

TAPE 95. 1. 20

MICKEY CLARK INTERVIEW
NO. 7

DECEMBER 14, 1995

EBEY'S LANDING NATIONAL HISTORIC RESERVE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INDEX

TAPE 95.1.20

SUBJECT: Downtown Coupeville, Local History, Threshing

INTERVIEWEE: Mickey Clark

INTERVIEW NO. 7

NUMBER OF TAPES: 2

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 12-14-95

LOCATION: Clark Home, 105 NE 3rd, Coupeville, WA

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY:

Theresa Trebon, Rob Harbour

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Tape indexed on: Marantz Recorder, PMD 220

95. 1. 20: SIDE A

INDEX # SUMMARY

000-016 Post Office on Front St. *Bob Cushing* built the building on Front St. specifically for the Post Office. He was working in the Post Office in the brown building when they built the one on Front St. at the SW corner of Front and Grace. The Post Office then moved into that building and later, moved into the one up on the hill. The building at Front and Grace was then made into a laundromat.

[Note: It is now [12-95] the new liquor store. T. Trebon]

Mickey said they got the mail out of the Post Office [at Front and Grace] through the side door on Grace. He got tired of it because the building was so low and you had to go up and out. *"I had to climb up out of there and got tired of it so I went out to Ebey's Landing and got a good big block of wood like that [shows with hands], so high, and I put in on the inside so I could step on the steps and get out of there and put it in my cart. It was an unhandy place, it always was. The building should have been right down to the ground. I was glad to get out of there and up on the hill."*

017-039. Prior to the Post Office being in the building at Front and Grace, it was housed in the old brown building on Front St. next door which was known as the Elkhorn Saloon. [Note: confirmed in the Walk Through History brochure as building 9, the Elkhorn Saloon, built 1883. It is currently **George Lloyd's Antique Store**, 12-95.]

We look at blue building in video. There's some discrepancy between Theresa, Mickey, and Rob, as to what this used to be. Theresa thought it was Lester Still's Law Office. Mickey said he thought it was *Jim Zylstra's* law office and that *Still's* office was closer to Mariner's Court. Mickey then said it could be *Still's* as *Jim Zylstra* studied under *Still*.

Rob thinks *Still's* Office used to be in the beige building west of the blue building. Mickey said his aunt worked in that building for *Nel Sill* and it was a post office then. Mickey worked in there too.

[Note: The Walk Through History brochure notes this blue building as No. 8, the Lester Still Law Office, the next building west of it as No. 7, the Island Co. News, and the next building west as No. 6 the Island County Abstract Office.]

040-058 Theresa pulls out Walk Through History brochure and starts going over the buildings from Alexander up Front St. to try and clarify. Mickey said *A. N. Corbin* had the Island County Abstract building. Mickey said the next one wasn't the Island County News as the brochure says... he said that was further up and run by *W. T. Howard*.

The old Library was between Toby's Tavern and the next building. You go down the steps where the library used to be and now enter the Knead and Feed Restaurant. Toby's Tavern used to be Clark Grocery and then Hesselgrave's Store and Gas Station which was on the buildings west side, the small lean-to type structure.

059-077 Haller House. ^{Wilheight} *Will Height* lives there now. Mickey said a man named White used to live there, then *Wiley Hesselgrave* lived in it, and now *Will Height*. The Circuit Theatre used to be right where *Height's* garden is now, on the SE corner of Main and Front. Prior to that it was *Shirtcliff's Mercantile*. "[The building] was kind of a long narrow one. It had an upstairs-you could go up there and sit on the upper deck and look down on it. I remember when they used to have a fire and the chimney would get red all the way up. Never got on fire anyway."

078-098 Threshing. Mickey gets a folder of his photos. The first photo shows shocks of grain. Mickey said they used to cut the grain first and put it into bundles that laid on the ground. Then it was "shocked" or picked up and put into piles of grain called shocks.

The *LeSourds* dairy is in background, now the *Sherman Dairy*. The old house is pictured

and there is a stand of trees on the Ebey Landing side which served as a windbreak. Mickey shows us *Dorothy Sherman's* story.

099-142 Other photos show men pitching grain up onto the wagon with a pitchfork, then they'd haul it into the threshing machine which is also pictured as is the team. Mickey is able to identify some of the people in the photo: *Mrs. Maxwell, York Dyer, and Dan Sholwalter* running the steam engine.

Photo #2. Next photo shows all the teams lined up and loaded, the cordwood which ran the steam engine, the belt running from the engine to the machine. Mickey identifies the people in the photo as *Mrs. Maxwell* and *York Dyer*. It was taken on Grasser's Hill which wasn't very productive farm country.

Photo. This picture features the threshing machine, the blower, steam engine. *York Dyer* lived in the area. He went to school in Coupeville and Mickey thought he graduated from it. He was somehow related to the *Fisher* family in San de Fuca and he lived most of the time in Oak Harbor.

Ferry photo from Camano Island: Mickey points out the cable that pulled the ferry across from the Island to Stanwood.

143-166 **Photo:** Mickey points out people in this threshing photo. Left to right: *Jim Stoddard, Walt Stoddard, Ben Ronharr, Bill Edmundson* [punching sacks], *Billy Sherman* [father of *Edwin* and *Wilbur*], *Jess Boyer* [~~*Freeman Boyer's* grandad, *Opal Boyer's* husband's grandad.~~] The *Boyer's* are somehow related to the *Shermans*. The photo shows the separator which separates the grain from the straw. The straw is shot off to the side and the grain is put into sacks. They then haul it down to the dock and put it on the boat. Horses are off to the side to see the machinery.

167-211 Mickey worked on all the machines. He did the separator, pitched which was putting it on the wagon, and shocked grain.

"Wherever there was horses, I was there. I liked horses. I used to go over there at 6:00 in the morning to be there early and ride on Jut Hancock's wagon, that's Judge Hancock's grandfather and Ethel Libbey's dad, I'd ride on his wagon up front and drive his team and then he'd go to the bathroom or something and he'd say, "Here you load her," and he'd give me the reins, and I'd drive 'em along and load the wagon while he was gone and when he come back I had it pretty well loaded.

I used to do that everyday.... I was a bum. I'd run over there and I'd stay at the place, and they'd feel guilty I guess that I didn't have any lunch so they'd invite me in for dinner, they'd have pie and cake and mashed potatoes and gravy and steak and everything else. I liked that. I tell you... I first went with Herman Wanamaker. But

pictured and there is a stand of trees on the Ebey Landing side which served as a windbreak. Mickey shows us *Dorothy Sherman's* story.

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Herman was a different guy... he was a nice guy and so was Jut Hancock who I drove for. Herman, if you broke a piece of harness, he'd take a piece of baling wire and he'd run it in through, bore a hole in it, tie it together... he didn't cut the horses manes, he didn't wash them down, lots of things he let go. But he was a heck of a nice guy and everything. He was related almost, my Aunt Emma and his wife were sisters.

[Note: The sisters were Margaret and Emma Rosenfield: Margaret married Herman Wanamaker, Emma married Ed Clark, Mickey's uncle.]

But I quit there and I went with Jut. He would keep you entertained, he'd be telling you jokes and everything and keep you entertained all the time and he'd let me drive the horses. He had a nice team, he'd wash em down, and he'd cut their hair and their manes, and trim their hair and tails and everything else. They were well kept and I liked that so I stayed with him, and I was there when they quit doing that. That's when they were putting them in shocks, like I said there, standing em up and dry out and then take em into the thrashing machines. Then they got the combines, when they got that that ended all that thrashing and so that shut the horses off and of course I grew up a little bit and got doing some other things too."

Mickey was out of high school when they stopped using horses and he thought they might have brought the combines in before that. [1932] "If Wilbur [Sherman] was here, he'd know."

212-233 "They all had horses on their farms, 8 or 10 horses you know, and something went wrong with one horse, they'd use another one. They'd maybe have a hired man, he'd have a team, and one of the [other] men would drive one-they'd have one or two teams out on the... they'd trade work all around the prairie. It was fun... I liked horses."

Theresa: "Plus they fed you well..."

Mickey: "Oh I liked that too. I never went hungry, I'd always get in there whether I was chiseling in or not I don't know, but I probably was. I didn't know what that was in those days, you just stick around till they give you something to eat. No, they'd invite me in, go wash up and go in there and eat, go back to work."

234-247 "Everybody had a little plot, an acre or two or five or twenty-five. I can remember out at Smiths, out at Ebey's Landing, I think they had probably eight teams normally, and when they'd go out by the bluff, a long ways to haul, they'd have to put on two more teams. Ten teams so to keep them going [the threshing machine] so they wouldn't have to wait for them."

Eight teams would normally keep the threshing machine working steady. For long hauls, like Harry Smith's out at the bluff, ten teams would keep the threshing machine working.

248-282 Mickey talks about the men who fed the machines:

"We had three guys that used to pitch on those machines: Jones, Peters, and Rohr. Big husky men, they were soldiers at Casey and they'd take their furlough so they could be off on thrashing time. They could make extra money too, they'd get paid for being in the service, and they'd also get paid for this. They'd sleep in the straw in the barn in the hay or whatever. They'd take a bag along with them and stay, go in and eat breakfast with them the next morning, then go to work. Big husky guys, big ones."

"You want to get somebody to plow for you, of course he's having a bad time with his knee right now, Edwin Sherman's probably the best guy with a plow there is out there. He does good work and they all know it."

The threshing machine probably belonged to *Horace Holbrook* or *Dan Sholwalter*. Mickey thought it may have been the same machine and *Horace* purchased it from *Dan*. When they went to combines, it was sold to *Hellers* in Oak Harbor. Mickey said the *Hellers* took it up into Canada where they got rid of it. *Harry Smith* and *John LeSourd* bought it from *Holbrook*, and they sold it to *Hellers*. Mickey got this information from *Jeanette* who sent him to *Hellers* and they thought it was still up in Canada, *"Probably on a junk pile."*

283-299 Rob asks Mickey if there was any type of celebration after the harvest came in. Mickey said,

"No, I don't remember any celebrations. They were just glad it was over with I guess. It's hard work. They're tired, you've had a long day and you're figuring well, if I get through here I got to get over to my place and get ready so they can move in there and cut mine, and they're moving from one place to another. Out here where the gym is I remember when they used to have a wheat field around here by that windmill, and the windmills gone too now, they took it down, but they'd go right in there, it was only a couple acres, but they'd move in there and cut it out, cut it out in half a day. A lot of them had big fields and it took alot of time."

300-316 *"The women, they probably had a hired woman there and they probably have some of the neighbors come over and help them and then they'd go back and help them at their place when they got over there so they'd have extra help. But there were a lot of guys to feed, you got the whole crew all those guys you saw there [in the photo] plus you got the guys that are out in the field getting the stuff on the wagons and getting it in there, and their own family too so it was a busy time."*

Mickey said they were all local people that helped on the threshing plus the three soldiers from Casey who took their furlough every year at that time to make extra money.

317-378 We talk about what will happen next in the interviewing. We talk about the way the Chinese were treated and Theresa mentions a book she read on the Chinese in the Puget Sound region entitled: **Straw Hats, Sandals, and Steel** by Lorraine Barker Hildebrand. [See EBLA bibliography.] In that book a *David LeSourd* gives his written observations on one of the Seattle Chinese riots. Mickey said the *LeSourd* family on Ebey's Prairie had relatives in Seattle who had a car agency in Seattle's Ballard district.

Mickey thought *Lillian Huffstetler* might know something more about that and the San de Fuca school because she went there. Mickey said he didn't think she went there long because he helped coach her on the Coupeville girl's basketball team. Mickey's wife *Margaret* was the coach and Mickey referred all kinds of games for a number of years. Mickey said that *Carl Dean* [*Lillian's* father] was always after somebody to give *Lillian* help, with foul shooting or whatever. *"She was a pretty good foul shooter. We got her going pretty good before we got through with her."*

379-462 Mickey said he and *Roscoe Berry* used to have a contest. They'd bet on fifty shots for milkshakes. *"It's nothing to get 49 out of 50... The other guy would probably get 48 and he'd have to buy milkshakes. Roscoe, he was in high school and he was a very good basketball player. I'd be down there to referee practice and he wanted to bet milkshakes and so we'd go."*

Rob: "And then off you'd go to Pat's Place for your milkshakes?"

Mickey: "Yeah, you betcha."

Theresa: "Mrs. Pat would take care of you eh?"

Mickey: "Yup, Mrs. Pat was a great old gal. One of the best."

Mickey talks a bit about the *Pats*. They moved up to Hamilton in Skagit County and she couldn't stand it, she didn't like the liquor, so she quit and came back and ran the restaurant and *Pat* stayed up there and barbered. He finally came back and died soon afterwards. She kept on running the restaurant all by herself.

Mickey tells how he owed *Mrs. Pat* a bill for the year; he charged everything as he didn't have any money. He did have a drag saw however and he went out on his dad's property, his dad had 60 acres and his grandfather had 60 acres, and he would cut all the wood he wanted in the summer, let it dry out, and then he'd take it in and pay her. *Mr. Pat* died when Mickey was at St. Martin's College and he wrote *Mrs. Pat* to say he was sorry. When he got out of school he filled her yard by *Pat's Place* full of wood. He also paid off *Mortiz Pickard* at *Prairie Center Store* in the same manner. *"You buy overalls, stuff you had to have, shoes to go to school. I paid 'em all off and by gosh, my credits good"*

yet... I put it in there for about \$3.75 a cord."

440-462 We talk about getting caught up. Mickey planned to go to southern Washington for Christmas holidays. He talks about his grandkids and how good they are and how good his kids are to him.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 95.1.20

END OF INTERVIEW NO. 7 WITH MICKEY CLARK

@ THERESA L. TREBON, 12-95