

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

NETTIE PINNIX COX

INTERVIEW 1012

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Nettie Pinnix Cox, Mrs. Paul Cox. This is interview number 1012. The interview is being conducted on Wednesday, September 9, 1992 at Mrs. Cox's home at 516 Pollock Street in New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: Nettie, we can start talking about growing up in New Bern. We'll start out first with my just asking you a few questions about your family. Where were you born?

Mrs. Cox: In this house.

JP: What year was that?

Mrs. Cox: 1915.

JP: What's your full name, Nettie?

Mrs. Cox: Nettie Huba Pinnix Cox.

JP: Where does the Huba come from?

Mrs. Cox: My father's mother.

JP: And your parents names?

Mrs. Cox: Ruth Watson Pinnix is my mother and William Maple Pinnix is my daddy.

JP: Where were they from?

Mrs. Cox: My mother was born in this house and my father was born in Kernersville, North Carolina which is between Greensboro and Winston-Salem.

JP: He came to New Bern about when?

Mrs. Cox: 1908 or 1909.

JP: How many generations of your family have been born in this

house? How far back does this house go in your family?

Mrs. Cox: My grandfather built it in about 1880. My mother was born here, and I was born in this house.

JP: Were your children born here too?

Mrs. Cox: Not in this house, of course, Joe Pat. You know better than that. (laughter)

JP: They were born at St. Luke's?

Mrs. Cox: Right.

JP: Nettie, just to talk about the house for a minute, when it was originally built, the long tall porch columns were not there?

Mrs. Cox? No.

JP: It was a square house, was it?

Mrs. Cox: Square house more or less with just a porch on the front.

JP: When were the columns added?

Mrs. Cox: Well, in about 1915 there were double porches all the way around the house, very Victorian ornate porches.

JP: Did your father add the columns then later?

Mrs. Cox: I remember the house as it is today. I'm guessing it was the same about 1925 as it is today.

JP: So, your father did that then?

Mrs. Cox: And my grandmother because she was still living then.

JP: I understand your mother died in the flu epidemic of 1918.

Mrs. Cox: She died in 1919.

JP: Do you remember anything about that?

Mrs. Cox: No, not really.

JP: It was a bad time in New Bern from what I've heard.

Mrs. Cox: Yes. I don't know if what I remember is because my grandmother told me or if I remember.

JP: One of the things we surely want to talk about is the drug store, and we'll get to that in a little bit; but right now, let's just go ahead with what all happened to you. You went to school here in New Bern on the school green?

Mrs. Cox: That's right. I went up right there to the Academy building.

JP: You went right straight through high school here?

Mrs. Cox: Right.

JP: Do you remember any of your teachers along the way?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah. Miss Molly Heath was my first grade teacher.

JP: Tell me about Miss Molly.

Mrs. Cox: I just remember she was my first grade teacher. Miss Lizzie Hancock was second grade, and Miss Ruth Berry was third grade.

JP: Do you remember Louise Bell?

Mrs. Cox: Yes, I do remember her.

JP: I had those same teachers.

Mrs. Cox: Well, you remember them too then. Wonderful teachers.

JP: After that, can you think of any others?

Mrs. Cox: High school; Miss Blackwell, Louise Anderson, Miss Lilly taught French. I don't remember her first name. She was darling; a pretty teacher. When I went to high school up there, Mr. H. B. Smith

was principal. Everybody was scared to death of him. Everybody!

JP: Did you ever have to go see him?

Mrs. Cox: Oh no! We were just scared of him. When he would walk across the school green, we would all run. Don't ask me why now.

JP: He looked a little bit like Abraham Lincoln.

Mrs. Cox: Yes; tall, thin. It was silly because he was just as nice as he could be and I don't know why we were afraid, but we were. (laughter)

JP: You never got into any trouble in school then?

Mrs. Cox: Of course not. (laughter)

JP: Who were some of your good friends that you went through school with?

Mrs. Cox: Elizabeth Hanks, Donah Hanks, Eleanor Stevenson, Alice Taylor, Ennis Aberly, Lela Badham, Jack Hellinger, Mark Dunn, Genevieve Dunn, Iris Rawls, Helen Stevenson, and Elizabeth Hodges. They were about my closest I think.

JP: Did you have fun in school?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah. We had a good time. Of course, there was no lunch room. Everybody went home for lunch.

JP: What time did school start?

Mrs. Cox: I think about 8:30.

JP: What time did you get through in the afternoons?

Mrs. Cox: About 3:00, a little after.

JP: You had eleven grades when you came along?

Mrs. Cox: Eleven, even through high school.

JP: Did you have a lot of social affairs in high school?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes, but let me tell you about before we got to high school. When we were say ten, eleven years old, every Saturday night we would have what we called "Come and bring your own" party at different neighborhood houses. That meant to come and bring whatever refreshment you wanted to bring. It might be a couple of apples, a box of cookies, or a tin of candy. We'd all go and put it on the dining room table and play games, and then when it was time to eat, everybody would go in and eat from the dining room table what everybody had brought. It was called "Come and bring your own party", and that was fun.

JP: As you grew up in New Bern, did you have a certain crowd of people you stuck with?

Mrs. Cox: Yes. There were a lot of children in this neighborhood then. Those that I just mentioned.

JP: They were your crowd?

Mrs. Cox: Alpha Newberry was another one. Mrs. Newberry that ran the Teacherage for so many years, yeah, they were our crowd.

JP: So, you would stick together at these parties?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah, and play games.

JP: Did you have dances?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah, we had dances. They had dances up at Stanly Hall. In high school, we had the Junior/Senior Banquet.

JP: Where was that held?

Mrs. Cox: At the Methodist church because that was the largest

place at the time in New Bern. There would always be a theme every year. It might be Japanese or it might be southern plantation or western. Different people would decorate it, and I mean it was very elaborate. The ladies circles at the church put on the banquet. The sophomores in high school served. They would dress the sophomores in costumes pertaining to the theme of the banquet. I remember my sophomore year, it was Japanese. I still have my Japanese costume that I wore serving that banquet. Eleanor Stevenson served it and Ennis Aberly served that time because we were sophomores.

JP: Where in the church did you hold it?

Mrs. Cox: In the basement. The old basement as we call it. Afterwards, there was a dance. I've asked several people where we had the dance and nobody can remember where we had the dance. I called Eleanor Stevenson, Alice Taylor, and nobody seems to remember where we had the dance.

JP: Were there any warehouse dances in those days?

Mrs. Cox: No. Not for that, we didn't.

JP: As you grew up in school, did you engage in athletics? Did you play basketball?

Mrs. Cox: I was a manager of the basketball team.

JP: The girl's team?

Mrs. Cox: The girls. Eleanor Stevenson played.

JP: Eleanor was a star.

Mrs Cox: She was.

JP: Where did you play your games in New Bern? At the Ghent

Casino? I think I remember going out there to see the girls play.

Mrs. Cox: Probably, but we had no gym. We played different towns.

The other towns, I think, had gyms; but when the girls came here to play, the girls from the opposite team would have to come into the homes and change their clothes to play.

JP: What was a game like in those days? Do you remember a half court game?

Mrs. Cox: No, I really don't.

JP: As I recall, the girls played on just one side of the court each time they had the ball, not full court. I don't remember it too clearly though.

Mrs. Cox: I don't remember that.

JP: What other things did you do while you were in high school to make life fun?

Mrs. Cox: You remember the old Atlantic Hotel down at Morehead City? We'd go down there to dances.

JP: What was that like?

Mrs. Cox: That was fun. They had a huge dance floor, and we'd go down there to dances. In the summer, we would go to the beach three or four times a week. Of course, it took quite a while to go from New Bern down to Atlantic Beach then.

JP: Did you drive down?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah, we drove.

JP: What was the road like?

Mrs. Cox: Just a little two passing car road. We'd go all day.



Eleanor Stevenson and I each had a car, convertible. One time we'd take Eleanor's car and the next time we'd take my car. We would fill the car with three in the front seat and two in the rumble seat. At that time, you had to pay to go across the bridge. It was twenty-five cents. Just before we got to the bridge, those in the rumble seat would pull the top down so we wouldn't have to pay that quarter.

JP: I don't blame you. Well now, did you put boys in the rumble seat or girls?

Mrs. Cox: No, no, no. This was just girls.

JP: When you were younger and went to the beach, there was no bridge at all. What did you do then?

Mrs. Cox: We went to Morehead on the train and took the ferry across to the beach. The Methodist church used to have their annual picnic in the summer time down at Atlantic Beach, and that's they way we'd go. That train would be full of people.

JP: Did the ferry land where the center of the beach is now?

Mrs. Cox: Oh now, Joe Pat, I don't remember that.

JP: There was a time that I remember when you'd just get boats to go across. Not ferry's, just a boat.

Mrs. Cox: Then when the bridge was built, you know there was a pavilion over there at Atlantic Beach and they had grand orchestras; Cab Calloway and all those good old orchestras on Saturday nights, and we'd go down there and go to the dances there.

JP: This is was at the casino on the beach right where the circle is now?

Mrs. Cox: That's correct.

JP: I remember those. The Atlantic Hotel was a wooden structure?

Mrs. Cox: That's right. It was at Morehead right on the main street on the sound.

JP: You'd get off at the train station and walk?

Mrs. Cox: Well, no, not on the main street. It was on the sound.

JP: You could walk there from the train station?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah.

JP: You'd go down there and stay sometimes?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah. We'd go and stay three or four days or a week.

JP: No air conditioning?

Mrs. Cox: Oh No!! (laughter)

JP: What happened to that hotel, Nettie?

Mrs. Cox: I don't believe it burned.

JP: I think it did.

Mrs. Cox: You think it did?

JP: I think it did. I don't remember when.

Mrs. Cox: You're right. It did burn, and everybody thought maybe they would build it back and hoped that they would, and of course they didn't.

JP: We've gotten you just about up through high school; although, some of these things maybe happened a little bit later. Perhaps, you have some other things about high school you'd like to talk about.

Mrs. Cox: No. I believe that's about all about the high school.

JP: When you finished high school, what did you do?

Mrs. Cox: I went to Duke University.

JP: How did you happen to choose Duke?

Mrs. Cox: Well, I don't know. I just said I wanted to go to Duke and daddy and my grandmother, of course, thought it was a great idea. Several of my grandmother's friends, I remember their saying to her, "You are not going to let Nettie go to Duke with all those boys!!" (laughter)

JP: And then they put you on a different campus. Who from New Bern went up there with you?

Mrs. Cox: Eleanor Stevenson. The first year, Eleanor went her freshman year to I believe Hollins College in Virginia, and the second year, her sophomore, she transferred.

JP: Just the two of you from New Bern?

Mrs. Cox: At that time. Then Genevieve came. We were juniors and Genevieve was a freshman, and she stayed a couple of years.

JP: You graduated from Duke?

Mrs. Cox: Yes.

JP: Did you have fun at Duke?

Mrs. Cox: Grand time!! Absolute lovely!

JP: What made it so much fun?

Mrs. Cox: Oh, we had a good time with all those boys! I joined a sorority and we had a good time. We had dances. The boys had dances over at their campus and we had dances at our campus, and we met a lot of boys and girls. We went to football games. I remember one

time Duke played Tennessee in Knoxville and they had a special train to go to the game. The train was full of Duke students, and we just had a grand time.

JP: What years were you at Duke?

Mrs. Cox: 1932-1936.

JP: Nettie, you lived through all this bad Depression time.

Mrs. Cox: Yes.

JP: Did that affect your life in any way?

Mrs. Cox: I probably shouldn't even say this. I hear other people my age talk about the Depression and how bad it was, but Joe Pat, I don't remember it that way. I was just blessed. Eleanor, I'm sure, doesn't remember it that way either. Because after my freshman year in 1933, Eleanor and I went to Europe for two months on a tour. Of course then, people went on tours. You wouldn't think of taking off on your own. Then when I graduated in 1936, I went again to Europe; not with Eleanor, but with some friends at Duke. Iris Rawls went on that trip too. Eleanor and I when we graduated from high school, went to the Olympics in California. We went to New Orleans, the Grand Canyon, the Olympics in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, Chicago. We were gone a month.

JP: You drove?

Mrs. Cox: No. On the train. So you see, I don't remember the Depression.

JP: I understand, Nettie. I was blessed too and I can understand. I had so many friends that saw the other side of it. We were just

lucky, that's all.

Mrs. Cox: Yes we were.

JP: Then you came back to New Bern?

Mrs. Cox: Right.

JP: What'd you do then?

Mrs. Cox: Nothing. (laughter)

JP: You got married.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah, but that was two years later. Eleanor came back too. She had met her husband at that point. He, of course, graduated from West Point. Eleanor would go to West Point whenever the occasion presented itself to see him. A couple of times she'd say, "Nettie, come go with me. I don't want to ride the train to New York by myself.

Bob will find you a date." I went a couple of times with her. Her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, used to go to Miami, Florida in the winter time for a month. That year after we graduated from college, Eleanor and I decided we'd go with them. Mrs. Stevenson fell and broke her foot and had to be in the hospital there in Miami two or three weeks. Eleanor said, "Mother, I'm so sorry you broke your foot, but if it had to be, what a delightful place to break it." So, of course, we stayed longer than had planned. Then I met Paul. He graduated from State the year that I graduated from Duke. He came here as assistant county agent and roomed over there at The Teacherage with Mrs. Newberry, and that's how I knew him. Mrs. Newberry was my cousin

and I was over there a lot, and that's how I met him. We went together

a year or more before we were married.

JP: You have two children?

Mrs. Cox: Right.

JP: Ruth, of course, is a nurse, and a very fine and educated nurse. She's in Alabama?

Mrs. Cox: An assistant professor.

JP: And your son, Bill?

Mrs. Cox: He graduated from State. He got his PhD at State in Civil Engineering. Now, he and his wife, Jane, own a computer school in Richmond and they hold classes teaching people how to work a computer.

JP: And you and Paul don't have one?

Mrs. Cox: No, and I see no reason that I have to know how to do a computer at this point.

JP: Nettie, I want to ask you some questions in a minute about the neighborhood here, but before we get too far away, let's talk about your dad and Pinnix Drug Store. Now, your father remarried.

Mrs. Cox: Yes. My mother died in 1919 and he remarried in 1953.

JP: He married Mrs. Lancaster?

Mrs. Cox: That's right, Mrs. Ethel Lancaster whose husband had been dead for many years also.

JP: During that time, were all of you living here?

Mrs. Cox: My grandmother, father, and I.

JP: Then when you Paul got married, where did you live?

Mrs. Cox: We lived here.

JP: With your father and his wife?

Mrs. Cox: No, no, oh no. About three years after Paul and I got married, my grandmother died. She had a heart condition and she died, so daddy and Paul and I lived here. Then the children came along and we all still lived here. Of course during the war, Paul was called into service for four years.

JP: Did your father and his new bride live here?

Mrs. Cox: No. She had a house out on Neuse Blvd and when they got married in 1953, they lived in her house.

JP: You are going to hang onto this house some way for the future?

Mrs. Cox: It's left to the children.

JP: So it will continue in the family. Pinnix Drug Store has been a New Bern institution for a very long time. Can you tell me something about how it got started and something about the history of it?

Mrs. Cox: When my father first came here, he worked at Duffy's Drug Store.

JP: He was a pharmacist?

Mrs. Cox: Correct. I don't think he worked there too long. My mother and father got married in 1910. Soon after that, he opened his own drug store where it is today.

JP: By the train station.

Mrs. Cox: That's right. Of course at that time, the trains came through here, and it was a wonderful location. Then later on, the sewing room opened across the street from the drug store, and it was

still a great location.

JP: Duffy's Drug Store was on South Front Street right at the corner?

Mrs. Cox: I think so. I don't remember.

JP: When the drug store first opened, was the building pretty much like it is now or do you remember?

Mrs. Cox: I think it was about like it is now.

JP: Bynum Smith owned that.

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: So your father never owned that building?

Mrs. Cox: He tried to buy his part for the drug store, but Bynum would not sell it to him.

JP: How long did your dad operate that drug store?

Mrs. Cox: I think something like fifty years.

JP: Until his death?

Mrs. Cox: No. He retired about five years before he died. Right at the time he was planning to retire he had a stroke, which he would have had to retire anyway. He lived about five years after that.

JP: Who ran the drug store then?

Mrs. Cox: His two pharmacist. He had two pharmacist along with him at the time. When he retired, he had planned to sell it to them anyway. So when he had the stroke and had to retire, he sold it to the two pharmacist; John McDaniel who is dead now and W. A. Crumpler who owns it now.

JP: And still runs it.



Mrs. Cox: Right.

JP: Was there a soda fountain in there in the beginning.

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes! Oh yes! And they made the best coca-colas you ever tasted. I don't guess they still have it now, but for years Bay McCotter every morning at eleven o'clock would go by there and get a fountain coke cola.

JP: Whenever my grandchildren come to town, they go there now and get a milk shake. Who were the people who patronized the stores through the years? Was it people on the trains in the beginning or mostly New Bern people?

Mrs. Cox: New Bern people. Particularly, people out Riverside way because it was the closest drug store.

JP: There were no drug stores out there then?

Mrs. Cox: At that time, no.

JP: Did you go there a lot yourself?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes! Particular on Saturday afternoon when we were children. Do you remember the cowboy movies they had at the Masonic Theater every Saturday afternoon, double feature?

JP: Yes.

Mrs. Cox: They'd have an intermission between the movies and we'd all go up to the drug store and get a drink or coke-cola or ice cream or whatever and then come back and see the second movie.

JP: Wonderful. They let you back in again?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes! Because back then everybody knew everybody, and they knew we had paid. They knew everybody had paid.

JP: Was this Mr. Kafer on the door?

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: And he'd let you back in?

Mrs. Cox: That was fun.

JP: How many other drug stores were there in New Bern along those years, Nettie? Can you think of any others?

Mrs. Cox: I don't remember. Gaskins Soda Shop down here of course was, but, of course, that was not a drug store. Floyd Gaskins, by the way, worked for daddy as a little boy. When he opened his drug store, Floyd was a little boy and he worked for daddy delivering medicine.

JP: Do you remember Shaw's Soda Shop?

Mrs. Cox: Yes I certainly do.

JP: That was catty cornered across from Gaskins?

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: What was that place like?

Mrs. Cox: I don't remember that too much because I always used to go down here to Gaskins.

JP: Mr. Jacobs took over that after Mr. Shaw gave it up. He had a soda shop too.

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: Nettie, the drug store still remains a fixture in New Bern. It's still sitting there just like it always has. Still named Pinnix Drug Store.

Mrs. Cox: That's correct. Of course it's not like it would

be probably if daddy had lived. But it's still there.

JP: Nettie, let's talk about your neighborhood around here a little bit. One of the things that really intrigued me when I was talking to Paul the other day was that the future Mrs. Kellenberger's mother lived right next door to you, Mrs. Latham.

Mrs. Cox: That's correct.

JP: In the house that's still standing there. That's the house that's right next to you going east toward the river?

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: Do you remember them at all? Do you remember your mother talking about them? Was she a friend of your mother's? Did they go out together.

Mrs. Cox: You see Joe Pat, I wasn't but three when my mother died, so I don't remember.

JP: That's right. Your father didn't speak about that too much?

Mrs. Cox: No. I have often thought, when you're young, you're not interested in that sort of thing. I wasn't. I couldn't have cared less about this house or when it was built or the history of anything around here. Now that my grandmother has died and my father has died, how I wish I had asked them so many questions. Are you the same way?

JP: Yes. All of us are the same way. I can understand exactly what you're saying. Nettie, as you grew up in this neighborhood, can you describe to me the way it used to be? Who lived in the house where Mrs. Latham used to live?

Mrs. Cox: Ed Smith. He was a postal carrier. Then the house

next to it where the drive is going to that Attmore-Oliver house, Hazel and Joe McDaniel lived there for a long time. Then Donah and Elizabeth Hanks' and their parents lived there. Then the house next to them that is still there, Mrs. Bell. Do you remember a Mrs. Bell?

JP: I'm not sure.

Mrs. Cox: That was the neighborhood.

JP: And on the corner?

Mrs. Cox: Lonnie Dill.

JP: Lonnie Dill lived on the corner.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. He was another one that came to our "Come and bring your own parties."

JP: He went to Duke?

Mrs. Cox: No, no. He went to Carolina.

JP: I'm thinking of Ernest Woods.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. Ernest went to Duke when I did.

JP: Lonnie was president of Phi Beta Kappa at Carolina.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. Across the street from the Dill's was Ennis Lane Aberly.

JP: That's where the little filling station is now.

Mrs. Cox: That's right. Ennis Aberly lived there. And then the Marks house.

JP: Where the Richardson building stands now?

Mrs. Cox: That's right. Then The Teacherage came along.

JP: While we're at The Teacherage, tell me what that building was like.

Mrs Cox: It was a great big old wooden boarding house with a porch across the front and rocking chairs. All the guest would sit out there and rock. She had an absolutely delightful dining room and the best food you've ever eaten in your born days. I guess there were ten or twelve bedrooms upstairs. There was about one, two baths for all those rooms. Then in the back was a two-story annex with rooms. It started out mostly as a teacherage. Some of the teachers stayed elsewhere, so then she opened it for anybody else that wanted to room there. And as I said, that's where I met my husband. Mr. Williams, the Episcopal minister lived there.

JP: Do you remember what she charged?

Mrs. Cox: Practically nothing. I don't remember how much she charged.

JP: For a while that was the place for the teachers to stay. That was their real center.

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: The building was torn down to make way for the Richardson building, is that correct?

Mrs. Cox: That's right. You remember the street car coming by here?

JP: Well, I was going to ask you about that.

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah, it came right by here. It made a stop out here on this corner, went straight on out to the end of Spencer Avenue, and it had to make a curve somewhere. Of course not as far as Spencer Avenue goes now, but probably to the Ghent Casino area.

JP: And the YMCA area.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. Then it turned around and came back.

JP: Along the same route.

Mrs. Cox: The same way.

JP: Then it went through the downtown section.

Mrs. Cox: Right. I remember that perfectly.

JP: Did you ride it?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah. I had a cousin out there on Rhem Avenue.

Of course, everybody knew the conductor. I don't remember who he was, but everybody knew him and he knew everybody. My grandmother would put me on the street car and say, "Now watch out for her and you tell her where to get off." She would tell him where I was to get off, to go from Spencer over to Rhem.

JP: Then this went out to Riverside too?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah, it went out to Riverside.

JP: It cost a lot of money to ride that trolley? (laughter)

Mrs. Cox: Five cents maybe. (laughter)

JP: Nettie, as you got down to George Street here, do you remember people who lived along Pollock Street to George?

Mrs. Cox: Across the street right over here where this shop is now, a black couple lived over there and her name was Mrs. Fannie Burney.

They lived there for a while. Where the Civil War Museum is now, that lot stayed vacant for years and years and years as you know. Bynum Smith owned that lot. Then of course Dr. Kafer lived where Oscar lives now and then Mrs. Abernathy.

JP: And the Congressman.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. She taught music and I took piano from her for years, reluctantly. I hated every minute of it. At the last recital I was in, I was playing my piece and I couldn't remember the end of it. I remember it perfectly. So, I just stopped. My grandmother says, "well, I guess that's it." So, I stopped playing and I didn't have to take music anymore. Then the Mohns, of course, lived next door. Across the street lived the Stevenson's. That's the same Stevenson's. Then the Duffy's and the Ashford's and then Nell Gaskins house on the corner.

JP: And the Eaton's? Sam Eaton?

Mrs. Cox: No. Sam Eaton lived around on George Street.

JP: Who lived next to The Teacherage?

Mrs. Cox: Miss Mary Ward. Like it is now.

JP: That's where the bed and breakfast is now?

Mrs. Cox: Right. Then where the bank is, was the Boyd house.

It's a shame that we here in New Bern didn't recognize the value of these old homes before we did. Do you remember that house?

JP: Vaguely.

Mrs. Cox: It was a beautiful old home! It had a gorgeous garden with all kind of flowers blooming all the time! Just a beautiful house!

It sat long ways on the lot. There was a fence all the way around and you went in the gates each side of the house. At the end of the house facing Pollock Street was a huge bay window, and old Mrs. Boyd used to sit in that bay window. I remember her vaguely sitting in

the bay window and watching people go by.

JP: Nettie, as you go back east from here to the corner of Hancock and Pollock, was there an apartment house on the corner, across from the filling station, catty cornered across from Lonnie Dill's house? What building stood there?

Mrs. Cox: There was an apartment building.

JP: Sultan's apartments?

Mrs. Cox: That's right, but it wasn't right on the corner. It was like across from where the furniture store is now. Not exactly on the corner. About the second building. I don't remember what was on the corner.

JP: Do you remember what was on the other corner where the dry cleaning place is now?

Mrs. Cox: That was Mrs. Brewer. That originally was the Cutler house. Do you remember Georgia and Mary Brewer's mother?

JP: Yes.

Mrs. Cox: She bought it from the Cutler's.

JP: Nettie, you grew up practically in Tryon Palace. What do you recall about that whole area before the Palace came into being again?

Mrs. Cox: Well, of course, George Street went right through what Tryon Palace is now to the bridge they used to go across. Of course there were houses on either side of the streets down to the river, and also a seafood restaurant down there.

JP: Hamilton's.



Mrs. Cox: That's right. Good food.

JP: And the bridge was right there. What other business were along there?

Mrs. Cox: There was a filling station across from where Eleanor lives. Where the Stevenson house is. There's a filling station over there. Then of course the stables for the Palace were there with apartments in them and houses. Sam Eaton lived down George Street there.

JP: Behind the Stevenson house?

Mrs. Cox: Behind uh huh. Two or three, four doors behind there.

JP: Did you play in that area?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes.

JP: Were the ruins of the Palace visible then?

Mrs. Cox: Oh no!

JP: You don't remember any? You just played in the yards?

Mrs. Cox: There was nothing. The street just went down there and old houses. No, no signs of it!

JP: Were there any problems about taking those houses over and putting the Palace there?

Mrs. Cox: I don't think there was.

JP: Nettie, this is a pretty broad question. Looking back at New Bern as you and I grew up in the town, what was the town like? How do you remember New Bern?

Mrs. Cox: I thought it was a lovely town. I enjoyed living here. Everybody was friendly. Everybody knew everybody, and of course knew

everybody's business too. (laughter) I thought it was a lovely town, and I guess it is now. But as you know, we could walk down the street fifty years ago and know everybody. I don't know about you, but I walk down the street today and I don't know anybody because of the newcomers, which is fine. But it's just changed so much.

JP: That's why we're doing this program. We don't want to forget things as they were.

Mrs. Cox: No.

JP: Did you know everybody in church in those days?

Mrs. Cox: Oh surely. In my church now, I don't know everybody. I don't know many of them. Do you in your's?

JP: Well, I'm getting to know more, but I don't know a whole lot. That's right. Do you remember South Front Street, the way it used to be, the piers and the wharves?

Mrs. Cox: Yes.

JP: How do you remember it?

Mrs. Cox: I just remember that vaguely. It wasn't very pretty.

JP: Was there a lot of boats anchoring down there? Do you recall that?

Mrs. Cox: Vaguely, yes.

JP: Did you sail any when you were growing up? That was not one of your things?

Mrs. Cox: No. That was not one of my things. When we were children, do you remember Shady Beach over on Bridgeton side?

JP: Yes.

Mrs. Cox: Our parents used to take us over there swimming in the afternoon.

JP: Where was that located?

Mrs. Cox: You went across the bridge like the bridge is now to Bridgeton and it was to the left not too far. I'm not a very good judge of distance. Maybe three or four blocks to the left as you would go across the bridge. It was a nice beach. Of course I don't remember that they had any dressing rooms or anything like that. We just put on our bathing suits here and go swimming.

JP: You're the first one that's talked about Shady Beach.

Mrs. Cox: Is that right?

JP: Yes. I remember it. Where else did you swim?

Mrs. Cox: That's all here.

JP: You didn't swim in the rivers on this side?

Mrs. Cox: No, that's the only side.

JP: Why not?

Mrs. Cox: There was no place to swim over here, was there?

JP: Down there at Crabby's.

Mrs. Cox: Well, I didn't go down there.

JP: Did you go out to the Country Club very much?

Mrs. Cox: Yes, we went to the Club, but that was later on. I don't ever remember my daddy taking me out to the Country Club as a child. The Country Club was built about 1920, and I was only five years old at that time. As I grew older, we went to the Country Club and go swimming out there in the river. It was fun then.

JP: Who was your family doctor?

Mrs. Cox: Dr. Richard Duffy.

JP: He took care of all your ailments?

Mrs. Cox: Everything.

JP: Did he deliver your children?

Mrs. Cox: He delivered Bill. There's five and a half years difference between Bill and Ruth because Paul went off to the war. When Ruth came along, he had given up delivering babies which I was so mad with him about I didn't know what to do.

JP: What as Dr. Duffy like?

Mrs. Cox: Oh I loved him! I was crazy about him.

JP: Can you describe him?

Mrs. Cox: He was very serious and very stern. He didn't joke around a lot. Well, of course, he was a doctor and I guess when his patient went to see him, he was not supposed to be joking and laughing. He was very conscientious. He had been our family doctor for years. He was my grandmother's and mother's and mine.

JP: How did your family look upon your family doctor in those days?

Mrs. Cox: As a great friend, confidante, which you don't get now.

JP: Did he come to your house on calls?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes. You could call him anytime day or night and he'd be here.

JP: Was that true of most doctors in those days?

Mrs. Cox: I think so.

JP: As the next generation came along, and I'm including people like Ernest Richardson and Francis King and myself, did that same type of relationship persist or did it start shifting?

Mrs. Cox: Francis King was our doctor when he came to New Bern. Of course, Dr. Wadsworth delivered Ruth. He was fine too. I was crazy about Dr. Wadsworth. Then when Dr. King came to New Bern, we all went to Dr. King. I think he's a fine doctor. But you see with Dr. Richard Duffy, all my family had known him all these years, which I think makes a difference. He knew all about us, all about everything.

JP: I guess it's growing up in a small town with doctors growing up sort of with your families, and it's hard to establish the same relationship now.

Mrs. Cox: That's right. It is.

JP: Nettie, looking back, what kind of car did your daddy have in the early days? Do you remember the early cars in New Bern?

Mrs. Cox: He had a car, but I don't remember it.

JP: You had a car.

Mrs. Cox: He liked Chevrolet's way back then. I remember he had Chevrolet cars. You want to know about my first car?

JP: I want to know about your car with the rumble seat.

Mrs. Cox: Eleanor Stevenson's birthday is in July. She got a car with a rumble seat in it and we were all thrilled to death. My birthday is in October and I thought to myself, oh, I would love to have a car like Eleanor's but I know I won't get it. The day of my

birthday, Eleanor said, "Nettie, I'll drive you to school today." It wasn't but two blocks, and I said, "that's fine." After school, she brought me home and sitting out there under the porte cochere was my car. You could have heard me scream into Bridgeton! It was a green Chevrolet convertible with a rumble seat.

JP: My goodness, what a present! You kept it for a long time?

Mrs. Cox: Yes, and that's the best car that's ever been made. I don't know about you, but I drove like the world was coming to an end. I drove, drove, drove. I have friends about my age say, "Nettie, I remember that Chevrolet convertible with the rumble seat and you driving it all around town." I said, "Yeah, that's right. That was the best car that's ever been made."

JP: Whatever happened to that good old car?

Mrs. Cox: I think daddy traded it in for another car that was not a convertible. I don't remember what the second car was.

JP: What was New Bern like, Nettie, during World War II?

Mrs. Cox: Oh dear. Of course all the men had gone, so to speak. Everybody who was married and their husband's had gone, came back. Eleanor Stevenson came back and Elizabeth Hanks. There was nothing to do. I remember the food stamps. I got a book upstairs now that I just saved. Not the food stamps, stamps for gasoline and even shoes.

Of course Bill was born ten days before Paul was called to go into service because he was in the Reserves and they called him right in.

A baby, a child, as you know, outgrows shoes. I remember daddy would let me have some of his coupons for shoes to get for Bill, and I'd

use some of mine. Cherry Point was opened at the time. Elizabeth Hanks was home, and so Elizabeth and I could go to Cherry Point and get groceries like bacon, which you couldn't buy here.

JP: It took some gasoline to get down there.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. In the meantime, Elizabeth had a girl about the age of Bill. So about once a month, Elizabeth and I would go to Cherry Point and get those items that we could not buy here and Mrs. Hanks would keep our children for us while we were gone.

JP: The town was pretty quiet during those times?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah. Of course there were a lot of Marines around. They had the USO down here in the Dill house.

JP: Was that the only place in town they could go?

Mrs. Cox: Surely there must have been somewhere else. Maybe the Women's Club building.

JP: Did you go down there to the USO?

Mrs. Cox: No. As I say, there were a lot of Marines in town of course, but there was nothing to do. You couldn't go anywhere or do anything for fun.

JP: You had enough food though?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes. We didn't suffer. Of course not.

JP: Most of the young people you knew were gone, the younger men?

Mrs. Cox: The men, yes, most of them.

JP: So, it was an unhappy time anyway you look at it.

Mrs. Cox: It was.

JP: Paul talked to me about hurricanes. We are always interested in peoples stories about hurricanes. Do you remember the hurricane of 1933? That was when the bridge washed out. What about later in the fifties?

Mrs. Cox: I remember vaguely the '33 hurricane. I remember one. I don't know which one it was now, but we had gone to bed and I got up the next morning and looked out the window upstairs and the water was almost to Pollock Street from the river down here.

I remember, among other places I'm sure, they had people open the Methodist church for people to go down there that were living down where the water was coming. The water came up Craven Street and people were out there in rowboats. Do you remember that?

JP: Yes I do. We had to leave our home on New Street that night because the water was so high.

Mrs. Cox: I remember Donah Hanks that night had a date with Iris Rawls who lived on East Front Street. When he got ready to go home, the water was up to her porch, so he had to spend the night with Iris, and we kidded him about it for a long time.

JP: He never heard the last of that. Nettie, when you were growing up, what were relations like between the races, the blacks and the whites?

Mrs. Cox: We had great respect for them. Of course we did not socialize with them, but any servant that we had, we loved them to death and would have done anything for them if they needed help in anyway.



JP: They felt the same about you?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes!

JP: How about the general atmosphere beyond the individuals in your home? Was there ill feeling between the races or was it an issue at all?

Mrs. Cox: No. I don't remember it being an issue.

JP: How has that changed over the years?

Mrs. Cox: Oh dear. Well, it has really changed. We probably were not completely fair to the blacks. For instance, their having to sit in the back of the bus, not being able to go in a restaurant and get a meal, that was wrong, absolutely wrong. But I think they have taken advantage of it. They talk about they're discriminated against. Well, I think we're the ones that are discriminated against.

JP: Do you think relations are better or worse now than they were then?

Mrs. Cox: In a way, I think they're worse. Because we had no problems. Then on the other hand, they were not treated quite fairly.

JP: Let me ask you a question that nobody has given me a positive answer to yet. Do you remember Chautauqua?

Mrs. Cox: Vaguely. Paul remembers that, doesn't he?

JP: I didn't ask him. He probably does.

Mrs. Cox: He does. I don't remember it at all.

JP: Okay. What movie theaters were in operation then?

Mrs. Cox: The Masonic Theater up there on Hancock Street, and then the Athens down here on Pollock.

JP: Was it called the Athens as you came along?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah.

JP: It changed names over the years.

Mrs Cox: That's right. Athens, and then what was it?

JP: Show Shop?

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: And Kehoe.

Mrs. Cox: That's right.

JP: And now it's the Civic Theater.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah.

JP: Do you remember any of the restaurants in New Bern as you came along? When you all went out for meals, where did you go?

Mrs. Cox: We didn't go out for meals very much. But when we'd go to a dance, after the dance, we'd go down here to the cafe where Branch Bank used to be.

JP: Is that the Central Cafe?

Mrs. Cox: That's right. After the dance, we'd go down there and eat breakfast at one or two o'clock in the morning. (laughter)

JP: That was a favorite place in town, wasn't it?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah.

JP: There was a place called the Beacon. Do you remember the Beacon?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yes.

JP: Tell me about the Beacon.

Mrs. Cox: Joe Pat, I asked Paul about that. It was out there

across from where the hospital is now, wasn't it?

JP: Yes. Out in the woods.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. I remember that. We used to go out there and have a good time and drink coke-colas, eat crackers and ice cream and candy.

JP: And beer.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah, if you wanted beer.

JP: Did Mike Pugh or Mike Shapou run that?

Mrs. Cox: I'm not sure.

JP: But that was a favorite hangout as I recall.

Mrs. Cox: That's right. Like the Parkway used to be when it was on Broad Street.

JP: Wasn't there a cafe on Middle Street too somewhere?

Mrs. Cox: Yes. What was the name of that?

JP: Pete Chagaris had a place there where the Baxter's Sporting Goods is now. That was later of course, but he had a cafe there. And there was a restaurant further toward the river from Middle Street I think.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. I can't remember the name of that though either.

JP: Well, we've gotten you through some earlier years. What's happened as you've gotten older? What have you been doing?

Mrs. Cox: You mean here in New Bern?

JP: Yeah.

Mrs. Cox: Well, I play bridge. I play one table every week and another table every other week.

JP: How long have you been doing that?

Mrs. Cox: For a long time. Years. I was a Gray Lady you know.

JP: At the new hospital?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah, at the new hospital. The day the new hospital opened is when the Gray Ladies started, and I Gray Ladied for twenty-five years every Wednesday morning. After twenty-five years, while I enjoyed it thoroughly, I got tired of it, so I stopped.

JP: What did you all do?

Mrs. Cox: I delivered mail, delivered flowers, took patients to and from their room to the different departments, x-ray, lab, wherever, ran errands for the patients, read mail to the patients that weren't feeling well enough to read.

JP: Who were some other folks working with you in the Gray Ladies?

Mrs. Cox: Mary Balko, Mrs. Celia Aarons.

JP: Aaron Aarons' wife.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. She's dead of course. Several ladies from Oriental and one from Arapahoe worked Wednesday mornings. Mildred Miller Gray Ladied. You know Mildred Miller.

JP: She's my next door neighbor. I'll have to speak to her about that. While we're on bridge, did you play bridge with Charles Duffy?

Mrs. Cox: No. (laughter) I wouldn't play with Charles Duffy and he wouldn't play with me because he takes it too seriously. The girls I play with, we don't take it seriously. We like to play and play our best and bid correctly, but we have a good time, and of course in between hands, we have a grand time gossiping.

JP: Charles is perhaps New Bern's most memorable famous bridge player.

Mrs. Cox: Absolutely.

JP: And still is.

Mrs. Cox: Yes.

JP: What other things have kept you busy?

Mrs. Cox: I'm on the book committee at the library. We meet the second Friday of every month except in the summer time, and we recommend books to the librarian.

JP: Are these any particular kind of books?

Mrs. Cox: All kinds. Virginia Hollister does children's. She recommends children's. I recommend fiction. Martha Mills loves mysteries, so she recommends mysteries. But you can recommend anything you want to. It's just works out that way. Different one's of us have our own choices.

JP: You have favorite authors that you recommend?

Mrs. Cox: No. I use a library journal for recommendations. I read the synopsis of the books.

JP: Does the library have money to buy these books?

Mrs. Cox: Oh yeah. They buy them.

JP: You're still doing that?

Mrs. Cox: I'm still doing that. I've been doing that a long time. Genevieve Dunn is on that committee and Martha Mills and Virginia Hollister and Margaret Stallings and Mary Monte. Amy McKnight was on it, but because of her physical condition, she's not able to come.

JP: You didn't name any men.

Mrs. Cox: There was a man. Bern Budd. Did you know him?

JP: No.

Mrs Cox: He lived in the house that Genevieve and Mark live in now. His wife worked at the Palace. They were from Massachusetts and they moved back to Massachusetts. He was on the committee and he was very good. It's good to have a man on it cause of course he has different interests. His was politics and business and always was good.

JP: Did you work at the Palace?

Mrs. Cox: No.

JP: Any other particular activities or interest?

Mrs. Cox: Well, Paul and I like to travel. We've travelled quite a bit, and I love travelling.

JP: Still at it?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. You do to. You and Alice love to travel.

JP: Yeah. We do a lot of it.

Mrs. Cox: I think it's wonderful. It's a wonderful education.

JP: Nettie, could you speak to other things that we haven't addressed?

Mrs. Cox: The New Bern fire of 1922. All I remember about that fire is there was some sort of championship football game in Raleigh and they had a special train going from New Bern to Raleigh to see it. Practically all the men in New Bern were in Raleigh at the game,

and this fire started. Do you remember it at all?

JP: Yes.

Mrs. Cox: At the time, my father had an awning on his drug store and the fire was coming toward Hancock Street. This is what I remember; my grandmother taking me by the hand and walking, because she did not drive, up to the drug store and pulling the awning off his store so the sparks would not catch that awning on fire. Now that's what I remember about the fire. Oh, do you remember the ice wagons? The ice wagons came by selling ice and we used to go out and swipe little pieces of ice off of it.

JP: How did they know what you wanted?

Mrs. Cox: You had to go out and tell them I guess.

JP: And they'd bring ice in?

Mrs. Cox: Into the refrigerator or ice box.

JP: Wasn't the refrigerator a wooden box?

Mrs. Cox: Yeah, right. Do you remember the old general hospital down there on Craven Street?

JP: I remember it a little bit but not much. What do you remember about it?

Mrs. Cox: Not too much; except, I don't know how old I was, a small child, and there was a Dr. Cohen from Baltimore.

JP: Dr. Lee Cohen.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah. He would come, I guess, every so often and take out your tonsils and adenoids. He took out my tonsils and I guess adenoids too at that hospital.

JP: He did this at St. Luke's also.

Mrs. Cox: Oh he did?

JP: He would come down periodically. He and my father became great friends. Later, he operated on me in Baltimore. I remember Dr. Cohen. What was the hospital like, Nettie?

Mrs. Cox: I don't remember.

JP: That house is being done over now you know.

Mrs. Cox: Yes it is. I saw it. I'm glad they're doing it over and not tearing it down. Isn't it a shame how many beautiful old homes that have been torn down before we had sense enough to realize their value?

JP: Yes, it's a shame. What else would you like to say?

Mrs. Cox: Dr. Civils and Dr. Hand were the dentist. Dr. Hand was my dentist and then Dr. Civils until he died.

JP: Nettie, your grandfather, Mr. Tom Watson, is he the gentleman who owned the business down by the bridge, Watson's Restaurant?

Mrs. Cox: No.

JP: What did he do?

Mrs. Cox: He had a fish market. There's a fish market down at the end of Middle Street right on the water. He had fishing boats.

JP: He didn't buy Hamilton's or Hamilton's didn't buy him out. It's another Watson. There was a Watson's place down there.

Mrs. Cox: That was not him.

JP: So, your grandfather had fishing boats at the foot of Middle Street?



Mrs. Cox: Yeah.

JP: Do you know anything about that business? It was long ago, wasn't it?

Mrs. Cox: I never knew him because he died in 1905. I didn't know him at all. In fact, daddy didn't know him. My father did not know him because he was dead when daddy came to New Bern.

JP: Nettie, can you think of anything that we should talk about?

Mrs. Cox: I think we've covered pretty much everything, don't you?

JP: I think we've done very well. This has been fun.

Mrs. Cox: It has. This is just incidental. One of these pictures that you've got with my mother and Eula Cole Waldrop with the pony and cart, my mother kept her pony in the stables where the firehouse is now on Broad Street. Of course, my grandmother has told me this.

Mr. Watson took the pony out and rode him out in the woods one day and didn't come home and didn't come home. So of course, my grandmother became very concerned and sent someone to try to find him. He was lying on the ground dead, evidently a heart attack, with the pony standing over him.

JP: A sad story.

Mrs. Cox: Yeah.

JP: Well, I think this has been a good interview, Nettie, and I do thank you for letting the Memories program come and talk to you.

Mrs. Cox: I enjoyed it too, Joe Pat.

JP: You will have helped other people understand how life used

to be in New Bern with the things you've told me, and that's what we're looking for.

Mrs. Cox: Quite different, wasn't it?

JP: Quite different.

Mrs. Cox: I don't know whether it's better or worse or what.  
Some better - some worse.

JP: But it was fun the way it was.

Mrs. Cox: It was absolutely great!!

JP: That's a good time to turn this off. It was a great time  
and it's fun to talk about it and fun to talk to you.

Mrs. Cox: I appreciate it, Joe Pat.

END OF INTERVIEW