

QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Oral History

FREDERICKA BROWN BETTINGER

April 20, 1999

Interviewed by Anne Doyle

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Doyle: Today is Tuesday, April the 20th, 1999. The following is an interview with Fredericka Bettinger of Whistling Chimneys, a historic home located on the corner of Sunset Drive and Old West Beach Road. Let's just start by having you say your name and your birthdate.

Bettinger: I'm Fredericka Brown Bettinger, and was born in 1932, March of '32 in Naugatuck, Connecticut. But my family came here from—before I was born—and stayed in cottages down on West Beach that was later destroyed by the 1938 hurricane. And during the Second World War, we were living in a little cottage my dad had rebuilt that is down on West Beach; and as kids we used to always ride bikes up there by this house, this Whistling Chimneys, and thought it was really a magnificent place. I thought it was very special and secretive. In 1944, it came on the market, a time when nobody was buying property around here. And my mother, who was always very interested in old houses, and in property, latched onto the idea of buying it, and bought it, really very reasonably, in 1944, in the summer. This house had been most recently, prior to their purchase—my mother and dad's purchase of it—been run as an inn, and it was called the Colonial Inn, and I still have the sign out in the garage.

Doyle: It was just before they purchased it, the family before that? Do you know who they were?

Bettinger: Yes, George Baxter was the owner, and he was the only son of a Georgie Sawyer Baxter. Georgie was the wife of John Baxter; and they owned the land, or purchased the property, in 1926. At the time of her death, George Baxter inherited this property.

Doyle: So that was the son?

Bettinger: He was the only son. And during the time that he owned it—and he apparently inherited it in 1938—she died in 1938 and probate was the next year, 1939.

Doyle: Did she die in the hurricane?

Bettinger: It doesn't say so.

Doyle: But she ran the inn, is that right?

Bettinger: Apparently, he did.

Doyle: Oh, he did, the son?

Bettinger: The son. George Arthur Sawyer [Baxter]. And, I'm not sure that he did the whole time he had it, but when we moved into this house in 1944, it looked—the exterior—looked very similar to today, but the interior was all cut up into very small spaces; and upstairs, instead of the current three bedrooms that are on the second floor, there were probably seven. And, he had just made every little nook and cranny into space to house people. And this room, where we're sitting, which is the original big living room, had a center pole in it, a post that went right up through the center of this room. And I presume that for the purposes of the inn, he used this as his dining area, because it had a huge—the post—the base of the post was a huge circular table, which you just can't even imagine now; and the beams had all been covered over, so it had an entirely different look.

Doyle: You were about twelve years old . . .

Bettinger: I was twelve at the time we bought the house. So, my parents—my father didn't retire until the early '50s, so during the period of time in the late '40s, after the war and after they were able to begin doing some renovations, they quickly started undoing what he had done.

Doyle: Bringing it more back to the original?

Bettinger: My mother got consultation from the Historical Society and from historical architects, and they began to renovate it. My father was a wonderful craftsman and woodworker, so that was lucky.

Doyle: Oh yes, that combination of . . .

Bettinger: And so, for instance, the paint in this room —they sent away for the old milk-based powder paint, and so, it needs redoing. Who knows what I'm going to do about that process, but . . . ?

Doyle: Did you live here year-round at that point, or not?

Bettinger: No, they moved here year-round in 1955. And so, prior to that, we came back and forth from Naugatuck. But then, it was full time working on restoring the gardens and restoring the house; and it was full-time work for many years.

Doyle: Now did you play any part in that too, or did you just let the adults ...

Bettinger: Well, at that—by the time they moved here, I was—well, when we bought it during the war, you didn't come back and forth very much; and I then was in high school and away at school and away at college; so, I was really only a part of it during vacation time. And by the time they moved here, I was married and away, and again, coming for vacations; so, I was really not a part of the renovations. So, my memories are a lot of that amazing interior when we— coming into this house that so much looked like an old farmhouse on the outside, and coming into it and discovering this cut-up-into-tiny-rooms place, and then its gradual changes. And when we bought the land, you'll see the paneling over the fireplace in the little dining room. I remember my dad, and my brother says he remembers participating in that, working on that for at least two years, because it had so many layers of paint from over the years, people just put another coat of paint on it, and it's a gorgeous piece of wood on the original panel. So that's the kind of restoration that went in here; it was a lot of tender, loving care.

Doyle: Did your father do most of the restoration himself, or did he bring other people in?

Bettinger: It was a combination, but he was fairly able; and so he certainly did some of it and supervised some of it, and a lot of the—some of the work that was done was done by the Pendletons, Albert and Palmer. They did a lot of work around here.

Doyle: Is Palmer that—was he the father?

Bettinger: Yes. . .

Doyle: . . . Down at the old—they lived down at the old . . .

Bettinger: Down at the old—East West Farm—not, no—not East West Farm . . .

Doyle: Right—the one that has—Brockmyers . . .

Bettinger: The one that has Brockmyers—have totally redone.

Doyle: Now, so he was—the father was still able to at that point in his life, I don't know . . .

Bettinger: I can't remember, but my brother David would tell you exactly when he died. And he—but he worked on a lot of property with my dad, I know. And some of it was done at West Beach; I know that they helped build property we had at West Beach.

Doyle: Oh you had other property, too?

Bettinger: Well, we had the little house that we had lived in.

Doyle: I see. I thought you rented or something . . .

Bettinger: No, no, no. They had that property . . .

Doyle: Is that—is the house that you were in gone now, that's because of the hurricane?

Bettinger: The house that we came to originally and did not own went out in the hurricane. This is the little house that they called Wren House, built when I was a youngster.

Doyle: And where's that?

Bettinger: It's on the corner of West Beach Road and Sandpiper Lane, at West Beach. And that they sold when they moved up here. But across the street from that, across the street from the entrance to the little West Beach, there's a driveway and a house that the Bemises now own. That was the barn for this property, and my parents bought—the same year that they bought this house, later in that year, they bought the 40 acres that go from here all the way down to the breachway.

Doyle: I didn't realize that.

Bettinger: And that property was then being farmed by Tom Clarke, who lived up on Route One.

Doyle: Route One. I've heard of him.

Bettinger: Yeah; lived up on Route One, but farmed this property. And, the barn was down there, where the little house where the farmhands lived.

Doyle: Is he the one that had the pigs?

Bettinger: They had pigs out on that property.

Doyle: I heard about the pigs.

Bettinger: But, there was cattle there when we were first here, and up until the '54 hurricane. At the time of the '54 hurricane, a lot of fencing went down; and neither Tom Clarke nor my folks were ready to re-fence it.

Doyle: I just talked to Dick Hutchins, who grew up on East West Farm, and he talked about bringing some of their cattle down; and then in the fall they'd march them back up. I just heard that story and talked to him a few weeks ago.

Bettinger: Was he up here?

Doyle: Well, he lives right down on West Beach Road.

Bettinger: Oh, the son.

Doyle: The son, yes, the son.

[SLIGHT PAUSE; TOPIC SHIFTS SUDDENLY TO SOMEONE NOT IDENTIFIED ON THE TAPE. BUT SEE PARAGRAPH NEXT PAGE]

Bettinger: I have not found anything that she wrote, and we were not good about interviewing her. It would be so wonderful to have an oral history from her because she was very good at asking the questions and going to visit people.

Bettinger: Lila Gunn, who was one of the earlier owners of this house, she used to go visit routinely, then moved to Clarks Falls, I think; and Mother used to go visit her and talk about the property and what it was like here then. We don't have any of that, which is too bad. I have lots of the old deeds and that kind of information, but ...

Doyle: Well, just tell me a little bit about what you do know. We were talking earlier, before I had the tape on, about what you felt in terms of when this house might have been built and ...

Bettinger: Well, I can tell you what the *stories* about that are. That is, that it was probably built by Joseph Stanton, probably around 1700. That it was, that this house was the farmhouse for all of Quonochontaug Neck, what was then called Quonochontaug Neck.

Doyle: I don't understand. You mean the old farmhouse?

Bettinger: This farmhouse was the farmhouse for the Neck, from here all the way down to the point by the breachway. So that there were no other properties where now the houses are lined along the beach. And the stories are that it was a trading post.

Doyle: Yes, I have heard that. This was when it was the Babcock, owned by Babcock, is that right?

Bettinger: Yes. The early—I don't have ... I have title search only back to 1893, and at that point it was owned by Albert Babcock.

Doyle: Well, then, I wonder if it had been passed down since it had been built? On no, because it was built by Joseph Stanton.

Bettinger: Yeah. But the Historical Society calls it the Stanton-Babcock farmhouse. So, when I get to researching back farther, somewhere there is a line and a connection between Babcocks and Stantons.

Doyle: That's what I'm finding too. It's why it's difficult in going back and trying to figure out the families, because everybody intermarried and you've got Stantons all over the place and Sheffields or Pendletons or whatever.

Bettinger: Yeah. Anyway, our understanding is that it was a trading post, and there are some evidences of that. There's ballast brick that's used, from ships, that are used as the hearthstone in both the front parlor and the upstairs master bedroom and those, even by the Historical Society folks that researched this house, identify that as an indication, as ballast brick.

Doyle: Then this obviously, the pond was open to large boats and ...

Bettinger: It was an old breachway that went from the point—well, it didn't go from the point, it went from really the original breachway that we know (as much as we know if it) came across from where West Beach is now and across through the marsh and out into the pond. And probably was big enough for sailing ships.

Doyle: So, about where it is now?

Bettinger: Well, closer to here.

Doyle: Oh, closer to here?

Bettinger: Yeah, where the little, the small West Beach area is, it apparently cut—the old maps show it cutting right across that beach and across over into the marsh, through the marsh into the pond. And that would have made easy access then here.

Doyle: But it must have been very much deeper; I mean it had to have been ...

Bettinger: Oh yeah, right.

Doyle: Is there any other indication, looking at the house inside, that there were—for instance you were just telling me about the ballast; were they ballast bricks you called them?

Bettinger: Ballast bricks, um hum.

Doyle: Is there anything else about being a trading post?

Bettinger: No, not that I know of. We know there are lots of indicators including the stone fencing throughout over around here and down through those 40 acres. And we

know that it was farmed for a while with potatoes, that there were potato fields on part of that, at the higher ridge of that property. And so, we know that more was being used as farmland than the early trading post . . .

Doyle: I was wondering if there were any findings of Native American pieces. Or...no?

Bettinger: No one has really done any searching for that, any archeological work. We have found arrowheads and, you know, the things that people find easily.

Doyle: Do you have any grinding stones at all around here? I know around the Sheffield house there's an indication of those, where they ground the corn.

Bettinger: No, no. Haven't found those. [APPARENT CHANGE OF SUBJECT, NOT INDICATED ON THE TAPE] Well, that's later.

Doyle: Yeah, but I want to capture ... but I would like to talk about them as well, unless you have something . . .

Bettinger: In the early—yes, during the Second World War, of course, there were stations along the beach with troops who were doing survey and looking for submarines, and they—we used to—Holly Branton was my good buddy who lives down on—still lives in a house on West Beach; and she and I used to, oh, play cards with the guys that were at the post and . . .

Doyle: You said the post; did they actually have a building or something?

Bettinger: Yeah, a little army shelter post. And then they would walk to the next one.

Doyle: Well, where was the post?

Bettinger: There was one-way down at West Beach between our little beach and the breachway; there was one there. And then there was one up, probably on East Beach; it would have been beyond Central Beach and East Beach. And then there was one up, up at the Charlestown breachway, and then one beyond. But they also used to do target practice at certain parts of the day. This is where the story comes in. And Holly and I were big hikers anyway, and we would walk down to—then you could cross the breachway, what is now the Quonochontaug breachway—before it was dredged. You could get across there and then walk that big beach. But we also liked to walk up past East Beach and get an ice cream or something to eat at Blue Shutters, and then keep going. But during the War, we kept being warned fiercely by each of our mothers that during the early afternoon hours was when they usually did the target practice—and we were not to do that. We were not to be there then. But on this particular day, we took our picnic lunch, packed our picnic lunch and left sometime in the morning, Holly and I, and Holly's dog; and up, up the beach we went. So, I was probably 10 or 11; we were probably 11-year-old kids, and off we went. Well, we tramped along and got to

the Charlestown breachway and thought it would be fun that day. That particular day we thought it would be fun to cross it.

Doyle: You could cross that breachway as well?

Bettinger: Well, we thought that would be fun. So, we swam across and then started walking up that beach. We then began hearing the target practice [unintelligible] knowing that we had been gone too long. [Laughter] So we started back, but the Charlestown breachway was at high tide and the riptide in there was terrific. And it also was that much deeper. So Holly's dog kind of led us back across the breachway; and we were just walking, starting back, and along the beach comes an army jeep with —

Doyle: Looking for you?

Bettinger: Yeah, with both of our mothers and a couple of soldiers. That was . . . They had been on the lookout for us, and everybody along the post had seen us go by, but nobody had seen us come back. And so, they had stopped target practice by the time these hysterical mothers had come along. And so we were in big trouble, but very safe. But cold and tired.

Doyle: Did you really —you didn't know what you were getting yourself into until you heard those . . .

Bettinger: Well, we were not paying attention. What were we going to pay attention to time for? That was—our adventure was more important than that. So, anyway, that was a scare for our parents; and they also thought we had gone very much too far for little legs. But anyway . . .
Let's see, who else — During the real adolescent years, there was a crowd of us that were both from Quonnie West Beach and some Central and East Beach kids; and you're going to ask me who, and I'm not going to remember them all!

Doyle: So you did know people right down through East Beach?

Bettinger: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Doyle: Because I find a lot of people were very restricted in terms of the people they knew. It was just like around . . .

Bettinger: I should have dug out—and I will do that for you because I had it shanghaied a couple years ago— some pictures of, quote, “the gang.” And this gang of adolescents, one of the things we did were the Friday nights at the dance. . . doing square dancing.

Doyle: Where did you go for that?

Bettinger: Up here, at the Inn.

Doyle: At the Quonochontaug Inn, or at the Sea Breeze?

Bettinger: At the Sea Breeze.

Doyle: The Sea Breeze.

Bettinger: In the little hall. So, we would all go there on Friday nights and somehow thought it was fun, all that square dancing, somebody . . . By then, someone always had a car if we wanted to go get something afterwards or else, we would all be walking, depending on who had been allowed to have a car; and we would walk to one of the places for ice cream. But nothing very exciting in today's world. But we loved those Friday nights. But another thing growing up was the old bowling alley; have people told you about the old bowling alley down here?

Doyle: The Casino? Before the '38 hurricane, I know they had two bowling alleys. Peggy Rase has told me about that. But I remember the Casino.

Bettinger: The one down here, at the end at the corner, where there are now tennis courts.

Doyle: Yes.

Bettinger: Well, that, Holly Branton again and I used to set up pins. It was old duckpins. And I've forgotten; we got about 10 cents a set, or whatever it was. And most of which we either spent on penny candy or bowling ourselves, or something. I don't think we ever earned much money doing that, but we had a good time.

Doyle: Do you remember the people that owned that place at the time?

Bettinger: Right this minute, I can't tell you their names.

Doyle: One story about some older children that used to live on the top floor, or something, do you know anything?

Bettinger: That was later. If that's who I think of—that was just put back on after the '38, kind of put back together after the '38 hurricane. [OFF THE RECORD CONVERSATION: "I can tell you about that, but probably not today."] But then they sold that property and probably, I bet it was late '50s, early '60s when there was someone living there and they had kids upstairs.

Doyle: Was it Ennis' bowling alley still, at that time?

Bettinger: Well, the bowling alley—oh some lady, wait a minute—the bowling alley must have gone out in the '54 hurricane. So, it must have been in the '50s, late '40s, early '50s, that it was owned by somebody else and had people upstairs.

Doyle: Did you start coming down here when you were . . .

Bettinger: An infant.

Doyle: Infant.

Bettinger: Yeah. My brother came before that, and then when he was . . .

Doyle: Do you have memories of Mother Brindley?

Bettinger: Oh yes.

Doyle: You do.

Bettinger: Not, not vivid; but she, Holly Branton, has a much more vivid memory of that part of West Beach. She would be a very good person for you to talk to. Did David tell you stories of us catching fish off Black Fish Rock off West Beach and selling, walking up and down the breachway to . . .

Doyle: Oh, no.

Bettinger: To all the houses that were then on the breachway. We would tote these pails of fish, and they would dutifully buy fish from us.

Doyle: This was before the '38 hurricane then too.

Bettinger: No, no because I would have been . . . David and my sister Betsey were probably 10 and 12, or 11 and 13, or something; and I was five years younger than David. So I had to be old enough to go fishing out on the rock. But we all did that from the time we could barely swim and get onto that flat rock that's out there, out past Picnic Rock.

Doyle: Picnic Rock. Sorry for interrupting you. Now I have pictures of Picnic Rock on postcards, but I'm not really sure where that is. That's not the big rock in front of Quonochontaug Inn? Is it towards the west?

Bettinger: [STATIC; UNINTELLIGIBLE CONVERSATION] . . . toward our beach. Yeah, it's southwest.

Doyle: I think I know which one, but I've been trying to find the spot that we talked about.

Bettinger: Well—the big rocks in front of Quonochontaug Inn are really a ledge out there. Picnic Rock, what we had called Picnic Rock, is the big rock formation that is

right at the edge of West Beach and in front of where the Andersons live. Do you know where the Andersons live, down here on the beach?

Doyle: No, I don't.

Bettinger: We'll walk it sometime.

Doyle: Because I have pictures from my own family that say "Picnic Rock."

Bettinger: I think that the place on Central Beach that had some rocks that had been called . . .

Doyle: Not that big, though. I haven't been able to locate any, because I have been really searching, trying to figure out where all these places were.

Bettinger: Well, I'll walk you down to Picnic Rock. Anyway, my sister Betsey tells a funny story about our fishing, because there was one family named King. Do you know the Kings?

Doyle: Kings were—Mr. And Mrs. King lived across the street from *us* growing up in Central. Mr. King's mother had [a little house, inn?] at the Kings' cottage or whatever, down on the breachway.

Bettinger: Yes. Well, that nice lady *kept* buying fish from us, no matter *how* many we got. She was wonderful. And then one day we discovered that she had umpty-ump cats that she owned. And all the fish would go to the cats!

Doyle: Not to all the people that she was feeding. Oh, that's funny!

Bettinger: So we had a good time.

Doyle: So this was when she was running the little inn. So that's got to be before the '38 hurricane.

Bettinger: That was probably just about then.

Doyle: Yeah, because that —

Bettinger: But they then stayed living there.

Doyle: Oh, they did?

Bettinger: Didn't they?

Doyle: I don't know.

Bettinger: In that little house?

Doyle: I don't know. I'm not sure.

Bettinger: Because I was older than that when [they were] the neighbors there. I was in a house along the side [of] the Kings. The inn was really above the point out there. And then they lived—the Kings that *I'm* talking about—lived in one of the houses that now is right along the edge of the current breachway.

Doyle: Well, then, maybe they did move. I'm sure it's the same –

Bettinger: I think it's the same family.

Doyle: Family, yes. And growing up, we used to go get bait from Mr. King. But I never knew that he had lived here all that time. I never knew anything about him. Now that I know about his life on West Beach, I've put together that he was fishing all the time.

Bettinger: Always.

Doyle: Constantly. Did you know Mr. King and his wife well? No?

Bettinger: In that period of time, I knew everybody by Mr. And Mrs. —

Doyle: I know. He was a young boy, of course, he was only 12.

Doyle: Okay, we're going to take a walk around the house and just talk about different places within the house.

Bettinger: We are now in what is now the living room and was apparently originally both the living area and the kitchen. And this fireplace, which is so huge, is really made of—like the hearth—is huge pieces of granite. And the stone is all granite stone, which—one of the things Mr. Sawyer [i.e. Baxter] did when he ran this as an inn was he painted everything in sight. So a lot of the old stone, as you can see, has been painted. It's wearing off gradually, but . . . anyway . . . It has the beehive oven in the back; and there are three flues to this giant, here in the basement. You wouldn't believe the base of this fireplace and how they ever moved the stone to support it. No wonder it's lived through all the hurricanes. It secures this house.

Doyle: Are these andirons original too?

Bettinger: They've been here as long as I know, but I doubt if they're original. They're certainly not 1700s.

Doyle: . . . Sawyers . . .

- Bettinger:** And this is an old—this beam across the top is an old chestnut beam that is very deep; it goes way back.
- Doyle:** So the original house actually went—that was the back of the . . .
- Bettinger:** These two windows, that are the 4 x 4, are original windows. So that was the end of the house. And that cupboard: you can see in the back of the cupboard is one of the original posts of the house. So that cupboard was probably the kitchen cupboard. These planks are half beams, so that—uh oh half boards—so that in the basement you can see the rounded part of the [board].
- Doyle:** Do you know what kind of wood that is? Is that the chestnut too, maybe? It looks similar.
- Bettinger:** I'm not sure. And then this is the paneling that I was telling you about, that had so many layers of paint on it. And that's the original panel around this fireplace.
- Doyle:** Now do you know what this was used for, this room?
- Bettinger:** Well, you know, one document which is from the Historical Society when it was put on the National Register, it refers to this as a bedroom. So, I don't know. But it has pretty much since we've had it, been used as a small dining area, dining room.
- Doyle:** These doors: are they all the original doors as well?
- Bettinger:** Yes, with the rafters and the old strap hinges. That's the one of the wrought iron. But all the doors have pull latches. There's the ballast bricks that I was telling you about. They're the little square brick[s] that—it's apparently documented—that those were used in the original ships.
- Doyle:** Where were the ships coming from? Do you know?
- Bettinger:** Now, I'm sure there are lots of stories about that. I've been told they were Danish trading ships. Why I don't know.
- Doyle:** So I was wondering if they could have traced the stone back to a certain country.
- Bettinger:** Well, I think more there's probably good historical documentation of who traded here.
- Doyle:** These are all your pieces, the shoes, all the older objects. Any of this get left by the Sawyers [Baxters]?
- Bettinger:** Oh, no. He had . . . the . . . most of the antique furniture in here is furniture my mother had collected. She was a great collector of antiques. This is the real front

door, which most of us don't use. So, this is really the old front entrance. That's why the gate, and people came up through the yard and then used this door. And this faces south.

Doyle: This is not old West Beach Road, then?

Bettinger: No. [end of side A]

Bettinger: ... of each of the rooms, and I'm just not as good at this as historians are, but this entry-way apparently is one of the things that is unique to the Rhode Island — early Rhode Island—architecture. Part of it are these S-shaped banisters, rails; part of it is that the stairs were built so they went around the chimney, so the stairs hugged the chimney. You'll notice up at Wilcox [Tavern], when you go into Wilcox, it's the same entryway, the same look.

Doyle: I'll have to look.

Bettinger: This kind of a double, one-over-one panel door to the basement is typical, apparently. The other place I've seen it is at Smith Castle, if you've ever been there.

Doyle: I haven't been there yet.

Bettinger: I finally went last year. It looks like you're walking in this house! I mean, apparently this was the early Rhode Island everybody-did-it design. So, let's see. ... Well, let's go upstairs and then we'll come down through the kitchen area. So, you see the chimney is right here. Now this window, bay window, was added by my mother some time in the early '50s. So, this had—when we first moved here, there was a porch. There had been—like I showed you, that 1900s picture had a double porch. When we moved here, there was one porch. There was not a porch on the second floor. But that was a late addition, and so when Mother was researching and wanting to restore the work, that [one] porch went. And under it were the original—were the original stone steps into the house. So that was good that they were still there. I'll show you a picture when we go downstairs that shows the farm land all the way down to the breachway when we first bought the house, and now you see how grown up it is. But it's the picture when there was cattle in the property. So, they kept it down.

Doyle: Where did you get the pictures?

Bettinger: Well, the pictures taken from up here, my folks, probably my father, took.

Doyle: Oh, I see; it was just at that point.

Bettinger: Yeah. While there was still cattle on the property. And it's kind of a nice look, and it shows you how pastoral it was.

Doyle: Beautiful.

Bettinger: So, let's see. . . Oh, here's the other fireplace with the ballast brick.

Doyle: That's the natural color of the brick. It's a very unusual shade of, almost like a pink.

Bettinger: And probably a nice piece of local granite here too, as there is downstairs. There's a lot of granite hauled from around here probably. This front part of the house, though, was added—the parlor downstairs and this end of the house. So that it was probably built in the late 1700s; it was probably added on.

Doyle: This whole section . . .

Bettinger: This whole section . . . So really this upstairs is not particularly remarkable up here, except its great view.

Doyle: It's very remarkable!

Bettinger: Well, I meant in terms of structure.

Doyle: The ceilings aren't as low as I expected them to be.

Bettinger: One of the interesting things, as I was reading the Historical Society paper, which you might want to take a quick look at, is that some of the original beams are covered when they "lowered" the ceilings. So, you think about early farmhouses as having very low ceilings, but this one apparently did not.

Doyle: Now the Sheffield House, their ceilings are very low. Nothing like this at all.

Bettinger: I don't know that you want to go to the attic, but you can see in the attic how they . . .

Doyle: Very clean attic.

Bettinger: But one of the things that's fun about this is that you can see that it was put together with pegs. See how the roof was . . .

Doyle: Oh yeah! I can see that. Wooden pegs.

Bettinger: Yes. And the . . .

Doyle: Have you had to replace any of the wood at all?

Bettinger: No. Imagine that. And the only other neat thing up here is that there is a smoke house.

Doyle: In the chimney!

Bettinger: Yes.

Doyle: Can you see that?

Bettinger: Yeah. Do you want to look at that? . . . I have to replace the leather strap on this but, so, you can see that it was well used. And I remember when we first moved here . . .

Doyle: Does it go way down? I don't know how it works.

Bettinger: Yeah, it's a flue—well, I don't have a flashlight—and there are big hooks that come out, where they would hang ham or whatever.

Doyle: Are the hooks still there?

Bettinger: Mm-hm. They're built into the side of the wall. That's a bit close, but I know when I—that there are hooks in there, 'cause I've seen them in my day. We have to come up with a flashlight sometime . . .

Doyle: Just look at the back of the door, all charred and . . .

Bettinger: Well sure, because that's what it is, an old smokehouse.

Doyle: There was no danger of that catching on fire?

Bettinger: Wouldn't you think so?

Doyle: Yes, I would.

Bettinger: So, it's an extra, see, it's built out here; it's an extra . . .

Doyle: So that they would . . .

Bettinger: For preserving their . . . pig.

Doyle: They put hickory in there or what, I suppose . . . I don't know how they did it.

Bettinger: They could have done that; and, you know, they just built a big fire downstairs and it went up the flue. Now, watch these stairs. Everyone is a different width.

Doyle: You still use the . . .

Bettinger: Stop just a minute and I'll show you something. On this, you can tell that this was the end of the house because the shingles are here.

Doyle: Oh wow!

Bettinger: There have been additions. Many an addition to this house.

Doyle: Now underneath . . . [unintelligible comment by FB]

Bettinger: Because those windows are original four-over-four windows. Those particular attic windows.

Doyle: But downstairs . . . if this was the end of the house, there was . . .

Bettinger: There were apparently two; there was that original room with a loft over it, with a kitchen shed, or an outbuilding shed. And then the two additions were added, but from what I can read, not . . . I mean when we think of a new addition, we think "new," but I'm talking late 1700s, so they still are probably 250 years old—the additions. Actually, I figure I should have a 300th birthday party, you think so?

Doyle: Oh wouldn't that be . . .! You would?

Hettinger: I don't know.

Doyle: And that's coming up pretty soon.

Bettinger: I know. I'll have to get thinking about it in a hurry if I'm going to do it.

Doyle: See, because the end of that, then would have been . . . here.

Bettinger: Because these rooms were added.

Doyle: That those rooms were added.

Bettinger: Because they were originally just a little loft area. Because under there is the living room.

Doyle: The living room, yeah.

Bettinger: The original room. And it had apparently a low loft, in that the ceilings were raised and these rooms added. So, there's these two . . . but I'll tell you whether . . . undocumented, no official documentation, but there is the theory that this was part of the slave underground.

Doyle: I was going to ask you about that.

Bettinger: And there is in fact—and we won't climb in there—but there is—in fact behind this little close, t there is a space; and I have gone back into that, it goes behind the chimney, so it makes me wonder.

Doyle: Any marks on the walls?

Bettinger: I've never climbed in with a flashlight. But there is a space back there. So I don't know. I don't know if anybody knows.

Doyle: Do you know anything about the actual use of slaves on these properties in the 1700s?

Bettinger: No. No. Now, when we moved into this house, and as I told you, all these rooms were divided, this was two rooms, that other bedroom was two rooms, the master bedroom was two, probably three rooms. And you walked down this hallway out to where that, that heading is; and then there was an outdoor stairway. Because this back room that you came through when you first came into the house was not there. That was added by my parents. So, they had it as, I suppose, an out door for fire protection when they ran it as an inn. To have an out-door entryway. Or else it was built to come from the beach and lead back to the rooms. I don't know what the theory was. But none of this was here.

Doyle: I'm getting a little confused about what . . . I came in here.

Bettinger: Here. You came in here. And so that little porch and that little entryway... the kitchen ended here, and they just put this little eating nook out. And I know why they did it. It's nice to sit here and have your breakfast.

Doyle: Do you sit here a lot?

Bettinger: Oh, a lot.

Doyle: Very peaceful.

Bettinger: And it's ever changing. During March changes, the clouds change, the bird life changes, the sky changes.

Doyle: How do you feel about all the changes that are going on now? I have this book *At the End of the Pond*—

Bettinger: I wanted to see if you were . . .

Doyle: My grandmother's book actually . . .

Bettinger: And these two . . .

Doyle: I have those two . . . Well, you've really got a lot of . . . [confusing]

Bettinger: Well, I brought out what I had in case we wanted to refer to any of it.

Doyle: Would you mind at some point if I wanted to come and read some of this?

Bettinger: No, I don't mind at all. I don't mind at all. This, when we moved here, was a screened-in porch. And when my folks move here year-round, they enclosed it. And I think probably put that kitchen addition on at the same time. But when we first moved here, we had a ping-pong table out here, and it was all screened in, and it was very lovely.

Doyle: Was this a space that they would use all year round or just in the warmer season?

Bettinger: Well then, it was only for the warmer season.

Doyle: Oh, I mean once they closed it in.

Bettinger: Once they closed it in, you can use it year-round.

Doyle: And you're good with cats? you've done some cuttings . . .

Bettinger: I wouldn't say good, but I . . .

Doyle: Enjoy . . . Well, one question, I know you're going to have to repeat this; but remember when you showed me upstairs where the shingles of the original house were? Now, wasn't that about here?
[unintelligible comments]

Bettinger: No. Originally, it would have been here, and then moved . . .

Doyle: Oh, I see now, yes, I understand. [pause in tape]

Doyle: Do you have that picture?

Bettinger: Oh sure; I have that . . . If you're interested, on the Historical Society—they have someone who comes and goes room by room, so that's room by room, telling you about —

Doyle: Now something like this, I would love to get a copy of and put it in our records, if you would allow that to happen.

Bettinger: Sure.

Doyle: Would that be . . . I think it would be important enough to have.

Bettinger: Now they also have ... lived in this house on West Beach. This [is a] picture of her house.

Doyle: We're talking about Doris Paddie; I don't think it got on the tape.

Bettinger: Oh, yeah; we're talking about Doris Paddie. Who was children's editor for McMillan for many years and had this house right on West Beach. One of my early memories is learning about galley proofs for books. You know how the editing gets put into just long sheets before the book is printed; and the editors read galley proofs?

Doyle: I don't know that.

Bettinger: You don't know that? Well, I learned about that as a young kid because when new children's books were being written, Doris would come for her vacation or a weekend and bring these things that she had to read. And we would be—Holly and I were able to read children's books before they got published. And it was such fun. And her house became a library, and we would be allowed to go and choose one of McMillan's recently printed books or read a galley.

Doyle: Is [the house] still there? [**B**—yes.] Now where is this?

Bettinger: Right on the beach. West Beach. The Hugheses own it now.

Doyle: I'll have to take a walk down there.

Bettinger: It looks like that [pointing to picture].

Doyle: It does?

Bettinger: Yes. And it's right out between, it's the most front. Anyway, finding that card reminded me. And she was a very good friend of the Blantons, Holly's parents, and my parents.