

BRADFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RESIDENT LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW

BHS P.O. Box 551, Bradford NH 03221

The purpose of these interviews is to allow individuals to share their memories of Bradford over the years. These are based on audio interviews, transcribed into text. The original audio files are stored at the BHS.

INTERVIEW WITH: George Cilley

DATE: May 18, 2021

Interview with George Cilley of East Main Street, recalling 'how it was' in the Bradford area when he was younger. This was recorded by Harry Wright 5/18/21 for the Bradford Historical society (BHS). Final edit 7/26/21.

HHW: We start this, I'm Harry Wright here visiting with George Cilley at his house on East Main Street, to get some deep personal understanding of the town of Bradford for all the time he's lived here. George, Marge said you will be be 90 in the next while.

GAC: June 9.

HHW: Good for you. Congratulations, and have you lived here your whole life?

GAC: We moved into my grandmothers in 1940, and lived until I graduated from college in '51 and then came back twice in the next years and then moved back here in '86 to stay.

HHW: I'll bet you have a lot of memories of the calendar year early days.

GAC: Well, I remember when the sidewalks went in and that was a thrilling moment in a kid's life. The WPA built the sidewalk, they built by hand.

HHW: That's on East Main Street?

GAC: East, and West Main, eventually went the length of the town. Also, the CCC

boys built a waterhole for fire protection on East Main St., which is long gone and an interesting project because we lived within 100 feet of the project, and I was eight or nine years old.

HHW: (new session) Good, now we can carry on from where we left off.

GAC: It was interesting when I was a kid, Lester Hall had a sidewalk snowplow, horse drawn, and he plowed the sidewalks. After World War II, the state started widening the roads and pushing the snow back so all the Main Street snow landed up on the sidewalk, which made it impossible to plow any more.

When we moved in here, my mother and dad, my three sisters, me and my younger brother. My grandmother was here and her daughter Martha, so there were nine people living in the house - three generations and I thought it was fun. I'm not sure the rest of the family did.

HHW: The house is big enough to accommodate nine people, though.

GAC: Well, at the time it was pretty small. We slept in cold rooms, so the only heated rooms were the kitchen, dining room, living room, which is only three rooms and all we had was a radio, so we didn't have to sit where we could see the TV, we just listened. Life was fun when I was a kid. My sister, one of my sister's, couldn't wait to get out of town and make money.

My Dad boarded a horse for somebody's estate. So, when I was in high school, we still had a buggy and I used to hitch the horse to the buggy and used to court Marge in a horse and buggy. Everybody thought that was cute.

HHW: Where did she live?

GAC: Warner

HHW: That's what I thought - you met in school over there.

GAC: Yeah, high school. Yeah, she would come up, she'd ride the school bus up and stay overnight, then we'd go back. Well, the first three years I rode the B&M bus home from high school and took the train down every morning. Then in my senior year the town paid a local school bus driver to take us down. Then the Boston and Maine ran

one bus up through at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I think there are some 40 kids who'd get on the bus in Warner to Sutton, Newbury, and Bradford, they all came to Bradford to get to school. 40 kids would get on that bus and the seats were already full. All these 40 kids were stood in the aisle and that was a factor of when the B&M told the towns they weren't going to accommodate it anymore and Bradford was the only one who did something about it because we had the most kids. I miss the train and I loved it. I loved the train ride every morning.

I still get nostalgic when I see the railroad bed growing trees. The bridges are all gone. Nine bridges between here and Warner, all crossing the Warner River, constructing them must've been quite a feat. The remnants of the railroad days are still there. We used to go up and climb on the rail cars, and every once in a while, the engineers of the freights - the freight train came up to Bradford and they drove up and back, backwards to Concord because they didn't have any way to turn around - the engineers used to let us up in the cab once in a while.

HHW: Did you tell me there was a turntable here at one time?

GAC: I don't know, not in my lifetime, but the railroad finally went through the Newbury Cut in 1870. The railroad arrived in Bradford in 1850, so it took 20 years to blast through the mountain of rock. And I think we had a turntable here, but I l've never seen anything written about it, I haven't seen any pictures, but I think it was behind the bank. There was a spur track that came over in that direction. They used to bring road tar in tank cars to tar the roads with – they didn't pave the roads then – they spread all that liquid asphalt out. We used to go out and play on those cars. Of course, there was always a great deal of spillage on the cars. On a warm day, it came off on our shoes, then we didn't have to tell our parents where we had been.

They had, in the 30s before the war, World War II, I think there were nine places where you could buy gas in town within the borders, while there were six on Main Street. Yes, you could buy it for a dime a gallon. There were two, it was three at one time, automobile garages. They were all busy. And there was the Frank Wise Dodge

Plymouth cars. And a good Kaiser Frazier dealership when they were making Kaiser Frazier cars

HHW: The same guy had a Ford dealership before that?

GAC: No, he had the Dodge Plymouth. He didn't really have the dealership. He was a subsidiary of one in Newport. He had all the signage but then he got a chance to get the Kaiser Frazier dealership. I think that only lasted five years. It's right where the condemned property is. Frank Wise ran the garage, and he was a great friend of all us kids. He used to let us blow up our bike tires for nothing and he'd patch bicycle tire tubes for nothing. Well, he was the only one who did it. Frank Wise had the school bus contract, he serviced all the fire trucks and the first ambulance in town for the rescue squad was named after him.

HHW: What happened to his business after Kaiser Frazier closed down?

GAC: I think he sold out to a guy from Massachusetts and both the filling station and the garage burned in his tenure, and he rebuilt them. But he wasn't very well-liked in town, that I know. I never knew why; we weren't living here then.

The garage up by the brick mill I think was the last one to go, that's been vacant since the early 80's I think. Now Bradford doesn't have a store, well there's the convenience store on 103, it's the only place you can buy a loaf of bread. And the red front store is gone, the house is still there but that made his living selling beer, but they all had gas pumps at one time. The Carr's store went out of business. I think in '55 or '6.

HHW: Before Route 103 was built on the train tracks, I guess it was the main drag from Concord to Newport.

GAC: Bradford Main Street with a rumble all the time with trailer trucks. The street was rough, it had potholes every spring and patches, and there wasn't much from Henniker until 1948 when they replaced the covered bridge on the Henniker Road. There was no truck traffic up from Henniker so very little Henniker driving into town, and it wasn't until 103 was relocated and then they made 114 straight up through the intersection on East Main Street.

HHW: Where was the covered bridge on 114?

GAC: Right at the sandbank.

HHW: Oh, over the Warner River.

GAC: There was a pair of covered bridges and the state I think it was '46; '46 or early '47 the state condemned the bridge and tore it down and put in a military Bailey Bridge, a one lane Bailey Bridge. Of course, the covered bridge was one lane too. The bridge, it was funny, you had to drive up into it, a driver drove up hill and turned into the bridge so, you entered that bridge almost blind for anybody coming. I never knew of an accident there. Then in '48, they relocated the highway and built a new bridge. And then in '66 or '67 they relocated the highway again put it back where the road was originally, right along the riverbank. You notice that there is a graded strip that goes straight from where the railroad crossing used to be, at the traffic lights, directly into that bridge in a straight line. And they wanted a plus sign traffic pattern through the lights and then put the road back around the riverbank. I think they took 3 acres of Mister Hall's meadow to do that, originally.

HHW: They named it the Mason W. Tappan Bridge. Yeah, but they got the name wrong. It says TAPPEN when it's supposed to be TAPPAN. To date they haven't noticed it. It's a sign I read driving by forever and thought it was correct. That's the thing I saw first, the sign was EN instead of Tappan. Then I saw TAPPAN for either father or son some place and I thought "That's wrong" and then I learned that that was the right one.

GAC: I'm still finding out about ancestors in my family, and I think a lot of families pass down their heritage to the younger generations. I'm learning things today that I didn't even know - things about my grandmother - we've been in town since 1824, the family has. Jason Ames came first, and his daughter married a Cilley but Jason Ames bought this place, everything across the street clear to the Warner River and everything west on Main St. to the brick mill bridge, the south side of Main Street. Because his name is on all the house deeds on the south side of Main Street. Jason Ames. And I always

knew that he owned as far as the Masonic Hall, but I saw a deed on a house just before Tappan's, where Burton Hersch lives, and the Jason Ames name is on the deed, in the early 1830's or 40's. He became a very wealthy man, lived to be 90 years old, died in 1886. I may outlive him, but I don't expect to be riding horseback though, he did.

HHW: You went to high school in Warner, but where did you go to elementary school?

GAC: Right next door (now the Community Center) I started in 37. I'd be getting out of town hall when they'd finish the school. They didn't start on this, they didn't buy the land until late March or early April and so we didn't move in till I think the 7th of November. It was thrilling to spend a couple months at the town hall and the rest of the time here, being dragged to school by my sisters. My aunt was a teacher. Imagine that!! I was so scared to go to school, I had hardly been out of the house.

GAC: The town hall was a schoolhouse, first floor. We had his and hers out houses in the back shed and two wood fired furnaces and we had a bottle of water we could take in a paper cup. Some of the older kids had to fill that bottle from the pump out in the yard every morning. We didn't have many amenities.

After we moved into the new school, we had hot and cold running water, toilet, flush toilets, central heat, plenty of electric lights and buzzers to tell us when to do things, signal recess or whatever. Parents had to go and show the girls and boys how to flush a toilet. I don't think that there were 15 flush toilets in Bradford in 1937, and of the 15, a lot of them were in the same house.

HHW: Did you have one here?

GAC: No. My folks didn't have indoor plumbing until 1956. Thanks to my Aunt Elsie who was moving up here she had and shared some money. My mother was her only heir, so it was nice. To my folks it was salvation in old age and all that.

HHW: Your mom was Town Clerk for years and years, where was the office?

GAC: 50 years. The last office was right here in this room.

My dad's first good job is when he was 38 years old. His first job that he could count on a week's pay. He knew where he was going to work, knew when he was coming home,

and knew what he was getting paid at the end of the week. We had a wartime appointment in the post office and the fellow, I don't know if he was drafted or enlisted, one or the other, and Dad got the appointment. And, of course, it was an appointment because after the war was over, the original worker could have his job back. But luckily for my dad, he didn't want the job back, he wanted to be a rural mail carrier instead. So, dad stayed on that wartime appointment until I think it was 1948, before he was sure of his job. and he retired in '66. The first job until 1954 used to be, they used to bag the mail and load it in a pushcart and he'd take it over to the railroad station, and throw it on the mail car. And then the train stopped running and they lost the mail contract so they stopped the passenger service so he used to get paid extra for that job. So, of course, when the trucks started carrying the mail, they'd drive up to the back door of the post office and he lost that part of his income, and he'd get a pay raise and then they'd cut off two to three hours a week. So, I don't think he was earning much more after 25 years than he was when he started. He was getting \$400 a month in retirement pay and that was in 1966.

HHW: 1966, that wasn't great, but it wasn't horrible back then either, was it?

GAC: At least my mother had, my aunt had left them some investment income so they made out all right.

HHW: I hadn't asked, what did you do for a living?

GAC: I decided I wanted to be a farmer, so I went to a two-year Ag school at UNH and I graduated on a Friday and got married on Sunday.

HHW: That was a busy weekend!!!

GAC: Marge and I were both 19. So, I got a job working in just over the Bradford line in Newbury, for Felton Fell. I didn't want to work there, but he had a nice house to live in, and my bride needed a nice house, and I couldn't find as good a job or as nice a house anywhere else. So, we moved in and lived there about two years. My daughter Linda was born there. We moved to Milford for four years, then we moved back to Hillsborough, lived there for 10 years. We moved 17 times, three times with the same

job. But trouble is, farming provided the housing and when you ended a job you had to move.

Then I decided in '66, '67, I thought I was gonna die. My body ached, I was tired all the time so I decided to quit farming, and that I could sell life insurance and I found out real quick I wasn't a salesperson. I just couldn't talk and meet people like I should have to. So I went back to agriculture, moved to Concord, then we moved to South Carolina. We went to Syracuse New York and worked for a year on a farm. Jobs weren't always what you thought they were going to be and once they had you in their house, they thought they could do anything they wanted, whether they made good their promises or not. So, I'm in my 50s, and in '85 we quit farming again and we had an apartment in Concord for two years and then we moved back here to stay. My dad had a stroke then. He was functional but you could see his speech was affected. He couldn't hold on to a thought for long, create sentences, which is very frustrating. And in '88 my mother had a stroke, which left her with tunnel vision, therefore not able to be the Town Clerk.

I really went to town on this house. Some people think, I still have been accused of stealing the house from my parents or from my family. I had a brother, then in Denver, and he'd been gone since '54, so he didn't want any part of it. My sister Carol in Henniker had another. My one sister had died in '68 and my other sister was in England at the time with her husband and so I made a deal with the folks that if they'd deed me the house that I'd do what had to be done and give our parents a home for the rest of the lives with no expenses, which left them their own money to do what they wanted to, which was not much with both of them pretty much incapacitated, but they did not need to worry about bills anymore. My dad was all for it. My mother, she didn't want to give up her independence. I can't blame her, giving up your home is not easy. When I married Marge my dad thought he had another daughter. My mother wasn't so sure. They got along well, I do mean that they got along well. There were some nice moments. When I was the only kid around, we shared holidays, they came to our place,

we came here with the kids so I had a good life. I had as good a life as anybody else in the family.

HHW: You are married how many years now?

GAC: 70.

HHW: Wow - good for you, good for both of you.

GAC: Marge used to mail a letter in the Warner post office to me and the postmaster down there was a wise character. He graduated with my dad in high school. He was kind of a wise guy. He said, well since she's writing those letters, he said it won't last. Another thing my dad said, I wrote Marge a post card once when I travelled out west when I graduated from high school. I wrote a post card to her, and my dad wrote a letter back to me. He suggested that I put my letters in an envelope – I thought to myself, if you stop reading the post cards, you wouldn't have known. If there's anything in the post office to read, it's the post cards.

HHW: So, the post card came through here on the way to Warner?

GAC: No, that is where it went. Marge was at the Pleasant View, which is the Rosewood today, she was working up there that summer. So, I guess they would tease her up there, the guests always wanted to know how George was. They and the Messers ran the Pleasant View, the waitresses didn't have a pad of paper to take down orders and they always had two meat entrées and vegetables, and desserts and stuff and the waitresses had to remember everybody's order. They had tables of eight and she got almost to the last person taking orders and somebody asked how George was and it made her forget all of them. She had to start over. Everyone got a kick out of that.

HHW: I remember as a kid having dinner someplace, with my parents obviously, and the waitstaff didn't write anything down. I thought "Wow, that's neat" but that was fairly common, if not common.

GAC: They were all resident boarders up there, they lived in the overnight place up there, and the meals were all fairly well served. When they were all set, they were

delivered to the table. Well, I think probably the vegetables were put on the table, on each table in the serving dish, so you know the drinks and meat entrées or whatever were all she had to remember.

They lived in a cottage. I don't know how many girls there were, must have been at least 4 or 5. All they had was cold water and I think all they had was a toilet and a basin in the bathroom. It didn't do any good to have a bathtub, you can't get into a tub of cold water. They had to do their own laundry and have a clean uniform every meal. The owners expected a lot, but that was good training for the kids to give them a work ethic, they either worked or didn't have a job.

If you work hard and show responsibility, you'll never have trouble getting a job or keeping a job. I never got fired. I thought I did once, I had a conversation with a guy that I was working for, walking the length of the cow barn, and when we got the other end, I didn't really know if I still had a job or not, so I quit. I wasn't sure if I'd been fired or not, but I decided to eat the words and I said I quit.

Dad, when he worked in the Post Office at Christmastime there was an 8 o'clock train down from Claremont to Concord and there was an 11 o'clock train up from Concord to Claremont and then at 5 there was another down train. And at Christmastime, they used to take off and put on mail on the 7 o'clock train; and they used to work evenings. I don't know if Dad got paid for that overtime or if it was just something they wanted to do to ease the workload. That's when the post office sat in the Pizza Chef's parking lot. You remember the IGA store, the Post Office is just west of the IGA store, there's room for three cars to park between them. My dad had to, a lot of times, he'd have to go out and shovel a path from the back of the post office to Main Street so he could wheel a cart to the train at 8 o'clock. I don't know if he ever got paid for that either.

HHW: Was he a Federal Employee then?

GAC: Yes, the Post Office has always been and the postmaster was always appointed by the Democratic President, so if you're a Democrat, you know, as long as FDR was President, you had a lifetime appointment. I don't know what system they changed to,

but I think his appointment as postmaster came from the President. Of course, not from him personally, but when Harriet Douglass took over for him, I don't know how she got the appointment - that system is long gone.

All the mail was mailed in this office, they had to hand stamp with the canceling stamp and my dad used to tell us how heavy the mail was. I wondered how much mail that actually meant. From the low, low point when they didn't have much mail, but I suppose at Christmastime when everybody mailed Christmas cards and I suppose parcel post was new then, so everything came by mail, it was the only choice we had. People were ordering out of Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs so it's lots.

I know everybody I grew up with is gone. With World War II some kids didn't even graduate from high school before they enlisted and after they graduated from high school, we never saw another young guy, another young person in town. So, between the end of World War II and 1949 when I got out high school, we didn't have any young people in town. We were the oldest of the young people, and gosh, when I was a nine year old we still had boys enough in town to make a baseball team. I don't think when I got out of high school you could find enough boys in town that wanted to play baseball, fill the positions. You go by the grammar school now; you see 150 kids out on the 4 or 5 ball fields, soccer fields, whatever.

HHW: When the school next door opened, it was the only elementary school in town?

GAC: From 1937 on it was. The Bradford Center school was the last one to close, a one room school by the meetinghouse, and the last year when it ended was in the spring of '37. That was the last of the 15 or 16 schools in Bradford to close. Most of the schools came into town in 1863 when the Town Hall was moved to town, because they made the classrooms in the bottom of Town Hall. I don't know why the Center School survived, well essentially it was the only place that had enough families left to have a school. The other schools were so outside the village, they probably only accommodated four or five families. By the time 1940 came, there weren't many people living in the outback of Bradford. I think the grade enrollment in '37 was only six or

seven kids in each grade. There would have been 50 or 60 kids in the building and most of us - I don't think the school bus picked up more than 30 of them.

My grandfather owned the land where the school is. That was the last piece of property the family sold off the homestead. And my grandfather died the July after he sold the property. It was kind of nice for my brother and I, well, compared to most kids, it's just a hop skip and jump to school, didn't tread snow or anything, didn't get wet even when it rained. I used to tell people how I used to walk through snowdrifts, five, six feet deep to get to school to get their attention till they found out where we lived. We came home for lunch and do the dishes after lunch and watch all the kids playing on the playground. We thought we were abused, but it didn't change anything.

We had some baseball equipment. A lot of it was our own. I don't know why any of it belonged in the school. But anyway, we used to put a pebble in the door in the back of the building that went down to the cellar. It wasn't a bulkhead but a doorway with steps inside the enclosure, we used to put a pebble in the door so it wouldn't close so we could get in and get our baseball stuff.

My uncle and my aunt were janitors of the school for seven or eight years and they went to Florida a couple of winters. My dad and I and my grandmother janitored the school for a couple of winters. I had two chores in the sixth, seventh and eighth grade room. That room had all the buzzers for the recess bells and buzzers for all the classrooms. If you're a good kid, you'd get buzzer detail and if you're also good you'd get a chance to put the flag up and down every day. I thought it was quite a treat. I don't know if anybody else did.

HHW: I think that's something you'd be proud of.

GAC: The school was through eighth grade and because of the war years everyone was more patriotic then. I don't know how long that lasted, but it was probably until they built the elementary school on Old Warner Road. I think that was 1985. I think junior high was in New London, I think, maybe both Warner and New London, I don't know. So, there were only six grades over here the last years.

Until they built the new high school, Bradford kids had the choice of either going to New London or Warner for high school. I wanted the kids to go to Warner, but they didn't think Warner was trendy enough, they wanted to go to New London, which I thought was stupid. It was a 5 mile longer bus ride each way and anyway that's what they did. I think the boys liked it, their mother didn't like it.

I never knew the bus drivers, but I heard stories about the bus driver, what a jerk he was, but of course, I wasn't a student in the conversation. But anyway, one night nobody showed up in the afternoon after school. Marge went just about crazy because she didn't know where the kids were. Apparently, the kids acted up on the bus so he took them back to New London. They were almost in Bradford and he turned the bus around, took them all back to New London and reported them to the principal.

HHW: Wow! Did they get bussed back down?

GAC: Oh yeah, they got bussed back, but what a stupid thing to do. Why would you want to spend another hour on the bus with these kids??? When we rode the bus to Warner in my last year of high school - you had no rights to a school bus ride, either earned it or didn't have it. Dick and I got up late one morning, but the bus came by the house. We never really worried about it because what we had to do was meet at the railroad station to get on the bus. That was the one place you could get on the bus. Everybody knew it. But we got up late, so we left the house and got out by Cilley Lane and the bus came out. So we stood there, and the guy stopped and opened the door and he says "Just one time, guys". You know you didn't question that a bit. You knew the next time he'd drive right by you. He was a nice guy but God, he had wild gray hair and he was a tough looking hombre. Very nice guy, but everyone knew he didn't joke around, so we were never late again.

It's funny how, in a crisis, people flock together, like World War II, everybody knew somebody in the service, there wasn't anybody that wasn't well aware what was going on, no matter how remote you were. We lost all our young guys in the service, and we had paper drives and rounded up old tires, scrap metal, and even collected milkweed

buds - they claimed they could make life preservers out of the stuff. And make parachutes out of the silk, I think. I think a lot of it was just a story. I don't think - I can't believe the milkweed we picked up ever made anything but maybe it did. That everybody pitched in made people feel proud and contributing.

My brother, he was different. I don't mean different, but he and I were not alike. And he came in the yard one day from his paper route, came into the yard and said "FDR is dead". And you know I was 14 and he was 13. As far as I knew FDR was our President. I didn't know whether he was good, bad or indifferent really and I don't think my brother did either. I don't know where he got his beliefs, so I never said what basis he had to form any kind of an opinion like that. But anyway, everybody rallied for the war effort, and then you know 9/11 happened and everybody rallied for that and went to church and prayed and everything else. You know the rest of the time no one cares whether the world is turning or not.

We haven't talked about organizations here in town. The Masons and Grange are the only ones left. Rebecca's, which is a woman's side of the Odd Fellows, my grandmother was a Rebecca - they had to go to Warner because this chapter closed. So the Masons and Granges - and the Grange was especially hard because there were no young people around to join them. The war took a whole generation of kids away from joining these organizations. It was really the beginning of the end for most of them. The Masons are still going but getting smaller every year - and the Grange. When I joined the Grange when I was 14 everybody in the Grange was older than my folks which didn't give much incentive for a young person to join it. I think some kids joined after I did, I don't know why some of them joined. I can't imagine why my brother joined.

HHW: The Grange was farm focused?

GAC: Yeah, we met at the Grange Hall next to the bridge across from the brick mill, that was the Grange Hall. They bought it in 1919 after the fire burned all the buildings in town. That's when Dodge's Store and the Pizza Chef buildings went in. It's the first building on the east side of the river. It was a barn and they fixed it up and built a

meeting hall upstairs. On the first floor they had suppers, and then no plumbing, no water, and they made a kitchen. They used to put on great suppers there, and down in the cellar was an outhouse. You had to go down the flight of stairs to that. I was going on 14 then. Of course, when I was 18, I went to college. So for the next four years I didn't go to a meeting. There wasn't anything to do and nobody to do it with, no young people.

The biggest fun I had, after I joined the Grange, one of the Dodges, the youngest of the Dodge boys he had some kind of a disabling whether it was a disease or what, but something that disabled him. He couldn't do anything physically. They had a Buick car, it was a 48 Roadmaster Buick and he loved to go to the Grange in it. He couldn't drive so, Marge and I drove him over. That was the best part of being in the Grange was having the chance to drive a big Roadmaster Buick. We didn't have much if you're looking for great, great excitement in Bradford, it wasn't there. You had to make do with what you had.

My brother went to college, to Durham. He went four years, he got into ROTC, which paid for his college education. He had to put in two years after that. He worked, he always had a job over there. He had a make up different than mine. He worked at a

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hamburger joint, really served hot dogs, hamburgers and everything else in Durham to the college kids. He earned his meals and money and then he went in the service, wound up in Washington state. He put in his two years and his outfit was going to Alaska and his term was almost up and he didn't want to go two years in Alaska so he got out, joined the reserve. He's only been back here a dozen or 15 times since 1954, he moved back to Washington state now. He lived in Denver for 20, 30 years. His daughter still lives in Washington so she got sick of coming to Denver to take care of him so he went to Washington or else. I told her it was about time, I wouldn't want to

live with him – that was all or nothing. She said you're not the same folks, two different outlooks on life. So, I wish I had some of his traits, would have made life a lot easier I think, sometimes. I spent my life working alone, mostly on farms. I never got the personality that goes with salesmanship, buttering up the boss or whatever you want to call it. I kept my job because I was the best they had.

How did you get talking to Harold Heselton?

HHW: He called Tracey Quigley at the Historical Society. I didn't even know him.

GAC: His brother Churchill runs the Newbury dump. He could care less about things like that. I never knew Harold, he's had poor health, and I've never known about his ambition. I never heard really good stories about him, in jobs and stuff. I went to school with his father. He's actually a year older than me, he's 92 and he's the only one I went to school with that is still alive, that was in my grade. This bus driver I was telling you about, his son still lives in Newbury. He was a year older than I am, and he's the only other kid that I ever see to talk to that I went to school with.

HHW: You know after we shut down, within 10 minutes something will come into your your head and say "Jeez, we should have talked about that" and we can get together to record them.

GAC: Yes, there's a lifetime of stories there. Of course, the real answer to the questions about the railroad yard, when the tracks were all still here, except maybe the one that went to the turntable, I used to hear talk about an engine shed - not a round house, but an engine shed, and Steve Hansen has a picture of it. And the railroad station was here and then there was a platform where they loaded milk, cans of milk on the train and beyond that was a water tower and just south of the water tower on the spur track was this engine shed. It was open on both ends to keep, apparently, keep the engine under cover. They had a sidetrack that came on the western edge. Some of the rails are still there, I don't know why they didn't take them all out, but you can still see some of the rails, that was dead ended just south of the end of the water pond. And there used to be a grain warehouse over there and my grandfather had a

slaughterhouse over the tracks, he owned that land, south of the pond and there was a road down to it, and as you went down the road, just on the edge of the railroad was a corral with a loading ramp for cattle to put them on a freight car, and the remnants of that was still there when I was a kid. It hadn't been used for years, right where the fire station is. Yeah, you go down 103 by the lawn area there was a couple trees planted, and maybe 100 feet beyond Main Street and look over the bank. You can still see the ties and everything - they may be buried under leaves now. That track was lower than the railyard so Cressy and Williams had a deal with International Harvester where all the equipment entering the state of New Hampshire came to Bradford and people used to come in from all over the state to pick it up. They all came in box cars and flat cars, and of course, the flat cars were right level with the dock. All they had to do is put a plate down.

When Merrimack opened in 1940 or '41 they used to have three or four or five carloads of grain come in every week. They used to truck grain all over the region from the Newport area and north to Croydon and Grantham and New London. They kept two trucks and used to go out of there loaded up with grain bags, all served right out of here. Of course, the last of Merrimack being open it all came in by truck instead of the railroad. Well, they ran the freight service up here until 1960 they quit the freight. The freights always used to end in Bradford because they wouldn't climb the hill to get to Newbury. Of course, Newbury couldn't handle freight anyway.

So, the freights used to bring the cars in and they used to back all the way to Contoocook. They had a wye down in Contoocook where they could turn the engine around. When the state agreed to share the property for Route 103, it's a shame the highway overtook the property, they could have attempted to preserve the railroad station and the water tower, it would have made a great attraction in this town but the businesses, they were thinking of going north of Lake Sunapee, north of the village but they'd still have to cross Lake Todd, but I think they were going north of the lake, with one plan they had. Of course, the IGA store, Dodge's store, the garages all lobbied to

leave it where it is now. Now their businesses are all gone, so it didn't make a difference.

Main Street almost used to be impossible get out of the driveway here before they put 103 in, the traffic was so heavy through here. Of course, by that time, with the new bridge of '48, the truck traffic used to come in from Henniker because there were less hills.

HHW: Yeah, this was a ready-made route from Concord to Newport and Claremont.

GAC: No other way and then over into Vermont. When the mills were all running in Newport, all that material, coming in and going out, all went through Bradford. The oil tankers - when I was in high school, when you went out for sports, you had to find your own way home. My folks didn't have an automobile, so I had problems with transportation. And every once in a while, a semi would pick us up. When you come up where the ballfields are on old Warner Road, the road used to go to the right of where it is now. There was an S turn on the hill, and it came up near Brackett Scheffy's house, now the Pfeifle's, the big yellow house. They'd have to shift down to a creeping gear to get up that hill, they'd like to make a run at it, but it wasn't straight enough to run it. I can remember the old Mack tractors, I rode home with a guy once, he'd shift that thing, and oh, God, those cabs were wicked hot, the heat from those burners was something awful on a summer day. He'd shift those gears and let out the clutch and the whole cab would torque, but it was still better than walking.

That's funny, I had a job in Concord I was working for a burial vault company that manufactured cement vaults and there was an undertaker up in Littleton, New Hampshire. I delivered a vault to him and I got to talking about it and he said "Are you from Bradford?" I said I live in Bradford and he said "I used to drive a truck through Bradford". I said really? - yeah for the old oil company. I said, Jeez, maybe you were driving the day I rode over here. The world isn't the same as it used to be.

HHW: No, that's not all good or all bad, but it used to be simpler then.

GAC: There didn't seem to be so much animosity, everybody was willing to work

together. Seems like we all needed each other back then, and we don't do that anymore. Everybody's thinks about their own little niche and nobody else matters.

HHW: Yes, that's a shame. I hope we can start morphing back to a more cooperative lifestyle between people.

GAC: Even this virus hasn't united people. We've done pretty well in this state but in other states it hasn't. Everyone complains about wearing a mask. I was down in Market Basket this morning, everybody in the store had a mask on. It's not required anymore but everybody had one on. The store can still request it.

I've got grandkids that don't believe it. They're not going to get vaccinated. So, they don't come to the parties. They call, and they don't know what the problem is. I have a friend in Glendale, California, who I grew up with. He says you live down here you'd believe it. He says it there are refrigerated trailer trucks at all the hospitals in the parking lots, full of bodies, and they can't bury them fast enough.

I said to my son, whose daughter didn't want the vaccine, "What do you suppose you'd think of your father today if your mother and father had not allowed you kids to have the polio vaccine and one of you had become crippled for the rest your life? What would you think of us then?" I knew a kid who was crippled with polio as a child. Carl Danforth who ran the IGA store, I don't know if he died before you came to town or not. He had a hump on his back. Bobby, his nephew was running the store at the end. He got it when he was only six or seven years old. He survived, got a hump on his back, and smoked and drank himself to death. He said, "Well, they told me I'd be dead by the time I was 45, I'm 55 now". That's a small win, isn't it? Of all things to do is to smoke and drink after polio affected your lungs. That was in his family.

HHW: The polio flare was in the mid '50s, correct?

GAC: It was around 1960 when they got the vaccine, maybe 1959. Well, we lived in Hillsboro so it had to be after '57. The first year they put it under the skin which was pretty painful. Later they got it so they could put it in a regular inoculation. I tell you, it

didn't take us long to think about getting it, all witness. The list follows a little different slope, to crippling militia, we were lucky, I guess.

I had had a flu shot, a regular flu shot last fall, my first one, and for something like 20 years Marge always had them. Three or four years ago was the last winter we spent in Florida for four months, she came down with the flu and God, she was sick, she passed out on the breakfast table one morning. She was sitting there and I was standing beside her at the time. I just put something on the table for her to eat, and all of a sudden she just went. If I wasn't there and could hold her in her chair she would have fallen on the tile floor. She didn't stay out very long, but that's pretty frightening. Of course, I was there all the time she was sick. Her sister came down the day after she came down with it. We all lived in the same house, ate off the same table and we never got it. Neither one of us. Of the three of us, only one had had had the shots. Maybe it would have been worse if she didn't have the shot. Very scary.

We talk about all this counseling goes on when somebody dies, gets killed in a car accident – students, kids. I lost a classmate when I was - in the summer between my sixth and seventh grade year I lost a classmate to leukemia, and my brother and I and two other boys were bearers at the funeral when I was 13, 14 years old. I lost a grandfather and grandmother – actually two grandmothers, grandfather, grandmother, and two or three other relatives before I was 15 years old and we didn't have any counseling. Just a matter of fact of life. And really, eventually when some kid gets drunk and goes off and kills himself and two or three other classmates in an automobile doing what he shouldn't be doing, and people are going all over putting out flowers and stuff – what's the matter with people? They may be respectful that they died, but to eulogize them and say what great people they were and have them do something like that? The mourning process of dumping flowers by the bushel on the site where they died or something like that seems to relieve all the grief, I don't know, if I had any to start with, show of hands. Well, that's a Bradford history.

GAC: Anyway, I found this trunk with letters and so two or three years ago I decided

bring them down and they were still in the envelopes, written in ink, and dating to 1847, between Jason Ames, my great-great-grandfather and his brothers and his father. His brothers lived in Mount Morris, New York, and which is just south of Rochester and his father lived in Royalton, Vermont and Jason was one of 13 kids and so with a magnifying glass and hours of time I rewrote these letters and then Marge typed them up.

And in all he talked about was the ill health, which from what I could get from the letters, because they didn't have names for all these things that they were ailing from, one was TB and one was typhoid fever and what was the third thing? – anyway, Jason wanted to see his brothers out in Mount Morris. The railroad didn't come to Bradford until 1850, so the only way out of Bradford was to go south to Massachusetts and across somehow to the Hudson River valley and then by ferry up the river or train, and then either by the Erie Canal or by railroad, whichever was in existence at the time. He went out there once and then he rode horseback from Rochester New York down to Mount Morris.

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Then he sent his daughter - his son went out there to take over the store business from his uncle - and the daughter, who married Bartlet Cilley, she went out there by herself one day to see her brother and her uncles and the only thing missing is what the trip was like. And I think, when my great grandmother went out, here's what I think she did. I think she went up the Hudson River and stayed overnight with somebody, and he took her in and didn't charge her anything for the trip. How ever she got to Mount Morris - either it had to be by rail, or boat on the canal, that's a long way – it's a long way today! It was twice as long then because of the way you had to go to get there. But the only thing that they talked about was their illnesses.

That's when the mills were starting to pop up wherever there was waterpower for the textile mills or whatever, and Jason's father was complaining they couldn't hire - they

couldn't get anybody to help on the farm because of the better wages and the shorter working day, and there were letters from several aunts and Jason's brothers - I forget now - there was some 40 letters that certainly gave an outlook into the family.

Then four years ago a guy knocked on the front door and turned out to be a distant cousin of mine. His mother's father was Jason Ames' grandson and they lived in Orange, Mass. In all these years no one has ever delivered a knock on the door but he wanted to see the Ames Cemetery in Bradford and know more about the place

HHW: Wow! How did he find you here or did you find him?

GAC: Well, he remembered coming here once with his mother, which would've been probably back in this 60s or 50s and nobody was home, so they didn't get to see anybody. I remember hearing the folks talk about his mother, Doris, Doris Ames and I never knew her other than the name and I don't think anybody corresponded in all of these letters. I did find a letter from his grandfather who was a lawyer, and he didn't marry until he was in his 40s. He wrote a letter to my grandmother when my grandfather died. He was two years older than my grandfather, and he remembered visiting here at the house when he was a teenager. He grew up in Mount Morris. He went to Ohio, or Michigan. His mother had some kind of family connection with Michigan so we went to college in Michigan, and I don't know where he got his law degree. He was pretty smart. I think it was my cousin who sent me a letter that he'd written to his daughter and it's pretty witty. It was kind of a father-daughter letter and it was kind of an instructional letter, maybe he's telling her what to do. They all came back to the homestead at least sometimes in their life. Jason's father was always writing in for money, "Got any spare money?"

Jason got to be a wealthy man. He bought all this property and, of course, he sold off the house lots, because he lived so long he had to have some income. He owned all the land that the railroad was built on, the station and all of that land he owned. So, I think he traded the land for stock in the railroad, and anyway he had money enough. He was an underwriter or a founder or something of a bank, and each one of them had

to have \$25 grand to become Director, or whatever they called themselves. \$25,000 was a lot of money back in 1840 or 50, but he was a doctor but a lot of his income was good friend money. Of course, back then, this was a farm. He had some cows and grew crops and stuff. It seems to me that he served in the legislature for one or two terms.

Yet his name never comes up in Bradford's government. And there is no mention of the Civil War in any of these letters. And yet, one of the letters that was written to Jason Ames wanted him to collect a bill from somebody in Warner. This guy was a doctor in Warner before he went in the Army. He was down in New Orleans as an Army surgeon and he wrote Jason Ames a letter, wanting him to collect a bill from somebody in Warner. That is the only mention in all these letters of any of the Civil War. He made mention that guys were always coming in trying to get sick time, creating illnesses or sick time so they wouldn't have to go to battle.

But he was never mentioned in town politics, his picture didn't hang in the Town Hall. He was behind-the-scenes in all his stopping, and he never was going to get any credit for it. The Tappan's, both father and son were notables here in town, and I think there was a guy named Gould. He lived up there, where Fritz the landscaper lives, is on the list in the town hall. I think he was one of the guys to get the railroad to Bradford, one of the guys to get credit for it. I don't think anybody deserves much more credit than Jason Ames did to get the railroad here. He owned all the land they needed.

When they built the railroad there was an underpass down at the end of Cilley Lane, well, not at the end, but that's how you get to it. There was an underpass under the railroad for cattle. It's kind of all filled in now. If you went down Cilley Lane and went to the right a little bit there's a path that goes down to 103, bypasses the town garage and a little bit to the right of that in the low point in the ground. I'm sure that because Jason owned the land beyond the railroad all the way to the river, they used to pasture the cows down there.

Jason's wife came from Warner and her family used to herd cattle from Vermont to

Boston. Cowboys walked them all the way, no railroads. I can't believe that the railroad came to Concord in 1845 and five years later they were in Bradford. That's hard to imagine. For 20 years Bradford was the dead-end.

HHW: I was saying that it took 20 years to get the next 10 miles.

GAC: That's why Carr's store - three generations of the Carr family that owned that store and they did business for 50, 60 miles around Bradford because they sold furniture and everything else.

When we took the metal off the house and we had the green roof put on, on the underside of the metal, it had A.B. Gardner, Bradford New Hampshire on it. He's the guy who owned the Tin Shop, now the Historical Society. I don't think he installed the roof but he ordered it and got it to Bradford. It probably came on the railroad or it could have come by truck in the 30s.

HHW: Great input. Thank you, thank you -