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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
EDITH WARE
EARLY SETTLER OF ARDEN
JANUARY 20, 1977

Transcribed by:
R. Herman
March 15, 1977

Interview with: Edith Ware

Arden, Delaware

January 20, 1977

Interviewed by: Yetta Chaiken

C = Yetta Chaiken

W = Edith Ware

C: This is Yetta Chaiken interviewing Edith Clementine Ware for the special collections, the University of Delaware oral history department. Edith, would you like to tell us when you were born, what date?

W: I was born December 14, 1888.

C: Where were you born?

W: I was born, I think it was Lewistown, Pennsylvania. My father died when I was about...I guess he died...anyhow, my mother was divorced. I had one sister, had one sister and she died recently. I always wanted to go to college but I was interested in too many things. I was interested in music and dancing and I went to art school.

C: This was when you were a teenager?

W: Oh yes, very much. I always studied. I was educated mostly in private schools. Well, even in a convent. I was at Niagara Falls, right over the falls. So, I had I guess a helter skelter sort of education but when I consider what some of the college educations are now I think it wasn't so bad. (laughter)

C: When did you marry?

W: I married in 1917.

C: When did you move to Arden?

W: Well, my mother was an actress in New York so when she was on the road, I was in private schools and I went to all kinds of ones and I think it was a very good darn education in a way. And I was one of those youngsters that didn't mind studying or anything and I always wanted to do things. So, I was always very much interested in anything I was doing. So, I guess I finally wound up being a gardener better than anything else.

C: Well, did your mother move to Arden or did your husband move to Arden?

W: No, she didn't, no but my mother married again. I had a stepfather when I was ten years old and we lived in Philadelphia. I guess I was around ten when I first came down to Arden. I was ten or eleven or twelve around in there and I met the Stevens children because they were friends of...well, we lived...I don't know...when you believe in...well...

C: Why don't you tell us when you came down here at ten first tell us what the whole idea of Arden was.

W: Well, Arden when I came down here, I met the Stevens...not the Stevens children exactly but other children and they knew...

C: Who was Frank Stevens?

W: Oh, Frank Stevens was a wonderful person and very much maligned.

C: What did he do for Arden?

W: He did everything for Arden. He was the soul of Arden really and he's very much maligned and when a person that has very fine ideas and you know for the betterment of people and things, there's always two against one.

C: What was his idea about starting Arden?

W: Well, single tax.

C: And what does that mean?

W: Well, single tax...I wish you would talk to somebody that could explain it a lot better than I, but single tax is a tax on land. I have this lot here and I have to pay a yearly rent on it. A rent for the lot, you cannot buy the land. You rent it and that's the idea of it, a fairer idea, more fair. There's people that can go out and buy a great big piece of land and other people can't and you pay rent. It's the rental of the land and you can't buy land.

C: Did the people live here all year round at that time or just in the summertime?

W: No, they...well, no, no, they didn't. I suppose...maybe I'm going to be too frank about all my shenanigans I guess. Well, however, the Ware family I met in Philadelphia and all my friends came from Philadelphia and Margaret Stevens was Frank Stevens daughter and Don was his son and he had another son, Roger, who...his wife died when the children were young and they were brought up by Frank and you know the way it...children are...they go from aunts and uncles and I guess...I don't remember them when they were real little children.

C: But did they live here all year round or just summer?

W: Well, in the beginning no. In the beginning most of the people came down for summers because this was a run down old farm and there were few buildings on it. Now, this house here, this is one of the real houses that was ever. It was my brother-in-law's stable. He came down. He was going to live here and farm or I don't know what his idea was. He'd go to college and he'd have grand ideas and he was a wonderful fellow. He went...I won't go into his background.

C: Well, suppose you tell us what it was like coming here in the summer and playing. What are some of the things you would do here when you were little?

W: Well, I was a tomboy and we had to make all our own fun. I remember a big rock that we had that was shaped...we used to call it the ice cream rock and one of our holy games was knocking a tin can off the top or somebody would get running up and puttin a tin can on the top of the rock and it would get knocked off by nine or ten other kids and we were rough little monkeys I guess, at least most of us. And that was one of our games and I rescued that ice cream rock when they might have broken it up but it's still now the ice cream rock over there. I couldn't see that rock going down the drain and it's now on somebody's rental property but they can't do anything with it.

C: What year was it that everyone started coming?

W: Well, 1900 I think is about the time, maybe a little before but I didn't come down that soon because I was away at school and I would only come down here mid...I wasn't here all the time you know and my mother and my stepfather were not the kind of people that would be interested in anything like that but Mother always let me think as I wanted. She had enough sense and I came down here with friends of Margarets', Franks' daughter, but she was...

C: Frank Stevens?

W: His daughter and she was considerably older than I was but there was Don and Roger and then other children of people that were interested in Frank that were down here too and of course the people that came here in the beginning, the countryside thought they were guests I guess. I don't know what they thought because I remember

one time walking back, this was all woods and fields, an old run down farm but there were people that were artists galore and all sorts of people. They had...they were all educated people mostly.

C: Craftsmen?

W: Well, there was...Oh gee, I can't think of peoples names anymore.

C: Did you have a place to swim?

W: Oh yes, the creek down there. It's the one from the woods and it was full of big rocks and one of our grand games was jumping rocks, hopping, rock topping or what we used to call all sorts of things and we had...Frank had an idea about the place. He had ideals. There was one big rock and that was the backdrop for Shakespearean plays and as children we played Shakespeare. We played all kinds of things. We make our own costumes and Frank was just wonderful at things like that. There wasn't anything that Frank couldn't do. I remember one time I was...I was always interested in the stage on account of Mother so I used to...I gave Alice in Wonderland I remember and I remember this about Frank. I said, "Frank, I don't know how to manage this thing. The birds all have to have heads." And he said, "Listen, you go out and get all the derbys you can." So, I collected all the derbys for all the birds and the different animals and Frank cut out the heads and we had really wonderful, marvelous costumes. When anybody had any satins you know, from changing their...oh, the silks and things and curtains and things, we made costumes out of them that are much better than the ones they have now I think. They were beautiful.

C: Well, you were interested in the Shakespearean plays at the very beginning.

W: I was interested in the very beginning.

C: You maintained your interest in it.

W: Yes.

C: And even after Frank Stevens left...

W: Oh yes.

C: Was there an Arden Theatre Company then?

W: There was in..I think it must have been about 1914 when that happened. If I had realized things, I've kept some of the data from the things that...but that was in...that happened after '35.

C: And you maintained your interest in this Shakespearean...

W: Well, I did, tried to, but they had a theatrical company came down and they had it and I don't think...sometimes they still have plays here down...but it's in Ardentown. But that's...was when Frank got another farm you know. They bought the farm...the Harvey farm and that was I guess about 1935.

C: And that became Ardentown?

W: That...but...I can't explain it carefully to you about how you would develop Ardentown. But when he bought the Harvey farm here, he made a single tax colony out of it. You couldn't acquire more land. He had that. That was a single tax colony, this is Arden. So, in order to get more land, they bought ...I don't like to get into this business...now this was the Grubbs farm. The Har...

C: The original Arden was Grubbs farm?

W: Grubbs farm

C: And then they bought the Harvey farm and added it to the single tax?

W: Well, they called it Arden too. It's changed you know. It changes with...after Frank died it changed greatly.

C: In what way did Arden change?

W: Well, the people. There's a lot of people that tried to change it

over from what Frank...from a single tax colony and I think they would do it very nicely if they could but Ardentown is a separate colony really. I mean it's called Arden but it's an addition in the same way as they acquired another farm over on the other side and that's Ardentown, Arden...Ardentown...that's Ardencroft. So, there were really three separate units that made up Arden. And people came there that had...they were mostly people that were thinking people you know were trying to make a better living. They didn't have any money any of them, some of them.

C: And they just wanted their life style to be better.

W: And the children and then of course the people around here...they had to stand for quite a bit of comment.

C: Was there a difference between the summer and winter residents? Later on it a lot of the people began living here.

W: Well, they lived here and the Stevens lived here all the time.

C: Did they?

W: Um hum. They lived...well, not from the real beginning. I suppose you're going to talk to a lot of people aren't you? Well, I would like to put you straight on some things. Well, Frank will be criticized. I'll let you save them, but don't believe all you hear about him because he was a very fine person and he had...he was really marvelous when I can think back now at my age the way he would...well, open up everything to you, you know, in a way. Like just...nothing was too small or too indifferent to interest him if it interested you. I was always interested in gardening and in fact I don't know much what that I'm not interested in. I like a lot of things. For instance, not long ago when I got up and supper one night, we had Saturday night dinners and went around and

collected a quarter from everybody and bought trees, all kinds of trees, the kinds of trees we wanted and I kept those lists that the people had contributed and we planted them out and things like that we used to do. That's how Arden started. Frank would go down at the bottom at the end of the Arden farm and say, we'll make a path up this way and then the roads...the roads went through where the places...but he made paths.

C: Who did the digging?

W: Oh, Italians and people that came around.

C: I mean, nobody in the community did the roads? Your roads in the community?

W: Oh, we didn't have any roads much in the beginning. This was an old farm. Well, the wagon ruts that...when the farmer went out on the farm with a plow or whatever he had, it was generally a road that they'd take and ride out that way and that became a road. The main road in Arden now which is called...

C: Miller Road?

W: No, no, Miller Road is one road yes, but the road on the Green where...

C: Cherry?

W: Cherry Lane. Cherry Lane was a...there was a barn...let's see... where is it? Oh, it's up, this is the end of Cherry Lane. This road it came on Harvey Lane...Woodland Lane...but Cherry Lane was the edge of the Green and Frank was so wise. He made a Green like a park and it's still there. He made that in the beginning and it's always been there and it's called Cherry Lane because the barn up here...there were a lot of wild cherry trees and they would grow along the lane and that's Cherry Lane. This line here is because

we faced...was part of the woods and this is Woodland Lane or Green Lane, I live on Green Lane and Green Lane is the other side and I forget what the other lane is.

C: Well, when did you marry your husband Buzz Ware?

W: I married Buzz in 1917.

C: And did you move to Arden then for good?

W: Yes, I came down and I lived here.

C: Before or at that time?

W: Well, I had a little...now this is something I'll tell you. This is for just you. When you talk to Inky, Inky will tell you that she had a little...they built houses here in the beginning and they were funny little houses...The Rosary was where I lived and I forget who built it before but it was a funny little house. I'll show you a picture of it I think I have somewhere and it was...we had to carry our water from pumps and the bucket...you know...to take a bath we'd go down to the creek mostly as kids and that Green is just the same as it's always been.

C: Well, what did Buzz do?

W: He was an artist.

C: He was an artist?

W: Um hum.

C: And did he sell many of his works? Was he able to live by his art work?

W: He'd better. (laughter) Yes, he was a commercial artist mostly. But I consider him one of the best artists I've known, I mean he was so meticulous and he was so wonderful. He could...he designed...we got interested when we were a little older in the Gilbert and Sullivan, you know, and he would design all the things, all the...

C: Sets?

W: Sets yes and anything we did, we made our own...well, we had made everything that we liked and wanted to do, we made ourselves and didn't...

C: You didn't buy very much.

W: We didn't. We couldn't.

C: What did you do while your husband was painting?

W: Well, I worked at A.M. Collins. I was a...I always had a feeling I could do whatever I wanted to and I'd start out and do it. So, I worked for Collins Paper Company in the art department down there for I think about seven years.

C: And what did you do there?

W: I painted.

C: Oh, you painted.

W: I painted and made...designed boxes and papers and things.

C: And then after you had your daughter, you stayed?

W: I worked then.

C: You worked then too.

W: For a while.

C: You had one daughter?

W: One daughter and two boys. But the boys were five years younger than my daughter you see. I didn't work after they were born. I had twin boys.

C: Oh really?

W: And...but he had the Ware Art Gallery you know.

C: And you opened up an art gallery here?

W: My husband did. It's still there.

C: It's still there.

W: Right. And Joan runs it. She's rented out part of it to Mrs., another woman.

C: And so it's still in the family.

W: Oh yes.

C: Do you see that there's a difference in young people today compared with your...

W: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

C: In what way?

W: Well, I don't know. We're just different. Well, you didn't mind doing without things and anything you wanted to do you went and did it. I mean there was no...if I wanted to know something, I went and studied it but that's all. You didn't mind doing it. I remember when a group of us used to go up to the concerts at the Academy of Music you know, and stand in line to hear the concerts and a lot of...some of the people that were participants in these things were the artists, the violinists and things, we got to know because they lived here too. The C lived here. They had a place and Guy Nearing, he lived...there was...oh, what's his name? He lived here. I can't think of his name.

C: Well, there were members of the Philadelphia Orchestra that lived here?

W: Oh yes, yes, yes. Some of them and the original people, most of them have lived here. People that you'd never get to know other than that. They were really fine people. I can't remember the people that they've all grown old and they were wonderful people.

C: Well, you don't think the young people today have the same kind of inner strength that people in those had?

W: No, I don't think so, no.

C: You think they want things too easily?

W: They want things too easily. Now for instance, I had a greenhouse out here and that hurricane we had blew it all to pieces and I can't get anyone to work for you. They want so darn much. But we'd get to work and do it ourselves. So, everything, of course I think everybody thought I was crazy anyhow because you can see all the windows I had and they'd come around and they'd say, I don't know what you want all those windys for and I'd say, well, I want to see out. Well, it might get cold. I'd say, I don't care I like it. I have a fireplace. We'd get a bunch of Italians from town and they built that chimney and they built things. Well now, people come down and they think they're going to have a grand time here and they get an apartment and they're there for a while and they're off somewheres else and they're divorced or something like that but that isn't the way it was.

C: Were people in Arden very religious? Did religion play any part in the people of Arden?

W: Oh yeah, we have quite a number of Jewish people and that's another thing. There was no feeling about religions or at least...I suppose there was a certain amount and some people did but I don't feel any.

C: There wasn't any particular religious...

W: No, no, no.

C: You didn't go to church or anything like that?

W: Heavens no. I did go to church, I'll tell you why. I was an Episcopalian and then going to a Catholic convent, you might suppose but I had, anyhow, what I felt religion was and I went to...they built an Episcopalian church up the road and I was one of the first...

one of the people that helped this young clergyman and he was a fine minister. I thought he was very good and of course my mother was pretty religious and very strict, my grandmother was and I even was well, I guess what you'd call...joined the church really, Episcopal church. They wanted me to teach Sunday school and I said, "No, I can't do that because I can't follow it through and can't take a class of kids and tell them something I don't believe myself." No, I couldn't do that.

C: I think Arden has always been a community that has had a special spirit and is different.

W: It has, absolutely.

C: What do you think is the difference between living in Arden and living in the suburbs or living in the city of Wilmington?

W: Gosh, I don't know.

C: What would make Arden, the feeling of Arden different from other communities?

W: Alright, for instance, it...if I were brought up in Wilmington in a house where the, you know, where white people generally live, I'd probably have to...if I wanted to wear something anybody else didn't why I would...well, for instance if I wanted to go and have dinner at somebody's house, a Negro's house, I'd go and do it. That's my business. I don't think you have any right to hate people. You know how people are about Jewish people, well, it's better now than it used to be but I can remember, I didn't know the difference. My mother wouldn't have stood it. Neither would my grandmothers, my mother's mother. But I can remember when I went to...a couple of years I went to high school in Philadelphia. Some of the girls said they thought I was Jewish because I'd go with Jewish girls a

lot. It didn't mean anything to me. They were people. And things like that I...

C: So, religion really wasn't an important part of Arden life.

W: No.

C: And you think that gave it a better feeling of oneness maybe.

W: I know Frank might have had his own ideas of some things. I never asked him anything and he never, you know, if he...I know people used to say awful things of Frank, about Frank, you know, things that weren't true. He took an awful beating, really, he did.

C: While he was still alive?

W: Oh yes, they never realized what a wonderful person he was. He really was wonderful I think.

C: You said you enjoyed gardening.

W: Yeah, I'm still a gardener.

C: Are you still a gardener? Have you ever...did you belong to the Gardening Club?

W: Oh yes, sure. I belonged to all of them.

C: What did you do in the gardening field?

W: Everything. I tried growing everything, plowing and anything I wanted to do.

C: You still maintain your interest in it?

W: Oh yes, I belong to a lot of them. I have friends who write books on gardening and I'm known, quite well known as a gardener.

C: And what kind of work do you specifically like to do in the gardening field?

W: Well, I like to try things that people say you can't do. I like to dig and I like to plant trees. I'm quite well known as a gardener around here.

C: In Arden. Have you planted many of the trees in Arden?

W: I'll say I have. (laughter) People come by and they throw something in at me and I plant it and the darn thing grows and they say, well, how did you make it grow? And I say, "I just planted it." But the thing is, if you're a gardener you don't let it suffer for water or forget to plant it and leave it out for days and then plant it. Oh yes, I'm a gardener.

C: Did you help start the garden clubs here?

W: Sure.

C: What group did you start?

W: I still start. I still...Arden Gardeners.

C: The Arden Gardeners. You're still involved in that?

W: Yes, I belonged to the college down here... I mean I...

C: The university?

W: Huh?

C: The college...you said the college or the university.

W: The university.

C: The agricultural?

W: Yeah, they know me down there.

C: Do they because you've been working with them?

W: I don't work with them. I, you know, when they had the flower show down there...all those flower shows...I worked on that for a long time. Haven't recently because I...some of my buddies are getting pretty old. (laughter)

C: Well, what do you think about the direction our country's taking today?

W: Well, I'm sort of sitting around waiting to see what this man's going to do.

C: This man, you mean the newly elected President Carter?

W: Um hum.

C: What do you hope that he does?

W: Well, I'll tell you. It's such a big energy thing. I hope that he won't lose control of himself and be talked over by a lot of people. If he was a poor man...he'd almost have to be a god, I'll tell you to do the things that I think he might do but I'm a little leery about letting his imagination run away with him. But I think he's a fine person but, you know, and I'm not getting the right slant on him either by the way things are developing.

C: Have you always been interested in politics?

W: Yeah.

C: Have you ever been involved in a political party?

W: Only the Democrats.

C: Have you ever worked for the Democrats?

W: Yeah. Oh, I used to go out in the early days when we had a car. Buzz and I were one of the few that had a car and I'd haul the people in to vote and do what I could but I remember, oh I remember down in Claymont I was a one...there weren't many women interested in those days and some of the people were terrible. You know, they weren't honest and you know, I think that politics...I don't know, I'm always a little leery of anybody that gets up a little bit in politics. They always lose control of themselves or the fact of the matter is maybe somebody else is a little better talker or something like that, I notice it in the club over here.

C: You mean your community...Arden meetings?

W: Oh yes. Some of the people I don't trust at all. It's all what I do. All that I am. You know.

C: They're not in the community.

W: Not the community the way I think it ought to be.

C: Do you still go to meetings of the town?

W: Yes, I go. But, I'm head of the Gardeners Guild over here. But a lot of the people that are gardeners and not as darn good gardeners as they ought to be but at the same time they're older people and they have an idea and they are honest in most places but the younger people won't...well, don't ask me about them.

C: You're dissatisfied with the way young people are running Arden today?

W: Yes, I am.

C: In what way?

W: Well, I think that there is a feeling that they'd like to change Arden. They want this and they want that. They don't look underneath to see what the feeling is. I really honestly don't think so.

C: You don't think it will continue in the same way that it was started?

W: I'm afraid not, not unless somebody comes to the front but I don't see any very wonderful change in view. I really don't because people are not...

Side one of the Ware runs out at this point
in the middle of Mrs. Ware's sentence.

Side 11

C: You were telling us first about the young people.

W: Well, to tell you frankly, I don't know the young people very well. But they're shifting. They're going this way and they seem to

well, they haven't the ideals about Arden that I think they ought to have and the times are so hard now for them and I feel sorry for them. Really I do because I think probably they think I was a damned fool but I don't think so. I think they expect something for nothing. I think you have to work for what you get and for instance, I had a little bit of grass that I could cut myself but I'm getting pretty old and they start up something some of the groups and I said, "Well, you can cut my grass for this." Well, they'll ask you, you say, "Well, how much do I owe you?" Well, I can do this and this and this and this and I say, "Alright." And then well, next time I do it I'll have to ask you a dollar more or something like that. Things like that.

C: So, you don't think they do a very fine job.

W: No, they don't.

C: Is your daughter working for Arden? I mean is she involved?

W: Yes, she's a very good gardener too. But I think that...I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me in order to pull yourself out of that depression and stuff that we have now, you've got to work for it, work to get it done and you'll have to do without and you can't sit back and say well, I want this kind of a job. I won't take that and you can't do that.

C: You wanted to talk...tell me about little houses.

W: Well, for instance, this was the stable. This room was the stable. Well, I have a bedroom this size upstairs. Well, that was a carriage house up there...the kitchen.

C: The kitchen was the carriage house.

W: We put this on for a dining room and I decided I'd make a little greenhouse out of it. And so, I had a dining room and kitchen out

there and this because I live here alone.

C: I remember all the houses in Arden used to look like this.

W: Um hum and they evolved. I can remember standing up in the... there was a big hay door where they...upstairs right up in here and I can remember standing up there with snow blowing through in the cracks and I could look all the way down to the river now then it's all grown up in here with trees and things.

C: You mean at one time these trees were not here?

W: No, I planted the things.

C: You planted them all?

W: And I...somebody came by here one time several years ago...I don't remember how many years ago but it must have been some time and they threw a thing in at me and they said this is a sequoia and I left it around a while and I said, oh, I better plant it. So I planted it, so the darn thing is out there and you can have it if you want it. I can't cut it down because I don't know how to fell it.

C: Have you done everything in your life that you wanted to?

W: No, not all I wanted to.

C: What else would you like to have done?

W: I'd like to travel. I'd to...but I can't travel and have a garden and I was always interested in the theatre a little bit and then I was interested in my children.

C: How do you feel about honesty? Do you feel that people are as honest as they were?

W: No, they're not as honest as they should.

C: How about kindness. Are people as kind as they used to be?

W: I don't think so. I think they're more interested in themselves.

I know I'm not as kind as I ought to be.

C: Do you think you were kinder when you were young?

W: Well, in a way yes.

C: What about money? People more interested in money or...

W: Oh yes, they're much more interested in money. They're more people... if people in the early days for instance I can think of my husband oh, he did wonderful work and he'd do it for nothing you know and works on the town, it was the town and he enjoyed doing it and I never heard him grouching about oh, I ought to get paid for this. No, he just did it. He was wonderful-and he was the town...well he was the town for a long time you know until he died. And he had a wonderful sense of humor.

C: Did you ever folk dance?

W: Oh, yes, folk dance every Wednesday night. Now we have to join for so much money for this and this much money for that, we're going to have this and you know like that.

C: You made your own activities then.

W: We made our own.

C: What advice would you give to young people maybe to help them live better lives? You've talked a lot about young people.

W: Well, in the first place, I don't think there's so much darn difference between old people and the young people.

C: You still feel young.

W: Sure.

C: Good

W: If you, for instance, I'd enjoy teaching kids to do something but they don't want to do that but there is a good feeling here in town though about children and if there's anyplace I think is

a good place to bring up kids would be in Arden.

C: Well, I certainly thank you very much for sharing some of your early thoughts about Arden with us.

W: Well, I was always very much interested in the college down there.

C: Thank you