

WIU Oral Histories Program - J. Hughey Martin

Subject: Jesse Hughey Martin

Birth: 15 Jan 1907

Death: 05 Feb 1977

Date of Recording: Jan 1975

Interviewer: N/A

Description: A presentation given by Hughey Martin for the McDonough County Historical Society in January of 1975; in the talk, he focus on the history of the area surrounding Argyle Lake.

Original Media: Audio cassette

Note: Most members of the audience are inaudible.]

Length: 52:42

[Tape Begins; 00:05; Man is midsentence]

Man; Speaker 1: -[half word] we were at a place where we didn't have enough people coming to the meetings to- so we decided to dismantle this last winter. What do you do with about four hundred dollars? Well, it was suggested we go and have a party!

Audience Members: [laughing]

Man; Speaker 1: With six of us, that would make a pretty good party!

Audience Members: [laughing]

Man; Speaker 1: So I brought up the idea, I says, why not donate it to the historical county- er, societies in adjoining counties. So we ended up splitting up- well, you end up with eighty-eight dollars into five counties. I would try to [inaudible], but I can't. McDonough, Warren is two, of course Warren is the farthest north. McDonald [McDonough], and then Carthage, Hancock, Schuyler, and I'm not positive about Adams. But anyway, you got eighty-eight dollars.

Audience Members: Oh, my! [claps] We, we appreciate it.

Man; Speaker 1: I thought you would!

Audience Members: [laughing]

Man; Speaker 1: Ah, while I'm on my feet, uh, I'd like to welcome you all to Roseville, or to Monmouth, whichever the case may be. We at the Warren County Historical Society meets on

the third Thursday of the month. Depending on the weather, where we meet. In warm weather, we usually meet in the museum, which is in the old high school building, a block east of Highway one sixteen [Hwy 116]. This kind of weather, we're right now, we're in the new bank building, in the basement. And, every other month, we change from Monmouth to Roseville. Now, the last meeting was in Roseville, so the next one, February meeting, will be in Monmouth. And right now, they're meeting at Community National Bank, which is the one that's across the street from Mister Quick mart, on North Main Street. And you were talking about your dues tonight. I'm sorry I paid my Warren County last week. Because I could have saved a dollar if- [inaudible under laughter]

Audience Members: [laughing]

Man; Speaker 1: Ah, we've got a membership of five dollars a family. That's the way it's set up. Or fifty cents for a junior membership. Which, I don't know whether you... Uh, I notice that, uh, this group is a [inaudible] like ours. You'd like to get some young blood to help do that work, but it's so hard to do. Well, so what. Thank you.

Audience Members: Well, thank you. [clapping]

[Tape cuts and begins again; 02:37; Man is midsentence]

Man; Speaker 2: -talk to us about Argyle, Lake Argyle. Do you want to sit up here?

Martin: No.

Man; Speaker 2: You don't need to stand or you can [inaudible, low voice] if you want to-

Martin: I generally stand, [inaudible, under audience member coughing]

Man; Speaker 2: We're kind of cramped for room, here...

Martin: Sure.

[Audience member coughs]

Martin: Thanks. [pause] I, uh, want to say that I'm very grateful to have the opportunity of, of speaking with you friends. [pause] I want to apologize for not coming very often to the historical society meetings. I can give you or Tim can, some of the excuses, you know, but uh, I don't think any of them are very good. We should all, uh, do things as, like this like going to church. Uh, you've heard people tell [inaudible] to the church. And uh, why they don't do this, that, and the other, just to get out of the habit, for some people. And uh, [pause] I'm perhaps

as strong historically as anyone you know! I have a lot of old relics that I've picked up, and... and uh, I just keep them, and... Not that I buy, buy 'em for any good to me, I give most of 'em away to my nieces and nephews. And uh, uh I, I uh, I've, I've always been a strong ad, advocate of the historical society in building, and some of the funding, uh the old Gumbart house. I, I felt sure we should buy it, but, well I think I sold, and I think it got what, twenty two, two or three thousand. [\$22,000-23,000] And in need of about that much spent on it, you know. And uh, we couldn't afford things like that .

[04:50]

We have a house, down in Colchester, it's the A. J. Smith house [Albert J. Smith]. [pause] It was built, uh, uh, it's one of the older houses in Colchester. It's uh, there on the curb, where [inaudible; sounds like "twelve hundred" 1200] used to be several years ago. It's across from Jones' mortuary. My wife wants me to buy that for the uh, the historical society, but who would keep it up? That's how those things... But we have a, there's this uh, fellow that gave a hundred and fifty thousand dollars [\$150,000] to uh, Friendway Park in Colchester. And uh, [pause] they've done wonders with it. The community, when you get something like that, you have to have a caretaker, don't you? [They] cost a lot of money and you just get kind of the same [inaudible, low voice]. To uh, the public. Some appreciate it, and uh, you know, kids'll be kids. We were all kids at one time. And uh, you see a little kid come through there, they break in, you know, tear up things like that, and you get about ready to do something. Yeah. And then you, you'd better [inaudible] tell ya, maybe, but what would you do with it? And uh, so uh, I let this house get away from me. Somebody bought it. And I suppose it'd be another few years afore it'd ever get to sale again. It's really a good house. [inaudible] and so it's a good house. It's, I don't know if it's the oldest house in Colchester, but uh, but uh, it's been there a long time. [dog howling]

Audience member: [inaudible, too quiet]

Martin: Yeah.

Audience Member: [inaudible, too quiet]

Martin: It's uh, it's a beautiful house. There was five of those houses at the time I think. Uh, one was where the [inaudible, sounds like Porter Hanes] lived. It burned, and then there was one down, oh uh, down towards Friendway down about where Missus Bloomview used to live. Somebody told me there's one of those nice houses built there. Well uh, [clears throat] anyway, uh, I want to say that I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to be with you. Uh, my uh, my heart's always been, you know, with something like this. And, and uh, I enjoy selling antiques because I love antiques. And uh, I see a place in everybody's home that should have some. And uh, associating with you people is very nice and tonight, uh, I want to say that we have a book

that was, uh, published about uh, Argyle Park. Eh, it's not very big. It was written at the time that the park was dedicated. Some of you folk probably have one. Well I thought I could lay my hands on it. And we looked and we turned over everything. And, it's still right under my nose there somewhere but I can't find it. I found historical things about everything. I've got the history of Keokuk that was- you see that one at least.

Audience Members: Mmhmm. Yeah.

Martin: It was, uh, um uh, oh, what? Eighteen, oh it was eighteen eleven [1811] or something like that that uh, to about time they built the uh, Keokuk Dam. Which was about nineteen...

Audience Member: Thirteen.

Martin: Thirteen. [1913] And uh, it was just before the dam. It was, it- they were going to do it. And that it just had a little one there. And uh, oh I have a... in, in finding, in hunting this book, I found wa- something I forgot I had. I had a sale of the old, Oscar Ellison sale of nineteen twenty-eight [1928]. [inaudible; possibly "over"] on the seventeenth [17th]. Mm, I'll just pass that around there. It isn't worth anything to anybody but me, and I'd forgotten I had it. And uh, uh [clears throat] I want to read a poem to you that kind of expressed my feeling for you folks. Not only you folks, but other people that helped me with my life. I think I owe most everybody a little something. It says, "touching shoulders." [The poem "Touching Shoulders" by Anonymous.]

"There's a comforting thought at the close of the day,
When I'm weary and lonely and sad,
That sort of grips hold of my crusty old heart
And bids it be merry and glad.
It gets in my soul and it drives out the blues,
And finally thrills through and through.
It is just a sweet memory that chants the refrain:
'I'm glad I touched shoulders with you!'
Did you know you were brave, did you know you were strong?
Did you know there was one leaning hard?
Did you know that I waited and listened and prayed,
And was cheered by your simplest word?
Did you know that I longed for that smile on your face,
For the sound of your voice ringing true?
Did you know I grew stronger and better because
I had merely touched shoulders with you?
I am glad that I live, that I battle and strive
For the place that I know I must fill;

I am thankful for sorrows, I'll meet with a grin
What fortune [Martin inserts "you"] may send, good or ill.
I may not have wealth, I may not be great,
But I know I shall always be true,
For I have in my life that courage you gave
When once I rubbed shoulders with you."

[11:09]

I thought that's a poem that expresses my thoughts about my fellow man, pretty well. Um, Mark wanted me to come talk to you about the Argyle uh, Lake park. Some of you know, much or more than I do. Some of you are older than I am, here, and, and uh, perhaps have, have had the same interest in it that I have. I'll go back a bit about the community.

Audience Member: [coughs]

Martin: Um, the community of [clears throat] of Colchester uh, was uh, uh, [pause] just a very small community of Kentuckians that settled there, mostly in the, an early day. A lot of the people around or into McDonough County, uh, especially around Colchester, a lot of people came here from uh, uh, Kentucky. And uh, Columbia, Kentucky. Adair County. If you look in the history of some of these people, a lot of people came here from Adair County. And they were very, very, poor, humble people. My folks came here in eighteen forty-five [1845]. And I think walked most of the way. And uh, that's my, the Martins. And uh, my mother was a McClure, and they came from Ohio. And they came in uh, in something of the early forties [1840s]. A lot of the people around Argyle came uh, from Kentucky. The uh, Murrays, the uh, Carmacks, uh. I don't know where the... I think, I don't know where the Nelsons came from. A lot of Nelsons. Um, uh. Whether they came from there, I don't know. Uh, some of the popular people came from Ohio. The Hickses [Hicks] came from Ohio. The Rogerses [Rogers] and uh, there were a few who were German settlers, but uh, they were uh, just woodsmen, and stuff like that, that came up here. I know my father said that uh, his father had one shoulder lower than the other one. And they, they always thought it was from carrying wood down the side of the mountain. And they, [laughs] they used to be woodchoppers and of course my father, I don't know, he never said too many good things about 'em. They always told the funny things, you know. It always amazed me. I suppose I didn't pay attention to the good things he said, because I wanted to laugh at about some of the other... Erm. But he said that they uh, never had very much fuel. Uh they lived where my sister does, four mile north of Colchester, there, you know. He settled there in eighteen fifty-five [1855]. [Train horn begins to blow continuously] Uh, he said that uh, he would get about two or three days' wood. And that's all they had. And then he [microphone feedback begins on top of train horn] said he could carry more wood on his back than he ever saw all those old timers [inaudible due to feedback and train; feedback ends] Chopped his wood and carried it. He didn't have coal, these, these fellows didn't know whether

to buy coal until, uh, I think about, uh, eighteen fifty [1850]. Something like that. [train horn stops, but noise from tracks continues] Now what it is... they could burn wood easier than they could dig coal, I don't know, but uh, it says in the McDonough County history that the Mormons [inaudible] came over from Nauvoo and hauled coal from Colchester. When they built the railroads that, that uh, left the [microphone feedback begins] you know this railroad was a Northern co-op [feedback ends] and they started to build it in Quincy. Up. And then Galesburg back, but it originally started in Quincy.

[15:02]

Uh, I suppose they shipped the rails by boat, from the east, down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi. I suppose that's the reason they, um, did that. And um, uh, it went through at about eighteen fifty-five [1855]. And it was going to Fandon. But they found that the coal in Colchester would be important, so somebody swayed 'em just a little more and [of] course Colchester then began to grow, and Fandon died. Fandon was, I guess as far as Macomb at that time. And uh, uh, and early. And uh, see the Patricks were one of the [inaudible] I don't know whether these Patricks or not. They were one of the early settlers of Fandon. And uh, there's not very many people, [knocking sound] the names aren't there anymore, the original. Well, getting back to the uh, the Argyle community, uh, you know, they just went in the wagons and buggies, horse wagons and buggies. And one time they was um, a... stagecoach road. That went up, uh, well it, it, went in down about, uh, across the uh, [train screeching] creek. [train screeching] Down there, just a little south of the dam, where we were talking a while ago, that was a stage road. Stagecoach [train screeching] road. And it went up what we call the Argyle Holler [Hollow]. [train screeching] Past the boat docks. And then past there. That was the stage road, from Burlington. And uh, uh, I heard some older people talk about that, and you can see some of the stage, uh, well there's one out here north of uh, Macomb, just this side of the Stickle's place. You know where that is. And, and, you know it is. There's a place uh, there where Mister Litchfield had the pla- the farm, and he had a, uh, stone put in the uh, in the uh, a block of some kind. [He] put in a cement dam out there that told that that was a stage road. Then there's another [inaudible; sounds like "rare plane"] over in Raymond Irish's field. Over in, uh, Tennessee township. Where the stagecoach went. Well, uh, I heard my father tell a story.

Well I'm a little ahead of myself. They started mining coal in Argyle Holler [Hollow] a long time ago. It's one of the early... and this coal was only twenty some inches thick. And the, these people had quite a life of mining coal. It wasn't "lay on your side." They'd have uh, fire clay under this coal. They'd wheel out about as much fire clay and rock on top, you see, it was solid rock on top. If they didn't have good solid rock, they couldn't, they couldn't mine the coal because it's [inaudible] the top, mind you. And they had to take this, this clay, wheel it out, and you'd see these little gob piles [train sounds cease] close to Colchester, placed around there. Well, about [pause] three fourths of that's clay. Those poor fellows. We [inaudible], see. So they'd have room to get this coal. And the, and they'd have what little rock was in the coal, and,

and the, the slack, they called it, and so forth. I used to hear those old terms that those fellows used. One time, there was six hundred coal miners in Colchester. And uh, they ran a, a train, uh, I guess five days a week, to Quincy. A train loaded with coal. There was a turntable at Colchester. Right there, uh, near where those oil tanks are, along the railroad track. Just west of there, uh, where they dumped cement, in the, in- when they'd back a little cement in there. They'd dump it on the block. Well, that's where the turntable was. They turned this table by hand, and turned the engine around, and went back to Quincy. I guess they sold, uh Quincy coal twenty-five years after they quit mining in Colchester. [Inaudible] said that they sold Colchester coal in Quincy, 'cause they had a good reputation. That's what all was, at the time there [inaudible; low voice] I guess there was, though I'm not sure, but...

Well anyway, uh, [pause] uh, the place where Argyle uh, Lake is, this land was owned by the uh, [pause] the Nelsons. And uh, the Carmacks. Uh, the, there's a man that uh, I've been told by the, the Carmacks, built uh, the um, Pleasant Valley Mill. When they first came in. The Carmack family built it. Uh, they uh, there was a, a big grist mill there. And uh, the main road went down that way, see.

[20:00]

It didn't go over the bridge and over and out, but you see, like you go through uh, Ragtown, you know as we call it, past the Argyle Lake Road. Well that, it wasn't even a bridge there for a long time. They all crossed the creek. And uh, went up this other way, and went by the way of uh, Pleasant Valley Mill. It was a grist mill, and people come from miles and miles around. And uh, well, I said that, I don't mean no two hundred miles, I mean fifty or twenty miles. Yeah.

Audience Member: [overlapping] It wasn't a water mill?

Martin: How's that?

Audience Member: Water mill.

Martin: Yeah! Oh yeah. It had a race [mill race, or sluice] and all, big wheel and everything. Well, uh, uh, [laughs] the burrs, are in the Argyle Park. When we first been, I uh, I found out that these burrs were from the, the Pleasant Valley Mill. So, uh, they were down in Fandon. And uh, Mister Frisby gave 'em to us. The how- Well, how they come to be there, when this mill quit and dismantled, the Carson brothers, which was Joe and Lee Carson, and um, Andy, built a mill. [coughs] Excuse me. To provide grain in Fandon. They bought this old mill and tore it down and took it over there. Well, when, I think it finally burned. I believe that's right. And uh, these old men, those stones were there, so we hired Charlie out in the wrecker, and took, bring these stones over there and put 'em on the, the ground. I've always thought I would put a plate-plaque or something on them but I never have. [coughs]

The um, talk about the uh, Argyle Park was when I was a kid. I used to hear, hear it and I thought, 'Oh, no,' and you know. And most everybody else did. But uh, we had a, a, Pole and Line club that Dan Hulson organized, and we uh, got the railroad to give us some of the land down by the Pleasant Valley Mill. I want to say again I'm getting, my story's not very well organized. When, when they quit grinding down there, the mill part was torn down. But at that time, the railroad had already built a dam on the LaMoine River, and had a pump out there to pump the water uptown to water the trains. And when, say just a few years back, all the trains stopped in Colchester for water, except the American Royal, which uh, didn't stop at Colchester. It had enough capacity in the engine. You know the passenger trains going through, but all the freight trains that I can remember, they all stopped at Colchester. Had to cut loose back there to come up and take water. Took about twenty, thirty minutes to take water. At one time they had a cooling station in the east end of Colchester. That's before my time. But they cooled all of the big engines. It was up, uh, oh it was about uh, where the old mill, just a little east of where the old mill was up there. I've heard some of the old fellows tell that, that the, the uh, they sold a lot of coal to the, to the railroad. And finally they, you know, they just [inaudible] kept expanding, and so forth, and stopped. Well uh, these people that lived out in this country, even when I was a kid, they either dug coal or they hauled coal. And uh, they'd uh, haul, some of 'em would farm a little in the summertime, but uh, they'd probably work for the farmers around there, shock wheat, and harvest and the like back then. But when, when uh, thrashing [threshing] time came, in the latter part of July and August, they'd all go back to digging coal. And sell thrashing coal. And people would come from miles around. Sciota and Good Hope, and Raritan, and places like that, to haul thrashing coal. There was a lot of people that lived in those, in those Holler [Hollow]s, what we called 'em. Those old houses were just full! They were just... I expect it was, or I, I think at Ragtown school, when I was a little kid, I think Ragtown school had forty or fifty students. Where, uh, the Argyle school up there had, say twenty, twenty-five. They would have forty or fifty. And the, it wasn't- See, the exit that, that this [inaudible] didn't go through Colchester, because it went to the creek. When they laid it out, the, south of, of the creek went to Colchester students.

Um, they um, those people who- well, um, Dan Hulson was a mail carrier- er, mail clerk on the railroad. And uh, he was quite a politician. And he had worked for years on some kind of recreation. This Pole and Line club didn't amount to too much, but we still owned that land. Owned land. Owned that land that the Burlington Railroad gave us down around this uh, this old, um, Pleasant Valley Mill down there. Um, but uh, they conceived the idea of uh, getting the state to buy this land for a park.

[25:03]

Well uh, Dan had all the time in the world see, he was the, off quite a bit, see, and he would uh, write and write, in longhand, all these letters. And he'd write to the, the state representative, and the senators and, and he got pretty close to Governor Green [Dwight H. Green, in office

1941-1949]. For some cause or other, I never knew just how that happened, but he got pretty close to him. And he got him to listen. So, we s- we went over to uh, Springfield. And uh, oh, there was twenty or thirty of us. [addresses audience member] Did you go, Hoyt? Were you there? [continues] We went over there. And uh, Dan had already got the ground laid and it was just easy. He was all ready to go, you know. And they started out to buy this land. For a park. And we said, Oh, didn't think it would go, wouldn't amount to anything, you know. But it did go. Of course they bought the land; they didn't get much for it. I think they, they told me I remember, I didn't, I had about, uh... I think I had three hundred and thirty-six acres [336 acres] in the [inaudible] United States that we bought. And of course they said, now you just sign this paper, and we'll appraise this land and we'll give you what it's worth. And all this happened and of course I thought it'd be all right, so come up they give me, I think they give me, uh, [pause] at least fifty dollars and fifty cents an acre [\$50.50 per acre], for all of forty acres. And they gave me a hundred and fifty dollars [\$150] for a forty acre farm. Well, uh, they went- I think, don't think they give less than fifty dollars and fifty cents an acre for any water with a [inaudible] on it. Now they bought, I believe, uh [pause] I believe it's uh, eleven hundred acres [1100 acres] or something like that. In the park. And there's about a hundred and, well they talked about a hundred and twenty acres [120 acres] of water at the time. But some of us lose, lose uh, you know the dirt washes down there and fills up these little places, and keeps making it a little smaller. I think they talked about a hundred and sixteen acres [116 acres] of water. At this time. But uh, it has changed that community a lot. Uh, it's brought a lot of money into the country. You know, I don't have to tell you this. It's full every weekend, about. And people come from a long ways. And uh, there's a lot of uh, a lot of parks in the state of Illinois, but uh, there's nothing just like that. This Siloam park [Siloam Springs State Park, near Quincy, Illinois] down there comes near as being like it, as any. Uh, we haven't been very successful in getting help from the state, like I think we should. Like most of 'em do. Uh, we could have got some money for uh, a motel or something, a place to stay all night, you know. And I thought [chuckling] different times about building a motel, and then you ask yourself, would anybody sleep in it? [chuckling] You know, if they come down there? And, and uh, they'd just sleep on the ground, and stuff like that, and your motel just might sit there, mightn't it? I thought about it. [Laughs, words inaudible] if I had to, though! But uh, it changes. The college kids use it a lot, like uh... Years ago they didn't. It was just uh, people that uh, have different ideas, but. These kids go down there, and they're, and they're uh, I don't know whether you just call 'em [inaudible] or what, but they, they do some things that you and I didn't do, when we were kids.

Audience Members: [laughing]

Martin: But uh, that's neither here nor there. It's, uh, it's going to expand, I think. They served notice on me that they were going to, uh, condemn some land that I got there, I got, I think the fifth of December. And uh, they're gonna, they wanna buy it. [Inaudible] ninety-six acres [96 acres]. I don't know what they're going to do about all- have to take what they can get, I suppose. And uh, uh, I think they should take more! I think they should take more of this, you

know, timberland, and lake back there. Well, they can, before somebody develops. And uh, picks the trees off it or something. There's still some land back there that, that uh... You see there's a road that goes right along the North side of it. Goes back from Argyle Church. The road isn't, isn't um, [clears throat] legally closed, but they've got it fenced up and why, it's just back there. They just- I'll tell you, there's all kinds of deer, and all kinds of wild stuff back there. It's right back to nature. And I think they should get it. I've talked to 'em to, tried to get 'em to, to buy that land. But they don't seem to want to, I don't know why. But you know, the state does something by inspiration. Somebody goes over and talks to them or something, and then they do those things. But uh, I think it's a park that [clears throat] I've, I've told uh, our, uh, businessmen's association lands- of course I belong to all, all the clubs I've had ever since I've been a kid, and I've said that we're asleep. That we should uh, capitalize on this park. And uh, why that we could do a lot of things.

[30:08]

Uh, that we don't do. And some of these people looking for something, for work go up here to work at a factory or something, then they go down there and run a sports good, sporting goods store, and stuff like you see, around different other parts of the country. And I think they could do real well in the [inaudible]. A good thing for the community. You know, you go to, I can remember, I went to Loke- Lake of the Ozarks, and you cross that Bagnell Dam bridge [Bagnell Dam, in Bentonville, Arkansas], there wasn't a place failing, not anywhere, when I first started down there. And that's been, uh, oh, it's been quite a while ago. Now, you know, it costs more to stay there than it does in New York, see.

Audience Members: [chuckle]

Martin: Based on the, what attracts, based on the highest prices in the world, down there. But I think that uh, that uh, Argyle Lake Park will uh, grow, and I think that uh, we'll awaken to the fact someday that uh, we should uh, do more there. I think they should take more land and buy more land and develop. And uh, uh, they could increase the size of the park, oh, but that- they could double it, I would think. And it would come over to this road that goes North, you know where, where Agony Acres are, you know. Well, that goes over and joins the park. My father told me when he was a kid, that- it was a big lake. You crossed that old bridge going North, and he said that that was a lake in there. And that the cattle used to uh, course he talked about cattle being on the [inaudible], you know. My dad was an old man. He said he could remember [when] they laid the road. Stuff like that. Well, uh, just a few people had their fences farmed wi- er, fences railed. And uh, if you had a very big farm you didn't, you know you couldn't fence it railed because that took a lot of work to make rails. Well uh, the cows would go back in the, in the summertime, you know, and it'd get hot and dry, and they'd go down there to swim, swat flies, in the old lake. They called it Pearson-

[Tape cuts; 32:05-32:13]

Uh, I want to tell you- I want to go back further, too. Uh, the Argyle, first Argyle church name was Bersheba. And they held church right at the, almost the, the southeast corner of Hire Township on the road that uh, well it's just uh, it's the uh, first road north of the Argyle Church Road. Down where John McCord used to live. And the old house is still there, and part of the old house was part of the house where they had church in. The Baptists, and the Methodists- or the Baptists and the Presbyterians, met together. There weren't enough of 'em, and they didn't have the money to, to uh, build a church. So they met in this John McCord home. For a few years. And then my grandfather helped build the Argyle church. The neighbors just went in and went out in the timber, and you just cut a tree, like it just was [inaudible], and trees, you know. Nowadays they'd have you arrested, you know. But if you wanted to-

Audience Member: [overlapping; speaking in a low voice under Martin]

Martin: -cut down a tree, you just went over to Bill Jones' place and cut the thing down. Well they, they hewed these uh, these big oak timbers. And they didn't want no second class, it was white oak, the good ones. And they, they hewed those, and framed the Argyle church. And uh, then they uh, they decided to call it Argyle. They changed it from Bersheba and called it Argyle. [On August 15, 1884 a petition was made to the Rushville Presbytery to change the name Bersheba to Argyle. The average church attendance at that time was 60. - ArgyleBibleChurch.org] There was a, a, a local house, uh, right west of it. They called it the old parsonage. And uh, it was a mail, it was a post office too. And uh, they called it the uh, at first they called it the Pleasant Valley Mill post office. They moved from there to Bersheba, up here to this little parsonage. And there was also one down just west of [inaudible] Friendship Church [most likely the United Methodist Friendship Church, located west of Argyle State Park], there was a post office there. And uh, a Mister Eakle deeded the land. And, it was on Mister Eakle's land. And I, I didn't even need to give it. That's where the old house was. And uh, the Baptists decided that they wanted to build a church of their own. So uh, they uh, my grandfather was a Baptist. And uh, he wanted to build on his land, wanted to give them a place up there in the northeast corner of his place. And uh, they selected a place over where they built the old Cedar Creek church that's over on the Tennessee and Blandinsville blacktop.

Audience Member: [very quietly] And for the first, uh, two [inaudible] Hire house

Martin: [inaudible]

Audience Member: Yeah, [inaudible] Cedar Creek.

Martin: Cedar Creek Church?

Audience Member: Yeah there were two of 'em, there [inaudible]

Martin: I didn't know that. But uh-

Audience Member: [inaudible]

Martin: Um, uh, they built the Cedar Creek Church there.

[35:00]

Martin: I never knew there was a schoolhouse there, but there might have been. Yeah. Alright and, uh, uh, my father, my grandfather was- belonged to the Baptist Church, and that's how I come to be a Baptist. And then I got married and married a Methodist and, and I uh, got to keep my religion and my wife's name but I'm a Methodist!

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: So uh, uh, that's one thing that- and I, I want to tell you another thing that happened. There used to be a lot of coal miners there. And they'd be, maybe they'd be twenty-five or thirty people that mined coal in the Argyle Holler [Hollow], see. And they'd have all these men mining and they'd, it'd be two or three fellows who maybe they [inaudible], in twelve. Go up in one of those mines, you know. Have rooms off here and there, and just, just kept working and finally got so they got too far to wheel it. Quit, you know, and went somewhere else. But there was some, some talk about that somebody had heard panthers. And once in a while they would see a panther. But they got talking about this panther. Well uh, somebody had told this story, about that he heard this panther scream. He said it screamed just like a woman. And uh, all this that, and the other. Some fellow, his reputation wasn't too good, you know, recruiting [inaudible; sounds like "brass band"] and everybody just kind of laughed it off, so... It was cold. Bad cold spell, and the snow was deep, and... Well these fellows come out and they always left about, oh, three o'clock [3 P.M.], something like that. So the air would get bad in the mines, you know. And they'd uh, go out til the next day. So they left and one went up this way, and one up this way. So one fellow screamed, and somebody out there knew who it was, and somebody else screamed, and somebody else screamed over here, and pretty soon there got to be a voice in there that they couldn't quite make it out!

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: So, [chuckles] it was a man by the name of John Ray, that stayed with that Winnie Rogers. And this panther took after him. And he ran him uh, clear up to the house, and this John Ray uh, fainted and fell in the door.

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: That's when the panther come right up in the yard. However it [inaudible] But uh, the panther came right up in the yard. Back in the old Argyle Lake grounds. Wow, that's about I get, about all I can think of to tell you. But if you have some questions I'd be glad to answer 'em if I can. I might not.

Audience member 1: [very quietly] Was that the same panther that, uh, that went down in [inaudible, but possibly Siloam] a couple of years ago?

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: [laughing] Might've been! But they didn't have much respect of the men at the start of this story if they found out the panther was there! Go ahead.

Audience member 2: Where are the burrs?

Martin: Pardon me?

Audience member 2: Where are the burrs?

Martin: Well, uh, you know where to check in, there.

Audience member 2: Yeah.

Martin: Just go a little farther and they're on the right. Did you, just like you was going down to the, to the uh-

Audience member 2: [overlapping; inaudible] fishing pit?

Martin: -boat, see. It'd just be on the right, there. They're laying right there. And these burrs aren't hard, like-

Audience member 2: [overlapping] By the flag pole?

Martin: Yeah, yeah. Pretty close right there.

Audience member 2: Oh!

Martin: These burr, b, b, these burrs have, begin to, disinsi- you know-

Audience member 2: [overlapping] Disintegrate.

Martin: -fall apart, disintegrate. Fall, fall apart, see. I don't know why. Now, you see this, the burrs up here uh, north of uh, Macomb, on the hard road up there, they're just as hard as flint. These aren't that hard. And they had a [inaudible - sounds like man trunk] around once, too.

Audience member 3: [inaudible, low voice] Canton

Martin: They, they. I never did notice.

Audience member 4: Uh, Betty White was telling me last week that Wayne's got his coal mine done, all, getting ready to-

Martin: Is that right?

Audience member 4: Uh huh. A car-

Martin: [overlapping] Well there's one of 'em in there.

Audience member 4: The ranger, Winn White, has dug out one of these coal mines. I don't know how far back he's going, do you?

Martin: Oh, I don't know.

Audience member 4: [overlapping] Six or eight feet, something like that. And he wants to put a grating in front.

Martin: Mmhmm. Well-

Audience member 4: [overlapping] And they got a car, and tracks, and all. When he gets it all lined up...

Martin: [overlapping] Yeah. What you'll see after you get in there a little while, there will be the old tracks, still there. They didn't have metal tracks, you were, they were wood. Well the, they made their own tracks. And uh, I think most of those coal mines are dry. Some of 'em are wet, you know. A lot of seep in 'em, but most of those coal mines are dry.

Audience member 5: [inaudible] out to Argyle Church? I don't know that eighty-eight years old [inaudible long story, low voice] 'if you put it on the ground [inaudible]' and he said 'I assure you, that no dog or no [inaudible] will bother it.'

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: I had a fun old story one time, over in Cedarville. They'd had him for a tractor meeting. And they had some high-powered, uh, evangelists. And he was quite talkative. Course I was about five. You might have been there. Were you? I don't remember. Anyway uh, Frank Hanes [or Hains, Haines, Haynes]. Do you remember Frank Hanes? Used to be a minister. And uh, he wasn't as polished as some of 'em. He didn't have a regular church, but uh, he had the spirit, you know.

[40:02]

So uh, this man... Boy, I tell you. He was laying it out and in the summer now, the door's open, and a big collie dog just trotted right in, and right up to the, right up to, up to, right in front of the preacher. He stopped, he said uh, "Will somebody, some of the brethren, please take this" Course, we were kids, [inaudible].

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: "Will you please take this, this dog out." Said, "I ain't never converted a dog in my life, that I know of." Frank Hanes said, "Maybe it's because you never baptized one."

Audience members: [laughing, coughing]

Martin: [inaudible under laughter]

Audience member 6: How many coal mines are there, in that area? [inaudible].

Martin: Well, there'd be a lot of 'em. I mean, I expect it'd be- Oh, you know, they didn't go back too far in the hill because you know it's- they had to wheel it out. And uh, I, I imagine uh, [pause] oh, [pause] I would sin- I expect it's been seventy-five or a hundred. [75 to 100]. You know in different places, you know. They'd just go in a ways, and then they'd go somewhere else. Oh, they di- When they'd go up in those hollers, you know, this coal crept out, you know? And they could... Now, when they got up- You know where [inaudible, possibly Lou Channel] is, don't you? That old place where I got there, you know. Well as you come up west, the coal doesn't crop out. See, you have to get down and get it. But, as you go along out the- where the boat docks are, the coal uh, cropped out on the side of the hill. Easy to get to, you know. And they went clear around there. And uh, in my time Doug Martin owned that. And uh, he had the, the Whalens used to dig out there, and the Nelsons, and oh there was quite a few people there, that made a living, for years. And uh-

Audience member 7: Was it lime rock, overhead?

Martin: No, sand rock.

Audience member 7: Oh.

Martin: It was sand rock. Now you get down the, in the McClure Holler [Hollow], where they used to call down, Marion McClure, now that's lime rock. But uh, up there in the... is sand rock. And they, they, right back [microphone feedback begins] west of the church, or east of church, um, Willie and Willis Rogers used to have a, um, [feedback ends] a rock quarry. And they used to, [inaudible] remember [they] used to work a pair of bulls, stone bulls. And move this rock around. And they would uh, you know they'd just mark it off, you know, and, and drill a hole down, and slip powder in there, and blow it out. But they farmed in the summertime and worked at the rock quarry and had some, a lot of farmers, to help 'em.

Audience member 8: My well was rock.

Martin: Oh, yeah. A lot of the old wells around that place.

Audience member 8: I remember-

Martin: Sure.

Audience member 8: - my father [inaudible, low voice] rock down there. [inaudible]

Martin: Yeah. There's a well there, where I live, back there in the pasture, that's lined with rock, and boy, it isn't... Seems a pretty good size well and then you put that darn rock in there, you know-

Audience member 8: Yeah.

Martin: Takes up the capacity! [laughs] Pretty bad.

Audience member 9: Can you tell 'em where Ragtown [inaudible, low voice]

Martin: No. I don't think anybody knows.

Audience member 9: Well, I heard you say [inaudible, low voice]

Martin: Well you might've heard but I don't [inaudible under laughter]

Audience members: [laughing]

Audience member 9: There is a miner down there [inaudible, low voice] Tennessee [inaudible] New England [inaudible] shake a rag at 'em and [inaudible] same thing!

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: When they named, when they named the Ragtown school, uh, I heard my father say that uh, that Mister We- George Welch's [or Welsh] father, what was his name? Bill Welch?

Audience member: Yeah.

Martin: And uh, they had some nice names for it and all of that and the other, and they got in a fight about it. One wanted one, and one another. And old Missus Tipton got up and said, "For all I care, call it Ragtown!" Just like the rest of 'em. She went home, and that's what the old folk school [inaudible under laughter]

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: Well, the Kiplings came there, they were English people. [Information on this family can be found in the History of McDonough County, Illinois published by The Continental Historical Company in 1885. Some of the following information may be slightly incorrect. Mary Jane Hassop is also known as Mary Jane Hassop Harpe Kipling, and according to census records, commonly went by Jane.] Most all these people were English, you know. And they hadn't had, uh, [inaudible] like we had in this country, I'll be wanting to say. So uh, Jack Kipling had never gotten married, and Tom Kipling tells me about this. He used to tell me all those old stories. And uh, so uh, his dad [uncle], Bill Kipling, went back to England, and brought him a woman, see? And brought Mary Ellen over. You knew Mary Ellen. Didn't you? I thought you did.

Audience member: [inaudible, low voice]

Martin: [overlapping] Well, uh, she's- yeah. Well, this was- See, the Tom I was talking about never was married. He was single folk. And his father's name was Tom. He was in the civil war. He had seven or eight children, you know. And uh, he married a Harpe. His wife's name was Harpe. He came here from England. And uh, so [chuckles] uh, they brought this woman here, and of course she lived back behind the school out there where Jack lived and, and the old man Bill Kipling informed her that all that land was his.

[44:59]

And he uh, had uh, a garden and that was his, and he had a, uh, an orchard and that was his. And uh, so she didn't have [a] very wide world, you know? So that fall, they begin to pick the

apples, she'd come out to help, they got her out helping pick the apples. Of course, she didn't one- know one kind of an apple from another one. So uh, she carried, we'll say um, some Grimes Golden over, and started to pour 'em all in the Ben Davis pile. So this old man Kipling just went wild. "Oh, don't do that!" [He] went on and on [inaudible; low voice]

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: He said, he said too much, and finally she said, "Well you old liar, you! Here you told me all summer these apples is yours and now you say they're Ben Davis'!"

Audience members: [laughing]

Audience member 10: [inaudible; low voice] I didn't want to say it. Missus Kipling, she had, had a large family-

Martin: Yeah.

Audience member 10: -and her roll call said, Seamus and Tommy, [inaudible] and Mary!

Audience members: [laughing]

Martin: Yeah, I've heard people say that [inaudible]. She was quite a [inaudible]. Well, thank you folks. Is there anybody- what?

Audience member 11: [inaudible; low voice] We had some friends [inaudible] that were staying out here at the park. They were church friends, there in Washington. And uh, he was from Eastern Illinois, somewhere along [inaudible; possibly "the edge of town"] I reckon. And she was from uh, out along close to uh, one thirty-six [Highway 136] out of Missouri, and they were supposed to visit their folks there. And they came there and stayed all night. Came down to talk to us in the evening. So I don't know where they heard of the park, particularly.

Martin: Well it's listed with the parks, you know.

Audience member 11: Well [inaudible under Martin] Illinois

Martin: [overlapping] You, they put out the literature and have them all with- Yeah. It's uh, they come all- they just, excuse me.

Audience member 12: Well, go ahead.

Martin: [makes noise]

Audience member 12: [inaudible] you're ready to take [inaudible]

Martin: Oh, sure.

Audience member 12: Where did Colchester get its name?

Martin: Well that isn't uh, exactly decided. Uh, they have two different versions. Uh, you see they laid it out in uh, what is it, fifty-five? [1855] Incorporated in fifty-seven [1857] I guess it was. But they started there um, a little two years before that. When they put the railroad through. They sold a lot. There was an engineer, worked for the railroad, [by] the name of Chester. Now, this is one version. And um, they said they'd call it Chester. But when they found out there was another Chester down in Southern- you know, on the Mississippi River, they added the prefix Col and called it Colchester. Now, that's one version. And that's what they have in the park's history. But, some of the old timers tell, told, that it was named for Colchester, England.

Audience member 13: Right.

Martin: Cause some of the coal miners came from Colchester, England.

Audience member 13: When you got around to the point of saying that many of the people there were English-

Martin: Oh, yes.

Audience member 13: I went to Colchester, England this summer [chuckles] just because I thought that Colchester, Illinois was named for it!

Martin: Now I want to sa- tell you something about the Stevens brothers [E.D., J.W., and Charles A. Stevens]. The Stevens brothers uh, uh, you told about th- who was it told about this uh, oh, Bardolph deal? Yeah. Well the Stevens brothers left Colchester once. And went up to Bardolph. Because they thought it was the clay, it was, you know, better or something. I don't know why they did it. But uh, they went up there and got into business. Well, they had a very, very good store. You could buy ladies' uh, fur coats, you could buy any kind of groceries. Fresh meat, they bought and shipped poultry. Oh, just by the barrel. They, what they called uh, "New York dressed" 'em. You know they uh, they didn't take the insides out. They stuffed something up through the bottom of their... under the beak, here, come up through their brain. And uh, supposed to loosen the feathers, which it did. They, they used to pick thousands of chickens. Thousands of turkeys, and stuff. And they put 'em in barrels, and shipped 'em on the train to New York. Iced 'em, too. And uh, shipped 'em to New York. Well, the Stevens brothers were big

in that. Then the Terrells got big. And Farmer and Smith come in. Well anyway uh, one of the Stevens brothers went to Chicago [Charles A. Stevens]. Before the days of telephone. And he uh, sent a telegram back. To his partners, brothers. That he'd be home, they'd sell everything they had, they had a chance to go to Chicago and get rich. Well they thought he was just a little bit off in the head or something. So the next night, uh, one of the bro- one of the other brothers went up to bring him home. Well, he get up [there] and he sent the same kind of telegram back. Said get ready, because we're going to leave and go to Chicago. And they started Charles A. Stevens and Brothers silk store on State Street and it's still there. [Stevens Building at 17-25 North State Street, between Madison and Washington Streets, and extends through to Wabash Avenue, having a frontage on both streets; built in 1912] And uh, they went uh, they sold out to Farmer and Smith. Now, Ed Farmer. You knew him as kind of an old [inaudible] like veterinarian.

[50:02]

And a man [by the] name of Smith, uh, they was in Macomb, and they walked up the store. And uh, Stevens brothers went to Chicago and they took the, quite a few people from Colchester with 'em, the Moore brothers went with 'em. And uh, worked for 'em in the store. Well they uh, they started the Illinois Life Insurance company. And it went broke in the Depression. It was the largest Illinois-based life insurance company in the state. [inaudible] state. It was big. It maybe wasn't big as New York Life, but it was a big one, you know. And they built the LaSalle Hotel, and then in the twenties they conceived the idea of building the Stevens Hotel, which is the largest hotel in the world. And they borrowed a few million, from the life insurance company. To build this hotel. Well, things kept getting tougher, and tougher, you know. And people had paid up policies, they had to borrow on, they had to borrow on, everybody in borrowing their policy, you know. Their interest was great, was cheap, and cash their policies, well they couldn't pay off. And so they folded. And uh, uh, some of these old men uh, were uh, one of, or two of 'em, I think, was still living. One of 'em, one of 'em died. J.W. Stevens died uh, uh, I think about the time they got in trouble. And Raymond and Ernie went ahead with it. And Raymond... they were, you know, they got a man took 'em up before the grand jury and told them they were gonna send 'em to the penitentiary. Raymond jumped out the s- the uh, hotel window and killed himself. And Ernie stood there and fought the battle and he come out of it all right. And uh, they built the Stevens Hotel. And in the Stevens Hotel, they had the Colchester Grill, Colchester Lane, and they had the- Now, I have the book they put out about the hotel when they first built it. And Helen Smith gave it to me. And it has the pictures of all the, the Stevens Hotel, and oh, just, it's beautiful, see. It's probably about that thick you know, and has the, the nice pictures of all the rooms, and tells all about... It's just [inaudible]. Um, I've got a lot of things like that, that somebody ought to have somewhere and you just throw it [inaudible]. But life's pretty short and you're gone. Well thank you a lot, folks. I'm, tried to talk too long, but I enjoy talking to you, and anything I can do for the historical society, but Tom-

Audience Members: [laughing]

Martin: I promise to come, and I'll come when I can.

Audience Members: [inaudible], then! [laughing]

Martin: Thank you a lot.

Audience Members: [clapping]

[Tape Cuts 52:43]

Transcribed by Julia Thompson for Western Illinois University in February 2018.