

**MSS 587, Iron Hill Museum oral history recordings and transcripts,  
Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.**

**Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library /  
Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 / Phone: 302-831-2229 / Fax: 302-831-  
6003 / URL: <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>**

### **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law. Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library, <http://www.lib.udel.edu/cgi-bin/askspec.cgi>

## Iron Hill School Oral History Interview

### Interview with Margaret D. Hoffman and Conrad E. Hoffman

Date of Interview: July 26, 2006  
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins  
Transcriber: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. Today's date is Wednesday, July the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and I am here at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hoffman. His wife, Peg, is here, and I'm at their home in Gainesville, Pennsylvania. I want to thank them for taking time to share their memories of Iron Hill and their involvement with the museum.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** You're very welcome.

Roberta: Can you... What I'd like to find out for both of you, for the recording, if you would give me your full name and date of birth and where you were born.

Mrs. Hoffman. Okay. I'm Margaret Daniels Hoffman. I was born in New York City on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920.

Roberta: Mr. Hoffman?

**Mr. Hoffman:** I'm Conrad the Fifth Hoffman. I was born in Lawrence, Kansas on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

Roberta: Oh, okay. So, how did you two meet? One's from New York City...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay, okay, (laughter).

**Mr. Hoffman:** We met at Cornell.

Roberta: Okay. What brought you to Delaware and Iron Hill in particular? Was that your first stop in Delaware?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** You want me to...? As much...

Roberta: Whatever you're comfortable with.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Right. Ed got his job with DuPont, so we moved to Delaware. Bought a small home on Iron Hill on Welsh Track Road, on the south side of Welsh Track Road, on the north side of Iron Hill.

Roberta: And when was that?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** That was about 1951. Or 2.

Roberta. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And we lived there until 1976.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** My children grew up mostly there.

Roberta: All right. How many children did you have?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We have three.

Roberta. Okay. Okay. So, um, give me a little bit of a picture. What moving there at that time was for you, what did that area look like, you know? Roads, people...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Chuckling.)

Roberta: And I will ask you questions along the way, just to kind of get it going.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yes, okay. First of all, we preferred the country, and it was country with a big farm in front of us with a burn pipe. Toll booths now on Foulk Farm. And we had the whole of Iron Hill for our back yard. (Laughter.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** (Inaudible 03:01.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay. At that time, it was not a park. It was owned mostly, I believe, by Whittaker Iron Company. The mining at the top of the hill was (inaudible 03:15). If you or (inaudible 03:21) can find a map of Iron Hill, and I don't know the date of it, but it gave all the owners of land, and this would be way back.

Roberta: Okay. I will have to ask her, because I don't know..

(Cross-talk 03:33)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** She might. I saw it many years ago. I saw the names and I happened to meet (unintelligible 03:42) name was on there, and...

Roberta: And so you said was Whittaker?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Iron Company.

Roberta: Iron mill?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Iron Company.

Roberta: Iron Company. Okay. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Inaudible **04:00**) ...a bit behind us on Iron Hill. He's the man who owned the farm in front of us and all that land.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Since taken over by the turnpike.

(Cross talk **04:10.**)

Roberta: How do you spell his name?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** F-O-L-K.

Roberta: F-O-L-K?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It would be good if you could get one of the Folk (inaudible **04:16**) if you can.

Roberta: And what was his full name?

Mrs. Hoffman. I cannot remember. His son was Harvey, and at one time was a blacksmith. He was (inaudible **04:30**). And I think that one of the daughters was named Elvira or something like that, and she owned a fabric shop in Newark. (Inaudible **04:44**), but they would know quite a bit. I don't think the older Folk are living anymore.

Roberta: Okay. And so, Mr. Folk owned that land that's now...

(Cross talk **04:56**)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Land between Welsantrio (phonetic **04:59**) and DeSantoro (phonetic **05:01**).

[**05:01**]

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And also some land behind us. He had sold the land that our house was built on.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** After that, (inaudible **05:14**) he sold it to the county when the county was (inaudible **05:18**) land on Iron Hill.

Roberta: Do you know how many acres that was?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Sorry.

Roberta: Yeah. (Laughter.)

(Cross-talk **05:23**.)

Roberta: ...curious. Just thought I would ask. Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Inaudible **05:30**) quiet little (inaudible **05:32**). There was a trailer park on it up near 896 and a few houses along the side and then they straightened... Then they started to build the turnpike and straightened the road out and took some houses out to build the overpass over the turnpike.

Roberta. Oh, okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Knocked down a bunch of trees. That was a pretty woods.

Roberta: I believe it. Yeah. Yeah. I bet it's all just so very different from when you all moved here.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, there was hogs and cows and when we left we were hearing trucks going down to pay their tolls

(Cross talk and laughter. **06:27**.)

Roberta: Oh, boy, yeah, it did. It did. Uh... Go ahead. You have some more.

(Cross talk. **06:39**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...the hill, and on the top of the hill was a, what I believe was a, what I was told was a caretaker for the Whittaker Iron. Yitzac Mahermic (phonetic **06:50**).

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Laughter.) And I'd seen remnants of his house when I got up there. You know, that is still there. Was up by the big coal pit.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Oh, okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Everything had sort of collapsed into the hole.

(Laughter.)

Roberta: I think I have yet to get a tour of that. I haven't done that.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And there were some, a couple of big ponds on the top of the hill.

(Cross-talk 07:24.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** ...all around. People would come up, fish there. We could skate there in winter. But that's pretty well-known. People started dumping in them.

Roberta: Okay, okay. Do you remember, do you know when they stopped mining?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Well...

(Cross-talk 07:44.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was a long time ago...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...long before we moved there.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And we had one, big (inaudible 07:58) quarry, get rock out.



**Mrs. Hoffman:** That was when they proposed building a turnpike.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And use the quarry for, for rock, for crushed rock for the turnpike.

Roberta: The turnpike.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** That was a (inaudible **08:13**).

Roberta: Is that right? So, did they mine it? Did they get...?

**Mr. Hoffman:** No.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** They tried to sneak in, but unfortunately, they asked directions how to get their equipment up there of the man who headed, who was head of the committee of (inaudible **08:32**) the quarry.

Roberta. Okay. Now, who was it that tried to sneak the equipment in and...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Elliot Stotnick (phonetic **08:39**).

Roberta: Okay. I didn't know if it was a particular company.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No, no it wasn't.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay, okay. Okay, so, it was a private company then, wasn't it?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: What, what, other than you were saying that the Iron Hill area drew you because it was country and you liked country and that kind of thing. How did you find out about the Iron Hill area? Specifically, did you do research? Did you have a real estate agent?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We had a real estate agent. We were just looking at houses. We didn't find anything out about Iron Hill. We landed on... (laughter, cross-talk **09:17**)... about Iron Hill.

Roberta: Okay, okay. Okay, okay. Was it in close proximity to DuPont? Were you...?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah (unintelligible **09:28**) Work in Stein Lab (phonetic **09:30**) which was only a mile or two away.

Roberta: Okay. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I know where that is. I used to work for DuPont. So tell me, tell me a little bit more about that community for you in 1950, '51 when you moved there. Okay? And how many houses were near you, around you? What was day-to-day life like for you?

**[10:00]**

**Mr. Hoffman:** We're out from the country. (Laughter.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** The kids went to school on the school bus, of course. Let's see... On the east side of us was the, lived the Burns family, who we also wanted (unintelligible **10:18**). And Bobby Burns still lives in that house next to the house where we lived. I don't know how long his family's been there.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And on the other side of us was the Grimmages (phonetic **10:32**). Now you may have met...

Roberta: Yes.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...Robert, and I...I've...

(Cross-talk **10:37**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...the one that was our kids' age.

Roberta: Okay, okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They were nice.

Roberta: Okay. "Cause I was... Laura told me about a particular incident. I want to ask you about that later on.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Of course, when we moved there, it was still family segregation, so...

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...most kids went to school, Iron Hill, and then down from Middletown went up to the high school. It was a long ride.

Roberta: It was a long ride. Yeah, yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Take (unintelligible 11:070 into Newark.

Roberta: Yeah, what... What was that... How did your children interact, you know, with the black children in the community? What was that like for the two of you? You know, you're moving to an area, um, I guess New York City was a little more progressive then? So you...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Actually, I came, I moved from Trenton, New Jersey. I'd gone to school with black children. That wasn't a problem.

Roberta: Right, right. Right.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Plus, I don't think...

**Mr. Hoffman:** The kids got along pretty well.

Roberta: Yeah, that's my understanding, too. Yeah. There was an...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 11:51.)

Roberta: Sorry. (Laughter.)

Roberta: They had to go to a separate school and...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. They had to take that long ride down to Middletown. A long day for them. My God.

Roberta: I just interviewed some Louis, some members of the Louis family. I don't know if you knew them or not.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No.

Roberta: Yeah, they live on Pleasant Valley. They lived on Pleasant Valley.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay. Near (unintelligible **12:21**), right across from us.

Roberta: Right, right.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** For awhile I (unintelligible **12:26**) for Sunday School.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. What... You mentioned about the (unintelligible **12:32**), probably a good time to ask. I might be, I might be stepping into it a little soon, but Laura was telling me that there was an incident. Someone broke into your house, and police wanted to blame...

(Cross-talk **12:48**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Right away.

Roberta: ...blame (unintelligible **12:51**).

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Knew well (unintelligible **12:53**) Some little kid that lived on (unintelligible **12:56**) Center Road.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And they were wild. They were charming kids, they were just wild. (Laughter.) The mother... Single mother, and she had no control over

them. By the way, though, the police said the black kid next door (unintelligible **13:20**) hadn't actually been, turned out to be those kids. Their mother caught them. My daughter had been working as a waitress, and they took all of her tip money, and their mother found them with it. I've often wondered what happened to those children.

**Mr. Hoffman:** There was a piece in (unintelligible **13:49**) and half the children moved out of the area.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** One of our neighbors selected to just...

**Mr. Hoffman:** I don't know what...

(Laughter.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I don't know what, either.

**Mr. Hoffman:** They... They were very fun (unintelligible **04:06**). They could lie with (unintelligible **14:10**). Unless you knew exactly what was going on, they'd...(unintelligible **14:18**) attached to them, the way they talked.

Roberta: They could be very convincing.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: What was their name?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Their last name?

Roberta: Do you remember?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, maybe by the end of the interview, I'll come up with it.

Roberta: Okay. Might be, if they're still around, they might be kind of...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They moved (unintelligible **14:33**). Their house is down up... They were poor, see, you know.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah, yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And although there were five, six (unintelligible **14:50**) around Iron Hill, you pick that up, and you...

Roberta: No, when was that?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Good question. It was while we were living there, so it was somewhere in that period. Well before they started that turnpike. We moved out soon after the turnpike was completed.

**[15:05]**

Roberta: Right, right.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And it took several houses on Winterthur Road. And there was more on the south side of the museum side outside the woods. It burned several acres.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Wow. Does anybody know what, how it started?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I don't believe so. (Unintelligible **15:29**)

Roberta: (Laughter.) But that wasn't really used.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No. Not near enough to cause the fire.

Roberta: (Unintelligible, cross-talk **15:36**).

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Oh, no, not...

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...burn down the trees and a few houses.

Roberta: So how long, how long did it burn?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I can't remember.

**Mr. Hoffman:** About half a day or so.

Roberta: That was a big fire.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was a big fire. Had lots and lots of fire.

Roberta: Wow. Was it, uh, what time of the year was it? Was it summer? Was it hot? Was there a reason that it would...?

(Laughter **16:05**.)



**Mr. Hoffman:** What's suspected was after the leaves had come down, probably fall or winter or something, [16:20 trails off unintelligibly].

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** That would be somewhere in the fire department's records, I guess, if they keep records.

Roberta: Yeah, (unintelligible 16:30), that was important, yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, we did hear rumors that there were lightning on Iron Hill that I...

(Laughter, cross-talk 16:40.)

Roberta: Then that's all you know about it at all? I...

(Laughter, cross-talk 16:44.)

Roberta: Yeah, they're still up there, I was told.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It would have been interesting (unintelligible 16:56).

Roberta: I mean, it's quite possible.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Oh, yeah.

(Unintelligible cross-talk 17:04.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Just because of how dense it is.

Roberta: Yeah. And even it's not that dense now.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: What, um, what were, uh, let's see... Some of the ways that you enjoy, you know, life there at Iron Hill?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, Ed did lots of franking on the hill, it was all over the hill (unintelligible **17:36**).

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We had big Chesapeakes and we'd take them for walks up there.

**Mr. Hoffman:** We got firewood for the fireplace in the woods right back of us on the hill. I sort of considered that our own personal property.

(Laughter **17:56**.)

Roberta: There was nobody to (unintelligible **17:59**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No.

Roberta: So, what were the roads like? There wasn't...was there much traffic?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No, not much traffic. Of course, there was, there was no I-95. And when we moved there, the Old Baltimore Pike was a nine-foot road and was only half of the woods paved and (unintelligible **18:24**) going into town. Paving and parking out of town with the wagons going in with the (unintelligible **18:31**).

Roberta: Interesting. So, when you, now, tell me, you said when the wagons were going in they would be heavier, but coming out they'd be lighter.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Farm wagons? Is that it?

Mrs. Hoffman. Farm wagons.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Going into Wilmington or Newark?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Newark.

Roberta: Newark.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And maybe on to Wilmington with heading towards Newark at the start.

Roberta: Now, see, that was just probably just common acceptance to (cross-talk, unintelligible **19:02**).

Roberta: That is an interesting (unintelligible **19:06**). That makes a lot of sense. Do you remember when they changed that?

(Cross-talk, unintelligible **19:12**)

Roberta: When both sides became...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...soon after we moved there.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: They paved both sides, yeah. Cause probably people didn't farm as much soon after that?

**Mr. Hoffman:** And more cars were coming up.

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We had lots more cars.

Roberta: What was that like for you all, to see the changes, and more cars, more houses, more people living there? How did you adjust?

**Mr. Hoffman:** There weren't that many more houses. I-95 was the big change.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. Now there are some very upscale houses there now. It was not an upscale road where we lived (unintelligible **19:56**). I could name at least four, four properties that didn't have indoor plumbing on that road.

**[20:07]**

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It's...it's gone upscale (laughter).

Roberta: Did you... What was it like for your children? I mean, you know, how did your children enjoy...

(Cross-talk 20:26.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They played a lot with the Burns' children who were the same age on Bildon Park (phonetic 20:40) between our two houses that belonged to Mr. Foulk (phonetic 20:43) (unintelligible 20:44) his land in back of us, and they played a lot there.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And they had what they'd call it was (cross-talk 20:53) Goofy-Land or something.

Roberta: Goofy-Land?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They had a fort in there.

Roberta: It was a fort that the kids built?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. (Cross-talk 21:04) ...for play (unintelligible 21:09). I think they enjoyed one another.

Roberta: Uh, what other, what other things did you, did you do in that area? You know? Well, I guess, I guess I want... What was the community life like, you know? Did you get to know your other neighbors? Did you interact?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 21:37) know our neighbors and stuff. I guess our community life was also more tied into Newark itself.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. And in what way?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, we went to Church there.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** More active in the schools (unintelligible **21:56**).

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And then tied with the Stein Lab (phonetic **22:00**) was just starting up with a lot of new people and we had to sell some quilt there.

Roberta: Okay. Tell me about the Stein, the Stein Lab experience. You said it was just starting up.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah. It was, it was new, and it was set to start with (unintelligible **20:25**) discover and developing veterinary products for treating veterinary diseases. But then it soon switched to going (unintelligible **22:41**) for human.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And, for me, it was a great place to work. We were out in the country and didn't have the formality of downtown Wilmington (laughter). And the one thing I liked, they told me that I could, as long as I'd gotten my project running, they wanted to spend twenty percent of my time working on (unintelligible **23:22**) and I discovered more for DuPont on that twenty percent of my time than doing the actual project.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

- Mr. Hoffman:** So, they really encouraged research and (unintelligible **23:41**) on your own.
- Roberta: Hmmm. Yeah, but I think as time went on, I think that changed a little.
- Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah. (Laughter.)
- Roberta: Yeah. It changed some. Yeah.
- Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah, now if I talk to anyone from way back, they say, “Aw, you were working there during the golden age.”
- Roberta: (Unintelligible **24:06**.)
- Mrs. Hoffman:** I worked at the experimental station, and I started there... When did I start there? 1967.
- Mrs. Hoffman:** Oh.
- Roberta: And I finished two years ago.
- Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah, I was on the team that developed the new big research building on the central research.
- Mrs. Hoffman:** The large science building.
- Roberta: Oh, at, at Astron (phonetic **24:41**) or...
- Mr. Hoffman:** No, it was at the experimental station.
- Roberta: Oh, Building Three Twenty-Eight?

**Mr. Hoffman:** What's that?

Roberta: That's Building Three Twenty-Eight. That's the big, central Research and Development building.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah, yeah, that's where I finished up. Most of my time was in ag. In the ag department, which was a lot of fun. [25:00] So, I get, I got to be down at Stein a little bit with the orchard unit. That kind of thing. It was different. It was a nice, it was a nice thing. It was a nice thing. Mrs. Hoffman, did you work? I see you went to Cornell (unintelligible 25:19).

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I worked briefly.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** In New York City, Rockefeller's (unintelligible 25:25).

Roberta: Oh, what did you do?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I worked in the streptococcus lab.

(Cross-talk 25:22).

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Sort of like a flunkie. (Laughter.)

Roberta: Oh, so you were in science, too.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yes.



Roberta: Oh.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah, she (unintelligible **25:37**) Bachelor's degree at Cornell in bacteriology.

Roberta: Oh, okay. Okay. Did you like it? Well, at the Rockefeller Institute?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, I liked that. I was madly in love and I wanted to get married. (Laughter.) (Unintelligible **26:07**) was interesting (unintelligible **26:08**). It was very nice. I wouldn't (unintelligible **26:110** in New York City.

Roberta: Yeah, yeah, I would think, yeah, I would think, yeah... It can be interesting or it can be a wild place to live, I think. When you and your husband moved in, in, into the Iron Hill area and settled down, you started having children... What school did they start out going to?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** That was certainly the time of the baby boom and they were building schools right and left in Newark. One daughter started out on Main Street, and they had classrooms in the (unintelligible **26:54**) building there. And then she moved to (unintelligible **27:00**)... I don't remember. The other daughter went to Medill on two buses, and they built West Park, so she went to West Park, went to Christiana Junior High, and to Christiana opening her senior year was at Christiana High, opened. They hadn't built the one near (unintelligible **27:30**).

Roberta: Oh, I see. Yeah, yeah. How'd they like those experiences? Did they ever talk about it?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I think...

Roberta: Yeah.

Mrs. Hoffman: There was good experience, I think, all in all...

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...for teenagers to have (laughter). (Unintelligible **27:47**.)

Roberta: They were happy with the teachers and the counselors...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: ...and the direction that the counselors pointed them?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, yeah.

Roberta: Hmmm, some of these questions I have (unintelligible **28:10**) because some of them are kind of (unintelligible **28:16**).

(Cross-talk **28:21**.)

Roberta: I'm sorry; go ahead.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** There were remnants of farming where on our side of Welsh Track Road there was some, ah, there was a broken down lot, a wall in between that (unintelligible **28:38**) place and the next property. I never did find out who owned that property and then just beyond that the (unintelligible **28:43**) lived.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And then in front of us was all clear. It was a big meadow in front of our house looking out to the west it would be. I had fruit trees...

Roberta: You can't possibly find that now.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Possibly those fruit trees may still be there (unintelligible **29:05**).

Roberta: Yeah. Um, two questions that brings from me. The farming... Was it primarily dairy farming in that area? Or cuck farming? Orchards? Chicks?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Oh... Chickens.

Roberta: Chickens?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Chickens.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Best friends there with the townies who had a chicken farm out in Pleasant Valley Road, which now sells homes. That place sells homes. Construction stuff, it looks like; I'm not quite sure.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** On the same... On the same side as the church, the little church.

Roberta: Would you register a... Would you and your husband be willing to just kind of draw a little rough map of the area. **[30:00]** Of where, where, you know, what it looked like when you were there. Who lived in what house. And orchards, you know. It can be as wide or as small as you, as you want it to be. When I say that, encompass as much, you know...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Chuckling.) Sure.

**End of Tape 1, side 1.**

**Begin Tape 1, side 2.**

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. This is, uh, tape one of two, and I was just previously asking the Hoffmans if they would be willing to create a map of the area that they lived during the time that they were there.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** About... I was about to say the counties were of (unintelligible **30:45**) few Finnish families down in that general area.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Right, right. Yeah, that's what... That's some of what we're getting. And, and that's kind of a curiosity because some of the general picture that Laura wants to create, too, you know, around there. So that's all very interesting. It's very interesting. So however you want to create that on whatever piece of paper, you know, it doesn't have to be fancy. That would be great. That really would. It would help me.

(Laughter.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I don't know, but we'll try.

Roberta. Great. Just give it myself or Laura, call. You might... At this point, might be easier to catch me than Laura. Yeah, yeah. And, well that would be really good to be able to see that.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And I had a four, I had a Four-H Club in the early... (Cross-talk, unintelligible **31:46**.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** The kids were quite active in the Four-H Club.

Roberta: How did you decide to be involved in that?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Must have gotten dragged in. (Laughter.) Outside of the museum was the sun.

Roberta: Okay, because that was going to be a question, too, you know...

**Mr. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 32:07.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** All I know is...

(Cross-talk 32:10.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 32:11)...Four-H leader

Roberta: Okay, so your son probably got you involved in the Four-H, you think?

(Cross-talk. Unintelligible 32:17.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...Iron Hill Museum.

Roberta: So how did that happen? He was, he was...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Didn't the Mousons (phonetic 32:25) have a program for children.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No.

**Mr. Hoffman:** What's that?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No. The Ace (phonetic **32:31**) were somewhat active. They're friends of ours no longer in the Newark area.

Roberta: What was their name again?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Ace Wilmer.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **32:41**.) And their son had taken to going over and helping Ben and Ann Nelson who were pretty close to the beginning (unintelligible **32:50**) and they would work every Tuesday and Thursday night. And they'd drive a couple... These are high school kids now. Invite a couple other boys, and they would come and work at the museum with Ann and Bob Nelson, who did... Bob and Ann would work the whole day in there and then worked Tuesday and Thursday nights and then all weekends. And (unintelligible **33:13**).

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah, that's work. Yeah, that's, that's putting in a lot of time.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And John got so enthusiastic, he got Peg dragged in.

Roberta: Now, this is your son?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And, uh, after awhile, he decided I was sitting around too much and prompted me to come in and help, too.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 33:37.)

Roberta: Okay. Oh, so, when you got involved, that was about when? What year?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well...

Roberta: Roughly?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** That was (unintelligible 33:51) in 1964. (Laughter.)

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I had (unintelligible 33:52) '64, '74, subtract three, about '71. Oh, for me, I think it was a little bit more than that. Anyway, around the '70s. 1970.

Roberta: So was it a natural history museum, then? When it was started?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay. That's when it was started. Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was started as a natural history library, and then Bob was interested in history, too, and some of the programs dealt with the Revolutionary War and what was going on at that time.

**Mr. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 34:22.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **34:25**.) ...neurology and geology.

Roberta: Okay, okay. Yeah, they have a lot of that there.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yes, as you well know.

Roberta: So, when you first started, I mean, was, how, what did the building look like inside? I mean, it didn't have...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was awful. (Unintelligible **34:43**.) (Laughter.)

Roberta: Okay.

(Cross-talk, unintelligible **34:46**).

Roberta: So they...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **34:48**.) Not a lot of things is there. The best you can do, I don't think (unintelligible **34:55**).

Roberta: I didn't know how far in to creating the museum they had gone before you got involved. You know, like...

**[35:05]**

**Mr. Hoffman:** They had the museum pretty well created.

Roberta: Okay. Yeah, okay, okay. And they had all the goodies in there by the time (unintelligible **35:14**).



**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **35:16**.)

Roberta: Yeah. It's a lot of work. You can tell. And so, how long were the two of you involved with the museum?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, probably from the 1970s until they let us go, which was five years ago.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Oh.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We couldn't do it (unintelligible **35:43**).

Roberta: Yeah. What did you do?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **35:47**.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** Most...mostly got in there at the end, we were mostly (unintelligible **35:50**).

Roberta: Oh. So, you just kind of gave them lectures on the history of Iron Hill and...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah. Yeah.

Roberta: ...The geology...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Geology.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We learned a lot. I learned a lot.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah. Then we did some on the Native Americans of the area, too. The Indians...likely...things to really likely be in the classes.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I miss that.

Roberta: I bet. Laura talks about how involved you all were.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 36:28.)

Roberta. Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 36:32) four or five (unintelligible 36:34) come in. In the beginning, it was all women. Okay?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 36:41.)

Roberta: Yeah. Tell me about some of the programs. Some... Was there anything about some of the activities, some of the times that would stand out for you more than others?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, there was Elmer. Elmer was a big attraction. He was an Indian skeleton.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Really?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yes, he was. And they laid it in a half-glass case, and they (unintelligible **37:12**) the Indian stuff, mostly his mouth. Unfortunately, the museum was broken into, and amongst the things that went was Elmer's head, full of (unintelligible **37:28**). The next day that they were supposed to go on, and Bob hadn't missed the head yet. I looked in the cases, and poor Elmer had lost his head. (Laughter.) And it was some time after that when the Indians, when the current Native Americans, wanted their ancestors...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Ancestors.

Roberta: Ancestors, oh yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...given a decent burial.

Roberta: Sure. Sure.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And the rest of Elmer was properly buried.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** The kids really liked Elmer. They were told that they named him Elmer 'cause of so much Elmer's glue to assemble his bones. I'm not sure I find that (unintelligible **38:08**). (Laughter.)

Roberta: So how did Elmer's skeleton come to be in the museum? Do you know?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I don't know why. I don't know.

Roberta: Was he, was he buried in... Was he in that area? Was...

**Mr. Hoffman:** I don't even know that.

Roberta: Okay.

(Cross-talk 38:25.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 38:26) ...interested to find out...

Roberta: And so, when the elders, I'm assuming it was probably the elders of a particular tribe... Lenape? Do you think?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Where...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was a Nanticoke one.

Roberta: Nanti – Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Their ancestors were in Delaware. They weren't up in that area.

Roberta: They were down...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Nonetheless, they knew there was an Indian skeleton.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** He could have come from anywhere.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** There's a path, a trail, there was a trail. That's why (unintelligible **38:55**), and that's why his head got (unintelligible **38:59**).

Roberta: So when they were...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They're worth money.

Roberta: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Really terrible market, you know? When I say, "terrible market," it creates a lot of dishonesty. So, which... Where was he finally buried? Was he buried in Delaware? Or Pennsylvania?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I think he was buried, I think he went back to... I don't know.

Roberta: Okay. I was just curious because I'd never heard about that. I'll have to ask Laura if she knows about that.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Laughter.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** That all happened before she came here, didn't it?

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. Of course they've all, always liked them (unintelligible **39:46**).

(Cross-talk, unintelligible **39:50**.)

Roberta: Were they from Iron Hill? Is that where they came from?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No. No.

Roberta: Okay, okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Because that's the path that by the, by the (unintelligible **39:56**) not from Iron Hill (unintelligible **39:59**)

[**40:03**]

Roberta: Okay. Okay. Tell me a little bit about that. I've never heard of that.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** There were some... (unintelligible **40:08**). We must go out there, and I'll give you a tour. (Laughter.)

Roberta: Okay, okay. Yeah. Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I need to shine an ultraviolet light on it cause that activates...

**Mr. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **40:23**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...and they give off the light.

Roberta: Where're they from?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** The ones we had were from all over.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** From Canada. But New Jersey has one of the best places in the world for them (unintelligible 40:40).

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Interesting to talk about Iron Hill. After Ann died and Milton died (unintelligible 40:55), practically nothing happened at the museum. She kept us together (unintelligible 41:00).

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 41:03.) It almost went under. It just sat there and nothing ever happened. (Unintelligible 41:13) control of the (unintelligible 41:16) Delaware Academy of Sciences. And then a president, and there's another name for once, and he knew a woman that was really helpful in getting it going. And the Delaware Nature Society (unintelligible 41:38). And when she took hold, said that we had to hire somebody to be here and take charge of this. It's not going to go any other way. And there was, there was quite a battle cause Bob didn't want that.

Roberta: (Unintelligible 41:56.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They hired the person to...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah, Bob wanted to give them a bone, too. (Unintelligible 42:05.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 42:07) ...volunteers to take on the job that Ann had done. So they hired their first museum director, and that was Terry. And he liked, he liked archeology and minerology, so, the emphasis went on to minerology. Ah, he preserved the Indian dig-out and back, and put his

stamp on it. And then Debbie Parazyski (phonetic **42:36**) was the next one.

Roberta: Okay. I'm trying to remember if I've seen that name. Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. She was very... They all...they all added their own...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Laughter.) ...Own bit to it. It branched out into plants, more natural history, again, too. And plenty programs for the children. She was very good. And then they hired Laura. And Laura is going more into history and to the impact upon the area.

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It's interesting watching the different museum directors put their own stamps on it. (Laughter.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah. And as Peg went along she'd sort of took over the museum shop.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **43:27**) ...Museum shop, and when she was in the hospital, she gave it to me, and so I inherited it for a long time.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: So, so all during the time that they had the different museum directors, you all were working there.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.



Roberta: Volunteering.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. I was very fond of all three of them. (Laughter.)

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah. That says something in that they hired good people. What else, what else about the museum can I ask you folks? About your experience there? Oh, you know what? Let me, let me, let me venture back out into the Iron Hill community for a little bit. And if you, and if you think of anything about the museum, please just jump right in with it. That's fine. Politics in the area. What was, what was it like politically? What was the political climate? You know? I mean anything. From voting, you know, or vote buying, or you, know, were you all involved in any way?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We weren't particularly involved in political...

**Mr. Hoffman:** No.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Or I would say, very few of our neighbors were, either. They were people who would do (unintelligible 44:58) that active in politics.

[45:00]

**Mr. Hoffman:** He went around until the... Interviewing people for demographics or something?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Laughter.) If I did, I have no memory of it.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Well you came back once and told me that one person who talked to you asked about what Harvey and (unintelligible 45:28) really said. He didn't

know who was going to vote. Or was it... It wasn't the one who was in power. He didn't know his name.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay, I have no memory of that.

**Mr. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 45:42.)

Roberta: To you, concerns were very local.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Concerns of what would happen when they built I-95.

Roberta: Sure. Sure. Cause they immediately impacted...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. Right. And more concerns about... I can't remember any problem brought against (unintelligible 46:13).

Roberta: Yeah, because by the time you folks... You said you moved there in '51 or '52, a couple years later, you know, the...

**Mr. Hoffman:** No, it was...

Roberta: Brown versus the Board...

**Mr. Hoffman:** There was (unintelligible 45:32) down in the graceland when I went to Stein. Stein, actually, set up a bowling league, and we had some black technicians and black (unintelligible 46:49) and I think the league's still there because they took us in. And when they had our Stein lab Christmas

party, we had to go down to Wilmington to find a place that would let us have a party with mixed. So, integration was pretty strong for them.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** You mean “discrimination.”

**Mr. Hoffman:** What?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** You mean “discrimination.”

**Mr. Hoffman:** Discrimination, yeah.

Roberta: And you said, and you said you had to go to Wilmington to find a place.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Some part of Wilmington. Well, we...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** In that particular neighborhood, I didn’t sense it.

**Mr. Hoffman:** No. And Stein Lab was pretty well integrated and got along pretty well.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. That’s the picture that I’m getting from everybody I’ve been talking to...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Really?

Roberta: ...In the Iron Hill area. People...different instances. I was talking to Mrs. Lewis; it was an interesting. But for the most part, things that did crop up were corrected, you know, and people just pretty much, you know, I think... Yeah, they just, they just worked it out.

(Sound of phone ringing.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **48:16.**)

(Tape seems to stop and restart **48:18**.)

**Roberta:** What, uh, I'm jumping around now... Military. Did either one of you have to be concerned with military in the family? Anybody going to war or being in service...?

**Mr. Hoffman:** My brother was a pilot and was killed in the war. And I went in the Navy, but never got on a ship. My tour of duty was in the biological warfare research unit in Frederick, Maryland.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Thankfully, our son came of age in between that.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah. He got...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Now I worry about my grandsons and my great-grandsons.

**Roberta:** Right.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And daughters, for that matter.

**Roberta:** I know. I know.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It's a mess.

**Mr. Hoffman:** I'd been excused from the draft when (unintelligible **49:28**) draft board. Was supposed to be very tough because I was in (unintelligible **49:34**). And then when I was at Deep Creek, I got something out of and was working with and was in the hospital there, pretty near out of it. I got a card from them that said that the state board had overruled them and I was to report in two or three days for my physical exam. [**50:00**] I just gave it

to the colonel in charge of the hospital. I, I don't know, I... That was the last word I ever heard from the draft board. And I just have a feeling he wrote "Deceased" on it and sent the card back. (Laughter.) Cause I never heard anything more.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Did, uh, you're two daughters weren't interested in the military?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No.

Roberta: Yeah, you could join if you wanted to, I know. And now we have this (unintelligible 50:37) volunteers, so hopefully, that won't change.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah, yeah, it's a wild business isn't it?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It seems so hopeless and so unproductive. Oh well. Back to Iron Hill (Laughter). (Unintelligible 51:00.) That's absolutely more fun.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah. What else would you like to share about, you know, your living at Iron Hill? Especially the museum. The museum, I think, is really kind of, was a big part of your life.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yup.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** For awhile there, Ann and I were... We really, really hit it off well together. We're working five days a week out there.

Roberta: So what were some of the things you were doing in the museum besides (unintelligible **51:41**). You worked with the gift shop. Did you give tours and that kind of thing?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Cleaning and (unintelligible **51:51**). (Laughter.)

Roberta: All the administrative stuff, right?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Administrative stuff and the records.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And trying to keep money enough coming in. Most of the time I was there I was Treasurer for a long time. I (unintelligible **52:11**) with their noses sticking up. (Laughter.) Now, and now when they talk about some of the money they're talking about it just bothered (unintelligible **52:20**).

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you know they've already, let's see... They have acquired the architect for the new learning facility, and that's lots and lots of money.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Lots of money.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah. It's incredible.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, you don't accomplish things unless you dream big. (Laughter.) It's a far cry from the little museum (laughter).

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: It'll be interesting. I have to get up to date with Laura to find out what, what the time frame is. I guess it was about a year ago. And they said three to five years, you know, they hope to be in to the new building. So,

we'll see. I'm curious about it myself. I'd like to see it move back to a school house.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, it was always thought that (unintelligible **53:17**).

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay, it's (unintelligible **53:21**). And then bringing Laura in, I guess was her interest in that aspect of history made a difference. At what point did Delaware Academy of Science become involved. Because you were saying Iron Hill's...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** At first.

**Mr. Hoffman:** First.

Roberta: Okay, so they... That's the impression I got. They were responsible for maintaining the integrity of the building. The fact that it's still in as good a shape as it is.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, it tagged along to the Newark...

**Mr. Hoffman:** School district.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...State school.

Roberta: Ah, yes. School board.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yes. While Bob had been very fond of a museum in Wilmington when he was a kid, (unintelligible **54:05**) just love that sort of stuff. And that was disbanded and a lot of the, some of the exhibits went to one of the

DuPont's barns. One of the DuPont family barns. And Bob always worried about what happened to them. He always had in mind he'd like to have a natural history museum, and he was talking to (unintelligible **54:35**). Sorry about his name, but just... And...and said that the Academy of Science was looking for a project.

Roberta: Oh.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And so that was the beginning of it all when we found this property. Someone told them they sold, they sold the Iron Hill School, with restrictions with one dollar (unintelligible **55:08**). There are restrictions it has to be for educational purposes. And somehow he finally got that history somewhere. And that's where it started.

[55:20]

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And Bob was active in the Mineralogical Society at that time and they did a lot of...

**Mr. Hoffman:** Help with getting things...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** ...Getting things set up, and we were also (unintelligible **55:35**). A few others, like a couple of archaeologists who donated a lot of these Indian artifacts and so forth. Set up that part. And they've always worked somewhat with museums with the university. (Coughs.) Excuse me. (Unintelligible **55:59**.)

Roberta: Did you want (Unintelligible **56:00**).



**Mrs. Hoffman:** I'd better.

**Mr. Hoffman:** After a while, the Academy was sort of the backbone of the museum started having its own programs and getting funding, and for a while there was quite a bit of almost antagonism with the museum and the Academy. The museum treasurer was afraid the Academy was trying to take over the museum finances.

Roberta: Oh.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was definitely (laughter)... But this is the best of organizations.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Couple of times of strain. Wilkins Zell (phonetic **56:47**)... Wilkins was (unintelligible **56:49**) awful lot from the Indian collection, the Native Americans.

Roberta: What was the name again?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Elwood Wilkins (phonetic **56:56**).

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I think he's probably not alive anymore. I'm not sure.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. Did he... He was involved with the museum? Did he live in the area? Or did he just...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** He lived in... He lived in Pennsylvania, not far away (unintelligible **57:13**).

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Not (unintelligible **57:16**).

Roberta: Okay. Cause I know that's one of the features that when Laura has the geology days or something there once or twice a year they have a Native American of (unintelligible **57:33**).

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **57:35**) was a very attractive young woman. For a while there, she was single (laughter). And she managed to attract a (unintelligible **57:45**).

**Mr. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **57:45**.)

Roberta: She, she managed to attract...?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Help. (Laughter.)

Roberta: And this was Debbie who, again?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Parazelas (phonetic **57:58**).

Roberta, Ah, yes, okay. Okay. Let's see. How do you feel about the fact that the museum, that building itself, is going to be restored in some manner to the schoolhouse with exhibits and programs and, you know...

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I think that's, I think it's fitting and proper. I love it, and mourn the loss of the little museum.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 58:45.)

Roberta: Yeah, I can understand that. You guys put a lot of time in that.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, that's...that's about it. (Laughter.)

Roberta: (Unintelligible 58:57) even, even, even though it's still going to be a natural history museum, in a different building, it's going to be very different.

**Mr. Hoffman:** It's going to be different, yeah.

Roberta: Very different. Very... What color was the building, was that building when you guys worked there, on the outside? Do you remember?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It's not the color, was not the color it is now. And we painted it a couple of times. No, I don't remember.

Roberta: One person we, we got that went to school there said that she, she remembered that it was kind of a red color. And then another guy was saying it was the color it is now. You know? But he was finished up in the early sixties. So he says he remembered yellow with brown trim. So. Most people don't remember. That's interesting. So there... So, so, was there a railroad when you, near the school in Iron Hill when you were there?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I had heard the rumors. Somebody said that once, and I never...

Roberta: Elkton Road?

**[60:10]**

(Cross-talk, unintelligible **60:09**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Iron Hill (unintelligible **60:19**) off of 273, south of (unintelligible **60:33**).

Roberta: Actually, I'm going to stop this. This ends tape one, side two.

**[End 60:42]\**

**End of Tape 1, side 2.**

**Begin Tape 2, side 1.**

**[00:00]**

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins on July 26, 2006. This is tape two, side one.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Meet in the classrooms was a pretty great thing because we had a lot of classes from Wilmington of little kids coming out and they'd never been in the woods and they're really afraid and (unintelligible **00:34**) around any snakes, any bears and I'd have two or three little Black kids holding on to my hand all worried, and they're coming from parts of Wilmington I'd be afraid to go into. But, and I always considered the Iron Hill, the woods, a really friendly, nice place. But the kids really worried about things.

Roberta: It's all about perspective, isn't it?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta. Yeah.

**Mr. Hoffman:** But it was good for them to see nature.

Roberta: Oh, yeah. Yeah. So, so these same children that had this fear when they came... How did they feel by the time they, they left the tour and they were (unintelligible **01:11**)/

**Mr. Hoffman:** Well they, they were a little calmer about it.

(Sound of phone ringing.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay. She's got it.

Roberta: Did they enjoy it?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Oh yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah, we, we'd collected the different iron minerals there there.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** We'd take geology and (unintelligible **01:41**) and break off and get pieces and he'd comment on what's this and what's that. And for a while, I think Theo'd clear Iron Hill if given the chance, so I told him that of little pieces, if it could fit in your mouth, you could keep it. If it's bigger than that... But don't try it; it might get stuck in there. But it's... No, I think they enjoyed the tours. I remember once there were boys and girls and they were running across the lawn and a snake came up and went crawling away in front of them and all the boys – and the girls – started chasing it, and suddenly some of the girls stopped and (unintelligible **02:32**) supposed to be afraid of snakes and and let it go. I think (unintelligible **02:43**) teach minerals, but there're birds and stuff, point them out.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** It, I think it did the kids a lot of good. We also, Peg and I also guided a...place up by Wilmington. The Natural History Society. DNS. Delaware Nature Society.

Roberta: Right, right. Ashland?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Ashland, yeah.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** We guided there a lot, too.

Roberta: How old were the children that came from Wilmington and that you gave tours to at Iron Hill? Elementary? Were they elementary? Junior high?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Mostly elementary.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** At Iron Hill, I think we had mostly third-grade class.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:** And there (unintelligible **03:49**) Nature Society, they, they got up earlier into junior high and high school, but it, it... You could tell the difference in teachers because some of the kids would come pretty well trained. Sometimes I'd say, "Oh, you'd better lead this class; you know more than I do." And other times, they weren't trained (unintelligible **04:23**) and some of the teachers, you could see, you almost had to tell them to keep

quiet because they were so eager for the kids to answer the questions they'd tend to answer them.

Roberta: When you taught at Delaware Nature Society, what, what did you teach?  
At the Delaware Nature Society?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Oh, a variety of programs, the geology of the area...

Roberta: Okay.

Mr. Hoffman: ...And from that, programs on deer and different trees. And they had a program we liked to teach very much (unintelligible **05:06**). It was down on Delaware Bay. We'd go down and study the coastline and home of the hermit crabs and other things that came up. Next twenty things. Then take the kids out wading with (unintelligible **05:23**) nets and catch the fish and stuff. The kids really liked that. And then the big study at Ashland for Peg and I were the pond studies where we'd go down the pond, catch animals, put them in pans and study them and then get them a sip of water and get microscopic life, take it back and look at it under the microscope. The kids liked that and so did we did, too.

Roberta: Pretty amazing, the life that's in a little drop of water, isn't it?

**Mr. Hoffman:** Oh, yeah.



Roberta.                      Yeah. Yeah.

**Mr. Hoffman:**              So I think all those programs were, were really good for the kids. But you could usually take, tell the kids that came from the country and from farms and stuff.

Roberta:                      Oh yeah? They were familiar with...?

**Mr. Hoffman:**              With...yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:**              I can't find Iron Hill Station on the map. But anyway, there's Iron Hill Station Road, if you go on out past Stein, if you go on foot, Maryland direction, it's on the left.

Roberta:                      Oh, okay. On 896?

**Mrs. Hoffman:**              Yeah.

Roberta:                      Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:**              There's a road back to it. And once I heard that there was, there were tracks on Iron Hill, that somebody said that, and I've never been able to...

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 07:06.)

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Bring some of the iron out.

Roberta: Cause I know that was one of the questions that Laura was interested in asking people. Evidently, there was a railroad nearby Elkton Road. Cause there's a sign in the museum. I don't know if you remember it. When you go in the foyer, there's a railroad sign, like it would be in a station in the museum.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible 07:32) Iron Hill Station. There was a station, people stopped there, trains stopped there. It's on the (unintelligible 07:40).

Roberta: Probably.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah?

Roberta: Yeah. I like trains. (Laughter.) What else can I bug you folks about? (Unintelligible 07:57) get you to share with us?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **08:07**) is in the area is interesting. I've never been in the (unintelligible **8:10**).

Roberta: No.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** You know where it is?

Roberta: I'm not sure...

(Cross-talk, unintelligible **08:14**).

Roberta: I'm still getting familiar with the area. Not sure if I do.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay. It's on the, close to the corner of 896 on Welsh Tract Road.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. How old is it?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Well, it's there during the Revolution (unintelligible **08:31**).

**Mr. Hoffman:** The Revolutionary War.

Roberta: Is that where you all went to Church?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No. I went there once, though. It's a (unintelligible 08:41). That's a sect of Baptist Church.

Roberta: Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** And they let (unintelligible 08:49) once a month. They had a traveling minister.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Ministers. Visitors. Took care of several churches.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah, I'm familiar with that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Didn't quite... They didn't believe in Sunday School because they feared the (unintelligible 09:09) take care of getting you any religion you needed.

Roberta: (Unintelligible 09:18.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It's interesting.

Roberta: See, here I was under the assumption everybody had Sunday School.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** No. They don't have Sunday School. Actually, actually, I was brought up Baptist, and we had Sunday School, of course, but (unintelligible **09:33**) Baptists don't baptize until you're old enough to know what you're doing.

Roberta: So, so, and so, you made that decision, then? Is that it, or...?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. (Unintelligible **09:49**.) You feel it's expected of you, so you do it. (Laughter.) I don't know how much, but when I was baptized, I really... (laughter).

Roberta: Community pressure.

**[10:00]**

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Found the strength of the Lord (unintelligible **10:01**).

Roberta: It was the strength of the community (unintelligible **10:06**).

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Anyway, a nice little church.

Roberta: I may have to, you know, go and visit that.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** There's a place where a bullet went through the building.

Roberta: I think somebody was telling me about that.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. And so is that still there?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They probably left it there.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** At least several years ago, you could tell where it was.

Roberta: So, is it open, do they give tours? Or do they still now have services?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** They did the last I knew, but we haven't been there since 1976.

Roberta: Okay.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** (Unintelligible **10:50**.)

Roberta: Okay. Okay. It's Welsh Tract Church?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah. Welsh Tract Primitive Baptist Church.

Roberta: Primitive... Okay. I can't write and think at the same time.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I write what I'm thinking (unintelligible **11:17**).

Roberta: Okay. (Unintelligible **11:22**.) Do you folks have anything else?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** I'll probably think of all sorts of things after you go. Sorry. (Laughter.)  
You know?

Roberta: I know. I know. I've got, um, another project in the community where I live, and that's what happens. People think of something, you know, after I've gone.

(Laughter.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: And sometimes, in certain areas, what helps us, too, is if you take the person and you (unintelligible **11:54**) a little walking tour with your tape recorder, and that helps to jog people's memories and that is how some folks recall.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah.

Roberta: So, you're not going to forget that map for me, right?

(Cross-talk, laughter, unintelligible **12:09**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** We'll see what we can do.

Roberta: Yeah, yeah, kind of play with it and see... I think it would be exciting (unintelligible **12:16**) people that promised that they were going to do that. So you get maps of areas from different time frames and different perspectives. It'll be pretty interesting.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Who sent (unintelligible **12:27**) that Laura didn't find that map of Iron Hill from the property owners on it? They were... That was way back that, with the...



Roberta: Okay. Okay. I'm going to make a star, an arrow here of a couple of things that I really need to (unintelligible **12:46**). She's really good because I ask her two and three times about something that she's told me. But she's really kind of history-ed-out (unintelligible **13:00**). Well if that's... If I've drained you, then that's all... Cause that's all the questions that I can think of right now to ask you.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Okay.

Roberta: And thank you so very much for your time.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** It was a pleasure.

Roberta: Yeah. I'm happy to have the opportunity to meet you. I've heard so much about you from Laura. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, thank you very much. This, this ends the interview.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Oh. (Laughter.)

Roberta: Oh. Not yet. Not yet. (Laughter.) This is exactly what I want. You go right ahead.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Wait a minute. I have to ask Ed... The museum had a, a caged animal. (Laughter.) (Unintelligible **13:45**.)

**Mr. Hoffman:** We had a tarantual, didn't we?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Oh, no. Yeah, we had tarantuals, but... (unintelligible **13:52**). That day.  
And a furry animal. (Laughter.)

(Cross-talk. Unintelligible **14:01**.)

**Mrs. Hoffman:** In the early days of the museum.

**Mr. Hoffman:** Peg, maybe it was before I got involved too much.

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Yeah, well, (unintelligible **14:13**) come up with that.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. So how long was it there?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** Not too long. That's why I definitely remember (unintelligible **14:21**)  
Bob Nelson?

Roberta: No. Is he still around?

**Mrs. Hoffman:** He lives in (unintelligible **14:29**), but you should talk to him.

Roberta:                Okay.

**Mr. Hoffman:**        Yeah.

**Mrs. Hoffman:**        That's down state.

Roberta:                Hey, I need to go down state anyway. That's all right.

**Mrs. Hoffman:**        I knew (unintelligible **14:38**) on Bob.

Roberta:                Yes, please. Thank you.

**Mrs. Hoffman:**        (Unintelligible **14:41**.) He does have a house up here and comes up once in awhile.

Roberta:                Okay. I've never been to (unintelligible **14:51**). I've heard of it.

**Mr. Hoffman:**        Yeah.

(Sound of tape being stopped and started again **15:01**.)

Roberta:                   Okay, this is, um, ends the interview. And this is tape two, side one.

**[End 15:12]**