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Contact:

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library
181 South College Avenue
Newark, DE 19717-5267
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>
askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

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Interview with Mr. Eugene Haefele, German immigrant, 407 W. Summit Avenue, Elmhurst, Wilmington, Delaware, November 2, 1973, by Steven Schoenherr.

Q O.K. What we usually start with is if you can tell me first of all when you were born in Germany, about. We're going to start now in the old country--when and where you were born.

A I should tell that now? I am born 1902, 15 July in Germany--is that right?

Q What city in Germany?

A The town's name is Esslingen^{Esslingen}atafolz (sp?), Wurtemmberg, about 30 miles above Stuttgart--between Ulm and Stuttgart.

Q About 30 miles north or west?

A North.

Q O.K. 30 miles north of Stuttgart. I've never been to Germany, but I think...

A What I should say now?

Q All right, can you tell me, did you live on a farm?

A I was...in my younger days over there in Germany, I went to school seven years. Be fourteen I come out of school and then I learn my trade. I came out of school in 1916 and learned a trade as machinist for four years...four years. Then I stayed six more years over there I worked on my trade. But the later part of 1924 and 1925 and 1926, too, the time was not so good with work. There was a lot of people out of work at that time. I went several places and I worked...I left my home town there once anyhow, worked about a half a year somewhere else, too, around Ulm. And then I worked another place in Saxon. I worked there for half a year, and then I came home again, and stayed around home. I still could not find good job, but I had some friends in Philadelphia, and I wrote to them about let me come over. And they fixed the paper up for me and then I could come over to Philadelphia, I came over May, 1926, and stayed in Philadelphia two years. I been working in a machine shop, but the time got bad there, too. That was...got bad. Then I had somebody down in Wilmington, a cousin of mine, and he was working out in Winterthur farm as farm hand. And I told him and he say I should come down. Then I came down in March 1928 to Winterthur farm and worked as a farm hand out there on the farm. And that time was bad, too, but I had some work. I had some work. That was in '28, and 1930, I got married. I got married 1930, and my wife, on the farm, Mr. DuPont give us a home too to live in there and I been living on the farm with our own home out there, and that's what we had. After that I had some friends they been working in Wilmington in DuPont's plant--DuPont shop on Maryland Avenue. I came down...I went down there and asked for a job and I got a job there in 1926 (sic) and I worked there about a year and then I got laid off. And then I looked for another job. I even was working out at the race track--the Delaware race track. At that time they made them

horse stables and I worked on them horse stables as laborer...helped the carpenter move the lumber.

Q Did you build things out there?

A Yeah. After that I got back again...after they be done out there I got laid off there. Then I went down to *Bellania* ~~Berlinga~~ (sp?) airplane place down there in New Castle. I worked there for a while, and after that...

Q Is that a company down there?

A They had a company down there--no more. ~~Berlinga~~.

Q How do you spell that? B-e-r?

A Yeah. I think they know down in Newark.

Q ~~Berlinga~~?

A Yeah, ~~Berlinga~~. Yeah. ~~Berlinga~~. I worked there and then I went back gain Wilmington to DuPont's--DuPont shop on Maryland Avenue. I worked there a while then I got laid off again too. And then I went down to ~~Berlinga~~ again, and from ~~Berlinga~~, I left down there, I went to Redding Textile Machine Shop. I worked there ten months up there. Then the shop got busy again too, in '39. I went down to the shop and I stayed down there 29 years from '39 to '67. I had thirty years service down at the shop.

Q And then you retired?

A Yeah, I'm retired now six years since July..

Q O.K. Now, can you tell me...

A What I do now? You tell me.

Q All right. That's all right. Can you tell me, in Germany, anything about your family. What did your family do? Did you live on a farm or did you live in the city?

A In Germany I was living in a town had 10,000 people.

Q It was pretty big then, huh?

A Oh, yeah. 10,000. That's where I was born and raised. But when I was little, I had an uncle and two aunts. They never got married. And they had a farm, and when I was little, I been working there all the time 'til fourteen years when I went out of school, my schooltime, I worked there all the time, on the farm, with my uncle and aunts. It was my mother's brother and sisters. Even when I worked in the factory and I came home in the evening I have to unload hay wagon. And they had cows--they had no horses, but they had seven cows, seven cows and about 100 sheep.

Q How did you plow the land?

A They plowed the land with the cows. The cows.

Q What kind of crops did you grow?

A They grew wheat and barley. And beets for the cows--big beets, cow beets, big ones. That's about all.

Q Did you say you worked in the factory in Germany?

A Oh, yeah.

Q Which factory was this? What kind of factory?

A I was a machine shopper. I work in Germany in a big machine shop. They had 1500 people there. That's where I learned my trade.

Q Do you remember the name of the machine shop?

A Yeah, Schuler.

Q Schuler?

A Yeah. I can write it down for you after while.

Q O.K. What kind of machines did they build? What did you work on?

A They made lots of presses--little presses to press something, even to press money. Even to press money, they made presses there. And the summer, or the past spring, I was up in Franklin Mint's factory, and they had a press over there. They had two presses--I see one press, the other press, I didn't see; I missed that, but I see one press up there that was made in the same place where I worked fifty years ago. I'm over here now...next May I am over here forty-eight years in this country, and I am citizen since 1932. I'm citizen. But I saw the press what they made in the same place where I work my trade. Up in...

Q In Franklin Mint?

A In Franklin Mint...I should say more.

Q All right. Can you tell me now, over in Germany, you worked, you say you went to this school. Can you tell me a little bit about this school. In 1916....

A I came out of school in 1916.

Q Now, how did you learn this trade?

A Oh, the trade...

Q Was it a public school...

A Oh, no. They don't have at that time. I learned the trade all in the place where I went. I learned my trade in the factory.

Q What did you learn in the school...that you went to school for four years.

A Oh, in the school, we didn't have them shops like they have here, trade school, you work in lumber or you work in that. We didn't have that over there in Germany. We could not make out. And my father had to put my name in there. I know they put the name in there if you want a job when you are ten or twelve years old. You have to have your name in there two years before or a little more that you have a job where you can go and learn a trade. You have to have your name in there.

Q You had to have your name in the school?

A No, in the factory.

Q Showing that you worked two years in the factory?

A You have to have some friends or your father have to know somebody. He ask--you be ten or twelve years--he ask you already, what you want be. You want to be a carpenter? You want be that, or what you want be, or you want to be machinist. And that's the way...you have to put the name in there. My name...

Q Yeah. Where did you put your name...on a list?

A On a list. In the factory.

Q In the factory.

A Yeah.

Q And then the factory hires you?

A Yeah. When I came out of school.

Q When you came out of school.

A Yeah. If you aint got the name in there, you aint...get no where in there.

Q Did your father know somebody in the factory? Who did he know a foreman, or just...

A Oh, had a good friend in there.

Q Um hmm. Your father...did he work in the factory?

A No, my father don't work there. He was working in another factory. But he know somebody in there.

Q He was a machinist but in another factory?

A My father, he was...my father worked over there in a silver factory where they make electric coffee...what you call that?

Q Coffee makers? Percolaters?

A Yeah. My father was working over there...they call that...where they make silverware. They make all kinds of silver--knives, and silver trays, everything what you can think they make it out of silver. That's what

That's what my father done. I show you after while. What else you want?

Q When you worked in the factory, what made you decide to come to America?

A Oh, when I work in the factory over there...after the war...it got for a while not so good anyhow, and then lots of people came over to United States. And I was two years away from home anyhow before I came over. I was gone in a couple of places, three places where I went before I came over. And I got laid off there too, and then I went over and got laid off. They had not much work no more either. And then I came home again, and I was home I think about four or five months before I came over here. Before I wrote to the people here that I want come over...or like to come over.

Q Why did you go home...because they laid you off at the factory?

A Over there?

Q Over there. It was bad times and they laid off?

A Yeah. It was bad time.

Q O.K. And then you went home, and then you wrote to some friends over here.

A That's right.

Q Now which friends...were they related to you, or how did you know them?

A They was related to me. They was friends was related to me. I would say second cousins to my mother.

Q Uh huh. Can you remember why he came over?

A Oh...yeah. The man that let me come over anyhow was second cousin of my mother. He came over...he was a beggar and he came over...lots of people came over before the war, no matter what they are, because they don't want to go to the German Army.

Q Yeah. So he came over before the war?

A Before the war. I don't know...1910 or 12. I don't know when he came over. I really don't know--I never ask him.

Q Did he have any trouble coming over?

A Who, him? No?

Q He could get out of Germany all right?

A Oh, yeah. At that time you could come...at that time. When he came over, it was easier coming in there. They had no trouble...I really don't know...I don't think at that time. I think he came over at that time...he have to have a nobody...I think so.

Q O.K., so you wrote to him, and what did he tell you? What did he write back? Did he tell you how to come over, or did he say it was better over here?

A Oh, when I wrote him that time, I wrote him I come over no matter what... even if I have to clean the streets, if I cannot find job. But when I came over I only was here one week. I was here one week and the second week I started work. We looked for a job after I was here three, four days...three days, he looked for a job and he found a job in Philadelphia. It was about...I think it was around 18th and Sedgley Avenue....That's about 18 and Lehigh Avenue. It's just two blocks above the Lehigh Avenue in Philadelphia. There was a shop...a little German machine shop there. The name was Wiedeman. There was about forty people working there, and about half of them was German boys because the owner was a German too. He was an old man...I mean that man at that time was around sixty anyhow...around sixty years old or seventy, and he had two sons. They worked in the shop, too. And I worked there two years.

Q In Wiedeman's?

A Wiedeman. It was 18 and Sedgley Avenue.

Q Century?

A Sedgley.

Q That's near Lehigh?

A That's just about two blocks above Lehigh Avenue.

Q O.K. Now can you remember about...how did you get the money to come over?

A Oh, when I came over...I had no money anyhow. The people what let me come over, they sent the money over and I paid them off. I had no money...I even had not a bicycle over there in Germany.

Q You didn't own a bicycle?

A No, I never had no bicycle.

Q Who sent you the money to come over? Your cousin?

A My cousin sent me the money.

Q And then you paid him back once you got over here.

A That's right. I had a cousin here, too...a cousin...they sent the money over anyhow. And I paid him off when I was here.

Q And what kind...how did you come over...by steamship?

A Yeah. At that time I came over...it was a small boat. The boat's name, I think--the boat had about nine or eleven thousand ton boat--Serawindonna (sp?).

Q Cera Madonna?

A Serawindonna--a long name.

Q Oh, a long name?

A It was a long name, Serawindonna. A long boat. I think it took nine days. It took nine days come over. But I came over with the second class, or they let me come over in the second class. And when I landed in New York I didn't have to go to that island in New York.

Q You didn't go to Ellis Island?

A No, I don't have to go to that Ellis Island because I came over second. Second class. And the second class don't have to go on that island.

Q I didn't know that.

A It only cost...I don't know, about ten dollars more, I think like that. And you don't have to go there.

Q So where did you get off in New York--right at the dock?

A New York? When I landed in New York there was some people there--a porter or what you call--porter, I think, that took the people...they could talk German. They was American, but they could talk German. They put them together. The people what went to Philadelphia, or the ones would have to go on the train, they put them all together, the one that goes to Philadelphia, or the one that goes to Chicago, and things like that. They moved them from New York to Jersey City.

Q Which city?

A I think Jersey City.

Q Jersey City?

A Yes, Jersey City. From Jersey City we came to Philadelphia...I don't know...I think we was about four or five. I really don't know...but we came in late, and the people that could...late, five or seven o'clock in the evening...summer. And the people was out that Sunday...they didn't know I coming no more today. And I been waiting in the railroad station until 11:00--ten or eleven o'clock on Sunday evening 'til time they pick me up.

Q And who picked you up? Your cousin?

A My cousin in Philadelphia pick me up.

Q And would you live with him then, at his house? O.K. Now, how long did you work in Philadelphia?

A I worked in Philadelphia not...I would say 22 months--not quite two years. I came over tenth of May 1926 and 15 March 1928 I went to Wilmington...out Winterthur farm and worked for H. F. DuPont.

- Q Now, why did you go to Winterthur farm? Because you knew the cousin there, or...
- A Yeah, my cousin was there, yeah.
- Q Your cousin was working there on the farm, and he got you the job then at the Winterthur farm.
- A That's right.
- Q And what kind of work did you do out there?
- A Out on Winterthur farm I was a farmer husking corn, or making hay in the summer, or loading manure.
- Q Did you ever get to meet any of the DuPonts? Ever see them, or...
- A Oh, I think so long as I was out there, I might saw Mr. DuPont, I would say not more than five or six time, and I don't know...I only talked one time to him...that was only once. Once in a while he went out to walk through the farm, through the woods.
- Q O.K., then, how long did you stay at the farm?
- A I worked on that farm eight years, from...I worked on that farm from March 28 to October '36.
- Q Did you live out there too?
- A I lived on the farm...I got married, my wife and I we got married September 1930...we got married in Philadelphia...but we never lived there. I was working out there two years before I got married. And then she came down and they gave us...he had several homes out there and he give us a home out there.
- Q How did you meet your wife--did you meet her in Philadelphia?
- A When I was working in Philadelphia, I had some friends, too. And our friends, the man...the man came from my hometown too, and he went to school with my father, and I was going there since I been there too, and visit him once in a while. And my wife she was in Philadelphia. My wife, she came over too, but she came...when she came over she had some people up in Hormel (?), New York State, and she was up there one year and she had a girl friend in Philadelphia what she knows and she wants her come down to Philadelphia and that girl friend what she had that was my father's school friend, that was her uncle and her aunt. And that's the way I met my wife. My wife...at that time my wife was coming with her girl friend to her uncle and I be coming there too, and that's what I got acquainted with my wife.
- Q Um hmm. O.K. Now, how did you get from the farm to Wilmington, to the machine shop here in Wilmington. How did you get your job in Wilmington?
- A I had some...when I work in the farm I had some friends what been working there in DuPont's and they ask the supervisor about they have a

friend that he's working out the farm and he's a machinist too, and he like to work on his trade. And that's the way I came in for interviewing and we talked to them and so and so, and finally they hired me. When I told them out there a week before...I think I stayed one or two weeks before I came down at the farm....And I let them know out there two weeks before I went down at the shop, at the farm...I told them I'd better let them know, and they was nice out at Winterthur, too. They aint got no bad feeling.

Q O.K. Do you like Delaware--do you like living here?

A Yeah. I been living now like I say...I been living pretty near next month 46 year in Delaware. That's my home state.

Q Do you ever write to people back in Germany?

A Yeah. I was in Germany...I been writing over there--I got two sisters over there. They still over there. And one of my sisters she was here this summer...this summer, for a visit. She was here in April--May and April for two months...two and a half months. And I had another one and her son was here, too. Her son is married, and he got a little boy two years old. They was here, too, for four weeks. They came over...they got a...my sister, her son and daughter-in-law and the baby, they came over together. But they only stayed three weeks, and they went home. But my sister stayed here two months.

Q Um hmm. When you came here to Philadelphia and to Delaware, did you have any trouble with the language? Learning English?

A When I came over at that time I couldn't talk much...I couldn't talk too much. I could not talk English at all in one way. I never learned that over there. I learn all the talk here and Philadelphia, none...I think it was I came...the machine shop where I was, half of them--there was forty in the machine shop and half of them was German. So anyhow we talked German, and half and half, what we could talk.

Q So you learned on your own how to speak English?

A I went to school in Philadelphia. I went to school in Philadelphia...I think half a year or so, or pretty a year. And when I worked out at Winterthur farm, I went to night school for one or two years...one year or two years. That was out a little school house out in Montchanin. The school house is still there out at Montchanin.

Q Is that north Delaware?

A Yeah, north. Montchanin Road. That Montchanin Road comes out there...when you come out the Kennett Pike, like you go to Chadds Ford. It's only out...that's where I went to school, night school. I think once or twice a week. I know I went for two years, anyhow.

Q Who was your teacher, do you remember?

A Yeah. At that time the teacher at that time...one teacher...that was Mrs. Schwartz. She was the teacher. And then once in a while they had...there was another lady, Miss Miller. Both of them was from Wilmington, teachers.

Q Uh huh. And they taught you English.

A That's where I learned. And my citizen papers...I took citizen paper out in Wilmington, 1932, Ninth Street in the old Post Office. Ninth and Shipley Street.

Q Did you have to go to school to learn how...

A Oh, to learn...to get your citizen papers, you went in school, learned them answers, you know, to question.

Q Where did you go to school for that?

A Ninth and Shipley, the old Post Office.

Q Oh, that's where the school was.

A Yeah, Ninth and Shipley Street. You didn't know that, huh?

Q I don't think it's a Post Office now, is it?

A Oh, that's some other...that was the old Post Office, not the new one. Ninth and Shipley. They can tell you, them other people. They know where it was at.

Q That was in 1932.

A I got my paper, I think...I got my paper out September, 1932. I think I went one year in the school--night school, to learn the Constitution.

Q While you've been over here, did you like any Presidents really well? Presidents of the United States...did you like any of them really well?

A You mean the one now?

Q Not now, but since you've been here...who's been your favorite President. You know, like Hoover and Roosevelt, and Truman, and Eisenhower. Who's been your favorite? Can you remember any of them?

A If I know 'em, or if I see 'em, or what?

Q No. Remembering back...

A Yeah, I know them, but...I know Hoover. Years ago I saw the President...I saw the President...that was in '28...I think that was Coolidge or Hoover.

Q Hoover.

A Hoover. I saw him in Valley Forge. The President always went down at Valley Forge. I saw Hoover and I saw several...oh, I think I saw all the Presidents...I saw Hoover...

Q And Franklin Roosevelt...did you see him?

A Yeah, I saw them too. I saw them in Philadelphia, going down Broad Street. I saw all the Presidents, I think. The only President I never saw was Nixon and Johnson and Kennedy. I never saw them. But all the

rest of the Presidents I saw in Philadelphia, or I saw them out at Valley Forge. At that time I was going plenty time out at Valley Forge. I would see the President and I saw the Presidents going down night times...I know, ten o'clock or nine o'clock, I don't know what time it was...in Philadelphia, Broad Street, I saw one there, too. Eisenhower, I think I saw him in Wilmington, before the election. But all them others...I see the Presidents, all. I know...I was going there many times.

Q Um hmm. What do you think about the situation right now, with the Watergate? Do you think...

A (Laughs) With the way it is now with Water...what I...no matter who they was the President, from now on it will be...that's what I see, anyhow...from now on it will be hard to get a President. Before that, they always say...well, they have about four or five men. But now if one want to be President they will check him up, since he was born, what he done and what done and all like that. It's hard to get a man. I even saw it in the paper last night about a man what they want for Vice President, Ford. He say he's not a saint, either. That's what the papers say last night. A saint. It was in the Wilmington paper... And it's hard to find a man, no matter what's what...to get a big job. You never know what a man done, if he was cheating there, or what he's done...no matter what. They have to keep going back and find out so and so, what he do. That's the truth.

Q Yeah, I think you're right. Well, before we end, can you remember anything since you've come to America, anything that stands out in your mind as something special that's happened to you while you've been in America. Something, you know, that you can remember that was special, or unusual that's happened to you over here. Just anything that you can remember.

A Well, one that what I will tell you...when I came over I had no...I had money, but the money that was just lent to me. I had no money to pay my fare coming over, but he give me some money top, and I have some money, too, when I came over. And I never owned a bicycle. But since 1928, the summer 1928, I bought my first car. I bought in summer '28. I bought a T-Model touring car in 1928. I had that one year and '29 I bought an A-Model Ford, '29...A-Model Ford.

Q A new one?

A A new one. And since that I always...never been without a car. Always had a car. And over there I never had a bicycle. At the present time I got two cars. I got...I drive a car and my wife have a car. We both have a car.

Q O.K. Anything else you want to add?

A No, no. I don't know.

Q O.K. Then we'll stop there.

END OF INTERVIEW