

## Interview with Mary Moore Mason Redfern

By Isabelle Chewning

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[Text in brackets is not on the audio, but has been inserted for clarification or editorial purposes.]

**Isabelle Chewning:** Would you give me your full name, please?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Mary Moore Mason Redfern.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay. Today is September the 1st, 2009. My name is Isabelle Chewning, and I'm in the home of Mary Moore Mason Redfern to interview her today for the Brownsburg Museum. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. I've wanted to talk to you for quite some time and you come very highly recommended by Dick Barnes and others.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well, thank you. That's probably because of durability, in that my family has been in this area for a very long time. So obviously we have a fair amount of history behind us.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Could we go into your family history a little bit? I know as a child growing up here in New Providence [Presbyterian Church], every Sunday School class learned about the captive of Abb's Valley, Mary Moore, and she's your [ancestor]. And if you could talk a little bit about that, it'd be very interesting.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well she was my ancestress, I don't know how many generations back. But we all grew up knowing the Mary Moore story. And it used to be that when we had a family reunion and the McLaughlins -- who also live out here and are cousins of ours -- and all these people would get together. And on one occasion, I think there were 10 or 12 ladies all named Mary Moore. And back then the custom always was that every generation of every family had a Mary Moore all named after the famous Indian captive. And every so often we would gather out in the New Providence graveyard where there is a very large -- almost like a plinth -- to Mary Moore, who, as she got older married Samuel Brown who was the second pastor of New Providence Church. So it's actually a monument to the two of them. Basically-- and also some of the, I believe, the grandfather and grandmother, I'm not absolutely sure of this, are buried on the top of the hill

which is right over there behind us [across Jump Mountain Road from Walkerlands at 204 Jump Mountain Road]. There's a very, very old graveyard that probably predates the New Providence graveyard. And it's actually on the land that's now owned by Rosa McLaughlin. And in there are some very, very old graves indeed, because Mary Moore returned to this area after the famous incidents for which she's well known, and lived with her, I believe they were her maternal grandparents in this area. If you want me to go into the story, basically Captain James Moore married -- I'm trying to remember her name -- but anyway, Mary Moore's mother [Martha Poage], who came from this area, and they moved down into Southwest Virginia, into what is now Tazewell County, which was very much frontier country. And he became quite prosperous because he owned a lot of cattle and a lot of horses. And they lived in a log house and they had numerous children. And eventually they were warned that this was a dangerous area to be in because of the Indian raids. Now the Indians didn't live there but it was a very fertile crossroads for the Shawnee Indians, the Cherokees, and any number of other tribes who came through and regarded it as their hunting land, and they resented the settlers down there so other settlers had moved away. But Captain Moore decided that he was well fortified enough in his fortified log house, et cetera. But one day, the Indians came and tried to steal some of his horses. And the young lad, whose name was James Moore, who was looking after the horses, shoed the horses away but the Indians captured him. Now that was a totally different story, he was carried off and had many adventures himself. And there was a book written about that which was probably more fictionalized called *Shawnee Autumn*. I don't know if it's still in print or not, but he ended up in Canada eventually, where a lot of the Indian captives were taken. Some years after that, Black Hawk, who was the Shawnee Chief, and who at this point was quite notorious for his Indian raids, came back into the area. Once again, it was in the autumn. He caught Captain Moore out in the fields with many of the children, particularly the older children and they were all killed out in the fields as they were running toward the house to try to escape. Mrs. Moore was in the house along with Mary Moore and Mary Moore's older sister, a baby, some younger children, and a visiting girl called Martha Evans. The Indians eventually, there was one sort of a servant man who was in the house, too, and he tried to fend the Indians off but he was not well, and eventually he was shot and killed. The Indians threatened to burn down the house, they eventually got in and they rounded up the entire family and started on a march back into the forest. One of the girls, the visiting girl, was actually outside and had hidden, but she thought that they had seen her, so she came out from her hiding place and gave herself up. That was Martha Evans. So they all took them up through the forest very quickly, up through Ohio and eventually up into Michigan. But as they took them along, they killed all the younger children along way. One of the boys was apparently mentally slow, he was his name was John, and he was killed very soon. One of the babies was killed instantly because the younger children slowed them down. And by the time they got somewhere along the route, I think it was up in the forests of Ohio, they divided the captives up into two camps. And I believe there was another Indian tribe, it could have been the Cherokees, I'm not sure, but who were on the other side of a river where they were in camp. And Mary Moore and Martha Evans, who was considerably older, I think Mary Moore was--I meant to look it up in the book today *The Captives of Abb's Valley*, to find out exactly what her age was, but she was I think either 8 or 10 at the time. Martha Evans was older. Anyway, they would periodically be hidden up in the trees by the squaws because they were afraid the little girls would be killed because the Indians would get drunk. And

when they got drunk, they could be quite brutal. But the chief, interestingly enough, quite liked Mary Moore according to all accounts. And it was partly-- I think she had red hair, and he found this quite novel. She also grabbed up the family Bible when they left. And even though the chief did not understand English, he was intrigued at this little girl sitting there reading to him. So anyway, they were kept on one side of the river. Unfortunately, the Indians on the other side did get drunk and the most brutal part of the story is that they burnt her mother and her sister at the stake. So I think -- I know -- Mary Moore was aware of this. And of course she was deemed with, you can imagine, the horror of everything that had happened to both of the girls. So they ended up around Detroit Michigan. Which apparently was a great staging point for trade, including human trade, across the border. So they then went across-- were both sold to various people across the border. And both the family that Martha Evans was sold into, and the old bachelor -- who I believe was a Scottish Canadian bachelor -- that Mary Moore was sold to, were very cruel to them. Luckily, Martha Evans then passed on to a very, very kind family who treated her more or less as their daughter. But Mary Moore stayed with this man who treated her --apparently she was kept in rags and had very little to eat and was used as a servant. Well, what they didn't know, is by an amazing coincidence, Mary Moore's brother who'd been kidnapped sometime before [James Moore] was also up in that general area. Well, Martha Evans' brother [Thomas Evans] heard about this. He was an older young man. He heard about what happened; he was horrified. So he set out through the forest to try to find his sister-- to find any-- what had happened to any of these people. And he realized that most of them had probably died, but he thought maybe there was a chance that his sister might exist. And he ran against a-- ran into a notorious Indian trader called Simon Daugherty [ph?], who usually was in history not well regarded, but on this occasion was helpful. And he said, "I know what's happened to these girls and I'll help you." So he eventually ended up, found the girls, had no real problem getting his sister away from this kindly family. And there is a story that he fell in love with a Canadian girl and wanted to stay, but he felt obligated to bring his sister and Mary Moore back. Meanwhile, he found James Moore. Reunited the brother and sister, had a terrible time bringing-- getting Mary Moore away from this man. Eventually had to pull all sorts of strings up there, got them back, and all four of them rode on horseback. They of course she'd had to walk. She'd gone on foot all the way to Canada with the remains of the family. They got them all back here and she was reunited with her, I believe it was her maternal grandmother and grandfather. And she lived, I think it was at East Fields. I'm not absolutely sure but one of the houses in the community here. And when she got to be older, she married Samuel Brown, who was the second pastor [of New Providence Presbyterian Church], had numerous sons. I'm not sure if she had any daughters. But the sons, when they had children, the first daughter was quite often called after the mother, Mary Moore. Her-- one of her sons who was, I believe, and most of them were pretty prominent guys. A lot of them were ministers, doctors, elders of the Presbyterian Church, whatever. And one of her sons, who I believe was the Reverend James Moore [Brown], wrote *The Captives of Abb's Valley*. And he could never get his mother to give all the details because she was so traumatized by it. When she became quite an elderly lady she was apparently in considerable pain because of I guess arthritis or just you know all the trauma she'd gone through. And they had a cradle that they would put her in as an old lady and they'd rock her. And this cradle is in the Lexington, Virginia Historical Society building [Campbell House at 101 East Washington Street] there, so you can see the cradle. As far as I know there may well be other books that have

been written besides *The Captives of Abb's Valley*, which is still in print. And it is now sold I believe-- I don't know if it's sold but it's available both in the local library here and also I believe there's a copy in the Brownsburg Museum. And it's -- I think it's still in print, you know, printed. I believe the version you have there was reprinted in 2002. Although, it was written back in, I think 1780 something, because all of this took place you know, in about that period of time just after the Revolutionary War. So anyway that's the Mary Moore story.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Which of Mary Moore's children are you descended from?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** You know I think it was Daniel, but I'm not absolutely sure. I should know because right here in the book it has the whole --

**Isabelle Chewning:** The whole genealogy?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** It has all of the genealogy. Now my mother, who lived to 97 and only died four years ago could probably tell us all of that. But it has here in the back, the descendents of each one of the sons and daughters et cetera. So I certainly should know that.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Do you know if the family bible survived -- that she took with her?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** No, this was one of the great tragedies. That somewhere along the way she lost it. And she always commented on that, because it was the only thing she was able to save from the house. And I also think -- and one of the reasons why I would like to go down to Tazewell sometime -- is I believe there is a plaque down there near the actual site of the cabin. I would not be at all surprised if there aren't some of the descendents that still live down there. I got that impression from reading one of the books, that there were still people from the family who had chosen to move back to Abb's Valley.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Can you explain to me a little how the Moores and the Walkers were connected? She was Mary Moore but she's connected...

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** She was Mary Moore. Well the Walkers -- you know it's embarrassing that I can't really totally clarify this. [According to *New Providence Church: A History*, Mary Moore's grandfather, James Moore, was an Irish immigrant who married Jane Walker.]

**Isabelle Chewning:** It's probably all in the book if I would read the book.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well it's -- it's quite possible. I mean the Walkers are another whole, another whole story. Most of the people out here, you know, were intermarried.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I think I may have read that when she came back she stayed with an aunt who had married a Walker. [This is incorrect; she stayed with her aunt, Rachel Moore McPheeters.] Does that sound right?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yes, that may well have been the case, because initially I believe she stayed with her grandparents [James Moore and Jane Walker Moore]. And that's what I really need to do is look into the book and remind myself. I want to say that her grand-- that that side of the family -- I know there were the Poages that were involved as well. And the old ancestral families out here, you know, were the people like the Walkers, the Poages, the Moores, the Powells, the Stuarts, you know, there were a bunch of them. Which once again I think are mentioned in the Brownsburg Museum. And what is interesting to me, is people talk as if this whole area began with the Borden Grant. But these people were already out here from my understanding before Borden even arrived. And in fact they would be a bit huffy about Borden coming in and saying, "Hey I've come to claim all these lands," you know, et cetera. And then they're even stories which may be apocryphal, but they were sort of run off some of the lands at gunpoint. [Laugh] I don't know if that's true or not.

**Isabelle Chewning:** The cemetery that you mentioned...

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yes.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Are any of those graves marked?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** They are marked. They're very badly eroded, you know they're covered with moss and all that sort of stuff. But one of the things that I used to find very interesting when my mother lived here, is that because this is called Walkerlands. And the Walkers were one of the original settling families in this area along with the Hayes, hence Walker's Creek and Hayes Creek. Almost without fail, at least once a year, somebody would arrive here that we had probably never heard of before that claimed they were Walkers. And they would say, "Oh, I was the descendent of great-Aunt Ruby who went to Texas, et cetera and we are the Walkers from Missouri, et cetera and they always wanted to go up and see the graveyard, which is actually on Rosa McLaughlin's land. But they could walk up there over a hill and see it and try to figure out who was up there. The funniest-- we had two really unusual groups. One is this very nice little Japanese lady arrived one day married to one of the Walkers from Hawaii. And she sort of bowed to my mother and she said, "You no think you have a Japanese cousin, do you?", et cetera. And then we had these two really quite unusual, very large old ladies who arrived from I think it was

New Mexico or Arizona. And my son who was quite little at the time -- we were visiting -- was thrilled by these old ladies because the son of one of them came with them. He told my son that he had seen extraterrestrials out in the deserts of Arizona. [Laugh] My son -- he'd been pretty bored by them up to that point -- he really picked up on that. But the other thing they all wanted to do, is out in the hall there, we have an old Jacobean chair. And everybody wanted to have their photographs seated in the John Walker chair, because the story was that it was brought over by the original John Walker, the immigrant from Scotland and it's not particularly attractive but, you know, it is ancestral so everybody-- I'll show it to you in a minute.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Maybe I could take your picture in the Jacobean Walker ancestral chair.

**Mary Moore:** Oh yeah, why not! [Laugh] And the Walkers -- I have been doing a little bit of research into them. There's a book in there -- if you think these are big -- which is about the size of two Bibles, all about the Walkers. And I don't know how much you want me to go into that, but they were lowland Scots. And they came from Wigtonshire. My parents actually went over and met some of the Walkers that stayed behind in Scotland, of the family that stayed behind. And one of them -- as it was at this time this was decades ago was Lord Walker. He was a Lord over there. But anyway, the Walkers had, like many of the Scots, moved from Scotland into Northern Ireland for a generation or so and become what's known as the Scots Irish. Then they came over here at some point in the 1700's. Most of them, I think, came in through Philadelphia, Baltimore, whatever. And of course when they got there they found out that much of Pennsylvania had already been settled. So they, like many of the settlers in this area, came down what was then the Valley Pike, I think is what it was called, other people had other names for it but basically Route 11. And they came down and filtered into all these lands down here. And of course the landscape is not unlike parts of Scotland so they felt very much at home. And the story I was told is that they came in and built a little log structure of some sort across the creek here in order to establish, you know, their claim. And then John Walker -- the Walkers always refer to as John the immigrant -- went back up to Pennsylvania to get the other members of the family. He died up there, so then next generation came down here. If you look at the old maps, there was a Tom Walker here and a Fred Walker there [laugh], you know, whatever all up and down the place. And there was an old -- this I don't think had anything particularly to do with the Walkers -- but there was an old wooden fortress down here along Walker's Creek where -- which was built because they thought there might be Indian raids into this area and of course the biggest one that I know of was the Kerrs Creek.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Kerrs Creek.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** The Kerrs Creek one, which didn't affect the people right around here, but it was close enough, and pretty horrific. There were a lot of people killed there so that they had every reason to be a little bit concerned. But...

**Isabelle Chewning:** Where was the fort?

**Mary Moore:** The fort, we don't know, but it's somewhere along Walkers Creek. And we have old diaries here which go into quite a lot of the Walker history. Many of them are-- first of all incredibly hard to read, and secondly just go into the minutiae of life, you know, how many hogs we sold or, where we went to market or that sort of stuff. But an interesting thing happened quite a few years ago in that there was a knock on the back door and this guy was standing there and looked like a pirate with a big black moustache. And he said that he was-- that his name was Bill Gilbert and he was a writer from Time Life Books. And he had been doing a lot of research on a guy called William [correct name is Joseph] Rutherford Walker. And he had traced his family back here. He'd never lived back here, but he just wanted to-- because the way he'd come across him was he was doing a whole series of books on the great frontier heroes. You know, people like Jedediah Smith and that sort of stuff. The Westering men, frontier guys. And he kept-- in all the footnotes he came across, people were mentioning this guy called Walker. And they were always saying well "I was stuck in a snow drift up in the Rockies and Walker came and rescued me" or something like that. So he thought, "Who is this guy?" And he started researching him and found out he was quite a remarkable man. So he would have come from the Walkers that were here, but like a lot of the Walkers they moved West. And his family went to Kentucky, then they went to Independence, Missouri. And he ended up as a young man -- probably just late teenage -- as the Sheriff of Independence, Missouri. Now I went to Independence, Missouri for another reason and I checked this out and indeed they have records of him there. He then got involved with the Santa Fe Trail. He and his brother Joel started becoming some of the first guides that took people through the mountains into California. There was a story and I can't authenticate this, but that Joel's wife was the first woman of English stock to have a child in California as opposed to, you know, people of Spanish or Mexican or whatever background. I think that's probably questionable, but that's one of the things I heard. And the story was that as he would take people through the passes, people would come to him and say, "Look can you guide us though?" And one group of people that came through -- I don't know if you've ever heard of the Donner party or not. Well the Donner party came and said, "Guide us through." And it was the winter and he said, "Well we'll have to go up through the mountains, high mountains and over." And they said, "No, no we don't want to do it that way. We don't want to get up in those mountains we want to go through a pass." And he said, "The passes are not safe, we're not going to take you that way. If you want my help you go the route that I choose." Well they chose not to go with him. They went through the pass which today is known as the Donner Pass. They got snowed in there. Many of them died, froze to death and they turned into cannibals. I mean I'm not making up this story it's authenticated historically. But anyway, the most interesting thing about him was that as he traveled around up there in the mountains he came across this beautiful spectacular valley and he recounted that he had seen this and I think that he even wrote about it in his diary, and it turned out to be what is today Yosemite National Park. Now I didn't believe this story, either, even though Bill Gilbert told me about it. So I got in touch with the Yosemite National Park public relations man and I said, "What do you know about William [Joseph] Rutherford Walker?" And he said, "Well we've got a whole bibliography here about him and we have photographs of him in a coonskin hat." So I went out there, because

my son at this point had decided to go to film school at the University of Southern California, so we went by a sort of circuitous route, went to Los Angeles by way of Yosemite. And I checked it out and there is a Walker Pass there, there's a plaque. I didn't have time to actually go up on this foot path and see the plaque. But apparently for many years they have attributed this to abandoned soldiers being the first ones to see Yosemite, but now apparently they're giving Walker the credit.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Fascinating.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** So out of that book-- out of that thing came Bill's book which is called *Westering Man*, which is in the Lexington library and you can also buy it et cetera. And it goes into, you know, it does go into a bit of the background here. It starts out and it refers to the people up and down Walker's Creek as the Creek Nation. As if they were Indian tribes or something which I find – here it is – as the Creek Nation. And he goes into the background of where the Walkers came from and all this other stuff. And it's really quite interesting for somebody that wants to know a little bit about, you know, about the people that came into this area even though it's just the first few chapters the rest of the book is about their adventures thereafter.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Very interesting. So this property is called Walkerlands?

**Mary Moore:** That's right.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And did it descend through your family or was it out of your family for a while?

**Mary Moore:** No, it's never gone out of the family. The earliest written records I can find -- and I'm sure there are others that predate that -- is about 1735. Somewhere we do -- at one point they bought some additional land when -- and somewhere there is a deed signed by Thomas Jefferson when he was the Governor of Virginia [1779 – 1781] because they at this point had bought some additional acreage. I can't remember what his dates were as the Governor of Virginia. Nor do I know exactly how many acres there were that were owned by the Walkers at that point. I mean Walkerlands itself is probably-- I say probably because we just fairly recently sold some acreage here, but it's probably about 550 acres, something like that. And much of it is forest land. And back in the forest land there were the remains of some old cabins which some of the Walkers had lived in. They're no longer there because long since have fallen down. But we own land right up Jump Mountain. Of course that is another story and nobody seems to know the true story of Jump Mountain. But, of course, the romantic story is that an Indian princess jumped off the top of the mountain when she saw her brave killed in battle down at the base of the mountain somewhere. The only thing that's -- well there are two things that are interesting about that. One is she must have had incredibly good eyesight if that is indeed true. And the other thing is that is evidence that there were Indian trails that went along these north mountains here and went up onto Jump



Mountain, et cetera. And also of course down here at Indian Bottom there were Indian mounds down there until fairly recently times when one of the Valentines from the quite well known Valentine family in Richmond came up here and dug them up and took them off to Richmond. The Valentine Museum in Richmond is named after that family. And of course one of the stories that my mother used to tell is that there was this old Scotsman who was buried standing up on the side of that hill overlooking Indian Bottom because he wanted to have a ringside seat when the Indians rose up on Judgment day. Now where these stories kind of came from I don't know.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well I'm so glad that you remembered them so that you can tell them.

**Mary Moore:** Yeah. But Charlie Valentine was an old friend of mine; he came from the Valentine family and we used to kid him. You know, we'd say it was all his fault that we didn't have this big tourist attraction down here near Rockbridge Baths because his uncle, or whoever it was, came and dug up all the mounds and it's now just a flat field. Otherwise we'd have people paying money to come see the Indian mounds. [Laugh]

**Isabelle Chewning:** So Walkerlands extended all the way up to Jump Mountain.

**Mary Moore:** Yeah, we still own right up the side of Jump Mountain. Obviously we don't own it all; there are a number of people. There's some National Forest land up there, the Jump Mountain Hunt Club, and some of our neighbors own land up there. And it's still predominately timber land. Well exclusively timber land. We do a certain amount of selective timbering up there. But the farm has come down through my family. I'm not sure how many generations now. But certainly my-- I mean the story of how we ended up with it is sort of semi-interesting. My grandmother was the youngest of this big Victorian family that lived out here and the rest of them went west.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And what was their name?

**Mary Moore:** Walker.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay.

**Mary Moore:** Yeah. And most of them went west and then there were two of them left behind. A spinster sister and a bachelor uncle, and I never knew them because my grandmother being the youngest of the group, you know, they had died early on.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I think they're the ones that my Aunt Mary [Sterrett Lipscomb] called Uncle Tom and Aunt Maggie.

**Mary Moore:** That's them. And Aunt Maggie [Margaret Dabney Walker] was apparently quite a character.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Or Cousin Tom and Cousin Maggie, I think she said.

**Mary Moore:** Yeah, well that would be the case. And Maggie-- they apparently were both real characters. Uncle Tom [Thomas H. Walker] was apparently quite short and very funny according to my mother. You know, she called him a cute little man, and she said that he was very, very funny and very dapper and very lively. And Aunt Maggie was apparently quite -- I don't know if she was a large lady, but she was very -- she was something that you would expect to come out of a Victorian novel, you know. Apparently she'd been very in love with a missionary, and he had chosen to move-- to marry this pretty rather fluffy, lady and took her off to the Congo or something and of course she immediately got a fever and died. Or fairly shortly afterwards. And Aunt Maggie could always see herself, you see, as a pioneering missionary lady in the Congo et cetera. And there was a story that Uncle Tom had an unrequited love affair, too. But anyway they lived here together and I think Aunt Maggie died first [1932]. Well she was a very stubborn woman and she apparently sort of ruled the roost as far as the community was concerned. She tried -- everyone was getting into Model T Fords and driving to New Providence on a Sunday. Well she bought a Model T Ford, she and Uncle Tom. And I think about the first or second time, she lost control of it and ran into a pig. And she was so embarrassed after that she refused to drive it again. These, of course, are all stories my mother told me, so I don't -- they might have been elaborated a bit. [Laugh] So she took back to driving a horse and carriage, and she'd drive in the middle of the road and everybody would be queued up behind her to go to church because nobody could get around her. In their cars, and they were all honking their horns and all that. But anyway then Uncle Tom was left here by himself after she died, and he became a bit of a recluse apparently. And he had a very nice black lady called Cornelia and her daughter Charlotte -- who became my mother's best friend -- and they lived in Brownsburg for quite some time. Harris that's right, Cornelia Harris and Charlotte Harris, I think was the name. Anyway, I know Cornelia got married in the little church in Brownsburg [Asbury United Methodist Church]. Or no, Charlotte did-- but anyway they lived here. And so the farm was going to be left to my grandmother and she said she didn't want it because her husband -- she lived out in West Virginia and her husband was not a farm guy and they'd never be able to run it and all that sort of stuff. So it was put up for auction. And I can remember going to the auction as a tiny little child which was held over at -- one of our cousins someone called Mary Brown Anderson, and I think the auction was over at her house. And the -- it was in the middle of the Depression so there was -- or at the end of the Depression, I can't remember. I may just remember this, you know, by hearsay rather than in reality. But then my grandmother relented and she burst into tears and said, "Oh we can't let the family home go out of the family." So my parents had to actually intervene and keep it from going out of the family before it was sold. So they had to buy it. It was in the middle of

the Depression, they didn't have any money, you know. They were living in Roanoke, my father was a business man but you know they were a young couple and, you know. But at that point this was a true mountain farm, like I think many of the farms out here were. I can remember as a child we had an ice house over there -- we had a creamery or whatever you called it down there. There was a, you know, an outdoor toilet. There was a big grape arbor, there was a huge orchard over there. There was an enormous old barn where they use to keep the horses and all that sort of stuff. There was a machine shed, a corn cob place, you know, all that sort of stuff on this ridge all up and down here. And-- but you couldn't keep these buildings together because they had wooden shingle roofs. So there were my parents-- and a smokehouse around the corner here and the remains of the old log house that was built before this house. So this house dates from about 1860. I'm not too sure when the old log house would have been built, but there was an old kitchen that still sits out there in the side yard. So, you know, here was my father, they owned a house in Roanoke. He was working there and they rented this house out. The Mohlers lived here. I don't know if you know them from Rockbridge Baths?

**Isabelle Chewning:** Mm-hm.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** There was Betty and, gosh, I'll remember his name in a minute. Betty Mohler. Her daughter was Jean Mohler who was the postmistress of Rockbridge Baths for years and years and years. Betty, Betty Jean, I think her name was. So they lived here and farmed the farm and we lived in Roanoke and we were-- we kept a couple of rooms, so we'd come out here and we lived -- Uncle Tom had never put in running water, he had never put in electricity. And so then when my parents-- the Mohlers, you know, then my parents decided they wanted to spend more time out here. And the Mohlers moved down into Rockbridge Baths, and we came out here, and the place was, you know, it was in pretty bad condition. Not because of them, but just because Uncle Tom had never made any improvements. So my father had to make a decision. Do we fix up the house here and run electricity in, run heating in, run running water in, or do we spend all our money trying to keep up all these out buildings? And of course the decision was made to focus on the house and the property around the house and whatever. But it was amusing to me because when they decided to build the Museum of the First American Frontier over in Staunton, they were looking around for a frontier farm. And almost none of them existed. So they had to go out and buy a barn from here and, you know, an outdoor johnny house from someplace else, bring them all together and put them over there. When you know, in my childhood, these farms around here still had, or many of them still had all of that stuff. [Laugh]

**Isabelle Chewning:** So your grandmother actually grew up in this house?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, yeah, she grew up here.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And then she married and moved away to West Virginia?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well, before she married my grandfather, he courted her for something like seven years. She said, "I will not marry you unless I have the agreement that I come back home every summer." You know, if we have children, you know, I'd have to come back home every summer. So my mother tells me when she was a little girl, they would -- Montgomery, West Virginia was named -- which is not much of a town anymore -- but it was my paternal, not my maternal, but my mother's paternal side of the family, were Montgomerys. They were more, you know, Scots that came over in sort of that same way and Montgomery, West Virginia was their plantation and it was called Montgomery's Landing along the Kanawha river there. So my grandfather was one of the Montgomerys. So they met I think through-- it was something to do with the New Providence Church. The pastor of New Providence went out to Montgomery as the pastor, or there was some connection there. Anyway, so she would come back on the train as a child with my grandmother. And the train would come into Goshen and Aunt Maggie would go out in her coach and horses-- or horses and carriage or whatever it was she drove, a wagon-- to get them with all the baggage, et cetera, and she'd come back here and spend the entire summer. And as I say, her best friend was the cook's daughter, Charlotte. And by an amazing coincidence, I think, at the Brownsburg picnic, what, a couple of days ago, this very attractive gentleman came up to me, and he said, "Do you remember me?" And I didn't. And he said, "I was Charlotte's..." now wait a minute, "I was Charlotte's nephew." And he said, "I came out to your house once when I was a young man and I met you." And he said, "My sister was Charlotte's half sister, Genevieve." And his wife is now the pastor of the little, you know, African American church in Brownsburg [Asbury United Methodist Church].

**Isabelle Chewning:** His name is Harry Holtz, if that's--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** That's it! It was Harry and Conchita, is that her name?

**Isabelle Chewning:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Harry and Conchita Holtz. And it was just amazing, you know, how these things, you know, these family circles or family friends, you know, sort of moved back into some sort of focus, you know, decades later. So, yeah, so the family-- so my mother came out here every summer and she had at that time was mainly -- and she absolutely adored Aunt Maggie, you know. She told all sorts of stories about growing up out here. Mary Lipscomb, your aunt, tells some of the same stories. Apparently Aunt Maggie and Uncle Tom were, as I said, were great characters, and a lot of the people in the community knew them.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well Mary Lipscomb talked about -- her parents would go with a group of people to Wilson Springs...

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah.

**Isabelle Chewning:** ...and she and my father [Madison McClung Sterrett, Jr.] would stay here with "Cousin" Maggie and "Cousin" Tom and Charlotte, and she adored Charlotte as well.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She said Charlotte taught her how to crochet, and...

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Charlotte was so cute. I mean she came back here. She and mother remained friends. Mother [Mary Moore Montgomery Mason] died at 97 about four years ago [on January 17, 2004], and I can't remember what age Charlotte was when she last came out here, but she quite up in years. And the two of them sat out in the den out there and told stories about what it was like growing up together out here. And I wished I'd had a tape recorder.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Where was the tape recorder that day?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I know. Well actually, I tried to tape my mother a couple of times, and the tape kept breaking and mother wasn't -- for some reason she froze up when she got around a tape recorder. I guess it was because mine was a sort of very incompetent tape recorder. [laughs] I kept having to rewind and the tape kept breaking and whatever.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Was your mother an only child?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** She was, yeah, she was. But she always, I think when she got out here, she probably didn't feel so much that way because there were lots of "kissing kin" out here. She knew a lot of the McLaughlins. They were sort of-- we're all distant kin, you know, to one another. And I guess she was a contemporary of Sam McLaughlin, and Lee, I guess was much younger. I'm not too sure. But yeah, she used to tell me how she used to go horseback riding with the McLaughlins and all this sort of stuff. And you know, you probably would want to talk to some of them, too.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I talked to Sandy [Samuel Brown McLaughlin, Jr.] and he talked a lot about the camps. And Rosa [McLaughlin] is on our list to interview. I think Georgie Young from the mill [Wade's Mill] is going to be interviewing Rosa.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well there is something -- I'll have to mention this because I'm going to see Georgie probably tomorrow. I think that Rosa is descended from Pocahontas.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Really?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I'm not sure if that's the case, I mean, she doesn't make a big fuss about it, but I think she is.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well Georgie will absolutely have to ask about that.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, oh of course, yeah, yeah. You know, she has that lovely bone structure, you know, the high cheekbones and the...

**Isabelle Chewning:** She's beautiful.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Lovely lady, and I that's the story in the family.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Are you an only child as well?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, I'm an only child too. It seems that my father had -- my father grew up in Norfolk and he's, you know, a Mason and, one of the, I don't mean -- a Masonic Mason. [Laugh] But one of my great desires is to see-- I'm not particularly into genealogy, but the story in the family is that we always were kin to George Mason, you know, the great buddy of George Washington the framer of the Virginia Bill of Rights and all that sort of stuff. Now I bought a couple of books about George Mason, but there was some story that we were descended from his brother or something. And I never had time to go into that. There is so much on the maternal side, and so I got ensnared with everything. But, you know, these family stories are quite fascinating because, for instance, with the Montgomerys, which have no connection out here except to my grandfather, you know, from West Virginia, was a Montgomery. But I was, of all things, at a sheep dog trial, what they call a sheep dog trial, I had been in New Jersey. And I got out of the car and I thought, "Why are all these people dressed up in, you know, in kilts and all leaping around out here, you know, throwing the caber and all this sort of stuff," out here in New Jersey." And there were little tents around and I went to one of the tents and they said, "Oh, well then you can check your heritage here, your Scottish heritage." And I said well, "My family-- my grandfather was a Montgomery." And they said, "Oh, well the Montgomerys were a sept of the Argyles and they actually -- the Campbells." And that's another story. In fact we found out that one of the Walkers was married to a descendent of the man that should have become the Duke of Argyle, but for some reason, he blotted his copy book and left Scotland he married a Walker and, but that's another story

anyway. <laughs> So I'll be real brief about this because it has no relationship to this [Brownsburg]. But we were there, so I said, "Oh, that's interesting." And they said, "Well why don't you join the Clan Montgomery Society?" And I said, "Well, okay, you know, why not?" So I joined in mother's name and gave it to her as a present to her and she started getting their newsletters. And in fact, oddly enough, here's one of the newsletters here. And when we started reading it, we found out-- we thought the Montgomerys were all-- this about Mont Gomerics. It says -- we found out that the Montgomerys were actually not originally Scots and Irish and all that. They were Norwegian or Scandinavian rapers and pillagers. They were the Gomerics, and they set sail on their ships and pillaged and raped along the Northern Coast of France and eventually set themselves up a fortress on a hill and they were known as the Mont Gomerics. You know, the Gomerics that live on hill. And then they eventually became buddies, eventually became-- translated into French, and they became the Montgomerys. And they then became buddies, a dominant one of them, became a buddy of William the Conqueror, and came over to England when he conquered England and stayed over there. And there's a Montgomeryshire in Wales, and then they ended up in Scotland, where there are some Montgomerys up there. And then they went over to Northern Ireland and then came to America. So then you suddenly have all of these Montgomerys cropping up all over the place, you think they are these rock-solid posh Scots and they actually all went back to a bunch of Viking raiders. <laughs> You never know where your people came from.

**Isabelle Chewing:** You have to be careful which roots of the family tree you're tracing.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, I know. You have to be prepared for what you find. Well in Britain there's a wonderful TV program called *Who Do You Think You Are?*

**Isabelle Chewing:** I haven't seen that, no.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well I don't know if they've brought it over here or not, but people will trace their roots. And quite often -- well they all pretend like they don't know where they came from. The Mayor of London, he was a towheaded eccentric guy called Boris Johnson. They found out that his grandfather on one side was a Turk [Ali Kemal Bey] who ran afoul of Ataturk when Ataturk, you know, took over Turkey and then he [Ali Kemal Bey] was assassinated. In fact, he was hung by a bunch of thugs or something. And you know, you have pictures of this guy [Ali Kemal Bey], with a big black mustache and all, and Boris is, as I say, towheaded and rather plump and couldn't look more unlike his grandfather. And on the other side, on his maternal side, I think-- it something like the illegitimate child of one of the French kings or something. [Laugh]

**Isabelle Chewing:** Fascinating character.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I just find that when you do genealogy in that way it's fun, but the people that will go endlessly through, you know a book like this and pull out every-- the third son of the fifth mother or something where it's just too much.

**Isabelle Chewning:** It gets to be tedious

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, exactly.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So your mother lived here full time at some point?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** No -- she- well, oh, yes. Yes, I'm sorry, yes she did. She spent every summer here up until, you know, she went off to college I guess.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Where did she go to college?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** She went to Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina, which was then, I think, a Presbyterian college; Queens Shakra, [ph?] I think it was called at that point. But she, then when she and my father got married, his job kept transferring him, and they lived in about six different states, but they always kept a foothold here. And then, of course, when the place was just about to be auctioned off, because of my grandmother's refusal to take it on, they then rushed into the fray, and kept it from going out of the family, and bought it. So then, after they returned, they lived-- my father was the Regional Manager, I think, a Regional Sales Manager for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, and they ended up in Richmond, and lived down in Fan District. They had a very pretty house, townhouse in the Fan District, but they came out here every weekend, and then they decided that -- my father took slightly early retirement, and they fixed the place up. And then I was working in Richmond, on the Richmond News Leader, which, of course, no longer exists, but it was the evening paper of the Richmond Times Dispatch. And I used to come out here on weekends, and bring all my friends. And I think, really, the first room here that was actually totally decorated, was done by me, and a then-boyfriend who got dragged into doing this. He came out for the weekend, and ended up on the stepladder painting most of the time.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I'm going to flip the tape over. So we're back on the tape. <pause> So your parents lived in Richmond, but came here.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well, my parents lived in Roanoke, I grew up in Roanoke, and then I ended up at the University of North Carolina. And I knew, from -- my mother was always -- well she was a teacher much of her life, but she always liked to dabble around in writing, and maybe I picked it up from her, I don't know. But I started writing early on. I mean, even when I was in elementary



school in Roanoke, a bunch of us put out a little newspaper, called The Chatterbox. I can remember it, and we all had great fun. Somebody was the film critic, and somebody else wrote the other news and whatever, and I guess it got into my blood early on. But I graduated from UNC, with -- which had quite a good journalism school -- with a BA in Journalism, and my first job was on the Richmond News Leader, where they made a -- back then, and it wasn't that long ago, they always tried to put lady journalists to the women's pages, you know, to write about flower arranging, and weddings and all that. Of course, that's long since changed. But they hired me as a so-called editorial assistant, and I found out I was working, doing more or less the same work as a couple of guys that had graduated from the same university in the same year, and were being paid twice as much as me, because they were "journalists" and I was an "editorial assistant." So I mean, that's -- we're getting into the women's lib thing here, but I sorted that out by freelancing for another newspaper, and I was told I couldn't do that. And I pointed out that I wasn't being paid or hired as a journalist, but as an editorial assistant, but other newspapers seemed to have this misguided idea that I was a journalist. [Laugh] So anyway, we sorted that out, and I was covering all sorts of different things: medicine, health, welfare. And when I left, I was sort of a special features editor. And then I had -- I was living in Richmond, I made a lot of friends who were, oddly enough, Europeans. I say, oddly enough, because you don't think of Richmond, back in those days, Richmond wasn't a particularly cosmo city. And so I was going over on my holidays, to spend time with friends in Europe, and decided that I wanted to keep in journalism, but I wanted to move into a bigger city, and I didn't quite know which city I wanted to go to. So I thought, "Well, this is a good time. I'll just take a year out and go to Europe." So I bought a one-way trip ticket and went to Paris -- where I had a boyfriend, which helped. And then lived there for a few months, and then decided to go with another friend to Athens, and lived in Athens for six months. And then I thought I really liked living in Europe, this is great, and how can I stay here? My friends were horrified. They thought I-- My parents were horrified. They thought I'd turned into a hippie. So they came over and met me in Paris, and tried to persuade me to come back to Virginia. And we compromised by my going to London -- or going to England, to be more precise -- where I had a friend who was -- and they knew, and thought she was a very sensible lady, would talk some sense into me.

**Isabelle Chewing:** A stabilizing influence?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** A stabilizing influence. In fact, she was more of a hippie than I was. But anyway, so I went over and lived with her in a little village outside of Cambridge, and we lived in a thatched cottage. And I started looking for a job in London. It never occurred to me that I didn't have a work permit, and of course, legally couldn't work. But anyway, I ended up getting a job on a magazine, that was a travel magazine that was just starting up. And they wanted someone who knew America well. And I still didn't have a work permit, and then I thought, "Well that's got to be top priority." And at that time, PanAm was the top airline across the Atlantic, and another friend of mine, who was their press officer, was moving back to San Francisco, so his job became vacant, and it came with a work permit. So I applied for the job and got it. And it was probably one of the smartest things I ever did, because, at that time, PanAm was so well regarded, and being in that position, I got to meet all the journalists. And I started -- then got a lot of work as a travel writer,

eventually. And so I started writing for a lot of magazines, newspapers over there, primarily for the Sunday Telegraph over there, and for some magazines and newspapers back over here. And then I got married to an English photographer [David Redfern] that I met through, you know, all of these connections, etcetera. He'd been married before, so I suddenly became a stepmom. I'm still very close to both of my stepchildren. My stepson lives in Berlin with his German wife, and their two little children. My stepdaughter is in London with her two little girls, and then we had a son [Mark Redfern], and he has followed both routes. His father was a music photographer. He did mainly -- back when record covers, you know, when everything was in vinyl, and books and posters, and all this sort of stuff. And he photographed the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, and all that stuff early on. So my son, now, went off to go to film school at the University of Southern California, met his wife out there, who's American, and they shared an interest in music, and he, after about four or five years in the film industry, got a little bit disillusioned for all sorts of reasons, and his great love, his second love was music. So they launched a music magazine [Under the Radar], which has now been running for five years. It's Indie music, which is not necessarily my type of music. So they are the joint editors and publishers of a music magazine. And of course, his father's interest was music, my interest was journalism, so that's, so we all try to keep together. We meet up from time to time, and we had great family reunion out here before-- a couple of years before my mother died, and we were all out here at that point.

**Isabelle Chewning:** When did your mother die? Four years ago?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Four years, 2004.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Tell me a little bit about the Brownsburg Book Club.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** [Laugh] Oh, well Mother [Mary Moore Mason] -- it was actually -- even though she had spent so much time out here as a child, when my father announced that he wanted to sell the house in Richmond, and move out here permanently, I think it was Mother that had trepidations. Because she had gotten -- she was quite an elderly -- you know, I guess she was in her, what, seventies, eighties, whatever. She wanted to -- she went to night school and took courses at the local universities. And she took creative writing courses and all this sort of stuff, and she was very involved with the AAUW [American Association of University Women] there, and all that sort of stuff. And she said, "Well, I'm not sure I can live out in the country." So anyway, she came out here, and I don't know the full story. Georgie [Young] can probably tell you better than I can, because she was a member of the book club. But Mother set out -- she's credited with being one of the ladies, because she said, "Well if I'm going to be out there, I read all the time, I need to talk to people about books." So she set up the book club, and she used to do the reviews for the Lexington paper [the News-Gazette], of, you know, what the ladies of Rockbridge County are reading this week. And it was a rather novel book club, because unlike most book clubs where everybody reads the same book, in there, everybody read whatever they wanted to. And I went

several times to the book club, and it was an absolute hoot, because, you know, one person would be reading Barbara Kingsolver or whatever her name is, and somebody else would be reading an annotated version of Winnie the Pooh, and Mother took this book in that my stepson gave her, all about how Mexico City has these environmental problems, and—[laughs] It was so much fun, it really was, and most of the people there were much, much younger than Mother. And you know, you know a lot of them, Betsy Anderson was one of them, and Georgie Young, and, gosh, I'm trying to think. Several ladies that have now moved out of the community.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I think Rosa [McLaughlin] was a member.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Rosa was, but Rosa didn't come that often. She was just so involved with the camp [Camp Maxwellton], but she was technically a member, too, yeah. And Nancy McLaughlin, you know, who's now-- she died a quite a few years ago, but had lived in Brownsburg, was certainly one of the members. And Mary Frances Davis, did you know her? And she doesn't live here anymore, but there were a whole bunch of people that were members, and they used to have quite a good time. And it still continues.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I always enjoyed reading your mother's column in the paper. I wish we had all of those for the museum, because they were just wonderful.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, well I wonder. I bet you we've got copies of them here somewhere. I'll have to look --

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well if you ever come across those--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, I will.

**Isabelle Chewning:** They would be wonderful, because they really, I think, told a story of what people were doing and what they were reading.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, and I thought it was so much-- you know, some of my British friends who go to book clubs, would say, "You know, they all read different books. How does that operate?" And I said, "Well trust me, it worked." [Laugh] And I said, "I think I prefer that," because otherwise, what happens is, you know, it becomes very academic. A person, they all read the same book, and then they all get into an argument about it.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Or they don't read it, because it's something they don't want to read.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** They don't, that's right, that's right. So this was much more fun.

**Isabelle Chewing:** So you spent a long time growing up, you were in Roanoke, and Richmond, but spent time here.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, I came out here, but at that time, I found I was very lonely out here, because I was an only child, and the people that were geographically closest to me, you know, were the McLaughlins, Rosa's kids, but they were all much younger than I was. And that didn't make an awful lot of difference, but they were, and one summer, I taught over at the camp over there, you know, as one of the counselors there, so I got to know, you know, some of those folks pretty well. You know, well some of them have been back now, you know, Nellie McLaughlin [Busch] has now moved back. She and I were a counselor, and her big sister. Sam McLaughlin's daughter, who lived in Richmond, and somebody called Sarah Swann [Watson] who now, I understand lives out here. In fact, I think I'm going to a dinner party on Saturday night, and she's going to be there. And so yeah, so I was out here a lot, but the thing was that, back then, it sort of, for the most part, it was the local people who were obviously very much a part of the community and were in farming and whatever. And then there were the summer people, who were either involved with the camp, or came out and lived along the river down at Rockbridge Baths or something like that, came up from Richmond to get away from the heat. And you know, for a summer kid on their own, you didn't sort of fit into any of these communities unless you did, as I eventually did, work down, you know, at the camp. Because, of course, when I was a child out here, the camp didn't have girls. It only- it was a boys' camp, and it was only when I was at college age that it started taking girls [Camp Lachlan], and that's why I was a counselor there, either the first or the second year that we were there. But it's- it's changed out here, and I think it's changed-- I think it's changed for the best, because there are so many people that have come in from all over the place, as permanent residents, which means that you have people that you can have quite a lot in common with, because you may have, at some point, lived in the same place, and you know, you've traveled a bit, and you know, you just get to know each other that way. Whereas before, I thought, well if I didn't belong to the 4-H Club or something, you know – I'm not being snide, it's just simply that mattered and I'd come out here, and the kids didn't know who I was. I didn't have, you know, I wasn't going to school out here, I wasn't-- I didn't know any of them. They didn't know me. So now it's great. I probably have as many friends out here as I have in London. And so I feel right at home when I get out here.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Did your family – the Mohlers lived here, but you stayed here, too?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah. What happened was that we kept – we didn't live here, we'd just come out in the summer. You know, we'd come out maybe a few times in the summer, and camp out, you know, back upstairs, you know, and we had two or three rooms that we kept for

ourselves, and the Mohlers had, either they had-- Their kids lived down here, and I think they had one of the rooms upstairs or something like that, so it worked out.

**Isabelle Chewing:** So you ate separately and did everything--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, well sometimes we'd eat with Jake Mohler, that was his name, with Betty and Jake and the kids. And I can remember how atmospheric it was out here, because I was out here one year at harvest time, and all the guys came around with their old steam reapers, do you remember that?

**Isabelle Chewing:** The threshing machines?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** and I remember that they'd all come around in their bib overalls, and they'd get out there, I guess, early in the morning, and then at lunchtime, they'd all come and they'd sit along the big back porch here. And Betty Mohler and some of the other wives would spread out tables, and they'd have all sorts of good food and rice pudding, corn pudding and apple pies and goodness knows what. And they'd put sort of – what did they call it? Cheesecloth or something over it, you know, and then the guys would go back out in the field, and then at nighttime, they'd all - And they'd take a little nap. They'd all sleep in those old rocking chairs along the back. And then at night, they'd come back and finish the threshing in the evening when it got cool again, and then they'd bring-- all the food would still be there, and it would be cold then, but everyone would have cold corn pudding or whatever. Yeah, I remember that. And they had, in the dining room here, which, of course is now, you know, quite formal, there was a huge old pot bellied stove that jutted out into the room there, and the-- I mean, I remember going back into the kitchen. My mother says when she was a child, the kitchen, there, which is where the den is now, was filled with smoke, and you know, because they had a huge old fireplace-- not fireplace, but I think another old pot bellied stove in there, etcetera. And you read by kerosene lamps, and there was the pump out in the-- which, the old cistern is still-- well it's sort of jutting out of the old patio out there now. You'd pump up your water. Mother always said we had to wash our hair by rain water, you know, because it was so much better for your hair, and all that stuff. I remember all that.

**Isabelle Chewing:** So you remember before the plumbing was in the house.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, yeah. The plumbing wasn't put in until I was in, probably in late high school or early college, early university. Because you know, my parents didn't move out here until they retired, and it wasn't until they retired that all of this stuff- work was done. So the place was always a work in progress, and then when Mother-- when Mother got much older, and my father died about 28 years before my mother did, you know, and she was out here, amazingly, you know, on her own, and coped surprisingly well, I thought.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did she live here by herself, or did she have someone?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, she lived-- after a while, you know, Alice Carter? Alice and Louis Carter? Alice used to come out here, during the week days, and she'd come out here for a few hours every day, and she would, you know, look after Mother. And when Mother got to be older, and couldn't drive, Alice would, you know, go get her groceries for her, and whatever. But Mother didn't learn to drive until she was probably about, I don't know, late fifties or early sixties or something. And she would never-- she wouldn't even drive into Lexington. She tried it -- Fairfield was a big deal, you know, and she'd drive to New Providence. Otherwise, you know, somebody had to drive her, because, "Oh, the traffic congestion in Lexington," she'd say. And here I am batting around in London, not having much sympathy.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How about the Civil War, did your -- did Maggie and Tom have any stories of--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Of course they were dead by the time I came along, but Mother said that Robert E. Lee used to come out here on Traveller and visit the house, and I don't know which of my ancestors would have been around here at that point, but that's what Mother said. And outside of that, I don't really know. I don't think the Civil War had a big impact. I'm sure that some of the men in the family would have been in the Civil War, but the ones that, you know, the pictures that we have in there, those pictures were, judging from the way they were dressed, they must have been, you know, post-Civil War, 1890s or whatever, you know. And sadly, I don't know much about the family before they moved into this house, you know, the 18-- which would have been 1860. I don't know anything about the old log house. I'm sure if I did quite a lot of, you know, delving, I would find out more about it. And I know very little about the family before that generation, except what I've told you.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I think we've covered most of my topics. Do you mind if I get a little personal information?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, sure.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Could you tell me when and where you were born?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Now, do I have to tell you what year I was born?

**Isabelle Chewning:** You don't have to if you don't want to. <laughs>

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well, I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, because, at the time, my parents were living out there. And let's just say I'm older than 60 years old. <laughs>

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay. Good enough. And could I get your mailing address in London?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, it's 55 Hereford Road, and it's London W (for Walter) 2.

**Isabelle Chewning:** W2?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** W2, for the area, 5BB (for Boy, Boy).

**Isabelle Chewning:** W25BB.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** BB, like Boy, Boy.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And one other thing. I wanted to ask you about the hand painted china that you've loaned to the museum. Margaret Skovira mentioned that you said some of the Morris ladies-

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, they did. Now I know relatively little about that, except Mother told me that the families, as I believe Mary Lipscomb has told you, used to go up to Wilson Springs. And she said that these ladies, and I think there were, maybe more than one Miss Morris, that used to come there and they painted the china, and that, you know, the family bought it. Now I know that Dot..

**Isabelle Chewning:** Martin?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Dot Martin has some of it, too, and I'd be quite interested to find out if she knows more about this china.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What I think I know about it is that the three ladies, the one who painted most of the china, I think, was named Minnie Rebecca Morris, yeah. And then--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** My mother referred to her as Miss Minnie Morris.

**Isabelle Chewning:** They lived where Dick and Betsy Anderson live now [2671 Brownsburg Turnpike].

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh how interesting.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And their sister-in-law was a minister. And she had built in the side yard there, a little church that people call the Friends Lighthouse Mission Church.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** How interesting.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And I think it was some sort of evangelical Quakers. She had a little log building in the back where she ran a little public hospital, like a two-bed hospital that she named William Penn. She, I think, was a fascinating person, and three women who evidently painted the china were her sisters-in-law. And I've looked at some of the deeds, and the deeds say that the sisters-in-law were supposed to be allowed to live in the house as long as they were alive. And she deeded part of her property, an acre or so, to the Quaker Church.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well I think the china is lovely.

**Isabelle Chewning:** It's beautiful.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I mean we've got more in there, which I'll show you before you leave. I think they got the best pieces, but it was interesting, because those are various things that, you know, I thought they might want to take. It never occurred to me that that would be of interest to them, but I didn't know that there was this local connection that there was. But apparently, I mean the whole Wilson Springs thing would be interesting. Now, who is it that lives up in the old Wilson house? It's not Katie Letcher Lyle. Who is that guy that is a local historian? Because that would be interesting to talk to someone about.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, was it Royster Lyle?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Royster Lyle.

**Isabelle Chewning:** He's no longer living.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, okay, I didn't know that. When did he die?



**Isabelle Chewning:** He died a couple of years ago. He had been married to Katie Letcher Lyle.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, okay, because, you know, those people would be of interest, too. Have you talked to – I have several things to ask you, actually, on this thing, but have you talked to any of the people in the black community?

**Isabelle Chewning:** Mm-hmm.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Is it Betty [Pleasants Brown] that you've talked to?

**Isabelle Chewning:** We've interviewed Betty, and Louis Carter and Alice [Carter] are on my list to interview.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh good.

**Isabelle Chewning:** We've talked to.. was Alice a Stewart?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I don't know.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I've talked to Sammy Stewart. I've talked to Virginia Franklin. There was a very well known black man named Zack Franklin who had a big family. He had ten children and they lived out in Castle Carberry [34 Beard Road], which is the--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, I know where that is. Now is that still owned by Nan--

**Isabelle Chewning:** It is. Nell [Marchant].

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Nell. Gosh, you know, I've totally lost contact with her.

**Isabelle Chewning:** We've been trying to get in touch with Nell, to see if she has anything for the museum, but she's never gotten back in touch.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Nell lives in San Antonio, and I've lost touch with her, because you know, all those McLaughlins have-- that family has more or less died out now. And of course, what's a shame in many ways, is that Nancy McLaughlin died when she did.

**Isabelle Chewning:** This is the Wade family.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, that's right.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Her name is Nell Marchant?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** You see, Nell, for a while, she and her husband, who is an orthopedic surgeon, lived in England.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh they did?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, and because he was sent over there by, apparently when he went to medical school or something like that, part of the deal was that he had to serve overseas, you know, with the forces. And he was—he had a pretty soft assignment. They were up somewhere in Norfolk, I think. So we got to know each other at that time, and she came down and visited me in London, and I went up and visited her. Because we had never really known each other. I knew her mother, of course, because her mother was the sister that -- Eleanor [Wade Marchant] was the younger sister of Jen Wade Heffelfinger. But yeah, because Nancy McLaughlin, that was another branch of the McLaughlin family who lived in Brownsburg, and she accumulated everything. When they had the sale, after she died, and Bill remarried another Nancy. Now he's died. But she owned something like four buildings, and well, you know this in Brownsburg, and it was just full of everything that she had collected. And some of that stuff probably would have been good for the museum.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Absolutely, she-- I think she had a wonderful book collection.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh she did, yeah. But I know one-- there are a couple of questions I wanted to ask you. One is, when all this is available, I mean, can people-- when will it be available, because I'd love to listen to some of these tapes.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What we're doing is, what will happen with your interview, is we'll have it transcribed, and you will get a copy, and you'll be able to edit.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, that's great.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And then the transcriptions that we've already finished are in the museum now, and then, we'll, at some point, have digital audio files of all these interviews in the museum, so that people can listen to them.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh well that's great! I'm sorry mine is very long winded. Maybe you can break it into different things, the Walkers and Mary Moore.

**Isabelle Chewning:** At some point, we'd like to do CDs, maybe based on subject matter. Just voices of different people that have done oral histories talking about a particular subject, like World War II, or the depression, or their family history, or..

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well one of the things I was curious about, and it touched on in the museum, I'd always heard the story about the Walker and whatever it was, shoot up in Brownsburg. And I know Nancy McLaughlin, who had a wild sense of humor, thought this was so funny, you know, that they were shooting each other in the courtroom. But what was that all about? Have you--

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well, Dr. Walker,

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Are you sure you won't have a little nibble of these [offers cookies]? They're rather nice, actually.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I will have a little, yeah. Thank you.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** you were beginning about-- Please forgive me. That's a slightly--

**Isabelle Chewning:** Dr. [Zachariah] Walker and his wife lived in Brownsburg. I think the Millers may have lived out at Bellevue. Then evidently there was some -- Dr. Walker thought that Mr. [Henry] Miller had said something inappropriate to his wife, or something like that. So they go to court over it, and--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I just heard a phone ring.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you?

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** It's not mine, it might be Rose's.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And so the-- I guess-- I can't remember who shot who first. I believe Mr. Miller may have shot.. Dr. Walker, and Dr. Walker's wife ended up being shot, and, no, I think Dr. Walker shot Mr. Miller, and then the doctor's wife--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I think--

**Isabelle Chewning:** Then the Miller boys shot Dr. Walker, I think. And the Miller boys, I'm not sure what happened. We have in the museum though, the document with their original signatures where they hired an attorney to represent them. Five of these brothers went together, paid a thousand dollars to hire an attorney. So I think it was the big event of the nineteenth century.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Apparently it was, yeah. <laughs>

**Isabelle Chewning:** But I don't really know the whole story.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** And the history of the little church, the African American church [Asbury United Methodist Church] is interesting, too.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Mm-hmm, very interesting. We'd like to get more information from the black community for the museum. And I think, when we move into the twentieth century, we'll probably have more from the black community.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** See, I don't know how long they were out there, you know, how long most of the black community had been around.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I guess they all, they were slaves in the farms around, and after the Civil War, I think most of the black people stayed on the farms, and worked for pay then.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well I noticed that there were, when they have a list, I think, in the museum, of the various people that were connected with the, with the church, I think a Carter [Preston Carter] was mentioned there, so I wonder if it was one of Louis' ancestors or not.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Probably so. I think most of these farms had black tenant farmers on them who did the work, and knew the farming. They were the ones who knew how to farm, and knew how to do everything. And I think a lot of the farms-- Well our farm had-- when my grandfather bought our farm, there was a man named William Haliburton who had worked there, who stayed on

to work for my grandfather and taught my grandfather a lot about farming. And Zack Franklin, I think, taught the Wade family about farming.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** That's interesting, you know, in the [Willson] Walker house in Lexington, apparently that was a black man there. I don't know what his background was, but I assume he was probably one of our relatives. <laughs>

**Isabelle Chewing:** I think, unless you have more stories, I think I've covered--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** No, I probably do, but I think nothing that's particularly relevant to what you're working on. What is-- just out of curiosity, what is the most interesting thing that you've sort of come across so far in doing this, because there must have been some really--

**Isabelle Chewing:** I've always been really interested in the Depression era. And what's fascinated me so much is, people will say, "We didn't really know. We were sort of poor to start with, and we were farmers, and we raised..." There were subsistence farmers and general farmers, and there wasn't a lot to start with, and they didn't know any different, really, during the Depression. But it seemed like everyone worked together, and if some people didn't have anything, their neighbors gave them food, and it just seemed like such a strong community, where people were working together to get by.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well, you know, that's interesting to me, because you know, the little log cabin down here, which I restored, you know – when Mother and I first went into estate planning, she said, "Well, you know, I can give you all some money." I said, "No, no, don't do that, give us some land." And she said, "Well, what do you want?" And I said, "Well, that little corner down there." Because at that point, that cabin was derelict. I mean, it was a dump. It was just, you know, old boards hanging off the front of it, and we didn't even know if it was a log cabin, or what was underneath it. It was just an old rundown building, and she said, "Well, I don't know what you want that for." And I said, "Well, you know, I just want to do something with it." And much to my surprise, when we had it valuated, because you know, you can give, I don't know, it's gone up now, I suppose, but what is it, 10,000 dollars a year, you know, in furniture or cash or whatever, to your family, without them being-- without people being taxed. So I thought, well, that will be quite a chunk of land, and no, it wasn't, because they said, it's an ideal building site. And I said, "Well there's already a building on it." And the appraiser said, "Well, get rid of that old dump." You know, but he said, "You'd only get 2.4 acres for your 10,000 dollars." And this was about ten years ago. And I said, "You must be crazy." I said, "The land out there is not worth very much." And he said, "But because it's this little knoll, and it's close to the road, and easy access, and all that, it's a prime building site." So anyway, I then took it upon myself to, you know, I had to run electricity in there, water in there. Luckily we've got a spring right across the road, on the other side of Jump Mountain Road. You know, I had to have all the logs reinked, had to have the foundations redone, and

luckily, the roof was always good on it, otherwise it would have been totally unusable. But I found out there was a family with something like nine children that had lived in there up until, certainly the Depression period, and on beyond. And you know, I think, "How on earth?" You know, I rent it out now, to one very nice lady. By the way, she's leaving so I mention this to you because the way I've rented it out so far, and with one or two exceptions, very successfully, to very nice people, is quite often it's people moving into the community, like the Zimmermans [Paula and Jim].

**Isabelle Chewning:** Right, when I first met them, they were living there.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** So, at the end of September, Becky Marks [ph?] who's been living there is moving in with her boyfriend, so I've got to find a new tenant. But the point is, nine people living in there, in a place that's not suitable for more than two people. That's the way people lived back then.

**Isabelle Chewning:** It is, mm-hmm.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** And I can remember, too, even when I came out here as a child, the place felt depressed. You know, there were so many unpainted buildings, and old rusty roofs, and, you know, rusty cars in people's front yards, and all that. I mean that's obviously just changed totally now. Or for the most part it's changed, anyway.

**Isabelle Chewning:** But it's just-- you're right, so many interesting people have moved into this area and it's just such a different place than when we were growing up.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, mm-hmm. Well how did you—of course you went to school here, so you knew people here, which I just didn't.

**Isabelle Chewning:** No, I grew up here, went to college, then moved to northern Virginia and worked for the government for 30 years. And loved northern Virginia, loved Washington, while I was there, but then, as it got closer and closer to retirement, I knew we'd really wanted to be back here.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Well it really is a nice community, and I think what makes a lot of difference is the fact that Lexington is a university town. Because it's, you know, it brings so many interesting people together, and they, you know, they retire from Washington, or whatever and want to stay here. One person that I want to look up if I have time while I'm out here, is Mary Stuart Gilliam. I've always been fond of her. And she was so sweet when my mother died. She came-- I wasn't at home at the time, but she came up here, and she wasn't a close friend of my mother's. She knew her, but you know, with all these home baked cookies and everything like that, and left

them into the side porch there. But she's a nice lady, and I know she's gone through a rough time because of her husband. And I'd hoped to get to know her daughter --

**Isabelle Chewning:** She is out of town a lot. Catharine works down at Fort Monroe a lot.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, what does she do?

**Isabelle Chewning:** She is working on a project to transfer it from a military institution back to the state. She's Governor Kaine's representative on the project.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh, okay.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She was a college friend of Governor Kaine's wife.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh. Now do you know-- this is a stupid question, but I don't know who my Senator is, or my House-- you know, because I vote out here. Do you know who our Senator is out here?

**Isabelle Chewning:** You have Mark Warner, and Jim Webb.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Okay, I'm going to write that down, and I'll tell you why. I don't know whether you're a Democrat or Republican, but I'm a member of Democrats Abroad, and--

**Isabelle Chewning:** They're both Democrats.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, and there's something I want to say to these guys. <laughs>. So, I'm-- This is me, switching into my British mode here, but it's irritating me immensely, at some of the stuff-- I mean, I'm not sure that Obama's health plan is the right health plan for America. But what infuriates me, is that this British twerp has been quoted over here as a great authority on the health care situation in Britain, and he's been badmouthing it on television, and all this stuff. He's what they call an MEP, a Member of the European Parliament. And he's almost totally unknown in Britain, nobody heard about him until this big row came up. And he's going on about how we have such terrible health care in Britain, and how America wouldn't possibly want to go down this route, or have anything that smacks of any sort of communistic, or whatever he called it, you know, health care plan. And I thought, and all the Americans who live, well most Americans who live in Europe are in Britain, are incensed by this, because one, we don't know who the hell is this— we know who he is, but he's a twerp. And secondly, what he's saying is not representative of the situation there.

You know, because he's saying something about old people are just left to die, and all this sort of stuff. And we have, what does he call it, a death lottery, so that when people reach a certain age, you know, the National Health Service just writes them off. I mean, it's just-- it incensed me, because, okay, make your decision whether you don't like, or do like, you know, Obama's plan, or come up with a better one, which is probably the solution. But you know, don't use it on false pretences, and I mean, I had my son on National Health in Britain. I've been looked after by National Health the entire time I was there. I have much older friends who have had hip operations, I've had-- I have an American friend who came over there, and he had an emergency problem. I whisked him off to the hospital, he had an operation within five hours. You know, it was an emergency, and I knew it was. Nobody said, "How are you going to pay for this?" you know, whatever – on the spot you have to queue up and fill out papers and all of that. In fact, the nurse was incensed when I said, "He has to do this." And she said, "If this guy's got problems, we're going to get him in there and sort it out. He can fill out the papers later." Whereas, over here, I had an accident about two months ago, in California. I was riding a bike -- which I shouldn't have been doing -- down a mountainside. Not a mountain bike, just a regular bike. And I had an accident, and I injured this arm, injured this leg, injured this face, knocked out my three front teeth, etcetera. Went into the emergency ward, because my friend was there. And it wasn't a big bill. It was about 600 dollars. Medicare won't pick up the tab, even though I paid into Medicare, you know, all my life. I mean, you know, I've worked over here for many years, and when I was over there, I, you know, paid into it. So I have Medicare coverage. They won't give me any reason why. My daughter-in-law had an emergency appendectomy out in California, and the bill was-- she was in I think for, maybe a day and a half, two days, maybe, 43,000 dollars. And she-- they, because they are a young married couple, they are self employed, they have health insurance, but they have a big premium. You know, big deductible. Well finally, and the reason why the bill was so big is because the doctor that performed the emergency operation wasn't on their list of authorized people, even though it was in an authorized hospital. And she was under an anesthetic, so she didn't know who the guy was. You know, and she eventually – because she is very clever – she got the bill down to, you know, just maybe three or four thousand dollars. But it's this type of thing that just, you know, when they go on and on about how we're a bunch of commies over there, who, you know, are trying to force this dreadful program down the throats of the Americans, it just really upsets me. And I think that someone who's actually benefited from the program--

**Isabelle Chewing:** Oh, I think you should write.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, so anyway, I'm going to write these guys. I'll find their addresses. Sorry to have gotten on my high horse about it, but it really upsets me. I mean, I think what they probably should come up with is a program that's closer to, maybe the French system, the Dutch system, the Canadian system. And we do have our problems in England, but at least people are taken care of. You know, I had to pay 200 dollars on the spot, you know, before they would even see me, when I went into the emergency ward out in California. So it's-- Sorry.



**Isabelle Chewning:** Jim Webb.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Jim Webb.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And Mark Warner.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, Mark's been around for a long--

**Isabelle Chewning:** Yeah, he was Governor.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** He was Governor, wasn't he? And they're both Senators?

**Isabelle Chewning:** Senators, mm-hmm, and they're Democrats.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Okay. What about the House of Representatives? I can't-- I don't know who it is.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Give me a minute, and I'll think of it.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Okay, it's no big deal, I'll just-- because I sent-- when I was in the library today, I sent off an e-mail to the guy who was, he's head of the Democrats Abroad, and I said, "You sent me an e-mail saying, you know, could we please try to put the picture straight with our Congressmen" or whatever, and--

**Isabelle Chewning:** His name is Bob Goodlatte.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Oh yeah, he's a Republican. Yeah, but I've heard good things about him. Is he good, or--

**Isabelle Chewning:** He's moderate. He's not a--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Is it G-O-O-D..

**Isabelle Chewning:** L-A-T-T-E.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Yeah, yeah. Well now tell me, are you doing any work out here now, or do you--

**Isabelle Chewning:** I work with my husband in our vineyard.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Of course, yeah.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And I work one day a week at Rockbridge Winery in the tasting room. I pour wine in the tasting room. And then I volunteer at the Stonewall Jackson House. And I've enjoyed working on this little museum project.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Is what's her name still there? The girl --

**Isabelle Chewning:** Michael Lynn? [ph?]

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Michael.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She's still the Executive Director.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I've known Michael for years. You know, she's been out here before, and she was a great friend of Martha Dulce? [ph?] who used to be the head of the Tourist Board, in-- I think it was Martha Dulce, in the Tourist Board, but she left, I think.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay, I don't remember.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I think she retired a number of years ago, or something like that.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Do you have any more Brownsburg stories to share with me? Any more--

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** I probably do, but I can't think of them.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well you think about it, and if you'd like me to come back some time with a tape recorder, I'd be happy to do that.

**Mary Moore Mason Redfern:** Thank you.

[End of tape]

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