

“Green Mountain Chronicles”
Oral History Transcriptions, 1981-1989 (bulk: 1987-1988)
MSA 199 & 200

Introduction

This transcription is one of approximately 42 transcriptions of interviews with individuals conducted primarily in 1987 and 1988 in preparation for a radio program sponsored by the Vermont Historical Society entitled “Green Mountain Chronicles.”

Scope and Content

The transcriptions in this collection represent interviews of approximately 42 individuals conducted primarily in 1987 and 1988 by Mark Greenberg, Mary Kasamatsu, Eleanor Ott, and Tom Davis in preparation for a radio series entitled “Green Mountain Chronicles.” The series of 52 five-minute programs was broadcast by commercial and public radio stations throughout the state in late 1988 and early 1989. The earliest interview in the collection was conducted in 1981; the latest was in 1989.

The interviewers spoke with well known Vermonters such as Governors Philip Hoff, Deane Davis, and Madeleine Kunin; lesser known personalities such as Catherine Robbins Clifford, one of the first women to hike the entire length of the Long Trail; and historians such as Weston Cate. The following inventory of the collection highlights the major theme(s) of each interview. The following list of program tapes gives the title of each radio program.

The goal of the radio series was to tell the history of Vermont in the twentieth century using archival sound recordings and recent interviews. The project was undertaken by the VHS in celebration of its 150th anniversary in 1988 and was funded by a \$14,000 grant from the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues with additional support from New England Telephone Company.

MSA 199, Folder 0 contains background information on the project. The VHS website at www.vermonthistory.org/gmchronicles contains a list of the Green Mountain Chronicles radio broadcasts and audio files of those broadcasts.

Sophia Bielli

Mark Greenberg
Interviewer

MG This is Mark Greenberg and I'm speaking with Sophia Bielli and this is for WNCS for the Barre History Series. Okay.

SB I've been here 85 years.

MG 85 Years? Well.

SB I came when I was four. I was born in Massachusetts and I came here with my family, I was four. So, I'm 89. Antique.

MG What was Barre like then?

SB Oh, it was very small, no sidewalks, lot of dust, but the people were wonderful. They had a lot of love in the home and discipline. It isn't like now. It was hard in the sheds at those days you know. There were no stoves and the, and the dirt floor. So in the wintertime they'd freeze. So when it was too cold, they had to stay home. In the summer, it was too hot they'd stay home. There was no, no convenience. So they'd go up in the woods. The men would go themselves when it was hot. But Sunday's they'd have family picnics. It was really beautiful. And I recall they also built a platform to dance up here. The women and the husbands would dance.

MG Did members of your family work in the granite sheds or in the quarries?

SB My father. My father, we lived first in Massachusetts. Came here, he was a, they use to do a lot of work by hand in those days. No machinery and that was his job to cut granite. He was sick for seven years, so I was only ten years old when he passed away. And, but the men would work so hard. They'd come home and they were terribly tired, full of dust. I don't like to recall those days. Those were bad. And the government stepped in and they put in the suction devices which helped a lot. It should have been done before because half the people are, those boys between 40 and 50 are buried up to Hope Cemetery or Catholic Cemetery. But they did wonderful work. Of course at Italy they worked on marble. When they came to America they worked on granite which was a little different. But they worked hard. They were, I think, my mother was from the German _____ of Switzerland. My father was from Northern Italy, so I'm half and half. But I always liked the Italians and the art. Oh by the way, I forgot something at the Opera House.