



Oral History Interview with Evelyn Conkle Gilbert

83 Years Old

July 26, 1984

Interviewed by: Larry Paoletti

[Notes in Brackets added by Kate LaLonde, Worthington Historical Society in January 2021.]

LP: *[Prior to set-up; poor audio quality has been omitted]* This is Larry Paoletti. I'll be interviewing Evelyn Gilbert of Worthington, Ohio on her memories of the past for our Oral History Project. We have as our objective to discover what Worthington was like 75 years ago and how it has changed over that time period to the present so that the community's past will be preserved for both the schools and the community.

[Sound test/set up]

Pre interview:

LP: *You've been here in this house very long? It's a pretty new house isn't it?*

EG: *I've been here since '72. No, it was about 35 years old then. It's about fifty years old, I think. It's been kept up... (sound cut)*

[more set up conversation/test]

LP: Were you born in Worthington?

EG: No I, No I was born in Bellevue, Ohio, in the northern part of the state. And we came here in 1913 and we lived over here on South Street, on the corner of South and Hartford.

LP: There probably wasn't any Pinney Street then, was there?

EG: Oh Heavens no! This was cornfields down here. And even across from our house, which is that nice house where Don, Donald Barnes lives now, and they've done so much to it. And across from that was just a field—had one house in it, and that was a tenant, a tenant lived there for the farm that was over there.

LP: Right across the street from us, where Kilbourne Village is, that was all fields when we moved there.

EG: Oh sure.

LP: Just cornfields.

EG: Yeah, owned by the church. [*St. John's Episcopal*]

LP: Bellevue, that's, it that by Mansfield or is that by Lake Erie?

EG: No that's near Lake Erie, near Sandusky and Norwalk.

LP: So your ah, just before World War I...

EG: Oh yeah, this is 1913.

LP: Just before the war.

EG: Um-hmm.

LP: What was Worthington like during World War I?

EG: Well, um, it was uh, I don't know, see I was a child, and I didn't realize what a war was and what was going on, really.

LP: Oh yeah, your family moved in from Bellville, Bellevue.

EG: Bellevue.

LP: Oh, you were just ah...

EG: See my father worked for Mrs. Eldridge who had, who had a, who had a school. In the early 1900's, she had a school where that Lane's Coach House used to be, in that house [*Ripley House, 623 High*]. And she had handicapped children, but she also had other children too. There were handicapped children and children of the first families in Worthington went there. And she prepared them for high school. And um, then, she bought some land, which is down in Rush Village now, and she had..

LP: called Rush Village?

EG: Down here, on South Street. And she moved her school down there. And that's when my father managed that for her.

LP: He was a teacher?

EG: No, he wasn't. No, he just managed the farm.

LP: Oh, the farm, I see...Was he a farmer?

EG: No. We, well, he came from a little town - he knew about farming.

I had a brother who was handicapped, not handicapped; but he was crippled and he went to that—that's the reason we came here. He went to that school.

LP: Oh a special school. I'll be darned. Worthington had something special then in those days. What was the name of the school?

EG: It was Mrs. Eldridge's School, I think that's the only name I ever knew.

LP: Mrs. Eldridge's school...yeah, that's a first.

EG: She had a, it was quite a well-known school, because they always had a commencement. There's a picture in the Historical Society files of a commencement from that school in about 1906, or some such year...

LP: I'll be darned.

EG: ...and some of the most prominent people in early Worthington, either graduated from that school or had children who graduated from that school.

LP: That's amazing. How long did it last? We came in '53, and I don't remember...

EG: Oh, I think, in about 1915 to 1916, I think she closed the school and just had school for the handicapped.

LP: Oh, she semi-retired or something...

EG: Mm-hmm. I used to go to that school. I never knew whether I was from the first families or the handicapped! [*Laughs*]

LP: Oh it was a combination private school?

EG: Uh-huh, it was a private school. Quite a well-known school.

And, Miss [Helen] Robinson, who used to be the principal of Worthington High School and who was known by everybody, who ever went to Worthington High School until about 1930, was her niece.

LP: Our house, where we are now, used to be a school. It was Miss Little's Dancing School. Do you remember that?

EG: Oh yes. That's where I learned to dance. [*Rose O. Little*]

LP: Really? That's our living room now. That was her former dance hall, or dance school?

EG: All my friends went there when we were in high school.

LP: I've had several people say they went to dancing school there. Some boys said they went reluctantly and the girls said they enjoyed it.

She lived in the upstairs and in the back she had a kitchen. And the whole front was her dancing school. It was quite big.

EG: And she also lived on Evening Street.

LP: Yeah, that's where we live; 690 Evening Street. That was her school.

EG: Oh, oh, yeah. That's right. I was thinking you lived on New England.

LP: No.

EG: Oh yes. I know that house.

LP: It's had another addition since then, since she left. It's had all kinds of additions.

EG: She used to be a librarian too. The library was over Leasure's Drug Store which is ah...

LP: Was it?

EG: Which is, now Leasure's Drug Store was in a building, where Dr. Bonnell's office used to be and the bank. [*Leasure's Drug Store was located in the building at the SW corner of New England and High St (Fritzy Jacobs today) from around 1897 - 1908, and the library was on the second story of this building for a brief time. Leasure's was also located at 693 High on the corner of the SW Village Green (McCormick, Histories of Structures, 93 W. Granville history)*]

LP: Oh yes, the red brick building.

EG: Um-hmm. And then the library was upstairs.

LP: It was? Well, that building was the later the library and then what was that, the town hall or something?

EG: You mean over on the Green?

LP: Yeah,

EG: No, that was built for a library.

LP: Oh yeah, that's right. It was a contribution by Mrs. Deshler. That building was not even there yet.

EG: Hm-mm. There was, well there was a building facing 161, which we called State Street. And that was an old, old school building. It was an elementary school when I was a child.

LP: Which corner was that?

EG: It was down a little bit where the um, almost, well where Kilbourne School is now, there was a building that was high school.

LP: Oh an old school.

EG: And then it was just west of that. It wasn't facing High Street. It faced 161. There were four rooms in it. For a while, there were two grades in each room and then, when the high school was built, well they had the 8th grade I think, 7th and 8th grades, in what was the old high school building.

LP: Oh, that's where Kilbourne School is now.

EG: I taught in that school, in the old elementary school one year.

When I was at Ohio State, I had to stay out a year because I didn't have any money to go any farther, so I taught a year, and I taught for \$90 a month. And I saved almost all of that, I saved like \$750 out of that, so I could go back to Ohio State another year.

LP: To become a teacher. I'll be darned. That was in the 20s?

EG: [Some date confusion omitted] I graduated [from OSU] in 1924 and this was about 1922. It was the year before I graduated. I went to Ohio State two years, then I stayed out a year, and then I went back finished in a year and a half.

LP: Oh I see, then you came back and taught at Worthington for a while.

EG: No, I never taught it Worthington. No after I graduated from Ohio State, I went to Cleveland. And I spent my whole career in Cleveland.

LP: Oh I see.

EG: I taught at Collinwood High School for 36 years in Cleveland.

LP: Oh I see, you started here, went to Cleveland and then came back here.

EG: Yeah, I only taught here one year, and that was before I graduated from Ohio State.

LP: I see, oh. What made you come back to Worthington?

EG: Well, I married John Gilbert whom I knew in high school here. He lived here.

[John Griswold Gilbert, b. 1899, d. 1960, son of Ezra and Elizabeth Wing Gilbert; married Ollie Mae Smith (1902-1957); married Evelyn Conkle in 1958; in Mila Jeanette Griswold's oral history she recalls that Evelyn Gilbert used to play the piano for the Presbyterian church and then run across the square to St. John's to see John Gilbert because she had a crush on him.]

LP: Oh I see.

EG: I knew him, I knew his first wife. And since he was a friend of mine, when she died, we were married in '58.

LP: Oh I see, then you were gone from uh...

EG: I was gone from '23 you see, when I graduated until about '58, until I came back.

LP: Oh I see. Okay. Then you wouldn't remember the Depression? You weren't here. You remember the Depression in Cleveland but we're looking at Worthington. That was quite a time, the Depression wasn't it?

EG: Yes, it was dreadful.

LP: I was a kid then.

EG: It was dreadful to be a teacher then because in Cleveland, of course, was just poverty stricken in so many areas. And I taught in an industrial area up there, and it was near the New York Central Railroad yards, and our children were poor anyway before the Depression, many of them. And they had, it was so hard on children. It was so hard to be a teacher then.

LP: I know. I was in school then. It was a tough time. Well then your memories would be, of Worthington, would be from '13 – '23.

EG: No, from the time I graduated from Ohio State, '23 until '58 I really knew nothing about Worthington in those intervening years.

LP: Yeah. You remember anything about the early years, from '13 to '23?

EG: Oh Yes. Sure.

LP: The World War era, then just after. Who was Mayor then? George Wing was mayor when we moved here. Do you remember who was mayor?

EG: Oh, I don't remember. I don't remember. I know Mr. Fickell [Fi-KELL] was superintendent of schools. That's about the only name I remember. I don't know who was mayor.

But, I remember a lot about the old families who lived, especially the old families who lived on what we called State Street, that is 161 now.

LP: Who would they be? The Pinneys?

EG: Oh, the Pinneys, and then there was a family by the name of Cless, and Pagels...[George] Pagels was mayor! He had children who used to live around here and they don't any more.

LP: A lot of them move away.

EG: Helen Pagels now lives in Pompano Beach in Florida, and Martha's dead and there was a boy, I forget his name [Edward]. He lives around here somewhere.

And Robinson, and um, Jones, David Jones.

LP: Horace Jones lived in back of us. Was he here then?

EG: Yeah, David Jones, his brother was in my class. Yeah, I knew Horace Jones for years.

LP: He was right in back of us, right next door to us, until he, uh let's see he died, or he moved and then he died. One of the two...Is David Jones still around, or do you know?

EG: No David Jones, David Jones had a handicap. I think he'd had spinal meningitis or some children's disease, and he was always very frail, and he died, I think shortly after we graduated from high school. I would think maybe in the 30s. [*Per 7/15/1943 Worthington News, Dr. David C. Jones died in 1943 at age 42; he was serving as Director of Physical Medicine and assistant professor of medicine at Ohio State University at the time of his passing.*]

And my class in Worthington High School had its 65th anniversary reunion in June. And we have an organization here called the 30 Year Club. Its people who graduated at least 30 years ago from Worthington High School. And we have a party every year spring, June, and this year was our 65th. Well, we have a, kind of a program that we follow. The chairman has the people who graduated before '20 stand, and then then the people '20 – '30 and so on. So he had asked people from before '20 to stand, and there were a few. It's fewer every year, you know. And so I said I like to talk, I always have to talk, and he said sure, Evelyn. So I said, "I want you to know this my class, this is the 65th reunion of my class, and there are 50% of the survivors here: me!" There are just two of us left.

LP: It probably wasn't a very large class to begin with.

EG: Fourteen. It was the old school, you see, the school that stands near Evening Street, that old building.

LP: On the corner there.

EG: That was new. Our class, I think as I remember, was the first class to graduate from that building when it was new.

LP: The library you say, was over...was George Bonnell there then?

EG: His father.

LP: Oh his father. Was he George also?

EG: I think...I don't know, I forget. But he had his office in that little extension to the building, you know, where George had his for so many years.

LP: Was there a bank next door then?

EG: It was Worthington Savings Bank, which is now the Ohio State Bank. [*Worthington Savings Bank was torn down in 1968 and new stone bank was built; first Ohio State Bank; currently U.S. Bank*]

LP: Let's see, what was there down the street, then? Was there any buildings? Those are all fairly new, aren't they? Was there older buildings?

EG: There was an old building where the restaurant is now. My father had a hardware store in that building. [now 666 High; Conkle sold to A.L. Johnson Hardware]

LP: Oh he did?

EG: And it was a frame building, and we lived in the back and upstairs at one time. My family moved from there, when I went to Cleveland in '23 or '24. There was also a hardware store across the street where the Worthington Hardware Store is. That's always been a hardware store.

LP: It was a different owner then?

EG: Yeah, um, Theron Wright's father owned it, James Wright.

LP: James Wright. And then Mr. Evans bought it?

EG: I don't know whether he bought it from James Wright or not, but it was the Evans Corporation that owned it.

LP Uh-huh. The Maxton Chevrolet would not have been there, right? On the corner.

EG: No. There was a garage that Frank Welling owned for a while.

LP: On the corner?

EG: Where that building, the garage building is now on New England and High.

LP: Where the Ford Body Shop is?

EG: Yeah. One time there was a fire in there, a big fire at night. Of course we lived right almost next to it. The cars inside burned and it was quite a big, a loss.

LP: [whistles] So the Jones Building would not have been there then?

EG: It was there, but it wasn't called the Jones Building. It was, a Mr. Parks, had an office for the...I think his name was William, William Parks. He lived down on Hartford Street right where the cut through is for the bank, the outlet for the bank. The drive in, you know. He lived right on the right hand side of that. He had kind of a candy store and ticket sales for the CD&M Interurban.

LP: Oh yeah, the Interurban. That was the first floor of the Jones Building, what is now the Jones Building?

EG: Downstairs. I don't know what was upstairs. I forget.

LP: We're talking about early '20's?

EG: Yes.

LP: Oh, okay. That's a little surprising. I thought the building was newer than that. [*The Jones Building burned Nov 27, 1926 and was rebuilt, per Worthington News 3/3/1927*]

Yes. Hm-mm. No it's been there a long time.

LP: Let's see now the old Corbin Funeral Home that's next door, wasn't it?

EG: Yeah. That's the Kilbourne Building.

LP: Was that Corbin Funeral Home, then?

EG: Yes.

LP: It was, that goes clear back to the 20s, huh?

EG: Yes, it goes back a long way. [*Samuel Corbin worked for Frank Goble's Undertaking business in this location beginning in 1902 and purchased and renamed the business in 1916.*]

LP: And there was - remember at least a grocery down the street, next to the Hardware.

EG: Yes. Tuller's Grocery.

LP: Is that the same Tuller...?

EG: No. I don't know if it's the same family or not. I don't think I ever asked them. They're friends of mine, Charlie and Helen Tuller. But, I don't think so. I think it was...See, the Tullers are really a Dublin family, I think. Their ancestors all settled over there around Dublin. I don't know if that was another branch of the family or not, but for years that was Tuller's Grocery.

LP: When we moved here it was Wood in 1980. That was many years later. Then the Hardware moved over and expanded into it. There used to be a confectionery called Allerton's in there.

EG: Well, I don't know that. That must have been still when I was away from Worthington.

LP: Then Bernie's Drug Store. Was that a drug store back in the '20's, that became later what is now Adam's Drug Store?

EG: Well, the drug store in my day was Leasure's.

LP: That was on the corner.

EG: On the corner. But it used to be across the street from that. It used to be in the building where Dr. Bonnell's office was, and the library was upstairs, and the drug store downstairs.

LP: And George Bonnell was in back.

EG: At the side. Then the house in the back of course is where the Bonnells lived. That brick house that faces the Square.

You see I say the Square because that's what it was called when I was growing up. When I came back from Cleveland, it was the Village Green. The whole concept of Worthington had changed. *[Laughs]* But it was the Square.

LP: Do you know when Leasure moved across the street?

EG: Oh, it was after I left Worthington. It was after the '20s. And then you see, Mr. Long who had the drug store when it was in that corner building there, the Jones Building, he had always worked for Mr. Leasure for years. My brother did too. My brother really put himself through college by working at Mr. Leasure's drug store. And um, he worked there all the time, summer and winter, when he was in school.

LP: Clarence Long was there when we moved here at the drug store.

EG: Mr. Long was always wonderful to my brother. He always liked my brother, and he helped him so much.

LP: Harold Heckendorn said he is now living in what was Leasure's house. *[93 W. Granville Rd.]*

EG: Yes.

LP: On Granville Road. It's pronounced "LAY-zhur," huh? You look at it you would think it was "LEE-zhur." Leasure.

EG: Yes. Now, Helen Leasure married the son, Lawrence Leasure. Lawrence died of flu, I think, in World War I.

LP: Oh yeah, a lot of them died in the epidemic.

EG: Oh, it was bad down at Camp Sherman, and I think that was the reason of his death.

And Helen Leasure *[Crane]* is still living. She lives down on Summit Street, Columbus.

LP: Helen Leasure.

EG: Yes, that's the daughter-in-law.

LP: Did you go in the Worthington Inn or whatever it was called then?

EG: Worthington Inn? Hotel Central.

LP: Hotel Central.

EG: Yeah, oh sure, I remember Hotel Central. They used to come up, because in the early days, the society people of Columbus would come up on horseback. There was a Columbus Riding Club, and they'd come up and make a whole day's trip of it, come up on horseback. And they would quarter their horses in the barn that stood on New England right behind the Inn. And Freddy Van Loon whose father owned the Hotel Central did everything. He would take care of the horses, and he would help the cook and he'd serve. And they'd sit out on the front porch and wait for Freddy to ring the bell, and then he'd come out in his white apron and he'd ring the bell and they'd all go in have chicken dinner family style in that front dining room of Hotel Central.

Not only that, but people used to come to Worthington to spend the summer.

LP: In the hotel?

EG: Um-hmm. They'd come up for a few days, or maybe a week, a weekend, and they'd sit on the front porch and talk and, [laughs] I had a letter from a friend of mine who grew up in Worthington, and she now lives in Winston-Salem. And she writes to me once in a while. I wrote her, sent her all the material I could find on the remodeling of the Hotel Central into the Worthington Inn. And she wrote back and she said, "Do you remember the ladies who used to sit on the porch and come up here for the summer and take walks in the evening through the village? They all smelled so good. They had such nice perfume!" [Laughs.] As kids I guess we noticed that.

LP: That's amazing that they would come up here. I guess they did that in those days though; they'd go to a hotel and just relax.

EG: Oh yes, like a summer resort. Well you know there were a lot of summer places around; not a lot, but the old building out on the Harding Sanatorium grounds, you know, was a family home. And I can't think of the name of the family, now it's quite a famous name in Columbus. [John J. Joyce] But they used to come out, they'd have a...

LP: You mean it was a vacation resort?

EG: They'd stay all summer. The whole family would come from their house down on Broad Street in Columbus. And they'd come out for the summer.

LPL Oh, it was their summer home.

EG: Yeah, um-hm. That house had a lovely porch all around. The men would take the Pennsylvania train down to the Union Station in Columbus to work each day. See that station out there where the Railroad Museum is? Well that was the Pennsylvania...

LP: The train actually used to stop in Worthington, then?

EG: Oh yeah, it ran from Sandusky to Columbus and it was used like a commuters train. They'd take the train down to Union Station. I don't know if they had an evening train or not. Maybe, they came back on the CD&M. A lot of men in Worthington in the early days, in my day, worked in Columbus and took the CD&M. They didn't drive to Columbus. They didn't use their cars for that. They used their cars just for pleasure, you know, and put them up in the winter because the batteries wouldn't work in the winter.

LP: I suppose in the '20s the road wasn't too good between here and Columbus.

EG: Oh Worthington, the High Street wasn't even paved in the early in the early '20s.

LP: Dirt road.

EG: It was dirt road.

LP: That wouldn't be too great. The railroad would be better, wouldn't it?

EG: There was a yellow house over here on Howard, I think it is, which was the summer home of a family by the name of Park, Howard Park. They were bankers in Columbus.

LP: Of Park Federal Savings?

EG: I don't know, probably. Yeah, I never thought of that. Maybe it was that bank. But, they would come up here for the summer. There was a long lane from High Street back to their house, right over here on Howard. And they had a girl, Martha, and she and I were about the same age so we got acquainted as kids do you know. And she would say to me, "Now my aunts are coming out tomorrow from Columbus, and they're going to spend the summer with us." It took them all day. They came from their house on Broad Street in Columbus in their electric car. And they'd start in the morning. It took them all day to come up to Worthington.

LP: Yeah, those cards didn't go too fast, electric.

EG: [laughing] And in the fall, they'd get in their electric car and go back. It was a vacation, summer vacation.

LP: Well it's easy to believe that. The roads were so bad you couldn't really go anyplace unless you went on the railroad. And then later they built the roads and people could....

EG: I remember when High Street was paved. It wasn't in the '20's, it was about 1917 I think. And up to that time it was a dirt road. See my husband's family had a dairy, and they kept their cows; they owned a lot on New England and High, on the southeast corner, where the Sohio station is now. They owned all that clear down to Hartford. They had a beautiful brick house there where my husband's grandfather and aunt lived. [*John Malcolm Gilbert, Grace Gilbert*] Then, the Gilberts had a frame house on Hartford and New England, and they had a big barn there. They kept their cows in that barn. When I was young, the boys would bring the cows

home in the afternoon after school and they would drive them down High Street from Medick Estates was there also.

LP: Oh Medick Estates was there?

EG: Yeah in the early days. They sold it for nothing during the Depression. They put the cows out to pasture on what is now Medick Estates.

LP: We're talking about the early '20s now?

EG: Yeah, earlier than it too.

LP: Late teens, early '20s.

EG: Like '16, '17, '18, maybe you know, the very early '20s.

LP: That house would have been right next to the Masonic Temple.

EG: Hm-hmm. The house was back a little bit. The house faced New England rather than High Street. So, they would keep the cows in the barn over-night, and then milk them in the morning, and take them back up High Street to Medick Estates and they'd be out to pasture all day.

LP: Oh I see. This is while Medick Estates was a pasture, before it became a housing development.

EG: Nothing there, pasture land.

LP: So the cows were walking through the streets of Worthington.

EG: Yeah, right up High Street!

LP: Any of them ever get hit by the CD&M?

EG: I don't think so [laughs]. We have some wonderful pictures over in our files at the Historical Society of High and New England, and in one there's a chicken right in the center. See, Worthington was a village. It was separate from Columbus. It was country between Worthington and North Columbus.

LP: Yeah, Columbus got up to Morse Road, but that took a while. When I was a kid, we used to drive up here just for an evening drive for pleasure, and you'd leave Columbus, you'd go through the country to get to Worthington. If we were ambitious we'd go on up to what was that place, the Brown Fruit Farm. Way up there. That was a long, long trip up there.

EG: Frame Brown's, yeah.

LP: Do you know of the Brown Fruit Farm? They were out of Worthington weren't they?

EG: Yes.

LP: They were almost up in Delaware County.

EG: Yeah, Murrin Cellar's father was manager of Brown Fruit Farm and he was in my class. He used to come to school each day on the CD&M.

LP: I'll be darned.

EG: When I went to college; the only reason I could go to college was that we lived here and I could take the CD&M to North Columbus. We'd get off what is along in there about Arcadia.

LP: Oh yes, where the big car barn is - was.

EG: And Olentangy Park. Then, you'd take the City Line down to the campus.

LP: That must have taken you quite a while.

EG: No, not too long.

LP: You'd have had a chance to study while you were riding down.

EG: The CD&M was very fast! It really did.

LP: Yeah, they really did. I remember those cars vaguely.

EG: Many towns had those electric and interurban systems and it was good communication (sic).

LP: Yeah. Some of those would maybe go 50, 60 miles an hour. A little dangerous I thought.

EG: It'd sway.

LP: I don't recall any of them ever having a wreck. I suppose they did occasionally.

EG: I don't, I don't know.

LP: I don't recall any.

EG: You know, up north, about where that camp is, that Boy Scout camp, what's the name of it? Camp Lazarus?

LP: Oh, yeah, in the ravine there.

EG: There used to be a trestle across that ravine.

LP: I remember that trestle. That was the CD&M, wasn't it?

EG: Mm-hmm, and that was a wild ride across there, because the CD&M would go fast, and that thing would sway, and the trestle would sway! That was a wild ride! [laughs]

LP: I bet! Were you ever across it?

EG: Oh, we used to go up there all the time, to Glenmary Park to skate.

LP: Oh Glenmary, that was right in the same ravine, wasn't it?

EG: Mm-hmm.

LP: Right near the Josephinum now.

EG: Across from the Josephinum. At Flint Road is where it was.

LP: To, you say, skate? Ice skate?

EG: Yeah there was a little lake up there and we'd go up there to ice skate in winter. Summer, we'd have picnics up there. There was a pavilion at Glenmary Park where they used to have dances and have a good band, you know, in summer.

LP: That was east of High, or what?

EG: East.

LP: East

EG: The lake is still there, I think.

LP: That's along Flint road somewhere.

EG: Mm-hmm.

LP: I'll be darned. I've heard the name before. Never knew what it was.

EG: Glenmary Park.

Church picnics, we'd always have church picnics up there.

LP: Oh, yeah.

EG: We'd all go up on the CD&M.

LP: Let's see here.

EG: In winter we'd...it was wonderful around here in winter because there were good coasting areas. We'd coast, there was a good hill behind St. Michael's Church, and we'd coast down there. And in winter we'd play up and down the ravine in what Rush Village is. There's a stream along there. Rush Creek. And we'd play along there, and set traps. Never caught anything. *[Laughs]* Like we'd catch beavers or something!

And then the older kids, when I was in High School, we would coast down Granville Road.

LP: Yeah, that's about a half mile hill.

EG: You could only go down about once. You could go from High Street to the river. And then it took you all evening to walk back, you know! You could only go down about once.

LP: That must have been quite a ride!

EG: It was, everybody went, all the high school coasted there every night.

LP: Be a long run with no stops, just keep going. Sounds like fun.

EG: And there were no cars because nobody drove in winter.

LP: I imagine. Was Granville Road paved then?

EG: I don't think so. I don't remember.

LP: This is early 20s. Late teens.

EG: It might have been a hard topped road. It was probably hard topped.

LP: Oh yeah.

EG: It really was a wonderful place to grow up in. It had all the advantages of a small town, and it was a fine small town. It had good schools and good cultural things here, cultural life. And it was near the university and near the city. So, you had the advantages of the city and the village. It really was a wonderful place to grow up.

LP: Yeah, Columbus was nearby if you needed something from the city.

EG: My mother was quite musical, and we used to go to concerts, [*sounds like* "Schumann, Haydn"], Kreisler, all those people who were famous then.

LP: All the old favorites.

EG: We heard all of those down at Olentangy Park. They had summer opera, and they had light musicals, and Gilbert and Sullivan operas, in the theatre down there. And we could go down there. We could shop in the city. We went to the Central Market.

LP: Oh yeah. That'd have quite a trip down there and back

EG: We'd go there on Saturday. Saturday evening my father would take us there on the CD&M and we'd buy things for the week.

LP: Right, Saturday night shopping. I remember when they used to do that. My parents used to.

EG: Take baskets, and fill them up, and bring them home.

There was Lazarus.

LP: Yeah, Downtown, you mean.

EG: Yeah. All the advantages of a city but we lived in a small town.

LP: Okay! I think we've covered a lot of things. I suppose you're getting a little bit tired.

EG: No.

LP: Let's see what we have not covered. You have a big space in there from the middle 20s to the early 50s when you were not here.

EG: When I wasn't here. I really don't know about the city. When I came back to Worthington, it was entirely different. It had grown and it was, we used to know about everybody in town, you know. We knew who they were. And there were so few, really very few people of my life in Worthington, left. They'd either moved away or died.

LP: When we moved here in '53, there was, I think 1500 people here. 2000 maybe. Which is not much. You could almost know most of that people. But now it's about 15,000 or something. There's no way you could know that many people.

EG: It think was about 500. In the early '20s; and from 1915 to the early '20s. I think that's about the population.

LP: You could be pretty well acquainted with them.

EG: Yes, you pretty much knew who everybody was, knew them by sight.

LP: That would have been about 100 some families. Maybe 100 families.

EG: But, some of the families are still here. The Hardings were here in the old days. I remember Warren Harding used to come here when he was campaigning. One summer he, because George, his brother was here, and he came here, and almost everybody in Worthington went out to Harding's. And he sat on the porch out there, and everybody stood around and listened to him talk. [August 11, 1920]

LP: Was that Harding Sanatorium then?

EG: Yes. That was George Harding the second. See this one now is the third, the third and the fourth.

LP: Oh. Yeah, the old fellow I think is retiring or retired.

EG: Well it was his father who was here then.

LP: That place has gained quite a reputation.

EG: Yes, it's a fine hospital.

It's so pretty out there. We used to play up and down that ravine and...

LP: Rush Creek comes in the back.

EG: The Harding's had a tennis court, and tennis was very popular then. We all played tennis, and we used to go out there to play.

LP: Very neighborly then.

EG: Oh yes.

LP: You could just go to someone's tennis court and play. They were happy. That's nice. It's nice to be neighborly.

EG: Oh yes. The Harding's were always, always a part of this town. See the boys went to school. George and Warren. George was in my brother's class which was about two years younger and Warren was three or four years younger than I was.

LP: These are the some of the Hardings?

EG: Yes. See they, they were always a part. They were Seventh Day Adventists, of course and they weren't connected to a church in Worthington, but they were part of the town. They knew everybody.

LP: They had to go out of town to go to find a church?

EG: I don't know.

LP: I bet you they built a church up there.

EG: Yes. See, there is a big Seventh Day Adventist Community here now, but then I don't think there was any, probably the Hardings and the people who worked in their hospital probably were the only Seventh Day Adventists in town. So, I don't know if there was a church in Columbus. I suppose so.

LP: I wonder if they attracted that community?

EG: Oh Yes.

LP: The Hardings attracted them there.

EG: Yes. People who worked in the hospital came here and settled here. I'm sure that they started that.

LP: So the Hardings' influence had brought them. I heard the Harding's started Worthington Foods because their religion said they should not eat meat. So they started this vegetarian type meat substitute. It was also a Harding project. Is that correct? That's what I've heard.

EG: Oh yes. I would think so.

LP: The whole area they've developed then. Become quite a big thing. They've sold it to a...

EG: Keebler [*Worthington Foods was acquired by Kellogg in 1999*]



LP: Yea, a bigger company

EG: No...

TAPE ENDS....

(End of tape, on one side only.)

Evelyn Fern Conkle Gilbert Biographical Information:

Born: August 28, 1901 to parents Joseph Almond Conkle (1877-1929) and Elizabeth Magdalena Sliffe Conkle (1876-1957)

Siblings:

1. Herbert Conkle, 1905-1965 married Mary Pinney
2. Mervin Sliffe Conkle, 1909-1915
3. William Orin Conkle, 1913-1981

Married: John Gilbert – 1958 (1899-1960)

Died: July 5, 2000 (Age 98 Years)