

NAME

Sturges-Pete-Interview-I-23-Sep-1986 side A.mp3

DATE

October 6, 2026

DURATION

30m 5s

2 SPEAKERS

Roger Leonard

Pete Sturges

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:01] Roger Leonard**

This is Roger Leonard, and I'm speaking to Pete Sturgis at his home on his farm at the corner of Gusky Lane and West Kerley's Corners Road in Tivoli. On September 23rd, 1986. So first of all, what do you know about the old building that was known as the church house that was north of the church?

[00:00:37] Pete Sturges

The only thing that I can remember hearing about is was a house north of the church owned by more.

[00:00:50] Roger Leonard

What was the first name?

[00:00:55] Pete Sturges

That I don't know. Now. Two two grandfathers and the doctor in Tivoli bought this land in the south side of the cemetery, South quadrant. And I think it was a farm. And they bought it off of this moor.

[00:01:27] Pete Sturges

And the way they were supposed to be repaid was when they sold a plot, they got a certain portion of it for them.

[00:01:37] Roger Leonard

I see.

[00:01:39] Pete Sturges

But My grandfather donated his share, and Doctor Pritchard was a doctor, a local doctor? Yeah. He donated his share. Well, he didn't donate it, I just The ears and died. His daughter died and everything and nothing done about it. So we just took it over. And I think my aunt. Was the only heir to her name was Rifenburg. And I think she donated her share.

[00:02:17] Roger Leonard

Yeah, I have that written down here somewhere. Now, wait a minute. See if I can find it. It was 1924 and it says property, Sturgis Pritchard and Mrs. Eliza Rifenburg. That was your grandmother.

[00:02:30] Pete Sturges

I have a book upstairs. I tried to find it. Oh, record. Something in doc? I don't know what the doc is. Good to see. Too good. Put that away. What's the check?

[00:03:01] Roger Leonard

I found the year. It was 1927.

[00:03:07] Pete Sturges

This is. Grouping children for school. I don't know what that was cut out for. It must have been. Something. But.

[00:03:40] Roger Leonard

That's about the Clarkson endowment.

[00:03:43] Pete Sturges

That must be something about it.

[00:03:44] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Here's here's what I got on that. There was a service there or a brochure. Not a service. A brochure was put out by Clarkson and.

[00:03:58] Pete Sturges

Yeah.

[00:03:59] Roger Leonard

And there's the information about that.

[00:04:02] Pete Sturges

There's not the Bank of New York. And that's. This 22nd day of March 1927, between the Red Shirts Cemetery Association Corporation, duly incorporated by and under the law of the State of New York. Part of the first part, the first National Bank of Red hook, all that was just where they put their trust fund in it, in that.

[00:04:29] Roger Leonard

Okay.

[00:04:30] Pete Sturges

I got a picture to show you.

[00:04:48] Roger Leonard

Oh, yeah. Well, you have that insurance fund. Is the church still insured? Yes it is.

[00:04:56] Pete Sturges

The high tension wires are going past it and they wanted to take it down.

[00:05:00] Roger Leonard

They took the one down right here at the corner.

[00:05:02] Pete Sturges

Yeah.

[00:05:03] Roger Leonard

Central Hudson.

[00:05:05] Pete Sturges

I had one taken down in the back. And that we paid 100, \$125. That was moved and they broke a stone in the process. Thank you judge. And Roosevelt wanted to point him to the Supreme Court and he wouldn't take it. No he wouldn't. He said, I'm happy he got all I want. I'll go down to Washington. No way. So he wouldn't take it. He just got his son, John Mack, too. Yeah, but.

[00:05:37] Roger Leonard

But I just wondered if you knew where that old church house. They referred to it as the church house in the a long time ago, when they had meetings, they would meet there. And then it was a it was on one side and the schoolhouse was on the other, according to what they say. I don't remember, but you don't remember your grandfather or anybody talking about that?

[00:05:58] Pete Sturges

No.

[00:05:59] Roger Leonard

No. Well, let me move on, then. What do you know about the white church? Because here I get to read it. I got to read this obituary for you. Now I'm going to read the obituary about the death of Daniel V v Queen. The death is announced. This was 1884. The death is announced today of Daniel V v Queen, one of the oldest and most respected citizens of Madeleine, his father Samuel Queen having located here near the close of the last century, meaning the 1700s. He was a carpenter and builder by profession and was himself architect and builder of the Dutch church near Madeleine, commonly known as the Red church. Now, have you ever heard of Daniel V v Queen or Samuel Queen. And then there was somebody who was on the board of trustees, later known as Montgomery.

[00:06:54] Pete Sturges

Later on, there was a I think he was secretary was Montgomery. Montgomery Queen as far as I will.

[00:07:02] Roger Leonard

Well, you never heard of these fellows here?

[00:07:05] Pete Sturges

Well, that's before my time.

[00:07:07] Roger Leonard

Yeah. But I mean, somebody might have told you about it.

[00:07:09] Pete Sturges

No, I don't remember. And what's the red. The white church that was down there on the four corners.

[00:07:16] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:07:17] Pete Sturges

Yeah. And they moved up to the Red church.

[00:07:20] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Okay. Well, tell me the story about repairing the bell.

[00:07:34] Pete Sturges

That. The bell was cracked. It cracked up at the ringing of some historical event. I don't know it and cracked it and was sent to Philadelphia to be repaired. And it was sent back. And when I say Modern Times, that was was put back in. So it was. I understand the bell has a large amount of silver in it.

[00:08:06] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:08:08] Pete Sturges

You ever notice the tone?

[00:08:10] Roger Leonard

Yeah. It's a beautiful tone. Yeah.

[00:08:15] Pete Sturges

I think Fred Ross, he was always connected with the cemetery. And I think he had something to do with repairing this bell. He sent it to Philadelphia.

[00:08:27] Roger Leonard

So it was Philadelphia that got it repaired. Yeah.

[00:08:32] Pete Sturges

It was in. Well, Mrs. Potts J. Potts wrote the history of the church.

[00:08:38] Roger Leonard

Yes, I have that.

[00:08:39] Pete Sturges

Most of that stuff in there.

[00:08:41] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Yeah, I got that.

[00:08:43] Pete Sturges

Did you get the copy of her?

[00:08:44] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:08:45] Pete Sturges

Yeah, I had a copy somewhere.

[00:08:47] Roger Leonard

Okay. Tell me about Eleanor Roosevelt's visits. How many times she came. And, you know, I have one. Apparently, she came in 1924 or so and then came again in the 50s.

[00:09:00] Pete Sturges

It was later. It must have. All I can remember was late in the 50s. She spoke up here. I remember at the time Brown called him Billy Brown. William Brown, young fella. I just just got out of college, and he introduced Mrs. Roosevelt. I remember that, and. Well, he must have been what was in the 50s. Was it?

[00:09:33] Roger Leonard

She came at least once in the 1950s. Did she ever come more than once that you remember? And she came also in the 1920s. But I wondered if she had come more frequently than those two times.

[00:09:47] Pete Sturges

That I don't remember.

[00:09:49] Roger Leonard

I don't remember you were there when she spoke.

[00:09:52] Pete Sturges

Yeah. I don't know what she spoke about. And I think before that, before the before the war, on the Memorial Day. General Delafield spoke up there.

[00:10:10] Pete Sturges

Because he was telling us about how short the army was of material and guns and stuff. And he said that some of the training was done. They were using stovepipes for mortars. And that must have been. Well, I remember I think it was a draft, wasn't it? Before the war, when Roosevelt have a draft before the war? Yeah. Because I know my brother in law was set to come out in the last of December. He had spent his year.

[00:10:45] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:10:46] Pete Sturges

And then war broke out.

[00:10:47] Roger Leonard

Yeah. I think the draft was 1940, wasn't it?

[00:10:52] Pete Sturges

Well, we got in 41.

[00:10:54] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:10:55] Pete Sturges

And he had been in a year then in December, then in a year. So it must have been 40.

[00:11:02] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Any other famous people speak here?

[00:11:10] Pete Sturges

No.

[00:11:14] Roger Leonard

Do you have a list of the soldiers who were buried there?

[00:11:21] Pete Sturges

No. We have a list of the men, but we don't have a separate list of soldiers.

[00:11:27] Roger Leonard

So we'd have to figure out which ones were the veterans.

[00:11:31] Pete Sturges

Yeah.

[00:11:32] Roger Leonard

Evidently, the American Legion or the VFW knows because they put flags on their graves every year.

[00:11:38] Pete Sturges

The American Legion should know because they were formed right after the First World War.

[00:11:45] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:11:46] Pete Sturges

And then on they put flags on veterans graves.

[00:11:53] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:11:55] Pete Sturges

Well, I don't know if they have a list. They should have a list. But they go by where there's a marker.

[00:12:01] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:12:02] Pete Sturges

They have a flag holder. They go by that?

[00:12:05] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Do you have any idea where which part the British encamped on when they came through. Or who would know that?

[00:12:17] Pete Sturges

All I ever heard was that the British camped there overnight or something. Of course, at that time, the church was there.

[00:12:27] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:12:28] Pete Sturges

And we don't know how much of the cemetery was in use or anything about that property. Chances are they. Might have been down back there, because the south, just south of the summit of the church, is where the most stones are. And then after that, of course, it's probably 1771, four, three, five, six. I don't know, it was somewhere at the British soldiers were there. And it wasn't many people buried there at that time.

[00:13:09] Roger Leonard

Now, apparently the new roof was put on in 1965, and before that there was a tin roof on it. And in 1889 they mentioned a shingled roof. Yeah. That everybody was supposed to go out and buy some shingles for the roof.

[00:13:27] Pete Sturges

I don't see, I had a roof put on. Of course, the metal roof tin roof began to blow off.

[00:13:35] Roger Leonard

Roll up. Yeah.

[00:13:38] Pete Sturges

And I think it was a shingles under it.

[00:13:43] Roger Leonard

Oh I see.

[00:13:44] Pete Sturges

I just don't remember. Klein put it on and I don't just remember because I wasn't didn't go up there. Klein put on the roof and I just don't remember. He must have taken the tin off. And if he put plywood over there or. What happened, I don't know.

[00:14:06] Roger Leonard

Do you have a record of the amount of money that Mrs. Potts raised in 41 and then in 65, did she turned the money over to you, or. Because in all the reports, it doesn't say how much they raised?

[00:14:18] Pete Sturges

No. I see. It must have been. When did the bank turn it over to me? It must have been before it was turned over to me. And I don't know what the fun was. The money must have went into the building fund or what was it for? Where did it go?

[00:14:37] Roger Leonard

Well, it was repairs for repairs for the building.

[00:14:42] Pete Sturges

I can remember. Hartmann. George Hartmann repaired the church. I remember. I didn't see him. And of course, he died a short time ago. And they put, I think, new sills and a few new boards in.

[00:15:06] Pete Sturges

And who paid them? And that, I don't know. I don't have any record of it.

[00:15:12] Roger Leonard

So it must have been handled separately. Like we're doing it now.

[00:15:15] Pete Sturges

It must have.

[00:15:15] Roger Leonard

Been. Yeah. Okay. Can you remember about the every once in a while in the minutes they mentioned card parties and entertainments and things like that for raising money. Remember any of those?

[00:15:30] Pete Sturges

Quite a long time ago, as far as that goes.

[00:15:33] Roger Leonard

Must be before your time. As as far as you know, as far back as you can remember. Has the interior of the church ever been changed?

[00:15:46] Pete Sturges

Not that I know. It's been repainted.

[00:15:49] Roger Leonard

Yeah, but it's everything's just about the way. Have they always painted it the same colors?

[00:15:55] Pete Sturges

Yes. What was painted here was 76. Yeah.

[00:16:02] Roger Leonard

So. And that was. But they painted it the same color that it had been painted before. Is that right?

[00:16:08] Pete Sturges

I'm pretty sure.

[00:16:09] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Well that's good. Every once in a while, they mention the gate fund. What was the gate fund for? Did they have to replace it or repair it?

[00:16:21] Pete Sturges

Well, they was going to put new, new gates up and I think Mayor Clarkson started it and we had a billionaire, Johnson Redmond down there. Well, they've got plans for the gate. And he said they was terrible. He was going to get some architect or artist or somebody to draw up pictures of what they wanted as a gate and was going to dried out, and that's the last I heard of it. So when I took over, I had a gate fund so that wouldn't pay. So I put the gate fund into Well I think I switched it over into. Money market and I get the money market money invested in mutual funds, which paid a lot more interest. Yeah, I figured it was never gonna get over \$1,000, and that was never going to get anywhere.

[00:17:34] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:17:35] Pete Sturges

So I might just put it in that. And if you ever accumulate money enough to where we need a new gate, we could do it. Yeah, but I don't know if we need a new one, a gate. We put one on a new new road. New part.

[00:17:47] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Yeah.

[00:17:51] Pete Sturges

I remember years ago, my father was in, and town trucks plowed it and got up to the north gate, and they couldn't get through.

[00:18:02] Roger Leonard

Oh, yeah.

[00:18:03] Pete Sturges

They moved the gate with the plow.

[00:18:06] Roger Leonard

Didn't they?

[00:18:08] Pete Sturges

And my father had a fix. And I know that the mason who ever done the job done it so much. And he came back and wanted more money. And I know he had a following. He was trying to get more money out of the cemetery, and the job he had wasn't much of a job. He just pushed around and put it back. His father wouldn't pay him, and he used to come here and he was going to sue him and everything else because he wouldn't pay for the gate. But he paid him all his voice. But that was the trouble. The gates was too narrow to get these snowplows through.

[00:18:50] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:18:50] Pete Sturges

So you don't need it today. You don't need any wider because you ain't got to put a big truck through there.

[00:18:57] Roger Leonard

Yeah, right.

[00:18:58] Pete Sturges

I plowed it out several times. I used a Louis four wheel drive pickup. Yeah, it's no problem. You could take that and go up and blow it out.

[00:19:10] Roger Leonard

Louis. Yeah, yeah. Now, the minutes stop in 1948. In the book I have. Do you have the minutes book since 1948?

[00:19:20] Pete Sturges

48. That was that little black book the. Mrs. Potts said everything was in the little black book, and I never could find a little black book.

[00:19:32] Roger Leonard

Well, the one I have is big, huge, thick leather.

[00:19:35] Pete Sturges

I know, but he had another book. You see.

[00:19:38] Roger Leonard

She was the secretary.

[00:19:40] Pete Sturges

To Lord Potts, which my grandfather was the president of the Association. He was.

[00:19:47] Roger Leonard

What was his name?

[00:19:48] Pete Sturges

Charles Sturgis.

[00:19:50] Roger Leonard

Okay.

[00:19:51] Pete Sturges

I don't know if he had his president or secretary or what, but I know every Memorial Day he. He'd go up to the cemetery with his little book and try to collect dues from followers.

[00:20:00] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:20:01] Pete Sturges

My grandfather died, and Potts called. Potts took over. Well, then that was kind of a mixed up. Thought he was sick and didn't take care of things too good. Of course, years later. The more Ulysses, more come to me and said, you sold my plot. What do you mean, sold your plot? Well, he bought the plot, paid \$125 down or something, and he had the receipt. He broke up with his wife and she took all the papers and got destroyed. He had no record. Well, I said, what am I going to do about it? I had already sold. I got buried in it, see? So it wasn't his plot. He hadn't he didn't have. No, he didn't have anything to show for it. And I didn't know anything about it. So they come around and then. Plots had it. Botts died and a lot of stuff there wasn't. And my father took it in 54. He died. Well, it comes through the books at me. I don't know anything about the cemetery. It says, well, you know as much about it as anybody. So I've had it from June 54th. Right on through.

[00:21:36] Pete Sturges

I remember the day my father died. He was building this road. This lane. Blacktop.

[00:21:41] Roger Leonard

Oh, Lane.

[00:21:43] Pete Sturges

Yeah. Father died, but the ambulance came up and the ambulance got here. Doctor black was there, and he was gone. He was an ambulance. So then I had ever since. And I get less help all the time. When I first started, we had a good trustees and. But after that run out we had. He was a trustee. He died. Harold Asher died?

[00:22:16] Roger Leonard

Yeah. Let me run over all these names. Let me start way back at the beginning, and I'll just read them on and you tell me whatever you can think of about these people. Now, way back in where that book begins, the first chairman is Frederick H. Burnett. And he was succeeded. We don't know whether there was anybody in between. Does that name ring a bell with you?

[00:22:42] Pete Sturges

Burnett. You see what rings a bell is stones up there with the names on Samuel Cross.

[00:22:52] Roger Leonard

James E green.

[00:22:54] Pete Sturges

Jimmy green. Well, well, what did James E green?

[00:22:58] Roger Leonard

Yeah, he was a chairman of the board once.

[00:23:01] Pete Sturges

Well, only way that rings a bell. It said Jimmy Green owned this property over here on this farm.

[00:23:13] Roger Leonard

Across the road.

[00:23:15] Pete Sturges

Yeah, well, the whole thing. He owned the farm.

[00:23:17] Roger Leonard

He owned your farm?

[00:23:18] Pete Sturges

Listen. The whole thing. This I built on the farm. And Jimmy Green. That must have been. Oh, I remember when I was a kid. An old fella come here working on fruit, buying fruit and that. And he must have been 75. And he said when he was young fella, about 15 or 16 years old, he used to come down here and cradle Rye. And when he got to tell me about this, Jimmy Green used to have a bottle of whiskey come up one year next year to have two bottles of whiskey. And he'd give it to the men. They'd go out in the field with a jug of whiskey. You'd never drive around a field. The men would get a drink of whiskey. But he said I was right with them. It's as much work as they did. But I was too young. They wouldn't give me the a whiskey. I had to drink milk for water, and that was too bad. Well, this guy was. 60 years ago. Better than 60. Price was putting his 70 or 65 years ago. And this man was here, and he must have been 75 at the time. And then he was a little boy, Jimmy Green.

[00:24:41] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:24:42] Pete Sturges

That's the only thing I know of that I could be the same morning. Same green.

[00:24:46] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:24:47] Pete Sturges

Probably is all the other greens I know around.

[00:24:52] Roger Leonard

How about pea or peeler?

[00:24:56] Pete Sturges

They was a family of peelers, and Tivoli that was popular was filled peeler. They had a store and a. Phil. Phil. Peter. Well, I can remember hearing them. And there was different people when I was a kid. You don't pay no attention. But yeah, they were, they was alive, living there in Tivoli. And I think they had a store with a library, a feed store or something. That was Phil Peeler.

[00:25:37] Roger Leonard

And then Charles Sturgis. That was your father?

[00:25:41] Pete Sturges

Grandfather?

[00:25:41] Roger Leonard

Oh, it was your grandfather? Yeah. He was chairman. Can you tell me anything about him? Well.

[00:25:57] Pete Sturges

Only thing I know, he was. He was one of the original Original owners of the cemetery. He bought it. They they're the ones I say was my grandfather Charles, my grandfather, Peter Isenberg, and the doctor was George Pritchard. Those three was the only one who had any money, I guess, to buy it with. They bought it.

[00:26:27] Roger Leonard

They bought the church and the cemetery?

[00:26:29] Pete Sturges

No. They bought this land south of church. I don't know if all the land they bought that.

[00:26:37] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:26:38] Pete Sturges

So they didn't want anyone else to get it and build on it, see, because it already had started the cemetery.

[00:26:45] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:26:46] Pete Sturges

So they bought that and. They sold it to the people.

[00:26:51] Roger Leonard

Oh I see. Walter Scott became the next chairman. And Walter Scott.

[00:27:01] Pete Sturges

Walter Scott. He lived up the road until he was a school teacher. He taught school up in. Their talk. Germantown was one of the country schools, and he was a father. You know Henry Scott?

[00:27:22] Roger Leonard

No.

[00:27:25] Pete Sturges

Henry Scott, the musician. I see Scott. One of the Scotts bought his farm. You know where that is?

[00:27:38] Roger Leonard

Yes.

[00:27:39] Pete Sturges

There was a Scott bought that.

[00:27:42] Roger Leonard

That's in upper Red hook.

[00:27:43] Pete Sturges

Yeah. Well, the Scott boys was Well, anyway, Henry.

[00:27:49] Roger Leonard

South of upper Red hook.

[00:27:54] Pete Sturges

But this Walter Scott road, and he didn't have the money. He was a schoolteacher, but his wife had money, I guess. And that's the way it came to buy it through her.

[00:28:07] Roger Leonard

What did he buy? What did he buy?

[00:28:10] Pete Sturges

Well, he didn't buy, but he got connected with it. See, by being well educated. And, you know, a long time ago, I met something.

[00:28:21] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:28:26] Pete Sturges

That poor guy died. He was a church, and we went and had a taxi, and her license was gone, and all of us were not. Well, he he was connected. Well, he was connected to the cemetery in a roundabout way to. His family is all buried there. And his wife was buried there. You know, he got in the car. And got over dead. Walter Scott. I rushed down to the hospital, he said. I kind of keep pushing him off. He was falling all around me and I had to keep pushing him off, he said. I got down there because he was dead. But he didn't know it at the time. I suppose he thought he was just unconscious.

[00:29:19] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:29:20] Pete Sturges

But there was three. Scott's family was well thought of. It was Henry Scott was the youngest and was Tom Scott. And I was in school with him. High school. And there was Lee Scott. And then there was a daughter, Gertrude Scott. Well, Lee Scott and Tom Scott, I guess Gertrude is too. They're all alive. Yeah.

[00:29:51] Pete Sturges

And this pouch. This pouch he bought a short time ago. And his wife was buried up there.

[00:30:00] Roger Leonard

What was his first name? Yeah.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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