

NAME

Losee-John-Interview side A.mp3

DATE

October 6, 2026

DURATION

31m 21s

2 SPEAKERS

Roger Leonard

John Losee

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:06] Roger Leonard**

This is Roger Leonard, and I'm interviewing John Lucy at his home in Rock city in the town of Milan, New York, on October 27th, 1983. Well, John, why don't you first tell me about when the Lucy family first came to Red hook?

[00:00:30] John Losee

Well, my grandfather, Johnny Doctor Johnny, came to Red hook in the mid 60s. I don't have the date on the tip of my tongue. Anyway He joined with Doctor Wheeler. And bought the house That is now occupied by John White at the corner of Spring Lake Road and Old 199 or Old Route nine in the village. I was born in that house. My father and my uncle both became doctors and took over Doctor Johnny's practice when he no longer was able to. He died in 1900, which was before I was born, so I never knew him. The two doctors took over his practice and operated from there. Sharing the practice in a nice and equitable manner, as far as that goes. My uncle was a very autocratic man, but he had the kind of bedside manner that was necessary to deal with the wealthy people along the river. He could order them to do things, whereas my dad would probably have given up. So it felt that my dad to take care of the. Less wealthy, even the poorer people in the countryside where my uncle worked on the river people. So it was a nice combination as far as that goes. I recall in fact, this is the only time I ever ate quail. A pair of quail was what my dad got as a fee for delivering a pair of twins. So I got to eat a pair of the quail that Well, it was it was in return for the birth of Charlie and Anna Stickle, who went to school with me. So later on, they say, Charlie bill sticker. Take my dad up there, quail for the fee. So the combination was pretty good altogether. And they both practiced as long as they could. My dad was ill and he gave up his practice earlier. He died in 1931. My uncle died a few years later. And Doctor Spiller in Red hook took over the joint practice from there. I see.

[00:04:03] Roger Leonard

And your father's name was Harvey?

[00:04:06] John Losee

Doctor Harvey. And your Edwin K was my uncle.

[00:04:10] Roger Leonard

And your uncle lived next door to that house.

[00:04:13] John Losee

And has now lived. Yeah. Well.

[00:04:18] Roger Leonard

What stories did you ever hear about your grandfather as a doctor there?

[00:04:26] John Losee

Well, I don't recall very many. Of course, he made house calls. We have a picture of him in a wagon wearing a gray top hat and always a wool shawl over his shoulders when it was cold anyway. As he rode out into the countryside. I guess they had very few office calls. Yeah, I know my dad's office was. Didn't even have room enough for a patient to lie down in, let alone anything else. Oh, really? Yeah. Well, he'd put them in the living room if necessary if they had to lie down. But essentially, that's what it was. Of course, they dispense their own medicines almost exclusively. They say almost as far as I know they did. They had a lot of them anyway. And we have the apothecaries chest. Yes. It's in the other room there where that my grandfather had for all the herbs and medications that he that he dispensed. I don't know how much prescription stuff was done in those days, but a lot of it was furnished by the doctor.

[00:05:58] Roger Leonard

Now his name was John. John E what did the E stand for?

[00:06:02] John Losee

Effort.

[00:06:03] Roger Leonard

And his wife's name was Mary.

[00:06:05] John Losee

She was Mary Elizabeth Knickerbocker. From Tivoli. Daughter of the man up on the wall there. Edward Knickerbocker.

[00:06:23] Roger Leonard

And then your father was married to.

[00:06:27] John Losee

Was married to Rosalie Fraley, who lived. Down in the family farm and at Rose Hill Farm. It was still in the family? Yeah.

[00:06:42] Roger Leonard

And Edwin's wife was Agnes.

[00:06:45] John Losee

She was Agnes Lamb. Scotch ancestry. My uncle met her in California and brought her back to upper right hook.

[00:07:06] Roger Leonard

And then I have some other names here now. James Kelsey was your cousin, right? Yes.

[00:07:13] John Losee

Well, Doctor Edwin Kay had three children two sons and a daughter. The oldest one was Edwin Lamb Locey. The next was James Knickerbocker Posey. And then the last one was a daughter, Agnes Marion Locey. And Edwin Edwin married? Well, they called her back. They called her bet. Oh. That's right, he was married. She was married first to Will Teeter's daughter, Marion. And then finally divorced and married. Well, they called her Bet Koon from Tivoli.

[00:08:30] Roger Leonard

And then Laurence Locey. Is your brother?

[00:08:35] John Losee

Lawrence was my brother? Yes. Well, to go on with the others. James married a southern girl. And.

[00:08:57] Roger Leonard

And James Pelosi's wife was Cathleen Rucker.

[00:09:04] John Losee

From Carolina. Someplace, I think southern girl. Anyway.

[00:09:10] Roger Leonard

And Agnes Lucy, the daughter of Edwin, married.

[00:09:16] John Losee

She married James Dargaville. Clark. Who was an Englishman? A remote cousin, in fact, I believe. They had no children.

[00:09:35] Roger Leonard

And your brother Lawrence?

[00:09:38] John Losee

My brother, Lawrence Knickerbocker Pelosi, two years younger than I am. He married Anna Kilgore.

[00:09:59] Roger Leonard

And Doctor Ronald Locey. Who was he?

[00:10:02] John Losee

Doctor Ronald was Edwin, Lucy's son. In fact, he's the. He's the only one of that half of the family that carries on with C family name and and medicine. He. Yes. He He was in Yale Medical when World War Two broke out. The Army grabbed him, put him, finished him through Yale Medical, but pressed him into service. And so while he didn't see any combat, he examined Charges from the army for a long, long time. And. After he got out. He felt the need of. Since the processing that he got in the army was really not very good training as far as the doctor was concerned. Just routine. So he felt the need of something more. He did, I guess, an internship in Denver and liked it out there very well. So. When he was looking for a place to relocate permanently, he went out there and somehow got in touch with. The Madison Valley in Montana, which had no doctor. The Madison Valley is. 100 miles long, 50 miles wide. No medical services whatever in it. And they were advertising for a doctor. And they agreed that they would build a hospital if a doctor would come and set up there.

[00:12:07] John Losee

Ronnie jumped at the chance and became the head of the hospital there in Ennis, Montana. And. That's where he still is now. He. Is. And this is a rough country cow town. I guess he's never finished a rodeo as a total spectator. Is there a doctor in the crowd? And he had. He'd have to take an injured, and injured. Competitor off to the hospital and pass him up. So consequently, the bone and joint problems were serious. So he went back and got special training in orthopedic surgery and has since become world world famous for his orthopedic work. He's the orthopedic surgeon for several of the football teams and patches up in specialty, especially now his knees. And he's invented a technique for patching up a knee that has been damaged and applies it, has taught it all over lectures at Yale, lectures back at Yale frequently. Has been to Florida on symposia on this general subject. And I guess I refer to it as a loci operation, whereby he can put in new cartilage straps to remedy this knee that won't stay in place otherwise. And so. That brings people from all over to see him.

[00:14:16] Roger Leonard

Tell me about your own career, John. Where did you go to school and when did you meet Clara and kind of thing. You're married to Clara, and her maiden name is.

[00:14:29] John Losee

Well.

[00:14:34] John Losee

I went to I went to Mount Hermon School for a year because Red Hook High School didn't give enough math for entry in any of the engineering curricula that I was interested in. My dad sold me on a bill of goods to going to Rutgers. I had had other places in mind, but he did a nice soft sell. Took me down there. I met the president of the college who was a former classmate of my dad's, and so on. So I got such a reception that there wasn't any question about where I was going to go. So. I entered the engineering curriculum at Rutgers. And in the middle of things changed from engineering to physics simply because the head of the engineering Department in a fit of depression, jumped out of a window a couple of weeks before college was due to start, and they put a. Much disliked. Subordinate in as a temporary replacement. So I switched to a major in physics for which I was never really sorry. Before I got out. I had an offer of a job from the Bell Laboratories in New York, which I took and would have been fine, except if I took it in in the summer of 1929.

[00:16:32] John Losee

And. Well, they bragged about their statistical department and about how I could forecast trends. They couldn't see what was going to happen in October of 1929. So consequently, out of. 31 engineers that they hired for this one department that I was in, they kept only one. And so I did that. And about the same time my dad was ill. So I came back to Red hook. Did anything I could do to make a dollar. Built radios, wired houses. With a plumber's assistant. Anything that I could possibly do. My dad was a frustrated farmer. His. His mother thought that a doctor's son should not be a common farmer, and so. Consequently she promoted the idea of his joining his older brother in medicine, which he did, probably reluctantly. But in any case, that's the way it turned out. So when my dad had a few dollars, he bought a half a farm and set it outdoors. And when he died, there was a young orchard. So I stepped into that.

[00:18:17] Roger Leonard

Tell me where that was.

[00:18:18] John Losee

That was on Rockefeller Lane. Let's see if it joins route nine. Mostly it's on both sides of route nine of Rockefeller Lane going west. It was half a farm, as they say, 80 some acres. And he said it almost altogether to apples, some nut trees and things like that. But apples were sometimes good and sometimes bad. I stayed with it for 20 years, and we ended up by losing our shirts and the farm. So from there on, I went back to industry, worked for Delaval Separator in Poughkeepsie for six years. And then went to teaching. I taught for two years in Pekin Public School System and then went to Bennett College In Millbrook, girls, very expensive girls school and from there to Dutchess Community College, where I stayed until I retired. Now, during that process one of the things that I did was to. Interest myself in hunting and fishing and things like that. And for a time one summer I was afflicted with a virus pneumonia and was told to take it very easy. Fishing along the river was considered within within the ease. So I fished with Gordon Norris, who owned a soap company in Red hook And Gordon Voorhis had a secretary and her name was Clara Weller.

[00:20:41] John Losee

So quite often Clara and I did some fishing, whether Gordon good or not. So that's the way that developed. We were married and on November 12th, 1944. And since then we've had three children John, Harvey, Lucy, Mary Elizabeth, Lucy and Martha Ann Lucy. So that brings the family pretty well up to date, I think. If you want to go further. John Harvey married Jane Nicholas. We have one child. Jeremy. John. Lucy. They lost another baby. Mary married a Norwegian from Minneapolis. Paul Rosendahl. That didn't work out. Paul. Paul had a graduate grant at the University of Hawaii in anthropology. So they were divorced. Finally, after one son. Carl, Otto, Rosendahl, and Mary now married a part Hawaiian. Francis Kelly. So that's the status of that family. Martha married John Herman's, son of Walter Herman's, and John runs the family insurance business in Millerton. They have two children, Sarah, Sarah, Catherine and. Jacob. Luther. Family. I guess that brings the family pretty well up to date, you know.

[00:23:07] Roger Leonard

Mentioning fishing along the Hudson River brings to mind that you did some archaeological work along Kruger's Island, too. Why don't you go into that a little bit?

[00:23:18] John Losee

Well, we've done we were both charter members of the Mid-Hudson chapter of the State Archaeological Association, which was Established in 1950. There was the. The island itself is a very complex thing. Archaeologically, there's a lot of Indian material there, spanning over a great many years, still in controversy, I guess, as to as to periods and such things. But we worked on the island for quite a quite a long time, unfortunately subject to considerable vandalism from people across the river who used to come over. And. One group moved in where we were digging with shovels and screens and said, well, if we find anything, we'll sell it to you. Which, of course, destroys the record. Nothing left. So the investigations on the island have been limited now because we complained the state archaeologist has forbidden any work, even by our own people on the place, because they would like to preserve some sites untouched until they could do a real investigating job on them. So that's the way the archaeology of Krugers stands right now, forbidden to anybody.

[00:25:11] Roger Leonard

And they're not doing anything.

[00:25:13] John Losee

Oh, no. They'd like to keep it until until the need arises. And they can do it when? I don't know.

[00:25:21] Roger Leonard

People are still permitted to go out there.

[00:25:23] John Losee

Well, you can go out there. Of course you can. And you can walk along the beaches. You can still pick up arrowheads that the weather that the tide and and the ice have uncovered.

[00:25:36] Roger Leonard

But that could still cause damage to people walking around there.

[00:25:40] John Losee

Well, but if it's on the beach, there is no record left anyway, except the piece itself. And the piece itself is of relatively little importance. It's the relationship with other pieces that that counts. So there's very little, very little that's lost, let's say, by somebody walking around there and picking up a stray arrowhead or two. And you can still do it.

[00:26:08] Roger Leonard

Is that about the only site of that kind around here?

[00:26:11] John Losee

Oh, there are a lot more. Oh yes, a lot more different places.

[00:26:17] Roger Leonard

In the Red hook area.

[00:26:19] John Losee

Well, it's the closest one to Red hook. The island above Kruger's Magdalen Island is also rich that way.

[00:26:30] Roger Leonard

Tell me more about the house you grew up in.

[00:26:34] John Losee

Oh, well. Old. Brick walls two feet thick. Subject to considerable changes. Some made by my grandfather. Some perhaps before then. So it doesn't resemble too much the original. The original had a hip roof, and I guess it was my grandfather that took that off and put in a front gable and a regular, regular peaked roof on the place. Some other things had changed, of course, too. Some windows were changed. I guess there's only one window that survived as the original, and that was in a pantry that consisted of small paintings and so on. So there were other windows that were changed. The front of the house had enormous. I don't know if we call them French windows, but they went from floor to ceiling and all the way across the house. And the other windows were all changed from the small paintings stuff. So for pain. Common. The common for paint jobs.

[00:28:15] Roger Leonard

Which room did your father use as his office? Then you say it was very small. Well.

[00:28:23] John Losee

It was the thing that the whites now use as a kitchen.

[00:28:26] Roger Leonard

Oh I see.

[00:28:28] John Losee

And it was small.

[00:28:29] Roger Leonard

As you come in the front door. Which one would that be? To the left.

[00:28:32] John Losee

Was in the northeast corner. Northeast corner. So to get to it, you'd go up in the back door.

[00:28:40] Roger Leonard

Oh I.

[00:28:40] John Losee

See.

[00:28:45] Roger Leonard

What sort of history took place in that house? I've heard stories about it from the Revolutionary War on.

[00:28:52] John Losee

It was a tavern on by one Thomas. It's labeled. It has a. It has a state plaque. Thomas house. It was the headquarters of General Putnam during the campaign of the Hudson Valley. There are all sorts of tales. Winch that the claim is they used to hoist hogsheads of rum in on the winch. Up from. From the ground level up to the main floor, and then throw the empties out the next morning. Story has it that at one time the spy was apprehended. He was brought in, tried, condemned, and hung from the winch. My dad used to tell the story and said that when the wind was from the northeast, you could hear the body swaying in the chains from the winch. He claimed, though, that the only time he ever heard it was when he ate two pieces of mince pie for supper. So in any case, that's the story of the witch of the of the ghost of the Thomas House.

[00:30:40] Roger Leonard

And is there any truth to the George Washington slept there, or is that not substantiated?

[00:30:47] John Losee

There's no substantiation to that at all.

[00:30:49] Roger Leonard

It's just that he's around. Maybe he would have.

[00:30:52] John Losee

Yeah. Well they used to call him. There was a pear tree out in the back yard that they used to call the George Washington pear. But whether that had anything to do with George Washington, I don't know.

[00:31:05] Roger Leonard

Your family has always been involved in the church. Saint John's Reformed Church.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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