

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF STILLWATER TOWNSHIP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Dr. Edward Cosgrove III

April 9, 2011



Interviewed by Rob Jacoby

Transcribed by Maureen Block

Rob: My name is Rob Jacoby . I'm with the Historical Society of Stillwater Township. I'm the chairman of the oral history program which is meant to promote the understanding and propagation of Stillwater history and memory. Today we are interviewing Dr. Edward Cosgrove who's visiting us at the museum April 9th 2011. With me is society President Bob Grabowsky and Recording Secretary, Betty English and we'd like to thank you, Dr. Cosgrove, for joining us today.

Dr. Cosgrove: Thank you very much.

Rob: Um, let's get first facts down. Tell us where and when you were born.

Dr. Cosgrove: I was born December 27th, 1942.

Rob: And where?

Dr. Cosgrove: Newton, New Jersey.

Rob: And what is your connection with Stillwater and the local area?

Dr. Cosgrove: My immediate connection in my own lifetime is that my mother grew up in Middleville - spent most of her time in Middleville and I call it the farm at Keen's Mill just so you can place it, living with her aunt who was Margaret Hill and her and Margaret's daughter and son in law named Levi Serey. And they raised her from the time she was about five years old because her mother had died when she was four or five. And my grandfather had 5 daughters my mother being the youngest. He didn't know how to deal I think probably with a baby so his sister took her and she raised her. She started living with them in - in Swartswood when they owned what became Louis' Lake House Hotel. I think it was always called the Lake House and they owned that hotel around somewhere from like 1910 or '12 through about 1918.

Rob: Let me intrude for a second. What was your mother's name?

Dr. Cosgrove: My mother's name was Helen Vail. Her father was Harry Vail. He was born in Stillwater on July 10, 1856. Um, actually I think you can see where over here. And his mother was a house servant or whatever in the Shaffer -Peter Schaffer House. She was an immigrant from Ireland and so he was born here in Stillwater and grew up pretty much between here and Myrtle Grove¹ over the years. And then his farm was on the Paulinskill. Right at the end there's a road called Vail Road and it's the very last house on Vail Road. So, in any case when my mother's mother died she went to live with Margaret Hill and as I said she owned the hotel in Swartswood at the time.

Rob : Margaret was your mother's aunt?

Dr. Cosgrove: My mother's aunt-right. My grandfather's half-sister.

¹ Myrtle Grove along Halsey Rd in Hampton Township, NJ.

Rob: Now Vail has a long history in New Jersey as a - as a family name; there's a famous Vail Mansion in Morristown. How's your mother related to the Vail family?

Dr. Cosgrove: They always wanted to be connected to the Morristown Vails or she did.

Rob: Yeah.

Dr. Cosgrove: Um, I think mostly because everybody did know who they were. So we always tried- that's how both my mother and I got involved in genealogy. And, we tried to find a connection and, there's some very good Vail records. The interesting thing was when we- when I dug back I found that we were remotely connected to the Morristown Vails but not directly. My mother's - it would be her grandfather, was a Dr. James H. Vail, who lived in Johnsonburg and his son was Daniel Harris Vail and that was the father of my grandfather.



Helen Vail, Edward Cosgrove's mother on Swartswood Lake around 1935.

Rob: So your mother grew up around Swartswood?

Dr. Cosgrove: Right.

Rob: And did she move away after - did she attend Newton High School or...?

Dr. Cosgrove: She went to Newton High School and she married my father in 1941 I think it was.

Rob: And what's your father's - what was your father's name?

Dr. Cosgrove: Same as mine, Edward Cosgrove. I'm the third-he's junior. Anyway she went to Newton High School. She graduated 1928 or '29 from Newton High School and then she went to work for the Acme Market which was at the time American Stores Company. That's where she met my father.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And she lived in Newton or we lived in Newton until 1949 and I was - so I was born in Newton as were my brother and sister both. Then my father was transferred to Newark and he had a fairly large territory so we moved to Morristown. And I grew up in Morristown but I used to spend my summers here not the whole summer but a fair amount of time with my aunt on the farm at Keen's Mill.

Rob: Let's talk about those-those summers and what you remember about Stillwater. Um, was Swartswood Lake still a touristy spot when you would come back?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yes, it was interestingly enough. My aunt ran a summer boarding house I guess you'd call it for - she has about 10 or 12 regular customers who would come up on weekends or for a couple of weeks in the summer time and I would - I would come up and stay with her and help her out um setting the table, washing the dishes, feeding the chickens...

Rob: Mmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...cutting the grass whatever.

Rob: Did you get paid for that? Or was it...

Dr. Cosgrove: No, not really. I just did it as something to do.

Rob: How old were you?

Dr. Cosgrove: Um let's see, I was about 10 to 12 years old.

Rob: Now do any of us know what building this hotel was?

Betty: It's torn down. I think it is the one that's now a parking lot. Is that where it was located?

Bob: Um, the San Francisco.

Betty: Louis' Lake House.

Dr. Cosgrove: It was the San Francisco...

Rob: Oh, ok.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...then before that it was Louis' Lake House.

Bob: Louis' Lake House. (inaudible words follow)

Dr. Cosgrove: And now I do believe it's a parking lot right next to the brook in Swartswood.

Rob: Mmmhmm. It's like a little picnic spot.

Dr. Cosgrove: Picnic spot.

Betty: Right , right.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah.

Rob: And did you have your own room or did you share rooms with other helpers?

Dr. Cosgrove: No, actually I had my own room. I was the only helper. She did everything herself which amazes me.

Rob: Do you remember where the visitors came from?

Dr. Cosgrove: Mostly from Newark. There were a couple of families I remember. One was called the Kean family.

Rob: Related at all to the mill or...?

Dr. Cosgrove: No, interestingly enough. It was - it's spelled differently. It was K-e-a-n. And they weren't related at all. And I remember another family was the Von Zell family from Newark. And they had come up even when my mother was a young girl so they were considerably older.

Rob: So this was in the 1950's?

Dr. Cosgrove: 1950's - before 1956 because she sold the farm to the Honness family in 1956.²

Rob: Now what are your memories of the hotel? Did it seem like a grand place to you at the time?

Dr. Cosgrove: I remember Louis' Lake House as a pretty - to me it was a thriving place because we would go up there - you know I would go up to Swartswood with them when they went shopping or went to the Post Office or whatever. And, there would be people - a lot of people in Swartwood in the summertime. They would walk - people would be walking down the roads and in those days to come out here from Newark was probably like coming to paradise and they just enjoyed sitting around and talking and having nice meals and...

² Levi Serey died in 1955.

Rob: What activities did the hotel have?

Dr. Cosgrove: I'm not sure because you know she didn't own it by then obviously. Um, but I think pretty much it was a restful summer two weeks. Later on they tried to upgrade it as people wanted more activities. And I know they built a swimming pool at one point and they put in tennis courts but it wasn't enough and eventually people just stopped coming.

Rob: So who did you hang out with?

Dr. Cosgrove: If I could just have a piece of paper.

Rob: Who did you hang out with? Were there lots of kids?

Dr. Cosgrove: No, there really weren't. When I- when I lived on the farm with my aunt 'cause that's - that's where you know she had her boarding house it - it to this day it's an isolated spot. There's no immediate neighbors in any real close direction and so pretty much was there you know by myself and I was busy because there was plenty to do. Take - you know she had a couple of gardens and in the earlier days I my uncle, Levi, had a couple of cows and she had maybe 50-60 chickens and you had to collect the eggs every day and you had to put out the chicken feed every day and make sure they had water and all that stuff. So I sort of did that as a way of taking some of the pressure off of her and at any given time I think the most they would have there at a time was 12 or 13 people.



Serey-Hill farmhouse on West Shore Drive located between Middleville and Swartswood. The house, also known as the Lake Cottage, was demolished in 1998. The sign on porch reads "Board & Room. By Day or Week." Photo taken in late 1930s.

Rob: And she would prepare all the meals?

Dr. Cosgrove: She did all the meals. It was amazing. Breakfast, lunch and dinner. The big meal was at noon.

Rob: Can you describe the types of food that she served?

Dr. Cosgrove: Very what I would call home cooked American standard food. Egg, fried or scrambled eggs and bacon at breakfast. Cereal, juice. Lunch was always something she could cook a large amount of like she would do meatloaf or she would do boiled ham or a baked ham chicken - chicken and dumplings and occasionally roast beef or beef stew. And then dinner would be light maybe some leftovers from lunch probably. I can't remember exactly what dinners were like. She would always have deserts. She was a great pie maker so there was always a nice big - a couple a big pies at lunch time.

Rob: Did all the guests eat together?

Dr. Cosgrove: They all ate together around one table, boarding house style.

Rob: Uh huh.

Dr. Cosgrove: In the dining room. I remember the table would - You could extend this table to fill the whole room so you could easily get 15 or 16 people around the table. And then in the spring, in May, my mother and I would come up and we'd help her open the table up and then put all the boards in the table to make it big and then right after Labor Day we'd come back and we'd put the table back take all the boards out of it and then the room wasn't used all winter except at Thanksgiving - we'd have Thanksgiving dinner there but otherwise it wouldn't be used all winter, she would get a few people to come up in October and November for hunting season so she'd get a few hunters but otherwise there were no boarders in the wintertime.

Rob: Describe what the downstairs looked like. Was there a big sitting room?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, it was - it was originally a farmhouse and you entered - the front door was in the center and the staircase. When you came in there was a fairly small hallway but you came into the hallway and the staircase was on your right. And then there were two rooms off the hallway. Just as you came in on the left was the living room which extended front to back in the house. The dining room was the same size as the living room. And then, originally that was all there was to the house but then somebody added an L in the back and then that became the kitchen. And the kitchen it - it came across the whole back of the house so it was a good size room. And they lived in the kitchen pretty much in the wintertime when it was cold. And then upstairs there was originally three bedrooms. One big bedroom over the living room my uncle at one point divided in half so they could get two bedrooms out of it so they could fit more boarders

in. And then two other smaller bedrooms and then above the kitchen in the L in the back were two more bedrooms and a bathroom. And so you'd have you know five rooms of people upstairs so there'd be at least 10 or 12 people when all rooms were full and everybody shared on bathroom. (laughter) But on the other hand it was - I can remember the price. It was four dollars a day three meals included.

Rob: Mmm.

Bob: Three meals included.

Rob: Wow. Were there - what sort of amenities were in the common area? Was there a radio?

Dr. Cosgrove: There was a radio. By the time I got there - there was a tele - a television.

Rob: How was reception? It must have been pretty bad.

Dr. Cosgrove: My uncle had built a - had put like a telephone pole up in the back. The house was built into the hillside a little bit and so the backyard of the house was basically a hill and he had put a telephone pole there and put the television antennae on top of it in an attempt to get reception but it was very snowy.

Rob : too old.

Dr. Cosgrove: And I think yeah you got maybe you know maybe the three big channels and that was it.

Rob: Did your aunt and your mother had - it was your aunt?

Dr. Cosgrove: She was my aunt, yes.

Rob: Did they have magazines in the common area?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yes, there would always be you know Life Magazine and the newspaper came every day. The New Jersey Herald came every day - got delivered out front. They would go buy the I think it was the Daily News to be exact down at Robbins Store down in Middletown when they went to pick up the mail. And that was another one of my jobs. I'd walk down to the store to pick up the mail and to buy the newspaper.

Rob: And did you have any free time?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, in the afternoon after lunch was served then you washed the dishes. Put them all away then reset the table for dinner then basically the rest of the afternoon you didn't have much to do.

Rob: And what would you do?

Dr. Cosgrove: I'd go out rowing on - on the pond. They used - my uncle rented boats - rowboats...

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...at the - right by where the mill sits. And, so I'd take one of the boats out and I'd go rowing or I'd go fishing. I'd pull up on the other - other shore right where it narrows. There's a spot where it narrows right as it goes into the lake and I'd pull up there on the side and I'd go wandering through the woods. There was a woods in there. Or I'd go up - there was a place that rented boats further up. It was just at the head of the narrows on the lake and I'd go up there and people would come in to go fishing and stuff and I'd just hang around there. People would come in to go fishing and I would just hang around there. Or I'd go further up the road towards Swartswood side of the road - on the road. I think that's the west side of the lake and I would go past Waldren's Boarding House which was on the corner right where the road curves. That was still in business when I first came up here. I think it closed right around the same time my aunt sold the farm in the mid 50's or maybe right after that. And now it's all gone too.

Rob: So there were other boarding houses or small...?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, right up the road you went from as you're going toward Swartswood from - from the Mill Pond there was Waldren's then there was a private house and then Camp Lou Henry Hoover which is still there I think.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And then there was a big huge boarding house further up the road almost into Swartswood. What was that called?

Rob: Is that what's called the Boat House?

Dr. Cosgrove: That's - it's all gone. It burned down. I think that might have even been called the Lake House too but it was a huge boarding house. And then you got into - as you were getting into - oh I remember there was another one just before that on the the lake side of the road that there was a big fire there. I forget the name of that one but it was a bar. They had - it was a bar for years. It might still be a bar.

Rob: Maybe the...

Betty: I think that...

Rob: the Boat House.

Betty: No , I think that's...

Rob: The Drake House.

Betty: where Diane Schlecter lived?

Rob: The Drake House.

Betty: Yeah, okay.

Rob: I think that's the one.

Dr. Cosgrove: There was a huge fire there I remember in '54 or '55. Everybody came to see it and the whole building just burnt and collapsed. And then - so as you - and anyways you went on up towards Swartswood after that huge hotel was on the left.

Bob: I'm wondering is that where those - that stone wall...

Dr. Cosgrove: Yes

Bob: ...with the wooden...Yeah, the stone stairs that goes...

Dr. Cosgrove: That's exactly, right.

Bob: Ok, I was...

Rob: around that sharp bend?

Dr. Cosgrove: Um.

Bob: Before that...

Betty: You mean not on the lake side?

Bob: Not on the lake side - on the other side there's like a stone wall...

Betty: Yes, I've seen that...and what was that?

Bob: That was the Basebook Boarding House.

Dr. Cosgrove: That was a big boarding house as well. Um, and that was quite - that was still very busy in the early '50s. But then that whole business basically became not viable. People just didn't want to do that kind of vacation. And the area didn't change. It was just as nice as ever, but it just - that wasn't popular to do. And then, as you got in towards Swartswood - originally - it's - it's a religious camp now I think but it was Try Try Beach. My cousin Gorman Struble from Swartswood built that - built that. That was originally Andrew Yetter's farm. And then he bought it and made Try Try Beach and then it became that religious camp. I don't know maybe it's not the religious camp anymore.

Bob: No, it still is.

Betty: What camp is that?

Bob: Um,

Rob: I can't remember.

Dr. Cosgrove: Right on - just before you get into Swartswood village.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: On the right hand side on the lake side.

Betty: Oh, yeah yeah yeah. Yeah, I know before the bus company.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yes, right there.

Rob: There's a drive that you go down.

Dr. Cosgrove: Gorman Struble ran...that was originally his buses. He ran the school buses around here for - forever.

Rob: What other businesses were in Swartswood?

Dr. Cosgrove: Well, let's see - Tosti's ran the grocery store down by where the Catholic church is on the other side of the brook there, where the Catholic church is. And then there was no other stores there. There was a gas station on the corner. I think it had originally been a Texaco station right across from where the Methodist church was.

Betty: Still has the sign.

Dr. Cosgrove: That was closed even when I was a kid.

Rob: Hmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: It had gone out of business. There was the Methodist church on the corner. And then on the left hand side across from the Methodist church on what was that 519? I can't remember. I always get those numbers mixed up.

Betty: 521.³

Dr. Cosgrove: 521, in the village was my cousin Gorman's gas station and then he had a little like trinket shop and an ice cream stand there and then across the street from that was the - originally the post office and a little candy store which had closed by the time I was around. And further up the road was the post office and Catterman's store right at the bottom of the road that goes up the hill.

Betty: Mt. Benevolence.

Dr. Cosgrove: I don't know the names of the roads because they didn't have names in my day.

³ County Route 521

Rob:? I think that's the post office now.

Bob:? Yes, that may still be the post office.

Dr. Cosgrove: Then after that came Louis' - Louis' Lake House area. That was originally as I said my aunt -my aunt May Hill - Serey Hill - Hill Serey. And her mother Margaret owned that. And that was on one side of the brook. And Margaret Hill had married. Margaret Hill was married to Edward Hill and his brother George owned on the other side of the property and he also ran a boarding house at one time. Then Louie bought it and he bought everything.

Betty: I have a couple of questions about this. Across the street from Louis' Lake House there's kind of a motel looking building.

Dr. Cosgrove: Oh, yeah.

Betty: Is that - was that part of Louis' Lake House?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yes, there was a - there's a picture that I had - that I brought one time of all the men lined up and they were in front of the....

Betty: Yeah, these were the - I think was this - the linemen.

Dr. Cosgrove: I had forgotten. Yes.

Betty: Yeah.

Dr. Cosgrove: And then.....

Rob: Let's describe what you're looking at.

Dr. Cosgrove: We're looking at a photograph taken in the early 1900's of Swartswood village and it's a group of telephone linemen putting in the first telephone wires in front of a building which is still there that was part of Louis' Lake House at one time. I don't know who owned it when this picture was taken but it must've been even then part of the hotel because they stayed in the hotel or they stayed on the hotel property. And, that building I noticed when I went through Swartswood the last time I was down that the porches aren't there but the building itself is still there. So as I said Louie bought all that property and united them.

Betty: So, when you were talking about the meals and so on - that was at Louis' Lake House?

Dr. Cosgrove: No, that was - that was at the ...

Betty: But they had a boarding house at the lower end of the lake?

Dr. Cosgrove: Exactly. My area was at the lower end of the lake on Mill Pond.

Betty: Right. And then at the upper end of the lake they also had a place or it was...?

Dr. Cosgrove: Well, they had originally owned that one at the upper end of the lake.

Betty: Oh, and then they moved it...

Dr. Cosgrove: They sold it in 1918 or 1920.

Betty: Oh, okay.

Dr. Cosgrove: And they bought the farm property

Betty: Ok.

Dr. Cosgrove: and then they continued to run the summer boarding house on the farm property with a small group of their former customers.

Rob: Near Keen's Mill.

Dr. Cosgrove: Near Keen's Mill right.

Betty: And I have a photo at home I didn't even think to bring it. It says E.D. Hill or something like that selling ice cream and it looks like it's at the bottom of the lake.

Dr. Cosgrove: That's probably the same one because his name - my Aunt May Serey - her father was Edward Hill. His brother was George Hill and those were the ones that originally owned up by where Louis' Lake House is.

Rob: And that - it was the San Francisco?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yes.

Betty: Okay.

Rob: So you weren't at the San Francisco?

Dr. Cosgrove: No, we had nothing to do with the San Francisco in itself...

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...other than we'd go by and say oh yeah I remember we used to own the hotel.

Rob: Mmmhmmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: They always just called it the hotel.

Betty: Okay.

Dr. Cosgrove: Um, and they so they in any case in the 1920's they sold it and moved down to the farm

Betty: I see. Okay.

Dr. Cosgrove: and became farmers sort of. It was subsistence farm.

Betty: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: Couple of cows, some chickens and the boarders in the summertime. Yeah, there were other hotels on the lake also on the other side of the lake. I think that's the east shore...

Betty: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...of the lake. Dove Island was a - a big place. There was Hendershot's Landing over there. And there was a big hotel just outside of Swartswood right on the lake. I think the building is still there. It may have burned down but there was a big hotel , on the Swartswood-Newton Road.

Rob: Were you ever in town for July 4th?

Dr. Cosgrove: I'm trying to remember. I don't think - I don't remember being there for July 4th but I might have been.

Rob: You mentioned Thanksgiving.

Dr. Cosgrove: Right.

Rob: And your family came back to the...

Dr. Cosgrove: ...the farm.

Rob: the farm for Thanksgiving.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, we would always drive up yeah, from Morristown on Thanksgiving morning.

Rob: Describe that for us.

Dr. Cosgrove: It was a typical you know kind of a family Thanksgiving Day. There was you know my - my brother, my sister, my parents, my Aunt May and my Uncle Levi. And she would cook dinner. She always had a turkey. You know the usual Thanksgiving dinner. Potatoes and turnips and peas and cranberry sauce and stuffing and she always made pumpkin pies. She made the best pies that ever were. And...

Rob: Probably used lard. (laughter)

Dr. Cosgrove: I'm sure she did because the crust was nice and crispy. Even on the bottom of the pumpkin pie it would be crispy. It wasn't burnt but it wasn't soggy either. And, I remember when she made a regular covered pie like an apple or some other fruit pie

she always put sugar on the crust on the top and it always made it taste better. The more sugar the better.

Bob: Of course.

Dr. Cosgrove: Um, but she had in the kitchen on the farm they had an old fashioned coal range and then she did all her baking and cooking in the coal range. And, I think that probably made it a little bit of a slower cooking and I think that made it better. But, when I think back they - she had a gas stove that they brought later that probably made her life a whole lot easier but I can't even imagine what it was like in the summertime cooking on a coal range.

Rob: Mmm.

Betty: Hmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: It must've been just incredibly hot.

Rob: They didn't have a summer kitchen?

Dr. Cosgrove: They did. My uncle finally must've- they must've got so they couldn't stand it and he built across the back of the house a long narrow addition that was a summer kitchen and a dairy room for...they'd let the milk settle and the cream rise and they had the eggs in there and that sort of thing. Um, it was never in use when I was there because by then she was cooking with gas. But my mother remembers it. They used to take the stove down in May as soon as the heating season was over. They'd take the whole stove apart and they literally moved this big huge heavy cast iron coal stove into the summer kitchen and rebuild it. And then cook on it all summer out there and then in the fall move it back. And there's a record that my uncle had it's funny they had an old fashioned victrola - Edison victrola and big thick records and the - one of the records was Uncle Josh puts up the kitchen stove. And it was exactly what they did. He'd be in there and the bolt wouldn't come out or something and he'd be cussing and she'd be mad because he was cussing. I can imagine what that was like. But those were the things they did. That's how they heated the house. The coal stove was the heat for the back side of the house. That's why they lived in the kitchen in the wintertime.

Rob: Was it your job ever to shovel the coal?

Dr. Cosgrove: Oh yeah. (laughter) Bring the coal in the coal stove. There was always a coal stove sitting next to the stove.

Rob: And where did they get the coal from? Regular...

Dr. Cosgrove: It was delivered. Um, I think it was JC Roy ran the coal company. And so she would buy the coal and there would be a big pile of coal in the cellar. And then we'd go

downstairs and shovel it and bring it upstairs and then later on they put a coal furnace in the basement and heated the first floor of the house with the furnace, but - the - my job was to bring the coal up.

Rob: How do you get coal to ignite? Do you start with a little wood fire first?

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, it wasn't easy. She was really good at it. She would start a wood fire with some small kindling and not -never any big logs but a kindling would get it good hot and then you start pouring small coal in first. They used to call it pea coal I think. And then that would get - that would start burning and then you would put the bigger chunks of coal on top of that and if you adjusted the draft just right on the stove you could get - you could get a lot of air going through there to get the fire started and then you'd damp it down so that it would just kind of burn slowly. And you could actually - they would start the fire in October and they wouldn't put that fire out until May 'cause it was such a hard thing to start the fire. And then sometimes she dumped kerosene on it then light that but...

Rob: Stand back.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, at least it's not gasoline. But I can remember the kerosene can was always around somewhere.

Betty: No wonder so many places burned.

Rob: Yeah.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah. That's what lighted some of those terrible fires. Yeah. Of course you had a volunteer fire department so they were all amateur fire fighters and there was one fire truck so if one of those fires got going all you were really trying to do was keep the rest of the place from burning down.

Rob: Mmm. So you were a frequent visitor to Stillwater in the summers when you were a boy

Dr. Cosgrove: Right.

Rob: from about the age of 10 'til when?

Dr. Cosgrove: 'til I was about 16 or 17.

Rob: And what changed at that point?

Dr. Cosgrove: Well then I - I graduated from high school and went away to college. And my aunt moved eventually to Newton and from then on I never - I never stayed with her again. They didn't need any help.

Rob: So that would have been - you stopped coming regularly around 1960?

Dr. Cosgrove: 1960.

Rob: Do you recall the town changing at that point or people talking about the town changing

Dr. Cosgrove: uh...

Rob: as new - new houses were built or people came in?

Dr. Cosgrove: Every once in a while a new house would be built or something would get renovated or - or abandoned as the case may be. I can remember them talking about how all the hotels were going out of business and they were having a hard time staying in business. And it was in the late '50s early '60s they began declining. It always seemed like they ended up burning. I don't know whether (laughter) I suppose vagrants got in there or something and then they'd try to keep it heated and then start a fire but I think most of them ended up burning down. And as I said once a fire got started there was virtually nothing you could do except keep everything else from burning down. And Louis' Lake House was the - I think that was the last man standing...

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...as far as hotels went.

Rob: Do you have a recollection of your - your aunt's political persuasions?

Dr. Cosgrove: Oh yes, they were Republicans.

Rob: And how did that manifest itself with the (inaudible)

Dr. Cosgrove: Reasonably conservative politics. My father used to joke because my father's family were - were all Democrats. He used to joke that she didn't even read the other side of the ballot. It was just....

Rob: If it had an r in it she voted for them.

Dr. Cosgrove: That was fairly characteristic of Sussex County at the time. It was pretty heavily Republican at one point in time. I don't know what it is now.

Betty: Nothing's changed.

Rob: Did visitors to the - to the farmhouse, guests go to church on Sunday?

Dr. Cosgrove: Some did. My father's family was all Catholic so I was - I'm Catholic to this day. So I would go with a couple of the boarders up to Swartswood to the Catholic Church. Sometimes somebody else would go to the Methodist church in Swartswood or occasionally down here to Harmony Hill Church. But generally no, they didn't go to church.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: My aunt considered herself - she called it a home Baptist. Read the bible and that's it. But I remember when the Catholic Church was in a hall. My aunt said it was once a dance hall in Swartswood up by Louis' Lake House.

Betty: That's what I heard.

Dr. Cosgrove: It was upstairs in an upstairs room - a big upstairs room. And then I think it was in the, I don't know it must be early '60s they built the church that they...

Betty: They just celebrated the 40th anniversary so 1971.

Dr. Cosgrove: Okay. So yeah okay.

Betty: Uh, yeah last year so 1970.

Dr. Cosgrove: That would be about right. They built it after the flood 'cause I remember we were up here during the flood. And that was the hurricanes of '56.

Bob: Was it '55?

Dr. Cosgrove: '55 - '56.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: Uh, we were up here then for those and I remember that land was all under water and I keep thinking what's going to happen the next time there's one of those because that church will be you know 3 feet deep in the water.

Betty: Yeah, it's right near a lot of wetlands.

Dr. Cosgrove: It's all lowlands in there. It's amazing so. So when she sold the farm, she sold that in either 1954 or '55 so that's when she went out of the boarding house business. And then she moved to Swartswood village. And she lived in a house that's right next to the Methodist Church. It used to have red kind of composition siding on it, It looked like brick but it wasn't brick. And she moved in there. And we'd - I - I still would come up and visit and spend you know a weekend here or a weekend there. My whole family would come up and we'd spend a week or two in the summer. I remember I was there in 1960 because we watched the Democratic Convention in her living room.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And, we - that's how come we were there for the - we were there for the floods is for that...

Rob: So you went away to college and pretty much didn't come back?

Dr. Cosgrove: To New Jersey even too much. Just to visit my parents. I moved to - first I went to college Georgetown in Washington and then I went to Northeastern University in Boston and then I went to Ohio State University out in Ohio and then I moved back to Boston. I got married and moved back to Boston and I've been there ever since.

Rob: And when's the next time you visited Stillwater?

Dr. Cosgrove: Probably around in the 19 - late '70s early '80s. And what I like about Stillwater and it's still true to this day really this area right in here hasn't changed much since I was a kid. The names of the stores have changed like Garriss's Store isn't there anymore. I mean there's a store there but it's not Garriss's Store. Harold Garriss was another cousin. And, I'd come down here. I'd walk down from Middleville. I'd walk down the road and I'd come down over here sometimes for something to do. And I'd go to the store and have a soda or whatever and then walk back. And, or I'd walk up to Swartswood village from the farm and it was very quiet. You know a few cars would come by but it was mostly just very rural. Everybody - the farms were still pretty much in business. Monroe's farm in Middleville village- he still had a herd of cows and planted all his fields. And, all along the road here into Stillwater was still a lot of farms. And I'd go almost everyday, I'd go down to Robbins Store for something - a something to do and I always had a little bit of money. I'd buy ice cream or something like that. And my uncle would go down. He was good friends with Amos Petit. And they'd go down and he'd meet Amos and they'd sit in the store and talk or Amos would come up to the house and sit on the side porch and they'd talk.

Rob: Was the blacksmith shop still operating around the corner from Robbins Store at that point?

Dr. Cosgrove: I remember them talking about it. I think it was Amos Petit's father or brother that ran that blacksmith shop. But I don't know as it was still operating. I don't think so because it's something that would have intrigued me and I would have been sticking my nose in there and I don't remember sticking my nose in there because I'd be kind of interested in what they were doing.

Rob: Do you remember many horses in town?

Dr. Cosgrove: Not many horses. The horse era for using them as draft animals was over. If they were plowing they were using tractors. Uh, and it hadn't - it was still dairy farms so it was mostly cows - dairy cows. Very few sheep as far as I can remember. I think sheep would have been a novelty. Maybe somebody had a pig but they weren't raising pigs for marketing. If they were doing it - it was just for themselves. Although I remember my mother told me - said they used to raise pigs on the farm. Two or three pigs a year but never - it was never a commercial thing. And that's it - mostly dairy cows -

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: - a lot of dairy cows. I remember the sign coming up from Morristown and you'd come into Sussex County on 206 coming in just where it leaves what, Netcong coming into Newton and it said "Welcome to Sussex County where there's more cows than people". (laughter) I still remember that sign. And the land was open. Now it's all grown up with trees but I remember when most of it was open field for example at the Mill Pond on the farm Albert Keen owned a farm on the other side of the pond. He was on the east side of the lake but his farm came over and one of his pastures bordered the lake - bordered the Mill Pond. And that was all open land and now it's all scrub trees. He used to always go in there and root out all the - they used to call them cedar trees but they're really juniper. But they'd always be rooting them out because they didn't want the land to fill in. And you'd have to walk carefully through his field pasture because of course the cows dropped little cow pies all over the place and you didn't want to step in that stuff either. But yeah I remember - I remember I'd cut along through there to get to the woods on the other side if I didn't take the boat and row up there.

Bob: So what do you remember of Keen's Mill?

Dr. Cosgrove: Oh, I was fascinated by the mill. It never operated when I was - when I was there. My uncle said that the turbine had bent or the shaft had bent at some point in the '30s or maybe early '40s but I think the '30s. And, then it was no longer functional. But my aunt had the key to the mill. The mill was owned by Blair Academy at the time.

Bob: Oh.

Dr. Cosgrove: Um, they - I don't know if Blair always owned it but they owned it while I was - when I was growing up 'cause they bought the water rights. If you owned the mill you had the water rights to the lake because you - the miller had the rights to open the penstock to the mill. And they - my uncle ran the mill for a while in the '30s. And they - the people who were on the lake would complain because the mill would draw the lake down.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And of course their docks. They couldn't pull their boats up to their docks and stuff. But Blair bought it for the water rights because I think they had a power station in Blairstown.

Bob: Yes.

Dr. Cosgrove: at the Kill.

Bob: Paulinskill I believe there was...

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah.

Bob: ...something there.

Dr. Cosgrove: And power station and a laundry because I can remember my aunt saying "oh, they're going to open up the - the sluice gate because they need water at the laundry at the - at the academy." And that's why they bought it. So it stopped operating at that point. But I remember going in there because my aunt had the key. They were the caretakers and just wandering around inside. I was always afraid I was going to fall through the floor because I - I would have visions of the floor being rotten but, I go up - there were three floors in the mill. And, the first floor the grain would come in I think on the first floor and there was a hopper and it would go down to the grinding - to the grinding stones which were run by the turbine and then you could see where it would go. There was a belt inside with little cups on it and as the grain came off - There was two grinding stones. There was a coarse grind and I think there was a finer grind and it'd go up these cups and then it would go down another shaft to the second grinding and then it would come back up to the top floor where I think it must've been bagged. And even then I can remember there was a soup-like debris of grain in some of those cups.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And that was in the early '50s. And the mill was full of junk.

Betty: Hmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: Because they never threw anything out. And every time they wanted to store something it was always "take it down to the mill". (laughter) Anything they didn't need anymore or they couldn't throw away was in the mill. The shutters from the house. My uncle took the shutters off because he didn't want to maintain them anymore. Took them to the mill. And so they're all lined up in the mill.

Betty: Hmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And all kinds of old china and glassware, furniture. I always watched the mill when I'd come up and visit my aunt and then I remember somebody. Blair sold it at some point and I think somebody bought it and they were going to make a house out of it. They tore all of the machinery out of it and the state rebuilt the dam and they took out the penstock for the mill. And, that - that I mean that ended it as a mill obviously. And now as far as I know it just sort of sits there. So it's more of a pretty site than anything else and it's the only thing left on the property 'cause the barn just collapsed about two or three years ago.

Rob: I remember.

Dr. Cosgrove: Uh.

Bob: And the house - was that the house that was torn down about 10-12 years ago?

Rob: Around - right around the opposite the boat house (undistinguished talk) Yeah, this was funny. Just before it was torn down I remember seeing a sign - whoever was living there at the time put up a sign that said "whoever took our couch, please return it."
(laughter) They must have had an outdoor couch and someone stole it.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah, the - that was the farmhouse that I talked about.

Rob: You could get 12 guests living there?

Dr. Cosgrove: Oh yeah.

Rob: Wow.

Dr. Cosgrove: What they did was - there was a - the farmhouse was - was on the as you're going toward Swartwood on the left hand side of the road right at the bend and then across the street was the barn - the big cow barn and a smaller machinery barn that had two floors on it. And then behind that was a corn crib and a pig sty. And then the mill was down on one side and the chicken coops were on the same side as the house. And they had a room upstairs over the - sort of garage, machine building where they kept the tractor and the car. In the summertime when they had a lot of guests they'd take and move out of the house itself and they'd live up over the - the garage so they could get an extra room - get more people in the house. That's how they made their money. There was no cash other than that coming in. My uncle didn't work so they had the cows and the chickens, whatever they got out of the garden. There were four fields at the top of the hill that they - at one time they ran themselves but then they rented them out. And so that was the subsistence part of the farm and then money to pay the taxes and whatever else they needed money for they made in the summertime by renting out the - the house to boarders and that's how they lived for like 30 years there between 19 -

Betty: '21.

Dr. Cosgrove: '20-'21 and 1954.

Rob: From 1921 to '54 then?

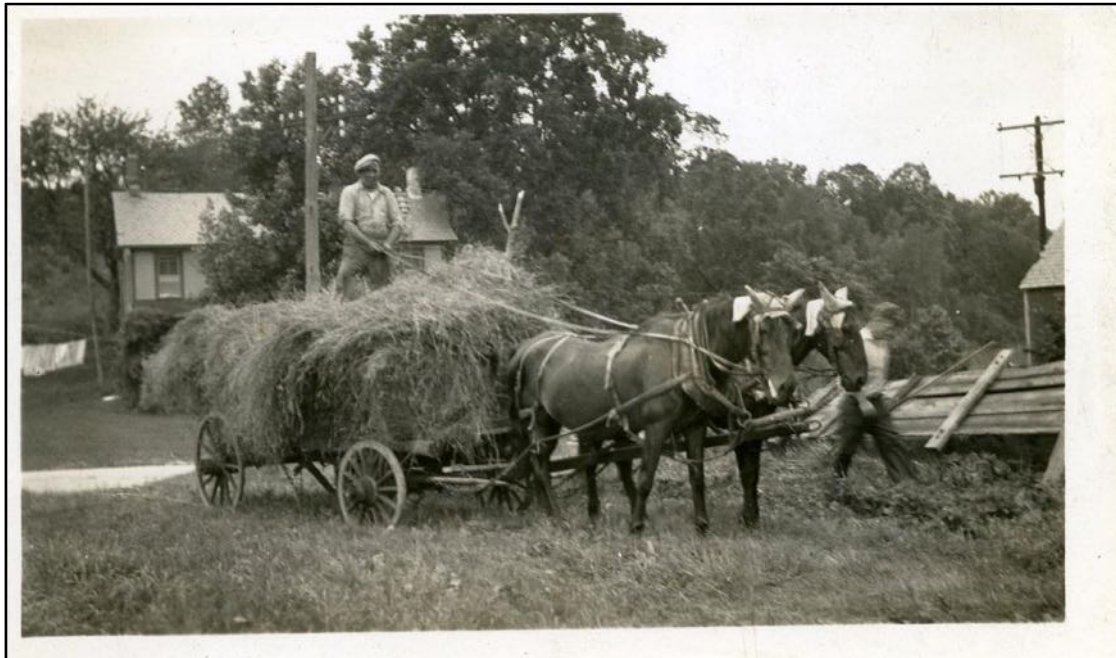
Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah. In the property. And then they sold it to the Honness family who were, as they would say, city people. And, they were going to come up and you know - I call it live the life of the country squire. Restore the house to its former glory you know whatever that was and - live there. And they did. They lived there right up until just before it was torn down. And, the state came along at one point and bought most of the land on the lake side for Green Acres and water control probably. So that really

killed it as a farm because then the barn was gone and the hay field was gone and and when the Hahn's family sold it I think the state bought the rest of it for Green Acres. And I was kind of unhappy how they tore the house down but on the other hand I was glad that the land was preserved 'cause that's the most important part

Betty: Mmm. Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: otherwise they just build junky buildings all over.

Rob: Mmmhmm.



Levi Serey, Edward Cosgrove's uncle, on hay wagon, around 1935.

Betty: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: This way it stays open forever. But I can remember the hay field was still hayed when I went - when I went there. They used to -, Andrew Monroe used to come up and...

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: ...cut the field and take the hay. The picture I had - one of these pictures in this thing. I think it's in there - my uncle...

Betty: Oh

Dr. Cosgrove: ...in the haywagon - that was in the hayfield. Yeah, that one.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: That's the hayfield right here and then the barn sat - you can see a piece of it right there. That's the edge of the roof and then the house is across the street.

Rob: You mentioned the Monroes. The Monroe farm is still active not too far away.

Dr. Cosgrove: Yeah.

Rob: One of the last farms in Stillwater.

Dr. Cosgrove: I don't know is he - is it still in the family?

Rob: Yes.

Dr. Cosgrove: I know my mother was very friendly with Andrew Monroe's daughter and then she married somebody named Consin(?) - Abe Consin. So I think it's the grandson must have taken the farm over after his grandfather died. Uh, but he did - he - he cut the hayfield for the hay and I remember one time they replanted the hayfield because it had gotten weedy and so they plowed it all up and replanted it.

Rob: Did your aunt and uncle have raspberry bushes and blueberry bushes?

Dr. Cosgrove: They had there were two gardens. One was on the side of the street with the farm and that was always the best soil. It was right - right down in there - right in that area there. And then there was another big garden over here to the - to the left of the house as you looked at the house. And they grew mostly potatoes in that - in that garden potatoes and tomatoes. And over here were the other vegetables. The carrots and the corn and they had a big rhubarb patch.

Rob: Did they have a sugarbush?

Dr. Cosgrove: I don't remember one. They didn't do any - they didn't do any sugaring so I doubt that they had any maple trees there. There were people around who did. I can remember when I was a kid and we lived in Newton one of our neighbors up the street used to hang the sap pails out in the spring. You have to collect an awful lot of sap to get a little bit syrup so I don't think it lasted very long. The weather here isn't really good for sugar because the springs are too warm. The night's are too warm compared with you know Vermont and places. So I don't think it ever was much of an activity around here. But even that - that wagon in that farm - I remember that wagon because - because by the time I was a kid it had collapsed and it was over here someplace. The wheels were all off it and it was just all rotting.

Rob: Hmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: But then another picture here - I don't know if I gave that one to you or not. My mother's in a buckboard and I think that's it - no that's not the buckboard. I think that might be the buckboard but she was in a buckboard wagon in the picture on the farm.

Rob: Do you remember what kind of automobile your aunt had?

Dr. Cosgrove: It was probably a Ford because they always had bought their cars in Newton at the - what was the Ford dealer. It down on - down by where the A & P used to be. I know they always bought their cars there because another cousin, Roberta Wintermute, worked for them.

Rob: Mmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And so they - they would buy their car there. They didn't go to Roof's. That was a - that was a Chevrolet dealer. So I know it was a Ford. Uh, my mother's first car was a Willys, and then...

Rob: With wood siding.

Dr. Cosgrove: It might have had wood siding on it. But, and I think they bought that there too. I think they sold both Fords and Willys at one time. But, it was a big old - I remember it was - to me it looked like a big old car. It had the wheel on the side on the running boards and the whole bit. And then they sold that when I was probably six or seven years old. Right around 1950 and bought this other little you know like a Ford coupe - black Ford coupe - they had. And we'd go to Newton - every Friday, was shopping day. And my aunt would go into Newton to buy all our groceries for the week. In the summer my uncle would drive her in and they'd park there on Spring Street and she'd do all her little shopping on Spring Street and then they'd go down - is that Water Street - to the A & P and she buy all her groceries and staples in the A & P whatever they couldn't raise in the garden. And then there was a guy that used to come around - I think his name was Roy too - and sold vegetables. He came around with his truck.

Rob: Hmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: And she'd buy vegetables and fruit from him and he'd come around once or twice a week to the farm. And, that's how she got whatever she couldn't grow in the garden or potatoes when they're picked. Things that weren't in season. And, the other guy. There was another one. There was somebody else that used to come around too. I can't remember what he sold but, I remember when that guy came around. And, she always looked forward to that. And she sold eggs because they always had more eggs than they could use. And people would stop to buy a dozen eggs.

Rob: Do you remember what a dozen went for?

Dr. Cosgrove: I think it was 50 or 60 cents.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: Eggs haven't really gone up in price all that much considering how much everything else has gone up. But it was probably 50 or 60 cents and that was another way of making a few dollars.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: You know, and I would do that too. If somebody stopped, I'd go and get the eggs. I don't think they were that fresh to tell you the truth. (laughter) You'd collect the eggs from the chickens and you'd put them in the dairy house and you'd try to keep them rotated so that you were always selling the oldest ones first but I mean I think they'd sit there a week. I mean you'd probably get just as fresh an egg in the supermarket. People thought "oh we're going to the farm".

Betty: Fresh eggs. (laughter)

Dr. Cosgrove: So -, but yeah, I think - I think they were probably 50 cents a dozen or something like that in those days. I remember my mother being very careful with the eggs 'cause she thought they were expensive so. And they probably were at 50 cents a dozen back in 1950's. It's probably a lot of money 'cause...

Rob: Well, do you have any final thoughts about Stillwater or your...

Dr. Cosgrove: Well, I mean I'm just happy when I do come back here because it hasn't changed all that much particularly Stillwater. Middleville has changed a lot because there's no commercial activity at all anymore other than that there's a restaurant there but..

Rob: No more.

Dr. Cosgrove: That closed too?

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: Uh, the bar even closed?

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Dr. Cosgrove: The bar's still closed. And then Swartswood has kind of gone down in commercial activity as well. So in that sense that's a little bit depressing but Stillwater's you know active enough to be a viable village but not to active to be destroyed by too much that's modern.

Rob: Well, we want to thank you very much, Dr. Cosgrove, for sitting down with us and sharing your memories of Stillwater.

Dr. Cosgrove: Well I hope it's not too rambling.

All: No.

Dr. Cosgrove: But reminisces are reminisces, so.