

QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Oral History

HOPE ANDREWS

January 28, 2005

Interviewed by Anne Schaefer Doyle

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Hope Andrews

Q: It's Friday, January the 28th in the year 2005. This is an interview with Hope Andrews of Hopkinton, Rhode Island. Her grandfather was the first in her family to come to Quonnie in the late 1800s. Would you tell me your name and where you were born?

A: I'm Hope [inaudible 00;36] Andrews, 78 years old. I've lived in Hope Valley all my life for the 78 years. I was prematurely born in July 1926, weighed three pounds in the newly erected Westerly Hospital that had just been built the year before. Daughter of [inaudible 00:57] E. Green [phonetic 00;57], who was the son and grandson of the village pharmacist, and of Annie D. Green [phonetic 01:03], daughter of Herbert E. Lewis and [inaudible 01:07], who I'll talk about later, at Quonochontaug. And they will be my memories of Quonochontaug. My mother, Annie D. Green, was a teacher in the Hope Valley schools in the kindergarten, and acting principle during World War II. She was awarded an honorary doctorate of education in later years of her teaching career. And when the new elementary school in Hope Valley was built in the 1950s, the new kindergarten room was named the Annie D. Green Kindergartener Room in her honor.

I've been asked many times, as my family lived in Hope Valley for generations, if I had received my name Hope because of the village. Although my great-great grandfather, [inaudible 01:53] Nichols [phonetic 01:53], my maternal grandmother's family, which repeatedly was said to change the name from the village of Carpenter's Mills to Hope Valley in the early 1840s when he built the Nichols and Langworthy Machine Shop complex [phonetic 02:05]. He stated he would call this place Hope Valley, because all his hopes were centered here. Until then, it was called Carpenter's Mills. I was named Hope, though, by my father, because I was so tiny with the hopes that I would survive.

You asked me who was the first member of my family to come to Quonnie. The first member, I believe, were my paternal great grandparents, who were Judge E. Green, the village pharmacist and his family. Let me explain. In the old Hope Valley newspapers of the 1870s, shortly after the Civil War, we found that Quonnie was popular with the

neighboring South County villages where the inhabitants were fond of visiting the shore. Some breachway hotels and cottages had been built and were taking paying guests. The Niantic House Hotel and the Hoxie Cottage [phonetic 03:6] were listed for a \$1.25 per day. And also, the cottage of E. P. Innis [phonetic 03:14] of Ashaway offered a furnished cottage in the 1877 papers. Grandpa Green and his young family were among those registered in those days. And [inaudible 03:27] by Rathford and Browning [phonetic 03:31] advertised a passenger carriage from Wyoming to Quonnie leaving Wyoming at 3:00 every Saturday and returning from Niantic House every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 to return to Wyoming. The Niantic House in those days advertised moderate prices, shore dinners, stabling for the horses, bowling alley and dance hall. Good surfing, bathing within 100 feet of the house. And it was advertised—it was kept on strictly temperance principles. Charles H. Nichols [phonetic 04:09] was the proprietor, and he was from Hope Valley. My maternal grandfather, Herbert E. Lewis, was an enterprising 30-year-old man at that time living in Wood River Junction running a store beside the rail road station. He was born in Exeter, taught school when he was younger, was elected justice of the peace, state representative of Exeter and clerk of the school board. In 1892 he moved to Wood River Junction. As he and his young family engaged in the general store business, he decided to enlarge his business by transporting beachgoers from the train there to Quonochontaug and building a store in Quonochontaug to accommodate the people and build a cottage for himself on the breachway. His cottage was built in 1898, and called it Lewis Anna. In the newspaper that year, we read that Honorable Herbert E. Lewis and party arrived in the new cottage about 10:00 Sunday morning, and the hours were spent in social conversation and a stroll on the beach in the [inaudible 05:25] writing of that day until the sun had reached its meridian, and the genial grocer of the junction inquired that one of his guests of Mr. Kenyon what the hour might be. Being informed, it was 12:00, it was his order that the guests be called from labor to refreshments, and after an hour of social things, departed the cottage for their homes. It goes on to say that after dinner was served that day, of which 50 participated, the company was shown to the live-saving station through the courtesy of Thomas Saunders [phonetic 06:04]. Mr. Benjamin Thayer [phonetic 06:06], of Wood River Junction, caught a [inaudible 06:08] and Mackerel, it said, Sunday morning to supply the table of the Honorable H. E. Lewis. The party departed wishing the host and hostess a long life of happiness in their new cottage, which they decided to name Lewis Anna. And that's where the Coast Guard Station was across the breachway from the cottage.

In the early 1990s, the barn in back of the cottage on the beach was attached to a large store on the road by a long, central addition. The barn became the Barn Cottage and was rented to a member of the life-saving station, which I said was stationed across the breachway. I remember my older brother learned his math plan from this man who lived in the Barn Cottage while earning badges on his way to become an Eagle Scout. By this time, our original Lewis Anna Cottage on the breachway had been sold, and the Breakers Hotel was built there in its place. The long, little cottage became my family cottage. It was usually filled with grandfather, children and grandchildren, of which I was the youngest granddaughter. It wasn't long before the great grandchildren began to appear. And in those years of the early 1900s, Grandfather gave up running the store and rented it to Mother Bridley [phonetic 07:36], who ran her well-known ice cream parlor there. I

remember going in the old store. She was a short, rotund little lady with a dress way down to her ankles, and I think she had a man-style haircut. As I went in the store, I also remember the smell of vanilla from the ice cream apparently. I also have a long member of a long oar from one of the light posts at the station with the name Lewis Anna painted on it hanging from the ceiling in the store.

Childhood memories of the 1930s, arriving at the cottage and racing first thing through the sand, I went between the Hoxie Cottage and the Breakers Hotel to the breachway where the boardwalk began on my left, and looking to the right to the grand front porch of the Worcester House [phonetic 08:38] so see if my great aunts Grace, Abbie and Uncle Clarence were visiting for the weekend in rocking chairs there. Aunt Grace's husband, Uncle Clarence, was treasurer of the Providence Tugboat Company. The three of them are great favorites of mine, and they had been down there as guests since the 1870s. I remember wading across the breachway at low tide. Everybody did in those days. Those at the cottages and those at the hotels alike would enjoy and swim at the big beach. I remember walking the boardwalk, the smell of the beach roses in bloom and the net-covered hand-blown glass float balls that hung on many of the porches. The grand walk ended at the little private beach. Nowadays we have our private swimming beach for cottage owners. It was just before the Ashaway cottages. I remember standing on the boardwalk at about the age of five holding Grandpa Lewis by the hand, and he telling me, "Hope, look out at that five-masted schooner and remember it won't be long before they will all be gone." I told this story to my son when he was young. And on a visit to the Norman Rockwell Museum, he brought me back a well-known print of an old sea captain with a young boy looking out at sea of a sailing ship. I treasure that picture and have it hanging in my home.

My last memory of Quonnie down there in the '30s was being put to bed early, tired after a long day in the sun and the sand and the salty breeze, and sleepily hearing footsteps and low voices of the guests at the Breakers Hotel in front of us on the breachway as they passed down the walk beside my bedroom window on their way to the bowling alley across the road.

You asked about the '38 hurricane. No one in my family were here at that time of the '38 hurricane. We were all at home in Hope Valley as school had started. The old store and the attached cottages I believe were a few of the buildings that survived the tidal wave. I remember the devastation and lives lost. Many people we knew lost their lives in Westerly. And the life of our local funeral director, who was a good friend of my great aunts, Grace and Abbie, lost her life at Charlestown Beach. The seaweed was in the trees along Route 1. Grandpa Lewis died in 1940, and the property was sold to someone in New Jersey soon after.

My memory of Grandpa Lewis was a stern, but loving man with a sense of humor. He walked with a cane and limped, as he had a wooden leg due to an accident riding an unruly horse from a young man, and he had to have an amputation. He was interested in politics, served in many municipal offices in Richmond and later Hopkinton. When he moved to Hope Valley in 1900, he was a member and officer in several fraternal

organizations. All his life, he continued his interest in Quonnie, and was popular with his friends. As [inaudible 12:15] tells us, the band boys formed into line last evening and marched to the junction where they gave a rousing serenade to H. E. Lewis, the mother of our counsel man, and one of our town's most honored citizens. The boys were royally entertained, and refreshments were served in abundance. Mr. Lewis is one of those large-hearted men who never do things by halves. He had a temper when aroused, however, I remember.

The old families and neighbors of Quonnie were friendly, and all enjoyed the sea and sand together. When the property began to be sold to out-of-staters, there began to be a different atmosphere, which continues somewhat to this day. I had always run free in my childhood on the beaches. We all did. But one day when I was about eight, I was playing on the small beach beside the breakwater off the boardwalk. One of the new cottage owners on the boardwalk, where it had been sold to someone out of state, the new owner came out and ordered me off his sand in front of the cottage. He said it was private now. I was very shy and had never had such a thing happen to me before, so I began to cry and ran to Grandpa. His famous Lewis temper erupted, and he told me to go back and tell this gentleman that my grandfather was Herbert E. Lewis, and if he had a problem to come see him. Of course, I never did. I never had the courage. But I've noticed since to this day, in most cases, ownership is supreme, and the friendliness and neighborliness of the old days is gone.

My love of Quonnie never left me. After marriage in 1944, my husband and his parents bought land from the Browns and we built our cottage at last on West Beach Road. We had bought the old mid-1800s Carolina Library, which was being torn down for a new one. Old wide boards and windows [inaudible 14:23] without panes were salvaged and used. And the finished cottage looked as if it stood there for 100 years, but after several hurricanes, it had to be renovated. And now over 50 years later, it has been completely remodeled and made wheelchair accessible. My grandson had an automobile accident at age seventeen, and had spinal cord injury. He is a paraplegic, but went on to URI to graduate. And the cottage became his bachelor pad and his home for independence while he commuted. Now, after graduation and a subsequent engagement, they continue to live here.

Both my daughter and son from babyhood spent their summers at Quonnie, just as their mother had. I remember putting my young son in his stroller, and with my three-year-old daughter on the other hand, we packed sand toys and drinks in our beach bag, and then stopping at the old bowling alley for Cracker Jacks for treats, we would walk every day across the rocks and sand on the bridge, which had been built across the breachway while the new breachway was being dredged about 1957. Happy days were spent there by them growing up. One summer we brought our Shetland pony, Jiminy Cricket, to the beach with us. He lived nights in his horse trailer in the backyard, and they gave rides to the neighboring children, including the Clark grandchildren who lived with their grandparents, Laura and Ed Clark [phonetic 16:01], next door. When my two grandchildren came along, Raymond and Stephanie, they spent their days as their father and aunt had. And this was the sixth generation who was making the same memories. I

have pictures of my father on Picnic Rock in 1890s in a sailor suit and long curls probably around 1896. And of his great grandson with his short, curly hair on the same rock almost 100 years later.

You asked me to describe my experiences of historian out of Hopkinton. I was archivist at Langworthy Library's Historical Archives for a number of years, and was active in organizing the birth of the archives. Then the past president of the Hopkinton Historical Association, and editor and writer of the bimonthly *Hopkinton Mills* for ten years. I was lecturer and writer of local history, and author of the book *Hopkinton City: the Williamsburg of Hopkinton*. My special project for many years, however, has been telling the story Prudence Crandall, daughter of Hopkinton by a slide talk for over twenty years to civic groups, historical societies, churches, libraries and school children. It has given me immense satisfaction showing the children of the area what a young girl born in Hope Valley in the early 1800s could accomplish. Even President John F. Kennedy, who received a Pulitzer Prize for his *Profiles in Courage*, recognized her work, and also wrote an article "Free Women of Courage", in which he wrote of Prudence Crandall.

