

## DENNIS HOWARD

Interviewer: Nanette Grygier

Interviewed on: January 2, 2004

**Interviewer:** Give your name and spell your last name and how old you are and what is your date of birth?

**Dennis Howard:** My name is Dennis Howard- H-O-W-A-R-D. I'm 59 years old and my birthday is September 26, 1944.

**Interviewer:** Where have you lived in Franklin Township and how long have you lived here in the township?

**Dennis Howard:** We moved to our present location at Howard's Falls in 1969 but we had moved back onto our family property and our family has lived here since approximately 1839.

**Interviewer:** What was your home like in the early years and how was it heated?

**Dennis Howard:** Sure. My Great-great grandparents moved here, as I mentioned, in 1839. By this time, I have recollection that my Grandfather was living here. His name was Levi and his wife's name was Mattie Hinds. My first recollection is probably about in the 1950s. My Grandparents were still farming here. They had dairy cattle; they had chickens, turkeys, ducks, and goats. Franklin Township in the 1950s was a very rural area. Electricity had only come here about 10-20 years earlier than that. Many of the roads were dirt roads. Our road, Francis Road and Falls Road both were dirt roads in the 1950s. So, those were some of my early recollections of the area.

**Interviewer:** When did the homes in this area get the electricity, telephones, televisions, washing machines, and refrigerators and did the neighborhood have someone who had the first car or truck?

**Dennis Howard:** I have photographs of the area from the 1920s. Certainly, by the 1920s automobiles were prevalent here. I have photographs of my Grandfather and my Uncles with delivery trucks and such here in the area. Rural electrification came into Franklin Township in the 1930s and 1940s. By the time I have recollection there was electricity. My Grandmother liked to cook on a wood-burning stove in the kitchen. To this day I have memories of her cooking holiday dinners on that wood stove. Even though they had a gas stove, she actually preferred the wood stove to cook on. I think people in those days were much more self-sufficient. Certainly, my Grandfather farmed here until late in his life. My Uncles and my Father were part of really, an extended family business. My Father owned a meat market in Erie. My Uncle owned a diner. And much of the produce from my Father's meat market and from my Uncle's diner was grown here, by my Grandfather, on this farm. And so, you had people that kind of worked together in extended families. Certainly over the period of the 1930s with the Depression, families stayed very close together in the township. We have records of family reunions, etc. that were very large gatherings at that time. Many people in the township intermarried. We are related to many people in the township.

I think these extended families really helped each other through periods of economic difficulty and through periods of family crisis.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember who might have had the first truck or automobile in the area?

**Dennis Howard:** No. Other than to say I have pictures of my Grandfather and a Model T Ford. My assumption is that automobiles came very early into the township. I also have recollections of old tractors on my Grandfather's farm and on adjoining farms. The citizens of the township really took advantage of modern inventions when they could.

**Interviewer:** Leads us into the next question. Your fondest childhood memories, a particular season of the year, or a particular gift, that might have been homemade or store bought?

**Dennis Howard:** In terms of the seasons of the year, Franklin Township I think is probably world renown for serious winter weather. We have our share of it here, for sure. In the time that I've lived here and visited with my Grandparents when I was younger, there are some memorable occasions. I recall my parents talking about the winter of 1944, as particularly bad. They were coming out here to visit my Grandparents. I was less than one year old. They got stuck on the way here and my Grandfather actually came with a team of horses, hitched onto their car, and brought them out here to the farm that winter of 1944, by pulling the car with his team of horses. Another particularly bad winter was the winter of 1956. It was at Thanksgiving when we were all planning to come out here to the farm for Thanksgiving dinner. The Erie area was hit by a major snowstorm, probably the most snowfall the county has ever received in one 24-hour period. There were literally two to three feet of snow fallen overnight. We never did make it to Thanksgiving dinner here on the farm. We wound up at home having, of all things, hotdogs for Thanksgiving dinner. (smiling) The other particularly notable winter, after we had moved out here, was the winter of 1977. That was particularly bad in Franklin Township. Our road was closed for a few days because the township plows could not get through the snow. Ultimately, they brought high lifts in to clear the snow on Francis Road and on Falls Road so that the township trucks could get in to start plowing the snow. So, the winter of 1977 was particularly bad and stands out in my mind. In contrast to that, the summers here are very delightful. We certainly enjoy the change of the seasons from spring and summer and into fall. On balance, considering the weather in other parts of the world and other parts of the country, really, Franklin Township probably has the best balance and change of seasons of anywhere I know.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a memorable gift given to you by family or passed down through the generations, a family heirloom or something of importance that stands out?

**Dennis Howard:** The things I treasure most are the early photographs of my family. We have photographs that date back into the middle to late 1800s. Some of our photographs are on glass plate; others are tintage. Others are of family gatherings, etc. One thing I'll note is that in many instances, people at that time took the time to write on the back of the photograph, who the people were. I have a picture of my Grandmother, for instance, on her sixteenth birthday because her Aunt took the time to write that on the back of the photograph at the time it was taken. Of all of our treasures here with respect to family, it's the photographs that we have and the ability to look back in time at our ancestors and our family and get a sense of who those people were, and what life must have been like here before electricity came. As I mentioned, electricity came into the township in the 1930s and 1940s. My family had moved here by 1839, and when you think about that, the family lived here in Franklin Township for over a hundred years without electricity. When you think about how we depend on electricity today, and how we grumble a bit when the electricity goes out for a few hours, can you imagine if electricity went out for a hundred years? You have no running water; you have no modern furnace or dishwasher, or refrigerator, or lighting, no Internet, no telephone. I can recall my Dad and my Grandfather telling me that a journey into Erie was an all day affair. It took most of the morning to get there, you do your business in Erie for an hour or so, and it would take all the rest of the day to get back home again. In those days, in a sense, life was simpler, I'm not sure it was any harder, I think we just have a different balance of things today than then. I know that we've kind of sat around by candlelight when the power goes out and talked about what it must have been like back when there was no such thing as electricity. Most of the residents in this township over the years spent their entire lives without electricity. And it's something that kind of sticks in my mind. The township before 1830 was very sparsely settled. And there are a couple reasons for that. One, to the north of Franklin Township, is Elk Creek. And Elk Creek, as it moves from east to west across Erie County cut a very deep ravine. Now we conveniently travel over Elk Creek by bridges, but of course, in those days, there were no such thing as bridges in this part of the county. So, people coming into the township literally could not come in from the north because of the great ravine of Elk Creek. So, most of the people coming into Franklin Township in the early 1800s, came in from the south. About 1810, Pennsylvania cut what is known as the State Road from eastern Pennsylvania all the way across the northern tier of Pennsylvania to the Ohio border. That was known as the State Road. The State Road was built between 1800 and 1820. And in fact, a segment of the old state road is now what we refer to in Franklin Township as Old State Road. That was the State Road. After that road was constructed, people were able to get into this part of Erie County. People began to settle here in the 1830s. One of the first people to settle in this area was a gentleman by the name of James Ryan. The Ryan's were from

Pennsylvania, probably the eastern portion of Pennsylvania. Jim Ryan came into this area in the 1830s along with another gentleman by the name of Fletcher. Today as you drive north out of Franklin Township on Route 98, and as you go down through the valley of Elk Creek, to local people, that hill is still known to this day as Ryan Hill. It was so named from the very early settler, James Ryan. My family came to Franklin Township in the 1830s also. My family came from Grafton, Vermont. There were two brothers, Henry and Levi Howard. Both Henry and Levi were brothers, sons of David Howard. David Howard also lived in Grafton, Vermont who had been killed in the War of 1812 in the Battle of Plattsburgh, New York. Both Henry and Levi were raised by their Grandfather Ziba Howard from Grafton, Vermont who was a soldier of the Revolution. And they spent years with Ziba Howard. Their mother was Clarissa Smith. Her brother, Elijah Smith also settled in this area and he was a stonemason. He taught the Howard boys the trade of working with stone. One of the reasons that Henry and Levi Howard settled where they did in Franklin Township is because of the outcroppings of sandstone here and they became quarrymen. And for many years operated a stone quarry here at Howard Falls, from which the stone for the Erie County Court House was cut and hauled to Erie by oxen. Erie County Court House was built in the 1850s from the sandstone taken from Howard Quarry right here at Howard Falls. (smiling)

**Interviewer:** Excellent! We need to know whom you married. How did you meet your spouse? Tell us about your wedding. Was there a honeymoon? Where did you live when you were first married? What were the names and birthdates of each of your children?

**Dennis Howard:** I'll drop back a little bit from that question to say that, as I mentioned earlier, my Grandfather Levi Howard, lived here at Howard Falls at the time I was growing up. Levi farmed until he was in his nineties. Ultimately, he lived to be one hundred and one years old. My Grandfather having the longevity that he did, his sons didn't have the opportunity to take over the farm. I was actually born and raised in Erie. My Dad, as I mentioned earlier, had the meat market in Erie and we spent summers on the farm each summer. I moved out here in 1969. We both built a new home on the property. At the time in 1967, I married Linda Davis of Erie. Her and I moved out here and we had our first child here, Debra Howard in 1969. Subsequent to that, my first wife passed away in 1976 and I remarried Dianne Dobson in 1977. We were married at the Franklin Center Methodist Church in 1977. And subsequent to that, we had three additional children, Drew, Darren and Laura. Dianne and I actually on our honeymoon went to Hawaii and had a very nice time in Hawaii. (smiling) I think it began a sense with Dianne and I, a sense of travel. Since then, we've done extensive traveling worldwide. But, in experiencing other parts of the world, I always find myself, and I believe Dianne also, there's no better place to live than where we are in Franklin Township. I really do believe that. This is home. And so, my direct residence in Franklin Township, as I mentioned, began in 1968.

**Interviewer:** What schools do you remember existed in the township? Did someone in the family mention older schools? Where were they located? Do you remember some of the teachers? What was the highest grade you completed in your education? Do you have any contact with any of the students that you went to school with, and if so, where do they live now?

**Dennis Howard:** I'll mend the question a little bit by speaking a little bit from my recollection of discussions that I had with my Father and my Grandfather. Before General McLane School District was formed, there were a variety of small schools located across this portion of the county and in Franklin Township. In fact, there was a school located very close to where we live here at Howard Falls. It was located on Francis Road, about a quarter mile west of us. And that Falls School was your classic one-room schoolhouse. We have photographs of it. It was a wooden structure. In fact, most of my family went to school there. My Grandfather was a School Superintendent. My Aunt, and her brothers, including my Father, went to school there. Later, my Aunt taught school there, after she was in her twenties and ultimately became a schoolteacher all of her life. Many of the students in those days only went to school to the eighth grade. That was the case with my Father. After eighth grade, you were pretty much expected to help on the farm. It was thought you pretty much completed your basic formal education in those days. Some of my family did go on to higher education. My Aunt, who also went to the Falls School, ultimately wound up graduating from college and as I mentioned, became a schoolteacher for the rest of her life. There were opportunities for higher education. Some of my Great Aunts went to Edinboro University and in fact became on the faculty at Edinboro University. It's a mixed bag with respect to education in the area. Certainly, education was available to all residents of the township in the little one-room schoolhouses that were scattered across the area.

**Interviewer:** Since farming was the predominant occupation for your Father and Grandfather, can you remember the type of crops they planted? What animals they had? Did they have other farm-related businesses on the side? The type of equipment—the tractors, thrashers or planters, did they own them or did they share them with neighbors? How did they go about doing their butchering and preserving their meat?

**Dennis Howard:** Well, certainly the soils in Franklin Township are not well drained, there's a lot of clay in the township, and topsoil is generally 6-9 inches deep above the clay. So, it did not lend itself to the kinds of crops that maybe are raised in other parts of the county or the state. So, Franklin Township to a large extent the type of agriculture moved to raising livestock and dairy cattle, etc. The growing of some crops like hay and corn as I recall as a child, the hay was brought in on hay wagons, not baled, but put in the hay lofts as bulk material. Corn, a lot of it was gathered by hand and tied into bundles of stalks; the corn was picked off of it and put into corncribs. So, there was a lot of manual labor involved. I can recall that in the 1950s, much of the hay was harvested in bulk form by teams of horses and traditional hay

wagons. I think it was about the fifties and sixties that we started to see more mechanized equipment with respect to the gathering of crops and planting of crops and cultivating. But before then, a lot of it was done with manual labor. In context of our own Howard family, as I mentioned earlier, my Grandfather raised chickens and turkeys, etc. I have vivid recollections as a child in the 1950s of coming out here to the farm and helping my Father and my Grandfather slaughter chickens. We would do probably fifty chickens on a Saturday. We would heat up great tubs of water over wood fires and dip the chickens in to remove their feathers. And use the hot water to clean the chickens, etc. It was quite an industry for my family to raise chickens and for my father to sell chickens at his market in Erie. So, as a young child, I have vivid memories of chickens and plucking feathers! (smiling and laughing)

**Interviewer:** Do you remember them butchering any cattle and canning your Grandmother might have done or planting a garden?

**Dennis Howard:** Some of the things I also recall is my Grandmother churning butter. When I was very young, I remember her churning butter using a wooden vessel with a plunger to get the milk to curd. Later, in my teens, I recall that she moved to a mechanical device that separated the milk from the cream, using a centrifugal device. And also, her churning butter with an electric churn. Again, from the fifties into the sixties, it seemed that some of the traditional ways were starting to fall aside. Even people such as my Grandparents were beginning to use more modern types of equipment.

**Interviewer:** What businesses or professions would you remember from your parents or Grandparents that existed in the township? Any Proprietors? We're talking about the stone quarry of the Howards, but also sawmills or blacksmiths, cheese factories, other merchants, utilities, oil and gas, shoemaker, wagon maker, gristmill, physicians? Any horse or cattle dealers? Especially your stone quarry.

**Dennis Howard:** I can mention a whole bunch of stuff here. In the fifties as a child, I recall frequent trips in my Uncle's pick up truck to Franklin Center. Franklin Center at the time, in addition to what's currently there with the Methodist Church, also across the street had a Grocery Store/General Store and a Tavern. I recall many, many trips there to buy milk, and bread and soda, etc. at that General Store. It was really the place where people in the township came to get some of their consumable provisions. So, I have a fond recollection of that. The other very fond recollection I have is of a family just to the north of us called the Weiggels. The Weiggels had moved into the township by the early 1900s. And one of their sons was named Jacob Weasel. Jacob stayed on the farm throughout his life and was a Master Blacksmith. So, Jacob Weiggel and his machine shop, located just north of Howard Falls on Falls Road, was quite the place. He had a blacksmith shop. He had a machine shop. He tended to repair much of the equipment that had broken down in the township and farmers and other residents would bring things to him for repair. Jake was quite a self-

sufficient individual and just a master craftsman. He could repair just about anything, whether it be an engine or a wagon wheel, or something that had to be forged in the forge to duplicate a broken piece of equipment. I vividly recall Jake. And as a boy, I admired his skills. There were other stores in the township also. Just to the north of the township there was a store down toward Crane Road and Rt. 98 where we would occasionally go to buy bread and milk. There were other stores to the north in Fairview Township. And there was a little gas station at the corner of Sterrettania Road and Route 98. In those days, gas stations were few and far between. I can recall many times stopping at the gas station at Sterrettania Road and Route 98 on our way back into Erie from a visit to the farm, to gas up for that trip. The quarry, as I mentioned, the stone of course, for the Court House was taken from that quarry. After that, stone was taken out for many of the foundations and buildings in Franklin Township. The last stone to be taken out of that quarry was in the 1950s. Stone was taken out of that quarry in the 1950s and used for the construction of Interstate 90. Interstate 90 was constructed across northwest Pennsylvania in the late fifties and opened about 1961. Much of the stone used for the construction of that road was taken from the Howard Quarry. That was the last stone ever taken from that quarry.

**Interviewer:** What year was this?

**Dennis Howard:** 1959-1960.

**Interviewer:** The Quarry closed or stopped operating?

**Dennis Howard:** Yes, stopped operating, then after that.

**Interviewer:** Were there cattle dealers or horse dealers?

**Dennis Howard:** There were, but I don't have any recollection of those.

**Interviewer:** So, the quarry lasted how many years?

**Dennis Howard:** The quarry lasted about a hundred years, on and off. It had its start in the 1840s and as I say, the stone for the Court House was taken in the 1850s. Another thing happened here in the township in the 1860s and 1870s that is worth noting. At the time, in that period, oil had been discovered in Titusville, Pennsylvania. The oil was discovered in what is known as the Pennsylvania Third Oil Shale. That stone formation stretches into Erie County all the way in to Franklin Township. And so, there was much curiosity in the 1860s and 1870s with respect to the prospect that oil might lie underneath Franklin Township. My family, because they were quarry men, were quite skilled and knowledgeable of stone. In fact, we have reference books from the Pennsylvania State Geological Society referencing my Great-grandfather and his knowledge of the Pennsylvania Third Oil Shale. That caused several oil wells to be put down in Franklin Township during that period of time into the 1870s. In fact, there were two wells drilled near us between the Howard and the Mischler property here in Franklin Township. Most notably, there was also an attempt to sink an oil well at the base of Howard Falls down in the ravine. And we have reference to that in a State Geological Publication from the 1880s. None of those wells were successful. There

was never any appreciable oil found in Franklin Township. And it's predominantly because the Third Oil Shale, by the time it reaches Franklin Township, is a very dense rock. That same shale down around Titusville is very porous and can hold an ocean of oil. But no oil was ever found in Franklin Township. (smiling) But I think it's notable that many people did try to discover oil in Franklin Township in the late 1800s.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember where they did any trading? Also the price of commodities, like cheese, milk, bread, clothing? And what the land value was? With property with a home and dwelling on it, or just vacant property, what the prices might have been around the 1900s to 1930s?

**Dennis Howard:** In terms of some of those questions, I don't have very good recollection myself. Just throw in a couple numbers from my own experience to contrast them with what they are today. I can recall growing up as a teenager growing up in the 1960s, and paying 18 cents a gallon for gasoline. So, if in the 1960s, gasoline was 18 cents a gallon, I can imagine it was perhaps even less expensive in those days. The other thing I vividly remember, is when we first moved in this home we presently live in, we heated our home with fuel oil. The first time I had the fuel oil tank filled, which would have been in 1969, the fuel oil cost me 16 cents a gallon. Prices have changed since then, of course. With inflation, etc., a dollar then is not a dollar today. But still, items such as that were much less expensive than they are today on a strict dollar-to-dollar basis. The only other thing...I'll harken back to what I said. The major trading occurred in Franklin Center, there was a General Store there. There were people there who specialized in water wells. If you needed your well repaired, you could find someone in Franklin Center that would help you in that regard also. The other vivid recollection I have with respect to a trading center was in Sterrettania, which is located in McKean Township, just to the northeast of Franklin Township. There was a very large and prosperous General Store at Sterrettania. Sterrettania Road in those days stretching from Erie out here to the northern boundary of Franklin Township was a major thoroughfare. Interstate 90 of course, had not been built yet, nor had I 79. So, Sterrettania Road was quite a traversed road. And the General Store in Sterrettania was very, very prosperous.

**Interviewer:** What jobs did you have in the township through the years? Your parents, even though they were farmers, did they have to go to town, to Erie to do work as some did?

**Dennis Howard:** I'm going to expand this question a little bit and you can go back further. As I mentioned, two Howard brothers came to Franklin Township in the late 1830s. Both Howard brothers had very large families. In those days, the principle occupation in the township was farming. As you might imagine, as the children grew up, and wanted to make a livelihood themselves, there just wasn't enough land in the township in which all the children could in fact, find occupation. So, in the mid to late 1800s, many of the descendents of those two Howard boys, in fact, moved

out of town. Henry Howard, although there are still descendents of Henry Howard in Franklin Township, most notably in my memory is the Mischler family. The Mischler's are descended from Henry's daughter, Hannah who married a Mischler boy in the mid 1800s. The Mischler's were from Bern, Switzerland. Many of the descendents of Henry Howard are found in the Mischler family in Franklin Township. On my side of the family, I'm a descendent of the other brother, Levi Howard. And Levi had several children. All but my own twig of that family moved out of town. Many of the folks moved to Michigan. Michigan at the time had a lot of undeveloped land. You'll find many of the descendents of the Howard's are now located in Michigan. Others moved out West. I have information that shows that some people moved as far away as Colorado. The Gold Rush, in fact, took some people into the Yukon. Others moved down toward Pittsburgh. In those days, with large families and with limited ability to cultivate the land here, many people moved on. As agriculture became less important and other occupations, particularly in my own family, as I mentioned earlier, my father had a meat market in Erie and so, he was able to work with my Grandfather to grow produce here and market it in Erie. And so, you had people that really needed to move on. In my particular case, I was raised in Erie, and only after my Grandparents passed away, did we move back out here to Franklin Township.

**Interviewer:** What was your particular employment and hourly wage, where did you work outside the township? Your parents, how did they move around...car, horses?

**Dennis Howard:** In my particular instance, I was born and raised in Erie. Being in Erie, I was able to take advantage of a good education system. After high school, I decided to continue my education. I did a few semesters at the Behrend Campus of Penn State in Erie. And subsequent to that, moved to State College, Pennsylvania and completed my undergraduate degree in 1967. After that, I was fortunate enough to get a job as a laboratory technician at Lord Corporation in Erie. And I have been with Lord Corporation ever since 1967. I am still employed at Lord Corporation and over the years, advanced at Lord Corporation to my present position as a Director of the Corporation. My wife, Dianne, I met at Lord Corporation in 1976. And Dianne is also employed at Lord Corporation and manages the corporate libraries. So, in my instance, we were able to take advantage, and in Dianne's instance also, we were able to take advantage of a good education system and ultimately get industrial employment in Erie. But in doing so, and with the advent of improved roads, etc. into the township, we felt compelled to move back to Franklin Township because we believe it is the best place in the world to live. (smiling)

**Interviewer:** Do you know any memories of WWI veterans or Civil War veteran stories that would have been passed down through the generations?

**Dennis Howard:** I have one...I have a letter that was written by my Uncle Paul who was in WWI. And it's a letter that was written to his Father, my Grandfather. WWI was over. He found himself still an enlisted man in the Army. He wrote

my Grandfather a letter, pleading for my Grandfather to send a letter to his Army Commander, telling the Army Commander that he was needed back on the farm again to harvest crops. I have to believe that my Grandfather must have written such a letter because shortly after that, my Uncle was dismissed from the Army. And did come back and moved back on the farm here in Franklin Township. So, again, it harkens back to a good reason to get dismissed from the Army in those days, was because of the manual labor required to harvest crops.

**Interviewer:** How many sons were able to work that farm? Were there other brothers?

**Dennis Howard:** Yes. My father was one of six boys. And probably in that day, that was an asset that would be envied by many, to have six sons all able to work the farm. It's interesting over the years, one of those sons died young, but the other five boys, even though they all went their separate ways, stayed very close. And as quaint as it may sound today, every Sunday we came out here to the farm, while I was growing up and living in Erie, all five of those sons, every Sunday afternoon, got together here on the farm and just spent the afternoon together. Month after month, year after year, as far as I can ever remember, we spent Sunday afternoons together, all five of those boys, on the farm. You never had to ask the Howard's what they were doing on Sunday afternoon! They all headed back to Franklin Township to spend time with their parents and their families. An interesting side note, of those five boys, I was the only descendent. I'm an only child, and none of the other boys ever had children. It's a very unusual situation. I only have one cousin on my Howard side and she is a girl from the one girl in the family. So there were six boys and a girl and there were only two grandchildren: myself and a girl from my Aunt Dorothy. (laughing) So, it's a good thing mechanized labor came around! Because the family would have certainly fallen on hard times! (laughing)

**Interviewer:** Do you know of the churches in Franklin Township and if you do, did you know of any circuit riders? Where did your family attend church, if at all?

**Dennis Howard:** My family for many years was closely affiliated with Girard. Girard in those days was a booming community. To many of the residents of Franklin Township, the closest major town was Girard. Many of the people were affiliated with the Girard area. My family went to church at the Girard Methodist Church. Then, later on, we became affiliated with the Methodist Church in Franklin Center. So, between Girard and Franklin Center, those tended to be the metropolitan areas where people tended to do business.

**Interviewer:** Do you have ideas of entertainment and recreation of your family in particular in the past years, such as Festivals, Fairs that would bring people together?

**Dennis Howard:** Well, a couple things there. One, family reunions were a big thing. The Howard family reunion in the early 1900s was quite an affair. It included the families of both the descendents of Henry Howard and of Levi Howard. And so, it included the Howard's, the Mischler's, the

Mathewson's, the Davis', and the Pieper's and it goes on and on...various families in Franklin Township that in one way or another were intermarried. And so, family reunions were a big thing. And we have records of the minutes of the meetings and who attended. We have photographs of the various reunions, etc. In addition, some people were affiliated with Dan Rice. Dan Rice was a circus promoter who wintered his circus in Girard, Pennsylvania. And many people of the general area were affiliated with the Dan Rice Circus. And I believe there probably was some entertainment there from that circus enterprise also, but I don't have any specifics on that.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any information about the State Game Lands, Erie County Sportsmen's League...any family activities? I think that was a yearly affair. I believe it ended in 1941.

**Dennis Howard:** My Uncles were strongly affiliated with the Erie Sportsmen's League. Some of the property here at Howard Falls had been leased to the Erie County Sportsmen's League. They raised various types of game birds here...pheasants, etc. There was quite a gathering here each year of Erie County sportsmen. There was a Club House here, etc. In fact, some of the fields behind our home still have wire in the ground from the areas where they raised pheasants and had to keep the pens covered with wire to prevent the birds from flying away. So, yes, Erie County Sportsmen's League had its Game Lands here and its summer gatherings here at Howard Falls.

**Interviewer:** The Mischler's asked me to ask you if you remember any of the activities there, as a child, if you attended any of those with your Grandparents when you might have visited here. Would your Grandparents have spoken about this or any other activities like greased pig contests and things like that?

**Dennis Howard:** I don't have any specific knowledge in that respect. We do have photographs of this area during the heyday of the Erie County Sportsmen's League. And it shows the extensive area in which they bred and raised various types of game birds. But I don't have specific recollection or knowledge of those activities.

**Interviewer:** Did you know anything about the politics in the area? Do you remember family members from past generations speaking about the twenties or thirties?

**Dennis Howard:** The only recollection I have there is that my Grandfather was on the School Board and I mentioned that earlier. So, that's my only recollection.

**Interviewer:** How do you remember from family the people involved in the local politics, school directors and such, and constables possibly and if anyone from this township possibly went on to high political office? The names of the township roads if you remember the road names and how they were changed and why because some names have been changed over the generations.

**Dennis Howard:** Sure. Well the first part of your question is easy. I don't have any recollection of any political

personalities nor any that may have achieved higher offices over the years. So, I am going to pass on that. I believe that the second part of your question was associated with township roads. Well many of the roads in Franklin Township are named after early settlers. Certainly, Francis Road running east to west across the western part of the township. The Francis Road was named after the Francis family. Several people by the name of Francis had moved into the township by the 1850's from New York State. And so, the Francis Road was named after the Francis family. Likewise you have Fry and Silverthorn Road, also named after early settlers along with Crane Road and then even Carberry Road at the southern end of the township is named after an early settler that is found in the U.S Census records. Other roads in the township that I mentioned earlier, Old State Road, Old State Road is a remnant of the state road that was cut across Pennsylvania in the very early 1800. There is a common misperception that Old State Road was the northern boundary of Pennsylvania before the triangle was purchased from the state of New York to give Pennsylvania access to Lake Erie. That is a common misperception. In fact it is on the township website that Old State Road represents the northern boundary of Pennsylvania. That's not true. The original northern boundary of Pennsylvania was much further north. In fact, it cuts through the community of McKean today and across Fairview Township and onto the west to Ohio. So, the northern boundary of Pennsylvania in those days was to the north of Franklin Township and in fact was not Old State Road. The other roads I'll mention are Falls Road today running along what is now Howard Falls. In the 1800s, you will find that the road was called the Stone Quarry Road and it was apply named because it ran past the Stone Quarry. And in fact, Rt. 98 where it currently exists today is a modern placement of that road. Really Stone Quarry Road, which is now referred to as Falls Road, was in fact Rt. 98 until the bypass was constructed in the 30's and 40's that takes Rt. 98 through the township where it exist. The other thing that I will mention is that because of the stone quarry here at Franklin Township Rt. 98 running into Fairview was originally constructed so that they could haul stone out of that stone quarry to Erie along the lakeshore. And so, Rt. 98 north from Franklin Township was constructed because of the need to get the stone out of the stone quarry. In addition, the crossing of the Elk Creek was quite an accomplishment in the 1800's and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The current road across Elk Creek at Rt. 98 was constructed, in I believe, in the 1960s. Before then the crossing of Elk Creek at Rt. 98 was quite a serpentine affair with very, very dangerous curves as it meandered down one side of the ravine across the Elk Creek and made its way up the other side of that ravine. So, Elk Creek has always been quite a barrier to the residents of Franklin Township and it wasn't until more recent times that there was an actual convenient way to cross it. And the final road that I will mention is perhaps Crane Road. Crane Road again named after an early settler by the name of Crane. The Cranes were from Connecticut and after a brief stay in New York State moved into the area also.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember any major natural disasters? We talked about the winter of '77 of course and '56. We've covered the winter. And also, if you could elaborate more on the snow plowing during the winter storms, the amount of plowing or the lack of it and people being homebound. Particularly other seasons and anything notable that your grandparents memory, that you, yourself didn't experience, but they would constantly bring up at conversation.

**Dennis Howard:** Well the one thing that I will mention and it's within my recent memories, were the tornados that hit Albion and I believe that those tornados hit within the last 10 or 20 years. I don't recall the exact year when the tornados in Albion hit. The reason I mention that is because even though those tornados did not reach into Franklin Township, what we experienced through the next few days after that those tornados had passed was a great deal of debris that was being deposited in Franklin Township. There was aluminum siding from people's homes, fiber glass insulation was falling out of the sky, we even retrieved letters from (must have been in people's mailboxes), and I think that it kind of hit home to us the severity of that type of a storm and the fact that it could just lift materials into the sky and deposit it in the surrounding country side after the storm passed us. So we did experience the Albion tornado but more the aftermath of it than anything else. Other than that in the years that we have lived at Howard Falls, we've never had any close encounters with tornados. We have seen times of appreciable rainfall but nothing that really ever bothered us. The only other thing that we have experienced here are high winds. We've occasionally had high winds in this area. And they are particularly bad in the winter months causing extensive drifting. And in fact going back to my comments early about the winter of 1977; winter of 1977 it was not so much the snowfall that we had, but it was the snowfall combined with the winds. The winds were particularly strong and caused drifting of up to 20 foot drifts on the roads. Such that there was no way a snowplow would be able to remove the snow. It was particularly bad.

**Interviewer:** This winter was also mentioned by another family member. Do you have any recollection from your parents or grandparents about summer droughts? So dry where there was not enough bundles of hay coming off the fields for their livestock or cows.

**Dennis Howard:** No I don't. Other than I can say that in the early 90's we experienced some periods here of very low rainfall to the point that we had problems with our wells. And we are fortunate here at Howard Falls to have very good wells. But there was period of two years where we had to conserve water. In fact, my wife on several occasions actually took the laundry to the Laundromat in Fairview, which in her way of thinking was the worst thing that possibly ever happened to her. We have seen periods of drought to the point that it did affect our wells.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember from the depression years, memories, from during the depression if such a thing existed such as droughts or blizzards conditions and as difficult as

those times were, if it had compounded the difficulties on the farm

**Dennis Howard:** No. My only recollection of conversation in my family about the depression is that it caused them all to stay very close together and depend on one another. They did that superbly.

**Interviewer:** All right then, what ethnic backgrounds do you remember from the earliest times, in this Franklin Township area, either people whom your family knew or they were aware of? And also where was their point of origin?

**Dennis Howard:** Well I am most familiar with the people that are in the area surrounding the Howard Falls area. And I will mention a few families and their background. Certainly a predominate family just to the east of us were the Waxham's. The Waxham's were from Cambridge Shire, England and then moved to Franklin Township in the mid 1800's. They were very proud of being from Cambridge Shire, England and maintained connection back to England over the years. And again, I am particularly aware of the Waxham family because they intermarried with the Howard's. In addition, in the late 1800's, Franklin Township saw the influx of some people from Germany. Certainly, around Drakes Mills in Cambridge Springs, there was a very well established German community. But other families moved into Franklin Township from Germany in the late 1800's, notably the Ludwig family which occupied a farm just to the north of Howard Falls. And also, as I had mentioned earlier, the Weiggel family, both were from Germany. So we had some people coming from Germany in the mid to late 1800's both here in Franklin Township and as I mentioned in Drakes Mills in Cambridge Springs, Crawford County area also. In addition, there were people that migrated from New York State west. We see several families in Franklin Township that had origins in New York State. Again, as farmland became scarcer in settled areas like New York State, subsequent generations would move west to find agriculture areas of their own. Another interesting tidbit is that some people after the Revolutionary War, particularly those that were loyal to England during that period, the so-called Tories, after the Revolutionary War tended to flee west. One of my branches of my family, the Taylor family, were in fact loyalists in Danbury, Connecticut during the Revolutionary War and fled west into the hills of Connecticut subsequent to that. And then, from the hills of Connecticut they made their way into Franklin Township, Pennsylvania, again in the search of better farmland. So, you have these migrations occurring from overseas into the township along with the migration of people westward that had been in America for several generations. And that migration westward occurring predominately in virgin farm land but some political strife also, notably the Tories either fleeing west from the east coast or fleeing northward into Canada.

**Interviewer:** Searching for farmland was probably the predominate reason then?

**Dennis Howard:** Yes, and as I mentioned earlier, even here in Franklin Township many families can trace their ancestors spending some time in Franklin Township in the mid 1800's

but many of those families moved westward again. Whether it is into Illinois, I mentioned earlier, many families in Franklin Township moved to Michigan. Many instances of that, my Perry family is a good example of that. My Perry family moved into Franklin Township in the mid 1850's and by the 1870's had moved on to Michigan. Other families like the Luther family, which lived just north of Franklin Township near Elk Creek. The Luther's moved on to Michigan also. Another family in that area was the Lyon family. The Lyon family inner married with the Howard's and then subsequently moved down to Butler County, Pennsylvania. So, you have many people traveling through Franklin Township with very few in those large families actually staying on. It's usually just one son or one daughter in a subsequent generation staying on while others moved on to greener pastures.

**Interviewer:** I needed to ask you also were there any diseases prevalent during the child years, the past generations, that you are aware that might have been something common in the area here. If it affected any of the Howard family and did people in the early 1900's, did they die young at an early age? If adults passed away what was the cause of their death? And where were the people in this township buried? Where were the cemeteries located or were these on plots of ground on their family farms? Mostly the illnesses and diseases that was common.

**Dennis Howard:** Well I will just mention a few things. Having done a lot of genealogical research on the families of Franklin Township and elsewhere, one thing that always sticks in my mind, is there was a good deal of infant and childhood mortality. Certainly, more than we experience today. People lost their children. I have examples of two or three children dying in a family in a one-month period. It makes you think that perhaps influenza came or something came through and affected that. It's something that sticks in my mind as I look through genealogical records and various types of census information. But there was that infant mortality and in fact, in my Howard family, as I mentioned, there was six boys in my father's generations and one of those boys died young. I don't know from what he died, that's not information that I was able to uncover.

**Interviewer:** How old was he when he passed away?

**Dennis Howard:** I believe that he was just four or five years old. And then there was also a subsequent part of your question that I wanted to answer.

**Interviewer:** Where were they buried? What affected the adults?

**Dennis Howard:** Let me first mention the adults. Certainly, in my family, we have been blessed with longevity. My grandfather passed away at 101. My grandmother Howard passed away in her 90's. My mother recently passed away at 92. So, we've been blessed with longevity. In terms of where people in the township were buried, again, many of the families in Franklin Township were affiliated with Girard, and so you will find many of the people in the township buried in Girard cemetery. A few people are buried in

Francis cemetery but I would say a larger majority of residents of the township you will find in Girard cemetery. Likewise, there is a small cemetery in Sterrettania, the Waxham's, for instance, are buried in Sterrettania. Because they arguably lived closer to Sterrettania than they did to Girard. But certainly families in the northwestern portion of Franklin Township very closely affiliated themselves with Girard and I keep coming back to there seems to be a very close connection economically with Girard and that has affected my family over the years. My grandmother's family was from Girard and her grandparents were from Girard. So, you start seeing this intermarrying of people from the township with the people from Girard, which means to me that there was social interaction etc. into the Girard area.

**Interviewer:** Mrs. Mischler mentioned to me that her own grandmother Grace Mischler had lived to be 98 and that she was telling a story that her grandmother had passed down, of riding a horse straight to the door of her house being chased by a pack of wolves. She asked me to bring that memory up right to you, hoping that you would be able to corroborate that there were wolves around or possibly some other instances such as that from your grandparents maybe or when this was still wilderness area.

**Dennis Howard:** When the early settlers came here, there were animals that today that we don't see. There was certainly bear in the area and I have accounts of bear. But another account that I have is an animal that they refer to as a panther. And I believe that there was a mountain lion type of species here of a panther like nature that lived in this area. And so it wouldn't be surprising to me that there was some sort of wolf like animal also. There is certainly still fox in the area. We had a sighting two years ago of bear in the area. So, the one that maybe that I can mention as I have already is the description of a panther like animal that lived here and was expensively hunted by the early settlers. And even though wild life today in the township consists primarily of deer and some fox and turkey. We have a lot of turkeys in our woods now again. There were these other animals in the early 1800's, including panther like animals.

**Interviewer:** It would be interesting to know if there were any stories about those because you are the first to mention panthers in this area. We're at the last question. Would there be anything else that you would like to bring up, of all that we have covered your strong sense of genealogy, that you are interested in. Overall possibly if I could add a question, the people who have moved in and out of here to the best of your understanding who would be the largest European group that has settled in this township?

**Dennis Howard:** Certainly, the migrations that occurred in the 1800's were principally those of Americans moving westward. And the early settlers of this township consisted of people from Vermont, Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts moving west. Some of the people that I have mentioned already, my Perry family was from New York State; my Stone family was from Rhode Island and Vermont, spent some time in New York and ultimately ended up in Pennsylvania. The Hinds family that I descend from again

from New Hampshire and so you have these migrations westward of families that have had several generations in the U.S. The migrations in the later 1800's from what I see in census records are generally beginnings of people with a German nationality. Mid 1800's into the early 1900's predominately some Germans and a few Irish etc. Then in the beginnings of the 1900's into the 1930's you start to see some migrations of people from the eastern European areas, like Czechoslovakia, from Austria, you have the Mischler's who came in the late 1800's from Switzerland. So you start in the early 1900's to see this influx of people come from Eastern Europe. Many of the people today in Franklin Township are descendents of these various waves that have extensively intermarried. What's enlightening is in those days you literally did marry the girl next door and you did not tend to move far away from home in your daily goings on. And I can show more instances than not that you wind up marrying the girl down the street or down the road or next door. It has happened extensively in my family and in other families too. And because of that many of the families now in Franklin Township, regardless of whether they are multigenerational Americans that just moved west or people from Germany or people from Czechoslovakia; we have all intermarried over the years and have become one large family. And it's amazing to me that many of the residents in Franklin Township are in fact blood relatives of one another or can show connections through intermarrying into the various families that are in the township and to a large extent the township is made up of those people that for one reason or another didn't move on and remained in Franklin Township. In my particular instance and in my wife's too, we chose to move back after having left. And decided that this is where my roots are and this is where we belong and having traveled extensively throughout the world to Japan, China, Europe, Australia and South America as I near retirement there is no other place that I would like to be than Franklin Township, Pennsylvania.

**Interviewer:** Thank you this is concluded.