

December 13, 2007

Interview with Margaret Ellen Wade Harris

By Richard Anderson

[Items enclosed in brackets [] are not on the audio, but are editorial notes inserted for clarification or elaboration.]

Richard Anderson: We're doing an oral interview of Margaret Wade Harris for the Oral History Project of the Brownsburg Community Association Museum. Today's date is December 13, 2007 and this interview is being conducted at 2671 Brownsburg Turnpike in Brownsburg, Virginia, and our interviewee is Margaret Wade Harris, and I'm going to ask her to say a few words to make sure this recording is recording. So Margaret, would you just give us your name and your address.

Margaret Wade Harris: I'm Margaret Ellen Wade Harris, and I reside at 906 Royal Street, Staunton, Virginia and I'm delighted to be here today and give to the Historical Association as much information as my brain can spill out.

Richard Anderson: Mrs. Harris, thank you for coming to do this interview today. We'll go over some questions and you can answer them at your best recollection, what you recall of these subjects. Feel free to expand on them in any way you wish to. Let me just ask some preliminary questions. When did you live in Brownsburg? What years?

Margaret Wade Harris: I was born May 2, 1929 in a home built by my grandfather, John Henry Potter [which is] presently in 2007 owned by Walter Lunsford [2651 Brownsburg Turnpike]. My family moved to Staunton in June-- it may have been July-- let's say June 30, 1941.

Richard Anderson: So you lived here between the time you were born and 1941.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: And you were born in Brownsburg?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, I was born in the house that Granddaddy John Henry Potter built. I was delivered by a midwife, Aunt Mariah Fisher who lived over on what we called then Raphine Hill. Her husband worked as a maintenance worker in Lexington [at VMI] and I can recall [him] going back and forth on a very deep brown horse. That's the only way I know how to describe that. She attended my mother before my delivery, possibly that early morning and stayed with my family and my mother for three days.

Richard Anderson: How big a family?

Margaret Wade Harris: Eight. I was born in '29 and I was the last one of four brothers and three sisters.

Richard Anderson: And you're the youngest?

Margaret Wade Harris: Absolutely.

Richard Anderson: And you lived in what is now the Lunsford house [2651 Brownsburg Turnpike]?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Did you live in that location the entire time?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: What were the names of your parents?

Margaret Wade Harris: My parents were Samuel Bell Wade married to Mary Annie Potter.

Richard Anderson: Weren't they both natives in Brownsburg?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. My daddy was born on Swope Lane. The farm belonged to my grandfather, William Moore Wade. My mother was born in the old log house that sat in front of the Lunsford house that's owned by the Lunsfords on that property.

Richard Anderson: So there was another house in front of their house?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yeah. If you'll notice [now] going up the road there is a bank [in front of the Lunsford house]. As described to me by my mother, [there] was an old dirt road in the early 1800s and that was dug away, and all that excess dirt was made into that bank. The log house sat left of the new house. When Granddaddy's mother died, he inherited all of the property, and probably during Grandma Potter's lifespan, Granddaddy started building the present home.

Richard Anderson: Was the log building taken down?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, it was dismantled. It was dismantled and if you of course know about the building behind Doris and Walter [Lunsford] in their yard in the back, that at one time sat in the front corner of the yard, and that was Granddaddy Potter's shop. He was a cobbler and a carpenter, and he proceeded then to build the new house, is what we called it [2651 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Richard Anderson: So how many generations of your family have lived in the Brownsburg area, more or less?

Margaret Wade Harris: William Moore Wade married Mary Lou McClure and I pronounce that "MacLore". The McClures have lived in this area and down through Augusta before Rockbridge was formed. So, I'm going to state about six generations.

Richard Anderson: What did your father and mother do when you were living here? Were they engaged in any particular occupations?

Margaret Wade Harris: My mother was a homemaker, and also a professional seamstress. She sewed clothing for anyone and everyone in Brownsburg. She sewed particularly for the teachers. Mother was very talented in that she could look at a piece of clothing or go to a shop and she could come home and get out newspaper or brown bags and make a pattern, and from that [make the clothing].

Richard Anderson: So she did a lot of sewing.

Margaret Wade Harris: She did. She also did crocheting; beautiful pineapple design table cloths, which I'm very fortunate to have inherited some of those. She also did knitting. She made sweaters, and I also have a sweater that she had made. Very talented in that direction, and she was also very active in the church, which was the Lighthouse Church [formerly located between 2651 Brownsburg Turnpike and 2671 Brownsburg Turnpike] and that was owned by Mrs. Mamie Morris. Mother played the piano and she played the organ. She was the

superintendent of the Sunday school. She did the ordering [of supplies] for the church. She taught Sunday School. She was a very active person.

Richard Anderson: She had a big family too.

Margaret Wade Harris: Absolutely, taking care of four brothers and three sisters. My father was what you'd call a finish carpenter. He did beautiful, beautiful work like moldings, cabinet work.

Richard Anderson: Did he work on any of the houses in the Brownsburg area?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. In particular, I do believe he helped to build the Patterson Barn. He made cabinets for the Whitesell's kitchen [2664 Brownsburg Turnpike]. I can recall that. He made our dining room table, which is absolutely gorgeous. He made that out of walnut from up at Grandpa's farm. He made brooms and he sold brooms. He also raised, I'll call it popcorn [to sell]. [Mrs. Harris later provided the following information (which is not on the audio) related to her father's work: He read the blueprints for construction of the "mail order" Sears Roebuck house [2669 Sterrett Road]; renovated kitchens in the Dice home [22 Hays Creek Road]; Mrs. Rosenell Patterson's home [Sleepy Hollow at 2654 Sterrett Road]; and the East home [Breezy Hill at 1223 Hays Creek Road]. He did carpenter work on the stucco school building; the Withrow house [2693 Brownsburg Turnpike]; and the telephone company switchboard office apartment over the bank [2711 Brownsburg Turnpike]. He remodeled the downstairs (basement) for living quarters for the Roy Huffman home [2712 Brownsburg Turnpike] beside the Huffman Grocery.]

Richard Anderson: Made from?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, and he sold those [brooms]. He was in a business. My father was not educated as a CPA-- we call it a bookkeeper. He kept books for the Lucas Grocery which-- on your left hand side about-- the corner house before you get to Old South Antiques.

Richard Anderson: Where Dick Barnes' current house is [8 Hays Creek Road].

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, and where the old store was, that has been torn down. My daddy--

Richard Anderson: That's the same corner I think.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, it is. He kept books for that store. Also he kept books for Mr. Humphrey's store in Lexington, and Mr.-- but he kept those at the same time. He'd go from store to store and keep their books.

Richard Anderson: How did he get into that business?

Margaret Wade Harris: I really don't know. He just had a "head" for figures.

Richard Anderson: What were the ages of your sisters and your brothers? Who was the oldest?

Margaret Wade Harris: Mom and Dad were married in 1908 and Thelma Elizabeth, the oldest was born in 1910. So I would say a space between each and every one was about maybe two and a half, three years until it came down to my youngest brother Bobby, and there's seven years space between Bobby and I.

Richard Anderson: Did your brothers and sisters stay in Brownsburg or did they leave?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, they all stayed in Brownsburg until we left in 1941, and the reason for leaving then is because World War II was looming, and my father was a strict Democrat. That one ticket, that was it. He was Presbyterian but he was also a politician, and he kept up with the politics in our government, and he could see that the war definitely was looming, and the boys had to register at the Brownsburg School [to be drafted].

Richard Anderson: So they were all eligible to be called into the service.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, at that time. They were above 18 years old.

Richard Anderson: So he decided that it was a better place to be in Staunton?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well he was looking for government work, is actually what he called it. He secured a job at the Norfolk Shipbuilding Company. I'm sure there's another name for it, but that's what I'll call it, and there his talent was used as a finish carpenter. He finished the officers' quarters in particular, and I have pictures of his beautiful work [on the battleships].

Richard Anderson: Was that in Staunton?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, that's in Norfolk, [Virginia]. The Norfolk Shipbuilding Company.

Richard Anderson: So he actually went to Norfolk.

Margaret Wade Harris: He went to Norfolk and then we secured residence in Staunton.

Richard Anderson: What's your first memory of Brownsburg?

Margaret Wade Harris: Stillhouse Alley. Ok, I can recall my brothers going out in that alley and putting off firecrackers. Scared me to death. I had never heard such a loud noise.

Richard Anderson: Was this at the Fourth of July or some other time?

Margaret Wade Harris: Fourth of July and Christmas also. First was the Fourth of July.

Richard Anderson: Who were some of your neighbors at that time?

Margaret Wade Harris: On our right hand side was the last name of Carroll. Tribby was her name. She was Tribby Hartless. Tribby Hartless married Otis Carroll, and there were two sons, Leon and Curtis. [This house was a tavern owned by Martin Potter, my great-great uncle.]

Richard Anderson: So they lived to the right of your house.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, and then to the left of course was this home, Mrs. Morris' home. But in Brownsburg then we were all neighbors. Across the road from us were Aggie and the [Glasgow] Craney family, their two daughters, Ruth and Frances, and they had family living with them by the name of Gilmore and Harrison. On the diagonal side from us were Laura and Letcher Pleasants. <inaudible> I don't recall. Then of course were the Whitesells of the funeral home, and on down the way was a family of Dices. Beyond there then was the family of Mr. Jim Bosworth.

Richard Anderson: So, you all lived pretty much together.

Margaret Wade Harris: We did. Well, I may be getting a little bit ahead, but Granddaddy Wade on Swope Lane owned an acreage of around 325 acres, and during the Depression it really didn't bother the Wade family as far as we had plenty-- maybe not plenty financially-- but the woods were plentiful of wood, we cut wood, Granddaddy raised hogs and cattle, milk cows,

ducks, turkeys, fowl, so we had plenty, and Daddy was the type of person, he would share. There was always a hog for families in the community that he saw really needed it, and there was also a milk cow for them. And then, that cow would be butchered and [the meat divided]. And then he had cattle, and we had plenty of food. There were two gardens up there. One was an acre of potatoes, so I mean, that's a lot of potatoes, but we shared. We shared with anyone who was in need. [Blacks were his favorites to receive help with food and wood.]

Richard Anderson: So did your brothers and sisters and yourself go up to help out on the farm?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well I didn't. I was a little young, but I went up and got in the way. Yes, they did.

Richard Anderson: The family helped out.

Margaret Wade Harris: Absolutely. Well, and other persons, other men here in the neighborhood who knew they were going to get some of the meat and garden supplies.

Richard Anderson: Did you have other relatives who lived in the Brownsburg area, besides your grandfather and grandmother?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. I'm speaking of Granddaddy Wade on Swope Lane. I had another grandfather, great grandfather, Jacob Brubeck Wade where Nancy and Dan Cook now own on Raphine Road [1593 Raphine Road], and Jacob Brubeck Wade married Jane Amelia Moore, and when she came to marriage she brought 200 acres as a dowry and Granddaddy owned quite a bit of acreage also, so they were in the vicinity. Also, James Franklin Wade who was the brother of Jacob Brubeck Wade, he had the mill [Wade's Mill at 55 Kennedy Wades Mill Loop]. Also the McClures were in the outlying areas. [Other relatives included the Runkle, Arehart, Potter, Moore, Dice, Huffman, Clemmer and Lucas families.]

Richard Anderson: So there were other families around.

Margaret Wade Harris: Oh, yes. Also, the Runkles lived close to Rockbridge Baths, which is owned by the Bares now [662 Dry Hollow Road]. I come into that too, the descendants of the Earharts [now Arehart]; that's the German side of the family.

Richard Anderson: Let's go on to schools. I assume you attended schools in the area.

Margaret Wade Harris: Absolutely. I attended Brownsburg School.

Richard Anderson: What grades did you attend?

Margaret Wade Harris: I attended one through six.

Richard Anderson: Do you remember names of any of your teachers?

Margaret Wade Harris: I certainly do. Well, let's see, Mollie Sue [Whipple] of course. Mollie Sue Hull [Whipple], first grade. Second grade was--

Richard Anderson: Did you have Mollie Sue in first grade?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. Second grade was Mrs. Ruebush. Third grade was Mrs. Williams, and the fourth grade was, I believe, Mrs. Buchanan. I had a Mrs. Cummings and it seems like-- I've spoken with other girls that have attended the same classes with me. They do not recall a Mrs. Cummings, but I do. She may have been a substitute. And of course there was Ocie Ellen Trimmer who was the principal. [Rosenell Patterson was principal before Miss Trimmer. Mr. Irby was district School Superintendent.]

Richard Anderson: How big were those classes?

Margaret Wade Harris: I'd say the first grade would have been maybe 14, maybe larger.

Richard Anderson: Were the students generally from Brownsburg or nearby?

Margaret Wade Harris: At the beginning of the school, yes, they were. Of course there were school buses that went back as far as Rockbridge Baths, but they didn't go as far as Goshen or some of the outlying areas that they do now.

Richard Anderson: Did you have any special experiences attending Brownsburg School?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well, yes. Since I lived down here on the corner, and the school of course was only a short distance for me to walk. [I played characters in the senior plays. I was the "guinea pig" for Home Economics food, and I modeled students' sewing.]

Richard Anderson: You didn't have to take the school bus.

Margaret Wade Harris: No way. After school my brothers and I, and my older sisters would go back to school and Ocie Ellen Trimmer, she would play basketball with us. We played football, touch football. We did track. We would do what she called back then was physical education and just really enjoyed it. The school was used a lot, yes.

Richard Anderson: You left here in '41. You were still in school at that point.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. I transferred.

Richard Anderson: You transferred up to Staunton after that. How many buildings were at the school at that point?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well my first grade was in the old academy.

Richard Anderson: So were you there when the new building was built?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. As a matter of fact I possess a program from the dedication. I really don't recall.

Richard Anderson: I think it was supposed to have been built-- at least I was told it was built back in 1938. Does that sound about right?

Margaret Wade Harris: That is probably right because '38, '39, '40, '41. Yes, I was in three grades in the new building.

Richard Anderson: So you had three of your grades in the new building.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: But when you started you were in the original academy, and that was torn down, is that correct?

Margaret Wade Harris: I'm sorry to say, it certainly was. <audio interrupted> My dad believed in preservation. He just thought it was terrible they'd tear something down. No control over it then.

Richard Anderson: So after you completed school, what did you do then? Did you go onto college?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, I went to business school for a year, Dunsmore Business School in Staunton, and then my cousin was Mrs. Clemmer, who was chief operator of C&P Telephone Company, suggested to Mother if I wanted a summer job to come up there and apply. So, I was with C&P Telephone Company for about-- for summer work, for probably two years, and then I became real active in school affairs at [Robert E.] Lee High. I was one of the originators of the Tri "Y" High which was affiliated with the Staunton YMCA and also I was a cheerleader and sang in the choral society and other activities. [I sold war bonds and did work for Red Cross.]

Richard Anderson: <inaudible> talks about this, I guess the farming operations that you might have been involved with was primarily your grandfather on Swope Lane.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Your father didn't do any specific farming operation here in Brownsburg, did he?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, not in Brownsburg because we didn't have enough acreage, but Daddy went every day to help Granddaddy along with his brothers. Daddy had -- there were eleven boys and one girl in my father's family.

Richard Anderson: And they all helped out.

Margaret Wade Harris: Absolutely.

Richard Anderson: Do you recall anything about the mechanization of the farms in the area?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, I don't. I recall the horses but Granddaddy did not own a truck or a tractor.

Richard Anderson: So you used all horses.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. Now my sister [Claudia] who married Russell Runkle bought what we term the old Hite house, it's on Raphine Road [383 Finley Road]. I think they were really among the first ones that had a tractor and a farm truck.

Richard Anderson: Was that before World War II?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, it was. I would say maybe '39, '40.

Richard Anderson: Did you get to ride any horses?

Margaret Wade Harris: Absolutely. I loved them.

Richard Anderson: Did you raise horses?

Margaret Wade Harris: We did up at Granddaddy Wade's.

Richard Anderson: So you got to learn how to ride the horses.

Margaret Wade Harris: And take care of them, and that was one thing that was specified: "Take care of your animals."

Richard Anderson: I assume you attended one of the area churches? If so, which ones and where were they located?

Margaret Wade Harris: I attended New Providence Church for Bible School and Sunday School; Sunday School on occasion. The transportation to New Providence for the local children here in this community was a bus, and it was a school bus which legally then was okay to drive a school bus, pick up children and to take them to Sunday School at New Providence. Also, that same school bus, which was driven by Mr. Tolerace Wiseman, picked us up to attend Bible School. I'll never forget that old bus. I mean, it was lumpy and I was so glad when Bible School was over and I was home, but on the way home we'd always have this little song: "Our Bible School is over, and we are going home." It was a lot of fun.

Richard Anderson: How about church?

Margaret Wade Harris: I attended New Providence and also of course I attended Lighthouse Church.

Richard Anderson: Tell us about the Lighthouse Church. I'd like to know a little bit more about where that was located and how big a church it was and how it operated.

Margaret Wade Harris: It was located on Mrs. Morris's property, the property that you now own [2671 Brownsburg Turnpike]. It would accommodate perhaps 50 people. It was large, not an enormous church. It was a frame church. [It had a cemetery with two graves. It was heated by a pot-bellied wood stove, and Dad supplied the wood. There was no basement for Sunday School classes, so curtains were drawn for partitions. Dad made the podium and some of the pews, all hand-crafted. The church had a tin roof, and three windows on each side. There were front and back doors. The floors were heart of oak, and Dad replaced some of the planks. Sunday School material, Bibles, and hymnbooks were plentiful.]

Richard Anderson: When was it built do you think? How long had it been here?

Margaret Wade Harris: I'm sure it was here in the early-- before 1930, and maybe before then. It was maintained from collection of course, financially. It was also -- Today we would call it <inaudible>. Really that church was an outreach from the Church of the Nazarene. <inaudible> Montgomery that I just vaguely remember, but he was--

Richard Anderson: What was his name again?

Margaret Wade Harris: Mr. Montgomery.

Richard Anderson: Where was he from?

Margaret Wade Harris: As I stated earlier, I thought he was from Alabama, but I'm not quite sure.

Richard Anderson: So it was sort of a missionary church.

Margaret Wade Harris: It was, yes.

Richard Anderson: There were about 50 regular people coming there?

Margaret Wade Harris: Oh, absolutely, and we'd have revivals, and I can remember seeing them standing outside.

Richard Anderson: Was there a regular minister?

Margaret Wade Harris: Mrs. Morris was the regular minister, Mamie Morris. On occasion we would have a visiting missionary [and exchange with Rev. Berger from Estaline Valley Nazarene Church.]

Richard Anderson: How long did that continue? Do you know when it went away?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well I moved away to Staunton in '41 and it was still here. The building was still here. Now, whether Mrs. Morris was still active in it or not I don't recall, because I don't recall us coming back up to any church up here.

Richard Anderson: So sometime after 1941.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, the church was dismantled and it was purchased by the Nazarene Church in Staunton [at 1307 West Beverley Street after Mamie Morris died and the estate was settled.]

Richard Anderson: The building itself?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: And they took it down?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Did all of your family go to that church?

Margaret Wade Harris: We all attended church. Some of us attended New Providence. It was just -- Mother attended the Lighthouse and Daddy was a very staunch Presbyterian, so he'd go to New Providence.

Richard Anderson: So you went to both churches.

Margaret Wade Harris: Both. I had a good mixture, and my Grandmother Potter, she was Lutheran, so I attended the Lutheran church also.

Richard Anderson: Where was that?

Margaret Wade Harris: It's over on Raphine Road. We called it Wayside, but it's New Mount Olive, I believe is what they call it now.

Richard Anderson: Is it before you get to Raphine?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Do you remember any of the people, the ministers in particular from New Providence?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, Reverend Hanna, Reverend Withrow. Oh no, his name was Walthal. Yes, I do recall those two.

Richard Anderson: Did you have any special experiences at any of the churches or church activities that you recall?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well particularly Bible School at New Providence was always very, very interesting because we'd have a break and of course we'd get cookies and cake and ice cream. [I liked the interesting people of the Old Testament. So much history!]

Richard Anderson: Was that a big group of children?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: How many would you say?

Margaret Wade Harris: I would say in my group it would have been at least 12, maybe more.

Richard Anderson: And they came from all over the area, didn't they?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, all over the area.

Richard Anderson: Describe what it was like to live in Brownsburg, either when you were growing up or later in life and what you remember most about living in the Brownsburg area.

Margaret Wade Harris: Well I recall a very warm atmosphere. There had to be dissent, domestic problems, but at my age that was never discussed at our dinner table. My father did not believe in that, and it just was very loving, caring.

Richard Anderson: What were the relationships with the black community?

Margaret Wade Harris: I could describe that again just as loving and caring. [I was never aware of color; they were welcomed; they did domestic work for us, helping in the gardens, etc.]

Richard Anderson: So everyone got along pretty well?

Margaret Wade Harris: As far as I know.

Richard Anderson: Did you have any interaction with the black children?

Margaret Wade Harris: Oh, absolutely. Frances and Ruth [Craney] were my best friends and I would go to their house and play or they'd come to our house and play, and Aunt Moses, Fanny, Carmelle, and Kathleen, Isabel-- Oh, I could just name them all. They were welcome in our home and likewise we were welcome in their home. Nice people.

Richard Anderson: They had their own separate school, didn't they? Where was that located?

Margaret Wade Harris: The house now that's being renovated which I would have remembered as the Ward House [2763 Brownsburg Turnpike], I think that school was just below there.

Richard Anderson: You're talking about the log building at the far end of town?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, before you go over the bridge.

Richard Anderson: So it was below that somewhere. There's a street down there called School House Lane that runs along the creek there on Janis Ayres' property now. Would that have been it?

Margaret Wade Harris: That's probably exactly the area.

Richard Anderson: And what type of school was it?

Margaret Wade Harris: It was a log building and it was heated by a big potbellied stove and my daddy would always make sure that they had wood for that stove.

Richard Anderson: Was still operating when you went to Staunton?

Margaret Wade Harris: You know, I believe it was. I really can't say for sure.

Richard Anderson: Well, this is an interesting question. When did you or your family first own an automobile?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well, my uncle, Uncle Tom Huffman who married my grandmother's sister, that's how I can recall a first automobile and they came down-- Oh, he was so proud of it-- came down and parked in front of our home and I put my hand up to see if that was a window, and Uncle Tom said, "Don't mess that. That's what you call isinglass." I don't know what isinglass is. It was really a cloudy piece of material. It wasn't material either. It could be something like plastic today, but he called it isinglass.

Richard Anderson: What year would that have been do you think?

Margaret Wade Harris: That would have been-- I was about five, six years old, so about 1934, '35.

Richard Anderson: Was it a Ford?

Margaret Wade Harris: It was a Ford. Absolutely.

Richard Anderson: When did you get a car?

Margaret Wade Harris: When my father was working for a Mr. Tankersley [a bookkeeper in Lexington], Mr. Woody [a Lexington car dealer] had ordered new cars and Daddy spied the green one that had a black top to it, so he brought it home and he asked mother what she thought about it and she said, "Well it would be nice for transportation," and so Daddy bought-- I believe it was a German make but it was called a Whippet, and a Whippet is actually the name of a German racing dog, so I do believe that was the model.

Richard Anderson: What year was that?

Margaret Wade Harris: Add seven years to 1929.

Richard Anderson: 1935 or '36?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, something like that.

Richard Anderson: You didn't travel much before you got the automobile, did you?

Margaret Wade Harris: Actually yes. I went with Uncle Tom and Ida [Huffman] different places; Lexington, we would go over to Fairfield if it was a circus or something like that, and also when I first started to school, I went quite a bit with Ocie Ellen Trimmer. I'm her namesake and Mother sewed for her also.

Richard Anderson: So <inaudible> to different places.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. My older brother along that time he bought a Studebaker with a rumble seat. That was fun [to ride and the wind blowing in the face!]

Richard Anderson: So they began to get cars too.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Did you ever use the train that ran through Raphine and Fairfield and Lexington and Staunton?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes and it went up through Decatur, yes. Went to Lexington with my mother and older sisters.

Richard Anderson: You remember doing that?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Was that used a lot?

Margaret Wade Harris: I believe so. Also, the Greyhound bus then, you could catch at [Raphine].

Richard Anderson: So there were other alternatives.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes there were. We would take the train to Lexington and then if we wanted to come to Staunton we'd use the Greyhound bus.

Richard Anderson: How did you and your family keep up with what was going on with the world in general?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well as I stated, Daddy was quite interested in politics and he-- well I can recall us receiving or subscribing to-- I don't know whether it was called the Washington Post that far back-- but a Washington paper and a Richmond paper, and also to the Gazette and there was another paper, the Lexington paper of course, [and the "Grit"].

Richard Anderson: There were only two papers in Lexington; the Gazette and the County News.

Margaret Wade Harris: No, the Gazette that I'm speaking of was published nationally and you received it in the mail I believe.

Richard Anderson: So you had a variety of newspapers.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, we had plenty of reading material.

Richard Anderson: Magazines too?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. I don't recall that The Times was published back then by that name. We received The Post and maybe The Times, [and Ladies Home Companion].

Richard Anderson: This is a tough question, but what individuals, male or female, stand out in your memory from growing up and living in Brownsburg and tell us why.

Margaret Wade Harris: Well I'll refer back to Ocie Ellen Trimmer. She was a real good friend of our family and she was a good educator. She was strict, but she was strict in a good way that made you want to learn; at least that's the way it felt to me, and as I have said earlier I learned

quite a bit from her in that she would take me-- If a movie was very, very educational-- I went to Lexington to movies with her. I went to ball games with her down in Sterrett's field when the boys played baseball. I went to school activities with her, attended seminars. We'd go to seminars in Harrisonburg; myself and Betty Jean Wade. Her father was Bud Wade that operated a pool room. She went one time with us-- I know I went at least three times to seminars, which were very educational. [Miss Trimmer's motto was "A book is a friend, one that never fails you." I also thank her for this instruction: "Exercise your body for the physical, read and exercise the brain for mental fitness."]

Richard Anderson: And she was the principal?

Margaret Wade Harris: She was the principal.

Richard Anderson: And did she live near Brownsburg when she was principal?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. She roomed and boarded at what we'd call the teacher's home.

Richard Anderson: Where was that located?

Margaret Wade Harris: We were speaking earlier of the Ward place that's being renovated [2763 Brownsburg Turnpike]; right across from there [at 2766 Brownsburg Turnpike]. That was called to us the teacher's home. But Ocie Ellen would have meals with us.

Richard Anderson: Was she married?

Margaret Wade Harris: Not to my knowledge.

Richard Anderson: If you lived in the Brownsburg area during the Depression years, 1930 to 1940, describe your life during that period of time. What was it like to live through that period of time and tell us about any special experiences you recall from those years related to the Depression. How did the Depression affect your family?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well it did not affect my family in that we had all the necessities and my mother continued sewing and that was some income. Daddy's work brought in income. It did not influence us in any way.

Richard Anderson: So you don't have any special, adverse feelings about the Depression.

Margaret Wade Harris: No, I don't.

Richard Anderson: And likewise, and this is sort of out of your range, but during World War II, what was the affect of World War II on your life?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well in that my four brothers were in service and I had 11 cousins in service [and two uncles].

Richard Anderson: A lot of family members.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. I had two brothers in the Army and two preferred the Navy, and two uncles. I was quite active at Lee High [School]. I can recall going to the Dixie Theatre and collecting for war bonds. Also I can recall helping to serve light refreshments for USO gatherings at the YMCA. I can recall my mother and the ladies that she was acquainted with in the community going to Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and they took-- I believe Mother crocheted [laprobes] and took them to those in the wheelchairs. So, we just became real active.

Richard Anderson: Do you have any recollection of rationing?

Margaret Wade Harris: Of rations? Yes, we used rationing for sugar, for gas, I reckon flour. I can recall sugar.

Richard Anderson: Did your dad stay in Norfolk in World War II?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. He came home on weekends.

Richard Anderson: Well, what changes, good or bad have you seen take place in the Brownsburg area since either you've lived here or after that?

Margaret Wade Harris: I am real delighted that persons who have bought and come to live in Brownsburg that they love the community as much as-- I'm speaking personally-- as much as I do, and want to preserve the history. And here again, my preservation ideas go back to my daddy. Preserve it, don't tear it down.

Richard Anderson: Did you have electricity in your house when you were living here?

Margaret Wade Harris: [Brownsburg received electric service early. Dad's brother, Finley Moore Wade, and Ollie Huffman strung the telephone wires. Our home never used oil lamps in my memory.]

Richard Anderson: Do you remember what it's like to live without electricity?

Margaret Wade Harris: When I visited my sister over in the Bare place, the electricity had not gotten that far, and I can recall going home from school-- she would pick me up and I'd go over there. I can recall studying by oil lamps, yes.

Richard Anderson: When was the first telephone system set up? Did you have telephone service?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Do you recall whether that started when you were growing up here or not?

Margaret Wade Harris: Evidently, because I can recall the telephone system used down by Mattie Wade-- Anyway, yes. [Brownsburg had a switchboard system. Cords were switched to connect parties. Four or five families may be on one connection. We rang "Central" and asked for the party we were calling by name. Mattie Wade, or her sister, Osie Supinger, were the operators. They lived upstairs over the bank in an apartment. Osie was married to Bob Supinger who operated a general store where Old South Antiques is presently located.]

Richard Anderson: So where was the telephone building located?

Margaret Wade Harris: It was the upstairs of the old bank building [2711 Brownsburg Turnpike], and they had a kitchen, two bedrooms and a room in the back, and a room then that was used as a telephone company.

Richard Anderson: So they actually lived there? There were operators that would live there?

Margaret Wade Harris: They were on duty 24 hours.

Richard Anderson: Do you have any recollection of how the building that is going to house the Brownsburg Museum [2716 Brownsburg Turnpike] was used in your days?

Margaret Wade Harris: No I don't. I just recall that always the Whipple's owned it and that it was a residence, but I feel like it had other uses, but I don't recall. [Ollie Dunaway and family lived in the museum building. They moved to Waynesboro before 1941. A trailer was parked beside the Lucas grocery store [Dick Barnes' house at 8 Hays Creek Road] and Mr. Matheney, Mrs. Dunaway's father lived there. Beyond the trailer was an alley to the school and to a log and frame house where Susan Porter lived. She was a black woman, and Dad said she had been a slave.]

Richard Anderson: How about the paving of the roads. What roads were paved? Was the Brownsburg Turnpike paved?

Margaret Wade Harris: No. It was graveled, and I can recall in that day that we called it Macadam-- when these huge trucks came lumbering down around the curve up there and Pookie [Marjorie Ann Whitesell Chittum] and Doodie [Elizabeth Mae Dunaway] and Clara [Clara Mae Huffman] and Kat [Mary Katherine Carwell Robertson] all of us [Frances and Ruth Craney, and Leon and Curtis Carroll], we were just rushing out to see what was going on.

Richard Anderson: Were those your sisters?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, they were my girlfriends, and Daddy came up from the alley because his shop was down there, and he said, "You kids get back in the house. Your feet are going to get black and that will never come off," and we ran back into the house, but it took them maybe three days. They had to let the tar dry. Then they had to come back and did the rolling.

Richard Anderson: So when was that? Was it before World War II?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Late '30s?

Margaret Wade Harris: Late '30s, yes.

Richard Anderson: And how far did the Macadam go? How far out of Brownsburg did it go?

Margaret Wade Harris: I don't know. Daddy wouldn't let us go near that. I would say-- well at one time before you got to the Huffman place [near West Airlie].

Richard Anderson: And all the other roads were still dirt. You mentioned your father had a shop down Stillhouse Lane?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: He had his own little building down there?

Margaret Wade Harris: Oh yes, it was a carpenter building and he had the broom making machine. Have you ever seen one of those?

Richard Anderson: No, I don't believe so.

Margaret Wade Harris: Well it's quite a contraption, and he raised the broom corn is what they called it, and then he would do other jobs in carpentry.

Richard Anderson: He had a separate little shop.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yeah, and in front of that shop was the Pitt -- I call him Pitt because that's what he was called-- Pleasants family, and I believe that house is still down there. The shop going down was on the right hand side and the Pleasants' house is on the left. [Letcher and Laura Pleasants, Pitt's brother and sister-in-law also lived in that area. Today the Craney family, Charles and Kenneth Porterfield, own the shop area.]

Richard Anderson: Have the locations of any of the roads in the area changed?

Margaret Wade Harris: Not to my knowledge. [We identified by location, not by routes.] Of course the names have been changed. We'd say to go to the Bare family, you'd go down through the stores or between stores back toward Rockbridge Baths.

Richard Anderson: And <inaudible> hasn't changed.

Margaret Wade Harris: No.

Richard Anderson: Alright how about businesses that existed in Brownsburg when you were growing up?

Margaret Wade Harris: I went back and made a list of all of those. What number are we on?

Richard Anderson: [Question] 12.

Margaret Wade Harris: The doctor, Dr. Glen Campbell and Dr. Joseph Williams.

Richard Anderson: Where were they located?

Margaret Wade Harris: Ed Patterson's home [2744 Brownsburg Turnpike], downstairs.

Richard Anderson: In the basement area?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, finished rooms. It was very, very nice. And then of course the Bank of Rockbridge. There were the Hays Mill and the Wade's Mill, there was a telephone company, and there was Zack Franklin was the veterinarian. He was not professional, he was not educated but he knew animals and knew how to care for them. He was, I believe, living in the Swisher place [3569 Brownsburg Turnpike] It's on the left hand side. Okay, before you turn [from Brownsburg Turnpike onto Raphine Road] to go to Wade's Mill, you would turn to your right and it's right here.

Richard Anderson: On the Brownsburg Turnpike?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Out towards the church?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. I would consider him a business because he was paid for what he did and that was his business. Of course back in those days you didn't have to have a work permit. Whitesell's Funeral Home and their grocery store.

Richard Anderson: So that was a combination grocery store and funeral home?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. Walter Potter was a blacksmith.

Richard Anderson: Where was that located?

Margaret Wade Harris: Going up around the curve [2610 Brownsburg Turnpike] across from where Betty [Brown] lives now.

Richard Anderson: On the south end of town.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. And then Mr. Walter Rees [and Mr. Frank Rees] had a tremendous cattle farm and he had, we'd call it scales in that you could take your cattle there and be weighed. Roy Huffman's grocery store.

Richard Anderson: Where was Mr. Rees? Was that outside of town?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, outside of town about a fourth of a mile [Mr. Walter Rees lived at 2315 Brownsburg Turnpike, and Mr. Frank Rees lived at 52 West Airlie Lane].

Richard Anderson: South?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. The house is still there; big brick house, well maintained as far as I know.

Richard Anderson: I think that's probably the Kay's. Is it opposite what is now the Heslep farm?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. Opposite there. That was a well-worked farm, but mostly cattle I believe. And of course Roy Huffman's grocery store.

Richard Anderson: Where was that located?

Margaret Wade Harris: Whoever owns it has the sign [2712 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Richard Anderson: Is it on the east side of the [Brownsburg] Turnpike?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Opposite sort of the bank?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Actually next to the museum site.

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, it is. That was a very active place. Roy Huffman is my cousin in that his mother and my grandmother were sisters. And of course Mr. Lucas's store, and I mentioned Wade's Mill, and then somehow the Lucas Store became the Farm Store. And then Sam Miller, he was a painter and his specialty was painting barns.

Richard Anderson: Where did he live?

Margaret Wade Harris: He lived-- You know where the [Orchardside] yarn shop is [273 Raphine Road]? That is the Miller home place, and the white house up above where the yarn shop is, the big white house [383 Finley Road], that was the <inaudible> home and that was purchased by my-- Russell Runkle that married my sister Claudia. My niece lives in the newer home; Doris and Jean Mullenax. Then, there was Roy Lotts that after the milk-- you put the milk of course in the milk cans and Roy Lotts from Middlebrook would pick up the milk, take it to-- and if he would, like if you had ten cans of milk, he'd keep an account of it and he would take it to the Staunton Creamery in Staunton, sell it and bring the profit back to you.<inaudible> a business and then Mr. -- I cannot think of his name [Porter Beard] -- the threshing machine that helped-- He would contact with farmers to cut their wheat and so that was a business.

Richard Anderson: Did he live in Brownsburg?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes he did. He lived in the stucco house on the-- diagonal from [Ann Beard's home at 3475 Brownsburg Turnpike.] And then there was a gentleman, Mr. Shaw who sold Raleigh products, so in my mind they were businesses because they worked for a profit.

Richard Anderson: They were active in the area.

Margaret Wade Harris: Oh very, very active.

Richard Anderson: Did you have any special experiences with any of these folks?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well yes, when Mr. Shaw would come to our home he'd always bring cookies to sweeten Mother and us up, I reckon, so we would buy his products. He was such a lovely gentleman.

Richard Anderson: Did you ever work at any of these businesses?

Margaret Wade Harris: No. I was too young for that.

Richard Anderson: Well I guess we're getting down to the end here, but what stands out in your memory as the most significant event or events that have occurred in Brownsburg during the time that you lived here?

Margaret Wade Harris: Brownsburg really was active, which I do not see that activity now. Everyone would sit on their porches in the summer time and in the winter time us kids were always over there on Whipple's hill sleigh riding.

Richard Anderson: So there were a lot of children.

Margaret Wade Harris: It was a lot of children involvement. There was a circus down here in that field.

Richard Anderson: You're talking about across the road here?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Behind the Whitesell's somewhere?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. I don't know who owns that lot now.

Richard Anderson: Dr. Bosworth, I think, owns that lot.

Margaret Wade Harris: And then the empty lot beside Betty [Brown].

Richard Anderson: Where did they [the circus] come from?

Margaret Wade Harris: Who knows.

Richard Anderson: They would just come for a day or so?

Margaret Wade Harris: I would say they'd stay for a week if the community would put up with them for a week.

Richard Anderson: Was that before World War II?

Margaret Wade Harris: Before.

Richard Anderson: Must have been a popular attraction.

Margaret Wade Harris: Oh my goodness, it was.

Richard Anderson: Well, any stories that you would like to tell us about?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well actually no, except one in particular story that Mollie Sue tells me when she sees me, is my younger brother who would stand at the door just in a very long, southern drawl say, "Mollie Sue, is it time to go home yet?"

Richard Anderson: This is at school?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes, at school.

Richard Anderson: Which brother was that?

Margaret Wade Harris: Bobby, the youngest one.

Richard Anderson: It was in the first grade?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Well, if you want to share with us any family history or events, names of any relatives. Did you have any Revolutionary War or Civil War ancestors?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes. On a personal side, my passion is ancestry research and I have-- I'm in the process of researching the Arehart [or Earhart] family, and I have researched the family McCray to the Areharts. [I have also done research on the Mitchell, Moore, Stukes or Stuks, McClure, Smiley, Runkle, Wade, and Brubeck families.] And also the German named Batdorff to Potter. Are you familiar with that name?

Richard Anderson: I've not heard that name before. Were they in this area supposedly?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well, it was through the census takers or whomever did the recordings when the passengers got off the ships and of course my Great-Granddaddy Potter did not speak English. He spoke German, and the census taker did not understand, so he asked Granddaddy, "What do you do for a living," and he said, "I make pottery," but also he said he was a carpenter. So if Granddaddy had said, "carpenter" his last name would have been Zimmerman, but he said Potter, so that's how the name Potter got started.

Richard Anderson: Have you run across any pottery?

Margaret Wade Harris: I have one that was made in 1835 by my great-grandfather.

Richard Anderson: I would hold onto that.

Margaret Wade Harris: I will. My son will inherit that. And I'm doing the McClure family, which of course my grandmother Mary Lou McClure. I'm doing the Steeles which is through the McClures and then I have a book that's been done by someone else, it's called the Alexander Carson Moore family which brings in kinship to Dr. Lynn Moore. So, I'm very, very interested in that.

Richard Anderson: You have a lot of work there it sounds like.

Margaret Wade Harris: I'm a member of the Augusta County Genealogical Society, and that's a society that specifically helps you with ancestry research.

Richard Anderson: Are there any other subjects or topics you want to mention about your life in Brownsburg?

Margaret Wade Harris: No, nothing in particular. I think we've pretty well covered it.

Richard Anderson: Did we cover everything?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: Are there any other individuals that you think we should interview?

Margaret Wade Harris: Well may I ask who have you interviewed?

Richard Anderson: Well we have a list, and I'll be glad to show it to you, but we're always interested in knowing about any others that you think might be desirable.

Margaret Wade Harris: One in particular is Frank Shoultz and he attended school, a black school, and he would have some good vivid memories.

Richard Anderson: I think he may be on our list, but I'm not sure whether he's been interviewed yet or not. If you think of anybody else after this recorded interview is over with, we'd be glad to take their names. We're trying to do as many people as we can.

Margaret Wade Harris: Well I'm sure, and that's great. What about John Layton [Whitesell]?

Richard Anderson: Well John Layton and Virginia [Whitesell] are both on our list, but I don't think-- I spoke to Mrs. Whipple earlier this week and she said that they had not been interviewed yet.

Margaret Wade Harris: John Layton has a sister that's the same age as I, and I mentioned her earlier. Her married name is Chittum.

Richard Anderson: Is that Marjorie Ann Whitesell Chittum, and she lives in Staunton?

Margaret Wade Harris: Yes.

Richard Anderson: I believe I checked and I believe she is on our list, but I'll double check. Well again, I want to thank you very much for agreeing to do this and this will be transcribed into writing and I'll send you a copy or we'll get a copy to you, and then if you want to make any changes or corrections or additions, feel free to do so.

Margaret Wade Harris: Well as I told you earlier, I am doing what I hope to be-- it may not be a book-- a pamphlet of some sort with X number of pages of just odd little stories that I did not relay here because it would take too much time.

Richard Anderson: Well, when you get that done be sure to give us a copy.

Margaret Wade Harris: I would be glad to.

Richard Anderson: We'll put all this down in the museum and hopefully there will be a lot of interesting things.

Margaret Wade Harris: I'm looking forward to it.

Richard Anderson: Well thank you very much, and I will bring this to a conclusion. I want to add a brief addition to this recording which I failed to identify myself at the beginning of the interview. My name is Richard G. Anderson and the interview was conducted by me at the time previously indicated.

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