

**“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](http://www.vermonthistory.org/gmchronicles) contains a list of the Green Mountain Chronicles radio broadcasts and audio files of those broadcasts.

Nettie DeForge  
January 27, 1988

Interviewers  
Mary Kasamatsu &  
Eleanor Ott

- MK This is an interview with Nettie DeForge who will be speaking about her native American heritage for the Green Mountain Chronicles.
- EO We are just are making a radio program that's going to last 5 minutes and you aren't even going to be the whole 5 minutes. So we are just going to talk about I think mostly you know when you were at Thompson's Point and some of that. That would be the most fun.
- ND Well these pictures are of the cottage that my grandfather built and it was much the same as that at the time that it burned. I was surprised when I saw these pictures. My brother had those pictures in his album. This is my mother, my Aunt M rian and my Uncle William who did live there at the point for a long time until their death, his death and they also had one other sister who was from Albany, New York, married and moved to Albany, who came quite often.
- EO Now what was your mother's name?
- ND Elvine Obomsawin Royce.
- EO Yea. How old is she in that picture, Nettie do you think?
- ND My mother?
- EO Yea.
- ND Golly, I think this probably was taken probably around 1965 Charlie? I'm not sure. November, 1952, there I was way off. So I'm not sure. She wasn't even sure how old she, when she was born, so we kind of guessed at that, but then we did receive a genealogy of the family.
- EO From John? [Moody]
- ND Uh huh, and he told us her birth date and now I don't really remember it.
- EO And who are the other people, Nettie? I mean this is your uncle?
- ND This is my Uncle William.
- EO Obomsawin?
- ND Yes who is my mother's brother and his sister. Neither of them ever married.

Nettie DeForge

Page 2

MK Her sister?

ND That's her sister and my mother's sister and her brother.

EO And what was her first name?

ND Marian.

EO Marian.

ND In Indian of course they call it Maian, because there are no r's in Indian and Simon, they called him. His name was Simon William, but everyone called him, everyone at the point called him Bill.

EO But his name was really Simon?

ND His name was, named for his father, uh huh Simon.

EO Sure. And they lived together at the Point?

ND Yes, they lived there. Aunt Marian took care of her father until he died and of course Uncle William lived there too. And then, as Uncle William got older and turned blind, became blind, of course took care of him in his later years.

EO Did she die before he did?

ND No, there was a tragic fire there and that's all that was left of the place. Everything burned very fast and he died in the fire.

EO Isn't that a shame.

ND And this was one of the things that made us very upset. They called it a shack and there was nothing at all a shack. It was really a very nice place. As nice as many of the homes here are.

EO Of course.

ND The reporter was a little upset with us because when we went down to get them, we didn't know where Aunt Marian was and the reporter tried to talk to us and we wouldn't talk to him about the fire. We told him we wouldn't, we just wanted to get Aunt Marian and bring her home because she was very- so upset and burned too somewhat on her arms. So he was upset and went to someone else to get information and apparently wrote up the report from that, which we think he must have been upset enough to have

written it badly.

EO These are people you used to go and visit?

ND That's right. I used to go down there. My sister May and I used to go down there right after school quite often.

EO You mean like in May and June?

ND Yes, right after school let out in June if we could, we would go down and spend the summer. We didn't do it every year of course, but we did a good many summers and we loved to go there. It was a place that had the very tall pines all around the place. They had never been cut so they, tall pines all around the camp, and it was a very relaxing peaceful place to stay. Everyone was relaxed, there was, I don't know they really didn't have much financially, but they seemed to be a very peaceful kind of people, very contented. They would get up in the morning at sunrise and have a good breakfast, do their housework that needed to be done and then move there, take their chairs outside in the backyard and sit out there with their basket materials, splints, gauges and the sweet grass and talk and work, make baskets most of the day ~~only~~ stopping for lunch. They usually kept a teapot on the back of the stove and as that cooled down during the day of course they would still have cold tea. But most of the time they just worked on the baskets. The typical day was spent that way and then after the evening meal, quite often we'd go for a walk in the cool of the evening. They lived on, it was dirt road down there at Thompson's Point, and my sister and I would walk behind them and they would visit and we'd go for quite long walks. Oh, probably a couple of miles I would say. I wouldn't say long walk, but a couple of miles walking and talking and it was a very pleasant place to be. They didn't seem to have the tension that a lot of people have in their every day life.

MK How old would they have been when you were still going there ?

ND Well I'll have to go by my mother's age. I must have been probably I was around I would say 10 and over when I went down there. So my mother must have been about 50 and a little older from then on, and Aunt Marian, she had told us she was the youngest of the family, but going by John Moody's genealogy of them, she wasn't. But they, she had always told me she was the youngest. Aunt Marian was next and Uncle William and then my Aunt Marie was the oldest of the 4.

Nettie DeForge

Page 4

EO Did you make baskets or what did you and your sister do all those summer days?

ND We, of course it was on the lake and they had a wooden boat and we used to paddle around in the boat. We'd go swimming and we did learn to make baskets a little. We learned to weave them some and Uncle William caned chairs quite a bit for other people and he would take the boat and row quite some distances. I remember him rowing to North Hero which was way up the lake.

EO Oh my word!

ND And back. He would row up and stay overnight with friends and then row back and bring back chairs with him.

MK To work on?

ND Uh huh, to work on. They were either rocking chairs, plain wooden rocking chairs with the cane seats or kitchen type chairs with the little cane seats that he would bring back. My sister and I learned to cane those too and we used to help him with those. And then he would, after he had them finished of course, he'd just put them back in the boat and row them back. Their method of travel was mainly by walking. They had never had a horse and they never had a car. They mainly travelled by walking or they would quite often walk to the bus stop and then catch, which was about 3 miles or so, and then they'd catch the bus from there to Burlington. And sometimes they would walk to the train. And there was a very small wooden station there in Charlotte and they would catch the train from there. I remember I was taking the lantern and lighting it at night and flagging the train down waving it so the train would stop for us to catch the train to come back home or whatever we needed. But they, I was trying to think. My sister and I of course did used to go swimming a lot. We were quite apt to go swimming being there at the lake. And Uncle William fished a lot too. And he was a good fisherman. He always, of course, living there a good share of his life, over 50 years, he really knew where all the fishing spots were, the depths of the lake and so on. They were well liked and well respected there at the Thompson's Point. I don't know if you are familiar with Thompson's Point, but it was a summer colony kind of place. There were mainly a lot of professionals that lived there, I mean, people, lawyers, doctors and business men that sent their families there for the summer or came down for the summer. And I remember the Duke and Duchess of York came and visited, not of York, of oh...

MK Windsor?

ND Windsor came. My sister worked for Mrs. Simpson and I thought afterwards I remembered that there was a Mrs., she was a Simpson and she came to that house and Mrs. Simpson entertained her and the Duke, so I think they probably were related in some way. I didn't think anything of it at the time. They came in a large boat-which was really big to us and we weren't used to a real large boat, I think it must have been a yacht-and were entertained there, had a big dinner party for them and so forth.

EO Well, she was an American, could it have been her mother maybe or an aunt?

ND I doubt it. The woman that my sister worked for was a French teacher, but I'm not sure where she was from.

EO Probably just some other relative.

ND Perhaps just a relative.

EO With the same name.

ND Yes, I imagine so.

EO Did you grow up Nettie with the same respect for the Indians that you have now? I mean were you always aware of the you know kind of specialness of your aunt and uncle here?

ND I was aware of the different, differences in other people and Aunt Marian and Uncle William. Though they had a lot of pride, a great deal of pride in their ancestry. My sister and I really didn't think much of it. As a matter of fact in school we didn't really want anyone to know we were Indians because you know in school you just don't want to be different in any way and that was one of the ways we were different than other people.

MK Did they talk to you about it as you were growing up, that you should have particular pride because of your heritage?

ND Yes, they did and they had told us of course where they were from and so forth. They did lead us to believe we were the only Indians in Vermont and we've found since then that we definitely aren't, but I grew up thinking my sister and that my mother and her family were the only true full blood Indians in Vermont.

Nettie DeForge

Page 6

EO Where were they from then Nettie?

ND They were from Odana k.

MK Tell me a little bit about that because most of the people hearing this probably aren't going to be familiar with Odana k.

ND Odana k is a small Indian village. It was called St. Francis before it was Odana k and it is on the St. Francis River in Canada.

MK In Quebec?

ND Right, in Quebec. We have, my sister and I have been there and from what I have heard and from the picture I have seen of it, the town really hasn't changed a lot except that it has, the buildings have been kept up to look much better than they did a long time ago. But I do have a picture in one of my books of the village and it is a small village with just one single street going through it and it is actually, ville is a French village and that is going one way and then the Odana k just goes other direct 45 degree do you call it from angle from ville. They have a small church, of course they are very religious. Catholic, strictly Catholic but and now they are losing a lot of the Indian language. They don't speak the Indian language nearly as much as they did of course when my mother was a child.

MK Your mother was born there?

ND She was born there from what she had told me. Again that differs from John's statement, but my mother has told me that she was born there and all her sisters and brothers were born there.

MK Did her parents come from Odinack down to Vermont?

ND Her mother died at childbirth, when my mother was, from what my mother told me she was about 7 and a little boy, my grandmother had a little boy and died soon after. Then my grandfather remarried and as I understand it it was a woman who had two children and she was from the St. James Bay area. So she is one of the people in this picture. This is her there.

EO What was the name Nettie?

ND I don't know. I wish I did, I really don't know. I've heard my mother, my mother's told me, but I don't

remember. So she did come down to Thompson's Point and lived.

EO She was Indian?

ND Yes, but she wasn't, she wasn't <sup>(Abenaki)</sup> (a Banakey) Indian.

EO Probably Cree, isn't that what they are up there?

ND I don't believe so.

EO Oh!

ND I have heard, but it doesn't sound to me that it was Cree.

EO There are other groups though.

ND Uh huh. She was a very, as I have been told, she was a very brave woman. She lived in the very back woods of James Bay and with her husband or she was in the back woods with him at one time when she had the two children. They were small and he died suddenly and it was in the middle of the winter and she made one of those, what do you call them, the one where you make a stick and put clothes around it and drag it behind you, dray or whatever, and she put his body on that and the two children and brought them out of the woods by pulling them out. And she was a very young woman at that time. But, of course, I don't know how - when she married my grandfather, but this little boy here is her grandson. Now she apparently brought him up. His name was Wasa.

CD Don't forget Weinus.

ND The little dog was Weinus. Probably you'd like me to tell you a little more about Thompson's Point, would you?

MK Yes.

ND Okay. Uncle William trapped and set snares there to catch food and he caught rabbits with a wire snare that he would set near there where they would have trails and also he caught partridges, muskrat/which we ate and I thought was quite good. And he also raised, had a garden of course and raised the garden and sold, it wasn't a large garden, but it was a little more than they needed and they did sell a little to the campers around there too. They called them campers, of course. They lived in cottages around there.



MK Did they call them campers because they were only there for the summer?

ND That's right, uh huh. So they called them campers. In the fall, we used to go and walk along, it was quite some distance along the lake. It must have been probably, I don't know maybe 3 or 4 miles. As a child you don't judge distances very well, but we used to walk along the lake and pick walnuts, which I haven't seen since then. They were, grew out along the lake, large walnut trees and we would pick them and bring them home and put them on that porch. It shows on the floor of that front porch and let them dry. Sometimes we had to fight with the squirrels in order to keep enough to have for the winter, but we used to let them dry until the heavy green husk on them that comes off shell that comes off and keep them and that was about the only nuts we got around there. They did used to use pick sweet flag from a swamp there and use that for medicinal purposes, but I've never known what it why and there was also bitter root that they used to use for medicine.

MK What kind of medicine?

ND I really don't know. It was a root and I remember mother giving me sweet flag to chew on. I don't even remember why and I didn't particularly like it. It had kind of a bitter-sweet taste to it. It wasn't awfully unpleasant but I remember her giving that to me to chew on, but I don't remember why. Well, let's see.

EO You told me <sup>about going at</sup> Easter once.

ND Yes, at Easter time they used to want to go down, used to go down to the lake and wash up. I think that probably they must have had a feeling that it was, or I got the feeling it was, kind of a spiritual thing. They would go down and wash up in the cold lake. Take soap down and wash their, soap their face and arms, up and splash water on them, rinse them off and my mother used to like to do that and Aunt Marian too. I don't know why, at Easter time, especially Easter morning, that was the first thing that they would do before breakfast.

MK Only at Easter time?

ND But particularly at Easter time. I don't remember if they did it any other time or not. Um, of course, because it was a summer camping area, summer cottages that were there, they shut the lights off in the winter. Lights were shut off for all of the cottages and camps and also

the water because the water pipes were at the top of the ground coming up from the lake and were apt to freeze so they shut those off. So they didn't have water, they had to carry their water in the winter.

MK Did they have a spring?

ND No, they carried the water, broke the ice and carried it up from the lake by buckets. And they didn't have a bathroom of course at that time. I remember years later when I went up after I was married and I remember they had a bathroom, shower, bathtub and so forth.

EO They had an outhouse I suppose?

ND Yes they did.

EO Yes, sure.

MK Roughly when would that have been when they were breaking the ice to get water—about ...?

ND Oh, I would say probably up until probably up until around 1945 around that.

MK It was recent as that because they were basically the only full residents on the lake?

ND Uh huh. I remember that they would take fat, animal fat, and use it for a candle type. They'd put a wick in of a piece of a rag in a dish with the fat and light it. I remember carrying those upstairs to go to bed at night and that was if they didn't happen to have kerosene they'd use that, which sometimes they didn't.

CD They didn't always spend the winters there.

ND No they did go to Albany sometimes, quite often they went to Albany for the winter.

MK Did they have family there?

ND Yes, they did. Well Aunt Marie was there, their oldest sister and she worked in the hospital there and Aunt Marian did work there too in the hospital in the winters when she went quite often. My sister went with them once and spent the winter there and went to a type of community college or all night school it was that she went to there one winter when they were in Albany. I don't think my mother ever went to Albany except after my grandfather died when they called her she went to Albany for the

funeral. He was living there at that time.

MK Someone that I interviewed over on Thompson's Point this summer — I had asked him about whether he knew anything about any Indian families living in the area before I knew of you, and at that point he said that when he was growing up he used to go over and sometimes would watch, and I don't know whether he was referring now to your grandfather or your uncle, but he said at one point he watched someone making a birch bark canoe.

ND Uh huh, my grandfather I know made one and my brother told me that he remembers, my brother was older. I'm the youngest in the family, and he told me that he remembered my grandfather making a canoe. And he said that he used, my grandfather used to cut the birch bark trees lengthwise. Normally you think of cutting birch off from a tree as going around, but he would cut it the lengthwise out of the tree up and down and use that to make canoe. So that's something that I don't remember because my grandfather died when I was about probably 4 or 5 years old, so I don't remember him very well.

MK The same fellow said that his family actually had some of the baskets...

ND Um huh, he does? I have quite a few baskets that I've kept probably Jane's told you or Eleanor.

MK Now did your family travel around selling the baskets?

ND Yes, Aunt Marian hired someone locally and they would take her around to the either sometimes she went to the regular summer homes, other times she went to the camps, large camps like the camps for boys, camps for, one of them was a French camp

CD ???

ND Uh huh, yea. Those camps and quite often she would sell her baskets completely out at one of those camps so she'd rush home and they'd start making them again. Of course they liked to make them in the winter and sell them in the summer, but they couldn't seem to keep up with them because there was quite a demand for them. Everyone like them for souvenirs.

MK What kinds of baskets were they? What shape and what —?

ND They had of course, most of the baskets were for utilitarian baskets. They were for like sewing baskets.

They also made a basket that could be put outside of a door for putting mail in or packages in. They made, there was a little small thimble basket that I remembered. They made a real tiny basket just the size of a thimble and they had a little top on it that they could lift off easily. It had a little round hinge, not hinge, but little round top on it that you. And then they made handkerchiefs baskets. Of course back in those days everyone used handkerchiefs and liked a nice place for and that particularly was nice because the sweet grass smell kind of went into those handkerchiefs and everyone like that. It was a real good scent. And they covered, I remember them covering the small bottles of liquor bottles, the little tiny ones that you get, like a little, I guess they were sample bottles then. I remember them covering those with sweet grass and selling them. I have one of those. And they made, oh gosh there was several baskets the shape of almost the shape of a vase and they used to make those and then there were baskets that were probably 5 inches around and about only a couple inches high that they could put on the dresser to put pins and that type of thing in and they just made all kinds of baskets.

EO Hat baskets, did they make?

ND I think grandfather and Uncle William might have and grandfather of course probably did. Uncle William might have made them. He used to make clothes baskets you know the long baskets that they put wet clothes in before they hang them out. He used to make those and sell them.

CO And fish baskets.

ND Yea, and fish Creels. They made those some. And of course my sister and I used to make the small ones like bookmarks. We learned on those mostly. Little small baskets that weren't very complicated. But they were very adapt at making them. They could talk and just be making them and visit back and forth.

MK Did they design, I mean were they making baskets that they had made for years and years, or were they making up new baskets?

ND That's right. No, normally they didn't, they made mostly baskets they had been making for years. Baskets that they had learned to make I assume when they were children because mother told me that they used to, they learned to make them when they were very small. That was one of the...

EO Did they learn from your grandfather do you think?

ND Probably and of course mother was brought up by her aunt and I imagine she was learned to make them from her.

EO Was that up in Odana\_k?

ND In Odana\_k, uh huh.

MK When did your family come to Vermont?

ND In the very early, either the very late 1800's or the early 1900's. I think probably I would think around 1901 - 1903, something at that time probably because these pictures with the long dresses show that they, it was quite early in the century.

MK Aren't they wonderful.

ND They did have a lot of people that came down to visit. There were a few people from Odana\_k that used to stop in occasionally and I don't believe they knew when people were coming. It just seemed to be a casual type of living where people stopped in and all was welcome. There was always a place for them to stay and enough to eat and they just quite often came and just visited and caught up on events of Odana\_k and events of the rest of their families. They did used to have relatives that came from Odana\_k and relatives from Albany. I don't know any others but, I do remember them dropping in and of course some friends came from Burlington quite often and would spend weekends or vacations there. They always seemed to be able, they caught fish. Ate a lot of fish.

Rhubarb

ND Rhubarb yea. But they did seem to like to have people stop in. One man that used to come was very talented at drawing. I remember T\_\_\_ Panidus from Odinack that was very good at wood carving and wood burning, wood carving and at drawing. They did have quite a few of the things that he had made there that burned in the fire. I do have something that I believe he made, a tray I think that he had made that Aunt Marian had had and my mother happened to have had it here at the time that the house burned so that we have it. Aunt Marian played the violin. Very few people know that. And I had kind of forgotten it, but I remember my, that she did play a violin and my sister has mentioned it to me too. She sent away for it in a mail order and with a book and learned to play it. She would never played for company but once in awhile when my mother

was there or my sister and I were there, she would get her violin out and play it. Uncle William played the flute. Quite a few of the Indians played flute I've heard since then. I didn't know it at the time, but he played flute and I used to like to hear him play it in the evenings and sitting out on this porch. He'd sit down on that front porch and sometimes play the flute.

MK Did he make the flute? Was it one that he had made?

ND I think he did. I believe he made it, I'm not sure. But I used to like to hear him play. I never heard him sing. I did used to hear them sing, but the songs that I have heard that they had made in their later years were pretty bad. Their harmonizing ~~left~~ something to be desired. Though my mother has sang some of the songs by herself that I have heard that were really good. I mean I thought were quite good.

MK What kinds of songs did they sing?

ND Indian songs and French songs. They sang quite a few songs in French.

MK So as you were growing up you did hear the language?

ND I did hear them. Yes and I learned a little bit of the language. A few phrases and sentences, but not as much as I wish I had. I wish I had taken more interest in what they were talking about and so forth because it's a pretty language. It was a quiet language and I don't remember... It's like they were... n fact their personalities were... I never heard them shout, never heard them get angry and especially with children, They seemed to think that children were very special people and they didn't, they never scolded us. Never. I guess they, it's just because they expected us to behave and act as we should, that's probably why we did, because I don't remember us ever causing too much trouble. I do remember my brother when he was a teenager and their older sister's son was there at Thompson's Point and decided to go across the lake to a place that had a beautiful beach on the New York side of the lake and the lake was just would roll those stones back and forth so that they became almost perfectly round. They were all rounded. I don't whether Aunt Marian had mentioned she'd like some of those or why but they went with the row boat over to New York State, had practically filled the boat, they put a lot of those stones in that boat and then they tried to come back and they did make it back but when Aunt Marian and Uncle William saw the boat, they were quite frightened because it was almost over the

top of the boat. If the lake had gotten rough they certainly wouldn't have made it back and I remember those stones. Aunt Marian had them around, they had them down the paths on each side of the path going to the lake and around her flower beds and those stones were there for a long time. Another time that same cousin of ours went to New York State and killed, he was older, he was grown-up and killed a rattle snake, ~~At~~ Rattle Snake Mountain, which is across the lake in New York, brought it back and had it in a box because he was going to use it to make a belt with. And some neighbors children came over, heard that we had one, and came over and looked at it and went home telling their parents that there was a rattlesnake over at the Obomsawin's and pretty soon the sheriff drove in and he wanted to know whether we had a rattlesnake. I guess probably because they were Indians, they felt they might have a live rattlesnake there and it wasn't of course, it was a dead one. As soon as my cousin showed them the dead rattlesnake, he got back in the car and drove away. I think he was a little bit surprised.

EO That gave everybody a scare.

ND I think it did. (Laughing) My sister and I did have a squirrel at one time. My uncle caught a partridge in a snare and when we were going by, he asked us if we would check the snare since we were walking along and we found that partridge of course still alive and in good shape so we brought it home and being children pretty tender hearted, we didn't want him to kill it and so we teased him not to kill it, and as I say there were awfully sensitive to children's needs and wants, so he put it, so he told us if we would put it in this large box and cover it with a screen, he'd let us keep it that night, and the next day we'd let him kill it and have it to eat, he'd catch us a little squirrel with a box trap. And so we said alright we would as long as we could have a squirrel. So he, the next morning when we got up the poor partridge had killed itself. It had banged its head against the screen over the top of the box and he killed himself. So that didn't do them much good, but he still made a box trap and put it down near the bank where we always saw squirrels and he caught us a squirrel. We had that squirrel in the camp and my sister and I had a grand time with it. It didn't bite us, I don't know why, but it would run up and down the stairs and my sister and I would try to catch it between us and it would hop on my head or my shoulders and back off and run up and down the stairs and then my sister decided it would be nice to take it out for a walk. So she put a little leather strap around its neck and a little rope to it and we went out for a little walk.

She hadn't anymore than got outside the door when the poor squirrel began to take its front feet and try to pull that collar off its neck and my sister thought it was choking. Of course naturally he just didn't want that collar on. So she reached down to loosen the collar and he bit her on the finger, right to the bone. And so of course she let the squirrel go and he ran away. Well it was only about an hour later and we found the collar and the little string or rope that was hitched to it on our, that front porch. I don't know whether he brought it back and thought we could have it for the next squirrel we got or what.

EO How long did you have that little squirrel?

ND I don't know how long.

EO That summer? Did you have it all summer?

ND No, I don't believe so. I think we only had it maybe for a few days.

EO A little red squirrel was it?

ND A little red squirrel, uh huh. And it's funny that he didn't bite us, but he didn't until that at the end there.

EO He probably went into a panic.

ND Yes, yea yea. But...

MK I wondered if you'd been able to tame him?

ND No, I don't think we did. I know we used to catch him.

EO You might have if you'd had him longer.

ND No, we'd catch him, but he'd squirm away from us and run of of course all over the place, but my mother had told me that my grandfather used to have birds that would come into the house actually in the wintertime.

MK Wild birds?

ND Yea, that he would feed and they would come into the house I suppose go in and out as they wanted to probably he'd let them out too, but she said that he did and I can understand where it might be fairly easy. I know I have done that with chickadees out here. I've held food in a little cup in my hand and they came right down and ate



right out of the cup so I can understand where that's entirely possible.

EO You get it from your grandfather obviously.

ND Probably, of course I like to hunt too. I think that must be from my Indian heritage because I've killed 7 deer up in the back here at different times going hunting. And I love to walk in the woods. I just love the woods, that's why I really like it out here because I'm very happy to go up and just sit up there and relax and just enjoy the quietness and watching. I don't know, it isn't as quiet as you think it would be in the woods though. There's always squirrels and birds and all kinds of animals and things that are alive up there so it isn't as quiet as you think, but I do enjoy the woods.

EO Now did you learn that from your uncle here to hunt? Is that where you learned...?

ND I never went with him. I never did go with him.

EO It sounds like he was pretty skilled at bringing in almost anything.

ND He was. He was, of course he had hunted in the Great North Woods in Canada when he was younger he had hunted up there. I know he told me at one time of finding a man when he was, of course he'd spend the whole winter up there trapping and then come out in the spring with the pelts. And he told me of finding a man dead up there. I believe the man was from Boston that had been missing for several years and he found the man and brought him out. But yes he was very good as a guide and as a hunter himself. And my oldest brother is a very avid sportsman. He hunts and fishes as he hunted everywhere. He goes all over Canada, most of Canada and our western states he has hunted in. He looks very Indian. I guess you've never seen my brother Elsworth, but he's a very straight. He's in his middle 70's I believe and he's very very active. He stills goes hunting. A group of boys go, they go way in, fly into the woods of Canada and hunt and fish. He usually fishes. When he goes hunting, he goes I don't know if he flies in or not, but I do know he's talked of going fishing in some of the lakes up there and enjoys that.

EO Salmon I think they go for...

ND Probably, yea, probably. I think they do.

Nettie DeForge

Page 17

EO fly into some<sup>of these</sup> isolated lakes and bring out salmon or  
landlocked salmon or some of those things.

ND Yes, yes. I imagine it is.

EO You have two brothers?

ND Uh huh.

EO Now do you think they ever went with your uncle? Do you think they learned any of that from him?

ND I don't believe they ever went into Canada hunting with him. I don't think they ever went hunting here either with him. I doubt it. Though my oldest brother did stay down there quite a bit with him, my mother stayed before she married my father. See she was married before. She married twice and when my oldest brother, half-brother was quite young, he was only two years old, she brought him, my mother brought him down there and lived over I believe it was over on the basin harbor side towards Vergennes area and stayed there one summer in a tent, and I know my brother has said that he remembers them having squirrels and so forth all over the place. They'd steal their food right in the tents, steal their food and go out with it and they did live there one summer as I understand it and then they moved over, went over to the camp cottage to stay with my grandfather, but he said he remembers going down to the lake as I had said about Easter time then washing in it. He remembers them washing in the lake, that he and my mother used to go down and wash of course all the time in the lake and how very cold that lake water was. Yea.

MK Now what was your maiden name?

ND Royce.

MK Royce, uh huh.

ND Royce, R-O-Y-C-E.

MK Did your family, did your mother or your aunt or uncle did they tell you any stories about... ?

ND They did tell me some stories, you mean about Od na k?

MK About Od na k or about anything...

ND They told me, yes, yes, my mother told me of course they believed I didn't realize at the time but since then I

have understood that they believed in which I  
have read about since I've grown up.

MK Now tell me a little bit about what that means?

ND But they did believe that animals, they believed people could actually take on the animal ways and animal feelings and I guess they could actually become animals. I know my mother spoke, told me that there was a man who died in Odana k and of course after they'd passed away, they were put in the homes rather than, of course they weren't taken to funeral homes like they are now and he was laid out in the living room and when there was a very large dog that came into the village and they knew all the animals so they knew this dog was one they had never seen before. He was a very vicious type dog like a wolf type dog. And he came into the home and went underneath the casket and when any of the mourners came he wouldn't allow them anywhere near that man and he snarled and just wouldn't allow anyone near. He was very vicious and my mother said that it was because the man had been an evil man and this dog was the devil who had come to claim his spirit because of his evilness. And they really believed you know of course that that would happen. Also um, there was another incident now if I can think of it that my mother mentioned to me. There was another incident that my mother told me of, of course they had dances a lot of dances there. They had dances for several different occasions that for a good harvest or for anything special I suppose and she said that there was one occasion where there were a lot of people dancing and a very handsome stranger appeared and was dancing with the young ladies and they seemed to be more or less hypnotized by him and he danced with one young girl and she of course was as taken by him as the rest of them had been and suddenly she glanced down and saw that he had hooves for feet and so she went immediately and told her father and mother and they of course, the word passed around but when they looked to him he disappeared and so that was apparently the devil that had come in to their midst, in amidst of that dance. My mother had told me of quite a few different things like that, but I don't remember any of the others much. Those are the only two that I can really remember distinctly that she mentioned. She did tell me, I'm sure you've heard the story of Rogers' Raiders that...

MK Would you tell it to me?

ND Well my mother had told me that her aunt told her of this. Of course in the Indians, with the Indians they had very little way of writing things down. They mainly passed

their stories down or their history I guess you could even say down by word of mouth rather than by writing it down because they just didn't have the wherewithall to write down things in history books.

FO Probably more accurate that way?

ND Yes, and also that was one thing, I guess this is a good time to bring it up. That's one thing that I had noticed is that in my reading of the history books and reading of any of the different events that happened with the Indians it always seems to me that it is turned toward the white side. It's turned toward the English, to make them look good where with the Indians I'm sure it's their telling it from their point of view and quite often they are entirely different. Just as Rogers did. When he came back from Canada, from what my mother had said his write up of the events was entirely different than the Indian write up. He made it seem as though he had really killed all the Indians. You bet, it just naturally I mean a general would do that. I guess he was a general, whatever. I mean a military man would do that. They want to make themselves look good and who is going to dispute it? So anyway, mother had told me that and she's told me this several, many times that her, now it's either, it couldn't be her great aunt, it must have been back further than that. But there was a young girl who was at a dance and someone a stranger came and told her that they should leave. That there was going to be, that they were going to be attacked and she should take her family and they should leave. So she went and told the rest of her family and they believed her and took her and the rest of the family which was of course my mother's relatives and left. She didn't tell me the whole that the whole village left, but from what I've understood since then, they apparently, a good many of them in the village did leave. But the family left the house and mother said that there was one little girl that was left, the youngest one, was left upstairs in her bed and they of course in the darkness they didn't light any lights, but in the darkness they thought they had gathered all the family and went down to this ravine to hide and suddenly when he got to the ravine they began to look around and father of the family counted and checked on them and there was that one little girl missing and he went back and he found her standing in the window of the bedroom singing and she'd apparently heard the commotion or something and had gotten up and was just standing in the window singing when he went back and got her too. And Rogers, when Rogers attacked, they didn't kill all of the people that were there in the village because there were some of them that had left and my

mother didn't realize at the time she told us she didn't mention Rogers' Raiders. She had no idea that that was, I don't believe she had realized that's who it was, but when she told this to Gordon Day, he checked on her story and checked the records and found that it sounded very much like Rogers' Raids and he believed that's what it was was Rogers' Raids and in telling about it it certainly sounded it. So he's written that up.

EO This goes to show how things like that can be passed down.

ND That's right, yea.

EO And how important it is to pass those things down.

ND Right.

EO Because if she hadn't done that, that would have been lost, that whole story.

ND Apparently this was a from what Gordon Day had said the man who warned them was an Indian that had befriended, had been a friend of them and then had joined Rogers, a Scout, joined them as a scout and then he didn't want them to be caught like that so he warned them.

EO As I understood it, he was one of those ones that had gone to Odana<sub>k</sub> and they had taken him in because he was a Stockbridge Indian I think.

ND Uh huh, I believe so. And then he had gone back.

EO And then he'd gone and been a scout for Rogers and he had to realize what Rogers was up to until they got up there.

ND Right.

MK So the best he could do was try and warn them.

ND To warn them. Uh huh. Yea. Well I don't know what else to tell you. I think I've pretty well told you about everything I know of.

EO I doubt that Nettie. We've talked about quite a lot of things. It's really been great and wonderful.

ND I do know that they like to be outdoors as much as they could. They seemed to enjoy being outside to make their baskets and occasionally we would take a picnic lunch and go down by the lake and eat it. That was one of the things that they liked to do and it was usually cool of

course in that area near the lake.

MK Do you remember how old you were when your earliest memory of being an Indian and having that somehow be different from other people around here?

ND I believe I must have been around probably 9 before I even realized or thought anything about it. That was about the time I began going down to Aunt Marian's with mother and that's when I realized that of course mother began to tell me more about where she was brought up and their ways. She had told me that they were taught by the nuns up there and the missionaries. There was always a priest there that was kind of guided them and talked to them and I believe that probably is of course why they were mostly Catholic because the missionary and the nuns were their teachers. They did, she made me realize that they were different because from what she had told me they were treated, they weren't treated nearly as well as the French children in school. They were quite apt to be punished. They couldn't speak Indian in school because the nuns didn't understand it and when the Indian children couldn't talk in Indian among themselves, they had to speak in French and of course that was discriminatory and then there were, my mother had the feeling that the nuns were more apt to be very strict with the Indian children than with the other French children.

EO That's the way people thought about things then.

ND Right.

EO It was just part of the world then.

ND Right. Of course I didn't run into that. Though I did feel in school that they would always, the teachers would always tell us that the Indians were not treated right and that they were taken advantage of and so forth. And so I think probably the teachers gave me that feeling as much as anyone did. The feeling that we were different. I think actually they gave me that feeling as much as my parents did, my mother did. Of course my mother married an Irishman so I kind of, I've kind of felt in between. I had, I didn't have an Indian name. I had the name of Royce so I think if I had had the name Obomsawin, I might have felt different. I've often felt, wished that my, since I've gotten older I've wished that my uncle had had children to pass on the name, uh huh, because...

MK The named stopped with him then?

ND Well in Vermont, I think so. In Canada, in Odana<sub>k</sub>, there are still Obomsawin's, a lot of them.

EO There's a basket maker isn't there, I think his name is Obomsawin?

ND There could be.

EO I think so. Peter Obomsawin I think in Odana<sub>k</sub>.

ND In Odana<sub>k</sub>?

EO I believe there's a basket maker.

ND That could be.

CD Only one person up there was making them and that was a woman.

ND There was a woman making them, but there might have been others that made them.

EO There are, because I know a basket maker, not an Indian, but a basket maker here in Vermont over in East Hardwick, I think it is or East Greensboro and he knows the basket makers up in Odana<sub>k</sub> and I think he says there are 6 or 8 of them making baskets.

CD When we were up there last summer, there was only that one woman that we run into that was making them.

EO You know they probably were just not doing it right then. In wintertime I think there's quite a few of them.

ND Could be, very well could be. I got the impression that it was kind of becoming more or less of a lost art. Though when we have been in New York, I've stopped over there and looked at the Indian reservation and looked at things there and they had some baskets...

EO Akwaga, up in Upper New York?

ND Yes, in Upper New York.

EO Near the Cornwall Bridge.

CD No, no, no,

ND No this side more. It was the Mohawk Reservation. They have a...

CD Where they have the Bingo games and all that...

ND They have a statue, yea they have a statue of \_\_\_\_\_ who is an Indian saint there at that town and when we have stopped there and I've found Indian baskets that they made that were exactly like Aunt Marian's. It's on the way over.

EO Yea, St. Regis.

ND St. Regis, that's it! Oh, is that it. Oh, okay.

EO There's a lot of basket makers over there.

ND And of course, I think some of the people from Od na k have probably married into...

EO They have. In fact there's the Benedict family is an Abnaki family.

ND Yes they are.

EO And Florence Benedict is quite a basket maker.

ND My mother's cousin was a Benedict, ~~she~~ Mackill, and she used to come to Thompson's Point and spend the summers there.

EO Oh you were related then?

ND Uh huh, they are, uh huh, yea. She was a Benedict.

EO Mackill?

ND Yea, her name was Matilda in English, but they called her Mackill.

EO Did she live over in...

ND She lived in Albany.

EO In Albany?

ND Uh huh.

EO I'll have to ask Florence.

ND Uh huh. She, let me see. Her daughter, this Mackill's daughter married my mother's nephew too. So they were kind of intermarried there.



CD Betty?

ND Yea, Betty. And her brother used to come to Thompson's Point and he used to make baskets when he was there.

MK Interesting.

ND I had kind of forgotten that but I remember him coming and staying off and on with Aunt Marian and he made baskets. I don't remember what type of baskets he made.

CD       ?

ND Huh, yea, Betty married, yes because Aunt Marie was married to a Remington, so Buddy's name was Remington. But they weren't Indian. He wasn't Indian.

MK When you were growing up, did they speak the Indian language around the house a lot?

ND Yes, they spoke Indian all the time.

EO Did your mother?

ND Yes, they spoke Indian all the time between themselves.

MK Would they speak to you in Indian or?

ND Occasionally you know a phrase if I would ask them what something meant, they would tell me and I'd repeat it until I had learned that phrase or sentence. But mainly they just talked, if they spoke to us, they talked in English and we used to say the Rosary when we'd go on those walks in the evening we say the Rosary quite often especially on Sunday nights and they would say it in French and my sister and I would repeat it in English and my mother knowing that we couldn't understand the French, she would, I don't know if you know what the Rosary is, but one part of it you say and then there is an answer to it, part of it's, she, my sister and I and my mother would answer and Aunt Marian would say the first part and then we say the rest, the other part and then she'd say again and we would. That was in French and in English but she couldn't talk English very well. She could talk it and Uncle William could too, but nearly as fluently as my mother and she had to, she had more of an accent and Uncle William did too. My mother spoke very fluent the three languages, French, Indian and English and she spoke very, she was very careful in English. She was, though she had very little education anyone that talked with her would have thought she was very well educated.

- MK I wondered..For a time I was part of a Japanese-American family and the older members of the family would speak Japanese to each other. Never to the children, because they wanted the children to be fully *assimilated* Americans. When I was...so the generation that was my age had grown up in a household where there was a lot of Japanese being spoken, but it wasn't spoken to them, so they really didn't speak much of it at all.
- ND They didn't? No, we didn't either. I really feel bad now that we didn't learn more of Indian and my sister does too. She wishes has often said that that we wish we had learned it and my mother did want us to learn the Indian language, but we weren't interested at that point because my father of course wasn't Indian, so we didn't hear it in our own home and only heard Indian when we were down at Thompson's Point.
- MK One thing I want to do is ask about--were the holidays celebrated (other than the trips down to the washing in the water at Easter time), did the holidays follow the Catholic church or were there some special holidays that...?
- ND No, they did follow the Catholic church, however they didn't consider Christmas as important as New Years. New Years was considered as a very important holiday.
- MK What did you do with New Years?
- ND They were quite apt to make the French, that meat pie, *tourtiere* you call it. They were quite apt to make that and they went to church if they possibly could on New Years. But that was, those two were really the only celebration the Easter and New Years were really the only holidays that they seemed to celebrate very much.
- EO Did they do anything like start a new fire on New Years? A lot of people do that for New Years.
- ND No they didn't. No, no they didn't seem to do anything in particular in that respect. The only thing I can remember...
- CD It would be in the winter you know. She wasn't down there in the winter time.
- ND I wasn't there, but I do remember that some of the things. And Uncle William spent one winter and Aunt Marian did to with us here in Montpelier.

Nettie DeForge

Page 26

EO You grew up actually in Montpelier? The rest of the time...

ND I came here to go to high school.

EO I see. Where did you live as a child?

ND Quite a few different places. Waterbury Center was the last place that I lived and I did live up here in Riverton, well it was in Moretown really up in the hills.

CO Jones<sup>B</sup> Brook.

ND In Jones<sup>B</sup> Brook which is down in the other direction, I was born in Florida.

EO You've been all over the place?

ND Yea, uh huh. Around here in Vermont. I mean we've moved several different places, but I came up here from Florida when I was about 6 months old so I don't remember anything about that.

EO Well, gosh Nettie it's been great that you've talked with us. Thank you so much.

ND Well I don't know.

EO We don't want to hold you up <sup>from</sup> going over to...

CD Farm show.

EO Oh, the farm show.

ND Well I don't know that we are, we aren't...

CD By the looks of it, <sup>when</sup> we were up there this morning...

MK The man that I had interviewed this summer had said that of the various things that he had that they had acquired over the years from them, the Obomsawin family, he had given most of them to the historical society. [Charlotte]

ND I would like to see them and see what is there.

MK <sup>He thought they would be better to be</sup>  
there than somewhere else.

ND Jane Beck told me that there was. I do want to go down and see.

MK I think he said there was some chairs or something. Did your family make furniture.

ND Yea, they made, yes that's one thing I didn't think to mention on your little tape there, but yes my grandfather made a lot of fences and chairs for outside and tables, that type of thing that were kind of a lawn furniture type thing and this many of them are still there at the point. It's surprising after all this time that it's still there. So it shows the good workmanship that he did I guess and Uncle William used to make them too. But I believe that most of the things that are there are my grandfathers. He made them of Cedar and split them and left the bark on of course and it was really good workmanship. He would make them and the fences he made in kind of a criss-cross pattern with across the top of course would be a piece of the cedar and he quite often the camps would want a fence, that type of fence going between, from one camp to another between the camps to separate them and he did that. He also made quite a few kind of a platform type thing that would go over toward the lake so people could sit out there in the evenings near the lake and look over the lake. He did that and had fences and chairs that type of thing around there. Some of them were the wide chairs he called settees and were for two or more people almost like a love seat type thing and then some of them were the narrower ones for one person and as I say they are still there, some of them. Jane has seen them too. She went down and looked for them and took some pictures of them. Jane Beck, and they are down there.

EO Yea, that cedar last forever.

ND It does, I guess it does. And there's a lot of cedar there at the lake. We used to, my sister and I used to love to walk along the lake and go over. (Phone ringing) There was a path that went near the lake and went over to the dock. There was a dock there where the Ticonderoga used to come in and my mother's mentioned to us that we'd love to see that and of course they'd listen to the music. They'd go down to the lake and listen to the music because the Ticonderoga would come in with all the people on it and my sister and I used to like to walk over there and enjoy it. So when we'd go over on that path, we'd see a lot of my grandfather's handiwork over through, it was on that side of the camps and of course my grandfather had been the caretaker at the camp. I guess you must have understood and have known that. He was there for a long time as caretaker and he watched over the camps, took care of them, little things that needed to be done through the summer and he also in the winter time kept, when he was

there, kept a kind of over saw them to be sure that they weren't broken into to or that nothing had happened to them through the winter and sometimes opened them up for people before they'd come in the summertime he'd go and open up the camps and see that everything was alright before they came. And he was, there again he was very well thought of, everyone knew him and liked him.

EO It's a world that's gone now, isn't it.

ND Yes, that's right. My mother came there across the lake from New York State when she first came. She walked across on the ice from New York State to Vermont because she had been told when she came down from Odona<sup>k</sup> that you would take the train to Essex and then take another train from there to Burlington and could get off at Thompson's Point at Charlotte and she didn't realize it was Essex, Vermont. So she went to Essex, New York and walked across on the ice. Well, she was taken across part way by-with a man that offered to take her over with his horse and buggy, horse and sleigh, but he took her part way and then there was a large crack across the ice that his horse couldn't come across so she, and didn't dare have the horse jump across that, so she got across it alright and continued on the way and came over in the middle of the winter and just happened to come to the very place, the very right place. She came right to Thompson's Point and asked, saw some fishermen out there and ask them where Thompson's Point was and they told her, "You're there." So she was quite lucky that she found the place as easily as she did, not knowing just exactly where to go.

EO She was looking for your grandfather?

ND Yes, uh huh.

EO Well it would be her father?

ND That's right. Her father, uh huh.

MR Did he know she was coming?

ND I don't know if he did or not, but she was quite lucky to have found him as easily as she did, and she was a young woman. It was kind of an unusual thing I think for anyone to try to come across the lake as young as she was in the middle of the winter.

EO It's pretty amazing. <sup>ND</sup> Then being on a train, I'm sure  
ND she didn't have the warm clothes that she should have had to do that either.

CD If I know your mother, she was dressed warm.

ND She might have been. (Laughing) They were very modest people. They wore several layers of clothes.

EO Nettie, this is just great.

MK It has just been wonderful. Thank you for taking the time.

ND Well, I've kind of enjoyed it. As I said I didn't think I'd know what to tell you or what to talk about, but...

EO We might even come again.

ND Well that would be nice. (Laughing)

MK If you would not mind, we would love to. I guess Eleanor explained what we are doing... (tape ends)