Historical Commission of Schuylkill Township
Oral History Project

Helen Davis Debus

Summary. *Helen Davis Debus grew up in Schuylkill Township and knows the area well. She worked for years in the post office, at its several locations. During World War II, she worked as a mechanic in the gas station on Route 23 and Davis Road. . Other topics included in these interviews include the quarry train, Valley Park, Holiday House, Schuylkill Township Schools, the swimming hole and ice skating pond, the street car, and the history and memories of the G-Lodge. Mrs. Debus also shares her memories of the history of the homes along Oakwood Lane, Valley Park Road, and Jug Hollow Road. Two interviews.*

1st Interview (final revision) - January 20, 2005
Interviewed by Nancy Loane
Transcribed by Nancy Loane

HB: I am going to tell about some of jobs I had in my lifetime. The first one was at a gift and antique shop. When I graduated from high school it was during the depression. My father wasn't making enough that I could go to college. I had to go to work. One night I was sitting at home and a man came and asked if I wanted to work. It was over where the mansion house is now, and they had a barn and I guess it was a hay mow up top. It had been converted into a garage. In the top part they had a gift and antique shop there. I worked there for about 2 years. And then they went moved down into Norristown, and I went down there, too. I was working, and I was making $10.00 a week.

When they moved down into Norristown, they didn't expect me to pay my car fare down there, so they paid that, too.

NL: You said, "mansion house." What do you mean by that?

HD: It's …what is it called now? Right up near here? It used to be a mansion house. It was a hotel and they had a little bar there.

It wasn't at the corner of routes 23 and 252 – that was the Washington Inn.

It was across the street, right before you come to the Post Office.

NL: Oh, what they call the Von Steuben Memorial House, on route 23.

HD: That's right. They called it Von Steuben's headquarters. People by the name of Archer Wolf had it when I was growing up. I don't anybody knew if Steuben stayed there.

NL: Von Steuben's Memorial Quarters was an antique shop?

HD: No, the barn behind it. The house and barn are torn down now. There was a little road that goes down beside the Von Steuben place. That led right into the house and the barn. I suppose that someone had animals there. They made it into an antique and gift shop on the second floor of the barn.

NL: All of that is gone now.

HD: They tore it down. They tore down a lot of stuff.

NL: Is that when the park became federal property that they tore it down?

HD: No, that was when the state had it. The federal government didn't take it until 1976.

NL: You went into Norristown to work. How did you get into Norristown?

BD: The train stopped here. I used to go down in the morning and come back at night I guess one day they told me that I was making more money that the rest of the place and they had to lay me off.

That's when I went to work for the Montgomery County Emergency Relief. A lot of the people were working on WPA or if they couldn't work they were on emergency relief and we were sending out stamps for them. After that I worked down in Philadelphia for them for a while.

NL; Did you get to Philadelphia on the train?

HD: Yes, the train stopped right by where Washington's headquarters is now. They closed the road – there was a road that led into there. And then after that – I worked for Eureka Casualty Company in Philadelphia. Then I got a job in Paoli with Ansul Chemical Company. And I forgot to tell you – the most interesting job that I had while I was working for Ansul. – that was during WWII..

My brother and my husband – but he wasn't my husband at the time – started the gas station over here. (On route 23, corner of Davis Road) Ken, my brother, did all the mechanics and that stuff and Willard, my husband, supplied some of the money and he did the bookwork. He had worked for Arco Refinery.

I was working over there and Ken was drafted. He didn't know who was going to help with the gas station so he asked me if I would do it. Willard taught me how to do the bookwork, but nobody showed me how to do the mechanics of the place – working the

pumps and all that. Ken said I didn't have to bother to learn because Ben Smith was working for us and he was 4F and they would never take him.

Well, Ken was gone a month and they took Ben.

I hired a young man who had one leg and he worked for me awhile. But he was selling gas without the stamps. You went to the ration board and they gave you a bunch of stamps. Somebody would ask for 5 gallons of gas and he would sell it to them for about 10 cents a gallon more than I would sell it for and he kept the difference. They didn't have enough stamps for their purchase. He was selling gas without stamps. We had to take those stamps and turn them in to Atlantic Refining, in order to get more gas. He practically ran me out of gas. I didn't have the stamps to turn in to get more gas.

I asked him about it, and he said that it wasn't him. He said the gas man was shortchanging him. I talked to the gas man and he said, "Don't you fool yourself. I know what he is doing." At the time we had a man who was too old to go into the army. He was like a woodsman – he cut down trees. He was selling a lot of his stuff to the army effort. He had all the gas he wanted. He could get it for your car or a five gallon can, like he got it. He knew what was happening. After I got rid of this young man, he gave me gas stamps to replenish my gas. If it hadn't been for him, I would have been out of business.

In the morning I would open up at the gas station I would open up at 7 and somebody would come in at 8. I would go home and eat my breakfast, and go over to Ansul. I would work to 5, come back, and work here until 7. I would then go up and eat. I had a lot of fun. It was hard, of course. The men were so nice. They were nicer to work with than women really. If I didn't know something about a motor or something like that, if any man knew about it he would show me. I learned how to grease cars, to change tires. I couldn't take the tire off the rim because I wasn't strong enough, but I could repair the tires and everything.

NL: So you were doing the actual repairs on the cars yourself?

HD: Yes, I did it morning and night. Saturdays. We weren't open on Sundays, no. We weren't allowed. I'm glad we weren't open on Sundays, I don't think I could have stood it.

I remember in the beginning they used to have a place up there where they used to entertain the boys – the soldiers who came in. Of course I was young. A friend of mine asked me if I would go to a dance up there and I said yes. And I was dancing with a young man – he was Italian – he was doing very fancy stuff – bending his knees and all of that. I did the bend in my knees, and my knees were so tired that I could hardly bring them back up. That's the last time I went out like that. I couldn't do it.

NL: Where did they have these dances?

HD: Up at the Phoenixville – one of the armories up there.

Let's go back to the gas station - The funny part of it was – I didn't get any money for it. The only thing that it did for me was that at the end of a pay period, when I didn't have any money, I could borrow from the gas station. From pay day to pay day.

NL: How long did you work there?

BD: The entire length of the war. The war started in 1941, didn't it? Ken left in November or December. I was working at the station until the war was over and he came home. The funny part of it was – I never looked at a car after that. I was so used to changing the oil and the differential and the transmission, but I didn't have to after the men came back. About a year ago I opened the hood of my car to look at something and it's a whole new country. It's all computerized. The carburetor was only a little thing, and now it's a great big thing. Everything is all spread all over. It's a whole new country. I don't know if I could do it now.

But you can do anything if you have to. I learned that.

NL: So now we have you working at the – what was the name of the gas station?

HD: Valley Forge Service Station. The business was Davis, for my brother, and Debus, for my husband – it was Ken and Willard**.** Then they decided that there wasn't enough money for two families. I was married in 1946; Ken was married during the war. At that time they had three children. Willard and I were both working, so they decided to split the business. Ken took the part that was making money.

I took the house – Willard and I took this house. This house was a shack. I guess it used to be the barn or something for the larger house over there. The cellar there was just bare dirt, except for one part. I said to father, "That must have been a stable for a horse." He said no, because a horse couldn't stand on the cement. He said it must have been for a cow.

NL: A cow in the basement of this house?

HD: This was like a barn. There was a door going out down there, going out from the cellar. We built on to it. We built the room upstairs, the kitchen, the other room. When father died we built a room for mother. We expanded it a lot. It was very small. There was downstairs, this room, and upstairs.

NL: When was this done?

HD: We were married in '46; we rented apartments first. We came here in '51. This was a shack and we either had to pay to tear it down or pay to build it up.

NL: And what is in the bigger house that is on route 23 to the east of the gas station? Are there two apartments there?

HD: Yes. One upstairs and one downstairs. What used to be the downstairs living room used to be the post office. When Ken inherited a house Aunt Jenny left him, they decided after they got the gas station that they would put a store nearby. So then the lower end of the store they made into a post office, and they moved the post office from the house beside the gas station to the lower end of the store.

NL: So the post office used to be in the house, which is on the east side of the gas station on route 23, and then it moved into what we now have as the mini-mart by the gas station. Then the post office moved again.

HD: Well, it was expanding, so they had to do something. I was working at the post office when it was in the little store. And I said I was the only one who could leave home at 7:30 in the morning and get to work at 7:30. And then, as I said, after Valley Forge Mountain got developed it got too big. As it is now, I think they take in – well, when I left there they took in more than a million dollars in stamps.

NL: Because of the Valley Forge address and businesses using the address?

HD: Yes, National Liberty gets their mail here. They are over above Route 202. Vanguard uses the Valley Forge address. Allstate, too. When I was working here, people from Allstate used to come over here in the middle of winter in their shirt sleeves. I said, "How can you do that? You will freeze to death." They said that they come out of the heated office, get into the car, come over here, come into a heated post office. The only time they are in the cold is when I get out the car there and over here.

NL: When did you start working at the Valley Forge post office?

HD: I think it was – Roy Wilkinson was the post master – I worked part-time, just to relieve the other girl – I guess it was in 1948 or 1949.

NL: So a couple of years after you married you started to work for the post office?

HD: I continued to work for Ansul after I married. Then they moved into the city. A funny thing happened when I was still working for Ansul. They had a place down on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia.. We had a wonderful boss. If we wanted to go to the dentist or something like that he didn't have to call him. This one day I had a dentist appointment in Paoli. When I got finished I got on the train in Paoli and I got into Philadelphia. I got in around 10 or so. The janitor who took care of the place saw me come in, and he thought I must be an officer or something because I was coming in so late. I told him I was nobody in particular, no official.

One day - he did everything – he ran the elevators and everything. One day I was going up and his wife was running the elevator. The two of them were a little wacky. I got into

the elevator and his wife said, "Pop wants you." Instead of taking me up she took me down to the basement. As I went down I thought, "Oh, here I go. This is my last trip."

I got off and here he had a lot of paintings all around the wall that he wanted to show me. They were finger paintings that he had done himself. I was scared to death. I almost went, "Whew," when I realized everything was ok"

NL: He was doing that for a nice gesture, a kind gesture.

HD: If she would have told me what it was about, it would have been better. But she just said, "Pop wants you."

NL: So you started at the post office about 1949 or so. How long did you work at the post office?

HD: This isn't on my official record, because the post office itself didn't have any record of me stopping work. When I adopted Gene, I stopped. He was only a baby – six days old. Until he was ready to go to school, I couldn't work. When he was starting into school – Ken Beemer came over – he was the post master then – and he came over and asked if I would help them out, because they were in sad shape. I said all right, I would do the best I can. So I worked there. Instead of saying that I worked for a couple of years, they couldn't find the records, so they said I started in '55 or '56, and then I went on to '76 – something like that.

NL: And did you say that building was something different at one time? Was the present post office always the post office?

HD: That was built in 1962 for the post office. There was a school there, but they tore it down. I went to school there. You know where the Holiday House is? You know where the fire house is? Well, there is a little house above it that sits on the hill. It's called the Holiday House.

NL: Why was it called the Holiday House?

HD: I don't know. It was the Valley Forge grade school – it was a two room school. I went there – I started to school when I was five – I went there for I guess two years. Then they had a fire on the roof and I guess fixing it up – I guess the politician couldn't make too much money that way – so I guess they sold it and they built the school on route 23.

NL: So the first school we had in the Valley Forge area was very near what we now have as the fire station on Valley Park Road. And that burned down –

HD: It didn't burn down, the roof caught on fire. Then they came over here on route 23 and they built a brick two room school house where the post office is now. Both of them were two rooms. There was a one room school in Pickering. That's on the corner of Valley Park Road and the road that comes down from Clothier Springs Road.

NL: We have the Valley Forge School, the Pickering School…

HD: Then we have the Schuylkill School, which is up on the corner of Route 23 and Starr Street. There is a gas station, and then there was a school. There is a house there now. I think there were two more.

There is another one up Pothouse Road. If you go up Pothouse Road, past St. Ann's Cemetery, on the left, there is a house there. It's white now. I think that was Oak Grove.

There was one the other side of Phoenixville. I can't remember what that name was.

There was one on Pawlings Road. Go down Ferry Lane, and turn left on Pawlings Road.

NL: What kind of things did you learn in that two room school?

HD: I'll tell you one thing I learned. One day when I was in the fifth grade we had to parse a sentence. And the sentence was, "Procrastination is the thief of time." I couldn't parse anything if I didn't know what it meant. So I asked somebody what procrastination meant. They said "Putting off tomorrow what you should do today." So when I went to high school – I was 12 when I went to thigh school – I was one of these scaredy-cats – I did my work and kept quiet – except to my friends. We were in economics class and the principal, Mr. Robinson, asked somebody what procrastination meant. I sat there and didn't say a word. I said to the girl I was sitting beside, "I know what that is." She said, "What is it?" I don't know if she pushed my hand up or what. Mr. Robinson said, "What is it, Helen?" I said it is putting off until tomorrow what you should do today. You know what he said to me? "Well how did you know that?" I told him I had learned in the fifth grade what the word was. That afternoon, he said to the afternoon class, "Do you know something? Sometimes the most unlikely people tell you things and they surprise you."

Thelma Bare was a girl who I used to pal around with, and she asked somebody who told them what procrastination meant, and they told her it was me!

NL: You were famous!

HD: I was famous for two minutes.

NL: That's a wonderful story…..Did you sit on benches at school?

HD: Over here at the new school in Valley Forge we had individual desks. They had the top that could be slanted or flat, either way you wanted it. There was a drawer – a big drawer that you could pull it out. It had a hole for an ink well. This was before the kind of pens that you have now. And one day somebody got a little mischievous, and they put a piece of chalk in the ink, and that caused it to effervesce all over the floor. One of my

brothers wrote a poem about it. Now I could never do anything like that, but he did. And he said

There is one thing that I confess
Chalk and ink will effervesce
And when it falls on the floor
It will make a mess.

NL: That is great! Was he in class when this happened?

HD: Yes. He was only sixteen months older than I. I guess he was a little bit brighter than I was, I could never do that. My niece can do that. She can write poetry. She told me that I could do it – think of two words that rhyme and write a story about them. Maybe when I have some time I will try it.

NL: Thinking about the school house – how did you heat the school house?

HD: There was a great big stove that was up in one corner of it. If you were right close, you were warm, but most of the kids wore heavy clothes. I don't remember being cold there, and I was a cold creature. I don't remember being cold in school.

NL: Who was your teacher? Who was teaching school?

HD: Well, when I was over in the old school – Holiday House there, it was Miss Emma, Emma Reifsnyder – and we always called her Miss Emma. When I got over here I had Mrs. Vanderslice and I can't think of the others. When I got up to Phoenixville, at the high school, no wonder I was scared. I was used to sitting in a seat and staying there until you went to recess or go to lunch or something like that. At every class up there, instead of the teacher's moving, we moved. It was strange.

NL: Did you bring your lunches to school?

HD: Sometimes. Sometimes we went home. It would take maybe ten minutes to get home. Mother would have our lunch ready when we got home.

NL: Was the time in school about the same as now? School starts in September and ends in June? And the days were about the same in length?

HD: Yes, September to June. We used to have to be there - I think 8 o'clock. And we left at 4.

NL: What did you study?

HD: We had English and Spelling and Arithmetic and Physiology and I forget what else – I think we had more than that.

NL: Did you have penmanship?

HD: We had penmanship every Friday in the beginning of the year, and then they got busy and they forgot about it. I am not a good penman.

NL: We something think about school and punishment – like kids sitting in the corner with a dunce cap on…did you have any of that?

HD: Oh, no. We had boys who enjoyed giving the teacher a bad time. One boy in particular, he was bigger than the teacher practically, he didn't do anything she wanted. That disrupts the whole school. One day I saw her take up a geography book and put it down on his back. He laughed at her. One day one of the School Board members – two or three of them came – and the teacher told on him. She said she was sick and tired of him and she couldn't control him. And he cried. We were so disgusted. Instead of standing there and taking it, he cried. He was never any bother again.

(Side B of tape)

One thing I wanted to tell you about school. This was when I was a freshman. I was sillier then. I put an all-day sucker in my mouth at the start of Freshman science class and decided I wouldn't answer any questions. But the teacher called on me. I had to answer. So I moved the candy to one side of my mouth and answered. The teacher just laughed – he never said a word.

I started school, as I told you, when I was five years old. My two brothers were going to school. I guess it was kind of lonesome for me around home. Not that they ever played with me – you know how boys are and I was the youngest – but Mother asked Miss Emma if I could come over for the final two months - I guess this was in April - to get me used to school. We didn't have kindergarten.

They weren't particular then, they didn't care And Miss Emma was a very sweet lady. So I went over to school. My older brother Lardy – he taught me how to read, and the ABC's and I could count to 100 – so when I got over there it wasn't too hard. So when it came time to take a test, I took it because she told me to. I passed! I passed into the second grade. I never really was in first grade. I think that is the reason that my math isn't too good.

NL: You missed the foundations.

HD: I missed the beginnings. I would never push anyone ahead – I don't think that it is right.

NL: When you were growing up around here, what kinds of sports and recreation did you do? What did you do for fun?

HD: Well, you know the Valley Creek down here. That wasn't like it is now. A little above the P.O.S. of A.(Pennsylvania Order Sons of America) hall it was like a little

creek and it was deep enough – I was about 4'10", I guess – and the water came up to my neck. We used to swim down there. That was the best babysitter Valley Forge ever had. Everybody went down there. We weren't supposed to. It was in the park. But the superintendent turned a deaf eye, as long as we behaved ourselves and didn't make too much of a fuss.

NL: This was when you were a younger child? When was this?

HD: I guess I used to swim down there from the time I was eight years old, maybe even into high school. Everybody went down there. There were a couple of grown women who went down there. One of them couldn't swim but she could float. She couldn't have drowned if she had wanted to, because the water came up to maybe her thighs. And they had a rock you could dive off, if you took a shallow dive. If you took a deep dive you would go off and hit your head.

And they had minnows down there. You would be standing there and they would nip at your legs. There was spring water, because it came off the hill there – Fisher's Run. It connected with water that came down from Malvern and then the spring water and the other water hit about as far as here over to the gas station. The water was cold. I couldn't swim in a heated pool because it bothered me.

NL: Oh it sounds like fun! A good community activity.

HD: Yes, we had a good time there. Nobody got into too much trouble. When we got older, well somebody had a Model – T Ford, and we saw how many people could get into it. We drove over to Collegeville and stopped someplace, and we acted like we were out on the town or something. The people who ran the place were looking at us – they were shocked. And they more shocked they looked, the more crazy we became.

NL: Sounds as though you had a lot of fun. How about in the winter time? What did you do then?

HD: We would sled. We used to start – my father lived up there on the hill – we would go down the hill – Colonial Springs Road now, we would start at the top, go down Colonial Springs Road, it wasn't paved then, there weren't too many cars on the road – go down where the Methodist Church is now – turn and go across the bridge (on route 23) The only trouble with that is that you had to walk back.

NL: The sleds that you used – were they single sleds?

HD: I had a Flexible Flyer. It wasn't mine – I was the youngest and I got everything that my brothers grew out of. I didn't care because they were good sleds. I have one down in the cellar – it's a long one – I was going to give it away but Gene didn't want me to.

NL: They were worth some money these days…..So in the winter you are sledding. Are you skating somewhere?

HD: You know where you go up there on Valley Park Road, right before the new big houses – there's a marshy place in there on the left and that used to be a lake. Mr. Ewing lived across the road. And I think he kept it there for us. Everybody skated there. We walked from here up to there, and then we would skate, and then walk back again. It was nice.

NL: What were your skates like?

HD: Mine were pretty cheap. I always had the kind that you strap on. Because, as I said, it was during the depression. My father was making 32 cents an hour. Ken and Lardy had shoe skates, but they worked and they bought them themselves. But I was too little to do anything like that.

Somebody bumped me on the side when I was skating, and this foot, instead of digging into the ice, it slid. I broke my tibia. That finished me with skating. That was when I was 14. I was in high school.

NL: So when you broke your leg, where did you go to the hospital?

HD: I didn't go to the hospital. I think the doctor came down. They visited then. I wrote an article about that one time. I thought it was a good article. I sent it to *Good Housekeeping,* as I thought they might find it interesting.

NL: Do you still have the article? That would be interesting.

HD: I have it, but I don't know where it is right now.

NL: So when you broke your leg, did they cast the leg?

HD: Yes, I had it in a cast. And did my leg itch! I used to sit like this and scratch the cast. The doctor – it was Dr. Dorn in Phoenixville - said I could go up there and stay with them, as they lived right up the street from the school. But mother didn't want me to do that. So I stayed home from school for six weeks. And then I caught up. I had to. Nobody asked to send my work home. So I just had to wait and catch up.

NL: Did they have any skiing at this time?

HD: No skiing. When I grew up, when I got older, one time I decided that I was going to try to ski. Father had a field that had a slope. I put skies on, and it pulled the bone that I had broken, and that put an end to that. I didn't do it. They used to – where the Wayne monument is in the park – they would go down there in skies and on sleds.

NL: What other kinds of things did you do after school?

HD: My oldest brother, the one I called Lardy – he was on the heavy side – they used to call him Dr. Lardpot. You know, no one ever says Dr. Lardpot, so he ended up with Lardy. Until the day he died they called him Lardy. His nephew on his wife's side became a priest, and he was the one who did Lardy's mass. And he was talking about John, and all of a sudden he stopped and said, "I'm getting sick of this. He was always Uncle Lardy to me." And he said I guess I'll have to continue with that because I'm getting mixed up. And his nieces and nephews always called him Uncle Lardy.

NL: Did you enjoy music?

HD: Oh, yes, I played piano. And I can't do it now. I decided that I wanted to sing. I didn't have a good voice, but I decided I wanted to sing. One day I was walking down Chestnut Street – I forget what I was down there for – and I saw a sign in the window about voice lessons. I walked in off the street, into a strange place I had never been before. He had his studio up on the second floor. If they weren't proper people, I guess I would have had to jump out the window – I don't know what I would have done. I got up there and he asked me what he could do for me. I told him I wasn't a very good singer but I had always wanted to sing. He asked me what kind of a voice I had and I said I had been asked to stop singing. I don't remember if he gave me an audition right then or if I came back. I took lessons from him for four or five years. And he had a beautiful voice. He wasn't very nice looking, but he had a beautiful voice. I have often wondered how come Pavarotti became so famous because he doesn't look so good. I like the other one better – Placido Domingo. I think he has a very good voice.

So I did take lessons. I asked Father Corbett if I could sing in the choir and he said yes. He was a nice, nice person – and I used to sing in St. Ann's choir. There was a soprano there, and she had the most gorgeous voice that I have ever heard. And the thing of it is, I have heard opera singers, I listen to them, and I go to operas, and not one of them can sing the way she did. The trouble with her - you know when you sing a note, you have to hit it. She would slide into it. She sang so pretty and so beautiful that it sounded as though the rest of us were making mistakes.

Eventually my voice had improved a little bit, she asked me if she could meet Mr. Noack. I told her she could come down with me to Philadelphia. He told me he would meet her, and that he was interested in hearing what I thought was a good voice. He was impressed. She was going to make arrangements to take lessons – she was ten years older than I – she was secretary to a lawyer, but her mother said no. I think that her mother was thinking of her own skin. At that time they didn't have social security and she thought that if something happened to her husband she would be stuck. I was really sad.

Mr. Noack got me a job if I wanted one singing in a church in Philadelphia. It wasn't a Catholic Church. I told Father that I had been offered this job and he said, "Why Helen, why would you want to do that?" I said, "For the money!" I think at that time I paid 5 or 6 dollars a week for lessons and that was a lot. So he said, "Suppose you stay here in this choir and I'll pay for your singing lessons." But I couldn't do that. So I said, "Alright, I'll stay."

NL: Did you accept the job?

HD: No, I didn't think that I was good enough. I placed myself beside Mildred, and she had such a good voice. And there were a couple of tenors there who sang like the angels. They all had natural voices. Mine, of course, was cultivated.

NL: You must have had a nice voice or he would not have suggested you for that Philadelphia choir, or that you become a soloist.

HD: I was a soloist at St. Ann's. Sometimes I think I rocked the church. You are supposed to be able to quiet your voice, to temper it. Boy, when I started to sing I belted it out.

I sang over at St. Isaac's for a while, but Willard didn't like the fact of me going out there at night, so to quiet him I stopped.

NL: It sounds as though you sang for a long time.

HD: Oh, I did. I sang until after I got Gene. Then I gave singing up. I stopped practicing the piano, and my fingers got stiffer. That piano – I want to get a new movement in there, because it won't hold the pitch. I can't practice with it, because that drives you crazy.

NL: Just for the record – tell us again about your relationship with Davis Road, which is by the gas station.

HD: I think Ken Beener was on the road board or something and they were looking for a name for it, and they just gave it Davis Road. Just arbitrarily. I don't know why they did it. This road – Oakwood Lane – that used to be called – that was Irish Road. I guess a few English people got on there and they didn't want it called Irish Road, so they changed it.

NL: Where was your home? You said "Up the road?"

HD: This road here, now Colonial Springs Road – well that wasn't Colonial Springs Road, it was Welbanks Hill. But anyway, it goes up and goes into Oakwood. There's a road that goes right straight up from what is now Colonial Springs. Well, if you go right up, my father had a farm up there, about 6 acres. That's where we lived. We had cows and pigs and chickens and geese, and Mother used to – we had a duck, and most ducks like to swim around in a lake – and we didn't have a lake, so Mother took the bottom of a roasting pan and filled it with water, and put in the yard, and the dumb duck used to get in the roasting pan. And it looked like it was just getting ready to be cooked. We had a dog, her name was Silver, and she kept the chickens out of the front yard. They could go in the back, Silver didn't care, but they couldn't come to the front yard. If they had little ones, as long as they were little, they could go all over the yard. But as soon as they got a little bit big, so that they didn't always follow their mother, she chased them out of the yard. The poor things didn't know why they were being chased.

NL: Were there other houses here when you were growing up?

HD: There was one back there in the woods – there was one where General Fisher (Civil War General) used to live. Charles Hires bought it. They bought it because there was a spring there. In that spring there were no metal pipes, only glass tubes. And these were all glass tubes. And they had a sky light, so the light could get in from outside. Hires bought it and they used the water from the spring to make the root beer. The park has it now. That is right across the road from where the Hires field was. The house was on back.

NL: What do you mean by Hires field? Was that part of the property?

HD: Yes, on Colonial Springs Road, there is a house and then a little bungalow, and then gate posts – well that is the start of Hires property. It goes back all the way to the woods. There was a barn and an ice house and another little stone house and then there was a building called Slab Tavern, where people used to ride over the hill and stop there. And they sold – I don't think they sold wine and intoxicants – but they used to sell homemade drinks like and gingersnaps and things like that – they rode over the hill on horseback. I think that is torn down, too. Father tried to talk when out of it. I think it's torn down.

NL: Hires didn't live here, did he?

HD: No, Charles Hires didn't live here. I think they had a place over in Malvern; I don't know where they ended up.

Mother told me when she was just young, that was before the 1900s, she said that one of her cousins was one over there - she was working for Hires at the company and evidently the boss didn't like her work. So he laid her off. She went home in the middle of the day and her mother wondered why she was home. And she said that she got laid off. Her mother said, "You did not. You go back and tell him you didn't lay me off." The poor girl went back, and the fellow said, "I thought that I fired you this morning." And she was crying and she said my mother said you didn't and my mother made me come back. So he said, "Go to work." So she kept her job. That wouldn't happen now. It makes me think of that man who fires the man who chews on breakfast cereal and makes so much noise.

NL: Oh yes, that commercial.

I knew Sue Ravis, who used to live in the bungalow you talk about on Colonial Springs Road – and she told the story of Hires coming and paying her and her brothers some money to open up the gates so they could drive up to their property.

HD: I don't know that – that was those stone pillars there. I don't remember what the gate looked like. It was Hires' gate – I guess they didn't want to get out . I don't think I've ever seen Mr. Hires. That was – I can't tell you – it's been so long ago.

Then people came up on Valley Forge Mountain. The kids are mischievous. They broke the glass of the spring and broke all the glass tubes and water is no good any more. They would have to clean it out. They used to have fires up in the woods. People would go hunting for arbutus and drop a cigarette or something and the ground was full of leaves and stuff that had fallen, and it would start it big fire. There was no way to get up there. They used to bring the fire truck right past mother and father's place and have a bucket brigade. That was the best they could do.

NL: I'm still thinking of things you did when you were growing up. What about the movies?

HD: When I was a kid, in the summertime, they used to have Valley Park there. They had a merry go round, they had the dance pavilion, and they had the lake and they had skeet balls – you shoot it like this and tried to get it in the thing – and they also had this theater open in the summer time. There were no walls that went all the way up. The walls went to where you sat and then it was open and then they had the roof. They used to have vaudeville there and they used to have movies. That was in the summer. In the winter we stayed home and did our homework.

NL: Did they have famous people come down there for vaudeville?

HD: I don't think so, and I would not have known it if they did. In Phoenixville, in the Colonial, they used to have vaudeville there, too. I don't know of any one famous there. But they were funny.

NL: Did you go into Phoenixville, to the Colonial Theater?

HD: When we had a chance to go with my brothers, or mother drove in. Then when I learned to drive – I learned to drive when I was 18 – then mother and I went once in awhile.

NL: Where did the streetcar go? Did you go to Phoenixville on the streetcar or other public transportation?

HD: I don't think we ever used it in the nighttime. We did in the day. It started down here across the bridge (near Route 23 and 252). It ran parallel to the bridge. It came up back behind the houses on the road there it crossed the road, and it came between these two house. (The Debus house and the house directly on route 23) Then it went on the left hand side of the road in front of the Holiday House, near the fire station.. Crossed over there, and went in back of where the new houses are. It went in back of Pickering School. And it came out near where you vote up there - the police station. It crossed the creek there, and I think it went up on the right hand side of the road to the light there. Then I don't know what happened.

NL: How much did it cost?

HD: I don't know. Maybe a nickel or a dime. They had thought of connecting it with the main line, going around the dam and route 252 but they never got enough money to do that.. They were going to connect it with a trolley that went down there.

NL: When did they pull the tracks out?

HD: Long before World War II. Maybe in the early 30s.

Then there was another railroad that went in the back here on Valley Forge Mountain. They had quarries back in the woods there. And they used to come down around here and go right by the bank and cross near the Methodist Church and cross the road and went back near the river. They had a crusher that crushed the stone. They had sandstone. I don't know who they sold it to. But that is what they did.

NL: That was long before Valley Forge Mountain came to be. Valley Forge Mountain came in the 60s

HD: I guess so. I was working at the post office. Some of the people are still there but most of them are gone.

NL: We need to stop now – our tape is running out. It sounds as though you had good times.

HD: Looking back, yes. At the time I didn't think it was so good – we were isolated. I'll tell you one thing. The people who owned this house were O'Connells. They owned the trolley.

Fred O'Connell went to school when I did. He was a brain. I guess they sent him to the little brick school. He was having physiology. He didn't know what "coagulation" was. So the teacher said you sit down and you learn that after school. And of course Fred couldn't stand being there after school so he studied and studied. At five minutes to four, just before school ended, Fred said, "Congratulations, Mrs. Graff." Mrs. Graff said, "What?" And Fred said, "Congratulations. That was the word that you said I had to study." He had the wrong word….

End of tape……

Interview 2 (final revision) – January 25, 2005
Interviewed by Nancy Loane
Transcribed by Nancy Loane

NL: This is Nancy Loane, and it is Tuesday, January 25, 2005. Today I will be interviewing Helen Debus. This is our second interview. She will be interviewed at her home.

Mrs. Debus opens by talking about the G-Lodge.

HD: When I first knew about the G–Lodge – there was a man who lived in the big house right beside it – it looks kind of ratty now, but it was a nice house. There is the G- Lodge and then the garage, and then there is a beat up old house that nobody takes care of. Somebody is living in it, though. Anyway, a man by the name of Jim Reifsynder owned it. Did I tell you about that?

NL: No.

HD: Well, he had those houses back there. It was an orchard. And it had – it was an apple orchard, I guess – and he also had strawberries. And the boys from Valley Forge used to go up and pick the strawberries. Did I tell you about that? And he paid them – this was years ago, when I was little – a nickel a quart. That was a good price. I'm not sure, but I think that the kids ate more than they picked. He didn't say a word about it. He let them pick.

He's the one who built the lodge there. Underneath those shingles, it's a log cabin. And the lower end of it there is a fire place. It is workable – they have too many tables close to it now – but it is workable. I suppose that kept the place warm. He just sold ice cream, soft drinks, candy – I think he did it mostly for the kids around there because there was nothing else around there. He had one daughter.

I don't know whether he died or he just sold it. I think he must have died and his wife sold it. They sold it to people by the name of Gordon. Years ago there was a company in Norristown that sold ice cream. It was Hannaway and Gordon. Something happened. Years ago they used to wrap ice cream bars in aluminum foil. Whatever they put in it – somebody ate one and whatever it was in the wrap seeped into the ice cream and the person died. They went out of business.

NL: This Hannaway and Gordon Company?

HD: Yes. This Gordon came up and bought Jim Reifsynder's place, and that's when the G-Lodge came to be.

NL: When was this?

HD: Oh, approximately…let me see…I have no idea when the Hannaway and Gordon thing was, they were in Norristown and I don't know – Gordon came up here, I would say, maybe in the early 30s. That is just a guess. Then one of the Gordon's – whether it was the man himself I don't know – married Nelly Roland. They ran it until the Dreibulbus family got it. This man's father was a real estate agent in Spring City. He had the nicest disposition. He was the nicest person. He used to come down on Saturdays and be the cashier there. I think he was the one who dragged the people in, because he was just so nice. He must have sold a lot of houses, because he was a nice person. He died,

and Dennis kept it. His name is Dreibulbus**.** I just thought of my brother Lardy, because I know what he would have called him – Dribblepuss.

NL: When did Mr. D here take over from the Gordon's?

HD: It was around the time I got married, in 1946.

No, somebody else got it first. A woman who had blond hair, and it was up like this. She had the most atrocious coffee I ever tasted.

Willard (Mrs. Debus' husband) used to stop down – if he was shopping or something in Phoenixville he would stop by for a cup of coffee – and of course he filled his coffee up with cream, and then put sugar in it, and he couldn't taste it. A couple of times I was with him – I had my coffee black with sugar – it was awful. Every time he asked if I wanted to stop at the G-Lodge I said, "I'll stop." I'd forget about the coffee and ordered it. I guess he got sick and tired of me talking about it so he said to me, "If you don't like it why do you order it?" I would say that I forgot. Somebody told me who worked there that he never changed the coffee in the pot. She just kept adding to it all the time.

No…..Then it must have been in the middle 50s or 60s that Dreibulbus got it. Anyway, they changed the coffee.

Somebody told me they stopped serving the dinners at night. It's a shame, because I do think that it's busy – if you get there at 12 o'clock you can't get a parking place. If nothing else it was good advertisement. He likes his help, but I don't think they like to work at nights. I don't know if they hired anybody else for night. I suppose it was too much book work or something.

NL: What is the connection with the G-Lodge restaurant and the building right next door, which is a garage?

One of the Gordon's sons, he owned the whole thing. And Denny used to rent (the present G-Lodge) from him. Then he sold it to Dennis.

NL: You say that you enjoy going to the G-Lodge for lunch. Any funny stories about the place?

HD: I don't know about a funny story, but I'll tell you something. One day – this was about 2 years ago I guess – and they were eating there. It was around 11 o'clock I guess. I hadn't gotten up there yet. I don't know – I guess it was a Wednesday. When I get my hair done I get it done and then I stop right down there. I do the same thing when I go over to church on Friday and then go straight on up.

My niece came in, and she told me not to be surprised when I went to the G-Lodge. Some woman with a SUV or something like that put her foot on the brake and the transmission went out and she went right through the window. One woman was really

hurt. She went to the hospital. I think they sued because they didn't have one of those restraining posts up. He still doesn't have it up, I don't know why. That woman was in the hospital for months. She was sitting right at the window. The car came right in and hit her. I guess she was the only one who got hurt. I went up afterwards. They were still carrying on. They still had to serve the people in there. They were all upset about it.

NL: Anything else you would like to share about the G-Lodge?

HD: The chef is also an artist. The window before it was converted, they left the door there and closed the bottom part of it. He painted a profile of George and Martha in oils. I said to him, "Bob, you know, she is not very pretty and I always thought that Martha was nice looking." He said that it wasn't really her. When they changed it all, they took the picture out. I asked him where the picture was, and I think he said that he still had it. I asked him what he was doing, working in a place like this as he was such a good artist? He said that if you are not very well known, they do not pay artists.

He does beautiful work. You could tell it was George. Knowing it was George, you could tell that it was Martha, too. I don't think that George played around much. I think he stayed with her. I read a book about that once. You never heard much about him. I like to read Mary Higgins Clark. She writes mystery stories. But she wrote one about George and Martha. Did you read it?

NL: Oh yes.

HD: I thought it was the nicest story I have ever read. I have it and I bought it for people.

NL: It was the first one she wrote. I have it, too….anything more about the G-Lodge?

HD: They always give me a birthday cake. I know a lot of people there. One day a man came in there – he had curly gray hair – and he said, "Hello, Mrs. Debus. You don't know me, do you?" I said that I didn't. He said that he was Orville Roberts. Orville Roberts when I worked over at the gas station was just a kid. He had black curly hair. He used to stop over at the gas station. I kept candy for them. I couldn't sell ice cream because we had to work around the cars. I bought candy because I could buy it wrapped, and it was for the kids. He used to stop by there and get candy. I said, "You are a little different when I saw you, your hair is a little different." And he said, "Yes, it is." The men they turn gray and they grow beards, and I don't know them. The women when they grow up all have blond or red hair or something.

I think he told me he lived in Phoenixville now. His grandfather was master of the hounds up at Clothier's. His grandfather. My father knew him very well because my father was horse-y also. The grandfather's name was Orville. His father's name was – well I can't think. He lived at the top of the hill off of route 23 before you get to the Girl Scouts. I don't know where they live now.

NL: One of my next interviews is going to be with Anita Packard Montgomery who is a granddaughter of the Clothier's.

HD: I knew Mrs. Clothier. She used to stop in the post office. The post office was right here. They had a metal shelf you know, they had a window and a shelf hanging out. She would wait there for you. Dot Rowan used to work there. She told me that when Mrs. Clothier came in to buy stamps or wait for the mail she would be like this, tapping her fingers on the metal stuff. Her daughter, Mrs. Packard, she was nice. I don't know if she is still living or not. Mrs. Packard was nice. She used to stop in, too. She had a house on part of the estate. I think it was for sale recently. She sold it, and went to live in the apartments on the left on Valley Park Road.

NL: Let's see…you talked about the G-Lodge, and the post office. What about the homes about the area? Who owned the big homes that are on the north side of route 23?

HD: The one with the mansard roof there – it was vacant for so long – the park owns it now – I don't know who owned it. The one right beside it is fairly new; that belonged to Fred Midgley before they moved up the mountain. The one right beside it is a white house with shutters. A dentist by the name of Dr. Nyce owned that. He had one daughter, by the name of Ruth. She and I used to go swimming down by the creek.

The house down below that, I don't think it is very old, was owned by an Englishman by the name of Lund. He owned the mill that was at the foot of the hill. Did you know there was a mill by the foot of the hill (intersection of Route 23 and 252)?

NL: I did.

HD: He owned that. The one below that is a gray house – a dreary looking house, but a great big one – when I was growing up the Superintendent of the park lived there. Their name was Shea. They were Swiss. He died, and his widow lived there until she died. I guess the park took over then. She was kind of a – not really likeable. She pushed herself around a bit.

There was another house down below that, owned by the name of Bean, Cap Bean. I don't know what happened to it, whether it burned down or what. But then he built the little yellow one that is on the corner, and he lived there with his daughter.

The green one that was all the way in the back – now let me see. Rowan's owned that. Mrs. Rowan and my mother were very good friends.

NL: You mentioned a Rowan at the post office, too.

HD: That was her daughter-in-law. Roy Wilkerson asked me – he was the post master – he asked me if I would help out at the post office. And I did it. She left her husband and went to Florida. Then he asked me if I would stay on. He didn't get anybody else for a while. After a while he got a man from Phoenixville, but he only wanted him part time

because he wasn't able to do the books. I couldn't do them either, I wasn't a mathematician and I wasn't good at it, but he got sick and he showed me how. As I said, when you have to do something, you do it. It doesn't mean that you are good at it, but you do it.

NL: What about the home on this side of the street? They talk about the iron masters house…

HD: I don't know who lived there first. I do remember a man by the name of Alfred Bean who lived there. We kids had cherry trees when we were little. I never picked many, if I could reached the lower ones I did, but mother told us that we could sell them. So I remember I went down there and asked Mr. Bean if he would like to buy some. He asked what kind they were and I said that they were sweet cherries. We didn't have any of the sour ones. He ate a handful of them and then he said that he didn't want to buy any. I went home and told mother and she said never to go down there anymore.

There were the three Beans. Cap – his name was Marion – he had been in the army and they called him Cap. And then the one whose name was Frank, and then Alfred.

NL: Did you hear the story about this being the iron master's house for the forge at Valley Forge?

HD: There used to be a forge at Valley Forge, and I guess that is where it got its name. My father told them where the forge was – well his father told him. My father's father was born before the Civil War, and that wasn't too far away from the Revolution. Grandfather told him approximately where it was. When Mr. Shea was down there they told him where it was. I think they used to have a bridge across. When the national took over they took the bridge town. Father built the retaining wall along the creek. He was another one who nobody told him how to do things, he just did them.

NL: Your father built the wall along Valley Creek?

HD: Yes. I think other people have worked on it since. He did it in the beginning. I don't think he put the bridge across, but they took it down. That's where the forge was.

NL: Were there other things around here that your father built?

HD: Nothing important. He built a couple of spring houses, and he built this front porch here. If he needed to do something, he did it.

NL: What about the homes that are right up here along Oakwood? If you go up Davis Road, past the gas station, you get to Oakwood. You can turn either right or left on Oakwood. There are some homes along there.

HD: Let's go down this way and we'll turn to the right. The first house on the corner (1 Oakwood) belongs to my nephew. That used to be a chicken house to the big house (the

big house is 50 Colonial Springs). Mr. Welbank lived there (in the big house) and my aunt kept house for him. He had a spot on his lung and he couldn't stay down in Philadelphia anymore, so he came up here.

The white house (9 Oakwood) was built by a woman of the name of Mrs. Lunkenheimer. They used to live in Philadelphia. Mr. Welbank owned all the property on that side of the road. He sold her some property.

The next house (11 Oakwood) is a little bungalow. That belonged to my husband's aunt. That was built I guess maybe about 1918, 1920 – something like that. The bungalow was one of the first prefab houses. It is called an "Aladdin." It came in pieces and parts. My father's uncle was a carpenter – he lived over in Audubon. He put it up for her.

The house after (15 Oakwood) that is owned by the name of Creed. He has one of the restaurants down in King of Prussia. No, it's not called Creed's – well, I'll think of the name of that, too.

That house used to belong to Cap Bean. Up in the woods there were quarries. The quarry people, I guess, it was Cap Bean, owned that house. Mrs. Reifinger lived in that with her son. She was a seamstress and could look at a picture and make a dress. Many a dress she made for me when I was little.

They had a little shed and the living room and then upstairs. They had another room on the other side. There was a black man by the name of Dill who lived there. He and his wife. They used to take in children – Children's Aide Society. They adopted two, Henry and Mildred. They didn't get paid for them, but for the others they got paid.

There were two doors, the door on this left and the door on the right. They have fixed it. It doesn't look now like it did then. It was an old fashioned house that went straight up. There were two doors, one for each side of the house.

Mr. Dill had a little yellow dog. It had a collar on it and a little metal tag that said, "I'm Nathan Dills's dog, whose dog are you?" They were nice people. Very nice.

The one across the corner (19 Oakwood) – a man by the name of Highley lived there with his wife. Their children were grown up. He also worked for the crusher down there – there was a railroad track than came back of the house here (1880 Valley Forge Road) and it went around between the houses, crossed over the road by the Methodist Church, kept right on going, crossed route 23, and went down by the river. I guess it stopped operation before WWII. I guess maybe – it might have been long before that. It might have been 1930.

I was telling you about Mr. Highley. I used to – my father had a cow and they used to buy milk off of us. I used to deliver milk to them. I remember he wasn't very well. He was lying on the sofa, and mother said that when you go there every morning ask him how he

feels. And I would go there, and I would say, "Good morning, Mr. Highly. How do you feel?" And he would go like this (rub them together) with his fingers.

NL: What was he doing?

HD: He was showing me that he felt with his fingers. I got so sick of doing this that I thought, "I am going to fix this." So I stood outside of his door and practiced, "Good morning, Mr. Highly. How are you?" And I repeated it to myself and I stepped inside the door and I said, "Good morning, Mr. Highly. How do you feel?" I could have kicked myself!

Of course, they died. A man by the name of Lemen took over - he bought a lot of that ground up there. Paul Lemen. During WWII.

Then the other two houses – there was a little house that Ruth Richards owned (25 Oakwood) . She owned the big house and there are two little ones. Mr. and Mrs. Nixon lived in the big house. They were English. Mrs. Nixon and Mrs. McIntrye up in Jug Hollow and Mrs. George Orner were sisters. Mrs. Nixon had taken in two of her nephews, she never had any children.

Albert lived in one of the little houses.

Somebody by the name of - what was her name – she was deaf - she used to come over to our house. She lived in the first little house. And she used to talk real loud. She used to ask mother to play some music, and mother couldn't play – but she knew that this woman couldn't hear. So mother began to play and started singing away. When she stopped Bella Curry - I remembered her name – said, "That was nice, that was nice." Of course mother was only fooling. Mother was a little crazy.

And then after that there were no houses. There is one on the corner. (right hand side of Oakwood as you go up the hill – 50 Oakwood) I think the man whose son plays baseball – the son is Mike Piazza – he bought that now.

The one on the lower right (right hand side of Oakwood, just after Davis) has just been built recently – I would say within the last twenty years.

The next house on the lower right (35 Oakwood) – a barber by the name of Dewees had it when I was growing up. He had a lot of children. Bill used to play with my brother. Dewees left there and went to Phoenixville. I don't know the people who have the house now.

NL: What about the home that is directly across from the present post office on route 23?

HB: That burned, that burned down. I don't know if Mrs. Bush was still living or not. She had two daughters, and they both taught school in Norristown. They built this other house. One teacher was the sweetest person and the other was a grump. When I worked at

the gas station they - their names were Esther and Emma Bush - used to stop and get gas there on their way down to teach. One time the grumpy one asked me how my mother was. I jumped, because she never spoke to me. They had gas stamps at the time, and she would give me the stamps and the money. The other one was nice. Miss Emma died, and Miss Esther still lived there alone. She got a little strange. She had family that were buried down in the Port Kennedy Presbyterian Church. One time she drove down there and parked her car to go in, to visit the graves, and she came out and forgot where she parked her car. She walked home and bought herself another car. She got somebody to live with her for a while. The woman she got to live with her was just as crazy as she was.

It was a nice house when the Bush's had it. This woman came to live with their brother - he came up here and was living here. He died and he left the house to her. She had all kinds of things. She had tires out and it was a mess. I was surprised that the park didn't stop her from doing it. But they say that it isn't a very nice house now.

NL: What about the properties along Valley Park Road? Do you know anything about them? There are several homes around the corner of Valley Park Road and Jug Hollow.

HD: That one house on the left (590 Valley Park), just before you go up Jug Hollow – people by the name of Britain used to live there. They had a little store – you know, just a little store with candy and bread and things like that that the people up on Jug Hollow needed. Then when they died, I don't know who…that has been sold several times. It used to be that the people came down over the hill, and they would go fast, and missed the corner, and they ended up on their porch. So many times…it a wonder that somebody didn't get killed there. Then somebody put that retaining thing there. And now it is all right.

When I was young a man by the name of Jackie Myers had the next house (30 Jug Hollow). There were several Myers' around her. Jackie lived up there. I don't know too much about him except that his people lived in New Jersey – I don't know which – lived in one of the places like Sea Isle City. His father owned practically all of Sea Isle City. He had Jackie and I don't know how many more. His wife died and he married somebody else. This other woman had another child and when Jackie's father died she gave all the money to her own child. The rest of them didn't have anything. It was years ago and people could get away with that. How he got up here I don't know. But when he got up here he was a drunk.

He had one son who was a beautiful mason and he did good work. He drank a lot, too. Now Harry wasn't a drunk but he was – during prohibition – he made the stuff. You wouldn't think that something like that would be around here, would you? But of course where things are to be sold, they do it.

The house beside it used to be a mill (40 Jug Hollow). There is a mill race that runs below it. Maybe the owners of the mill owned the big house opposite (15 Jug Hollow) – I don't know. Water ran down by it and under the road and somewhere down there was a

millrace. I don't know how it turned into a house. Ed Ray owned it and he had a lot of children.

One of his sons was named Ed – he was a good man. He was the one who kept me out of trouble at the gas station. Before he was married, Ed lived for a while by himself in a trailer on my brother's property. Ed was nice to the animals. He used to feed the raccoons. During WWII he used to stop down, and I guess maybe he was married then, he used to stop and get gas and he had a pet raccoon in the car with him. You know raccoons are smart, and he had a model T, and the raccoon used to stand up there and push the horn. He got it because he was a woodsman and he cut down trees and sold the wood to the government during WWII. When he cut down a tree he found a nest of raccoons. I think the mother got killed, and he took the young ones to raise. He took them and fed them, and I guess they all disappeared into the woods but this one stayed with him. I don't know what ever happened to it.

I guess he got something on his circulation, because he lost part of his leg. I guess he was in the 70s, and then he died.

My father's real mother lived in one of the Jug Hollow houses – the people's name was Fox. I don't know who has it now, but there are a lot of vines and things growing on it.

My father's step-mother lived in another house, I don't know who lives there now. There was a kitchen and a living room, and rooms upstairs, and a porch, but it's grown up now. There is a spring house to that house. It had a gate that went down, and then there was a spring and then that house.

NL: I heard a story that one of the houses on Jug Hollow was where General Washington's farrier – the man who took care of his horses – lived. Did you ever hear that?

HD: Who told you that?

NL: I don't even know.

HD: It's possible. I'm not saying that it wasn't true, I never heard of that. I wonder who said it –

NL: As you are coming up Jug Hollow on the right, there are several homes on the right, just before you come to Oakwood. They sit back off the road. It looks like a farm house…

HD: There is a house that sits back off of Jug Hollow, on the right, on a hill (35 Jug Hollow). As long as I have known that was a McIntyre house. Also across the road. It's only a small house. It is right after - the golf course is right above it.

I hadn't been in that house for a long time, and I was in it about a year ago. It doesn't look like much from the outside. Ruth McIntyre Stewart has a couple of goats, and beautiful flowers, and a pond back there. You wouldn't think it from the road. It's so pretty back there. She had a porch there, and she had the porch all screened in so the little goats couldn't get in.

NL: I hear the name McIntyre a lot. The McIntyre family must be part of this history.

HD: A lot of these people came over during the Irish potato famine. I know my mother's family came over during the potato famine. That was around 1850. My mother's people were along in Malvern and Frazer.

The McIntyre's – I think Al was the first one. I have a McIntyre living in that house. (directly in front of her home, on route 23).

NL: Anything else you want to say about Jug Hollow and the other homes along there?

HD: When you go down Oakwood and cross Jug Hollow – you know all of the houses there? Harry Hartshaw lived there. His daughter married a man by the name of Faddis. I guess she lived up there because I went to school with her daughter. She married a McIntryre, no relation to these McIntyres.

I was talking to the girl who helps me with the cleaning. She is related to the McIntyres. I said that the Davis' are the only ones in Valley Forge who are not related to the McIntyres.

NL: Do you think that I could talk to one of the McIntyres?

HD: Maybe Ruth. Dorothy just died recently – a month ago. Maybe you could talk to Ruth. She lives in the house I told you about. She has sheep – whether she does now I don't know. She gave me a white cat, and it just died. Mother had a white cat when I was little.

Mr**.** Tindle, who owned the farm near the covered bridge (Valley Forge Farm), father worked for him. They had kittens – Mr. Tindle asked father if he would kill one of the kittens with short hair, because he couldn't sell him. Father said that he had just gotten married and asked if he could take the kitten home with him. Mr. Tindle said go ahead and take her. She was just a kitten when we got her.

At Helen McAleer's place (140 Oakwood Lane) there was a driveway that went back to a little house where Mrs. Johnson lived.(Small house on right hand side of Continental Drive) She raised these dogs. I rarely went into the living room. Went you went in there was a little sun place. She had a fireplace, and it was a corner fireplace. I had never seen one like that. I don't know how long it was there. Mrs. Johnson said that during the Revolution there was a charcoal pit, but she never got to showing me where it was. She

had this little Scottie who she used for breeding purposes. When she was no longer able to have pups, she asked mother if she wanted her. She was the sweetest little thing. If she did anything bad she put her little paw up like his. She died of a heart attack. Even the cows – we had a cow who used to bawl if she didn't see mother. She didn't like father, but all the animals loved mother. She loved animals. Our dog was named Silver. Father used to sell her pups.

NL: What other kinds of dogs did Mrs. Johnson raise?

Did she raise collies?

HD: She had small dogs – maybe a Sheltie.

NL: Someone told me that someone had a dog that was the inspiration for Lassie. Did you ever hear that?

HD: Never heard that.

I don't remember seeing any Collies there. I never heard that story.

NL: That house is still there.

HD: If you find a house with a corner fireplace, you'll know that is the place. I never saw a corner fireplace before.

NL: The other thing, when you were talking about the farm property on the corner of Oakwood and Jug Hollow– did they have a house back there. A white house?

HD: Yes, it was all the way back. Only builders tear down houses. People by the name of DeSanno owned it. They had mills up in Phoenixville. I forget what kinds of mills they were. They gave a lot of work to people in Phoenixville. Now there is nothing doing up there. The iron works – of course that's what kept Phoenixville – that was there during the Civil War.

They did make Majolica – I thought I had a piece of Phoenixville Majolica, but I was disappointed when I found out it wasn't. My aunt gave it to me. (Takes piece from cabinet) It doesn't have any antique value. When she gave it to me it was a mess – the spout was broken and there was a crack. I don't know where she got it. I had it restored. He told me it wasn't Phoenix Majolica. I was disappointed. I don't know – I could get away with saying that it was perfect – but it wasn't. It cost me three or four hundred dollars to get it done.

I want somebody to go up with me to have some things appraised.

This is a syrup jug. My father's aunt gave this to me.

NL: I love the colors of it. Do you remember using it?

HD: Oh, no. I don't know how you would use it – I don't know how you would clean it.

NL: What is that piece?

HD: What do they call that? My mother used to use it to put applesauce in it. What is it called? Carnival glass! That's it!

I was never much for collecting – I like furniture better than the dishes and plates.

The reason I kept this – it's iron stone – when we first moved here there was a dirt cellar, and the heater was right down at the bottom of the steps. I saw something there and I had a trowel and I started digging. And I found this plate. There was something else there that felt like a box. Something told me not to touch it. It's still there. It's cemented over. I wish I hadn't succumbed to my inhibitions.

NL: You found that under the dirt in the cellar?

HD: I got this out. It's not worth anything.

NL: I don't know. It might be very old. What a surprise that must have been to find it.

HD: What I'm trying to do – I have a book, and I'm trying to write in what I have and where I got it.

NL: That will be very interesting. Thanks for the interview!