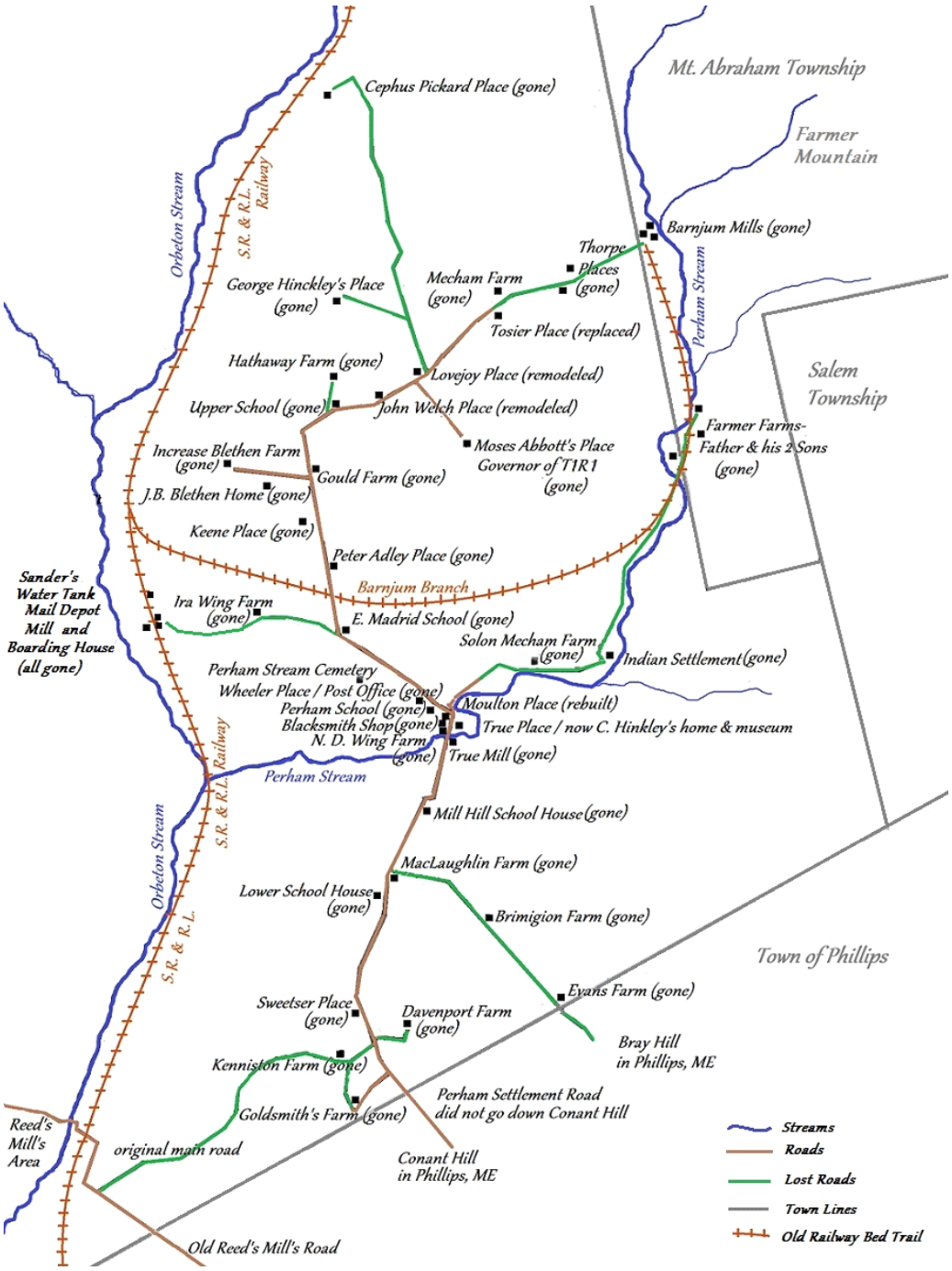
Molly Graham: This begins an interview with Carson Hinkley on November 6, 2022, in East Madrid, Maine. The interviewer is Molly Graham. What follows is a series of conversations as Carson gives me a guided tour of the Perham Settlement and then an interview about the history of the settlement that supports the Perham Settlement report by Steve Scharoun, which was sponsored by the High Peaks Alliance.

Carson Hinkley: This is a map I [drew] out of the Old Village all the way through, every lot that I know of.



It's kind of a – I'm not a very good drawer. But it covers all the places. A few out towards the town line that we haven't – I can't get to. But I've got them named here. This is the first one that's up here. It's the Clark's now. This was Zachary McLaughlin,

Zachery T. McLaughlin and his Farm House located 1/2 mile toward Phillips from the Perham Stream - Zachery served in the Civil War. His Son, Ralph married Carrie E. Wing, daughter of Nathan T. Wing.

which was Ralph McLaughlin's father. Ralph McLaughlin was the first husband of my grandmother.

MG: He's the one who died of pneumonia.

CH: Yep. Zachary was the Civil War vet. And that's that farm. And then we come down into the picture – coming down the two hills here of the village that used to be here.

MG: When is this picture dated?

CH: About 1903. This is when the mill started falling down. This is a picture of the dam. The dam set where them cedars are all the way across to them rocks over there. The water come up. As you can see in this picture, it's coming out from underneath the mill, and the dam backed up all the way around to the back corner over there for the pond. They harvested the ice right out behind the cedars here.



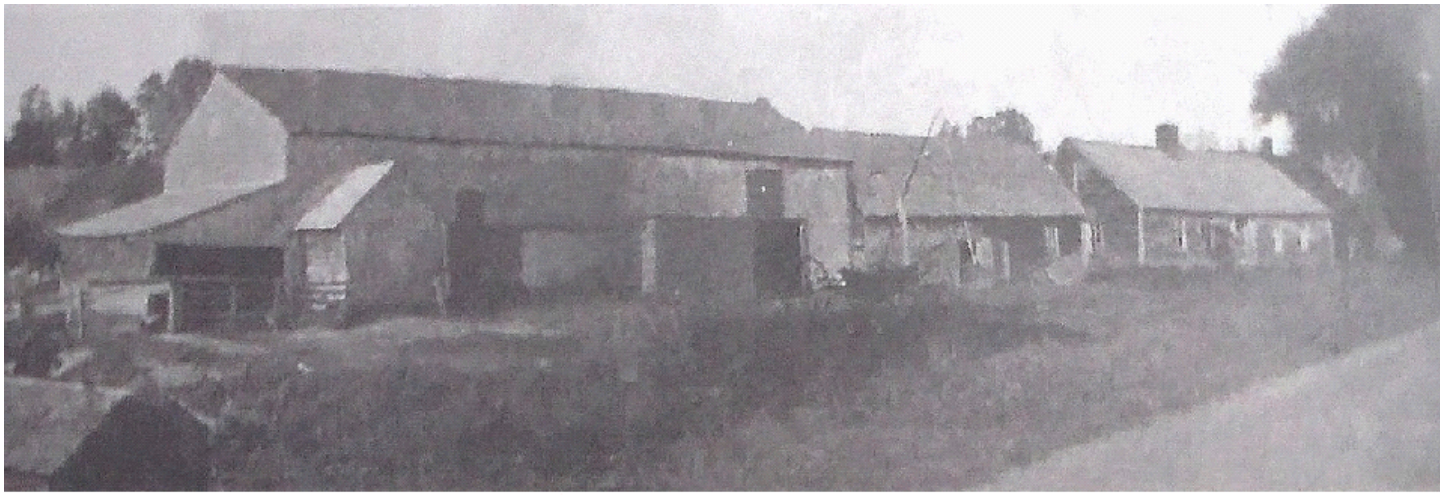

The True Mill and the Mill's Dam on the Perham Stream - circa 1900
George True purchased the mill from J. Prescott, then sold shares to several people of the village.

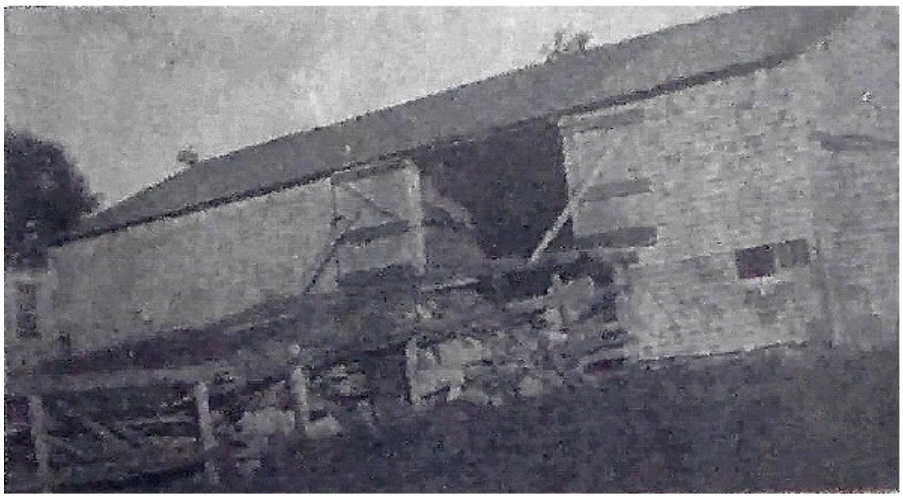
MG: You can see that the water was much higher.

CH: Oh yeah. Well, it was all up to the top. The cedars would be underwater. And these are a few pictures of the old bridges that used to be here. They replaced this one from a wooden bridge in 2020. It was a wooden bridge until then. This is the George True place,

which is my place here. This is a picture of the old Nathan Pickard farm.

MG: Across the way?





Nathan D. Wing Homestead - Ramp to second story on back side of Barn - Nathan & Lucinda Wing
Nathan & Lucinda's daughter was Carrie [Wing] {McLaughlin} Hinkley - Carson Hinkley's Grandmother

CH: Across the way. This is where the shit house is, virtually. They had a pump and the two stories the barn. This was the milkhouse, and this was the house. This was the "L," and up on top end of the "L" was the ice shed. They had a ramp on the backside up to the second story.

MG: What was the purpose of the ramp?

CH: To get the wagons up because they stored the hay in the top part of the barn. The animals were in the bottom part. This is the blacksmith shop.




The Pickard/Chandler Blacksmith Shop - the building located on the left in all four photos. Shortly after being allocated as the blacksmith shop, it became community owned and operated.

That was located just above the Nathan farm here. There's a big black rock up there. That was the forge rock. They didn't have a forge inside the shop. They forged their iron, like the old Vikings did, in a cast on top of a rock. That rock has on it "JRP 1860." Justice Richardson Pickard, which was Thomas's son – he's the one that died in the Civil War. He signed that before he signed up for the Civil War. On top of the rock is an X that was etched out by the Indians beforehand. If you walk by that rock with a compass, it goes nuts. That's why it's always been called the iron rock. [laughter] I figured we'd walk up towards the red house, and I'll show you that one. As I said, the Thomas Pickard house here – Nathan bought it in 1866. Daniel lived in the red house, which we're going to. We always called it the Moulton House, but they lived there. I think Moses lived there before Daniel because that's where Cordelia Pickard lived when Thomas Pickard was here when he was still alive. Then, Nathan bought it and let his mother, Cordelia Swift, live out the rest of her life in half of the house. Daniel died at the red house. Their daughter lived there for a while. And then the Sweetsers lived there. Then the Moultons, which are in the cemetery up here.

MG: Those are all classic Maine family names. Did they hail from this area or beyond?

CH: Yeah, hail from this area down to Southern Maine and so forth. My house, as I said before, Prescott built it after he bought the mill. Then he sold it to George True, and George True, when he moved to Reeds Mill to operate that mill out there, he sold it to Andrew Keen, and Andrew Keen sold it to Carrie Wing, which was my grandmother. She still lived over with Nathan. So, when she bought it, she let Zachary, Ralph's Father, come down and live here. Then she moved up with Ralph up there at the McLaughlin farm. Then, when he died, Zachary was still here. My grandmother moved back with her parents. And then when Zachary died, that's when Carrie married Arthur, [and] moved over here. And then, of course, when my father got married, he moved over [to] the old Nathan Wing place. Then, when my grandmother died, they moved back over here, and then I was born, taking care of my grandfather. The blacksmith shop was known as the Moulton-Pickard blacksmith shop when it got started because it was Justin, Thomas, and Dennis Moulton [who] operated the blacksmith shop until Solon Mecham moved down from the Mecham farm to live up on the intervale here. Then, he took over as blacksmith.

MG: How do you think these people worked out these joint ownerships? Was that unusual, or is that typical?

CH: It was typical back then because everything was community. Virtually, it was all combined. They were virtually all related in some sort of fashion anyways. But I know the mill, at one time, after George True owned it, then it went [to] Andrew Keen. By the time that started getting demolished, there were seventeen owners, and that was all of the different families in the area. It's the same with the blacksmith shop. After Daniel Pickard died, Solon was the head blacksmith, but everybody used it. As I said, it sat right there. That's another one that Steve wants to check out to see if there might be any artifacts in the ground from the – because there was a dirt floor in the blacksmith shop, so there might be some stuff fallen into the ground just like old farms.

MG: But that area has not been excavated yet?

CH: Not yet. This is, as I said, I think was Moses Wing's place. Then, it went to Daniel Pickard. Then, when Daniel Pickard killed himself out back – hung himself – it went to his brother Charles. Charles sold it to Sweetser, and Sweetser sold it to Moultons. I don't know the name, but another person had it before Bronson Griscom bought it in 1949.

MG: That's the family you worked for.

CH: Yep. His descendants and family relatives own it now, as they still have a trust – whole family trust. One of them, Lloyd Griscom, is his nephew. He's the head of the High Peaks Alliance, which has taken over the Perham Stream Birding Trail to preserve it. The one thing I didn't tell you was Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust is a big thing on birding. They have a festival every year, and they include this one, even though it's on the other side of the mountain from Rangeley. I was the first recipient of their conservation award.

MG: I saw that. I was going to ask you about that. That must have been quite an honor.

CH: Yes. Just like yesterday's interview, I broke up. I couldn't talk at all. [laughter] They wanted me to make a speech, and I couldn't do it. It was emotional for the aspect of how my family's always done things. It was a virtual recognition of all the work that all the generations have done.

MG: Yeah, finally.

CH: As I said, this was the – we called it the Moulton place as I just told you. This was the original one.

The Moulton Place - original burned in 1903 and was replaced - the Moulton Orchard/ Rose Garden

This one burnt in 1903. Then it was replaced with this one here. [Recording paused.] Now we're going to go up on what they called the Mecham Intervale Road. This is the access road that they used to get to the Barnjum mills. Before the Barnjum mills, there was the Farmer farms. I don't know their names; all I know about it is there was three farms up there. The old man Farmer had a farm, and he raised two boys. And later on, they made a farm two farms below him. That's all I know about it.

MG: I remember reading and thinking it was convenient their last name was Farmer.

CH: Right. Well, that's why the Farmer Mountain was named – because of them. Up here, the upper end of the intervale, was where the Indian village used to be. One last Indian used to live up above, and he gave a basket to a white man that made a log cabin up there. That person gave the basket to my mother. Other than that, Solon Mecham, which was the son of a farmer up on Mecham Farm on Mecham Hill, came down and became the blacksmith, and he lived up here on this road. I'll take you up to where they used to have a footbridge across the stream. You can see the yellow birch right there. That's where the bridge crossed. But they still have a little apple orchard right there, too. This is where high freshets in the diaries that came in, the water went right across here and down through. There's three times it was a freshet that my place and the old farm place had water up to the windowsills.

MG: Oh my gosh. When would that have been?

CH: That was in the early 1900s. It was in 1901. Another one in 1913, or something like that. There was one that she reported of an earlier one before; it was in the late 1800s. But the only one I remember was in 1987, where it took out – it was the April 1st storm. We called it the April Fool's shower. We lost three hundred bales of hay in the barn.

MG: That's a big deal.

CH: And washed out the road. Washed out the bridge. The bridge was never rebuilt until September 29th. So we were walking since then. This is where the footbridge was.

MG: Where the chair is?

CH: Yeah. It crossed the stream here.

MG: Where would the footbridge take you?

CH: It would take over to a field that's across the stream. It's all grown up now. But this is where they had the footbridge to cross to have their community socials and picnic events that the community would put on.

MG: Am I looking at the intervale?

CH: The intervale's up beyond. They always called this field over that's grown up on the other side of the stream "the island" because this was the only access to get to it. You could go a long way around, which took three or four miles to get to it. The pictures – there's one of them right there.

MG: Do you know who built that footbridge?

CH: I don't know who built this one. But this one here, this was a second rebuild. I don't have the first one.

MG: Maybe it was before you could take pictures.

CH: I don't know. But this one here was built by Andrew Keen. [picture]As I said, Andrew Keen lived where my place is for a while.

Foot Bridge across the Perham Stream to the Island Field where community socials were held
Top - First rebuild after washed out - around 1870s, Bottom - Second rebuild - circa 1903

MG: That was in 1903? What does that say?

CH: 1906 that was taken. In 1906, the school was at the top of two hill – they called [it] the Mill Hill School. They had torn down the – used the Perham School for something else at that time.

MG: Do you know who that could be in the picture?

CH: No, I don't. I have a feeling it might be the Moulton girl, but I'm not sure.

MG: Do you know who took these pictures?

CH: I don't know who took this one. But there is another picture at the Madrid Historical Society [that] was taken at the Perham School location, looking down here, and it shows the bridge but not the person on the bridge. She was a teacher at the school. I can't recall her name right now. But it was in 1911 that they took that picture. So, that bridge was between 1906 and 1911 anyways. I don't know [the] exact date when it went out. It was probably one of them freshets [that] took it out, and they'd never rebuilt it afterwards.

MG: If we kept going down this road, where would it take us?

CH: It would take us to the intervale. You'd cross across the stream. We always called it the Cow Pasture Stream. It's a stream that connects to the plains fields down through – the drainage from that down through into the Perham Stream. Beyond that was the (oat piece?), and that's where the Indians used to have their (oats?), and where the white man, after they settled, continued using it for oats. Then, you went through a little bit of woods, a little rise [in] the woods where the ledge is, and then it makes the stream turn back, make another curve in a S-shape, and that would be the wheat field. The wheat that you grew there was called proso. It was a very fast-growing wheat. The Indians did it, and then the white man did it. Then, above that was another field that the stream came in on the upper side, very close and then swung back to the left. Above that was the clover field, which the Indians used and the white man used. Then there was – they called it the Middle Brook. That came out of a beaver pond up behind the Peter Adley place. Then it was called the Mecham Intervale beyond that, and that was a thirty-five-acre field. The upper end of that field was where the village was of the Indians. This is a picture of Solon Mecham's house that was on the intervale. And now, the other place is up on – we can either walk, or we can start our car trip to get to the Wheeler place.

MG: Up to you.

CH: Because the Wheeler place is on the way to the car trip road.

MG: Sure. Whatever you think is best.

CH: So, you can shut it off now if you want. [Recording paused.] This road up over here was not here. It was originally between the house – before the milk house and put between the house and the barn of the Pickard place, and it went in back of this one here. This up here, the Mecham Intervale Road now was the main road. This one was called the Abbott Road because it went up to Abbott, which was the governor of the village. Now right here, is where the Perham Stream School was.

MG: Behind this rock wall?

CH: Behind this rock wall. As I told you, it was just a little shack. It wasn't even big enough for a vehicle. It was only about five or six students at that time. And then, when they got a few more students, they had to go further.

MG: You mentioned the governor, and it made me wonder who was in charge of the Settlement over the years.

CH: Back before it was the state of Maine, Massachusetts gave governorships as a governing body/president for the area. That's what I mean by governor because the governor is a representative of the whole state. Back then, governors were for a certain area of land, which was usually the size of one township, or maybe five or six townships. He lived in the upper village, which would be at that hill right over there. Covered up is Abraham [Mountain] – that is the northern part of Abraham. Over there is the central part. Over a little back further behind the hill is the southeast part, which is behind Abram School, which I said [inaudible]. This here, you can see the fence here. This fence is a cellar hole, and that one is the well of the Wheeler place, which was the post office and the minister's house. They had two barns over here. That's a picture of the Wheeler place right there.

Rev. Ezra Wheeler was the spiritual leader of the Perham Stream Community until his unfortunate death from desease.

Jennie Wheeler, Daughter of Rev. Ezra Wheeler, was the head of the Post office in E. Madrid

The Wheeler Place on Wheeler Hill used part of their house for the East Madrid Post Office. located. Just before their place was the lacation of the first school building, The Perham School.

MG: That was over here?

CH: Yeah, that was sitting over here. The road was on that side of the school but on this side of the Wheeler place. They had two barns sitting over here. And where that fire pit was was the small barn. This is another picture of the building. You can see the small barn here. But I don't have a picture of the big barn. The big barn was two and a half lengths of the barn that I have.

MG: Oh, wow.

CH: It was eighty-five feet long barn. He's the one that, before Minister Wheeler came, was the farmer, and he had the beef cattle. That Cow Pasture Bridge drained that swamp buried down there. This is the road – this is called the Wheeler Road because this is the Road that – we have shorter access, so that we can get to. But this is the main road to the cemetery. It went by a peat bog that they harvested the peat out of for fertilizer and fuel because they burned it for fuel too. This up here is called the plains field. The reason it's called the plains fields is because it's all

flat area like plains out west. But I call it that for the simple reason [that] my half cousin actually landed a plane in here. [laughter] He used to.

MG: Oh, yeah?

CH: He used to be a bush pilot up in Alaska.

MG: Oh, wow. What brought him up there?

CH: His knowledge of flying the plane. Because up in them – bush pilots had to land in very short areas.

MG: Was he a guide up there?

CH: Yeah, he was a guide, and he was a tourist person. He was there only two or three years. My other half-cousin was a warden on Katahdin.

MG: Oh, wow. What was his name?

CH: The warden was Rodney Sargent, which was my half-cousin from my father's half-sister Amber. Harley was the pilot, and he was Rodney's brother.

MG: Ginni [Robie] was saying that some Sargents are buried in the cemetery where she is.

CH: See, Amber, my father's half-sister, which was Amber McLaughlin, she married Irwin Sargent, and Irwin Sargent was a descendant of them Sargents over there in that area.

MG: Interesting.

CH: This is a road here that they used. This is a barn that Bronson Grissom brought in from number six to put in here. But this was all field. This back one here was known as the main plains, and this was the lower plain, and then there was an upper plain and a back plain.

MG: This is still Griscom property?

CH: Yeah, but there's a right to get to the cemetery. He can't complain about – and he's back in Texas right now, too. This peat bog here is also unique for it's got the pitcher plant. A pitcher plant is a carnivorous plant like the Venus flytrap. It looks like a little pitcher, like a plant vase – a vase for a plant and the flowers. The insects crawl into it. So much silky substance on the inside that they can't get back out, and then they drown in the fructose liquid, and then they slowly dissolve, and that's how the plant gets its nutrition.

MG: Is this the cemetery that was mis-named?

CH: Yep. I'm trying to get them – they're still working on it. I wanted them to name it the Perham Stream Cemetery and have a date of when it was supposedly established around when the trapper was buried here up to when Madrid became a town and got changed to the East Madrid Cemetery. I wanted to include both names on it. This marker here is one of them, and that one there is another one that she's identified. There's no marker for.

MG: The woman with the rod.

CH: Yep, the dowser. This one is Dennis Moulton's, which was at the red house.


DENNIS
MOULTON
DIED
Nov. 15. 1906.
AE. 84 ys. 1 mo. 17 ds.

MG: “Died November 15, 1906. Eighty-four years old.”

CH: Beside him is Roseanna, his wife. “Died January 2, 1891. Seventy-three years, eleven months.”


ROSANNAH MOULTON
Wife of
Dennis Moulton
DIED
Jan. 2. 1891.
Æ. 73ys. 11ms. 16ds.

MG: Ginni was telling me about the legend of a boy who drowned, and they weren't sure if or where he was buried.

CH: It's in Center Cemetery just below her place. The legend over there is a boy that drowned, and they buried him outside the grave plots but inside the fence at the gate. The legend over here was it was a girl that drowned, and they buried her there because they could not afford to buy a plot. So, they buried her outside the plots.

MG: So they think it's a boy, and here, they think it's a girl.

CH: Right. [laughter] But they don't know the name of the person. This is Sarah Moulton. Sarah was Dennis's daughter.


SARAH E MOULTON
July 24, 1852.
Mar. 31, 1933.

MG: She was born in 1852 and died in 1933.

CH: Yep. Sarah Moulton did live her life out at the Moulton place down there. I do know that. She was there when Cordelia was living with Nathan in his farm.

MG: Was she a teacher?

CH: Sarah? I think she was one or two terms. I'm not sure. Then we go to the Pickards. This is Lucinda Pickard, which was my great-grandmother. She died May 9, 1890, age sixty-seven years, four months. As I said, she died bedridden. She was originally a Masterman from Weld, from the Masterman settlement in Weld. Sarah is the wife of Thomas Pickard. I'm sorry. Lucinda Pickard is not – Lucinda Masterman. That is the daughter of Thomas and Sarah.


LUCINDA L. PICKARD
Dau. of Thomas &
Sarah Pickard
DIED
May 9. 1890.
Æ. 67ys. 4ms. 13ds.

MG: Lucinda is the daughter of Thomas and Sarah Pickard.

CH: Yeah. Sarah Pickard died October 7, 1882, I think. Yeah. Eighty-five years. No, 1887. Sorry. It's hard reading some of them.


SARAH
Wife of
Thomas Pickard
DIED
Oct. 7. 1887.
AE. 85 yrs. 4 mos.

MG: I know.

CH: This is Thomas Pickard. That's the one that built the house and built the mill down to the village. He died at twenty-three [in] 1851. They put a flag on him for the Civil War. But he died in '51, ten years before the Civil War.


THOMAS PICKARD
DIED
Dec. 23, 1851.
Æt. 64 y's. 2 mo's
& 23 days.

MG: He's who you thought maybe fought –?

CH: He was the right age to be fighting in the War of 1812. If it is, that confirms that military button that we found and the musket trigger guard.

MG: What does the inscription say? "The land is my …"

CH: "Strength and my" –

MG: "Shield," maybe. "My heart."

CH: Yeah, "My shield. My heart." Hard to read,

MG: Yeah. That looks like it's been rubbed away. "Something helped."

CH: Underneath is something "Lord. In His truth of love." It's virtually scripture. He's the one that – I think the records have screwed up, and they put the flag on. But I think it's for his sons in the Civil War, not him, and he was in the War of 1812.

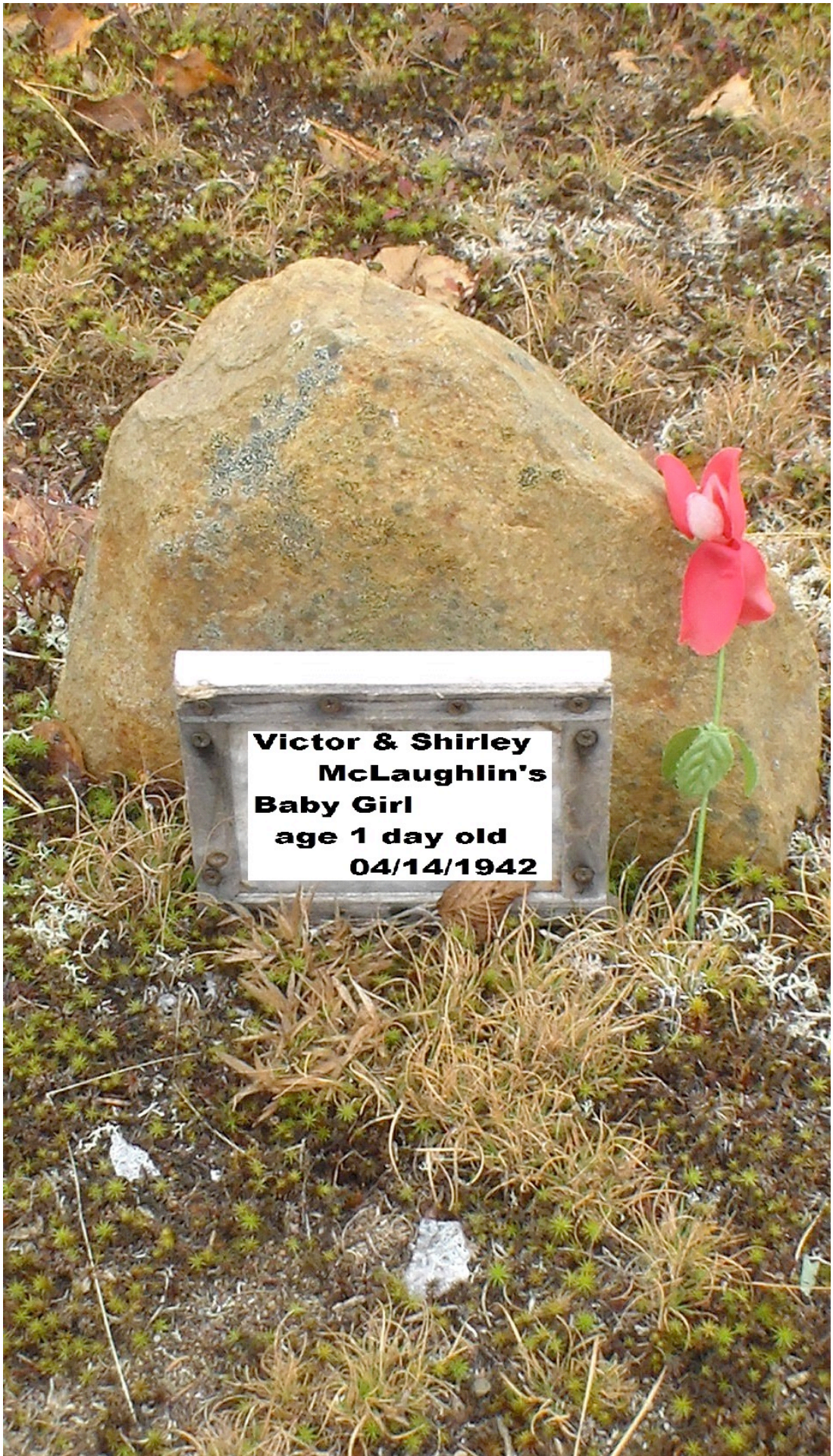
MG: That makes sense.

CH: This is (Eliza?), their daughter. She died [in] 1884 at age sixteen. And I stick the flowers – I stick a flower on every grave here no matter whether I know them or not, just so that the spirits know that they are recognized being here. Then, down here, there's a stone.


ELIZA D.
daughter of
Thomas & Sarah
Pickard,
died Dec. 18, 1846.
Æt. 16 yrs. 8 mo's
& 14 days.

MG: Do you know (Eliza's?) cause of death?

CH: No. But it was the time that there was a lot of disease [and] diphtheria going through. This stone here – somebody's taken my sign off – was my half-uncle's first born baby, [who] died after three days. And this, as you can see, there's indention here, so I figured it was, and the dowser identified it was here. Then down here is Norman Welch, only eight weeks old. This was according to the map that I found in the farm ledgers. Down here, I'll let you pronounce that name


Victor & Shirley
McLaughlin's
Baby Girl
age 1 day old
04/14/1942


Norman Welts
age 8 weeks.

MG: (Alberton?) Moulton?


Alberton
Moulton
age 10 yrs.

CH: Yes. Age ten. The dowser says that that is one, and that's another one behind it. She's not sure, and she identified one up here too. This one here is another good name. [laughter]

MG: (Ferlinand?) is how I'd say it.


Ferlinand
Moulton
age 7 yrs.

CH: Yeah. (Ferlinand?) Moulton, age seven years. See, these were about the same time as a lot of that diphtheria was going through. This is another one here, and all I know is its name said, "Old man John (Rowe?)," and he died an old man in 1850. The map said that that was his footstone. But if that was his footstone, he was one long guy. The dowser says there's two different graves. Down here, is where that Swedish trapper is supposedly buried.

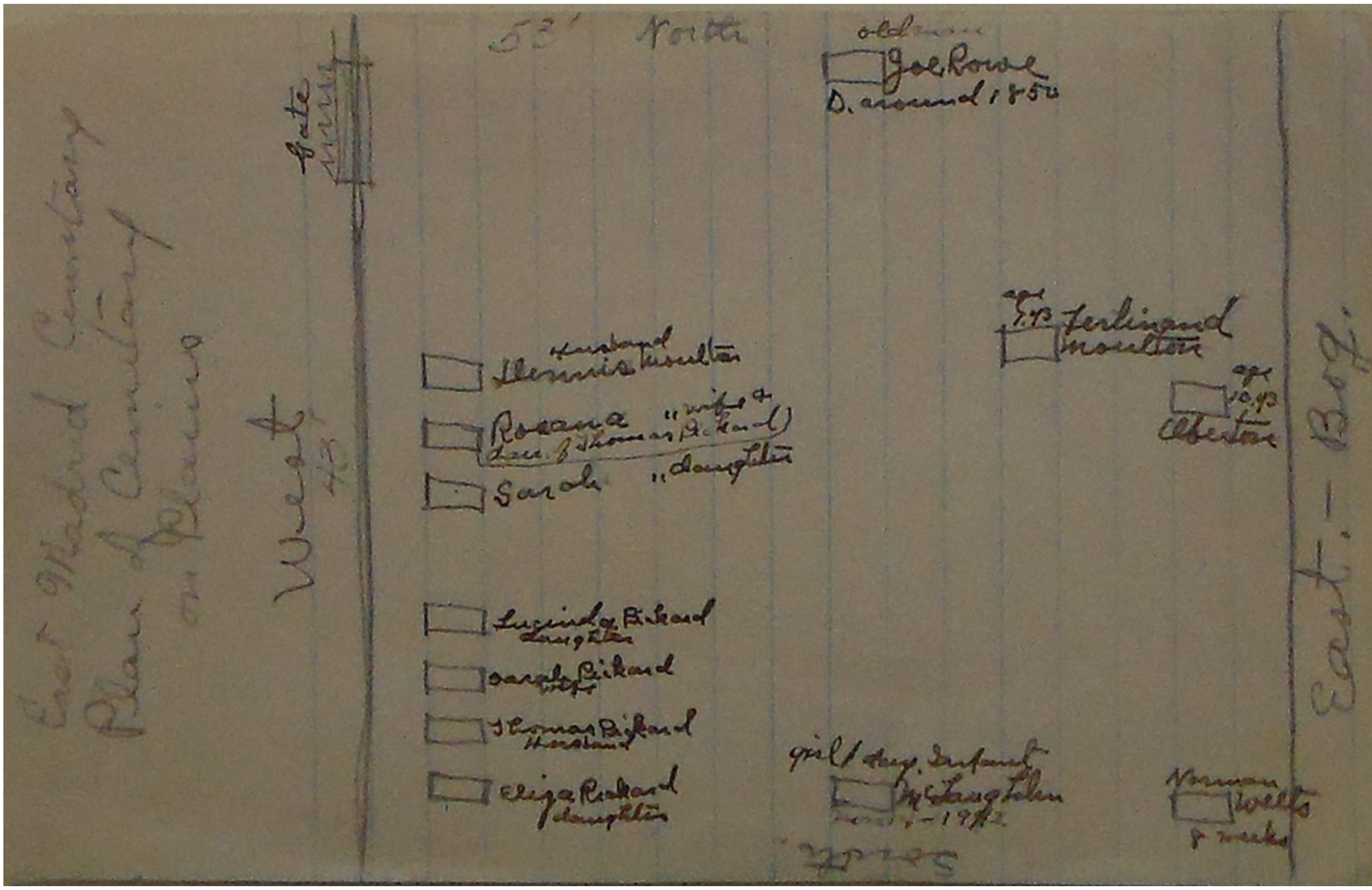

John Rowe
died a old man
around 1850

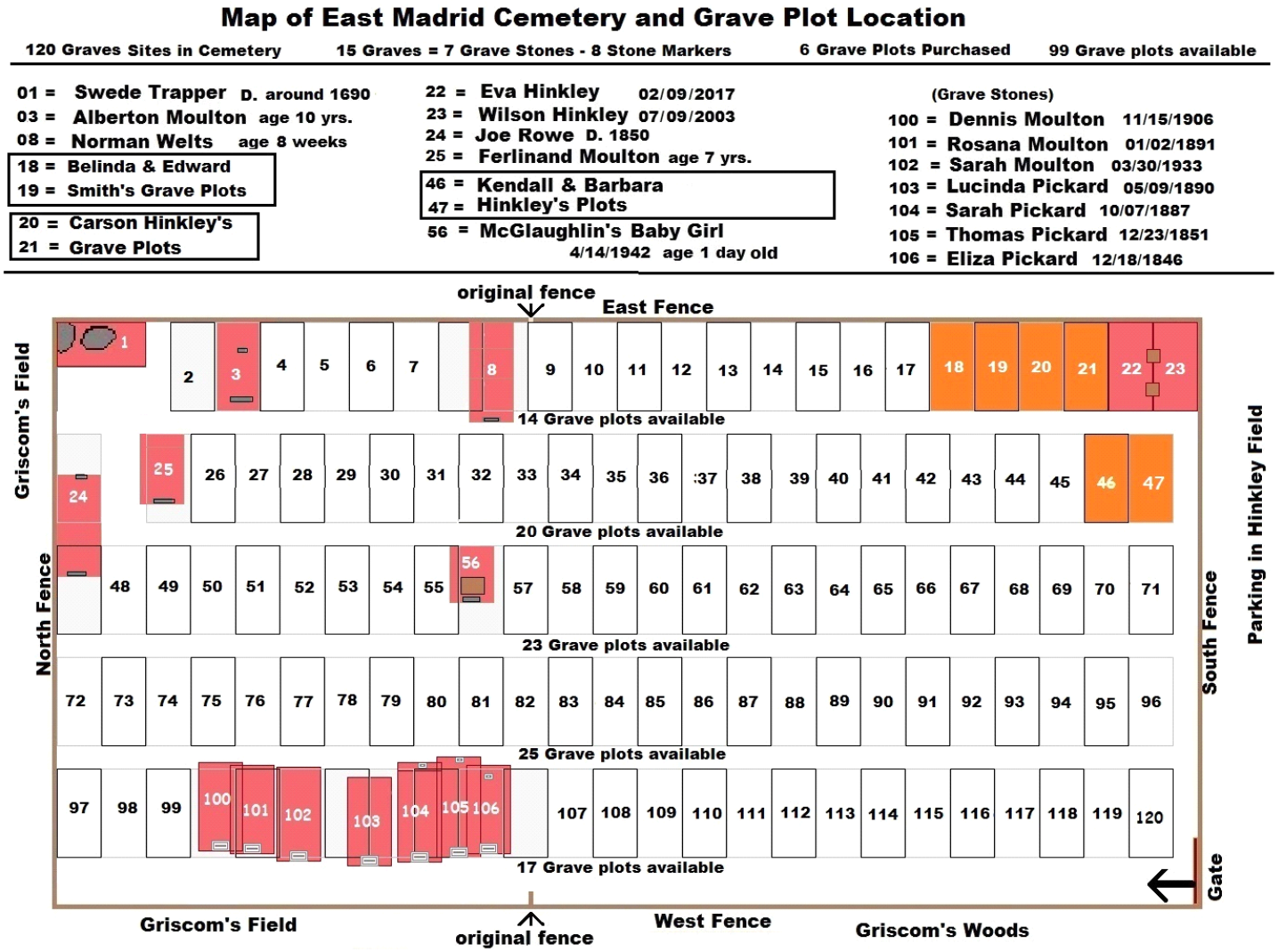
MG: Who messed with the placard there?

CH: The weather did that. [laughter] I got to replace it. But you can see this stone is this way. The stone goes clear over to here. It's just under the dirt and sod and so forth. But that was the headstone. She said the dowser said he was buried this direction. On the lower corner, way down there, is where my parents are buried.

MG: Let's go see them.

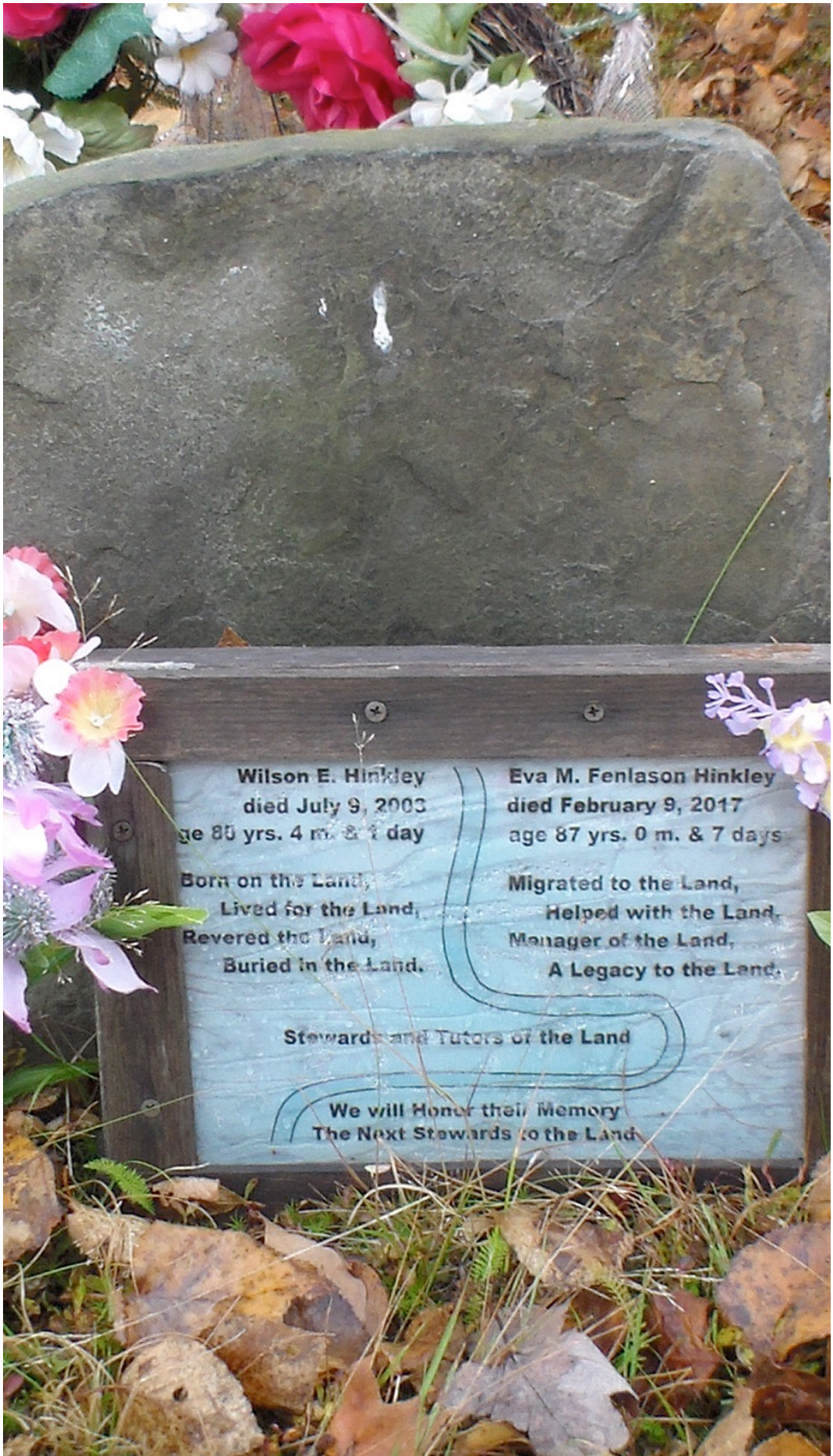
CH: Might as well pick up their basket at the same time. Now, the cemetery stopped right here. You can see the original post – iron post. According to the Madrid Cemetery Society, this is all it was, and it was chuck-full. It didn't even have a record of the deed that we deeded all this to them. That's why all the records in Madrid got – they almost forgot everything over here.


East Madrid Cemetery
Plan of Cemetery
on Plains
53' North
West
43'
Gate
old man
Joe Rowe
D. around 1850
husband
Dennis Moulton
Rosana "wife &
dau. of Thomas Pickard)
Sarah "daughter
Lucinda Pickard
daughter
Sarah Pickard
wife
Thomas Pickard
Husband
Eliza Pickard
daughter
age
Ferdinand
Moulton
age
Alberton
East. - Boz.
girl / day. Infant
McLaughlin
Norman
Wells
8 weeks



MG: Well, what a peaceful place to be buried.

CH: Well, my father said he wanted to be buried on the land. My mother said she wanted to be, too. I'll let you read that. I wrote it. It's enough. [laughter]


Wilson E. Hinkley
died July 9, 2003
ge 80 yrs. 4 m. & 1 day
Born on the Land,
Lived for the Land,
Revered the Land,
Buried in the Land.
Eva M. Fenlason Hinkley
died February 9, 2017
age 87 yrs. 0 m. & 7 days
Migrated to the Land,
Helped with the Land,
Manager of the Land,
A Legacy to the Land.
Stewards and Tutors of the Land
We will Honor their Memory
The Next Stewards to the Land

MG: "Wilson Hinkley died July 9, 2003, eighty years, four months, and one day. Born on the land. Lived for the land. Revered the land. Buried in the land." And then Eva Fenlason Hinkley died February 9, 2017, eighty-seven years, seven days. Migrated to the land. Helped with the land. Manager of the land. A legacy to the land. Stewards and tutors of the land. We will honor their memory, the next stewards to the land." I like that.

CH: I found that stone; I put it up. Eventually, if I get enough money and can find somebody, somebody told me that there's a person that engraves actual stones instead of these molded ones. So, if I can find somebody to do that, my father said he wanted a natural stone. So that's what I did.

MG: Yeah, that's all you need.

CH: I will be buried beside them. My sister and her husband will be buried beside me. My brother and his wife will be buried up here above them. But we donated all this land to the cemetery, and the cemetery society never even had any record of it because the one that was the overseer of the historical society and the cemetery, as I said, didn't want to really acknowledge the stuff over here and never even presented the deed to them. [laughter] So when I got over there, they got a copy of the deed. So, now they know that they've got a cemetery up here.

MG: Shows you need good paperwork and good record keeping.

CH: But I've got to do some research to see if I can find them other four that she's identified.

MG: Who's the woman who does the dowsing?

CH: Jane Stinchfield, and she's the head of the Phillips Historical Society. She has another friend that does it with her. I don't know her name. She's been up here with her. Steve Scharoun, the archeologist, says what ought to be done is have somebody come up here with one of them GPS-penetrating things to really identify to see if they are here or not.

MG: I wondered about that. Do you think in the early part of the 20th century, the Coast and Geodetic Survey marked the land?

CH: There's one site on top of the Wheeler hill above the Wheeler place. They used to have one of them geodetic –

MG: A theodolite?

CH: One of them markers for the altitude. They chipped it off, and then put it up on the road up here above where the railroad crossed, and the lumber crew destroyed it. My father said they should have left it right there. But they said it was on private property, so they had to move it. They had something about some policy. They couldn't have them on private property anymore. My dad said it was perfectly fine where it was. It didn't bother him, and it wouldn't have bothered me either. I built this fence three years ago. I had a friend come up with a post hole

digger, and he dug the holes a year before. I set the posts, and let them settle for – during the winter. Then I built a fence, and I said, "You're going to build it a lot like the fence down at the Perham Stream birding trail." Everybody's complained about this one and that one, that's it's not finished. I said, "It's finished for moose because moose can just step over it. [laughter] They all say it's got to be all the way up to the top of the post. I said, "No." I want moose to be able to walk across and not have to destroy it. I don't want to build it every three times a year.

MG: What's this in the woods here? Is that the car you were telling me about?

CH: No. The car's back down next to the birding trail. That pile over there – that pile of dirt over there was a hollow in the field. Bronson Griscom and his descendants made junk piles out of them – pushed the garbage in. There used to be a dump over there, but they stopped using it, and then they just started piling it right in the middle of the field. Looks like an eye sore to me. I know my father said he was disgusted, too, because we lost seven swathes of hay in that.

MG: Oh, yeah? [Recording paused.] First, say where we are.

CH: We're going up towards the Upper Village on East Madrid Road before you get to what – right here is called the Schoolhouse Corner. Because this right here on the left was the very last school that was built for the area. I think it was around thirteen, something like that. 1936-something.

MG: That it operated?

CH: Yes. My grandmother never went to it. My father did. But his fourth year, he had to go down to the Blethen in Phillips. So, it'd be around that time about '36.

MG: Were boys and girls equally encouraged to get their education?

CH: All the kids were encouraged all the time. There's a picture of the school, right there.

MG: This was the school that was here?

CH: Yeah, that is the last – that one was called the East Madrid School.

MG: "The last school located at the intersection of Upper Village road and Sanders Station Road."

CH: Yeah, Sanders Station Road is on the opposite side.

MG: That little trail here?

CH: Yeah. That went down to the Sanders Mill and the post depot station. They had a boarding house and mail depot. That's where they walked down to get the mail. Ira Wing had a farm halfway down the road. Ira Wing was a cousin to Nathan D. Wing. That one right there.

G. O. Sanders Mill is on the right with the Mail Depot and the Boarding House on the left, the road, in the center going up the hill is the road to East Madrid.

G. O. Sanders Mill with the Mail Depot and the Boarding House on the right

The Mail Depot that replaced the original that burnt in the Sanders Mill Fire. It is now at the Narrow Gauge Railway listed as the Sanders Station.

The Ira Wing Farm was located half the way down the Sander's Mill Road from the E. Madrid School
Ira & Ina Wing - Ira Wing was a cousin to Nathan D. Wing, Nathan Wing is standing in front of farm.

MG: Ira Wing Farm.

CH: Yes.

MG: Through the woods here?

CH: Yeah. Halfway down to the Sanders mail depot. The road turned here. It's virtually a square corner. This was originally – East Madrid Road [is what it's] called now. But it was originally the Abbott Road because the main road went up on Mecham intervale. This part here is actually right on a lot range line of the properties – of the town lots. This road crossing here, they've got it named Barnjum Road on the right, and on the left (Potato?) Hill Road. But this was the Barnjum branch of the narrow gauge railroad, Sandy River Rangeley Lake Railroad.

MG: What happened to the train tracks?

CH: The train tracks, when it went out of business, was dismantled, and most of the tracks went over to Japan just before World War II to make planes for Japan.

MG: Interesting.

CH: So, we got them sent back to us. [laughter] Everything above the tracks was always known – below the tracks was known as the Village, and this was known as the Upper Village. The train tracks [were] virtually the line.

MG: So, we're on the other side of the tracks now.

CH: Right. The Upper Village, the other side of the tracks, as you said. This is a new place here.

MG: That's a nice house. You mentioned a number of people are moving here. Are they year-round folks? Are they working in the area? Staying in the area?

CH: There's two or three that are year-round. Most of them are before retirement age. But what they're doing is trying to get their place built and buildings and so forth and cleared to settle after they retire, to be here. This is the location of Peter Adley's place, and he was the horse whisperer, or the animal whisperer, whichever one you wanted to call. He lived over – just about beyond where that rubble is over there. There's no way of finding the foundation because they brought in fill and everything and buried it.

MG: That's too bad. Is this the land that you don't have access to?

CH: Actually, this is up above. This is (Conley?) Gould, and he is the great grandson of the Gould Farm that we'll be getting up to. But over here, where camp is, that was – I don't know his name, but his initial was J. Blethen. He lived there. There was a cellar hole, but I can't see it. They demolished it, but you can see just one little corner. I can't get to it because it's on that land I can't access. Up here, where these signs are – this, from here up, was known as the Gould area. There's a little (brook?) we just passed. There used to be a fence, open fence, right here – a gate to go in. This was the bottom of the pasture here. The Gould Farm was up here.

MG: That sign says Greenfield Hill. Is that a new name?

CH: That's the guy that – Rufus Griscom put up. It's not the original name of the area. He brought some Texas names up and put them here.

MG: These rock walls along the side of the road, are they –?

CH: That's the walls to the pasture. Now I'm going in here, but I don't know whether they got the bridge up or not. This was the Increase Blethen Farm in here, and then it was the Toothaker Farm. This was one of the big farms in here. I told you the J – initial J. Blethen – he lived at the lower end of this field right here, but his road was where I showed you. He didn't use the same

road as his sister Increase. Increase never had any kids. She was a [spinster]. When she died, the Thoothakers bought it from J. Blethen, [who] inherited it.

MG: Her first name was Increase?

CH: Yep. She was alone. I don't know how many workers she had. But as big as the farm was, she had to have several workers working for her. Lloyd's up here.

MG: We're on his brother's lot.

CH: It's his brother's land. That's Hope right there. His wife.

MG: Okay, I'll turn this off. [Recording paused.]

CH: This was, as I said, was the Increase Blethen home. This is not the house that was here. The house that was here was after the Toothakers bought it from her brother. When they left for Phillips, it was taken down and moved out into Phillips for somebody to use for a house. I have a picture of it falling down out there. As you can see, the house was a lot bigger than what this house is. All this porch was all house. All this open area here was the barn. Then, over here, the stump over there – that was the well in the barn. Below it, it had another barn, a lower barn. I don't know what the animals were that they used here, except for one thing. This raised section here was the chicken house. They had a little shack here for the chicken. Then, they had the other – I know that lower barn was a carriage barn, but this one up here was the animal barn. Over that way, you can see Saddleback Junior and Saddleback Mountains. On towards the right, in the woods there, there used to be an apple orchard. That's this location. This is actually where the gas plant I got poisoned from.

MG: Are you having flashbacks?

CH: Yeah, somewhat. [laughter] But it was over there on that side. She had a garden. [Recording paused.] – the last place that we did any haying because, as I said, my family was caretakers for the Griscoms. We started mowing these fields, and that's when my father came down with his liver disease and was down to Thayer hospital for eight months. So, it was just my brother and I finishing it up, and that's when we decided we're done farming.

MG: Was that a hard decision?

CH: Yeah. Yes and no. As much as much as my father tried to teach [Bronson] how to farm, he would do it just the opposite. When you have cattle, you buy, say, about a hundred cattle. There'd be eighty, ninety female cows, and a few – ten bulls or something like that. Every year, he'd slaughter the bulls. How are you going to have offspring when you're killing off the males? In five years time, he just lost interest. Then it was just hay. He had a couple of horses, but that was it. He didn't want to pay us enough to keep us going to do it. That's when I went into the shoe mill and my brother went into the saw mill. My father, of course, became disabled after that. That's when we got rid of our animals. Then, when I was done the shoe mills because I became disabled, then there's no way I'm going to be able to handle a thousand-pound cow. So,

that's when we're done. [Recording paused.] This is all pasture, both sides of the road – the Gould fields. Right up here where them trees are –

MG: Yes, and the fence.

CH: Yeah, just beyond the fence there, that area – there's a cellar hole right in there. That's the old farm.

MG: The old Gould Farm?

George Gould Birth Place - circa 1900

CH: The old Gould Farm. There was a road that went by the farm and out into the woods. There was an apple orchard out there. In that apple orchard, they had the Wolf River, the Worthy, and the Blue Pearmain apples.

MG: I'm not familiar with those varieties.

CH: There's an apple tree right here. Right there. That is a Sierra apple. You have to catch that one quick.

MG: It looks like it.

CH: It's a very sweet and very juicy apple. It's so juice that when it falls off the tree, it busts.

MG: Like a balloon.

CH: Like a water balloon. That sign back there, Greenfield Hill – that's what he's calling this hill up here. It was always known as Ledge Hill because you see the ledge right in the road here. But this hill is all ledge. There's just three inches of dirt on top of ledge here. Right here somewhere there's a stone marked with some dates on it. I can't remember what they were because it was at that location of the Upper School, which is right up here by that pole. That was the road to the Hathaway Farm. Right at that edge of the big evergreens there, one little anecdote that happened was my father was up here tending cattle for [the] Griscoms. He was up here, and a thunderstorm come. He was standing just below that, and a cow was underneath the trees. The lightning hit the tree and knocked the cow over and drove – there was a fence right beside it – and drove the fence post right into the ground.

MG: Wow. Was the cow okay?

CH: Yeah, the cow come-to. Dad thought he was going to die because he saw it hit the tree. This is the road to the Hathaway Place here, Hathaway Farm.

MG: Beyond this old fence?

CH: Yep. It went up through there to the Hathaway Place. The school set right here. Right beside the road. That was when they divided the school, one lower and upper.

MG: Those posted signs that say, "Come up here at your own risk …"

CH: Yeah, that's Griscom's signs that he put on the road.

MG: You get a pass?

CH: Yeah. I got a pass to come up and pick apples. So, I'm picking apples, even though it's past time. But I also come up to help Jimmy check on his brother's place, too. This here is the start of the Welch Farm. Down here, at the lower end, is two or three apple trees. That is a Strawberry Apple and a Snow Apple.

MG: What's a Snow Apple?

CH: A Snow Apple is an apple – the skin is very thin on it. It's almost the same color as the inside of the apple. It's very, very sweet.

MG: Sounds good. Now, I saw the Welch name spelled a few different ways. Is their family history lost or unclear?

CH: It's different people in the family wanting to spell it differently, but the one around here – I know some of them have it marked as a different spelling. But the ones – John Welts and Edgar Welts and all the Welts here spelled it, W-E-L-T-S, Welts. This is the Edgar Welts place. After Edgar Welts died – his son was John Welts. John Welts had a farm down this way. After Edgar died, my half uncle lived here for a while.

MG: And here is 1022 East Madrid Road.

CH: Yeah, that's what they call it.

MG: "Edgar Welts place."

So, this is what I'm looking at.

CH: Yeah. It's quite a lot different.

MG: Yes. They've done a lot of work. Very nice house.

CH: He has got that – the floors are all heated, electric. He's got wifi spread through it. He's got at least, I'd say, almost thirty thousand dollars of electricity wiring in that – the security and this and that. He thinks he's got to have the protection. Here is still the Edgar Welts Farm. Bronson Griscom, when he owned this, he had this as a horse hovel. They made this shed. We always called it the covered bridge shed because it looks like a covered bridge. We're coming up to the upper fields of the Edgar Welts place. This lower side is now Rufus Griscom's. But the barn on the left and the left fields is Lloyd's Griscom's. He uses it for his blueberry business. Up above this field, there's another field over towards the lower side of it. Then, there's a field in back of that, and that's where George Hinkley lived in that back field. But he accessed it by going up to the Lovejoy place. He didn't come down through the fields.

MG: Is that someone who works for –?

CH: That's Lloyd's old farm vehicle. It's got a farm auto license on it. He can only go twenty miles away from his house. This is what was always called the Horseshoe Pond. But it was never a horseshoe pond; it's more of a circle pond to me. It's got an island in the middle of it. It's now owned by – how do you pronounce his name? – Eben Mehegan. He's the grandson of Bronson Griscom. He owns the Lovejoy place now. But this is where the Abbott Road turned, right here at this gate. Down that road, is where the Abbott Farm was – Moses Abbott, the governor of Madrid. And now it's Gerry Birdsall's.

MG: Oh, Gerry's down here?

CH: Yes. His house is actually just to the left of where the original house was.

MG: Interesting.

CH: I'd go down, but he buttoned it up just three days ago. [laughter]

MG: He just had another grandchild. How did you meet Gerry?

CH: He come down one time because he knew that we'd always taken care of the area. He wanted to know the history of the area, so I started telling him. He was thunderstruck how much knowledge there was – how much it was important to the village.

MG: We should put on the record that it's thanks to Gerry that this [interview] happened.

CH: Yeah. It was him because he got me in contact with you, and you with me. [Recording paused.] This is the Lovejoy place.

MG: This is an old house.

CH: Yep. This is how it looked.

MG: It's missing the barn now.

CH: Yeah, it's missing the barn and part of the house. This is the whole barn. The barn was eighty feet long. And then there was a section of house and this – and this was the house. See, all it is now is here – and it was to the barn. This here, Bronson Griscom took it –

MG: Flipped it.

CH: – turned it, and raised it up. Then built another level underneath it. When he did, he ruined everything inside so that all the floors are tilted almost at a thirty degree angle. You can't even get to the attic, because you're almost going bottom side up to go up the stairs.

MG: Like a fun house.

CH: Yep.

MG: What's it being used for now?

CH: Eben is going to let it fall down because he says it's unlivable inside.

MG: It doesn't look like it's got a lot of hope.

CH: No, he says it's got to come down. Eben is younger. He's about forty, fort-five, somewhere in there. When he retires, he's going to build another house up here, he said. The road is going to get a little more tricky now. But this is where – you went by the edge of the house here. You can see a shack out there.

MG: Behind the Lovejoy house?

CH: There used to be a Strawberry Apple here, Wolf River, a Wealthy, a Snow, and the Sierra was all in here.

MG: Apples?

CH: Apples. The road went through and then turned left back to George Hinkley's place. Then we go up a very steep grade. We're going up to the Tosier place. That's the original Tosier.

MG: T-O-S-I-E-R.

CH: That's what they built after they burnt. Then it became Barnum's place. Then after Barnjum, it became Roderick's. Jimmy Roderick, my neighbor, is the grandson of the one that used to live here. Before Tosier, it was the Baker place. In the diaries, it tells about Tosier selling to Andrew Keen, but Andrew Keen sold it immediately to Barnjum. In the diaries, it said George Tosier sold it to Andrew Keen – "the old Baker place." So, it was Baker before. The reason I took my car instead of yours is because I knew this road. [laughter]

MG: I don't think I could record and drive at the same time.

CH: I know. [laughter]

MG: You're doing a good job talking and driving.

CH: Yours ain't got as much clearance as mine has either.

MG: No.

CH: As you saw, I've already hit twice. [laughter]

MG: Can I ask a silly question?

CH: Yeah.

MG: If you need a gallon of milk, where do you go, and how long does it take?

CH: Gallon of milk? I have to go at least Phillips, which is eight miles or go to Kingfield or Rangeley, which is twenty-two miles or Farmington, which is thirty-three miles. It was a lot handier when I had cows, and I could just go out [to] milk the cow. But them days are gone by …

MG: Remind me where –

CH: This is the Tosier place, and it's pretty well dilapidated.

MG: Yes …

CH: In the diaries, they said Tosier sold it to Andrew Keen, and she named it the Old Baker Place. This house burnt in 1902, and they rebuilt it to this one, but this one's remodeled from the one that they rebuilt somewhat. But the last owner was Moses Roderick. Moses Roderick was Jimmy and Eddie's – Jimmy's my neighbor, and Eddie's the one that has a trailer up here. Every summer when Moses would come, he would bring all three of us kids Necco wafer candies. The reason they did [was] because the keys were at the house. They stop and get the keys and come up. A lot of the neighbors that had – it was just summer residents – they left the keys at my family's place, and they just picked them up and went. Where that tractor's sitting right ahead of us was the gate to the Thorpe Place, and that's the picture of the gate right there. That's right where the tractor is sitting. Before you got – it was quite a road. It went up the rest of Mecham Hill, then halfway down towards Barnjum to the Thorpe Place. But before you get to the top of Mecham Hill, it veered to the left, to the Mecham Farm. Solon Mecham was the one that grew up here, and he had a blacksmith shop in the barn, and when his – when he got old enough, his father was a blacksmith and his brother was [too]. They [were] all blacksmiths.

Solon moved down to the village on the Mecham Intervale and became the blacksmith down there, while the father and the brother stayed up here for the blacksmith up here. Then, beyond that, down the road, was the log cabin of the Thorpe Place.

MG: That would be up this way?

CH: Be up over and start down towards Barnjum. That was the log cabin.


The Thorpe Cabin on the

That was another picture of it. It had a full porch on the front side, and it had a good stairway. Then, from the log cabin, you could see the house and the barn. The house had a porch three-quarters of the way around it.


The Thorpe Farm

It was Fred Thorpe's place. Ethel Thorpe was their daughter, their only daughter. My grandfather, after he went to Togus for his operation for his legs, couldn't stay with us anymore because of his legs, being just little wooden stubs. He stayed at Ethel Thorpe's down to Chesterville.

MG: What was his relationship with Ethel?

CH: Growing up with her.

MG: Friends?

CH: Neighbors.

MG: Was she a nurse?

CH: No, she was the last of the neighborhood kids like Arthur was. They [were] the last two. He [had] more access to medical services down there than he [had] up in this area. But the Thorpe Place was also known as a hotel. A lot of the residents were workers at the Barnjum Mill.

MG: I read about that in the report you shared.

CH: The house was big enough that they could have fifteen guests at a time.

MG: All employed in the area.

CH: Yep. All employed in the Barnjum Mill. Barnjum had actually four lumber mills at different times.




Different views of the Barnjum Mills Complex in Mt.Abraham Township, just east of the East Madrid Area of Madrid

One went out, then another started up, and another one started up. I've got records of all four mills that were there, and the Thorpes housed a lot of their workers the whole time.

MG: What happened to this house? When was it damaged like this?

CH: The chimney fell in, in 2016. It's just slowly been going in. They thought they'd take the tractor and try to whack the front a little bit. Somebody told – "Just knock the stone wall

foundation out from underneath, and it'll come down," and it's been sitting like that for three years. I said, "The older houses were built to hold up."

MG: Wow.

CH: He said probably next year he's going to get an excavator up here and take it down because he said it's getting dangerous. That's the neighborhood of East Madrid or Perham Settlement, whichever you want to call it.

MG: It's amazing how much is still sort of intact. You can get a sense of where things are.

CH: Yeah, it's surprising. But it's surprising how much the knowledge of everything – if you walked up here, you'd see the old place, but you wouldn't know anything about the history of who lived here or anything, unless it'd come from me. [Recording paused.] When Moses Roderick owned this, this whole hill, he manually placed rocks all the way up the hill. So, it was all a rock road.

MG: Oh, that's a big effort.

CH: Yeah. He did a lot of work, and then the town put some dirt on it, which washed out two or three times. They had to re-put it every time. Finally, they got a mixture enough to hold. But you're not coming up here with a Cadillac or a limo by no means.

MG: No. Definitely need four-wheel drive.

CH: A horse wagon – no problem though.

MG: Or a horse and wagon. When do you think the last horse and wagon went up this road?

CH: Let's see. About in the late '20s, early 1930s would be about the last. That's when the automobile started in around here. I know I've got the diary of my Grandmother Carrie going down to Sanders Station with a horse and wagon in 1928 to get the mail.

MG: Was the railroad mainly for commerce, or would people travel on it to visit here?

CH: The main line was for visitors to come to go to Rangeley and so forth, for the people to get in, get out. There were passenger trains, delivery trains, and so forth. But as for the Barnjum branch, that was just lumber. They'd have lumber cars on the trains. On the main line, where it went through Sanders Station on the main line there, it was just like a bus and – it combined the busses and trucks virtually. It was either that or take the wagon out over the hill with the horse and be gone half the day.

MG: Was it originally envisioned that Perham would be its own town, or was it always a settlement within Madrid?

CH: It was a settlement. It was probably envisioned to be the town, but the trouble was when – as I said, my family moved over from Madrid. The town slowly moved towards there because the main purpose of the town changed from farming to more industrial. After the industry started, then the whole area became a lumber community virtually because there was a period around the 1920s to virtually World War II that it was just mainly – the only product going out was all these lumber mills, all the textile mills, the wool mills, and all them kind of mills all went. All the farms – everybody was either going into lumber, or they started – the servicemen – to the wars.

MG: Was there a big population spike in the area when those mills were in operation?

CH: Oh, yeah. I've got in the diaries when the Barnjum mill was in operation that – well, it says one time when it closed, there were eighty shacks of families, of workers besides the ones that were residing at the Thorpe Place up there in Barnjum. They were putting out pretty near ten thousand cord of wood a day … all these houses have been remodeled, rechanged, or completely [taken] down [and] rebuilt. The only ones left like it was, is mine. [Recording paused.]

MG: Who's going to do the excavation here?

CH: Steve Scharoun, the one that made that report, is doing the excavating. We think we finally found the edge of the cellar hole. The main house sat here, then the upper house, which Cordelia Pickard lived her life out in, and then the ice house. Right here, where dug here to that tree, was the milkhouse. From there, down to that bank, was a double-story barn. Right here was where the ramp went back down almost to them alders for the ramp to the back of the barn to the second story. You can just see that 1919 Dodge jalopy down there. My father married my mother in 1949. She moved up here, and he was in the process of breaking them two Dodges down into stump jumpers.

MG: Did they get married here on the property?

CH: No, they got married in Wilton at the jeweler's house, the one that made the ring. [laughter]

MG: So, they weren't wasting time.

CH: No.

MG: What do you think their wedding was like? Sounds very simple.

CH: Yeah, it was. It was just my father, my mother, the minister, and that's it. Didn't have a bridesmaid or best man or anything.

MG: And how come it was so small?

CH: Because they couldn't – all the money my father had paid for the ring. He was a poor man. As I said, our income was eight thousand dollars a year. That's right there, the Dodge 1919. Most of it's gone.

MG: Say again what this was used for.

CH: This was used for the farm. It replaced the horses, virtually. It was a touring car. He chopped it down into what they call stump-jumper or jalopy to use for – they put truck axel in it and so forth. So he could use it for pulling all the farm machinery. He re-modified all the horse machinery so that he could hook it to these tractors. As I said, I didn't learn on this one; I learned on the '23. My brother learned on both of them – how to drive good.

MG: It was a good education.

CH: Yep.

MG: Well, that's a nice view of your house. [Recording paused.] Thanks for that tour. That was really helpful to see everything laid out in that way and get a sense of the landscape. One thing we were talking about on our drive back here was the 1903 fire, which I read about. So, tell me what happened.

CH: In 1903, they had a drought, a very severe drought. Everything was bone dry. And then, Barnjum lumber train was going up into Barnjum to get a load of lumber, and a spark from the rail ignited, and it burnt this area for three days, this whole area around here. Two or three of the houses was burnt. I don't think anybody died from it, but it wiped out a lot of the hay fields. I

think there were seven farms that got burned. There was a shack up in one of the fields that they used. They built it afterward, and they marked boards from the 1903 fire that was leftover.

MG: Was this area also impacted by the Great Fires of 1947?

CH: Well, it came almost over here but didn't quite. It burnt all of the southern side of Spaulding Mountain. And started over towards Rangely somewhere in that area and burnt all over Spaulding Mountain and almost made it to (Lone?) and almost made it down here.

MG: In 1903, how would you fight a fire like that?

CH: By hand. Just hand and water buckets, and that's it, and that's why it took three days to get it out.

MG: Did any of your family members document or write about that fire in their diaries?

CH: Yep, in the diaries it mentions about the fire, and it mentions how it got started and [how] them are going up and still fighting the fire, and coming back, and telling about the smoke and the cloud from it and everything else – haze and all the weather change.

MG: Any other big fires over the last –?

CH: Not that I know of. Of course, there was fires out in Phillips that burnt Phillips Upper Village, and then they burnt the Lower Village. The Lower Village was in my lifetime, but the upper village was before my lifetime.

MG: We haven't talked much about Phillips and its history. It was named for John Phillips. Is that right?

CH: Yep. Like Moses Abbott was, he was a governorship of Strong, Phillips, Freeman, Carthage, and then, after Moses relinquished, he got Madrid, too, and Avon. Jacob Abbott was the one that – he was overseer, and he's the one that promoted – tried to get people to come up and settle. But that was after the main settlement started up here. That was to get more people to come up.

MG: Over the last one hundred years, who have been the community leaders and the people in charge before the town was unincorporated?

CH: This community, there was really no leader. It was all cooperation virtually.

MG: Was there a mayor or a town council?

CH: No. Was no Council, no mayor. The only leader would be the spiritual leader, which was – they usually had somebody come in for a month or two to preach, and that was that. But other than that, it’s just families working with families.

MG: What about in the last fifty years, though?

CH: Last fifty years? Last fifty years, it was just me growing up with my family here, and that was it. Nobody else here but summer residents.

MG: In the greater Madrid township, was there someone –?

CH: Over in Madrid and Reeds Mill, there was a lot of community business over there. But over here, it was almost a separate unit. They didn't want to associate over here with us and so forth. Virtually, it was me that went over and made them realize that there was a lot of history over here there was going to get lost.

MG: I sense there's a divide between this area and the rest of Madrid?

CH: Yeah, it was sort of a divide. When my family moved over here, the manufacturing – the way of life was changing. This was farm, and they were changing to more industrial. And it's just like every community; you got the townsfolk, and you get the farm folk on the other side. They're the country hicks, virtually. They're just the country hicks. They didn't want to really acknowledge you, virtually. But we just kept plugging along. The old saying – I coined a phrase, and it [stuck] with a lot of people, and the summer residents always joke about. I may be backwoods, but I'm not backwards.

MG: I like that.

CH: Other than that, we just keep plugging along as I've always said. Your family you got to count on because that's all that you got, and that's the way we was raised. That's all we had was our family here.

MG: I wondered a little bit more about your family. Did you guys ever take a vacation or get to travel together?

CH: Oh, we went for outings and stuff like that, but we never went for what they call vacations. We went out to see the foliage. We went out to see the Christmas lights, see the spring flowers, or the Apple tree blossoms. We'd travel around. We'd, once in a while, go take a trip up to Canada just for a day trip and back. It was just always day trips because you had the animals. You had to tend the animals; you had to tend them at night, so you couldn't really go on vacation like they tell about it. You can go out, but you got to get back there and tend the animals.

MG: In your adult life, when you stopped farming, did you have opportunities to travel?

CH: That was [on] my bucket list, but that never happened because I became disabled when I had the motorcycle [accident]. My bucket list was I was going to travel [with] my motorcycle and hit every state in the United States, make one big, long trip. It may take two or three years, but then I became disabled; that went out the window. But it ain't like –I don't know about my sister and my brother, but my mother and I – our voyages were in books. We've got massive libraries.

MG: Are you still a big reader?

CH: I'm a big reader and a big movie watcher. I have over five thousand movies.

MG: What's your favorite movie?

CH: The [Fearless] Vampire Killers, or Pardon Me But is That Your Teeth in My Neck.

MG: I've never even heard of that one.

CH: It's a foreign Swedish movie. It's a comedy. It's so funny all through it, but there's one scene in it that scares me. It's the scene that scared me the most in my whole life. Of all the movies [that] tell about scary scenes, that one really – it jumped you right out of the seat when it comes on. But all the rest of the movie, you're almost laughing all the way through it.

MG: I'll have to check that out. Can you say how the population of this area where we are now has changed, or maybe the greater Madrid area over the years?

CH: I can't tell about the Madrid area, but over here, it was all the village that settled here. People kept coming in to make the community and so forth. And then when the industry changed a little bit, and a lot of diphtheria and flu and stuff killed a lot of the kids, a lot of them moved out or moved to get a different job. Then it went down to just my family. We're the ones that hung that out.

MG: I read that around 1854, gold was discovered in this area.

CH: [laughter] [In] 1854, there was a gold strike, and they named this stream as a gold stream. But the gold didn't come from this stream. Down where Perham Stream enters the Orbeton [Stream], where the main line of the Narrow Gauge Railroad goes up through, a person went panning for gold for three months. He got twenty-four cents worth of gold. But the gold – he was in the Perham Stream, yes. But it was where the Orbeton swirled into the Perham Stream, where they connected. The gold came from the Orbeton Stream. But they named it because he was in the Perham – they named the Perham Stream as the gold stream. And every three or four years, there's somebody [who] comes up here and tries to pan for gold, and there's no sand to pan. [laughter] It's all rock.

MG: I think I saw a YouTube video of a couple of guys trying to get some gold.

CH: Yeah, there's no gold here. There's a lot of iron, but no gold.

MG: Can you talk a little bit more about the industries in the area? The sawmills and the grist mills? When would this have been?

CH: There was no grist mills here in this area. Over in Madrid, there was a textile mill, a grist mill, and so forth. Over here was just the lumber mill – they had saw machines, clapboard

machines, and shingle machines. The mill here in the village was a mill that virtually built the village. That's why it was here, to cut the lumber. They did make poles and ship them for the railroad, the ties and so forth. They made them, and they made the telephone poles and so forth. The Barnjum branch went into Barnjum just inside of Abraham Township from here. But any access that they had out was through this area here, not through Madrid. That was strictly the same thing. But that was more commercial that shipped out on the rail. It wasn't shipped out by horse and wagon. It was all by rail. When the rail went out, then the trucks – the lumber trucks come in – lumber companies. They had a mill after the rail. Then, all my life there was always lumber trucks going out through here, all in lumber, pulp, paper.

MG: You were saying in the car that it brought a lot of families and boarders here. Where do you think they were coming from?

CH: Oh, they was coming [from] all over. Mainly, it was vacationing. As for in here, there was never any coming from the rail. They came to visit, to hunt, and so forth. But if you had any access of any news, or you needed any supplies or anything, that had to come through rail. Once in a while, the diaries mentioned about my family, had gone down to the station to go visit some distant relative in Weld or down [to] Farmington or Jay for a weekend, and then coming back. Things like that. But it was mainly just getting supplies that we couldn't make here. You can't make flour. They didn't have a gristmill. You had to get the flour from someplace else. You could pound and pound and pound and ground it by hand. It was largely, they'd go buy it. Or to get some leather material – leather belts, or leather hat, or clothing like that. You had to go – because there wasn't that many animals either. So, as I said, my grandmother was – my great grandma was the last one to see an elk in the area. And my grandmother was the first to see the whitetail deer arrive. Other than that, you had bears, or you had foxes, mountain lions. Mountain lions are here. I don't care what the game wardens say; they are here.

MG: Have you seen them or heard them?

CH: I've heard them.

MG: What about bobcats?

CH: Oh yeah, we got [bobcats]. We have both bobcats and lynx.

MG: We talked a little bit about the Reeds Mill Church. I think I read that there were Hinkleys involved in the founding of the church.

CH: Yeah, that was the Hinkleys that didn't move over here. That was the rest of the Hinkley family. It would be Thomas and Ebenezer. Because the only one [who] moved over here was George. All the others stayed over that way. George went over here, and then the line over here.

MG: And did some family stay in that area over by the Reeds Mill Church?

CH: Not by the Reeds Mill Church. They was more on the Dunham area and the upper side of Madrid Village, where they had the Hinkley mill.

MG: Did any of your ancestors continue to be involved with the church?

CH: Not really, because the church was a church for that. And over here, they held the church in the Mecham Farm, the Thorpe Place, down to my family farm. A house that had a big enough – what they used to call a parlor is what it was. It was big enough to hold quite a few people. That's how they held the services over here. They had the minister come in for a month or so and stay with the family and service until the Wheelers moved up here. And when Wheeler moved up here, he was the minister right along until his death. And then they had them come in again. But as for going over to that, they did go over sometimes. Carrie's diary does mention about going over there, but not regularly. Maybe once or twice a year, and that's it. Most of it was right here.

MG: Did you ever attend church services growing up?

CH: Not growing up. I have attended two or three times afterward. I've gone to the Reeds Mill Church three times in my life. I went last year, last Christmas there. I was married over there. And my son was baptized over there. That's the only times.

MG: Those are the three times.

CH: Those are the three times. I have gone to Philips Church both [denominations] down there when they were in service. I did go once to each of them, and I did go once to Strong. But it's just like my mother. They preach. I enjoyed their preaching and everything. But they didn't connect nature and the real God's creations in it. As my mother says, "[If] I want to see a church, all I got to do is walk out and look at Abraham Mountain or Saddleback Mountain because that's his steeple right there. You walk out in the morning. You get the fresh air. You can hear the birds. To me and my mother, it was more inspirational than sitting down in [a] closed building listening to somebody.

MG: Yeah, that's your church.

CH: Yep.

MG: One thing I forgot to ask you about is the connection to Wilhelm Reich and Orgonon to this area?

CH: Yeah, I've heard of it. I've never been there. I've heard of it.

MG: Where would that be in relation to here?

CH: Twenty-five miles away. On the other side of the mountain.

MG: Because that was kind of a funky history.

CH: Yeah. He was a naturalist [but] not like we are. He's more of a – it's hard to say. More of a spiritual naturalist than a naturalist-naturalist.

MG: Yeah, he had created something called Orgone, and he was trying to manifest certain energies.

CH: My mother and I both – we could walk out and see an ant crossing the dooryard, and look at it and think how much he has to do to make a living. As small as he is and how much he can carry and so forth. Or a worm going across – how in-tune nature has to be to function. I always looked at the night skies or stars. I know all the constellations. But I always look at it, and I say to myself, "There's all that creation out there and all the creation here. There has to be some – whether it's a person, or whether it's even an alien, a superbeing, an energy, that had the knowledge to blend everything together to work."

MG: That's your belief system.

CH: Yeah.

MG: We drove by a property earlier with an alien statue on the lot. Does that signify anything?

CH: No, it's just something they stuck up there. They used it for the corner of one of the gardens they had up there, and then it became a conversation piece. There's one going towards Weld on the straightaway. All my life, [since] I was seven years old, they made a scarecrow, and they put it out. They had an oil barrel behind it to hold it up. Then, after Halloween, the father of the family threw it into the barrel. So the legs were sticking up. And that became a marker to get to Weld to get to Phillips, that to you go so many miles past the man in the barrel. It became a landmark for years and years. I bet it was there for thirty years.

MG: We had talked earlier about how diseases really ravaged some families around here. Was the native population also impacted by those diseases?

CH: I don't know whether it was or not. I think mainly the native – there [weren't] that many real big villages of natives anyway; it was just a small community. Maybe eight or nine families, something like that. But I think they just blended right in with the – became part of the community and just interracial – just became part of the – probably half of the village, by the time that the disease has gone through, probably half or more – three quarters of the village probably had Indian blood in them. [laughter] I think they just melded right in with the village, the settlement. I think they just melded together because there was no squabbling about it.

MG: What about the fur trade through this area?

CH: Fur trade – there wasn't that much. The only fur trade I know of is that Swedish trapper. Other than that, it was – if they did skin an animal, they used it themselves.

MG: And I had asked you in the car about the Coos Trail.

CH: I know the Coos Trail is one of the Indian trading routes, but it's not up in here. But they did access – these trails up here did join up with it lower down. The Indian trading path here went to the Orbeton trading path. The Orbeton went down through Phillips and connected to the Coos, as far as I know.

MG: Was Orbeton one of the names we saw in the cemetery earlier?

CH: Yeah, it was one of the boys. But no relation to the naming of that. The naming of the Orbeton Stream is because a guy was trying to get his wrench and pliers from a rock before the freshet, and he didn't make it. He got caught in the freshet. His name was Orbeton, so they named the stream Orbeton. The Perham Stream went all the way to the Sandy River originally. There was no Orbeton Stream.

MG: So, what happened?

CH: Then they found the Orbeton Stream and changed it from – Perham entered into the Orbeton, and Orbeton went into Sandy. But when they come up, when they explored up the Sandy, they hit the Orbeton, and the Orbeton – they first named it as the East Branch, I think it was. It went up to – they connected Beal Pond into it as part of the – then, they went up, and they come up to the Perham. The rest of the Orbeton was just a little trickle on the maps. There wasn't really a stream. They had the Perham going all the way up around, and all the way back towards Rangely [laughter] by the 1861 map, which stops up in Abraham Valley. The Orbeton is the one that goes up into [the] Redington area.

MG: That map you're talking about must have been such an important piece of the puzzle in trying to figure out how this was all laid out.

CH: Yeah. I used that a lot. Then, when my sister-in-law – my brother's wife – found the map down in the probate court in Farmington that was dated wrong, and found out that it was between 1811 and 1829. So, I marked it about 1825. That map, showing Samuel Hinkley owning where Madrid is – that showed the Perham Stream and the [inaudible] Orbeton Stream, but it didn't go all the way around into Redington like the 1861 map does. 1923 map that my father had a map of – and the 1939 town map, which we have a copy of – what I did is I combined them all together and traced other virtually originally where the roads were, and then plotted where the houses were and using the names from each of them of the properties – that way, I could know who owned what after the other person. That's how I compiled it.

MG: Another name that kept coming up in that report was the last name Dill, D-I-L-L. Does that ring a bell?

CH: I know the Dills [were] very [influential] in what they called Northern Phillips, which was virtually right south of here. Northern and Upper Phillips area.

MG: And the narrow-gauge railroad? Can you say again what you know about that?

CH: The Sandy River Railroad went through in the late 1800s to the early 1900s. They built up – the main line was from Phillips up through to Rangely along the Orbeton Stream. What they did is they was on the right side of the Orbeton Stream, and they use the old Indian trading path as the route. A lot of people think that they use the Fly Rod Crosby trail, the Indian trading trail. They think Fly Rod Crosby Trail was the Indian Trail, but the Indian Trail was on this side, where the narrow-gauge railroad was. Then, later on, they decide to connect to Barnjum Mills and get a track up through there to that, so they could get the lumber out.

MG: I just learned about Fly Road Crosby yesterday. Tell me about her.

CH: Fly Rod Crosby was a naturalist, and she was virtually the first naturalist tour guide, female tour guide, in Maine. She was [a] very adamant fisher-person. She went to big meetings about fish conservation and so forth. Ginni could tell you a lot more about her than I could. I do know that there is a trail over there, and it is a – I think it's a twenty-six-mile-long trail. But it's a narrow trail. Whereas my Birding Trail is only two and a half miles long, but it's a very easy walking wide trail that you can take your time on and relax. I do know that Fly Crosby Trail – some of it's kind of hard-going.

MG: What years was she alive?

CH: I don't know exactly, but I can give you the flyer that I have. Then you can ponder over it and add to it. I do have that clipping of her in the newspaper from the – she originated in Phillips. She lived in Phillips, but she went up through Madrid with the Fly Rod Crosby Trail. She went up into Saddleback, onto Saddleback, and so forth. That's how it's connected through. The trail does go on Ginni Robie's land property there.

MG: I read that there was an economic depression, I think, in 1873, the first great depression in United States history, and that it impacted the expansion of the railroad. Do you know about that? Did it impact anybody in your family?

CH: I don't think there's any real impact on the family because, as I've said, this whole village was virtually self-sufficient. Except for the big depression, the only thing was things like flour or leather or gasoline. Other than that, you can get by without them if you have to. They had everything stored up. So, when some hard times come, they was ready for it because every year they had hard times. They had nine, ten months of winter up here.

MG: So it didn't really matter what was happening in the rest of the world?

CH: Right. They was in-tune. They knew about it. They learned about it and was informed about it, but it didn't affect their daily lives like it did in the other places.

MG: We talked about the lumber trade and the lumber industry. Was it mostly white birch being used in the beginning? What kinds of trees were used?

CH: Evergreen. Softwood. It virtually became paper – paper wood. It all shipped down to the paper mills and so forth. That was big time. But before then, and they did ship it – log drive it

on the Orbeton – was the hornbeams. The hornbeams is what they used for masts for the ships. They did harvest them up here, and they did go down the Orbeton I know. My father showed me out on the birding – out on our property where the last hornbeam was. It was an old tree. It was almost dead when I saw it. He said, "That is the last one in the area." Because they harvested all the others. When they harvested it, it was just a little sapling.

MG: They didn't replace –?

CH: Just like the big pines, that time they just cut them, and that was it. There was king's pines. You cut them – back then, they didn't think about replanting.

MG: When did the paper and pulp mills close down?

CH: When the internet and cell phones and all that business and the social media started. Because everything – all the newspapers were going out of business because nobody buys newspapers. Nobody reads books anymore. It was all on the internet. That's when it all petered out. And they're starting to realize now they should have kept some of that. [laughter]

MG: I talked with Ginni this morning a little bit about when Madrid was dissolved as a town. Can you talk a little bit about what happened?

CH: Unorganized. It became unorganized. In other words, it relinquished town status and dissolved the town officials and things like that for the simple reason that no people had moved out of Madrid so much the people couldn't sustain the expense of it anymore. Over here, everybody was happy that it did it for the simple reason we could get the roads fixed. Because the town would have the road crew and so forth, but that would be over there, and they had to do all theirs before they'd get around to do anything over here. When the town [plows] the winter, and the kids got to go school, the road over here wouldn't get plowed out until two o'clock in the afternoon. So, my father learned how to drive in the snow. [laughter] In fact, my father was actually commissioned – he was paid by the town to plow this whole road with one his jalopies that he made – or the dump truck afterward. He plowed the road here. Just like they paid him to ship us to school every day and get us from school because they didn't want to bring the bus over here for just us.

MG: How have things changed since Madrid was disorganized?

CH: The roads get plowed first thing, almost before dawn. The road has been better ever since – maintained. They've ditched and retop two or three times. The buses still don't come up here.

MG: The school buses?

CH: Yeah.

MG: Are there any kids around here to pick up?

CH: In the upper neighborhood, there's two or three. They have to take them out to where the Blethen School connection the crossroads there. They take them out there to get on the bus. But when we was going to school, my sister had a detention. She went to school four years before me. She had a detention in high school and had to stay, and when it come time to bring the kids home from detention, the bus driver refused. So, the teacher had to bring my sister home. They came in here one time – they contracted for SAD [School Administrative District] 58 to come in and get all the kids everywhere. The buses came down over the hill – it was in the wintertime – and they couldn't get back out. We didn't go to school that day, and the bus sat here all day long. [laughter] Of course, it didn't have any kids on it because they was going to pick us up first and then go get the rest, but they couldn't get back up over the hill. So, ever since then, the bus drivers refused. And my sister had the detention, so the teacher had to bring her home. Then, when she graduated high school in '72, my brother and I arrived at the high school [in] the fall of '72. We walked in to present our names as a student. The principal was there, signing the kids in. He said, "You wouldn't happen to be Belinda's brothers?" "Yeah." "Oh, great." Then, two or three times something happened, and the teacher was going to give me detention. I said, "Go talk to the principal." He'd come back. "He said 'no detention.'" For the simple reason, there's no way that the bus was ever going to get here. The teachers were not going to drive here either.

MG: So you got a pass.

CH: I got a pass from detention, but I didn't get a pass from missing the bus. If there was a storm [and] you couldn't get, my father could drive a regular car through a foot of snow and still make it out and back.

MG: Oh, my gosh. You talked yesterday about how there wasn't really any time for extracurriculars because you had to get home to the farm. Were you involved in anything outside of school or home, like Boy Scouts?

CH: Nope. My mother was going to sign us up for Boy Scouts. She thought of it. And there was a couple of kids in our grade that went to Boy Scouts. Somehow she found out we was related. So, she talked to the mother and the father and says, "Forget it." She said, "Why?" He said, "Because your kids can teach them kids."

MG: You were probably an Eagle Scout at five years old.

CH: Yeah. [laughter] He said, "What the Boy Scouts are teaching is what a farm kid knows automatically because it's part of their life." Boy Scouts is based on taking town or city kids and teaching them how to be a farmer. A farmer already knows. [laughter]

MG: Did you talk to me about the Prescott Mill? Where would that have been placed?

CH: The Prescott Mill was across the stream. That was the True Mill. It was Pickard Mill. Then it became the Prescott Mill. Then it became the Hoyt. Then it became the Hoyt-Prescott. Then it became George True's. Then it became Andrew Keen's. And then it became the community's, which was up to seventeen owners at once. They had a quarter share or an eighth share or a tenth share. It was all community after that. It was virtually a community anyways.

They had an official name, official owner until that became the seventeen owners. But it was all the same mill. One thing I didn't mention to you – in 1989, a car drove up across the bridge here. At that time, I was sleeping upstairs. And on the ceiling upstairs, the plaster had the name "Alice True." And Alice True was the daughter of George True [who] operated the mill and lived here. One of the girls was raised [here]. Her name was up there. That car pulled up. A young fellow got out and started taking pictures all over the place. I was out in the barn at the time. I was coming out to check something at the end of the house. The woman spotted me, drove the car up, and stopped at the end of the dooryard and got out. I got about halfway out, just about where the door was here. She says, "Is my great-grandmother's name still on the ceiling?" I said, "You mean Alice True?" She says, "Yeah." I said, "No, my brother tore it down, but I always wondered what Alice True looked like because that was my bedroom." She said, "Well, we got on the internet trying to find relations. They found George True and Alice and so forth, all the relations. She said, "We was wondering whether there's any evidence of anything." I said, "Well, I don't know of that, but I do know everything [about] the area." She said, "Mainly, I come up to find out where my great-grandfather walked himself to death." I said, "What do you mean?" She says, "Walking twelve and a half miles to his mill." I said, "What?" She says, "It has that he lived in your house." I said, "Yeah, he did." "And his mill was in Reeds Mill, and he walked to the mill every day." I said, "His mill was right across the stream here." She says, "It was?" I said, "Yeah. He didn't walk himself to death." I said, "He did, later on, have a mill over in Reeds Mill, but he moved to Reeds Mill over there, beside the mill." I said, "He didn't walk." [laughter] She said, "Well, thank God for that." But on the internet, it said that he walked twelve and a half miles to his mill every morning.

MG: It shows you how easily history can be lost or misconstrued if not documented properly.

CH: And that's one thing that – a lot of times if I'm not sure if something, I say it's [a] possibility, or it's almost a fact until I'm sure of the fact. And once I'm sure of it, then I incorporate into the – just like that Swedish trapper. I've had confirmation from three or four different sources, but I still have no actual evidence. So, it's still a possibility he's there. As for Thomas Pickard, there's no – I haven't found the musket yet. I found the trigger guard, and I found the uniform button, but I haven't found the actual rifle.

MG: It sounds like there are plans to do continued excavation and exploration. How's that going to unfold?

CH: We're going to continue digging in the cellar, trying to get the foundation, and once we get the foundation – I have the map of the whole farm, the measurements and everything of every section of the building. Once we find that cellar hole and get one corner, I'm going to take and put a post in every corner of every section so that people can see how big that building actually was. He wants to excavate the rest of the cellar out, and he wants to excavate the upper cellar out to find the wells and that foundation underneath that opening under the chimney. And then he wants to go to the blacksmith shop, check that out. He wants to go up to the Wheeler place, check that place out, and the Perham School. If he can get more permission to do, possibly up to Mecham Farm, Welch's farm, and maybe the Toothaker – the Increase Blethen farm, to find out more on how they lived their lives. He wants to tie in the Indian aspect and the trading routes and so forth like that. He's going around right now – this year, he's been doing test pits all over

the place. Because he says that there's a good – the lay of the land and everything is a good indication it might be the same kind of site [that] they found down in Strong, which would be ten, fifteen thousand years old.

MG: Wow. What did they find there in Strong?

CH: They found evidence of knapping stones and stuff to make tools and pieces of tools and everything that dated back to thirteen thousand years ago.

MG: Holy cow. Where are those artifacts living?

CH: I have no idea where they went. He don't either. He was involved …

MG: Do you want to pause? [Interruption in the recording. Recording paused.]

CH: Every year, it's almost doubled in people coming in to see things. As we said right there, people are always coming in to see – it's more and more people are realizing how much history this was in this area. I've even gotten – the people have a nickname now. There was one person coming up to see the museum. They was walking the Fly Rod Crosby trail as we mentioned. They stopped and talked to somebody there that lived in the Reeds Mill area next to the church there. He says, "Well, if you want to know the real history of Madrid, you have to go see the mayor of the ghost town." They're talking about me. He says, "If you follow this route and go up and cross the bridge, and you see a trail, and there'll be a museum. The mayor of the ghost town will come out and speak to you. The old man in the woods – I've been named that. Like the old man in the mountain in New Hampshire, the knowledgeable old man. The old man of the lost town. People have come up and greeted me that way. "Are you the old historian such and such?"

MG: Do you say, "I'm not that old?"

CH: [laughter]

MG: We've talked about the red house across the street. I think in the records, there was a Robert Davis on the deed at some point.

CH: Robert Davis, I think, was in 1861 before Moses Wing had it. Moses Wing wasn't up here that long. He was here to have his son and so forth, but then he died. He blind and half-crippled. He lived there, and then Cordelia, of course, and Daniel. But I think that was the first name – Davis – that lived there. A lot of the names in 1861 are – the information [about] a lot of the places got handed to another person, but it took a long time for the information to get to Augusta to make a new map. Because in 1861, most of the ones listed – almost three-quarters of them – had passed on and moved and sold it to somebody else at that time.

MG: It says the red house was burned and rebuilt in 1903.

CH: Right.

MG: Did it burn down because of the 1903 fire?

CH: No, it burned down because of a spark from a stove in the house. It was in the spring. They had a cold snap and then filling it and a spark come from the stove and burnt the house down. Then, by the fall, they had it rebuilt, and they built it almost exactly the same, except the porch didn't extend quite so far on one corner. That was the only difference that made until Bronson Griscom bought it in '48, '49. Then he dug a hole on the lower side to put a door into the cellar from the outside.

MG: Is that when the Griscoms came to this area?

CH: Yep.

MG: And what first brought the Griscoms here?

CH: As I said yesterday, as a child, he was walking with his father up on Saddleback Mountain –

MG: That's right.

CH: – and he saw that, and he said he'd like to live [there] and own that area. So when he became retired, he came up and started buying everything.

MG: And I'm sure we've talked about the Wheeler Farm. Can you remind me of its history?

CH: The Wheeler Farm is known as the Wheeler Farm. I can't remember the name before it right now. I think it's on one of the maps. The one before it was the one that had the beef animals. Every year, he would take a jersey –

MG: Who was "he?" Wheeler?

CH: No. Before Wheeler. He would take an old jersey that he had and walk across the longest property all the way to the point of the land and then down over the bank to load, and the beef critters would follow him all the way. They'd load the beef critters onto the railroad to be shipped out for meat and everything – slaughter. Then, he'd walk home with the jersey every day. Well, the bank – they'd walk out there. It was about a mile out to the top of the bank. It's all flat. And then you got the bank of the Orbeton Valley and the Perham Valley, and it goes right to a point, just like that – a point. There's a trail down over. That point from that top of my land – or was my land – is all flat. From there to the stream at the Orbeton is 480 down. It's about three-quarters of a mile walk down the hill, and three-quarters [of a mile] walk back up the steep hill. It is steep. He'd do that every fall when it was time to sell cattle. Then, Reverend Wheeler came from below Farmington somewhere. I can't remember exactly where. He went to Freeman for a while – Freeman, Maine, which is north of Strong. Then, he came over here and lived. He was a spiritual leader here for two or three years, and then he died from disease, and his daughter – when the post office started, she became the postmistress. Ezra, her brother, was

just tending the farm and so forth, but they didn't have the cattle like the one before did. They had cattle and milk cows and horses and so forth. They was mainly either – he was a lumberman and she was a postmistress.

MG: I read that [Edgar] Wheeler married a Masterman, Cora Masterman.

CH: Yep.

MG: So, was there a connection to your family? Weren't there Mastermans in your family?

CH: Yeah. Lucinda Masterman. Cora Masterman was a distant cousin of Lucinda's. They came from the Masterman settlement in Weld, both of them. I've got a picture of Ezra Wheeler at Cora's father's farm. Ezra Wheeler was Jennie Wheeler's brother. I've got a picture of him standing in front of the old Masterman farm.

MG: Remind me of the location of the post office that we're talking about.

CH: It's at the top of the hill. It's called Wheeler Hill because of the Reverend Wheeler. It's the knoll in back of the main village. On the top of the hill is where I told you that they had that geodetic marker of the altitude of the land that they moved. It was right on top of that. The Wheeler place was on the eastern side, so that the winter wind would flow over the house, not in the house. There was a cellar hole, and I keep it cleaned out so the people can see it, and a well that I have barriered off so that people don't get injured. But the well is very good-tasting water. [laughter]

MG: And your grandmother worked in the post office.

CH: Yep. Carrie Wing. She was the post deliverer. She delivered the mail.

MG: Was that challenging to do in these parts?

CH: Yeah, it was horse or walk. She would have to walk a mile and a half from the post office down to the mail depot at Sanders Station, Sanders Mill, to get the mail, and then bring it back. Then Jennie Wheeler would sort it all out, and then my grandmother would have to take horse or walk the whole length of the settlement here to deliver the mail. It was an all-day job. Sometimes, the upper village didn't get the mail but once or twice a week, and that was it. [laughter] Sometimes, the mail didn't come from the train, except for once a week because something happened, and [if] the train didn't run, you didn't get the mail. There was a lot of train wrecks on that train because it was narrow gauge. It flipped over easy.

MG: We were just talking about the Reverend Wheeler. Where would he operate out of? The common area across the footbridge?

CH: No, he held services – as I said, they held services in the school that was unoccupied after building another one. Or at a family farm parlor room or a big living room. They'd hold

services. He'd come to their place and hold the service. I do have a ledger of the church of when they was using the old Mill Hill School. I do have a ledger of that.

MG: What else can you tell me about the Prescott Mill?

CH: Prescott Mill was the True Mill. It was right across the stream here. It's the same one, the one that was built here.

MG: My notes say, "James Roderick, present owner of the mill site."

CH: Yeah, he owns across the stream here. He's the one that brought the map. He's the one that owns that property now. We did own it, but we sold it to him because he wanted a place of his instead of up on the old farm.

MG: So, does he live over there?

CH: Yeah. Well, on the lower side. The mill was on the upper side of the road. The mill yard was where his house is. Where they put all the trees and everything to be processed.

MG: We've covered the Nathan D. Wing Farm.

CH: Yeah, that's my family farm over here. Nathan D. Wing. That was my great-grandfather.

MG: I'm going to go through my notes, but please let me know if there's things you think we're missing. I think a lot of these are things we've already talked about. We talked about the blacksmith shop.

CH: Yeah.

MG: The Pickard orchard.

CH: Well, we ain't talked too much about the Pickard orchard. The Pickard orchard is in back of the – it comes down from the Wheeler place down back of the Pickard Farm here before you get to the basin piece. There was an orchard in there. That had the Wealthy, the Worthy, the Tolman sweet, the Wolf River, and the McIntosh. That was on the lower – southern bank of the Wheeler Hill is virtually what it is. It's accessed from in back of the Pickard Farm and shop here, up behind the red house and up to the Wheeler place. There used to be a little road. The stone wall of the Wheeler place is the upper part of the – at the very top of the orchard – and the orchard's down this way from it.

MG: Is your guess then that it was a barnyard?

CH: No, it was an orchard. It had about sixteen, seventeen trees in it.

MG: Was that the area that was converted to a rose garden?

CH: No. That rose garden is out near [the] eastern side of the Pickard/Moulton place here. That's just above my place here on the bank. From my house, you cross the street on the main road – whatever you want to call it – is on the west side of my place. The Pickard Farm was on the west side of that. The orchard was behind on the west side of that farm before they got to the big field and the basin piece and the sheep pasture.

MG: Would your mom cook with the apples from the orchard?

CH: Oh, yeah.

MG: What would she make?

CH: All kinds of them. Apple pies. We had baked apples, apple sauce, apple muffins, apple fritters, apple donuts, apple cake. When you leave here, you'll have an apple pie.

MG: Oh, yeah?

CH: Yeah.

MG: Did you make it?

CH: Yeah. My mother and I made it. It's still in the freezer. You can have it when you go home. You can take it home with you.

MG: Did you make it in 2017, and it's been frozen ever since?

CH: I had one the other day that was made in 2010, perfectly fine.

MG: People do keep their wedding cakes in the freezer and eat a little bit every year. Well, that's really kind. I feel honored. If you're granted permission, what other areas need to be covered in this excavation or exploration?

CH: If I was granted [permission], I'd have every site excavated. But mainly, the Mecham [property] because he was a blacksmith up there on Mecham Hill. If we could get permission [for] the Thorpe Place because that was, as I said, virtually a boarding house for the mill people. The Toothaker Place, which was Increase Blethen's because that was a very big farm, and they had an orchard behind it. They had a lot of fields. There's a lot of history there that I think there'd be a lot of evidence of – got a big animal barn, a chicken shed, and a carriage barn. I think there'd be a lot of evidence in the ground to that. As I said, the Wheeler place. There's very good ability. You can see the foundation and the front step of the door and everything. One thing I didn't mention about the Wheeler place is I remember it pretty near well fallen down. My father told me not to go into it, but I could look in the door. When I looked in the door, stood at the door – to the left of the door – there was a wall inside the door. To the left of the door was another door. In the door, the top half was post office grates. To the right, was an entrance to the cellar. I've scuffed enough places on the outer edge, that I found the sink drain through the foundation wall from the kitchen. I found a piece of pipe from the sink drain. But I

just thought I'd let you know that I did see that post office grate, so I do know that that was the post office.

MG: Did someone live there?

CH: It was Jennie Wheeler. She was the postmistress. It was the Wheeler place. That was the East Madrid post office.

MG: What happened to those artifacts?

CH: Just gone. Just like over here, Jimmy used to have a pile of the old scrap metal from the mill. Somebody just swiped it. Just like somebody swiped my sign up there at the grave.

MG: It seems like you could see who's going back and forth.

CH: There's more traffic on this road than there is [on] the main road. They go the speed of a main road up through here, too.

MG: I'm seeing in my notes something about Goldsmith farm and Goldsmith loop. Was that the area we drove past?

CH: No, that's out there to [the] town line at the top of the tarred hill. That area out there. When you go back out, you'll go by an opening with a house sitting there in the trees and the shed. They'll be on the right. That was the Sweetser place. Then you go through where on the left it says, (Gagne?) Preserve. Then there's a little hollow, and in that little hollow, to the right, that looks like an old little road, that was the main road out of East Madrid.

MG: The "Old Main Road?

CH: Yeah. That went down to the old Reeds Mill Road. Goldsmith Loop went up where the road is now to a dooryard that's got a cable over it, and that went up to the Goldsmith farm. Then it looped back down onto the "Old Main Road."

MG: Where's the Noah Davenport farm?

CH: Davenport farm. I think that's the one that's – I think that's the one that I know as Brimigion, and that would be out here where Clark [inaudible] was the (McLaughlin) Farm. But right at the end of this side of the house that used to be there, the Brimigion Road went out and connected to the Bray Hill Road. The Brimigion Farm was that, and I think the Davenport Farm is that area.

MG: You've mentioned the Sweetsers a couple of times? Where were they from? What kind of family were they?

CH: I don't know too much about them. I do know the Sweetsers lived at the red house here for a while. And the Sweetsers had that place out there that I just mentioned on the road just before

the "Old Main Road." Other than that, the descendants of both of them live out in Phillips now; that's all I know.

MG: That's a common Maine name, too. We didn't go back out that way, but is that where the Bailey and Evans farms are? On Bray Hill Road?

CH: Yeah. That you can't get to unless you hoof it or four-wheel drive it.

MG: Oh, yeah.

CH: Four-wheeler. Not four-wheel drive. It's mostly [on foot] to there because there's no more road. Just a walk path, if that.

MG: Yes, that's what I'm reading here.

CH: It's all grown up.

MG: Where was the Mill Hill School?

CH: Mill Hill School was – these two hills that you come – the Perham Stream here – to go out to Phillips, you have to go up over two hills. The first hill at the top of that is a little bog to the left, and then there's a – trading [trail] you can see just – this side looks like an old little wood

road. That was the Indian path – trading trail. On the other side, you can see an opening. That went all the way down along the Perham Stream and joined the Oberton trading path. But you went up over the top of the second hill, and that's where the Mill Hill School was. That's one that my grandmother's – that was her first school that she went to.

MG: Did she ever record any recollections of her school days in the diaries or anywhere else?

CH: The diaries mention it. I've got what they used to call cards. It was people who signed the cards, and you could collect cards to go to parties. It's like – you have to have a card to dance with a person. I've got a lot of them. I've got a lot of teacher cards that teachers would give the cards for recognition of schoolwork or something. I've got a whole mess of them. I've the records of how many students were in the grades with her. There's one that's – she's got a list. It's a little tiny book. It's like a pamphlet book. One page says, "How many (scholars?) with red hair?" You flip a page. "How many (scholars?) with blonde hair?" You flip a page. "How many with brunette hair?" Flip a page. "How many with bobtails?" [laughter] All her classmates – their looks, different complexions, who wore hats, and who didn't.

MG: Why was that significant to capture?

CH: I have no idea. She's got it. As she got older, she got, "How many men have mustaches?" How many men don't have mustaches?

MG: I guess it's a way to document demographics and trends. How many men did have mustaches? Do you remember?

CH: I think she had seven with mustaches and nine without. She also had how many rats she caught in one month. [laughter]

MG: How many was that?

CH: She had up to twenty-five one time.

MG: That she caught herself?

CH: They caught on the farm.

MG: Oh, wow. I think we've covered most of the things that I wrote notes about.

CH: I can't think of much of anything else.

MG: My brain is very full after the last couple of days.

CH: There's probably a lot more that I could come up with if somebody could recall it to me.

MG: Yes, that's why I'm looking closely at my notes. I want to see if there's anything that will bring any old memories to the fore.

CH: I know a lot of things I remember, but unless somebody mentions it, I don't recall. But as soon as they mention that – "Oh, yeah." One thing I did recall earlier when we mentioned about snowmobiles, one year, with my friend that I was telling you about – the Hereford eating the apple?

MG: Yes.

CH: His family had a snowmobile, and we had four or five. One winter, we made a point of packing this field down, every bit of it all winter long. Not one piece of field was not packed with a snowmobile track. I do have eight-millimeter film of a lot of when I was a young boy and so forth [inaudible] family here. There's one that we have that my father – which I don't have the equipment anymore. But my father and my friend's father hooked up their '66 and '65 ski doo snowmobile to the horse wagon, and we all rode the horse wagon through the snow in the field, all around the field, the two snowmobiles pulling that horse wagon while we were riding it. [laughter]

MG: You should get those videos digitized.

CH: I know. It ought to, somehow. Because it virtually records everything that we've done on the farm here.

MG: That would be a good idea.

CH: There's one here – when my brother and I was six or seven years old, we both had a pet calf that we tended to. We were trying to get – my father filmed us trying to get it from the pasture into the barn. My brother was pushing his, and I was pushing mine and trying to get them to the barn.

MG: Did you name your pet calf?

CH: No.

MG: I guess you don't want to get too attached.

CH: I did name the cows a lot of times. The Hereford that we had – everybody that came up thought it was a bull because I called it "Harry Ford." Harry Ford is the one that I made twenty-five dollars on one time. Somebody bet me that I wouldn't jump on it.

MG: But you did?

CH: Yeah, I did.

MG: Tell me about that.

CH: I used to jump on her all the time, no problem. She would be walking across the field. I'd go up, run, and I'd jump on her, and she'd stop. She wouldn't move until I got off. Somebody come up one time [and] said, "You're a little farmer. I bet you ride cows." I said, "Yeah, I can ride that cow right there." He said, "[inaudible]. I'll bet you twenty-five dollars you'll get bucked off." I said, "Okay." Jumped right on her. She stood right there. I sat there for about five, ten minutes. I got off. I said, "Where's my twenty-five dollars?"

MG: That's a good payday.

CH: She walked off.

MG: There was so much information in that "Perham Settlement" report.

CH: I know. Steve done a good job.

MG: It's really comprehensive. I'm glad that exists. A copy of that should be available online or through the Madrid Historical Society.

CH: Yeah. Well, I think it ought to be put into a book. Just like you said, this is a ought to be put into a book.

MG: Would you ever think about writing one?

CH: I don't know how to write one.

MG: You've got all the information.

CH: I've got all the information, but to put it down – to coincide as a book format, I wouldn't know how to do that.

MG: It's a lot of work.

CH: Like the autobiography – somebody else do it for me.

MG: Yeah, get a ghostwriter.

CH: Right.

MG: What's your vision for this area over the next one hundred years?

CH: My vision is to keep it just the way it is. If you don't, there's a lot of history that's going to be lost. There's a lot of habitat going to be lost for the animals. Because this farm has all the habitats any animal needs to survive – all types of animals. It's got streams, it's got bogs, it's got fields, it's got woodland, it's got thickets, it's got open meadows – every kind of habitat that – nature books all say they have to have five, six different types of habitats, and this has got it. It's also right at the border of the two climates, the high altitude climates, what they call the high

peaks or the tundra, and the lower altitude life-supporting areas. It's right at that border. It ought to be preserved because it's the only – there's others farms here, but they don't have all the habitats that this one does. I'd like to see this place historically preserved. As I showed you that – we didn't mention in the records here – about that door painting out there.

MG: Tell me that story again now that we're on the record.

CH: There is a type of painting that they do for furniture and doors and walls that they take the wood, they put an undercoat on, and then they brushstroke another technique of painting, so it looks like wood again, but a different type of wood – different types, different style, different graining, different year graining – knots and so forth. My room in there, my bedroom and my work room, has it on the walls and everything. They had it on this wall here, but it had so much cigar smoke from my grandfather, we had to paint over it. And on that door, it's a lost art, and somebody on that door tried to teach somebody, but they didn't get the knack of it. But you can see the difference – how they was trying to teach him. I put that out in a museum. That's got to be preserved somehow because there's virtually two rooms worth in there of it.

MG: Yeah, it's a really impressive inventory over there.

CH: And all the farm machinery of the museum. Somebody get up here – interns to get up here to learn – there is techniques of farming that they have lost. A lot of them – they're saying it's a new technique is actually an old technique, but they've just realized that it actually works better than what they [were] doing. And get up here and learn from me how that was done, so that it can be passed on and used in other, more productive, more major production for food processing.

MG: I keep thinking the timing is right for this. With the pandemic, so many people have found areas like this to settle and have become interested in homesteading. Perhaps, that's an opportunity. I know there's a nonprofit on the coast of Maine that does something similar. Maybe it's finding the right partner organization.

CH: Well, that's the trouble. Being way back here, all these organizations – until somebody pulls them in here, I don't know about it, and they don't know about this. I've got to get that connection to say, "Hey, wait a minute. This place way up in the backwoods there – they've been plugging it out for over a hundred and fifty, two hundred years. Maybe they've got ideas up there that work."

MG: There are two Maine-based listservs that might help reach some of these organizations, one for Maine libraries and one for cultural institutions. It might be worth reaching out to those listservs to see if there are people who are interested or know of other organizations that could be involved.

CH: But see, this is an internet-free zone.

MG: This is an internet-free zone. This is something I'm happy to do on your behalf.

CH: That's what, I think, Gerry Birdsall and High Peaks Alliance – we've got to get that little last connection in to pull them in here to find out what is here.

MG: Do you have an inventory?

CH: I have a list of everything that's in that museum. I have a list of everything in here that is archival, just like this sewing machine. I've got other pieces. I've got the inventory of every board in there that's got that painting on it. My ex-wife said I was – what's the word? – virtually neurotic about lists. I make sure I have inventory of everything I own. I'm very adamant on authenticating everything to make sure that it's identified right. Just like my genealogy. A lot of my genealogy history – I have one source, but I won't say that is it because I know there's – just like all the old sayings and the old stories, there is that story; There might be a piece of it that's true, and there might be a lot of it [that's] exaggerated. But there might be another story that another piece is true. You've got to get all the facts before you can say, "Yes, that's it."

MG: Otherwise, it's a several-hundred-year-long game of telephone.

CH: It's just like somebody saying, "This is it. This is it. This is it." Then somebody comes along two hundred years later, and says, "No, that wasn't it."

MG: Yeah. Well, it sounds like we've got what it is from at least your perspective, and it's pretty close to probably how it happened.

CH: I try to keep it as close – even if my family ended up as the mean, despicable one, I would keep it that way. Fortunately, my family kind of slid through the middle. [laughter]

MG: Well, is there anything I haven't asked you about or anything we haven't talked about?

CH: I don't know of much that I – as I said, somebody might mention something that I might recall it, I'll just have to get back with you afterward or through phone.

MG: Perhaps, we can get together again in the future. I'll transcribe our conversation so that you can review them, make changes, and then we can share them with some other folks who might say, "Hey, wait a minute, I want to know a little bit more about this." And perhaps there's an addendum that's required.

CH: They might bring it up, and I might recall it a little bit better. Because I've noticed a lot of times that somebody [will] say something, and I tell them about it, and so forth, and so on. All of a sudden, somebody's coming in a week later. I say, "Oh, yeah, that also occurred to that." One thing that did pop into my mind just now and it was about my father and his hunting. He stopped hunting completely. I think I was fourteen, fifteen years old. Out there in the field – there's two fields; there's a basin field and the sheep pasture beside it. And there's a big field behind that. The big field has a very sharp drop-off, the 480-foot drop-off. It is almost a perpendicular angle, all the way to the stream. My father went out and was coming back over the backside of the sheep pasture. He came out into the very edge of the big field. And there

was a buck at a pine tree on that bank. He decided to shoot it. He was a good shot. I'm [a] fairly good shot. I can kill something. My neighbor Jimmy has to take five or six shots to kill a raccoon; I kill it the first shot. I've killed porcupines [on] the first shot, too. But he shot it. And just as he shot, the buck jumped over the bank. So the deer went down. Luckily, it didn't go 480 feet down. But I remember it was – I think it was eight, nine o'clock at night. My mother was kind of pacing. Being a farmer, you're a very light sleeper. I had to do the milking in the morning. I did the morning chores. My brother did the afternoon chores because he was never a morning person. It worked out that way. Towards the night – it was after dark. I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "Your dad ain't home yet." Pretty soon, he come walking in. He was soaked from sweat. He said, "I'm not hunting anymore. I just chased a buck a hundred and fifty feet down over that bank and had to haul it up over." [He] said, "I'm not hunting anymore." He went out after that a lot and just sat there and watched deer. I think I was nineteen at the time. He went out, and he saw a hole in the stream out here during the winter. He come back. "You know," he says, "I don't know how a deer can get water without breaking their legs." And sure enough, the next day, we saw blood from that hole. And three days later, he saw a deer out here with its right front leg folded right up like that. So, he started putting feed out. She'd come maybe an hour later, something like that. But it got to, after three years of doing it all year long, that deer would take food right out of my father's hand. That deer died, and her doe and buck that she had came afterward. The doe died. The buck came for three years, and his kid came. We had ten years of feeding those deer. Up in the fox hollow up here, in the first part of the basin that goes towards the cemetery, which you went to, there's a hollow. It's always been called the fox hollow. It's just a swampy area. It's not a swamp, but the peat bog drains into that area and sits because it's clay underneath, and it won't drain out. It's always been called fox hollow for the simple reason that all five generations [that] my family's been here, there has been generations of foxes in the edge of the bank. There's dens. As long as my family's been here, them foxes have been there. It's always been called fox hollow, and a couple of people have said it's the Hinkley fox family, like that. Because as long as we've been living here, they've been living here. We'd go up there, and we'd see fox run. Just a month ago, I had a gray fox right out here, in front of [the] house. Other than that, we snowmobiled all over the place here. As I said, we'd be snowmobiling after Halloween. There'd be snow on the ground now. We snowmobiled when I was twenty-eight years old from this house all the way up to on top of Abraham Mountain with snowmobiles [on] May 29th and [didn't] hit a bit of bare ground.

MG: Well, you've seen a lot change and a lot not change. Carson, I think I'm out of questions. I hope I have an excuse to come back. I'd love to see you again and continue the conversation. This has been such a treat and an honor to meet you. I'm really glad this finally happened. So, thank you for all your time and your expertise.

CH: Yeah. No problem. That's what I'm here for. I figure if I know it, somebody else should know it later on.

MG: Well, now we have it for perpetuity. It's on the record, and it will be publicly available fairly soon. I just have to transcribe all of this. All right. Well, I'll turn off the recorder, and we'll figure out how to stay in touch.

CH: Yep.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------
Reviewed by Molly A. Graham 3/27/2023
Reviewed by Carson Hinkley 4/10/2023
Reviewed by Molly A. Graham 4/28/2023