

Interview with Harriette Evans by Jacob Barry for Historic New England, July 15, 2011.

JACOB BARRY: So this is Jacob Barry interviewing Harriette Evans on Friday, July 15, 2011 for Historic New England's One Hundred Years-One Hundred Communities Project on the history of African-American tourism in New England. The interview is being conducted at her home in Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard. So Harriette, where are you from originally?

HARRIETTE EVANS: [Laughs] Originally from Washington, DC. My mother taught at Miner Teacher's College and bought—fell in love with Martha's Vineyard. She came to visit friends here, fell in love with the island and came every summer. She bought two homes, this one and the one right across the park, which is a winter house. We've been coming—see, we—I'm a twin. He's gone now—oh, don't know. We were children when she brought us here, because we'd go to the—to the Vineyard Dry Goods in Vineyard Haven, to buy all of our clothes. And I would say, "Mother, why do we buy our clothes on Vineyard—on Martha's Vineyard, when we live in Washington?" Now I know. Washington, we couldn't buy clothes. Black folk couldn't go the stores, so we—we were protected from segregation this way.

And it wasn't until I grew up that I realized that Washington was so segregated, we couldn't buy clothes—we couldn't go downtown to Heck's or to any of the stores. So we bought clothes up here. So I've been coming since I was a little girl. I've raised my children here, my children's children, my grandchildren, and thirteen

great-grandchildren. They've all come here because this is home. My husband was a minister, and we moved and moved seventeen times; I counted the other day just to see how many. We made—moved seventeen times, but every summer we could come here. This little house was here for us, and this was home. Parsonages were not home. In those days you had to live in the parsonage. Today you can do what they want to do.

And as I said, my children and their children and my grandchildren all learned to swim; they learned to ride the bicycles. They loved to go to the flying horses and—which is a merry-go-round, and the oldest one in the country. They liked to go to Gay Head, and we used to climb the cliffs. Can't climb the cliffs anymore—they've put up big gates. You have to go around and down. Pick berries—it was for us a leaving the city behind and coming to the country. We didn't know anything about country. I've lived in Chicago, New York—you name it. We traveled extensively around the world. That was a—a great part of my husband's job. So we [unclear]. But we could always come back to this cottage, and it's as though the cottage says, "I've been waiting for you. Here I am."

So I come in May, fourth or fifth of May, and stay until oh, late October. We have stayed through November, but it's pretty barren, and today there are many, many, many black families that stay here year round. But in—when I started coming there were only a few of us here. We were the first black family on the park, and didn't have any problem with it. I have good neighbors. This whole side are generation—what they call generation families: four and five and six generations. We've never changed. We've watched each other grow

up, get married; watched their children grow up, get married. And so this is why—this is—this has become a gathering place for my family. Little children—as I say, my grandchildren realized that when coming here it's not just mother and daddy. I have a big family. I have uncles and aunts, and I have cousins I didn't know I had.

We make it a point for them to come at the same time so they can know each other. I'm not a—a climber. [Laughs] I'm not a joiner. I'm a family person, and I'm the last—we have a group here called the Cottagers; raised a lot of money for this island—black families. I'm the last of the original Cottagers. I don't belong anymore. They're too fancy for me now, but I support them. I—as I said, I come because this is home. This is where we taught the children to drive. This is where we disciplined them. They knew—they had bicycles—they knew they could go any—anywhere they wanted to. There weren't that many cars on the road. But they knew they had to be home at a certain time, and they came home at that time. My husband would sit on the porch and the twelve o'clock whistle would blow.

They had things on this island that you don't hear about anywhere else. This was a poor island when we started coming, and workmen didn't have wrist watches. So at twelve o'clock the fire—fire station down here would blow a big whistle—everybody would listen for the whistle—and all of the workmen would climb down their ladders and get in their cars, and away they would go to lunch. And at twelve o'clock my children, on their bicycles, would be coming across the park. My husband said, "Here they come." I said, "They better be coming." And, but they had the freedom to go and

know that they were safe, and to come back. And that's one of the beautiful things about the island. It's changing now. You pick up the paper and there's been a murder. My—my painter was murdered last—two weeks ago. It was a terrible thing! Anyway, it was on the front page of *The Gazette*, and I threw it out. Are there any questions—, specific questions?

JB: Well yeah, absolutely. I was just wondering—so you said your mother was the first one in your family to start coming here. Do you remember, do you know when that was?

HE: Yeah, she was—my mother was the first of our family, but there were several black families here. And she knew them, and fell in love with the island. You leave your worries behind, it seems. When you get on that boat and you get here, all of a sudden something happens. The children—as soon as they—I would drive from Chicago to the Bluffs with three girls in the back of the car. It took four days and three nights. They learned all of the states as they came along. It was a learning process. And they got to Providence: “Mommy, we’re almost there!” I said, “Yes, I know.” “Can we go across on the big boat?” I said, “Yes.”

In those days you didn't have to have a reservation; you just got on the boat and came over. And they would feed the seagulls. There were certain things you did. You fed the seagulls; you always had dry bread with you. As soon as we got off—and it was a good learning lesson—there was a seamen's retreat, right? It's gone of course, but you learned to give. I—we'd give them a couple of dollars to go into and put it on the table for the seamen. They were the whalers come in on the big whaling boats and had no place to go, and they could stay

at the retreat. There were beds. They could get food. They could have a bath until they go back out for months as whalers. This is whaling country. And they learned; they learned to give, and it was a wonderful experience!

The firemen would come around and ask for a contribution, so we always gave them the money. “You go give it to the firemen. It’s important that the firemen are taken care of.” And so many little things. After the—after the twelve o’clock whistle, the Catholic Church—the organist would sit and play four or five beautiful hymns. You could hear them all over. All over. We’d sit on the porch, and you could sing the hymns with—with the—it was different. It was something you’d never done. You didn’t do that in the city. This was country. And everybody took care of everybody else. We all had a chart for fire. Everybody knew where the fire was. A big whistle would blow one, one, two, three, thirteen—run and get the chart and find out where thirteen is! “Oh Mama, thirteen is up near JoAnne’s house. Can we go?” I said, “Yes, go.” And cars would be going by because it’s volunteer. We—we have about three firemen [laughs] and everything else is volunteer. And so we knew where the fires were. You went, you helped; you did what you could do.

If there were small children, our children would kind of look out for them, and love them and hug them and say, “It’s going to be all right. It’s going to be all right.” And it—it was a community like no community I had ever known. I think that that’s why I keep coming. I keep coming. My husband died two years ago. We were married sixty-three years. And all of those years we had to come to Martha’s Vineyard for the summer. We could go anywhere we

wanted to. We had the money. We had the—we had the facilities, but we had to come here. This was a drawing card, even after my mother died. She left me both houses and—but I like the cottage. That's a house. We've always lived in a house: paneled walls and back stairs to the maid's quarters. Been there, been there, done that. And as I said, for us it was just a gathering place. They made friends here. The same people came every year, and you looked for them, and the children all knew each other. The other day I looked out on the porch—my—I had a big group here last—last—what was it—Fourth of July? Oh Lord! And I looked out, and four of the girls that my daughters used to run with were on island and had come over to see if they were here.

And then the young man that lives across the street who is married—Wes Allen—he saw the gathering on the porch, and he and his wife came over, and they just had a reunion. And that—that's—was wonderful. There are a lot of things to support on this island. It's become very commercial and very expensive. As I said, I'm not a joiner and I—I support what I want to support, but I don't support everything because I can't do it. And—but some people do. They support everything on the island. And they come here and they work.

I work when I go off island. That's my job. I come up here to rest, to put it all behind me and to know that this is peace and quiet. And well, as I said, we had so many opportunities that they don't have today. When—when the Kennedy's moved over here and built, they put up fences all around their property. Well, that's where the children used to go to pick berries. And they would go to pick berries, and there were guards there with guns. And they came home, “Mama,

they got guns.” They’d never seen guns. One policeman on the corner [laughs]—now we’ve got a police department. But there was one policeman on the corner. And as I said, everybody knew everybody. The—the head of the police department cut my grass. And the butcher at—was the A&P—was my electrician. I’d just go over and tell him, “Come over after work.” And it was so funny Eddie—Eddie—well, he’s Eddie to me because we grew up together—Senator Brooke would come. His helicopter would dock out in the yard here, and my—and the Chief of Police would get down off of his riding thing that he’d cut the grass, and he’d say, “Miss Evans I’ll be right back. I’ve got to take Senator—I’ve got to escort Senator Brooke home.” I said, “All right!” [Laughs]

You know, it was down home for us. I don’t know what—what the other people—what your other interviews have been, but as I said, this is home and I—next week some of the children are coming. They have a playroom out there, so this—because this is a little house, but it has a lot of rooms upstairs.

JB: Could you tell me a little bit more like about the social life, you know?

HE: Here—the social life?

JB: Yeah, you know, back in—back in the day when you were coming?

HE: Well, there wasn’t that much social life. There were about ten families, black families, and they banded together, and they called themselves the Cottagers. The Cottagers met on Wednesdays, and they—if you—if I had houseguests, or if you had houseguests, you brought them to the meeting. Wasn’t much of a meeting; it was really a coffee clutch. And then after the meeting was over we all went to

the beach at two o'clock. And that was—that was the extent. People have—they would have a little luncheon and invite you, or cocktails.

Now, oh, the social life on this island is unbelievable! The Cottagers have three or four big affairs to raise money. And I think that's wonderful to give back, because now you give back. As far as the social life, as I said, I don't—my generation has gone. The young people do have a big social life. One of my children would have to be here to tell you about it. There are groups that come over and have historical seminars. There are musicians that come over. And, but I'm not a part of that. I'm sorry.

JB: Yeah. Well that's okay. I'm interested in how—?

HE: You can get that from somebody else.

JB: I'm interested in how it used to be.

HE: Yeah.

JB: You know.

HE: Yes. Well this was the way it was. There were just a few families. Cottagers were the only ones, and we—we paid ten dollars dues. Now, I think it's a hundred and something. But they give big affairs and they sell tickets. I don't come down here to sell tickets and to go to meetings. I have to do that as a minister's wife in the city. So I don't. I don't. And as I said, my mother came every year. She—she would be here when we got here. She was a school teacher and they're off three months, so you can take three months off and come here and rest up, make your lesson plans, sit out on the porch. As you see, everybody who speaks—everybody who goes by, waves or says, "Hi," whether they know you or not. And you'd have to get the real social life from the Banks, around the corner, or other people, because

as I said, I am not involved. And I say, “No thank you,” all the time. But then I always have family here, and that’s important for me. As I said, these children who were here last week—that’s—they’re the thirteenth of my great-grandchildren. And so I have my hands full when they—and that’s what I like to do.

JB: So I just was wondering a little bit more about—and you said you had traveled for four days and three nights to get to the ferry. So what was that, you know, what was that trip like?

HE: [Laughs] Well, my husband hated it. Well, he didn’t come with us. He came, and he only—he had August as a vacation. He flew in in August. We’d pack up the children, and we’d pack up the suitcases to the level of the—of the backseat, and put a blanket down so they had the backseat. And you just sit there and drive until you get to the hotel. You’d made the—your reservations all along the way. And we’d go to three motels, and the fourth day we would come over. And I say when they got to Providence they knew. “We’re almost there!” [Laughs] I remember once, we were going across the George Washington Bridge in New York and I missed my turn. I could see the motel but I was in the wrong lane. I couldn’t get over—nobody would let me in. And I had to come—and I came through the toll booth, and I said, “I don’t want to go through the toll booth!” [Laughs] “I don’t want to do that.” I said, “I want to go down there.” He says, “Lady, you’ve got to go through.” I said, “No, I’m not going to go through,” because then I couldn’t. I had to go all the way in—what was—what was the next town? I had to go to the next town, turn around, come back, and go all the way around again. I think I’m the only person who was allowed to make a U-turn. He final—to get rid

of me he stopped all the cars on this side and said, “All right lady, [laughs] go on down.” And I went; went right on down to the motel. But the children were tired and disagreeable, and I was tired and disagreeable, and I wasn’t going any further. I was too near to my destination. The children enjoyed it, but it was a hard trip. It was a hard trip.

JB: I bet. You were coming from Washington, D.C. for these trips?

HE: I was coming from Chicago.

JB: Oh, from Chicago, okay.

HE: Yeah, yeah. Washington’s only—what is it? Five, six, seven—about nine hours from here. When we lived in New York, it’s five hours. But we always came. Chicago was the furthest that we came.

JB: In the years that you were making this trip, what—what years were those like, you know, from Chicago? Can you remember?

HE: Oh—

JB: I mean like, you know, forties, fifties, sixties?

HE: Well, it would be about sixty years ago. My children are all—the girls, the three girls are now sixty-five, sixty-three and sixty. So it was—yes it was in the, yes.

JB: In the fifties and sixties?

HE: In the fifties, yeah. Fifties—in the fifties, yeah.

JB: So how did you—because I know like, back then, you know, a lot of hotels didn’t, you know, allow black people to stay there?

HE: Well, we were very careful. Yes, yes, and motels would take you. And we only picked those—AAA would pick them for us, usually. And we—and they would map us. But we took the same route every year. I watched the Pennsylvania Turnpike being built! [Laughs]

JB: Wow! That's impressive.

HE: We did. We used to have to take Route 6 out here to get here. And [laughs] you'd get a slow New Englander driving in front of you and it's, "I got to make a boat!" [Laughs] And it's a one way street. You can't do anything about it. Oh, and they—the children would—trying to push me. I said, "I can't go any further. This is it." And we would just about make the boat. But as I said, you didn't have reservations. You didn't have to go anywhere. You didn't have to get the tickets. You had to just get on the boat. So it was an exciting time. Just getting on the boat was—was the joy, as I said.

JB: So—so when you were hanging out with the, you know, your group of Cottagers, about, you said ten families or so, what did you—what did you talk about?

HE: Well, we wanted to get a place where there were more people coming with children. We wanted to build something, or buy something that—where the children could come and have art lessons. There were art teachers, and I'm a dancer and I had ballet classes, and we all gave of our time to the children. And in the evening, once a week, we would have a dance for the older children, and we would supervise. And finally we were able to raise enough money to get Cottage Corner down here. Now, that was the firehouse when I was growing up. That was the firehouse. We only had two—one engine, and the jail. Firehouse was in the front and the jail was in the back; the men on this side and the women on this side! [Laughs] And there were just about room enough for two—two at a time.

But that's the history of the Cottagers. They didn't know that. They didn't know about the building. I said, "Well, this is the story of

the building. This was—this was the firehouse for this area.” And it was the jail. It was all there together. And upstairs was the clerk’s office. There’s the side stairs, and you’d go up to the clerk’s office; pay your bills and things. So that’s what we did. We gave of our time. Every day the cottage was open. There would be art lessons; there would be ballet lessons. There would be tap dance lessons. There were cooking lessons. They were always busy. And the children could all go—walk, ride, get on their bicycles, and could go. And they were on their own, you see. Then in the evening, the parents would take them to the beach. But they had the free time. I don’t know what they’re doing now about the children because I’m not participating with them. And any other questions?

JB: Oh, yeah.

HE: Oh, yeah! [Laughs]

JB: So, did you have any interaction with, like, the locals, like the year-round residents, when you first started coming here? Did you know any of them?

HE: Not much, no. This group over here—we kind of stayed to ourselves. We were all families; what they call here on the island generation families. As I said, this is the fifth generation in this house. And it would be about the fifth generation when Ann, the girl who just waved to me—she’s getting—her daughter is getting married next month, August. And her babies will be fifth generation for them. The Barmakians here—oh, that’s an interesting family. Have you heard about the Barmakians and their homes?

JB: No.

HE: The great big houses up here?

JB: No, I never heard of them.

HE: They're diamond merchants from Boston. They—three brothers: a set of twins, and [laughs] a set of identical twins, married a set of identical twins. And their house. They weren't—they weren't married then. Their house burned down to the ground.

But they were diamond merchants. They're Armenian. They had—well, when mother bought this house, they tell me now, Ira was sitting on the porch, about six years ago. He said, "You know Harriette, we really didn't—we were very upset over here when we heard that—what—Hyde—that Mr. Hyde had sold his house to a colored lady." And I said, "Well, you know Ira, if I were here first and I found out that you were buying this house next door to me and you had fourteen children, I'd be upset too." So we got—we struck it off all right. Well, they had money on top of money, and as their children grew up they wanted a house of their own. This is a very—these are very—there are three houses, and they're very small. And they're very standoffish. Armenians are Armenians, and they stick together.

JB: Yeah, yeah. They sure do.

HE: What's the child's name? Just went by the house running. One of their daughters went with Lincoln Pope, handsome black youngster, ran with my children, and I think they could have made it, but Daddy says, "Armenians marry Armenians. Now you can—you and Lincoln Pope can fool around all you want, but [laughs] you're not going to marry him." And she didn't, and she hasn't married all these years. And he had a bad marriage. I think they could have made it. They were—they were—it wasn't puppy love. This was real. And she's in

her sixties now, late sixties—hasn't married. I was talking to her the other day—had no interest. She's a lawyer up here. Has a good job, beautiful home—homes. Every time the children got there, they built them a home. You need to go up the hill and that's—all those big houses are theirs. Oh, I don't know how many there are. It's a real compound. They first bought Eddie Brookes' house, which is a huge house. He used to live right behind me. When the war was over and he married a young French girl and brought her home and her family. [Laughs] That's another story. And so they decided—he got married; Eddie got married again. It's a long story—and moved off island and sold that house, big house with a glass ballroom in the back for dancing and parties. He wasn't accepted up there. They didn't want this black man up there.

JB: Really?

HE: No. And every time he had a party, the police would come. Not just police—I don't mean Oak Bluffs police, I mean state police with black boots on and guns in their pockets. You know, just—we didn't see that; we didn't see things like that.

JB: Yeah. And was this when he was Senator?

HE: Yeah.

JB: Wow!

HE: Oh, yeah. He bought it, because his girls were at the age where they wanted to—well, we were all partying at that age. They were thirteen, fourteen, fifteen year olds. And they'd all come to my house, or they'd all go over to the West house, or they'd go to Eddie's house. And Eddie says, "These children need a place to go." And he wanted his daughters to join the—the club, the sailing club down here. They

wouldn't. And he's the senator from Massachusetts. They wouldn't admit him; they wouldn't take him. So he decided—the Morningstar's were moving, and decided to buy the Morningstar estate up here. And it was a big estate, because the Morningstar's didn't feel that there were any young people on this island that they wanted their children to play with or mingle with. So once a—once a week, on a Friday, a boat would come in. All the children he had invited to the party came. They stayed over. They stayed for the weekend; had a dormitory built upstairs: boys on this side and girls on that side. [Laughs] And—and then they would go home.

So when they died out they sold it, and Eddie Brooke bought it. And he began to—well, he rented rooms upstairs. They had all these dormitory [unclear]. We'd have a lot of parties in the glass ballroom. Well, when the Barmakians bought the house they didn't need the ballroom, so they turned that into a lovely great big living room—huge! And their friends could stay upstairs. And in the main house, some of the children stay. But they're—they're an interesting family. I said for years and years, I never knew who I was talking to. To this day, I don't know who I'm talking—I don't know if I'm talking to Lillian or Caroline. And they're the only girls left now. But identical twins, and it was in the paper, and I cut out the paper and I thought I brought it here—identical twins married identical twins. And they were identical, really. I grew up with them and I can't—still can't tell them apart.

JB: Yeah. So when—so when a new family would come onto the island, and you know, start renting a house, or buy a house or something, how would they get to know people?

HE: They joined the Cottagers.

JB: Okay.

HE: And then—because then they knew all the black families on the island, because most of them were Cottagers. And that's what they did. They'd come; they'd buy a house and then they'd join the Cottagers. And then they had access to everything that was going on.

JB: I see.

HE: Yes, that's the way that works.

JB: And so to join the Cottagers, they didn't—?

HE: Well, you had to be voted in. Somebody had—somebody had to pull your name in. Somebody in the Cottagers you had to know and bring your name in. You were voted on. I don't know of any people who had been turned down frankly.

JB: So was—did you ever experience any, like, discrimination on the island, or anything like that?

HE: Yes, there's been a lot of discrimination on the island, earlier. Our young people, when they got to the thirteen and the boys wanted—wanted a job and, they would go around asking for a job: busboy, dishwasher. No, no. In fact for many, many, many years they would send to Ireland, and they'd bring over a whole crew for the summer, and they did all of the hotels and restaurants. Now, our children couldn't get a job—not the black children. And now they can. Things have changed. But it was—yes, there was a lot of prejudice, as I said.

JB: Really?

HE: The Browns on the corner were the first black family. They are West Indian. I guess you know of—or do you—Suzanne de Passe?

JB: No, I never heard of her.

HE: Did you ever hear of her?

JB: No.

HE: She's—she's a director of movies. She's done three or four big things. Anyway, they lived on the corner. And he would come in the back way. He wouldn't—he never used—he said [laughs], "I never use my front stairs." But he showed color because he was from the islands. And he came in the back way, always. And, but we never had any real trouble. This island was—a lot of them thought they were having some trouble, because if you went to a restaurant it—you didn't go to a restaurant like this, like this. They had a notice, "No pants. Women cannot come in pants." You had to dress. You had to wear a coat. You had—and if you didn't, they had coats, jackets hanging up, you could borrow. And several of our black folk felt that it was discrimination, but it wasn't. It was the standard of—don't do it anymore. You go anywhere you want to go. But this island had very high standards as far as dress codes and manners.

But they weren't used to—I can say this—they weren't used to black people on the island. The natives were brown, but they were Indian and they knew it, and they were up in Gay Head. And we would go to Gay Head. And I loved going to Gay Head. And you wouldn't see them until Illumination Night, when everybody would go to the Methodist campgrounds, and the oriental lanterns were hung in all the homes. And they sat on their little porches, and I mean little. You need to go over there. Have you been over?

JB: I've—I've—a little bit, yeah.

HE: Little, little porches.

JB: Very small houses.

HE: Yes. And they would serve tea and cookies, and ask you to come up and sit on the porch with them. And it was a wonderful experience. I loved going over there. So yes there—there was prejudice. It was—it was subtle. It was subtle. As I said, the Barmakians didn't speak to us until my daughter was being married. My husband married her. We got permission to use the chapel in Edgartown. He had to go to—to Boston to get a permit. I sent them an invitation, and they were so surprised that they were invited to the—to the wedding, that they came over and they brought chairs. And had a—had the wedding there, but we had the reception here, and on this side of the lawn. And they brought chairs and they: "What can we do?"

Then I realized that it wasn't so much that they were prejudiced as it is that they are loners. They don't know how to speak to you. They don't know how to come up on the porch. They might come over and stand at the—at the porch and talk to you while you're sitting out there. But I found out later on that it isn't that they were prejudiced to us. But that was a long time, you know. My children—she's getting married and we've been here all this time. We came over when she was three months old. So, a lot of it, you just don't understand that the people are—the Regents were cold and cool for a long time. But my Barbara, who is an outgoing child, and she would go over and speak, "Hello, Ms. Regent," and go up on the porch [unclear]. [Laughs] And she got used to it and we—we've been good friends ever since.

But they didn't want the Gay Head Indians coming down here. They come now all the time. They don't dress in—in those days that

was really ox tail or ox tail—oxen drawn wagons, and beautiful ceremonies that you could go to free. It—this island was a different world from anything. It's changed. You can't go to Gay Head. It's become commercial. They're selling their stuff.

JB: That's really interesting. So, can you tell me about any notable events that you remember, you know, from when you were younger, like anything that happened here?

HE: Yes, I can think of the big auction they have every year. What was it called? Oh, I'm sorry. That's the biggest event on the island now, run by a black woman. It was run by—what was his name? He died. [Pause] Can't come up with his name. If I'd known, I would have looked it up. They have a big, big auction. They raise thousands and—a million dollars.

JB: And this is now, they're doing this?

HE: Now. Now they—they're still doing it. Oh, yes, they're still doing it. The last one they had over in Ocean Park. They've never been down here. We've had to go to Edgartown. Bunch, Birch—what was his name? And they have the kind of things where they auction off—a famous man will have a big yacht, and he would offer so many thousands of dollars for you to come on his boat and be his guest for a weekend. And get it! And that money won. These are money people: upper island people, movie stars, who have come here. They're mostly in upper Edgartown. You don't see much of them.

You saw a lot of the Kennedy's. They walked the streets and they waved, and everybody knew their sailboat. It was out here on the water. They were different. Walter Cronkite. A lot of—a lot of big people have homes here. And they do have big events. As I said,

there would be that, and somebody else would offer their home for a weekend, to live in their home for a weekend and have their maid service, and all of the things that they have. They would move out for that time. And it's quite a thing. I've got papers on the auction, but I didn't know that you wanted to know that, because I would have gotten them out.

JB: No, that's okay.

HE: Yes, they raise—they raise hundreds of dollars—millions. They go into the millions on that auction. And as I said, now it's become a rich island. It was a poor island when we were here. There were just the natives. Everybody—when you go the store, I pay cash, and they couldn't get over it. "Cash?" Everybody had a charge, and at the end of the month when they got paid, they paid the charge. And I said, "Yes, I pay cash."

JB: What is so—the people—back to the Cottagers again. What were the occupations of, you know, of the husbands and—?

HE: Well, most of the people who come here are professionals, both—both the wife and the husband. This house right straight across the street from me, right there, belonged to the Powell's, and it was given—left to Howard University when they died. And they let it go. Howard didn't—wouldn't take care of it.

JB: Oh, so you've got some pictures here?

HE: Yeah. Howard wouldn't take care of it and left it standing, and this is—for years this is what we looked at. They wouldn't—they wouldn't let them take the—see, this is what we looked at. About eight years it would have to be now—about eight years ago, a family called Wellbournes—they own about eight or nine McDonald

establishments—built that beautiful home there. These are people now that are coming, are money people and they're professionals. That's all that could afford. The latest of the big houses [unclear]—you know of him, of course.

JB: Yeah, Peter—Peter Norton.

HE: He—yeah, Peter Norton. This is his house. It's right on the corner down the street. Had a big fire. The whole house burned to the ground.

JB: Oh, really?

HE: Oh, really.

JB: Oh, dear.

HE: Yeah. And I kept the papers. He has rebuilt it and this is the history. I'm—I'll just keep this. He has built—he's married to a black—he was married to a black woman, and when I met him I said, "Well, why do you come from California to Martha's Vineyard?" And he said, "Because of my children. Understand, I want them to know that they are black as well as white. And I want them to know the kind of children who come to Martha's Vineyard." And so they come every year. [Unclear] the building of the house—all the—and he's—they're very open and understanding. And so as I said, I've been trying to—it's a beautiful house right on the—right on the corner down there. [Unclear]

JB: What other—what other photographs do you have in that album?

HE: Oh, in this one I'm just getting it together—just that—

JB: Is it mostly of the houses and things?

HE: I'm putting this—mostly, yeah. I'm just starting to get it together.
Oh, I've got photographs. We were having a terrible time out here.
You see these ugly plants they've put up?

JB: Oh yes, yeah.

HE: Well—

JB: Who put them up?

HE: Conservation people. I was just at a meeting. This is the way it used to be. Look at the water.

JB: Oh, that's [laughs]—that's pretty bad. There's water all in the park.

HE: This is from the other house, and that's my house sitting in the midst of all this water. And then there was so much water they thought it was a pond, and mothers would come and their children would play in that dirty water. She's sitting there watching them. I have this—

JB: How long—how long ago is this?

HE: Oh, up until two years ago! [Laughs] And any—any bad heavy rain, and this is what I would get. See, that's from our porch, all the way across. And so I showed them: this is what I live with when it rains, and so they put these plants in. They say that there's some kind of conservation. They drill up the water; they suck all the water. I don't know if they do enough yet—

JB: We'll find out.

HE: —because we haven't had—we'll find out, yeah. This is the way the park used to look. They've let it go.

JB: Yeah, I guess so. How old is this postcard here, do you know?

HE: I don't know. What's it say on it? Is anything on it? It had to be 1800, though.

JB: How did you get this?

HE: Oh, whenever I find a place that sells things like this, I buy them. No, no there's no marking on it.

JB: Yeah, there's no date or anything.

HE: [Unclear] place stamp here. Stamps were one cent! [Laughs]

JB: And so where were—where were the other vacationers coming from back in, you know, back in like the forties, fifties, sixties, at that time?

HE: Most of them came from Boston and New York: Boston, New York, New Jersey—that was it. But now they come from everywhere: Vermont, Maine. And they're coming, and they like it and they're buying and building huge houses. They're spending money. I'm going to have to do something with this house or move over to Mother's big house. I don't want to. I like the view. I like it here, but all these all these grown children—and they're big. I've got a daughter-in-law who is 6'1" in her stocking feet. And all the boys are big. So we've got to build on. We need room. This was all right for my family, but it's not all right.

JB: Well, we're getting a little short on time. I've got to get up to Jocelyn Walton's place to talk to her. But I just wanted to ask you, you know, sort of just to close: what do you think, you know, what—what's the most important thing, you know, what makes Martha's Vineyard special to you?

HE: Well, as I said, it's an escape from the big city. It's a different type of living than I was used to. I like the quiet. I come here because it's a retreat and it's nothing I've ever known. When I go back to the city it's—when my daughter got married I came here to meditate and to make her dress. I did all the sewing in those days. Those days, we did things differently. You made all your clothes. And I would sit

here and think about her marriage and my marriage, and what—what's—what's ahead of us. And the girls have all had good marriages.

But I came here, brought a sewing machine, brought a—a form, all of the clothes, all of the beads, and sat here and would bead her dress, and got it all together for her. It's a retreat. It's a place to get away for me. Now they come to party, and that's all right. That's another generation. They come to party and they have big lavish parties. And they come, as I said, to have big affairs and give the money back to the island. But I don't—my life is just a little different from the other interviews you're going to have, whatever you have. So, that's all I can say.

JB: Yeah. Well thank you so much.

HE: [Unclear] all right.

JB: I really appreciate it. I'm just going to stop.

[End of Interview]