



# Forest History Society, Inc.

109 Coral Street, Santa Cruz, California 95060 / Telephone (408) 426-3770

Oral History Interview

Robert K. Mitchell, Sr.

with

Elwood P. Maunder  
(3/6/68)

This interview is the property of the Forest History Society and may not be used or quoted for publication without the permission of the Society.

ERM: Now let's see, this is -

RKM: Are you sure you got it on?

ERM: Oh, you bet I am. March the 6th today, isn't it?

RKM: Yes.

ERM: It's warming up there. Getting on towards spring. And I'm Elwood Maunder -

RKM: 15 days until spring.

ERM: - and this is Phil Jones and we're interviewing - and your full name sir is -

RKM: is Robert K. Mitchell, senior.

ERM: Senior.

RKM: Purchase (?) Road, Southbury, Connecticut, District and home of the Indians. This particular valley right in to here was the headquarters of the Indians who originally occupied this whole area of the Housatonic Valley. Further north here, New Milford and so forth, were the Indians.

ERM: How many were there back at the high point of ~~XXXXX~~ <sup>their</sup> -

RKM: Well the history books tell us there were about 200 and their ~~main~~ main camp was up here on the hill; the burying ground was along down the edge of the river here in the bend of the river. And - you see this farm now is occupied now by the 6th generation of Mitchell that have lived here and no else has ever owned the land but the Mitchell family. And grandfather tells me that many times ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ after a ~~ps~~ spring fresh(?) that the Indians bones would be washed out now and then and rebury them and at one time about 50 years ago, some professors from Yale came and dug up some of the bones and I remember very well seeing the skeleton in the bottom of the grave there

ERM: Did they find any artifacts apart from the skeletons?

RKM: Oh, this is 50 years ago and it's hard to remember, but I ~~XXXXX~~ remember there were a few and a few little clay pottery of something of that, but I can't remember exactly what they were. I believe that they said that they thought this was a female or a child by the bones, but it's hard to ~~XXX~~ remember 50 years ago how

ERM: What recollections do you have of what your father and grandfather told you about the Indians? They were still present, here, I believe, probably in your grandfather's time,

RKM: Well I remember grandfather always said that every spring they went down to the shore and dug clams, and when they came back up they'd have quite a load of clams and they'd stop in and he'd go down and sell them a pitcher of cider and they'd give him a good bunch of clams. Course at that time they were living at the reservation up in Camden (?) and they'd go down down to the shore every ~~pr~~ spring to dig clams.

PJ: They probably did ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ~~shad~~ shad fishing, too.

RKM: Well, you see, shad fishing stopped when they built the dam at Derby. When grandfather was a boy, they still caught shad here, but ~~th~~ when they built the dam at Derby that stopped the migration of the shad up the river.

ERM: But the shad used to come as far as ?

RKM: Oh the shad came all the way up too before they built the dam at Derby. That's the low dam way down at Derby, not the Stevenson dam, but the dam they had at Derby. I remember when they built the Stevenson dam in 1873.

PJ ~~ERM~~: The shad once swarmed up just like salmon, then.

RKM: ~~Yup~~ Yeah, uh huh.

PJ ~~ERM~~: ~~shad~~ dam put a stop to the shad

RKM: That's right.

ERM: How would you say the Indians made use of the land here in what do you know about their use?

RKM: well of course they used the land for corn. You know they fertilized the corn by ~~catching~~ catching the fish and putting a fish on each hill of corn to fertilize it and of course ~~the~~ <sup>these</sup> low river plains flooded with the ice jam every year, so they got a lot of silt from river so they were very fertilized and they grew their corn on these river plain and because of the flooding and so forth, they weren't ~~having~~ <sup>heavy with</sup> timber, so it was nice open land and nice fertile land to the flooding each spring they could grow a nice crop of corn.

PJ: And this particular tribe was ~~this~~ then primarily an agricultural -

RM: Well all of the history of ~~this~~ <sup>a</sup> tribe always mentioned that they were very peaceful tribe they never at any time fought with the white settlers. The Indians from ~~from~~ further north came down - see the original settlement that came up from Stratford was in (at?)

was in Woodbury. At that time the town of Woodbury comprised all of Woodbury, Bethlehem, Roxbury, Southbury, Oxford and Middlebury - see the ancient town of ~~X~~ Woodbury was a large area. And the Indians came down from the north and drove them out a couple of times from the Valley up around.

PJ: What tribes would these have been, the war-like tribes?

RKM: You'll find the history of ancient Woodbury and all ~~about~~ about the Indians in ~~Cothern's~~ <sup>Cothern's</sup> ~~History of Ancient Woodbury~~, Volume 1

ERM: How's the author's name spelled?

RKM: Cothern. C O T H E R N ' S .

ERM: And that's in several volumes, I take it.

RKM: That's in 3 volumes.

ERM: 3 volumes. When was that published, back in -

RKM: There are very ~~x~~ few copies of this available and it was published in 1854.

ERM: Well we might run into some problems with that. I ran across something that Phil gave me to read here that made ~~note~~ note of the fact that there were no less than 16 Indian tribes, ~~native~~ <sup>evidentially</sup> native to what has been - what became Connecticut, which located the home land by reference to the river.

RKM: Well they - in Cothern's History, ~~you~~ you'll find the names of the tribe and the "ousaton River means the great river, and of course they used this for canoeing; it was their main travel up and down and because of the ~~contour~~ contour, they could walk up along the edge of it much easier than they could going cross country over one hill and down another. Now you talk about the ~~original~~ use of the land. Course, the original use of the land by the settlers ~~was~~ was in lumbering because this was all covered by a virgin growth of white oak, and they cut this timber and all of the old houses, the beams are white oak.

ERM: And was there ~~was~~ a good deal of chestnut here, too?

RKM: Chestnut came in later after they cut the white oak -

ERM: I see, it came afterwards.

RKM: - because in my boyhood ~~my~~ days, the chestnut was the big crop and many times I went out and picked up chestnuts from these big old trees, they would be 3' in diameter, and back when I was a boy the chestnuts were all very live and it was a wonderful timber; it was fast growing, it was relatively soft, it was strong, it was straight grained, it had a long ground life - you could use it for posts and it lasted very well in the ground.

fact, today you ~~can't~~ <sup>can</sup> find chestnut trees that when they fell, laid on a rock or something that are still sound and they probably fell 20, 25 years ago. And the old houses that were built later were chestnut timber and chestnut boards, but the original stand was a virgin white oak. You see right up back here on this hill back of our house is still some of the virgin white oak that was never cut. And you read in Cothorn's History about the oak timber. And then after they got the oak timber cut - of course, along the river here they either dammed up the small streams running into the river or they built diversion ditches in the swift water and brought the water in through these diversion ditches that were - one up above here and they had a water wheel and a sawmill because sawmills and grist mills were the big business then.

ERM: Was most of the timber, then, cut used in what might be called the local market, or was there enough of it and was enough of it manufactured here in the valley to supply markets farther away?

RKM: The great amount of timber, I would say, was used by the railroads. See, the railroad was built through here in those early days, and they took a lot of timber -

ERM: This is the Housatonic Railroad that ran up to Pittsfield, you mean?

RKM: No. Well that ~~was~~ <sup>would've been a</sup> part of it, but that further north, that crossed up just above the Chappaugua (?) River. This was the - this particular branch through here ran from Danbury to Waterbury, and I've heard grandfather tell many times about shooing out the timbers that they put in the bottom of the river under these abutments down here and the pier in the center - you ~~see~~ still see the pier standing. And the oak logs that that pier is standing on grandfather -

ERM: The pilings that they

RKM: No, no, they layed them flat in this.

ERM: They layed them flat.

RKM: They layed them flat; oh no, they had no way of driving them.

ERM: Oh I see. This was hard rock bottom, then.

RKM: No, it wouldn't've been a gravel bottom.

ERM: Gravel bottom.

RKM: A gravel bottom. And I've heard grandfather tell many times one of the ~~boxes~~ <sup>bosses</sup> from the railroad came up and bet him a ten dollar bill he couldn't split the ~~with~~ with a ~~broad~~ broad axe. but he did. <sup>ERM:</sup> They were laid down ~~as~~ sort of a pontoon. ~~in~~

RKM: They were laid down as a mat what they started they building the piers.

ERM: They're ~~xx~~ still there.

RKM: They're still there, yep~~t~~, they're still there. And then later when they got the timber cut off around here and they still had a sawmill, they used to cut timber up in Camden; that was pine, that wasn't oak. And they would float in down in the high water in the spring, and they'd have a boom in the eddy - do you know what an eddy is? That's where there's an indentation in the ~~x~~ land and the eddy flowed upstream instead of downstream with the rest of the current. And they would have a boom out around the eddy and they would go out in a boat and catch the logs floating down and -

ERM: Pull them into the -

RKM: Pull them into the eddy under the boom, and then they had a sawmill here that they sawed those logs. But those were pine, of course. Oak wouldn't never have floated down.

ERM: Now this was a family enterprise of your family.

RKM: Oh yes. They were all family enterprises.

PJ: Whereabouts was the big mill?

RKM: The first mill they had was~~s~~ up about where the dam is now; the Chappaugua dam is now. That was a big fall in the river there and very swift water and they had a long ditch about a half a mile long that they brought the water in from the water so it had quite a fall when it got to the wheel. And then in one of the big ~~x~~ floods way back, the ditch got filled up, and then ~~xxxxxxx~~ they moved the mill down into the and they used this brook out here and they supplemented it by the Purchase Brook up above that they brought up out of the glen here when wooden and brought the water down through here.

PJ: These would have up and down mills, I suppose

RKM: ~~These~~ <sup>They</sup> were up and down mills and we still have some of the irons that went with the up and down saw. It took about half an hour to saw through the logs with these old up and down saws, and they had a - they would set the saw, open the gate, and then they would go about some of their chores and at the end of the carriage was a trip that tripped the gate and shut the water off and they got the log sawed through, and then they could come down and rack off the carriage and re-set the saw, -

PJ: They ~~had~~ had lots of time but they didn't waste very much of it.

RKM: Well of course most of those old boards were sawed through and through: they didn't

bother to edge them and the partitions in these old houses are sawed through and through that is, the edge of the boards ~~was~~ would -

PJ: Perfectly straight.

of the boards

RKM: No, the edge followed the contour of the logs with the knot -

PJ: Slash saw.

RKM: Had the bark and everything on it. So this was, the first use of the land here was lumber and then in the - the next use in this particular area in their farming, the United States Rubber had two factories over here in Newtown, they present fabric fire hose, and the shop up above that was known as the upper rubber. And they employed about 300 men, so the use of the land here was to produce produce that could be sold to these ~~200~~ 300 families; beef and port and vegetables and potatoes and wood in the wintertime. So there was a local market that they supplied.

ERM: Now, these industries came into the valley at about what time, do you recall?

RKM: Oh, probably around 1850. You see, this was the first -

ERM: They were pre-Civil War, then.

RKM: I wouldn't know the exact date, but the idea was -

ERM: I think this must have been a little bit later than that -

RKM: The idea was the first source of power that was usable was a small to <sup>a</sup> medium size river that they could dam and run through a water wheel. Now the Housatonic River was too big a job for them to handle then. The Pomperung River that comes down through South Britain, the River that comes down through Newtown, the Chappaugua River that comes down through Roxbury -

ERM: They were ideal.

RKM: These were a size that they could handle. They could build their log dam across these and divert the water to a wheel and get power for the industries. So all of the original industries were located among these small to medium size -

ERM: Small tributary streams.

RKM: These are small tributaries. They couldn't handle the Housatonic only by building a diversion ditch to run it through a wheel.

ERM: That's good to know. And you think these industries began to come in in the years 1840 to '50.

RKM: Well, if you get your Cothern's History, you can get the exact date on those and the

locations of all of them.

ERM: All right.

RKM: Now, speaking of that, when the town of Southbury was laid out, instead of having it end with the Chappaugua River as it does now, they went one mile to the north of the Chappaugua River so that the town of Southbury would have the full use of the Chappaugua River for local industry. And then at - the Chappaugua dam was built on the Housatonic River, that isolated the land on the north side of the Chappaugua which was eventually deeded to Bridgewater because the children ~~is~~ there would be unable to reach the schools in Southbury without making a long detour to get here.

PJE: This is the last power dam that you speak of. This has just recently been done.

ERM: Was there any considerable number of farmers already settled in this part of the valley prior to the ~~coming~~<sup>coming</sup> in of these small industries, or did the ~~farm~~ farm population -

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

ERM: This is a continuation of the interview with Mr. Mitchell on March the 6th. Well, you go right ahead with what you were talking about. We were - I was inquiring of you whether the farm population of this area was still relatively small prior to the coming in of these factories in the middle of the 19th century.

RKM: No, the farm population had to come first; the people had to come, to had to cut ~~o~~ up the timber, they had to cultivate the land, and then when you get a sufficient size of a village, it is then followed by a mill to - a sawmill and a grist mill. See, originally ~~is~~ they would have to take their grain back down to Stratford or somewhere to get it ground, then with the coming of the population, then the industries followed.

ERM: Did the industry bring a new labor force along with it, or did it depend pretty largely on the local people to provide its labor force?

RKM: The local people, of course, all had large families of 5 or 6 children apiece, so there were ample labor force. I don't know whether you know that in 1850 that 2/3'd of the area of the state of Connecticut was under cultivation, and at the present time, 2/3's of the area, or approximately, is in woodland which means that in the last 100 years a third of the area has gone back to woodland from cultivated areas. Of course back in the 1850's when they plowed with oxen and mowed by hand, they could mow every little side (?) hill corner and around the rocks, but with the coming of power equipment many o



these side hill rocky lots just had to be abandoned because they weren't practical, and they have gone back to woodland.

ERM: The old story of the farmer here not being able to really compete with a farmer out in the Ohio Valley who now had a cheap means of getting his produce back to the eastern market. As I understand it, the markets of the ~~se~~ farmer here dried up to a certain extent; he could no longer compete for those markets with the more efficient, more highly mechanized farmer of the middle - of the Ohio Valley.

RKM: Well, I'll have to disagree with you in that. I think that the type of agriculture changed; we could no longer compete with the west in growing wheat or corn for a market where they had their big fields, but we could compete ~~in~~ with them with the perishable goods - vegetables, fruit, milk, dairy products, eggs - that wouldn't be shipped from the west. We had to change from an agriculture of grain and corn to the products that had to be produced right next to the market and you want to remember that back in those days, the only refrigeration they had was ice, and if milk kept two days it was pretty good milk! So that ~~xxx~~ our agriculture changed to - from a grain growing to ~~perish~~ a perishable products that had to be produced in close proximity to the market.

ERM: Well, this ~~change~~ over of the land from one use to another, which over this period of time has shifted the lands used around and it's now, as you say, 2/3's back in woodland whereas it used to be 2/3's cultivated in the state of Connecticut, this was all going on at this period, wasn't it, that you're talking about? And part of the reason for that was the abandonment of the fields, wasn't it, for agricultural use? They were going back to trade; ~~xxxx~~ <sup>it</sup> was no longer profitable to use them for farming, right?

RKM: Well they're two points here: One is with the - in ~~xxxx~~ industry's moving in the marginal farmer found it much more profitable to work in industry than he did to till the side hill rocky fields, so this made a lot of ~~abandonment~~ abandonment of land because the people still lived on the land, but they worked in the local shop instead of getting their living from farming, they got their living from industry but still occupied the land, and this meant that they just used for their own use the fields that were the most easily tillable.

ERM: How would you see this having an impact on your own family property here?

RKM: Well of course, our family have always been farmers all down through the ages, and with our property here we have bought more and more land and increased the size of the farm,

and instead of abandoning fields, in my lifetime I have brought into production 50 or 60 acres that had never been in production before. Some of it had been used as rough pasture land and we cleaned off the rocks and the stumps; many of the fields still had the old stumps on where grandfather cut the trees, as I told you about, the way used in the building of the railroad. And an interesting thing on this land there were the old bottoms of the charcoal pits.

ERM: Oh, is that right.

RKM: As you go across the fields, you would see this ditch that would be in a circle of about 30' in diameter. They went in there and they shoveled out the dirt into piles around the outside; they cut the wood into 4' lengths and stacked it in this pile; and then covered it up with the dirt and then -

ERM: But ~~you~~ used the dirt over and over again.

RKM: Well they only had - they only burned in one place at a time because ~~they drew~~ <sup>they drew</sup> the wood in that area and then they would go through a - they would never use a charcoal pit but once.

ERM: Just once.

RKM:: Just once, because they'd draw the wood in in that area and then they would go down a quarter of a mile or somewhere and -

ERM: And they'd dig new pits.

RKM: And they'd dig <sup>a</sup> new pits because of the handling of the wood - have the wood close to the pit.

PJ: Well most of that charcoal went down to the brass industry?

RKM: Yes, <sup>see</sup> all the brass was fired with charcoal originally and I can remember even in my day down through the river valley here they had a large crew of men that were cutting wood year 'round.

ERM: The brass company had its own wood procurement people who were out

RKM: Well the brass company got the wood any way they could. They had their own gangs and they bought it from the farmers and they got - they brought charcoal because their demand for charcoal was very great, and they got it every way that they could.

ERM: ~~It~~ And did you, then, cut a lot of wood and make a lot of charcoal on this farm and sell it to the brass company?

RKM: Well this charcoal was made in grandfather's day and I don't know where they sold it but

probably it went to the brass companies. Of course it went also to the local industries because they used charcoal for - in the shops and in the forges and in all that. This was the local supply.

ERM: What brought about the change in the charcoal market? Was it the coming of electricity and other fuels?

RKM: Oh, no, the coming of other fuels. I mean, they changed from charcoal to coke and then from coke to oil and from oil to electric furnaces; much more refined and much more exact ~~but~~ temperature.

ERM: ~~XXXX~~ The charcoal industry faded out about what time? Do you have any recollection of that?

RKM: I would say about 1920.

ERM: Up to 1920 there was still a good continuing market for charcoal.

RKM: There was a market for it because I remember they men ~~was~~ were cutting wood and they were drawing ~~brass~~ <sup>wood</sup> for the brass company back in 1920.

ERM: And it was only after World War I, then, that you began to get a real change in the fuel situation as far as that industry was concerned.

RKM: I guess that you got a very good point there. Probably the great number of men ~~in the~~ <sup>that</sup> were taken in the army in World War I forced the brass companies to get other fuel because they wouldn't have been able to get sufficient labor to -

ERM: To get it out of the woods.

RKM: To cut the wood.

ERM: Yeah, I was wondering whether that had anything to do with it.

PJ: I imagine that probably was.

ERM: The woods industry by and large all over the country suffered rather badly from labor shortage in World War I, and this may have provoked the change.

RKM: I would think that it would because I remember that we were very short on labor. We had some good labor during World War I, very good labor, skilled labor in fact. We had Austrian and Germans and they couldn't get a job in a factory ~~because~~ -

ERM: Because they were the wrong nationality, huh?

RKM: Because they were the wrong nationality, so we had very good labor. They were people that were born in Austria and Germany and -

PJ: They weren't citizens were they?

RKM: They were not citizens.

PJ: They ~~was~~ were aliens.

RKM: They were aliens, and they wouldn't give them a job in any of the factories. So they - we had very good, very good help then. I remember one of them was a skilled tool and die maker he could fix anything and he had a good set of tools. It was funny we had one German and one Austrian and they didn't see eye to eye about a lot of things and on Saturday night if they got ~~liquored~~ <sup>liquored</sup> a little, they were quite apt to get in a fight over it.

PJ: Try to settle the war in their

ERM: Yeah, the Prussian and the Bavarian.

RKM: Yeah.

ERM: Well, how would you ~~and~~ identify the change in the lands' use in your own time?

RKM: We were talking about the 300 men that were working over here in the factories of the United States Rubber Company. In about 1902, U.S. Rubber moved most of these to the state of New Jersey, so this lost the local market, and then there followed a time -

ERM: Well, did they close out the factory completely, or did they turn it to other use?

RKM: They closed down the upper rubber and the lower ~~w~~ rubber was then the Fabric Fire Hose Company; the rubber tubing in the center of the hose was made in Passaic, New Jersey, was brought up here and the fabric for the outside was woven, the rubber tube was drawn into that fabric, and then vulcanized together. And then the couplings were put on. So, they had a relatively small crew up here that woved the fabric for the outside of the fire hose and vulcanized the -

ERM: Prior to that, had the whole operation and the whole manufacturing ~~l~~process taken place here, or had it always been that the rubber hosing had been manufactured down in Passaic and shipped up here?

RKM: Well now, I was born in 1905 and this happened in 1902, so we're kind of pre-dating it a little, but ~~it~~ as I understand it, the tubing was made in the upper rubber originally and then ~~f~~brought down to the Fabric Fire Hose Company for the fabric~~s~~ being woven and ~~the~~ inside tube vulcanized to it.

PJ: It probably became more profitable in a small operation to do everything in the one place

RKM: Well I don't know the reason for that. But then the farming industry changed here to sheep and beef cattle, and in about 19 -

ERM: You mean when there was a cutting off of the labor - movement of these families -

RKM: That's right.

ERM: - then there was no longer quite as much need for the truck gardening -

RKM: Truck ~~garden~~ gardening, the wood, ~~pr~~ pork (?) -

ERM: And so they shifted over into dairy -

RKM: No, no, they shifted to beef and sheep. And then around 1906, Borden's ~~pr~~ opened up a plant over Newtown Station.

PJ: For milk.

RKM: For milk, and then they started to shift over to the production of milk, and that at that time, I think, brought - I heard Dad say about 2¢ and quart~~¢~~ in the winter and about 1½¢ in the summer, or some price like that.

PJ: It gets worse and worse, doesn't it?

RKM: Well don't laugh because I sold milk for 2¢ a quart in 1932. And then, of course, the dairy industry continued to develop. This plant over in Newtown Station separated and made cream and butter, and then the ~~fluid~~ <sup>fluid</sup> milk market started to move out. Of course, originally the fluid milk market was all right in the edge of the cities and the - each farmer produced his own milk and peddled it. And there was several years in there that Dad would go down through Monroe and to Stephany (?) to these farmers who produced milk for the city; he would buy up their dry cows / or their cows that were relatively along in their lactation and not producing, and sell them fresh cows, then he'd bring those dry cows up here and keep them for 4 or 5 months because they had used all their facilities for cows that were really producing ~~pr~~ to make enough ~~pr~~ milk for their retail trade.

PJ: In order to transport them, he probably drove them right over the road.

RKM: No, they'd have a buggy and they'd tie 3 or 4 cows in back of the buggy and lead them along -

PJ: String them along.

RKM: String them along in back of the buggy. I remember back in my early days there was a Jewish ~~immigrant~~ <sup>immigrant</sup> from Russia settled in town and his specialty was buying ugly bulls that nobody else would touch, and he had a saddle horse and he would come and buy the bull and take the rope in and tie on the bull in the stanchion in the barn and go out and get on his saddle horse and tie the rope on the saddle and then tell the farmer to let the bull go. The bull would come tearing out of the barn and he'd start down the road on the

horse with the bull chasing him. Of course the bull was only good for about a half a mile and then they'd settle down to a slow walk down to the Bridgeport slaughter ~~house~~ house where he'd sell the bull at a good profit, because nobody else would dare to touch him.

ERM: Is that right.

PJ: Well, there's a good story there; nationality.

RKM: Then of course the dairy industry ~~was~~ with the increase of the size of the cities spread out to the neighboring towns and we have the -

ERM: Were there any cooperatives then? started among the farmers of the area?

RKM: Well, the Connecticut Milk Producers Cooperative started in about 1920. Dad helped to start it. The second year, he was president of it and he was continuous president of it for 20 years until he retired, and this was during the formative period when times were really rough and at one annual meeting in 1932 when milk was bringing 2¢ a quart, they had it in the armory in Hartford, and they had to call in the State Police to maintain order. But you can imagine what farmers selling milk at 2¢ a quart, they ~~were~~ were really destitute and really up in the air to find out how they were going to make a living for themselves and their families.

ERM: Well, there was a lot of milk dumping back in those days in the early '30's I recall.

RKM: No, very little. There was one milk strike -

ERM: Not here perhaps, but out in the middle-west -

RKM: Very rarely. There was one short milk strike here, but that was all we ever had here in Connecticut. The Connecticut market has always been a very good milk market and we've had very high standards on quality, so that the people of Connecticut have had a very quality milk from the local area and everybody has benefited by it.

ERM: Most of your milk from this valley would go where, into Bridgeport and - ?

RKM: Well, no. The milk from this valley would not go into Bridgeport because the train that came through here from Danbury to Waterbury took the milk, so the milk went to either Waterbury or New Britain because if it went to the Bridgeport area, it would have to be taken over to Newtown Station ~~and~~ -

ERM: And transferred.

RKM: - to be that much further to take it, and we used to take it with a horse and wagon. can remember that the train left down here at 7:40 every morning, and you had to have the

horses hitched up on the wagon and loaded by 7:00 to be down there and have the milk on the truck on the platform by 7:30 so you could load it on the train when it comes in.

ERM: In the big cans.

RKM: In the 40 quart cans. With the amount of production we have today, if we had it in 40 quart cans it'd sure be a back-breaking job to pull it out of the tank because today we produce about 2 tons of milk a day, about 4,000 pounds, and a can of milk if it's right up full has 87 pounds, but they average, say, 80 pounds so 80 goes into 4,000, that would be 50 cans. That would be quite a little back-breaking job to pull those up out of the tank and load them on the wagon.

PJ: can would come kind of hard, wouldn't it.

RKM: Yeah, it sure would. With 80 pounds of milk and the weight of the can gives you pretty near 100 pounds to -

PJ: 10 or 15 wasn't so bad, but -

ERM: Of course, back in those early days, too, it all had to be - it all had to be brought out of the cow by hand, too. You didn't get around to mechanized milking, I don't suppose, until when, about -

RKM: Well, if you talk about mechanized, in my day farming we weren't very farther advanced than they were days of Moses and the Egyptians because we still pitched hay by hand, we pitched it on the wagon, we pitched it off into the mow, we mowed it by hand, ~~we~~ we shoveled the manure by hand, we milked cows by hand, we did the work with horse true, we had the mowing machine and the horse rake (?), but we still had the walking plow we still had the walking cultivator. So, in our gener(ation) -

ERM:~~RM~~: the work producing 50 cans of milk then either, ~~we~~ were you?

RKM: We produced from 8 to 10 cans of milk and we were considered very large producers.

ERM: Yeah, that's right.

RKM: But in our lifetime, we've seen all this mechanization.

ERM: That's come on, really, with ~~the~~ a great rush in farming here in this area in the last years.

RKM: In farming in all areas we have seen this mechanization, this new method, but there's one thing you've got to remember, too. It's not only mechanization; it's better varieties, higher producing varieties, better methods, weed-control chemicals, sprays

we started farming, you planted the corn with a one-row planter; today we plant it with a 4-row planter drawn by a tractor instead of an old horse. Then we cultivated and hoed that corn until about the 4th of July ~~xxxx~~ before we started haying. Today when they plant it with a 4-row planter, they spray it with a weed spray and don't go near the corn again until September when they cut it. Instead of starting haying on the 4th of July, today you're supposed to be through haying on the 4th of July, because you're not held up by that cultivating and hoeing of the corn that we had to do, and you get a much better quality of hay, early cut hay, then you get a much larger second cutting because you get the first cutting off a month sooner.

ERM: What has been happening in this period of your lifetime in terms of the number of farms in the valley in this area? Have they been diminishing in number?

RKM: Well, I mean, you read this story all over. It's a funny story because the number of farms now probably 10% of the number that when I was a boy, but the number of farms that are left produce more than they all did back then. Take for instance our's here; we ~~xxx~~ produced 8 to 10 cans of milk. The average production when the Connecticut Milk Producers was started was 10 cows per farm and 3 cans of milk. And a man made a good living on this and raised his family. Now we're milking 130 cows; we're making -

ERM: Is that the average - or what you're milking?

RKM: That's what we're milking.

ERM: What you're milking. What is the average dairy?

RKM: Well wait, let me finish this. ~~xxxxx~~  
~~xxxxx~~  
We're milking 130 cows and making 50 cans a day instead of 8 to 10. Now this is 5 times the amount of milk that's being produced on this one farm and is being produced with the same amount of labor - 3 hired hands - that we produced 8 or 10 cans back in the 1920's. Now what is the - the average production - every number of cows per farm today's around 50 and a man can't make a living with less than 50 cows was the - you see the price of milk has gone up very little, but the price that everything the farmer buys, his taxes (?), his machinery, his grain, his automobile his food, everything that he buys has ~~x~~ tripled, quadrupled, because we used to buy a good tractor for \$4, \$500 dollars. Of course, it was a smaller size tractor, but today you don't buy a tractor for less than \$4 or \$5,000 dollars so this is the way the farmer costs have gone up, and he must have a larger operation to meet the overhead of these higher costs.



ERM: All right, this <sup>has</sup> ~~is~~ obviously then forced the small, inefficient farmer out of business and this is a national phenomenon. To what extent does it exist here in the valley? Is it as big a thing here as it is elsewhere in the country? Or is it less important here?

RKM: You've got to look ~~xxx~~ at it from a ~~very~~ different angle all together. Here's it's a land use problem; if a man has got land enough to take on this large-scale operation, he's in business. If he hasn't got land enough, if his land is a small area and small rocky fields, he just isn't in business. So it's a land use problem and - that he's got sufficient land to support this type of ~~exp~~ operation. ~~xx~~

ERM: He's got to have the land, but he's also got to have the capital to invest in machinery, too, hasn't he? I mean, it's possible for ~~him~~ to have land without ~~with~~ the other ingredients of success in the contemporary farming scene, here, isn't it?

RKM: Well this is a - you've got to look at this from 2 sides. If a man has been in farming operation, has had the land, the capital to buy the machinery is a progressive step. I mean, he buys one piece this year and another piece another year. Now if you're talking about the capital to jump in and start, then you would really have a problem not to get enough capital to begin with. But we're talking about farms that have been in operation; they have the land and they gradually changed over from the smaller tractors to the newer tractors, and the newer bearers and the 4-row . I mean, you don't jump in and buy all this stuff at one time in one year. You buy one piece of equipment each year and keep progressing to a larger scale operation.

ERM: Now on your farm here, has it followed the ~~xxx~~ pattern of the state in the change of land use, or ~~are~~ you using more of your acreage now for farming purposes and less of it gone back to wood?

RKM: We continually developed more of the land for farming purposes.

ERM: In other words, you were going in a contrary to the general trend.

RKM: Well as you ask these questions, I think back over the years of the different changes that we've had. We started in with small acreage of corn that had to be cut by hand, loaded by hand and then the big idea there was better pastures and we went into

so that we had better feed and longer pasture seasons and a great commotion of grass silage. Then the - we've now come back to more corn silage and less grass silage because of the efficiency of the weed killer and the field choppers so that it takes all the labor out of handling corn. The - of course the great advance that we've had in the

last 10 or 15 years is zero pasturing; that is, the cows are kept in the yard 365 days a year, they don't go out to pasture at all. During the summer months you cut the green feed and bring it into them; during the winter months, they're kept on silage and hay. Of course, the trend in the last 4 or 5 years has been more silage and less hay, because the silage can be handled so efficiently. And the big change is in barn construction from the stanchion type barn to the free stall in the milking parlor. With the free stall in the milking parlor, you can handle the same number ~~of~~ of cows with one-third the amount of labor. If you're - are you - have you seen the free stall in milking parlors?

ERM: No, I'm not familiar with these -

RKM: Well the free stall, the cows are never fastened at all. It's like a whole lot of rows of horse stalls, and the cows just go in and pick the stall that looks good to them and rest themselves in there, and when they feel like eating, they ~~if~~ silage is put in a long bunk and they go out and eat from the bunk. The corn silage is brought from the pit silo up with a silage wagon that distributes it along through the bunk so that there is no manual handling of the silage at all. The silage wagon has been loaded with a front end loader, and the silage wagon just peddles the silage out in this bunk. And the hay is fed in hay feeders. And then, in the milking parlor the cows - the man that operates it is down in a pit so that he doesn't have to bend down to put on the milking machine or to perform any of the operations. The cows come in 5 on each side. When they come in on ~~one~~ one side, the automatic feeder's in front of them, and he pulls the string and feeds the grain in the automatic feeder; he then washes them with his hot water hose puts on the milkers, the milk runs through a stainless steel pipe directly into the tank so there's no handling of the milk. He then lets 5 cows in on the other side; he feeds ~~them~~ the grain, washes them and gets them ready, then he shifts the machine over from the other side on to those 5, lets -

ERM: How much time is involved in each 5 cow -

RKM: Oh a man will average to milk a cow a minute.

ERM: A cow a minute.

RKM: And one man will milk 130 cows in around 2 hours or a little over. And this is one man. Now we used to milk 57 cows and it took 3 of us in the old barn to milk 57 cows, to milk them, and feed them and take care of them. Of course, one man doesn't do this whole operation; you have another man that does the feeding outside and takes care of the calf

and does the odd jobs. But for the actual milking operation and the feeding of the grain, one man does this and he ~~xxx~~ doesn't work nearly as hard as he did in the old barn because he doesn't have to stoop down - this really gets your knees; up and down 100 times you don't just go out there and try it.

ERM: I can believe it.

RKM: Then the carrying of milk, running back and forth to the milk room, took a lot of time and energy, and ~~is~~ now with the milk going down the stainless steel pipe, this is automatic.

ERM: Well, it's happening ~~every~~ everywhere.

RKM: Well people don't give agriculture credit enough for the changes in operation. They think all the efficiency and change come in the manufacturing industry, but agriculture has made just as many changes and efficiencies as manufacturing has but the public doesn't give it the credit for this.

ERM: How many farmers here in your near environs of the valley ~~is~~ have been in dairy - had dairy herds - and ~~xxxx~~ have given them up in recent years? Is there any great number or is it rather modest in number?

RKM: Well what do you mean by recent? years? You mean 5 years, 10 years?

ERM: In the last 10 years or so.

RKM: In the last 10 years probably 2/3's of the dairy farmers have gone out of business.

ERM: What have they done, have they sold their herds to other farmers living right here in the area mostly?

RKM: Well the main reason for these going out of business is age. As they got along in years their children ~~is~~ didn't care to take up the farming operation or they didn't have children and the young people weren't going in, so the main reason is age.

ERM: Yeah. Rather than -

RKM: And then the, of course, the increased value of the land. You see, we're in close proximity to Danbury, Waterbury, Seymour, Bridgeport; you've got to realize now that with Interstate 84 going through Southbury ~~is~~ that you can get to a job in Waterbury or Danbury quicker than a person living in Danbury ~~is~~ <sup>and</sup> Waterbury if they got to go through ~~is~~ crosstown traffic.

ERM: So you've got suburbia on your hands.

RKM: We can go either to Danbury or Waterbury in 15 minutes on a 4-lane super highway without

any cross traffic or lights, and this beats just going crosstown either in Danbury or Waterbury.

ERM: So what was, in your past, the country is now becoming a part of the metropolitan urban sprawl ~~sit~~ situation, isn't it, with many new people coming out and building their homes here and riding back and forth to their work in the city.

RKM: That's an interesting thing. Back probably 1850, the population of the town was around 7,500 then around, oh, 1910 or '15 it dropped down to around 3,000 - dropped half in population - and now we've come up again to around 5,000 and we're growing very rapidly because of the people that you speak of coming and building ~~their~~ <sup>their</sup> homes here and commute to their jobs in the neighboring cities.

ERM: What was the reason for the peak of population and then the drop?

RKM: The reason for the peak of population was large families on the farm, and then the drop, of course, they went to the cities to get better paying, easier jobs. Back when they mowed all the hay by hand and did all the rest of the work by hand -

ERM: They have to keep the boys down on the farm.

RKM: - it took 90% of the population of the country to produce the food. And now, remember, that 8% of the population of this country produces the food and the only complaint they have is that we produce too much. They should live - these people that complain about this should live in India or Africa or somewhere where most of the population ~~goes~~ go to bed on an empty stomach because they can't produce enough food.

PJ: I guess if you went back 100 years, any flat ~~pe~~ piece of land in the whole area that wasn't in a swamp was probably cleared land and used for farming back in that era.

RKM: Well, every piece of land was used for farming. You remember 2/3s of the land was under cultivation. Whether it was side hill or whether it was flat was used. The only land that wasn't used was swamp and rocky -

PJ: Solid ledge.

RKM: - woodland. It was all used. All used for farming back in 1850. They had to have it to get enough food for their (the?) people. Remember back then, they ~~is~~ - big bread basket of the mid-west wasn't supplying the food ~~here~~; it had to be grown locally.

ERM: Right. And they were ~~go~~ growing food on marginal ~~in~~ fields, weren't they, in lots of cases. They had cleared fields that no longer were capable of producing good crops. I think they'd worn some of them out: a good many of them were pretty well worn out, weren't they?

they?

RKM: Well, if you could just imagine producing wheat on a small field and cutting it with a cradle - did you ever see a cradle?

ERM: Oh yes.

RKM: Did you every use one?

ERM: No, I have never used one.

RKM: Well if you ever used one, you certainly wouldn't have produced very much wheat because that was a real hard job to use a cradle, and this wheat ~~wherex~~ was cut with a cradle, then it was raked into small bundles, you went along and you took out a handful of the wheat, you wrapped it around a bundle and tied it in a knot, then the wheat was put in a shop - that is, a number of bundles ~~wherex~~ were stood up together and let to dry, then it got dry it was loaded on wagons and taken into the barn and then in the winter, the barn floor was clean and these bundles of wheat were put down and they were thrashed out with a hand flail. Did you ever try that?

ERM: I've seen it done, but I've never done it.

RKM: Well you should try some of those things sometimes so you have a little personal experier

ERM: Oh, yeah. I wish I had the time to do all of the things that I would like to do in this world.

RKM: Well, I've tried both of them and I wouldn't care to work at it now because it was real hard work and you didn't produce very many bushels and you -

PJ: Just about enough to keep your family through the winter, I suppose.

RKM: Well no, you had to produce to supply the cities around there, because that's the only source of supply they had; that was before it came in from the mid-west. It was taken down, the wheat was taken down to the local mill and ground and they had the ~~braks~~ <sup>bolts</sup> there to sift it out and make the white flour and the brand. This old mill over in Sandy Hook I think still has some of the bolts in there and the screens.

ERM: Did your family mill grind grains at all, or did you just make lumber with the mill?

RKM: This mill here just made lumber. They had another mill over in South Britain that ground grain and there was a mill up above here know as Little ~~York~~ <sup>York</sup> and there was a mill in Sandy Hook that ground grain. I've taken grain to both the one up here in Little York and the one in Sandy Hook to be ground when I was a kid. Course, there was a job for the boy back in those days; they loaded you up in the morning and you went up there and the

millier took it out and you waited 3 or 4 hours til they got it ground and then you brought it home. They didn't want to send a man up there to lose all their time, so they sent the boy up with the spare horses and the load of grain and he had to wait around all day instead of going fishing or something that he wanted to do.

ERM: Well now, I notice that you were in the insurance business as well as farming. This is something totally new in your family's history, isn't it?

RKM: Well, Uncle - see, Grandfather had 3 sons and the oldest son, Walter, started here in the insurance business in 1891 and then he moved to Pennsylvania, so Dad ~~was~~ inherited the business which was very small, writing the insurance on local farms around here. And this was continued as a very small business until 1929 when the national grange went in the insurance business and I was active in the grange and they came around and ~~asked~~ asked me if I would be an agent. So I took on the grange agency as a part time occupation in 1929 and then 7 years ago when my son Robert Kimberly Mitchell, Jr. took over the farming operation, then I started working full time at the insurance business. Up until that time it was just a evening and weekend and part time operation. It's only been a full time operation since my son took over the farming operation.

ERM: Are many other families that consider themselves long-term traditional farmers also branching out in other directions, such as you have in the last 25 or 30 years? Is this a - in other words, do your contemporaries in farming here have other occupations that they carry on besides farming as you carry an insurance business as a side line?

RKM: Well there are very few of the old families that are still in the farming. The <sup>only</sup> other old family in town that's still in the farming is the Platt (?) family and they've always had large families and some of the boys have stayed on the farm and some of the boys have gone into other occupations, so this is the way that it has developed down through the years; one of the children has taken up the farm operation and other have taken up other occupations. The same as my insurance has developed since my son took over the farming operation.

ERM: I'm ~~xx~~ just trying to get at a change - any changes that are taking place in the character of the rural community here, the farm scene. We know it, ~~x~~ from what you've told us, it's become very much more efficient, much more mechanized, more scientific, utilizing the knowledge of research in many fields and in engineering and so on, but I wondered if there were other changes that <sup>have</sup> taken place in the character of the rural community of this valley.

that might be brought about by the influx of new people; the impact of the recreational industry that's beginning to develop as a result of the building of the dams and the creation of the lakes and summer houses and all that. How do these things effect you and ultimately effect the use of the land?

RKM: Let's break that down into two different categories. First, recreation. Now with the building of the Stevenson Dam in 1917 or '18 and the Chappaugua Dam up above here about 10 years ago, you developed two large lakes. These lakes have brought in many summer people and summer cottages. They've also - the state has acquired large areas along these lakes for state parks. The towns have adquired areas for town parks. The different organizations have bought land for their summer camps. We have up here on the Chappaugua River a very large camp for colored people from Bridgeport and the -

ERM: When you say "we have", is this something that -

RKM: This is in the town of Southbury.

ERM: The town of Southbury?

RKM: Southbury on the Chappaugua River right down where it's in the back water of the - from the Chappaugua Dam, Lake ~~Liliana~~ <sup>Liliana</sup> (?) they call it. By the way, this Lake ~~Liliana~~ <sup>Liliana</sup>, the name comes from Indian Maiden that was jumped off of the cliff off at lovers' leap because something happened to her Indian lover, <sup>and</sup> her name was ~~Liliana~~ Liliana and this lake up here above the Chappaugua Dam was named for her, Lake Liliana.

PJ: This actually happened.

RKM: This actually happened; this is an historic fact, and it is known as Lovers' Leap, the cliffs up there just this side of New ~~York~~ Milford.

ERM: I'm curious to hear more about this Negro recreational facility on the lake shore. Is it a segregated situation where it is exclusively for Negroes?

RKM: Well this land up along the lake here was bought in about 1925 by the Connecticut Light and Power Company planning to build this Chappaugua dam. Now when they bought this land, the farms were along the river where the river ~~plains~~ <sup>plains</sup>, but they also owned the side hills adjoining the river plains, so when they sold out to the Connecticut Light and Power Company they naturally sold the whole works; they ~~were~~ weren't going to sell their house and <sup>their</sup> fertile river plains and keep some wooded side hill up there for and down through the years, the Connecticut Light and Power Company didn't get around to building this dam. They had drilled in a number of places but they, finally 10 years ago, did build it up here

but they had acquired all of this land back in 1925. So after the lake was built, they very carefully distributed this land out to the state for state parks, to the town for recreational uses, and for other recreation uses. I think we can give the Connecticut Light and Power Company a lot of credit for their land use. And this group in Bridgeport bought this land up on the Chappaugua River and built their camp up there.

ERM: What group is that? Is this a Negro group.

RKM: It is a Bridgeport recreation group. I can't give you the exact name or the composition of it.

ERM: But it's not the city of Bridgeport.

RKM: No, it's not the city of Bridgeport.

ERM: It's <sup>an</sup> ~~a~~ organized group of people using this group in Bridgeport.

RKM: It's an organized group of people in Bridgeport, yes. So that we're not going to have a lot of small cottage development along the lake up here because of the careful planning of the Connecticut Light and Power Company that will be in recreation facilities. Now the other change in land use that you were ~~speaking~~ speaking of comes from the building of Interstate 84 which puts us right in the center of the map from New York to Boston, and we have - we talked ~~about~~ about the influx of the residents. We're also having an infl<sup>ow</sup> of small factories, because, you ~~see~~ see, they can come out here <sup>and buy</sup> ~~by~~ relatively cheap land in a low-tax area and if they're right next to an exit of 84, they can receive or distribute their ~~produce~~ produce -

ERM: By truck.

RKM: - by truck to any of the cities within 50 miles. ~~3~~

ERM: So you are getting an influx in the valley now of new, small industry.

RKM: We have two new factories built this year and many others are trying to find land here but they haven't been able to purchase suitable locations, but there's many, many -

ERM: That are trying.

RKM: That are trying. Oh you also know that -

ERM: What's the general attitude of the people native in the valley towards this development? Are they for it or against it?

RKM: Well, just a minute before I answer that question. You know, ~~down~~ down in Oxford the state has appropriated money for a new airport there, will have a mile-long runway, and United States Rubber, now known as Uniroyal, has bought 600 acres of land for their new



headquarters, research laboratories, and other factory buildings and that within a few years they will have their headquarters ~~in~~ down here in our neighboring town of Oxford. Now to get back to your next question, with - what do the native people feel about the bringing in of the factories, with the increase in our population and the increase of our school enrollment, we need a larger tax base to help us pay for these new schools and larger school enrollment, so the people are very happy to have these factories come in. Of course, we've been very fortunate in town to have this Chappaugua Dam. The power house and 2/3's of the dam is in Southbury and that is - carries nearly 1/3 of our tax burden here of the Connecticut Light and Power Company without any services needed and without any children to educate. We also have a -

ERM: You feel - would you say then that the rank and file of farmers in the valley are not antagonistic then towards the incoming industries.

RKM: Oh they're very happy to have it because it makes a broader tax base.

ERM: It lightens their tax burden.

RKM: It lightens their tax burdens.

ERM: Has it made a substantial dent that you can notice in recent <sup>years</sup> in your taxes?

RKM: Well, <sup>years</sup> has just been completed and we're just starting to get them now, and this increase in school population - no it hasn't made any dent in the taxes because the increase in the school population has kept ahead of the -

ERM: That's the question I was going to ask you next. Doesn't the new industry that you entice in also bring with it new families which have more children which requires more school facilities, so that doesn't the new ~~industry~~ industry - I mean the thing is a constant?

RKM: No, it's just the opposite.

ERM: It's the other way around?

RKM: Just the opposite, because our people here that have been driving to Waterbury and Danbury and Seymour commuting, spending an hour every day on the road can now work ~~in~~ in these factories right here.

PJ: Right in their back door.

RKM: Right in their back door, and you've got to remember that our - we graduate about 100 from our high schools every year, and they can find jobs right here instead of having to commute. So it's a double-barrelled proposition; we get more taxes from these industries and there are jobs available right here for our people instead of having to commute ~~back~~

because see, we don't have enough industry here to provide jobs for our people. See, our people had to go to the neighboring cities to get jobs, and now they can get jobs right here so it's a very happy situation both ways. Then we have another new interest industry here known as Heritage Village where they're building 2,000 condominium apartments for people over 50. I don't believe these people over 50 will have too many children and this will -

ERM: I hope not.

RKM: - this will add some \$30 million to our tax base when they get it completed. They are not have completed, oh probably 40 or 50 apartments and they are selling them much faster than they can build them.

ERM: Is that right?

RKM: They have a golf course over there and recreation facilities, club house -

ERM: Sort of a Connecticut Sun City, huh?

RKM: That is just the way it was planned, from the Sun City in California. In fact, they had the engineers from there came here and helped to lay it out. This was on the old Victor Borge property, and then before Victor Borge, this property was owned by Balantine, Balantine Beer, and before that it was owned by Wallace Nutting. Now I don't know whether you're familiar with Wallace Nutting or not. He took a great many pictures; in practical every home around there, you'll find a lot of Wallace ~~Nutting~~ Nutting pictures. And then he had a number of girls working for him that would touch up these pictures in color and Wallace Nutting pictures were known all over the country and you'll find them in practically every home. So this is - this property is quite a -

PJ: Modern history -

RKM: - quite a history to it, yes.

ERM: Well what's happening to the valley now? Is it - it's becoming more heavily populated it's getting more industrial

RKM: More industrial, more heavily populated and it's going to be a great recreation center.

ERM: This has fundamentally changed the character of the valley, isn't it?

RKM: The valley through the years has progressed first from strictly ~~agricultural~~ agriculture to ~~any~~ agriculture and small industry, then from agriculture to the people going to the neighboring cities for industrial jobs, now the population is increasing in the valley because of route 84 bringing us very close to all the neighboring cities. so people are

living here to commute, small industries are moving out here because of the availability of more land, lower tax rate, better employees because they can get the local people, and the large area along these lakes that has been put aside for recreational facilities thanks to the forethought of the Connecticut Light and Power Company.

ERM: Is this condition taking ~~place~~ shape all up and down this valley from one end to the other or are you talking of it just as it effects the part of the valley that you live in here?

RKM: Well you want to remember that the population starts with the big cities and as the land use changes out from these big cities, they progress up the valley further and further, starting out from Bridgeport and Waterbury; they progress out ~~of~~ from the cities and ~~the~~ <sup>as the</sup> land use is built up into houses, it progresses further out. And at the present time, Southbury is right in the center of ~~the~~ <sup>this</sup> growth area. As Southbury becomes built up, then it'll progress further up the valley, but of course with the completion of route -

ERM: It's most active, it is strongest, felt right here.

RKM: Because of the natural growth, the natural spreading and the completion of Interstate 8 I mean, there's been a number of studies made on these - on the completion of these interstate highways and the towns that they go through have ~~x~~ very rapidly ~~grown~~ growth because as we said before -

ERM: The farther reaches of the river as we go north from here become more -

RKM: Agricultural.

ERM: - agricultural, more rural -

RKM: More rural.

ERM: - until you get on up towards the sources of the river towards the very top of it, then you begin to get into more industrial areas again, don't you?

RKM: Well let's be specific. Now New Milford, in the last 10 years, has had terrific industrial growth. Kimberly-Clarke has come in there ~~has come in there~~ -

TAPE 2, SIDE 2

ERM: You were telling of the development, Mr. Mitchell, upstream from here at New Milford and I think you had just mentioned that Kimberly-Clarke had come in with a new plant.

RKM: ~~has come in with a new brass plant, and Nestle's has a food producing plant up there.~~ Now when you get north of New Milford up along the river, it's still very

agricultural. Canaan, Salisbury, and all through up there is still very much open land with a very low population.

ERM: Right, and a tendency on the part of the ~~poor~~ people up there to want to keep it that way isn't it - aren't they rather defensive about letting new industry <sup>in</sup> in that area? I may ~~RRK~~ be wrong, but it seems to me that there's an impartial -

RKM: Oh I don't think so at all.

PJ: It's good farmland up there.

RKM: It's good farmland up there, but this wouldn't make any difference. If industry wanted to come in there and pay the price for the land - they'd buy it, but it's too remote at the present time. It's too remote.

ERM: Too removed from the best routes of communication and transportation.

RKM: Well, too removed from the sources of sales; the cities. You see here, we're only an hour and a half from New York City and all the large Fairfield County population centers.

PJ: They might find a deficiency of skilled labor up there for any kind of specialized industry. You know you had it from here on down.

ERM: What about the impact of professional people moving out and establishing a life in the country? Don't you have a lot of writers and artists and lawyers and people of that kind who've come out from the city to establish residence out here and commute to New York City and -

RKM: Well, we have a - the - many of those here. Last Sunday we had over for dinner the editor of ~~the~~ one of the encyclopedias in New York; and this Heritage Village over here has a number of sculptors and writers, this is an ideal center ~~xxxx~~ for them. I think we would be a mess if we didn't ~~xxxx~~ <sup>(speak?)</sup> about the political changes in the valley, too.

ERM: Oh, by all means.

RKM: With this United States Supreme Court one man-one vote decision that they had and the redistricting of the legislature is going to make a very profound change in the political structure of the valley. Back - you had at least one representative in the legislature from every town. The original towns had 2 representatives, regardless if they only had a population of 3 to 500. Some of the original ~~xxx~~ towns had 2 representatives the same as New Haven and Bridgeport and Hartford and Waterbury with all their tremendous populations. I was in the legislature for 2 terms under the old system, and under the old ~~y~~ system the rural people had control of the legislature, the house. The cities had

control of the Senate that was on a population basis. And now with this redistricting, you take the northwest corner of the state that we're talking about where the Housatonic Valley is still agricultural, they have one representative for 8 towns! Eight towns! They used to have 12 representatives for those 8 towns. So this is cutting down their representation in the legislature. Now what ~~is~~ does this mean? This means that the legislature is going to vote less money for rural roads; it's going to vote less money for ~~any~~ agriculture; it's going to vote less money for rural schools, and this is going to have a very depressing effect on many of these rural towns because they're going to have to come up with this extra money for their roads and for their schools and their agriculture's going to suffer because the state isn't going to furnish as much help to them as has in the past. Now, you see, the cities -

ERM: Is it going to mean that they're going to get less or that the cities are going to get more and that there is going to be more taxes levied in order to take up the increase?

RKM: Now don't kid yourself. There's just so much money to go around; there isn't an unlimited supply of money, and when Waterbury ~~had~~ has 15 representatives and Hartford has 15 representative and New Haven has 15 <sup>representatives</sup> ~~representatives~~ and Bridgeport has 15 representatives and you've got 1 representative for 8 towns up in the northwest corner of the state, where's their money going? Just figure that out. You've got 60 representatives in those four cities and one in those 8 towns. Now are they going to vote money to build rural roads; are they going to vote money to carry their - the burden that they have of aid to dependent children and all of these other welfare programs that are costing the city millions of dollars. You mark my words, the state money is going to be diverted to welfare programs instead of being spent on the rural roads. The formula for state aid to schools that has been a large amount for the first hundred children and then the next hundred ~~is~~ has been a smaller amount and a smaller amount, so the rural town that just had a hundred or 200 children got a higher per capita than the city that had a thousand children. Now this is going to be cut back so the per capita is going to be the same right ~~is~~ across the board, and this means that the small town - this was already done in the last legislature to a certain amount. So the smaller towns are going to have a much higher tax burden than they've had in the past and they're not going to have anything to say about the bills that <sup>are</sup> ~~have~~ passed in the legislature.

ERM: And of course the people in the urban communities say, well, that's true, but you had it

all to your advantage for a number of years in this political situation, now the shoe is on the other foot; now we're going to have the advantage for a while, and this is the way the pendulum of politics swings, isn't it? As there is a shift of population, where do most of these people in the cities come from that are creating the problem that we have in ~~xxx~~ a city. These people <sup>that</sup> have come in off the farms, aren't they?

RKM: Yes, but this is two or three generations ago. When they were first generation from the farm, they had an interest in the farm but now ~~xxxxx~~ they're thinking in third generation and they could care less about the farm. All they're interested in is how much they pay for a quart of milk. They don't care whether the farmer lives or starves. I talked to one the other day, I said where <sup>are</sup> you going to get the milk if the farmer goes out of business, so he said we'll go down to the store and buy it!

ERM: You've just tapped that

PJ: Well how do you look at the increasing support for a state income tax, which you hear more and more about?

RKM: Well the - you know the Aesop fable about killing the goose that laid the golden eggs; when they have a state income tax here in Connecticut, they'll kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.

PJ: I quite agree with you.

RKM: Because New York State has a high state income tax, Massachusetts has one, so people that are retiring leave New York and Massachusetts and come to retire in Connecticut. They come to retire with the money that they've spent a lifetime accumulating, they build a ~~big~~ big house or buy a big house and remodel here in the state, they support our taxes; they don't have any children <sup>to</sup> go to school, they donate their time for all kinds of town ~~functions~~ functions, and when we have an income tax instead of a welcoming in all these residents of New York and Massachusetts who are retiring with their lifetime fortunes, we'll be driving them away. And this will be very detrimental to the rural towns, because these -

ERM: Where ~~xx~~ will they go?

RKM: Where will they go? That's not our problem where they'll go then; we want them to keep coming to Connecticut.

ERM: Well that's true. I know what you're getting at, but it's getting to the point where there's no place to hide. Almost all states are getting to the point where they have a

state income tax, aren't they?

RKM: This I wouldn't know about. I'm interested in seeing the rural towns of Connecticut keep developing.

ERM: Yeah. What I'm getting at is the people you're talking about, the goose that you're afraid is going to get killed and sent away, doesn't really have where to fly anymore unless he's going to fly to some foreign land or something or other; there's no place to go.

RKM: Well over the years ~~to get away from the burdens of taxation we complain and complain and~~

ERM: ~~to get away from the burdens of taxation we complain and complain and~~ complain about paying taxes and we say we're getting killed. Good Lord, we don't know what taxes are in this country compared to what other people pay -

RKM: Right here in this town I could name you 20 different farms that have gone out of production that had been brought up by retired New York people. They spent a lot of money on them, they've contributed to the town both in taxes and in services, and they reason that they came here was because we didn't have an income tax.

ERM: That's exactly what's happened with a lot of industry that previously was centered up here. Look at the textile industry. It decided that for tax reasons, it would go off to the sunny south where the good people down there would not only welcome you with southern hospitality, they give you a tax free ride for a period of time and you had all that cheap labor down there and everything, and boy, the millenium was just around the corner. They just got settled down there and the millenium starts to unhinge itself and the taxes start going up there the same as they do anywhere else eventually, and the labor costs started going up gradually down there as they are everywhere else and getting more developed, so they're really not much different off - any better off now than they were when they were up here.

PJ: Short-lived millenium.

RKM: Now we're kind of getting off the subject of the Housatonic Valley

ERM: That's right, but this - but in doing that you said a few things that I wanted you to say, you see? And -