn't need the house no more, so they tore that house down. Boys that... they was boys then, and they growed up to be men, but they all passed away. And now they tore the house down.

J: So... and you said, that was like a major landmark.

G: Yes, that's like the older ones are going on and the few younger ones come... just mostly young boys that they... like to fish down here at the creek. And they just come and get candy and pop, and there's always been a younger bunch come. The older ones get married or goes away, and then there's another younger bunch come. And there's always been a few children. And all my life... and it's getting so there's not as many.

J: When you say: "They come", you mean they come here to the center? or just they come and live out in the area and...? You know what I mean? I'm not sure if you mean that they come from somewhere to come here....

G: No, they live out....

J: They live like somewhere around here.

G: Not so faraway but what they can come; ride their bicycles or ...

J: That's what I thought.

G: ...walk or.... Now, quite a few of the folks around, getting older, they need to get out and walk. And they walk up and down the road here; that's there.... They come and visit once in a while.

J: Yes.

G: I think the other Sunday when I was gone, there was about four of them come and set out here on the seat out on the porch. Of course, I wasn't here to let them into the store.

J: (laughs) So they just stayed and had a party by themselves.

G: They had a party all by theirselves out there.

J: Oh gee. Well, these people that come out here, are they people from the area? Or they... are they newcomers...?

G: Well, a lot of them come now just to see if Pumpkin Center

is still here, or maybe look for something that they'd like to buy. And of course, I don't sell anything, and they can't buy. So they'll stay and look around some, but they usually go on whenever they find out they can't buy anything.

J: Yes.

G: And there's some of the older ones that like to get out and ride around and go places. Why, they come and they look around and enjoy themselves. They think they have a good time looking at... a lot of this old stuff means quite a bit to some of the older ones.

J: Right.

G: They've seen and know what things are. But, of course, some of the younger ones, they don't know what a lot of things are and...

J: Yes.

G: ...we try to just leave them kind of like they was, so people could see how they used to have to... just like all that spoons and....

J: Spoons and stuff, yes.

G: Scratch and dishrag up there, you don't never see a scratch and dishrag like that now. And things like that that people never heard of, they enjoy seeing. All of it's got a little history; it's either somebody used it, or somebody had it and wanted it preserved. And we try to keep it like it was.

J: Keep it.... Yes. (pause)

So how do you feel, then, knowing that you have history here? in your house?

G: Well, I like for people to come and visit and see what they used to do with. Until I get ready to part with it, well, I'd like to stay here to have company and have them come.

J: Yes. Yes. What have you enjoyed most about, you know, being out here at Pumpkin Center? Which aspect of it does...?

G: Oh, I just... I enjoy the people coming, and you meet lots of nice people. And some of them are not as nice as some, but most of them are nice people and they're just older senior citizens that doesn't have anything much to do, and they just like to come and look at this stuff. And I like for them to come.

J: Yes.

G: And I'm here where I can either be in here or I can be out. And I like to get out in the yard; and I get my burros home, why I'll have to go to the barn.

J: Do you have burros?

G: Yes, I've got some burros. I got them... another man's taking care of them this winter for me and he's going to bring them back in a few days.

J: Good.

G: And I'll have them and my dogs; I'll have... he'll have to go back to the barn. She's been staying out here but she'll have to go back to the barn. And I used to have some chickens but I had to get rid of them, so I may get me a few more chickens so I'll have a few eggs. I'm not able to go to barn and feed if we have snow in winter.

J: (laughs) Ah, you'll be busy.

G: Yes. Younger ones not interested in antiques as senior citizens.

J: Sounds great. (long pause)

Well, you'd also mentioned too about people... the younger people not visiting as much? I mean something like, you know, they have their homes and they have their families, and their jobs, and they're just too busy?

G: Yes.

J: How... I guess I'm trying to figure out for myself, just trying to understand the whole change better for myself, and I wonder, do you think, you know,... how important has that been that people have to work now and all that?

G: Most all of them's got jobs any more and they go, like, in the morning and don't come in until late in the afternoon, and they don't have time to visit. And if they come in, why, they watch the television. And used to when of a night, when the neighbors was all around here, why there'd be... some of them come every night, you know and play cards and visit, crochet, and tell jokes.

J: Yes.

G: ...and visit and then through the daytime too. But most usually every night there'd be somebody come.

J: Yes.

G: Now there ain't that many to come anymore; they've all gone.

J: When you say "gone," do you mean: some of the old....

G: Well, I suppose, moved away, and the older ones passed on, and there's not as many houses any more. Course, they've torn down several, and the farms... they took the fences out and put the ground all together and there's no little farms any more...

J: Yes.

G: ...they're all big ones. They farm with all that big machinery and they can do that... put in a crop in, like, two days and a night; they work of a night any more, a lot of times. And they don't farm a long time like they used to with horses. And of course, then they'd have milking to do, and there's nobody milks anymore.

J: Yes.

G: And they've got some hog operations, and they've got some beef cattle up to feed. But, now, as far as... there's one farmer down here that I know of that milks. And used to, everybody had two or three cows, and chickens, and they had feeding to do of a night.

J: Yes.

G: It's a different day.

J: Which day..? this might be a question. Which day do you think you... what did you like about the days that... the way they used to be?

G: Oh, they...

J: Versus now.

G: ...used to be friendly, you know, and they'd come visit, and neighbors would help each other. Of course, now, this has always been a good community; if you needed help, they'd come and help you. If you called for help, why, they'd come any time.

J: Yes.

G: But....

J: Is it still that way?

G: Yes, its always been a good community like that. They didn't... got so they don't visit like they used to, but they still help each other.

J: And they don't visit...? again, because they're too busy...?

G: Too busy to... everybody's got their own....

J: Their own jobs and they're out all day long, and when they come home...

G: Yes, come home and get their own supper, and set down and watch their own television.

J: But... yes, so it's like everybody's got their own kind-of lives and jobs and families -- and that's it? Why do you think it's...? (long pause) Hmmm.

So the difference, then, is just because of the different way people work and....

G: Yes, it'd be a different way of making a living than what they used to have. Used to, nobody'd worked out _____; work at home. But now, then, there's nobody have anything to do at home; they have to go to the factory or somewhere.

J: Yes. Yes. So the different way of making a living, then, that's been part of what's changed....

G: That's changed a lot.

J: OK. Have there been many newcomers? Like I hear that, you know, people... people from Louisville maybe come here around Paoli and live, and then commute to Louisville -- and things like that. Have you seen very many, like, newcomers from outside of Orange County?

G: Not right here. Most of these that lives around here has either lived around here or their relatives have lived here.

J: OK.

G: There may be some that come live at Paoli that goes to Louisville, but they drive a long way sometimes to a job. But they've two or three factories at Paoli, and one at Orleans; and all these around here that works at the factories don't have to

go to Louisville or that far...

J: Yes.

G: ...for a job.

J: Yes. Yes.

G: And then the Carpenter's Body Works is over here at Mitchell; they hire a lot of them. And they _____ an awful lot of them around here worked over there.

J: So there aren't as many... there aren't very many newcomers? I mean, you know, like from...?

G: No.

J I mean, outsiders from outside of Orange County.

G: No, not right around here.

J: Not right around.... Do you know if it's any different like in Paoli, or anything like that? Have you heard very much about that?

G: No, I don't know too much about....

J: I'm not sure myself. I should have gotten to hear something about that.

G: I imagine that most of them in town works in Paoli.

J: Yes.

G: Works in Paoli.

J: Yes. Yes. OK. And then, when you were talking about the children leaving..? they leave because they're not farming, so..? I guess I'm trying to figure it out.

G: Well, they go off to... almost all of them, you know, they go to college or....

J: Yes.

G: About all the children any more goes to college.

J: Does it, really?

G: Then they get through college, then they've got them a job

someplace; they don't come back home.

J: Like, do they stay in Paoli? or go to a different..?.

G: Well...bigger towns, better jobs.

J: ...someplace other than Orange County?

G: A lot of them go to Bloomington school and... not too many comes back home whenever they get out.

J: Yes. Well, so does this seem to you like, you know, the normal change of generations, or does it...? Is what's going on now different than the way it used to be with kids? You know, 'cause before, kids would kind of tend to stay more where they were raised.

G: Yes, the kids most always stay around home or, if they went to school, they'd come back and help their dad, or do something (long pause).... They always had a job somewhere, but it doesn't seem like they left home like they do now.

J: Yes. Yes. So, what do you think about the area? I mean, the future for the area around here?

G: I don't know what to think about it; it's... It looks like all the... some of the older ones, I know, is going to retire. And I don't know any younger ones that's going to take over. So, there'll just be the ones that's got the big farms to go ahead and farm, I reckon, and tear down these old houses.

J: So, how do you feel about that?

G: Well, I hate to see them tore down, but I reckon that as long as they're getting old and they don't want to pay taxes on them, I reckon that...

J: Yes.

G: ...it's to their advantage.

J: Well, not so much that you've _____ about the houses, although, I mean, that's part of it, but just the whole way that things are changing? I mean, do you just shrug it off at times, or does it make you sad, or... how do you feel about it?

G: Oh, it makes me sad to think it's all gone.

J: Yes. Yes, I figured it's hard.

G: Of course, since Add's been gone, it's changed quite a bit. You just wonder how much longer you can stay.

J: Do you think about that? I mean...?

G: Yes, you think about it. The older you get the more you think about it. (laughs)

J: Would you ever think about leaving here?

G: Oh yes, I'll have to leave here sometime; I hope not for awhile.

J: Yes.

G: No, if I get sick or something, that'd be it.

J: Yes, because you're kind of isolated? Yes, you'd need someone to.... Right.

G: I don't know what will happen.

J: But you're a far cry from that now.

G: Hope. (laughs)

J: (long pause) So... this will be the last thing that I want to talk about anyway. So what would you want for younger kids to know about the way of life that was...? You know, that Pumpkin Center, some part of it... or what would you want them to know about the Center? I mean, is there anything..? you know what I mean, that you want them to understand? Or that you think is important to understand, either about Pumpkin Center or about the way of life connected up with it? Do you know what I mean?

G: I don't know what you mean. The younger ones aren't going to be too interested in Pumpkin Center other than the antique part of it.

J: Yes.

G: They might if somebody was going to write the history of it sometime, but it's been a store here for 66 years -- and that's a long time for one place.

J: Yes.

G: And I don't know if... the ones that come in probably now, won't know anybody that was here some years back.

GRAY2

J: Yes.

G: And they won't care what has happened, probably. And it don't make a difference when they get together anymore; the older ones, they like to talk about who lived here, and who was a relation to who, and where they lived, and how old they was and all that. Well, now, if the younger ones comes in, they don't know them people they're talking about, so really, it's going to fade out, I reckon.

J: Yes. (long pause)

Is there any last words? Anything else you want to say? Add Gray started Punkin Center January 25, 1922 with \$325.00 of groceries.

G: I've had a good life here; lived here... been here 50... it'll be 55 years in June, and made a lot of friends and seen a lot of people. I hope it can go on, but we don't never know what's ahead. Add and I were married 54 years.

J: Yes.

G: We've got to hope for the best.

J: Yes. Yes. OK. And keep your sugar down. (both laugh)
Thank you so much.

G: OK.

END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE

END OF SECOND INTERVIEW

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