



HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

Interviewee: Thomas (Tommy) E. Thornhill

Place of interview: Historic Charleston Foundation (40 East Bay Street)

Date of interview: April 7, 2005

Interviewer: Jonathan Poston

Videographer: Carroll Ann Bowers

Transcriber: Karen Emmons

Length of interview: 53:13 minutes

BEGIN INTERVIEW

Jonathan Poston: [Recording begins mid-sentence] [We like to ask] Charleston natives about what it was like for them to grow up in Charleston. I know you grew up in Charleston and I believe you grew up on Legare Street in the house that I know your family had there. Could you tell us a little narrative about growing up in downtown Charleston as you remember it?

Tommy Thornhill: Growing up in Charleston was wonderful and I'm just sorry that people don't have that experience today. I compare Charleston in the 1930s to Ansonborough in the 1950s. There wasn't anybody downtown that I knew of that had a lock on the front door and most of them couldn't afford to, like the old saying, "too poor to paint, too proud to whitewash." We had people living four families in one house and-- Charleston in the 1930s was like the slums in the 1950s. Fortunately, these buildings just made it through until the time of preservation and restoration came. But it was a fun thing. I often wonder why kids don't play marbles any more and I finally figured it out after a while that there's no more dirt. We had all dirt in the backyards and the front yards and the back yards and the side yards and people couldn't afford to keep up gardens and all that beautiful stuff. They couldn't lay stones for patios and terraces and all that. And we had plenty of young people downtown and we ruled the roost, we thought anyway.

JP: What was Legare Street itself like in the 1930s?

TT: My father bought the old Whaley house that was at 26 Legare Street. It was a Grecian mansion and there are some old pictures around that show these three-story columns and porticoes on the side, and it was all marble and granite, and it had been left open since the Depression and it was a haunted house of downtown Charleston. And all the doors and windows were wide open and the kids would go in and throw brick bats at-- There was a mirror down one ballroom wall and they would throw brick bats at that mirror hoping that they could break it but they never could. The mirror was about an inch and a half, two inches thick, and my father took it and cut it up and put it up in every bathroom in the house and all that. But he bought that house as I remember for I think was \$6,000 in bankruptcy court. And that was the time of Williamsburg and so he tore off all this Grecian stuff and came back with what's there now with

a kind of Williamsburg design house. But in those days you could buy them for nothing and then when we came along later and that was I guess my first touch [?] as a child and so when I got involved in Ansonborough [Rehabilitation] Project, it was not too unfamiliar to me to see us buy houses for five and six and seven thousand dollars, now worth a million.

JP: One of the families that you grew up with on Legare Street was the family of Frances Edmunds, the Smythe family, and they lived across the street from your family. What are your recollections of Frances and her family?

TT: She was in college when I was a kid and then she went on to work so I really didn't have a lot of contact with Frances herself. My brother was a close friend of Cheves, her younger brother, and also Henry. And then in the backyard they had a clay tennis court, probably one of the only one in town. That's where I learned to play tennis. As young boys we'd walk in the yard and tap on the back door and [say] "Mr. Smythe, Mr. Smythe," and he'd say "Yes, son." I'd say, "Can we use the tennis court?" He said "Sure son, come on back and let me show it to you." And he'd bring us back down to one of the old pieces of carriage house and then there was a big vat of lime and a big roller and a broom and he'd say "Before you play I hope you just sweep the courts off a little bit and here's how you put the lime in the roller and you roll the lines and then you boys go ahead and play." By the time we worked on the court, we didn't get a lot of play. But it was fun. I knew that family so well, being across the street, but Frances had gone on her way before I came along.

Of course later, I served as President of the Chamber of Commerce and she wanted to get some young people involve in the board because the board of the foundation at that time was the same board that had started it back in 1947. They were lovely people but they were getting old and they were not paying a lot of attention to what was going on and Frances wanted to move on. She was a better friend of Ben Hagood I guess than of me and she got Ben to come on board as the first young person. And then she got me to come on and I wasn't on the board very long before she decided that she wanted to get a new Treasurer. Mr. Cannon had been Treasurer of the foundation since its inception. I don't think he wanted to give up the job but if you knew Frances, she moved on and she said "We nominate Tommy Thornhill" and I didn't know what I was getting into and then all of a sudden found that Mr. Cannon had multiple mortgages on houses all over town and every meeting at the foundation we when we would have Ben Whaley present, he'd get up and say "All right now, let's see, we have a mortgage on such and such for \$3,500. All in favor say 'aye.'" They'd be executed by the Executive Director and me, the president, and we'd go through this gyration all the time. So after I became Treasurer, I said, "this is ridiculous." I went down Broad Street and either two, at least two, it might have been three banks to agree to just give us an open line of credit. So we got an open line of credit paid off all the mortgages, and unfortunately, I don't think Mr. Cannon ever spoke to me again. I guess I'm at the age now when those people, well not quite as old as some of them were, but the new [unintelligible] so we started moving in a new direction with open credit and every bank in town thought the foundation was wonderful and that we were run by decent and fine people so they just opened their banks to us and it was great.

JP: I guess that explains why in so many of our archive files we have little mortgage books for some of the early Ansonborough properties. Well Tommy, we've asked so many of your fellow

trustees when talking their growing up in Charleston to recollect a bit about the rest of the city scene, the countryside, how it's changed, how the building condition was, but maybe some of the other social fabric of the city-- King Street and the commercial corridor. In a few sentences, maybe you can tell us how that's all changed.

TT: I've often been quoted as saying that when people were fussing about the Charleston Center development and all that, hotel, the Omni when it started, and all that Center development, and they said "We got all these companies coming in now that are brand name companies and they're taking all the little people out of business" and this kind of thing-- I'd say "Well, you can't have it one way or the other. When I grew up you could take a bowling ball and throw it from Wentworth Street to Broad Street and not hit anybody." And now the streets are crowded with buyers and lookers and so forth on the street. And that's the way it was in the 1930s and 1940s. We had no economy here and War brings some good things to people and it brought us an economy, it uplifted the economy, and we could move on a little bit and do things that we hadn't done before because streetcar tracks were still there. I used to fall down on my bicycle all the time in high school riding up Rutledge Avenue because I'd go around the cars and hit the tracks and skid off. In the main social activity for the young people was East Bay playground right over here next door. Where I live today, Price's Alley, that was an alley of shacks where the kitchen workers and janitors and all that lived, and I lived on Legare Street and had to come across town to East Bay playground and my parents would not allow me to ride my bicycle through Price's Alley where I now live. So I had to either go Tradd Street or Water Street to get over here to East Bay playground. But we did live with the Black people at that time, and at that time I had a different relationship. After we were married and my wife and I bought 72 Tradd Street, there was a seamstress that lived next door just two or three years before we moved in there. She'd been a seamstress for a lot of people downtown. So I've seen a lot. Charleston has moved ahead in the right way and I think Historic Charleston Foundation had a lot to do with it.

JP: Speaking of Historic Charleston Foundation, you've told us I think in a way how you ended up being on the board of the foundation through Frances, and bringing some younger people on the board, and a little bit about Ansonborough, but do you think you could tell us a bit more about the projects that you got most interested in with the foundation, particularly those that came about during your presidency with the Revolving Fund and other foundation activity?

TT: I don't know the exact date but I got on the foundation sometime early in the Ansonborough project so I just kind of got my feet wet in the Ansonborough project as it was beginning to go. It was fascinating to me to see how many houses we could buy for almost nothing. And of course Frances had laid out the pattern and she got Elliot Hutson mostly to be the phantom buyer. So people didn't know that Historic Charleston was moving into Ansonborough and it was not until after the foundation had secured the title of a group of houses that the news was spread that the foundation was moving in there with the Revolving Fund. I just remember so well that so many of the houses-- We would just go there and put plywood over the windows and plywood over the doors and get the people out of there and just leave it until some good soul would come along to buy. I'd say a great many of those first purchases were done that way. And then we took some of the money and started shell restorations and we did the exterior until it looked beautiful on the street but you walked inside and it was still a mess.

And there were a lot of good pioneers who went up there and bought houses. Peter Manigault was probably the first but there were a lot of others that went up and took over these houses that were just trash inside except fortunately had the moldings and wainscots and those kinds of things still there. But then the mayor appointed me to the Municipal Auditorium Committee and we were looking for a site and Joe Riley-- Big Joe, Old Joe Riley-- was on that committee and a number of others and we were looking-- We thought the Municipal Auditorium probably ought to be on the waterfront somewhere, so we went on both waterfronts, the Ashley and the Cooper, and looked and looked and looked for property and Frances came and got me one day and she said, "Tommy, let me show you where that auditorium ought to go." And so she took us up there where the Gaillard is now and she said, "This slum should be cleaned up and that would give us a buffer to the north side of Ansonborough." So we got the committee together and everybody thought that was a great idea and we went ahead with it. Of course, the only things that were saved out there was the gate house of that's on Calhoun Street and then three other buildings which were moved, two of them on the corner of Anson and Laurens, and one on East Bay and Laurens. I always take people up there to show them the remarkable thing that-- Mr. Chitwood moved that four-story house from George Street, out of the middle of George Street, and moved it over to where it is now. That was remarkable. Of course, I got elected president and we went on with all the activities of the foundation with a lot of other houses in town and some over there that you're familiar with over on Bull and the college area over there, and Avery school and all that. Then one of the things during my time was that we were concerned about-- Everybody wanted to build like they do in every city, you know, make full use of land and build it high, and so Frances and I talked about it at great length and we thought that the only thing that's going to limit that, stop that kind of thing, is a height ordinance. So we got a group of people in here, professionals-- Previous to that we had Feiss, Wright, and Anderson who did the survey of historic buildings. They recommended to us who could do this, the height ordinance, so maybe it was one of those that did it. I've forgotten. But we presented that to the city and the city was just tickled to death. They made some changes but at least they adopted the ordinance. I think that had more to do with stopping the growth, the vertical growth of Charleston, and I hope that's still working to some extent.

And then of course the highlight I guess of my time in the presidency is when Dick Jenrette sent Allison Harwood down to Charleston. She wanted to get out of New York and retire. She was an editor of Vogue Magazine and she came down-- I'll never forget. Frances called me one day and she said, "Would you mind coming over to the Russell House to my office tomorrow or the next day? I have a lady coming that Dick Jenrette sent down here and thinks that she can help us run the Foundation." I said [chuckles] "That's wonderful." She came down and she talked to us about a reproductions program and told us about some of the contacts she had in New York. At that time, Harrington Bissell and I had restored the dungeon under The Exchange and we were also setting up-- We had a company we called Charleston Reproductions and we were setting a reproduction program ourselves and we had made a lot of different things like fire markers and my joggling boards and he had written a book on Stede Bonnet the pirate and I had written a book about the flags of South Carolina and he had gotten a lot of pipe molds made and so we were making Caylen[?] pipes and we were selling all this stuff down in the dungeon, you see. So I said, "Well this is wonderful. If you want to take it on, Allison, we'll go with you." So the next day I had to go tell Harrington that we were out of the reproductions business [laughs]. But Harrington said "No, you're right. The Foundation ought to do it." So a couple of years later, he

came on the Board of Trustees and he was also president of Charleston Museum and helped us in some of the products that we were getting from there. And that went on and I went to New York and she stayed in New York for a while and I kind of ran it from this end and she ran it from New York and she had all the contacts and we put together a program. I think one of my questions was "What was the highlight?" I guess a couple of highlights was that one of her close friends she had grown up with Mildred Mottahedah and so all this wonderful china and all the reproductions from Mottahedah came very easily and that helped start our program. And of course, she thought she was going to get Baker Furniture Company to be our furniture manufacturer and Mr. Von Steenberg, who was the president at that time, he said, "I spent three months in Charleston in the 1930s and I've got drawings of every piece of furniture worth reproducing. I don't need to pay royalties." And that was that.

And so we went to-- Allison found cabinetmakers at Stebbing in England who made our reproductions for about three years I think. And then Phillip Kelly became president of Baker and Allison called me up one day and she said, "They got a new president. Do you think we ought to make a run at it?" I said "Absolutely." So I sat down and wrote one of my most famous letters and told him how I thought that a company that size and with that length of service to reproducing Americas[?] certainly ought to give money back and that royalties were not that big and they could always hide those and all-- And I'll never forget Rod Kreitzer was the vice president at that time and Rod told me-- He called me in and he said, "Come here and read this letter. Who is this guy?" And Kreitzer says, "I don't know who he is. But I know Allison Harwood." And so he said, "Well go down to Charleston and see what you can do. See what their idea is." And he came down. We wine and dined him and got him ready to sign a contract and then he had a plane to fly out and so I raced him up to the airport and the radiator hose broke half way up there. I think my car froze on the ramp going up to the thing and just absolutely froze and he had a flight in the next ten minutes and so I-- There was a little [unintelligible] in the car behind me. I said, "Here take this." I threw his suitcase in the car. I said, "Take this man to the airport." And he did. And so he came down and signed the contract a couple of months later, so we've had a good time-- And then Phillip Kelly said then, "Well it's a good program. It'll last probably five years." So how long has it been? Twenty-seven, twenty-six, twenty-three? Thirty years? Gosh time flies.

JP: So you really did think[?] the reproductions program would last that long?

TT: Well I thought it would but they didn't. Of course I always thought if it got us thirty or forty thousand dollars that would be a winner! And now it's up in the multiple hundreds of thousands which is very nice. I stayed on as chairman of the reproductions program I think for ten years. I thought that was enough and I thought they ought to get some new people so-- But I still serve on the committee. They can't get rid of me.

JP: Tommy, you had a big issue start during your presidency I believe that you stayed close to for a number of years after your presidency and that was the issue pertaining to the James Island Bridge. Could you talk a little bit about how that first arose? I know that the route was much worse than it ended up being in the end in terms of its impact on the historic district and maybe you can tell us a little bit about the bridge and--

TT: The first proposal for the bridge was at Broad Street and then the second proposal for the bridge was at Wentworth Street. The Foundation kept saying to the Highway Department, "You can't come through these residential streets." And so they finally settled on Calhoun Street. Then they were just going to build a bridge and drop it into Calhoun Street and that was going to be the end of that. And we thought that the impact to the Harleston Village and further up would just be tremendous and that they had to have-- Of course what our hue and cry was that all you're doing is moving the traffic up from west of the Ashley to the city peninsula and we're not going to stand for that. So they said, "Oh well. Too bad. That's the way we're going to do it." So we went to the National Trust and the National Trust said, "Well, the president has this-- I don't know whether they still have it-- committee on historic preservation. So they came down. We got that group to come down to Charleston and see the situation and they said [unintelligible] can't go [unintelligible]. So the Highway Department then came back with some ideas of taking a boulevard on up by the Citadel and go around up into I-26 North up around Mount Pleasant and Heriot Street. And we still said, "Well wait a minute. You've got all the traffic coming over here. Why can't you take care of it over there, or at least part of it over there?" So they went back to the drawing boards and they drew in a James Island Expressway [connector]. The cut off that goes from the James Island Bridge over to [highway] 61. The plans started developing and all like that and then they announced that they were building all this over on this side but the Citadel wouldn't let them go through their area and also they were going around all those people on the Ashley River shores who had a big old bridge right in front of them. No, no, no. So they said, "So that's it. We can't do it so we're ending it right here at Spring and Cannon Street so it would go across and have a loop there or something." And we said, "No. That's just not going to work." And so we got a viaduct, that little viaduct that goes over Lockwood Boulevard, we just got that so it wouldn't be a mass of traffic at that end. And then they said, "Oh well, we can't get any federal funds and we don't have any state funds to build a James Island bypass over there." And so they announced it at a meeting which I was so surprised at and I got up and I said, "You're going to build it or that bridge is not going to open. We're not going to let you open that bridge." The Chief Engineer said, "Who are you?" And I told him. And he said, "This is the first I've ever heard about it." And I said, "You haven't heard of the Memorandum of Agreement between the federal government, the state government, and your highway department?" He said, "No, I'm sorry I haven't." And I said, "Then you better check up." We became good friends after that but he finally put that Connector in and that's when we also put that over the-- [laughs] They told me they should have named that the Thornhill Bypass but they didn't and I'm glad they didn't. We stuck to our guns and it worked!

JP: One of your major activities in the historic realm other than the Foundation was your work with the South Carolina Tricentennial which was I guess started a year or two before 1970 and maybe a year or so after that. Did you chair that--

TT: Right, I was the chairman.

JP: Could you tell us a little bit about your activities?

TT: I don't know how I ever agreed to do that but I had been I guess number two guy with the Confederate Centennial in 1961 and I enjoyed doing it. Then they came to me and asked me to be chairman of the Country Tricentennial Committee and so I did. Then they later put me on the

State Commission. It was an interesting thing. We got tremendous amount of support from the community and we had a one-week long celebration which was April 12, which was supposed to be the founding day until the next week. And we had the largest parade that Charleston has ever had because we had Mendel Rivers who got not the Charleston Air Base band but the Air Force band, the Marine band, the Army band, and the Navy band all down here to Charleston, plus we had everybody in the area-- well, not everybody-- I mean businesses that could afford it bought floats and we had a tremendous parade of floats and all and had high school bands and college bands and so it was a big do. And then we had a pageant every night up at the stadium, a pageant of the founding of Charleston and all like that. We put out books. And one of the most successful things, I got my friend Harrington Bissell involved again and we put out coins. We made so much money on the coins that the county had given us \$30,000 as seed money to put on the Tricentennial and when it was over, we returned to them \$20,000 plus and the County Council said, "What? We're getting money back? Can't believe it!" So we had a good time with that. But it was a wonderful occasion for the community and I think-- And the whole Tricentennial effort with Charles Towne Landing and all had helped to open up tourism in Charleston. My wife always says when we get behind a carriage, she says, "There you go. There's your tourists again." We didn't have that much tourists in Charleston until about that time, about the 1970s.

JP: [unintelligible]

TT: [resumes mid-sentence]-- plan but they didn't have this overpass on the plan because they were going to have that boulevard by the Citadel, you see. And so, are you ready to go?

JP: Tommy, I think of all the Foundation trustees you stayed the most active after your presidency, I think than really any other past president and certainly for a longer period of time than so many of the past presidents have stayed involved. What do you see as the Foundation's best role for the future?

TT: I guess keep doing what you're doing. And I'm so excited really about the reconstitution of the Revolving Fund. I think the Revolving Fund is what really put this foundation on the map. What they were able to that only \$100,000, no government money, and restore Ansonborough, ten blocks or whatever it is, I mean it's a wonderful story and not any other places have done it. And I think there are still some opportunities and you've heard me in the meetings-- I think it's time to lose some money, you see. We're getting a lot of money but you can't restore these buildings like we did back a few years ago and expect it to clear ever nickel out of it or make a profit on it. And so there are some buildings that we're going to lose some money on. I think we need to have that psyche that that's what we're here for. I've always thought that that was a wonderful thrust for the foundation because we can have tours and we can have reproduction program but the thing that stands out in the public's mind is what do you for this city, bricks and mortar. We have all these wonderful programs of appearing before all of these boards that you go before and certainly that is vital, and the foundation gets a lot of credit for that but only credit for that in small groups of people here and there that know something about it. But you go out and fix a building up and say this done by the Revolving Fund of Historic Charleston Foundation, you get notoriety and I think that's great for the future. When I'd say everything is good so do what you've been doing.

JP: I think of all the trustees, you've been the one who has always had a perspective about the organization as a non-profit organization that's supposed to do good stuff and not sit on large bank accounts waiting for more and more accretions in the endowment as much as they're supposed to be doers, I guess.

TT: I voted against the endowment because I just have this old-time feeling that organizations such as this eleemosynary shouldn't live off the dead. It ought to live off the living. And the living ought to be paying for it, not the dead. And most endowments come from dead people. So, there's a danger in that, of course, and that's hurt a lot of old organizations that have such large endowments that nobody supports them. And you know, people are interested where they put their money. If they're not giving money to these [unintelligible] that's got that big endowment they don't need any money. And then you don't have the heart and soul in the thing and that's why-- I just happen to read that if eleemosynaries have to have an endowment it ought to be a small amount, it ought to be a rainy day fund that can take care of the staff for six months or something if they haven't been raising money. If they haven't been raising money they ought not be there, right? You're part of the staff. If you're not causing money to come into an eleemosynary, then you're in the wrong business. So that's my theory on that and that's why I'm always pushing to see the foundation spend more money, to do those good things that they've done through the years.

JP: Tommy, you are involved with the real estate company that's embarking on probably one of the most forward-thinking perhaps projects in Charleston's recent history, the Magnolia Silver Hill Development, which will move the city's rehabilitation and rejuvenation efforts significantly north towards North Charleston itself. What role do you see the Foundation playing in the future in the city and rejuvenation of neighborhoods? Where do you think we ought to be?

TT: Well, I think you pretty well ought to be where you are now. I mean, you're an oversight group and you ought to have the nerve to call their hand if they get out of sync with what we believe to be the best for the future of Charleston. And sometimes you're going to spend some money on that. But you know, I'm just one of the brokers of this property. I'm not an investor. But fortunately, the investment interests that we have involved in this issue are very sensitive to most communities and what they think how they ought to develop in the future. But, when there's a bottom line that somebody has to meet, as you know, they start cutting corners or putting things in place that don't conform to the 19th century or early 18th century things, and so that's where the Foundation is vitally important is to be an oversight and keep a lid on these kind of people. When my wife was so sick, they were building the college library and they were building the Jewish Center on Wentworth Street and had I been able to take a more active part in it, I think I'd have been like those old ladies did with the College of Charleston I guess. I'd have gone out there in front of the bulldozer. I just think those are two tragic additions to our community. I heard that the BAR said just come back and forth, coming back and forth, coming back and forth, and they finally just had to agree to something. I said no. You shouldn't have just agreed to something because all you've got is something out there which is pretty bad. And I think that's where you folks can really do. And the other thing I think is that new staff people should be getting more and more trustees to go arm in arm with you to some of these board

meetings where real controversial projects are coming up. And I hope you will continue to do that.

The other thing that I enjoyed having a part in and just happened to come on my watch I guess or maybe it was the year after my watch, was Drayton Hall, and that was a very nice experience. And also I happened to have a friend over at Georgia-Pacific and so I helped get the piece of property next door so that they would have more property around Drayton Hall. And just recently they asked Peter McGee and Rufus Barkley and me to come up there and they wanted to make a little presentation, so they showed us around and talked nice to us and then gave us a gorgeous crystal bowl, a big punch bowl, that has an etching of Drayton Hall on it. It was very nice. Old people like to get their flowers before they die [laughs], That was very nice.

JP: The acquisition of Drayton Hall started when you were president or maybe culminated--

TT: It was around those times and I don't remember really which was which, but I was involved in it and, of course, that was Frances's idea again and Frances just had a remarkable vision for things that she could do, that she wanted to do and get done, and she pushed us to do it. She was a remarkable woman. You could walk by her on the street and she wouldn't even say hello to you because she had her mind centered on something else. I'd say, "Hey, Frances" and she's [TT makes a flustered sound to imitate Frances's response].

But, of course, you worked for her for a little while. But she was a dedicated and a very smart, visionary woman.

JP: Tommy, when I interviewed with you for my job you had an office in the People's Building and I think you were maybe just retired from Charleston Oil.

TT: That's right.

JP: And maybe you were pursuing some of your special projects like your flag book and your joggling board company--

TT: Well, that was even later than that because that would have been 81?

JP: 82.

TT: 82. Yeah, 81-82, we sold the company in 81, Charleston Oil Company and I didn't know what I was going to do with my life so I got a little office up there in the People's Building and stayed up there for two years. Taught at The Citadel. I didn't have a Ph.D., so adjunct professors don't make much money so I did that for a year. And then Max Hill asked me to come in the real estate business and I said, "No, I don't want to do that. No blue bathrooms and pink bedrooms for me and a bunch of ladies" [laughs]. He said, "No, I'm doing a commercial department, just organized." So I said, "I bought and sold service station properties so I might like that." And so I got into it and thought it would be a part-time job for a few years and then I'd retire, and here it's now been 24 years and I'm still working harder than I ever worked. Too much! Got to quit someday [laughs].

JP: [Consults with videographer]. Is there another topic you might want to bring up? We've done all the outline questions and maybe a few more but--

TT: No, I think it's been one of my great experiences in life to be on this board and you see I'm one of the ones that stick around. I like to stick around organizations that I'm most comfortable with. I tried to get away from Charles Towne Landing but I'm still on that board and still very active in trying to get the State of South Carolina to do what they should have done years ago over there and I hope that's coming to fruition. And Peter McGee has just been a great help in something like that. He's the one that put together the deal with Mrs. Waring to buy Charles Towne Landing and I was just kind of brought into that a little bit later, and so he and I have been the ones that have been kind of keeping Charles Towne Landing or being an oversight group to the State of South Carolina. And then he decided about five or six years ago that he'd had thirty years of it and that probably was enough and I said [laughs], "No you cant." So just a couple of weeks ago we'd been working with Senator McConnell and so I said "I need some help and so you're back on the committee," so he's on a little committee with me to talk to with the legislature. So he's another trustee who's really kept his finger in the pie here and it's a great organization. It's got great staff people. You and I can argue a little bit but we're going to come out for the good of the community I hope.

JP: How do you feel about the future of the Landing property in terms of its use and--

TT: I think finally we've got a person up there, the head of PRT [Parks, Recreation, Tourism] that understands its importance. The legislature is not giving them the money they need but McConnell and Harrell say they're going to take care of that in the legislature. And so maybe they will. They are building a new building out there and so at least that's going to be something. If you have a building where we can interpret the site, at least people will come. We hope that will help the attendance because right now there's nothing there to see except the palisades and a few things like that. So we'll see. We've seen before when the State has said "oh yeah, boy we're going to fix that place up" and then they don't do anything. In this year's budget, there's not even any money to cut the grass. So the foundation which I'm on, the Charles Towne Landing Foundation which is a private foundation, we're going to cut the grass for a few months until they get some budget money.

JP: When you were on the Board of the Foundation [Historic Charleston Foundation], who were the stalwarts on the board? I think you've mentioned Mr. Cannon sort of having to retire as Treasurer but I guess Ben Scott Whaley was still involved and some others, but who were the stand-out leaders of the Board when you first went on?

TT: Ben Scott. I think he and Frances just about did most everything that she wanted. And it was a different situation, I mean, most of-- Ms. Middleton was very interested and Ms. Whitelaw, very interested in the Russell House. But as far as putting on a national program or something like that, or going out for Ansonborough, that was not really their-- I hate to say it but they'd passed their prime. I've passed my prime now [laughs]. But I can't really put my finger on too many other people.

JP: One other question I'd love to ask you because we've asked so many trustees to remember their favorite buildings in Charleston. What do you think are the worst losses perhaps from demolition that you observed in your lifetime in Charleston?

TT: Well, I can't remember when the Orphan House was torn down but I can remember the Orphan House as a boy. I think it was probably torn down when I was in College sometime.

JP: Early 1950s.

TT: It was? That was just when I came back from college. And then the old Charleston Hotel was a terrible thing but in those days we thought, well here's a rat trap on the street and that something else could come in its place better. But because nobody had the money to restore it. I still got a bunch of the fans out of the rooms, circle fans. Nobody bought fans in those days but I bought them when they were tearing down the building. I guess those are two. I don't remember some of the others that we've lost really. I was sad to lose the, what do you call them, the "seven girls" or something up there.

JP: The three sisters.

TT: The three sisters. That's on the corner of Calhoun and [interrupted by phone ringing]--

TT: The three sisters were there, but what do they call them, the "Seven Days of the Week" or something up on--

JP: Right. Next to the Aiken-Rhett House.

TT: Those were really bad to lose. And then we had a building I thought was good at the back end of the-- where they put the county library [404 King Street]. And the county library needs to go down pretty soon I hope, the old county library. But all in all I think, mainly because of the Foundation we've saved so many buildings and we've gotten the historic area moved up further uptown. So I think that you and me and all of us can be proud of what the Foundation has done in that regard. And now money is pushing so much of it and so that's where you have to be the oversight and not let the money take away the ambiance and grandeur of Charleston.

JP: And that's a great way to end.

[Brief banter until recording ends.]

END OF RECORDING