

**FLORENCE JEANNETTE DEXTER**  
**Interviewed by Catherine Rumbaugh**  
**on January 11 and February 12, 1978**  
**for the Clinton County Historical Society – Tape #005**  
**Transcribed by Myrna A. Van Epps, December 2006**

**Side 1**

This is an interview with Miss Florence Dexter for the Clinton Co. Historical Society's Oral Tape Project by Catherine Rumbaugh. We are interviewing at Miss Dexter's home at 200 Church St., St. Johns, Michigan, on January 11, 1978, at 1:30 p.m. Since inviting Miss Dexter to interview for our oral tape history, she has written a lot of this in preparation and we're going to let her begin by reading what she has written. First though, let me ask you--maybe you didn't write in there your name in full. Would you give me your name in full, please?

Florence Jeannette Dexter.

When were you born?

May 29 1888.

Where were you born?

In a small, white cottage that stood where Walter Pierce's house now stands. At that time there were no houses between our cottage and the house on the corner where the Mishlers live now, so I had a big playground.

What street was that house on?

Clinton Ave., south.

It was on a corner, was it not?

Corner of McConnell, kitty-corner from the jail which is now a parking lot for the school.

Well, I didn't even know there was a jail there. Well, Florence, do you suppose you would like to start reading your story now?

I had a very good time recording many happy memories. Often people have asked me, "From whom so many of your family get their love for and interest in music?" Three of my nephews have made music a career; and a nurse [niece] has married a musician. My answer has been, "I think, from my grandfather, Roswell Chauncy Dexter, who used to play a violin or a fiddle for the country dances in Greenbush Township." He owned a farm on Hyde Road between US-27 and Scott Road. The house is still there where my father was born.

Is that at 7010 N. Scott Road? That's where the Whitcomb family purchased?

This was on Hyde Road. Now you can use that address for my grandfather Davies. My grandfather Dexter's house on Hyde Road was around the corner from my grandfather Davies on Scott Road, not very far if you cut across fields. My grandfather, William T. Davies, my mother's father, and his older brother, Robert, came from southern England via New York State as young men and settled in Greenbush on Scott Road, just north of the present Greenbush Methodist Church, then a town hall. Later their mother, younger brother, and one sister came. Still later his older sister who had married William Goddard, a painter who decorated the interior of churches in England, and with them, a lovely girl, Serena, from London to marry the youngest Davies brother, Richard. They all built homes and raised families in the same neighborhood.

My grandfather and his brother, Robert, started a milk safe and fanning mill factory. The milk safes were like book cases with shelves for pans of milk. The doors had screens and some had screens on each side to keep the milk as cool as possible. They were a bright red and decorated in gold by William Goddard. I remember seeing the big trucks that would load several milk safes and fanning mills to be distributed throughout the country, much as trucks carry automobiles today. Each morning the pans of milk would be brought up to the kitchen from the basement for grandmother to skim off the cream to be churned into butter. She used a round, flat sieve about four inches wide. I used to love to stay at my grandmother's.

A special event was the so-called "donation," when everyone gathered at the hall for a huge dinner. I can remember seeing grandmother baking and cooking quantities of food to take. Many of the young generation prepared box suppers filled with delicious food and wrapped artistically to be raffled off. Each girl hoped her favorite boy friend would bid the highest for her box and escort her to supper.

But the greatest joy was going to grandfather's Christmas Eve and in a bob sleigh if there were enough snow. There would be the George Marshall's with their three children and our family. I believe we always had oyster stew before going. My cousins, brother, and I had spent hours stringing ropes of popcorn and cranberries and making paper chains for the big Christmas tree that would be waiting for us at grandfather's. As roast beef was the proper meat for Christmas in England, we always had it as well as turkey for dinner. We also had the traditional steamed Christmas pudding with delicious sauce. On Sunday and holiday afternoons we gathered in the living room and sang hymns to the accompaniment of the organ. I used wonder why we sang about <sup>1</sup>bringing in

---

<sup>1</sup> Old hymn, *Bringing in the sheaves*.

sheets." Christmas night we followed an old English custom of having snapdragons in the kitchen. A large milk pan was placed on a chair with large raisins with stems on and brandy was poured over them and then lighted.

Florence, let me ask you first, how old were you when you recall these remembrances. It goes way back to the time I was probably earlier than five.

And these were traditions that you would do every year?  
Yes, every year.

I was curious about the snapdragons. What were these?

It goes on... Amid much screaming and laughing, the brave ones would try to put the flaming raisins in their mouth. Unless roads were too bad, we all left the following day. I don't see how my grandmother stood so much.

How many children were there?

Well, there would be three Marshalls; two of us; another cousin, Myron Ellis; and then all the grownups.

My grandmother was descended from the Baker family of Revolutionary fame. Some of the ancestors were the Green Mountain Boys. A large picture was hung in my grandmother's bedroom of the two Baker cousins and a third man sitting around a table planning the capture of John Wilkes Booth who had assassinated President Lincoln. I believe one was a colonel and one was a lieutenant Baker.

Grandmother's father was David Sevy, an expert cabinet maker. I have the beautiful octagonal table he made for her when she was married. The top is curly or fiddle maple and the pedestal is walnut. There are no nails in it. Grandmother gave it to me with the understanding that I would never let it go out of the family.

My mother and father went to the Sherwood School which is still standing at the corner of Scott and Hyde Road. My father was an excellent speller and used to spell down various schools at the popular spelling bees. He was also a good orator. I have a set of five books on McCauley's History of England that he won when he was a student at Albion College. On the flyleaf of each book is this inscription: "A reward from the E--- Society to R. C. Dexter, as its best orator, January 20, 1882." His subject was, "public opinion."

After leaving college, my father was employed in the St. Johns National Bank and remained there until shortly before his death with the exception of a few months in Detroit, but we returned to St. Johns as my mother was afraid something

would happen to my brother and me. We were then three and five years old. We played with a little girl across the street who had a parrot. As my mother often called to us to be sure we were alright, the saucy bird started shouting out, "Florence! Robert!" whenever she would appear.

The following spring after our return from Detroit, my father bought the house which has been my home ever since. I was just six years old at that time. He planted all the maple trees around the house. The street was then called Trowbridge Street, but Uncle Jim Adams [Later she says it was Uncle Jim Osgood.] had it changed to Church because of the Free Methodist Church and the Baptist Church which was then where Rodney B. Wilson School is.

My brother and I had a very happy childhood as we had loving and devoted parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Winter evenings, after getting undressed, one of us would sit on my mother's lap and one on my father's, and they would read to us until bedtime which was 7 o'clock for a long time. My father often carried me upstairs on his back. One winter night when I was five years old, my father pulled me out of bed, wrapped me in a blanket, and took me outdoors to see a wonderful display of northern lights. Summer evenings he would teach me the names of planets and constellations.

When I was five, I went to a little private kindergarten as there was no kindergarten in the schools at that time. As it was snowing and my mother had to stay with my little brother, my father took me my first day. Everyone made a big fuss over me when my father left because I was such a brave little girl to be there without my parents, and I felt very proud.

I started first grade in the basement of what was then and is now Central School and went there for twelve years until I graduated. My lovely first grade teacher, Helen Wheelock, told my little playmate who was with me and me that we might sit in any seat we wanted to. I thought that was very kind of her but sat in the nearest seat I could find.

On the north side of our house were five large apple trees and in one there was a nice place to sit and read the Louisa M. Alcott books or eat bread and jam. In the summer I had a tent on the north side too where we used to put on shows and charge our neighbors five or maybe ten pins admission. There was also a dog house for our black Newfoundland dog, Curly. My father bought a jockey cart that had been on display at the county fair and had a harness made for Curly. The trouble was that Curly didn't like to be driven like a horse. Once when I was in the cart, Curly started for the sprinkler but my uncle grabbed me before I got wet. At that time we also had a horse and carriage, but father

moved the barn nearer Trowbridge Street and added space for a dining room and kitchen and made the house where Barbara and Cayle Beagle live. We played the same kind of games children play now. I had a card game called, *Uncle Sam's Farm*. On each card was a picture of a famous place in the United States. It was some time before we knew how to pronounce "Yo-sem'-i-te." We pronounced it, "Yoz'- mite."

Going to the county fair was a great event. My aunt used to take mother, Bob, and me in her one-seated buggy. Robert and I sat in my mother's and aunt's laps. The souvenirs, folders, and pamphlets made a fine collection to take home. In winter we skated on the brick pond; caught rides on bob sleighs, and went tobogganing.

Where is the brick pond?

I can't tell you--just on the edge of town.

Here in St. Johns?

Yes. It wasn't much of a place. A favorite hill was the block on Ottawa St. just north of State St., but the best one was from the corner of Oakland and Walker, north down to the depot.

That is a steep one, even today.

Pretty dangerous.

Yes, it is.

In high school we had what we called, "Lyceums," where we sang, recited, read original stories, and produced little plays on our small stage, a far cry from the excellent plays put on by our drama club today. We used to have dances in Harmony Hall over the printing plant. High school days ended too soon and college days began and they too were soon over. Important decisions had to be made about our future.

I had always wanted to be a teacher like my aunt, Mrs. Coleman Vaughn, whom I adored. However, my father and uncle, Mr. Vaughn, didn't think much of the idea. But my mother thought every girl should be prepared to earn her own living if she ever had to and teaching was a good way. So during spring vacation my senior year at Smith, I enrolled with a teaching agency in New York City and was soon notified of a girls' private school in San Antonio, Texas. As Mr. Vaughn was then Secretary of State in Lansing, I thought a letter of recommendation on his stationery would be impressive. My letter asking him to write a recommendation crossed the one from him saying, "Maybe it is alright for you to

teach, but don't go to some outlandish place like Texas." And that is just where I went.

I had to use a good deal of tact to teach southern girls about the Civil War. At that time Mr. Vaughn was running for re-election as Secretary of State and some of the girls knew I was watching the paper for news of the election. One of the girls remarked to a dear friend of mine, "Isn't it too bad about Miss Dexter? Her uncle is a Republican!"

After two years at Bon Evans (sp?) School, I resigned to take a four-month tour of Europe. It was followed, unfortunately, by a nervous breakdown. However, I was finally able to teach again in a private girls' school, this time Grafton Hall in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. I had gone to Fond du Lac to see a college roommate. It was the beginning of the school year and as the father of one of the teachers was very ill, the head mistress asked me to substitute until she could come. Well, she never came and I stayed four years. I was at Grafton Hall during WWI when sugar had to be rationed. We had round tables for six in the dining room and on each table was a bowl with our quota of sugar for a certain length of time. If one of us was going to have a birthday during that period, we would all skimp on the sugar so she could have a birthday cake. Grafton Hall was a beautiful, gothic, stone building next to the beautiful, stone Episcopal cathedral. It contained many pieces of furniture from the Grafton estate in England and on special occasions we used the gold and white, monogrammed china from there.

After being there four years, I was afraid of getting in a rut and was fortunate enough to be offered a position in the beautiful Bishop's School in La Hoya, California, right on the Pacific Ocean. However, I still keep in touch with several of my Grafton Hall pupils. At the Bishop's School, many of the girls were daughters of navy officers. There were also Gloria Caruso, daughter of the famous singer, and the Sousa girls, grand daughters of John Phillip Sousa.

After two years I left to accept a position at Anna Head School in Berkeley, California, partly to be near my Smith freshman roommate. Anna Head School was the alma mater of many excellent tennis players: Helen Wills, before my time, but Helen Jacobs when I was there. Many of my pupils were daughters of university professors. The school at that time was just two blocks from the university campus, but due to illness I had to resign after one year and later returned to the Bishop's School. In fact, I was there three different times and cried bitter tears when I left to take a position at Westover School in Middlebury, Connecticut, to be nearer home as my father was not well.

What years were you teaching?

At the Bishop's School, I can't tell off-hand.

I was just wondering what your teaching years were.

Well, I'm not anywhere near through my teaching years.

No, you're not. You began teaching in what year?

1910. That's when I graduated from college. We could tell from this, because I tell how many years I was at each place. Use a little arithmetic! If we had an adding machine we could find out.

I just wanted to get approximate what years you were talking about. So you began teaching in 1910.

Many of my pupils were daughters of politicians: Rose Chatfield Taylor; Betty -, Louisa Bullock, a niece; and Mary Acheson. In my American history classes we had many lively discussions, especially at election time when we were allowed to sit up and watch the election returns. When one time a Democrat was elected, one of the Dupont girls just couldn't understand it.

After thirteen years there, I resigned to be home with my mother and substituted in the St. Johns schools. I enjoyed the work, but of course no one can do her best work when called upon, often after school had started. Now it is heartwarming, however, when someone I don't even recognize comes up to me and says, "Oh yes, you were often my substitute teacher in high school."

Well, you've got a history to be proud of.

I don't know whether you want all that or not.

This is fine. You were teaching in 1910. That's when you graduated from college and you started teaching. What was the year that you came back to St. Johns?

I can't remember. I've got it written on ...

Let me ask you first, what is your father's full name?

Roswell Chauncey Dexter, after his father.

Your mother's full name, including her maiden name?

Jennie Paine (Davies) Dexter.

Paine was her middle name. Was that from another grandparent?

No, from a friend of my grandmother's. I don't think she is any relation, some friend in New York.

We were talking about this home on 200 Church Street which was formerly Trowbridge, you mentioned and I'd like to get some dates straight. Your mother, just looking at some obituaries here, was born March 23, 1862, and she died Aug. 19, 1953.

Right.

You came home six years before she passed away.

Right.

Was she sick these six years?

She was fine when I came home but about a week after, as I remember, she was taken awfully sick with flu and after that I just made up my mind I didn't want to be so far from home because it was awfully difficult getting people to stay with her. She didn't want anybody with her all the time. Well, one person would come in and stay with her and then she would have an opportunity to go to Florida. You couldn't blame her, you know. Because she was so awfully sick this time, I wrote right away and resigned at Westover. That tells me when I went to Westover.

It was in 1947 you came back to St. Johns and you did substitute teaching after that?

That's right.

Could you give your mother's name completely again?

Jennie Paine (Davies) Dexter.

Your father's name?

Roswell Chauncy Dexter.

He was born Oct. 16, 1859, and he died Sept. 23, 1936. You had a brother, and I don't believe you mentioned his name.

Robert Chauncy Dexter.

Was he an older or younger brother?

He was about two years younger.

How long did he live?

It was very, very sad. He died with cancer, couldn't locate it. He'd been awfully sick with flu in the winter. It was the time that Taft had his cancer. They found that he had one at the same time of my father and they lived the same length of time, died the same time. His doctor in Kalamazoo thought there must be some cancer because he didn't recuperate. For awhile they thought he was just getting over the flu. So they sent specimens to Ann Arbor, but even then Ann Arbor wasn't willing to say yes, he had a cancer. They couldn't locate any



cancer. I guess they didn't know what it was until after he died. Anyway, he died on ---

These nephews then were his children?

His children. That's right.

Two nephews?

Three. First, there's Mary; then there's Bob, the one there; then John who's this organist. I speak about my musical nephews, you know. John is organist in this great big Methodist church in Corpus Christi. He's just left and gone there because he gets so much more salary. He loves it down there in Corpus Christi. Two of his sons are musicians and one of his daughters is married to this musician and he goes all over. Last I knew he was in South America playing with some group of musicians. As I say, so many people would ask me where they got all that musical talent. It's not on my sister-in-law's side. She says, they're not musical in her family at all. The nearest I can figure out, it goes back to this grandfather who was a violinist.

There he is. Head of First Federal Loan Association Dies. Services Monday for Robert C. Dexter, 62.

He died in what year?

I can tell from this. This is the birthday book.

Where did he live?

Kalamazoo.

He wasn't too far from St. Johns then. He was in banking as well. Did he start his work with your father's bank?

No, he never did. Here he is. Robert C. Dexter, 1891.

That's when he was born?

He was born in '91 and I was born in '88. That was a gap of -?-. You know the Episcopal Church, St. Louis Church, in Kalamazoo? It's a great big church. It was packed with people--oh, an awful lot of men. You don't usually see such a lot of men.

He must have done a lot for his community then.

He was very active in community and business. Even when he was sick, people would come to the house and ask his advice on loans and things. My father, when he was in bed there for awhile, (He was in that bedroom down there.)

people would call up and want his advice, banking. I would relay the message. He would tell me what to tell them. That happened lots of times.

He was with the National Bank here which is now the Clinton National Bank and Trust Company.

Your father must have been a civic-minded man. What else was he active in? He was active in what organizations?

He was senior warden. In those days way back you didn't have to get out of being senior warden every two or three years. Now you have to be re-elected ever so often. In those days they would re-elect him and re-elect him. When I was a little girl, he was treasurer of the church. I can remember that. How I can remember, we would get a card table right there. We would come home and get all the envelopes out, and I would undo the envelopes, you know.

Senior warden was an office in the Episcopal Church?

Senior officer is head of the vestry. This was written by Bill Leucht, Oct. 17, 1836 (sic), to my mother:

"At a recent director's meeting of the St. Johns National Bank in Clinton Co. Savings Bank, the following resolution was passed with the request that a copy of same be forwarded to you. I know the board wants you to know the high esteem in which they held Mr. Dexter. "Resolved: That in the death of Roswell C. Dexter on Sept. 23, 1936, this bank lost a faithful servant, director, and president," --

Yes, he was president for a short time. At that time it was really very difficult. The leading men, the most important directors in the bank all died within a couple years. John Hicks died first, I think; then my uncle, Mr. Vaughn, took over and was president; then he died and then my father was president a short time.

"--one who has devoted his entire life to the service of St. Johns National Bank and its affiliate, The Clinton Co. Savings Bank."

We had that then too.

"Uninterruptedly, for over 54 years, untiringly he labored and devoted his time and service to these institutions. We shall miss him as a friend as well as a banker, and this community will miss the valuable service he has rendered. We will cherish in our memories many pleasant recollections of our association with him. We send the members of his family our heartfelt sympathy."

There is something else I want to show you if I can find it.

Was he active in any clubs?

He was a Knight Templar.

Was your mother active in any clubs?

She was a member of the Woman's Club and guild. Way back, the Episcopal Guild had a parish hall down where that furniture store used to be right near the *Republican News*. What is that?

They've torn that down.

They tore it down. We had a guild hall right in there.

On Walker Street.

We served the Rotarians. It was during WWII which was a very, very difficult time because everything was rationed, you know. After I came home, (That would be six years before she died.) she would go down there and sit and spread bread and do things like that to help out those lunches. I can remember as a little girl having the Woman's Club here. Right over in that corner (that was before the dining room was added; that is, that part was added on) there was a wigwam because the program was on Longfellow. They had a scene or scenes from Hiawatha. I was a little bit of a girl then but I can remember it so well. Have you ever heard of the Dooling family?

No.

Well, they were a very nice family. Gertrude Dooling was Minnihaha and she was beautiful. She had lovely, dark hair and very beautiful. At that time she was dying with cancer. She was very frail. I presume that's why I remember so much. She was so lovely that I decided I would like to have cancer. Isn't that awful?

Isn't it funny what you connect certain things with?

It seems to me that the Knight Templars and their wives were always going off places. They don't do that any more much. There are too many other things. For bankers' conventions my mother would very often go with my father.

Where did they have those?

I can remember one time, it was in Chicago, because I know on their return from Chicago, I was then at Grafton Hall and they stopped at Grafton Hall.

So they did travel. How did they travel at that time?

We had a cottage at White Lake from the time when I was down in the grades. We kept it till way after father died. To get there--Do you know where Whitehall is?

Yes.

To get there, we would take the train here about 11 o'clock, I think, and go to Grand Rapids; go from Grand Rapids, take another train to Muskegon; have to get off that train and get on another train; go to Whitehall; get off at Whitehall and take a ferry.

And it was worth going to a cottage like that?

Because we stayed all summer. The minute school was out, we would start out and stay until school started in September. My father would come for weekends. Oh boy, it was a big celebration every time people came for weekends because you see, there was an association. It was called San Juan from St. Johns Association and the others would go there and stay all summer too. When anybody like my dad would come weekends, everybody would go down to the pier to meet him. We had a cart and the older boys would stack up the suitcases and bring them up because the cottages were 40 feet up a cliff, a bank.

This ferry, it went down this river?

White Lake. White Lake emptied into Lake Michigan. We were way up at the Lake Michigan end and so it was about six miles on the ferry from Whitehall up to the cottage.

I never dreamed they would get to these cottages that way.

Then we started having automobiles. We would go by automobile. That would take quite awhile because if you were going 30 miles a hour you were devilish. You would have your hair tied down with a veil. It was kind of dangerous as you got almost to the cottage because you had to turn and the road hadn't been improved and it was all sand. I can remember the sand and we would almost always get stuck in the sand before we would get there.

You would spend all summer there.

All summer. I would gain weight. I can remember the end of my senior year in high school I had lost so much weight--I was so thin, way down to 89, I think--my mother said I couldn't go to college unless I gained some weight. That wasn't difficult. You go to a summer resort and eat like a pig. I gained 16 pounds that summer. My clothes wouldn't fit me. I had to have new clothes.

This resort, was this a case where you lived in your own cottages and then you went to a main hall?

No. We had our cottages.

You all got your own meals then.

They drew for lots. There were three front lots and then there were some back lots. There was a boarding house. We had a boarding house of this Mr. Bush who was the caretaker and had helped build all these cottages. His wife started this boarding house, and oh, the most delicious food. So we could go there and eat if we wanted to. We drew a lot right in middle of the three lots, the middle of the middle lot. On one side of us was Congressman Fordney. Do you remember your American history enough to remember the tariff lots of Mr. Fordney? The last lot on the west was John Hicks' lot and the next to John Hicks was Uncle Coleman's lot.

## SIDE 2

On the other side of us was a double cottage owned by the Van Sickle brothers. Cad Van Sickle was druggist here for years and years. Then at the end of that block on the corner was Dr. Gillam's home. Across the street on the third block, the first cottage was Sayers (sp?) Clark's. He is the father of R. G. Clark. You remember R. G. Clark, don't you? Next to Sayers Clark was Charlie Hulse. Next to Charlie Hulse was Dart/Bart or else it was Bart and then Charlie, I'm not sure, but the two Hulse cottages, right next to the Clark cottage. The cottage at the end belonged to the Kneelands.

These were basically all St. Johns people then, this association. So you were with the whole town. You would have had quite a summer.

Yes, growing up with the Clarks and the Hulses.

I'm curious about this ferry. Was it made just for these families?

No. It went around the lake to the different resorts. I know before we would leave in September, we would have to charter the ferry. It would tie up at our dock. We had a long, long dock. At that time we had a beautiful, long beach with this long, long pier, it was. The water went down. I think it was due to the Chicago drainage canal. That had a lot to do with our lake. We would have that ferry tied up at the end of our dock. I can remember once we had a terrific storm, oh a terrific storm in the night and it seemed just terrible because in those days we all thought we had to board up the windows of the cottages before we left. Here in the middle of the night we couldn't see out because all these windows and doors being boarded up, you see. We could hear that awful storm and then we could hear the pilot blowing in distress down at the dock because the wind was slamming that ferry right against that dock. Anyway, we

got to Whitehall the next morning. We would take the ferry coming home from Muskegon, but going we would get off at Whitehall. Of course, these towns are right there together. They gave up boarding up the windows as we used to do. That was a job.

When you first had the cottages, there weren't any roads to them at all?

No. The roads were made. We were up 40 feet. At the end of both of our roads between these lots were stairs going down the 40 feet.

What was the year? Do you remember the years that your folks had this cottage when you first started going?

I was in the grades somewhere, about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I imagine. We were one of the first. The two Van Sickles, Dr. Gillam, and Sayers Clark, and the two Hulses built the very first year. We built the next year. After that the Hicks and Long cottages were built.

It sounds like you had interesting summers.

We did.

I think you were going to read this. You found this about the Davies family. Your grandfather, William Thomas Davies, was born in Winchelsea, Sussex, England, August 1829. He died in St. Johns, Michigan. Nov. 2, 1904. You mentioned that he came to Greenbush Twp. in 1850, his older brother, Robert.

He and Robert came together.

Oh, they came together.

They were first.

(Not transcribed: Short discussion to interpret the paper Florence is preparing to read.)

"His older brother, Robert, after whom your father was named, came to America in '48 when he was 21. He came to Greenbush in 1850. Mary Ann (Thomas) Davies, my great grandmother came in 1860 and brought the copper teakettle with her."

I wrote this for Dick when he was here. He is the youngest of my great nephews and he lives in Boston. Their house is a modern house, but they have a lot of colonial things in it too. When he went back, I told him to take to his wife this copper kettle. It was a beautiful copper kettle that one of them had brought.

"Her daughter, Elizabeth, and son, Richard Connor Davies, came with her." ...

This is more about my dad. Do you want to hear this? This is written by Schuyler for the paper [*Clinton Co. Republican-News*].

Is Schuyler some relation to you?

No. He is a cousin of my cousins.

What was his full name?

Schuyler Marshall. His father was Frank Marshall. Frank's brother, George, married my aunt. You know Jean Marshall down the bank?

Jean Loomis?

She is a cousin of my cousins, but she is no relation to me. We have the same cousins.

"His life departed, his mortal remains will soon be laid to rest. We are impressed because this marks the end of a remarkable life of service. For more than fifty years he had served one institution, the oldest bank in the country [probably means county]."

Did you know that? I didn't.

"We doubt if the future produces similar records of service. Men do not start so young, work so faithfully and patiently, and serve so many years."

I know every time we would go a place to stay, maybe even over a night or two, the first thing he would do, he would have to go visit the bank.

"His duties have been that of a trust. For the bank he accepted the savings, large and small, of the people of this community. In turn, it was his duty to take those savings and use them for the benefit of those who needed help. It was a double responsibility to the depositor and borrower. He reached into the lives and affairs of thousands of Clinton Co. people. The farmers' welfare, the businessmen's problems, the young person seeking an education, for years and years went to Mr. Dexter for —."

Yes, I know that because they would come here to the house.

"As we came away from the house we passed a workman mixing cement. "Is it true that Mr. Dexter is gone," he asked. Given an affirmative reply, he volunteered, "When I in the service about to go overseas, I wrote a relative to send me some money before I left for France. The letter arrived in St. Johns late in the afternoon before our ship was to sail. The bank was closed. Mr. Dexter was appealed to and he walked to the station and wired me money out of his own pocket. I'll never forget that. It meant much to this young soldier starting a great adventure." Yet it was but one of the thousands of routine errands of thoughtful service performed by this man. To his family, and his church, his fraternal connections, to every charitable and civic undertaking he leant

his support. It is impossible to enumerate his many activities. Whatever the duty, he was to perform modestly, efficiently, and with meticulous accuracy. It was such a deal of satisfaction that his business associates gave him an honor, which he highly praised in the closing months of his life, the presidency of the bank he had served so long and faithfully."

Did your father build this home?

No. I don't know, but I don't think it had been built very long before we came here. This Mr. Jim Osgood who changed the name of the street lived where "Shelley" lives, two doors over.

Shellenberger. You're 200, that must be 204.

Some relative (His name was Stewart, I think) of Uncle Jim Osgood liked that house so well they copied it. This house was almost exactly like the Shellenberger house originally, but they've made changes and of course we've made changes.

On the outside, this is basically the same. You still have your tower. This is a Victorian brick.

They took theirs off. The on south side of the dining room used to be a porch and then my mother had that enclosed for that buffet. At the back--In those days we burned wood.--I can remember these huge, great piles of wood that we would get. It was so much fun to climb on them as a youngster. We had a wood shed. It had kind of a trap door and the wood would be thrown into this woodshed.

You would probably have to fill that up a couple times a year?

There was an awful lot of wood that would go in there. I think it would just about fill that thing up. Today that's my breakfast room. I bet I bore you with all these things.

Hardly.

When I get started, I don't know when to stop.

Do you know offhand how old the house is?

Time of the centennial, we tried to figure it out but there's no record. There's no way of finding out exactly. I don't think it's a hundred years old, but not far from that.

Your home was on tour in the Clinton Co. Historical Society's Home Tour Festival in 1975.

That's when we tried to find the date.



It was thoroughly enjoyed, that I know. You have many lovely things. [Looking at pictures] I was curious about this relative. That's an uncle. That's your grandfather's brother.

He's the one who's buried in Winchelsea Churchyard. He died Aug. 3, 1914, just as the war broke out.

He died in England there and his wife, what did you tell me about her? She just got him buried and she managed to---

She just managed to come with her clothes, but she couldn't bring any of her lovely things.

These pictures show almost a mansion.

It was just beautiful. It was called Rufus Lodge. It goes way back to the time of William Rufus, the King of England.

This was their home?

They would lease it.

It was destroyed then?

We don't know.

It's not there any more?

I don't know. We've never been back, but my father could never find out anything about it--the house or the contents. Of course, he might have been bombed. I'm so glad we got there. We had this little fireplace, the old place was just that big, about that wide and that high.

That was WWI that she came back here. You went back before WWII and you saw the house then. Was that it?

No. We were there the summer of 1912.

Oh, you saw it before she came.

I was there pretty near a week with them.

I misunderstood then.

They had a gardener. They would have to have with all that lawn.

I was going to say they must have had a lot of servants.

Every day he would bring in little sticks, about that long, for that fireplace. I took an awful cold. English houses were never very warm, even in August, and that fireplace with those little sticks didn't do me much good.

I thought they burned charcoal then.

I don't remember that he had any charcoal, but I can see those sticks. They were about that long. They had a pony cart, Aunt Louie and Uncle, with these seats back to back. He would drive us into Hastings with that pony cart to get their supplies. It was a beautiful place. From the upstairs window you could see the lights in France. I think it was a light house, maybe, across the channel.

You mentioned that while you were teaching, these were private girls' schools. Were they church schools?

The only one that was a church school was the Bishop's School in La Hoya. The school is named for the bishop of Los Angeles because he was instrumental in getting it established. That's why it's called the Bishop's School. To start a school like that from scratch took a lot of money. The persons who put up the money were the Scripps sisters, Miss Ellen and Miss--what was the other one's name. I don't know, but they were both alive when I went there. Every year they would make up the deficit.

You were teaching in Texas when you decided to take this trip to Europe? You got on a steamer and it took you how long to get to England?

It was really a very nice trip. It was a slow boat. There were a lot of people from San Antonio going. We stopped in Havana and we were in Havana a day and a night, I know anyway. We got off the boat and went into Havana. The purpose of stopping there was to take on men to work in the vineyards in Spain. The one thing about Havana I can remember was the flame trees. This was the very end of May and those flame trees were just beautiful then. We left these grape pickers off in Vigos, Spain. Again we stopped there overnight and we could go to the town way, way up high. It was very hilly. One thing that impressed me. I will never, never forget, this woman, I would say maybe around 30 years old, she had, I think, a baby on one arm. She had a big jug like that on the other arm, and on her head she had a basket of live chickens.

She was able to walk!

She walked. Then from Vigos, Spain, we landed in Bremen, Germany. That's where the tour of Europe really started.

How long were you on this ship that went across the ocean? Longer than a week? I was just trying to get an idea.

It probably wouldn't even be a week. I don't believe it would.

I was thinking those crossings took about that long. That's why I asked.

I don't think we were on that long--maybe five days. I don't know.

Do you remember how old you were when you were taking this tour with your friends.  
Sure, if I stop and think. I was 22 when I graduated and I would have been 24.

Your folks were in England at the time.

They were there. I didn't meet up with them until August. After they left we all went in to Hastings to take the train at the same time. Mother and Father took the train to Liverpool to get a boat to come back to the states. Frances and I took the train to London and then started our tour of England and Scotland.

How long were you over there?

Didn't get home till October.

You left when school was out. You were there all--

29<sup>th</sup> of May, because that was my birthday, that's how I remember. That was a wonderful summer.

Something you'll never forget.

No. This friend, Oh, I never had a better friend. She was the most marvelous person. We were together all the time. I think we left all the rest of them in Bremmen. The thing I remember about Bremmen, I had an awful stomach ache. I thought it was probably the water from the boat. I found out afterwards I was having an attack of appendicitis, but I didn't know it. I had several attacks after that and when I got to Bremmen, there I was with this attack of appendicitis. I wasn't going to have some strange doctor. My first day in Europe was spent in bed in Bremmen with a great, big, thick comforter like that. It was a featherbed on top of me. I can remember these San Antonio people and Frances had been out shopping that morning and touring around and they came back and they brought me back these gorgeous, gorgeous poppies. I always think of those poppies when I read that <sup>2</sup>Rupert book about the field of poppies--

*In Flanders Field the poppies grow, field on field, row on row.*

The same kind of poppies. She was a wonderful person. In fact, she contracted TB. It was really because she overdid it .

During the trip?

No, during the war, 1914 on.

You mentioned these other people from San Antonio. You were with other people then, the two of you, or were you really on your own?

---

<sup>2</sup> Probably WWI poet Rupert Brooke (1887-1915). *In Flanders Fields* was written by Lt. Col. John McCrae, MD (1872-1918)

We were on our own from Bremen on. They went their way and we went our way. The way we worked it--I love maps. I like history and I like geography. Frances didn't have much of an idea exactly what she did want to do, anything special. I had definite ideas of what I wanted to do. So I sat down and wrote out an itinerary that I thought would take about this time up until August. When we got to Bremen I went to the office--Thomas Cook, I guess is was or American Express, one or the other--and I showed them that. I said, "We'd like a tour that would take in these places." You could buy what they called a what they called a "rude rise," round trip ticket that would include all the places and get you wherever you wanted to go. He said, "I can't improve on that itinerary, except in one way. When you leave Bremen, you must go through the Harz Mountains." We did, and we loved them. Of course, we were all fresh then--wanted to see everything.

How did you travel from town to town?

Train. This ticket took us by train. We didn't have to buy any more tickets. This ticket took us on all the trains. Of course, if we were stopping anywhere, like when we got to Berlin, for instance, the very first thing we wanted to do was go to the Cook's office to see if we had any mail. It happened to be a Sunday morning. There was this great, big limousine for seven people standing out in front and it wasn't filled up. They wanted to know if we wanted to take it. It took us out to Sans Souci, that beautiful place. I guess that was destroyed by the war too. I never hear anything about it any more. It was a palace. This was a funny thing that happened then. Frances and sat in the back seat with these two gentlemen about our age. One was an American who was connected with the Elgin watch people in London. He was having a vacation. This man who was with him was having his vacation. Of course, you know how everybody asks everybody where they come from. They asked me. I said, "Oh well, I come from a little town in Michigan. You never would have heard of it." This man said, "Maybe I have." I said, "I don't think so." He said, "Whereabouts?" I said, "St. Johns, Michigan." "Oh," he said. "I come from Wacousta." I think just the name "Wacousta" is awfully funny.

It sure is, and to hear it over there--

I know it. We had the best time together. In London we met this man. He was a bachelor. His sister had just had a baby. All he could talk about was that baby. Everywhere we went, he bought things for that baby. He was kind of lonely. At the very first we were on the tour in London and he happened to be on that tour. We were going to take another tour that afternoon and he said, "Would you care if I went with you?" "Well, no." And he said "You know, I can't find my way around. If I want to go anywhere, I have to go to Piccadilly Circus first to get my bearings." He was the nicest fellow. He was a senator or

representative from Ohio. He was lonely. He was all alone, you know. I remember one time he bought us each a gardenia to wear. He was so nice.

There were compensations then. I was curious, were the lodgings and meals all planned on this tour?

You mean through Europe?

When you got to a spot, did you just go there?

I don't know if all of them were or not. At least we knew where we were going. I don't believe that was included in the ticket though, but I can't remember.

Did you stay where you wanted to?

I do remember that when we got to Dresden, we went this private home. Miss Hull, who had studied music in Dresden the year before and lived in this pension, and she gave us the address and she wrote to this German lady about us and that we would be coming. We got a taxi and drove up to the house and rang the bell. This woman came to the door and we told her who we were. I was supposed to get them around in German and Frances, was very good at French. She could do all that part of it. I guess my German wasn't too good because she couldn't understand at first. She finally said, "Oh yes, I know, Miss Hull's babies, Miss Hull's babies!" It was an awfully nice place where they had paying guests. In Scotland we were in another awfully nice pension where they had paying --. Well, in Cologne too. We must have known ahead where we were going. I guess we did. I know we did at that one place--Oh, Miss Hull's babies! It was a wonderful summer.

It certainly must have been. You've never gone back?

No. I never have. I've was always going to.

Have you ever been on an airplane yet.

Don't want to go! I was always afraid of my ---. Change of altitude always affect my inner ears--always has, way, way back.

We are resuming our tape with Miss Florence Dexter. This is Feb. 2, 1978. Since taping, Miss Dexter gave me a history that was prepared by Catherine [nee Post] Ward in the summer of 1977. In this she relates quite a bit of Greenbush Church history. So Miss Dexter will read this.

"In the early days of Greenbush history about 1849 a Methodist Church was organized and services were held for several years in the Sherwood School located one-half mile north of the Davies homes and the fanning mill factory. The Davies, Adams, and Goddards were regular attendants.

"On Nov. 10, 1870, the Women's Foreign Missionary Society was organized. There were twenty-four charter members in this organization. Mrs. Jeannette Davies, Mary Ann Goddard, Serena Davies, Alice Davies, Mary Ann Davies, our grandmother Davies, and Elizabeth Adams were among the charter members. This missionary society was started just one year after the Foreign Missionary Society was organized in the Methodist Church of America. In the beginning this group of ladies met to make bandages and so forth for the soldiers of the Civil War. Then it became a missionary society. Elizabeth Adams was the first president and Mrs. Fleagle was the first treasurer.

"In 1877 the Keystone Grange Hall, a two-story building, was erected one half-mile south of the W. T. and R. E. Davies homes on a half-acre of land given by Richard Davies. The Greenbush Methodist Church then held services in the lower floor of the grange hall. At this time annual donations were held and money was subscribed for the payment of the minister's salary. As they made their pledge for the year, tickets were given to the family for their suppers. These occasions were looked forward to as the outstanding event of the year.

"In the year of 1898 a beautiful church was built where the grange hall did stand. The hall had been moved across the road. This church was said to be the most beautiful country church in the Methodist Michigan Conference at that time. The Davies families were charter members and several of this family paid for some of the beautiful stained glass windows and contributed liberally to the building's fund. William Henry Goddard did all the interior decorating and varnishing of the interior and also painted the outside and paid for one of the stained glass windows. His funeral was the second one to be held in the church.

"The Greenbush Church has been a lighthouse for many people through the many years and still is with an attendance of eighty or more this past year. Descendants of the Davies families are still most active in the church and give much of their time and talents and money to it. The missionary work begun by the early members is still being carried on in a large way.

"Psalm 127:1. Except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it. Truly the early pioneers that built the Greenbush Church did not labor in vain. Their descendants are very active in the church and community at the present time. The character of the Davies family still lives on not only at Greenbush, but in many parts of the world. Outstanding men and women have come from the Davies family. We have a rich heritage for which we can thank God.

"The W. T. Davies contributed liberally to the church and the life of the community. His wife, Jeannette, was a descendant of the Baker family of the Revolutionary War fame. Her father was David Sevy, one the very first settlers of Greenbush."

Florence Dexter, Catherine Ward, and Helen Post share the same great grandparents, Robert Davies who was born in 1794 and died in 1859. He was married to Mary Ann Thomas who was born in 1797 and died in 1876. This is the relationship of Ward, [Post], and Florence Dexter. Talking about Dexter, we were also mentioning that you have very little history of the Dexter family. Is the Dexter Trail related any way to your family?

No, we can't find any record of any connection at all, I'm sorry to say.

We are too. We'd like to pinpoint it that way. You mentioned in our previous taping about dances in Harmony Hall. Where is this located?

Harmony Hall was the second floor of the printing press. At that time it was the *Clinton Co. Republican-News*. That building is the same building that we now have for printing the *Clinton Co. News*.

You mentioned in a visit here that there was another newspaper in town.

That was called *The Independent*. I don't know that it had any other words in connection with the title. I think it was just *The Independent News*. It was a Democratic paper.

So we had a two-party newspaper. Were these both weekly papers?

Yes.

Did many people take both papers?

No. Of course, we took just one paper, the Republican paper.

This is what I was wondering, if this was strictly your party.

I don't think people would take two. I know we didn't.

Do you, Florence Dexter, knowingly and voluntarily permit the Clinton County Historical Society the full use of this information for whatever purpose they may have?

I do.

Thank you. This is really going to be of much value and has become extremely interesting already. We thank you ever so much, Miss Dexter.

Really, I've enjoyed talking with you Catherine, very, very much.

That goes double for me.