

CONNECTICUT 20TH CENTURY AGRICULTURAL HISTORY PROJECT

ORAL HISTORIES

Interviewer: Luane J. Lange

Name of Person Interviewed: Jesse Gaylord

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Transcriber: NIM Transcription

Interviewee Address:

Q: We are in Litchfield, Connecticut but you live actually in the Torrington area. Is that Right?

A: That's correct. Yes.

Q: I was led to you by your other daughter, who I ran into, just happenstance. She told me that you had come to the family farm when you were how old?

A: How old was I when we came to the farm to live? (Addressing her daughter)
Twenty-five?

UV: Fifty-three? Maybe fifty-three? It was after my father died.

Q: What year would that have been?

A: That would be in around 1970.

UV: 1971.

Q: All right. And he had been raised on that farm?

A: Partly, yes.

Q: And chose not to farm and moved away.

A: Um hmm.

UV: To Hobart.

A: Hobart yeah.

UV: He went to high school in New Haven, I know that.

Q: And his family stayed up in Torrington?

UV: No. At that point my great-grandparents were living in the house.
And, his parents lived in New Haven.

Q: I see. So he also did not farm per se?

UV: No.

Q: His parents did not farm?

UV: No.

Q: His grandparents maintained the farm.

A: Um hmm.

UV: Right.

Q: Do you know why your husband's father or mother did not stay on the farm?

A: Oh, he was a very brilliant person and he graduated from the...

UV: MIT. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston)

Q: (Addressing Mrs Gaylord's daughter) Now this would be your grandfather?

UV: Right. My father's father.

A: He was a very brilliant man and he engineered a great many of the factories and so forth around Connecticut.

Q: Interesting. Who did stay on the farm to farm it in the relation? Was there some son who stayed?

A: No. There wasn't...there was another son but he didn't stay. I guess the grandparents kept at it until they wore out and that was it.

A: Yes. Nobody farmed it. It was just used as a residence.

Q: Do you know how many acres there were?

A: Originally, no I don't, but there were a lot.

UV: I...I have some idea. There were more than two hundred acres because when...before my father died, when my grandfather Gaylord died, a few years later my grandmother sold two hundred acres and my father was furious. Just furious with her. You know, she didn't consult others.

Q: Oh, I see.

UV: So I know there were...and actually, we have old maps in the house that show the parcels of land.

Q: So did she sell this when her husband died?

UV: Yes. And...

Q: And both of her sons had left the farm?

UV: Yes.

Q: So she sold the land. Where they in school at the time?

UV: No, no. This was you know, ...well, how old would grandma have been? She would have been in her seventies or eighties.

A: When grandpa died you mean?

UV: Seventies, yeah?

A: I think so, yeah.

UV: So my father was...you know, this was not too long before my father died actually. He was probably fifty years old or something like that. And at that point, we were either still living in New Haven or we had just moved to Long Island, one or the other.

Q: Okay.

UV: And my uncle, the one other son, lived in upstate New York and he was not on good terms with my grandmother so...

Q: I see.

UV: Okay.

Q: Did...you said you knew something about what had happened to that land.

UV: Oh, to the land. If I'm thinking of what you're thinking of, I meant after it had been sold.

Q: All right.

UV: And I can talk about that.

Q: Sure, go ahead.

UV: An older gentleman named Richard Coralli, who's eighty-nine years old now, bought, I think, most of that land from my grandmother, most of what she sold. We lived right on the corner of Tarringford Street and Gaylord Lane. Gaylord Lane used to be a dirt road. He built five houses on Gaylord Lane and the largest portion of the land is his land. He is now a widower. He has a beautiful big piece of property right around his house and then he has acres and acres of land that is just the way it's always been; an old apple orchard. Sometimes...actually for a period of time, he rented his land to Joe **Rouette**. He had Joe Rouette's cattle on his land.

Q: Oh, oh.

UV: Yeah, in a couple of different spots, couple of different fields, but Joe's not doing that anymore. What I want to be sure to say is that I see Mr. Coralli every day because I walk my dog you know...

Q: Could you spell his name?

UV: Yes. C-O-R-R-A-L-I. He is very protective of his land and does not want it to be developed. Over the years you know, people very persistently pursue him to...to...yeah...

A: To sell, um hmm.

UV: ...for development. The portion of Gaylord Lane that goes through most of his property is still a dirt road. It's paved just where those five houses are and then it turns into a dirt road which is the way it's always been ever since I can remember. It's a city road though and if that road is to be paved, it will only be paved if both property owners on either side are developing their land. And so...and he won't do it.

Q: Who owns the other side?

UV: Yes.

Q: So they didn't farm. So Mr. Coralli was the one that actually farmed it over the years?

UV: Well, I'm not sure that he farmed it. But he...he leased...

Q: He tended it.

UV: Yeah, he tended it and he leased, you know, he let Joe Rouette use his land for the cows, you know.

Q: Interesting.

UV: Yeah, yeah.

Q: (To UV) You've come to the house since you've been back... you had never lived there before?.

UV: I know, it's confusing.

Q: (To A.) When you first came back after your husband died...

A: Um hmm.

Q: You had not lived in that house before?

A: No, never.

Q: As you visited it over the years, what are some things that you remember about visiting it?

A: Oh, just that it was pretty and quiet and...and definitely in the country. And I guess that's about as much as I have to say. It was very beautiful and very quiet and soothing. A lovely aspect.

Q: And this was in '70...I the '70's that you moved back?

A: Um hmm.

UV: 1971.

Q: Where did you live in Long Island?

Q: And which grandmother did they....?

UV: Same grandma.

Q: Oh, same. Okay.

UV: It's just the parcel of land on the other side of Tarringford Street.

Q: Oh, I see.

UV: Mr. Coralli bought the land behind our house towards the New Hartford and east and on the west side of Tarringford Street. I think it's **Leonardi and Birdy** is the name of the developers. Bought all that land.

Q: So basically, you're surrounded by development?

UV: Yeah.

A: We are basically.

Q: Out on your side of the road?

UV: Um hmm.

A: Um hmm.

UV: Both sides of the road.

Q: How far is Coralli's from you?

UV: Oh, it's just you know, the part of the Lane...
Yes, maybe not even a quarter of a mile.

Q: Okay.

UV: He owns...and my grandparents before him, owned the property back to Harrison Road which is the boundary of New Hartford. That's where New Hartford begins and right on the corner of Harrison Road, right there, they have just built an enormous Home Depot. So, all that wild land, all those woods and everything, I mean, a huge chunk of it was just bulldozed over for Home Depot. There's a lot of commercial development that's going on right in this...

Q: So other farms are selling out. Or if they haven't been farms, they've been land that's being held but not farmed recently? Was it overgrown?

A: Yes, um hmm.

Q: Interesting? Where did you go to school?

A: In Newark in New Jersey. It's a Presbyterian hospital in Newark, New Jersey.

Q: Where are you from originally?

A: From Verona, New Jersey.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: Well, it's all very complicated. My sister married my husband's best friend and we were the Maid...Maid and Matron of Honor and all that.

UV: Best friend though...he's not just a best friend, he's a cousin.

A: He was a cousin.

UV: My uncle Art. My Aunt Jean married Uncle Art who's my father's...not first cousin though was he? He wasn't really a first cousin.

A: No.

UV: Like a second cousin or something.

Q: First cousin once removed or something?

UV: Yes, right. One of those.

Q: So you met at the wedding?

A: Yes. Um hmm. And a year later we were married.

Q: Where was he living at that time? And you were in New Jersey?

A: I was living in New Jersey and he was in New Haven, I guess. Was it New Haven?

UV: Yeah.

Q: So how did you...how did he court you? From a distance?

A: Um hmm. Well, he was very attentive to me and...

A: No, not really.

Q: So there was one son who didn't connect with her at all, the one that went o New York, then there was...

UV: Yeah, my father. My father was very...was devoted to her. I mean, he saw her regularly and...

A: Yes, he was always very devoted and helpful in any way he could be.

UV: I remember making trips up to Torrington with my father 'cause he need to go on a weekend you know, 'cause he needed to help her around the house and visit her you know, keep her company. I remember doing that after my grandfather had passed away. You know, that happened on a regular basis.

Q: It's...do you have any pictures of...of the house and when it had land around it?

UV: Probably.

A: There might be some now.

Q: I want to thank you very much. I'm going to turn this off while I talk about the ...
(Tape interruption.)

We're talking about the rooms in their house. Go ahead.

UV: I was just saying that although I came after the farming had ended, visiting my grandparents house, we always...they always referred to different rooms in the house with names and the milk room was one of them. It was like the back room, right in the back of the house which is now right inside the garage. And it's a long narrow room that had...

Q: The separator and creamery and that...

UV: Yeah, and the big metal pails in it.

Q: Did they have two kitchens?

UV: There's one kitchen and there's the original kitchen with a fireplace and the dutch ovens that's...was sort of being used as a dining room. One of two dining rooms. But no, there's one big kitchen and a big pantry which is right next to the milk room.

Q: Did they have a parlor?

UV: Yes.

- A: Yes, um hmm.
- UV: I know the house we live in began to be built in 1771. In the first year before the first winter, they just built the cellar and there's a huge walk-in fireplace in the cellar 'cause the family lived there that first winter. Then they started building the rest of the house in the next year.
- Q: Interesting.
- UV: And it's very...well, I believe at this point in time, at the Bicentennial, I know we were told...she...she was in the parade. There were two homes in Torrington that had been build prior to the Revolutionary War that were still inhabited by the families who built them and ours was one of them. And I believe now, our...our house is the only house now that has the original family in it.
- Q: Very interesting.
- UV: Although it's not a farmhouse anymore.
- Q: No, but it's still...interesting.
- UV: A lot of farm implements...I've got big scythes and you know, a lot of old, old tools and I'm sure are...would be worth something to somebody who appreciated that.
- Q: Yeah, you have to take very good care of them.
- UV: Who'd appreciate them.
(Tape interruption.)
- Q: We're going to add this about the flood of '55.
- A: Um hmm.
- Q: Talk about it, yes. What do you remember?
- A: Not a heck of a lot really. We were perfectly safe in New Haven but my husband came home took the boat and went afield to see what he could do to help you know? And I think it was in Ansonia that he was carting people from their homes to safety.
- Q: That wasn't too far off.
- A: No.
- UV: ...made it all the way up to Torrington.

with road building of that Camp. He was in that Camp until the end of the CCC. Probably he was about the last person discharged from the CCC.

Q: And when would that have been?

A: That was in 1941, right after Pearl Harbor 'cause then the CCC boys all had to go into the service. He did leave Camp Wonegone and went to a camp up in Massachusetts that was composed strictly of World War I veterans. He was Superintendent of that Camp until that was disbanded.

Q: What kind of work did he do ...they had a certain area that they covered?

A: Yes. What they did was they took over a lot of the abandoned farm areas in the State. This Camp Wonegone was in Voluntown and it goes up in public land property in Sterling and Plainfield as well as Voluntown. It was old farms that had been abandoned. This was following the Depression or during the Depression, rather. But the whole movement was started by Franklin Roosevelt in '32. Some camps like Hammonasset was developed by the CCC. Hammonasset State Park. And there's quite a few camps in Connecticut. Up in West Stafford there's the remains of an old camp and they've made a museum out of it. And there's an association of veterans of the CCC and in fact, they meet in Willimantic quite often. I've noticed in the paper.

Q: Now with some of the farms that were reclaimed, were they later then sold as farms again?

A: Well, they became State property.