

# QUONOHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Oral History

# JEAN BURDICK BABCOCK

June 17, 2008

Interviewed by Anne Schafer Doyle

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**Doyle:** This is Tuesday, June the 17<sup>th</sup>, in the year 2008. I am interviewing Jean Burdick Babcock, of 21 Powaget Avenue, in East Beach, Quonochontaug. She will relate her memories of her family being here at Quonnie since the early 1900's.

Jean, I'd first like to have you first tell me your name, your full name, and when you were born.

**Babcock:** Jean Burdick Babcock, and I was born April 16, 1929 in Shingle Nook, on Route One, in back of the Four Seasons Restaurant.

**Doyle:** Jean, if you could talk a little bit about the first person in your family – who he was and why he came to Quonnie.

**Babcock:** That would be my grandfather, \*Hazard Hoxie Burdick, and he came here to farm and to spend summers. He and his brothers owned a great deal of Quonochontaug, and I'm not sure exactly how they acquired all this property; but I'm sure it was very cheap at the time. But of course it became very valuable as time went on, which today it's just remarkable to think of the value of what it is today by comparison.

My grandfather wintered in Bradford and spent spring through probably November or so here at the beach. And he initially had a farm in Bradford and had to walk his cattle down here to the farm in Quonnie. And he had quite an expanse here of fruit trees, and a very large garden. But the winters were too difficult to spend here, so they lived in Bradford. And my grandfather had three children, he and his wife Ella. I mean -- I'm not sure -- Ella or Etta Burdick—I think it was Ella Burdick; and it was my father, Allen Burdick, my aunt Mary, and my aunt Lucy. And my father served in World War I, and my grandfather certainly missed having his son around and tried I think to keep him out of the service; but in 1917,

they had to go. And I haven't told this before, but my father actually was in charge of the oxen in World War I; and so he kind of carried on with his farming that he had been doing all his life with his father.

**Doyle:** Can I interrupt for a minute? He was in charge of oxen? Where was this?

**Babcock:** In France and Germany, and I have all of his letters that he wrote home from the first World War. And they walked hundreds of miles with these animals. Because that was the way they had to travel during those days. As I mentioned, my father and my grandfather were very close, and worked together and played together. They pretty much lived off the land in those days; they hunted and fished. My father and grandfather had boats and did lobstering and fishing and sold their fish to the Fulton Fish Market, which is still there today, which is quite surprising.

**Doyle:** Where is that?

**Babcock:** Fulton Fish Market is in New York. And when my husband and I went to New York, that was one of the places we went to see – the Fulton Fish Market, which kind of brought back memories to me of the barrels that they used to put the fish in to ship on the train to New York. My grandfather and my father seined, and initially my grandfather was able to do that. Toward the end, it was just my father. But they seined with Captain Sisson-- which I think many people around here have heard of him. He had a fish market in Westerly; and they would take these skiffs, (they called them) out into the ocean, they'd row them out by hand. And the nets were in the boat, and they would usually have three men--if it was possible, four-- to set the seine. And they would pull in these fish. And they'd all be separated and put in separate barrels and shipped to New York. And they did this from springtime through the winter, depending on what fish were caught there at the time. And it was pretty amazing that there were that many fish that you could seine and put them in barrels and ship them to New York for people to live off in New York – on the fish from here!

**Doyle:** Now they did this down on East Beach.

**Babcock:** Yes. They did it down at what used to be Big Rock, until World War II, when they took the top off Big Rock [Fresh Pond Rock]; so now it isn't quite as big. It was a big rock in those days! And of course as a child, it looked very big! We used to play on it.

During that time, when they would go out seining, it was always a fascination for all the people at the beach. They'd come down and watch and be amazed at the fish that they would get. And Captain Sisson, of course, had his fish market in Westerly; and he sold a lot of it there, but

nowhere near the amount that they caught. And as time went on, of course, people could not manually do the work any more; and they finally had to quit seining. But that was quite an occupation during those early days, probably the late '30's, that I remember, to early '40's.

**Doyle:** Perhaps the amount of fish, too, had gone down?

**Babcock:** I really don't know when the fish started really decreasing in quantity. I know when my husband and I first moved down here, down in Powaget Avenue, --in 1953 we built here--[**tape difficulty**]  
—my brother – my two brothers, my sister and I all built here, right here on East Beach, only because we've loved it here and been here all our life and hated to move. But when we moved down here, my husband and my father and George's father (my husband's father) at many different occasions went out and caught these huge bass, striped bass, **off** the shore. We have pictures of them with 43-, 45-, 47-pound bass, and two or three in a night's outing that they would catch. And it's surprising today: occasionally someone will catch one big one; and [in the past] there were like probably schools of these fish that would be coming ashore, and people would catch them.

My grandfather's house, which is still standing, one of the few that was left from the '38 Hurricane: During the war, it was my understanding that at one point, when my grandfather came down the next spring, he found that someone had been in his upstairs or attic and that there were maps and coastline associations that had been specified up there, with binoculars and everything that were left, like someone had left them in a hurry. And it was our understanding that some foreigner had gotten in there and was using that to check the coastline for subs or maybe signal to subs. And in later years, I myself have been amazed at the amount of reading I have done about the subs that were off this coast and the things that were happening. And we were so distressed at having to keep our lights lowered and black shades at the windows and having our headlights blackened so that just very little light shone underneath-- thinking that it was ridiculous, that no-one was off the Rhode Island coast and certainly not off Charlestown. But in later years we found that there were many subs off there, and that they did do many things that were quite surprising had we known it at the time.

As a kid going to Charlestown School, I had a school friend whose name was Christina Mast. And her parents, Mr. Mast and his wife-- he was the chef, and his wife did all the napkins and tablecloths for the Wilcox Tavern. So as a kid it was very exciting to me to go to a fancy restaurant like that. And they spoke very, very broken English. But they had four children: Christina who was my friend; Kurt, who was my brother Howard's friend; and Ewald was older. And they came over here from Germany. And evidently he had been a cook in Germany and started

running this restaurant. And Mr. Mast's son Ewald was enlisted in the army and was killed as a United States citizen flying over Germany. He was a pilot. And that was just very hard for me to understand how a German could be killed fighting for the United States. And they were watched very closely, while they lived here, until after the war, even though the kids were all citizens and I'm not sure – I don't know if the mother and father ever became citizens or not. But I know that they were under quite close scrutiny while they lived here.

As a younger man, my father painted with my grandfather; and they did many many homes around here. They also did the Campbell's Grain mill, in Westerly, which was a great big building – it's pretty dilapidated right now, but in those days it was a big mill. And in the early '30's, it was my understanding, that my grandfather and my father painted the Ocean House, which the size of it just amazed me: to think that the two of them painted that huge big building. But that was one of my dad and my grandfather's endeavors, which is quite a thing to me today.

My grandfather had a lot of grapes growing down on his property, and he had a beautiful grape arbor that I remember playing in as a kid and thinking it was so beautiful. But I also remember that my grandmother was Women's Christian Temperance Union and absolutely did not approve of any alcohol at all. So my grandfather's reprieve was to grow these grapes and make his own wine. And he always had a barrel in the shed. And any men friends that came, they had to go out in the shed to have a glass of wine because my grandmother would not allow it in the house!

My grandfather and grandmother had three children: my Aunt Mary was the oldest: Mary Kenyon. And she settled in Bradford and lived there all her life. And my Aunt Lucy (my father's two sisters) married Ethan Pendleton, and she had one son. But that connected us to the Pendletons in Quonochontaug. And so we are probably related to many many people down here because of that relationship, the Burdicks and the Pendletons. And then of course, my father, who was the youngest. So they had three children, and then my father of course had the four of us: my brother Howard Hazard Burdick, who was named after my grandfather, and my sister Phylis, and myself Jean, and my brother Gilbert. So there are four Burdicks that were born here and lived here most of their life. And my Aunt Lucy had one son, and he was Ethan Pendleton. And my Aunt Mary had one daughter, who was Barbara; she married a Gavitt. And the Gavitts, of course, are very well known around here.

And the thing I remember as a young teenager was the Gavitt boys' mother left, and so they lived with their grandmother. And they spent many, many, many hours at our house: Nick and Bob and Sam and Joe

Gavitt. And they all lived here most of their life. And the Gavitts were very close to our Burdick family.

**Doyle:** Now this was when you were living right on Route One; is that correct?

**Babcock:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** Now there is a Gavitt's Cove or what used to be called a Gavitt's Cove; did the Gavitts own property down there?

**Babcock:** I'm not –the Gavitts that I know, and I don't know the elder Gavitts – but the Gavitt boys' father was Phil Gavitt; and he's the one that carved decoys. And many many people in this area have decoys that Phil Gavitt carved. And there was a Gavitt's Cove, as there was a Matt's Cove (and I'll go into Matt Crandall in a minute) but Phil Gavitt's cove I think was named after maybe his father, **not** possibly Phil; but that was the Burdick family.

And next door to me was Martha Crandall, who had the Crandall farm. And she's related to us through many family trees. In fact when her estate was settled, there were so few heirs that actually our family was involved as some of the heirs. But that property was so beautiful, and they had such lovely vegetables – she always had a caretaker, and his name was Pat Durkin. And, as a kid-- I really was a very good child but I remember the awful thing that I did in my lifetime – I'll never forget, I'll never understand why I did it. Pat always used to have us over; and as a gardener he used to give us musk melons or tomatoes or anything that kids could eat, from the garden, right there in our hands. And so if we went over there, he'd say, come on down and I'll give you a candy bar. And he'd give us a candy bar almost every time we went over there, and I don't know how he managed to do that, 'cause he didn't -- although there was a little store, right down the road, Brightman's store. But anyway, when I was about nine, I guess, everyone was making May baskets. And they made them with flowers and put nice things in them. But I made a May basket and cut the bottom out and put horse manure in it and dropped it on the step for poor Pat! And I've felt guilty, I think my whole life, thinking about how I ever could have done that—I don't know.  
[Much laughter]

**Doyle:** Did he know it was you?

**Babcock:** Oh yeah; we told him. Well, we had to make up for it, let me tell you. We had to pay. It wasn't only me; it was a few of the neighbor kids.  
[More laughter]

**Doyle:** I'd just like to hear a few of your own childhood memories, at Quonnie.

**Babcock:** Well, one thing that I remember is that when we'd go down to spend the night at my grandfather's house, they had this wrap-around porch that was on the east and south side of the house. And for some reason, it captured the wind. And it always blew, and it seemed like any time I went down there, the wind was always blowin' and it always had that eerie sound inside the house. And it was kind of a frightening thing to me but I always longed to hear it; so every time I'd go down there, I hoped the wind blew so that I could hear that noise that the wind made, blowin' through that porch that they had on the front.

**Doyle:** Did you spend much time on the pond?

**Babcock:** We lived on the pond! Actually, we didn't go in the ocean until it got really warm. And we swam in the pond, we quahogged in the pond, we paddled there; we had little boats we played with in the pond until we were big enough to row. And of course we didn't have to be too big to learn to row, because my father always had a boat. So we spent many, many hours on the pond, and it was an enjoyable thing to be able to spend your life near the water, as we have. We were very fortunate.

**Doyle:** So your memories are more centered on the pond than they are on the beach and the ocean.

**Babcock:** The ocean I remember --of course my father always fishing, and my mother and I and my brothers and sister-- my sister and brother -- older one, "Blondie" Howard, was in the Navy; and my sister Phylis went to work helping people; so it was usually my younger brother Gibby and I used to go down--this was when I was older--swimming with my mother. And when my father would be fishing, we'd be playing in the surf. And there was of course no one on the beach at that point, and that was probably September. And I can remember one time, my mother and I were just playing at the edge of the water. And we were rolling with the breakers, letting the breakers roll us in and then roll back out in the tide. And my father hadn't been paying much attention, and he looked over at us and all of a sudden he comes screaming down the beach: "Are you all right?" He thought we'd drowned --and we were just being carried by the tide! I'll never forget it! **[Laughter]**

Another thing I remember -- this was -- I was older, I was married. My husband and I and my brother Blondie and Bob Richardson, who was a local around here for many years, went to swim because there was a big surf. It was kind of like a hurricane surf that was going by. So we decided that we'd go down and go for a nice swim and ride some big breakers. Well, we did -- and we got out too far. And we were looking; and the shore kept getting further and further, and the breakers were getting bigger and bigger. And we finally said -- "We're gonna have to

go ashore.” So we said, “Let’s go together.” So we went “One, two, three,” and we came ashore. Let me tell you we were scraped and bruised from head to toe, and frightened to death. And that was the last time I think any of us ever went swimming in a hurricane surf again. Learned a lesson!

**Doyle:** So this was without a board or surfboard or anything – this was swimming—

**Babcock:** xxxxx [acknowledging previous comment; then change of subject]. We built our home here in 1953. And to begin with, we had a very difficult time getting a mortgage to build a house down here at Quonnie, after the ’38 Hurricane. And shortly after we built, they had the ’54 hurricane, which was terrible! The water came right up to in front of our house, and I think the people that denied us a mortgage were probably laughing then, you know. They thought we were crazy, not giving them a mortgage; but it ended up we had no problem. But, as we had built a home and neither one of us – I had only worked as a waitress –and my husband worked in Bradford Dyeing Association for probably \$30 a week—maximum, \$30 - \$35-- to own a house and pay off a mortgage was very difficult.

So by the time my youngest son was born, and he was three years old, I went to work. But we did it the way most people did it in those days: if I worked days, my husband worked nights; and if he worked days, I worked nights. So we were able to work but still one of us be here with the kids. But my kids, living at the ocean and being as crazy for the beach as I was (I lived my life down there – any opportunity I had even when I worked, I’d leave work and come home and jump in a bathing suit and go swimming.) So my kids had a love for the ocean. So by the time my youngest son was probably seven or eight years old, my older two boys -- who were-- Gary was five when Glen was born, and Danny was seven-- they used to go surfing. So my youngest son couldn’t carry a surfboard because he was too little; he would put it on his wagon and wheel it over to the beach, and they would spend the day on the beach surfing. And I’ve often heard that many of the people at the beach said that they brought my three kids up in the summer because we weren’t there to see what they were doing; and they used to surf off those rocks by Big Rock, and they said they just held their breath because they didn’t know how they’d live to grow up!

My oldest boy Danny moved to Kansas when he married a girl from Kansas, and he has been back here intermittently; but he has two of his children who’ve moved back here because they love Rhode Island a lot more than they do Kansas. My middle son Gary, who was the real surfer, went to the University of Hawaii, was gonna go over there and be a real surfer. And after he and Karl Endrelunas who – some of you probably

remember the Endrelunas family— they went together to the University of Hawaii--and after a couple of trips out on the ocean with their boards, they decided that that surf was more than they could handle. It wasn't quite like the Quonnie beach!

And my youngest son Glen--my middle son Gary had a work accident and passed away when he was 41, but he was the more athletic, I think, of my three boys. And that was a real tragedy for us. But my youngest son Glen is here. And I'm very, very thankful for that. He lives just a couple of miles down the road, at Tamanaco; and he and his wife have two children which are just a joy for us. My granddaughter is on the Dean's List at URI, and she wants to be a doctor. And my grandson, Glen, I mean Drew, graduated high school this year and he's going to Hawaii to college in September!

**Doyle:** Does he want to become a surfer?

**Babcock:** Well, I understand he told someone he was gonna try surfing in Hawaii; and I'm going talk to him before he goes and tell him he'd better try it here at Quonnie first.

In the '38 Hurricane, I was at Charlestown School, as were my family, and a couple of things that I remember very vividly [about] that day: [One] was that we were on a school bus; they let school out, and we were trying to get home. And the bus driver fortunately had an axe on the bus, and he would have to cut trees to clear the road for us to get through trying to get the kids home. And at one point, we were in Charlestown, and Marilyn Grinnell, who was a daughter of the guy that ran Grinnell's garage, went to get off the bus; and as she did, a gust of wind came and picked her up, and she did a complete loop in the air, and it dropped her on the ground. And so for the rest of the ride home, no child could get off the bus without someone with her, or him; and it would take two to hold one or the other down till they got to the house. And then the bus driver would get 'em back on the bus to go to the next house. But it was very, very frightening to be on the bus at that time.

My father wasn't --we were dropped off at what used to be Sweet Briar, which was a little restaurant, and my mother worked there. So we were dropped off there; it was right at the corner of [Route] 216, where the knife place is now. And my father was at our home at Shingle Nook. And to get to us, he had to literally crawl on his stomach. When he got there, he said he could not stand to get from my house to the restaurant, to be together with us during the storm. And after the wind let go, we went home; and the next day, my father brought us down -- because he wanted to check on his dad's house here at the beach. And of course, you couldn't drive all the way. We had to walk quite a bit of the way. But it



was just amazing to walk into what now is Burdick Street, and there were just houses upon houses upon houses. And the thing that stuck out in my mind as a kid was --you know-- toasters and stoves and refrigerators and all that kind of thing piled on top of each other; and somewhere in the middle of all that mess was an organ.

And the MacLeods lived on that strip, from my grandfather's down toward the ocean: there were several houses there that were gone. And I'm not sure if it was Danny MacLeod's uncle – I think it's his uncle – I'm not sure – played an organ in I think it was St. Joseph, Missouri, a big choir; they had a big tabernacle choir there. Anyway, he had this organ to practice on. So when we stumbled across this organ, we were all excited; we thought we had found an organ. I went to play it and it was an organ that had absolutely no sound – strictly for practice. So we were very disappointed!

**Doyle:** That was Danny's dad.

**Babcock:** It was?

**Doyle:** Yes, it was his dad.

**Babcock:** So those are the stories I remember about that. And then, my father went to George Sarcy's house, which they had a few cottages, as people remember, along East Beach Road, that they rented every summer. And George and his wife Agnes were friends of my mother and father. They used to come up and play cards back and forth between the houses.

**Doyle:** Did they buy their property from your grandfather?

**Babcock:** Probably, but you know, I'm not familiar with that. I really don't know. But I know Mr. Sarcy went to either turn a light bulb on or to check the power, whether he had power in the house, and was instantly electrocuted – the current went through him. And my father grabbed a stick and knocked him away from the power energy that he was getting. And my father never got over that. He never ever thought he'd be in a situation and know what to do that instantly to save his life. And George always talked about "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, Allen."

Some of the houses, the underneath part, the first floor were all destroyed with the Hurricane. But it kind of floated the tops of the houses down to where they have resided now. And people would have the top floor raised and build houses underneath. So my understanding is that the MacLeod house was purchased by Bernie Davis, and he built his house, which is the second house now on Burdick Street. And what used to be the Blue Shutters, was moved up to Hoxie Avenue, which was all Hoxie Avenue —

now they're calling it Moulton's now [Moulton Place], but it was Hoxie Avenue altogether a few years ago. The church bought what was the Blue Shutters and used it as a parsonage for our church for several years.

**Doyle:** This was the Charlestown Baptist Church –

**Babcock:** First Baptist Church, on Old Post Road at the head of East Beach Road.

**Doyle:** And it's still there now.

**Babcock:** Yes.

**Doyle:** Do you know what the address is on that?

**Babcock:** 5073 Old Post Road –oh, do you mean Hoxie Avenue?

**Doyle:** Yeah, Hoxie Avenue.

**Babcock:** I don't know the number.

**Doyle:** I think we'd recognize it.

**Babcock:** Oh, I know; I know which house it is. I remember xxxx

**Doyle:** xxxxx

**Babcock:** To go back to when we built our house, and they had the '54 hurricane – my husband was working in Bradford, and I was at my brother Howard's house next door. And I had my two boys, and I was pregnant with my youngest son Glen; and my brother and his wife Lorraine were next door. And the wind just kept getting stronger and stronger, and I have a large picture window on the front of my house;

**[To Side Two of Tape]**

**Babcock:** --storm --so we're there, and the wind is getting stronger and stronger, **and** I'm getting more nervous with two kids and carrying one, thinking I'm never going to get out of there. And my brother said, "Hey, Jean Marie: Come on outside and look at this." So I went out to the corner of his house. And the houses from the strip were going by, bobbing in the water. And I said,

"Blondie, we have to get out of here. I can't stay another minute." So I went home to grab some things and by then, my husband came in. And he said, "What the H are you doing here? You've got to get out. You don't know what I've just gone through to try to get home!" And Powaget

Avenue was not, at that point; it was just a little sandy road. And there was no Cross Street. And the only way we could get out: there was a path that went between my house and my brother Gibby's house. And we got through that. And when we looked back, people were walking down East Beach Road in water above their waist, as we got out.

**Doyle:** So --now, did you get out by car?

**Babcock:** Yes; we got our car out, and it was an absolute miracle. We were just ahead of the water.

**Doyle:** [Whispered}Oh my goodness. And now where did you go?

**Babcock:** We went up to what was Perkins Garage. It's now Michael's Texaco, Michaels's Shell station now. But my husband had helped Al Perkins build the garage, and they had a trailer down in the field. And at that point they were trying – the police and the National Guard were trying to recruit people to close off the beaches so that no people would go down there. So my husband left me, and my brother left his wife; and he said "Well, why don't you go down in that trailer." So we sat in the middle of the field down in back of Perkins Garage in a trailer that at any minute we thought was gonna go over! So it was a very frightening experience to be here in the '54 hurricane.

**Doyle:** Yeah.

**Babcock:** I'd just like to hear a little bit about your neighbor, Mr. Speed. Buckner Speed--xxxx has a picture of him that we took when we first moved down here—was quite an eccentric old man when we came here in the '50's. And he had a home that they had built, that they engineered. And they thought that if they had a roof that was indented (and it still is that way: Cheryl and Skip Mattson, own the house now), and it always intrigued us to look next door and see that roof that looked like it was falling down – but it was built that way. And Mrs. Larson and Mr. Speed both had their homes built that way.

And he was friends of Thomas Edison, and they traveled [together] world wide. And Mr. Speed had many, many pictures of he and Mr. Edison in Germany and Japan, and told many, many stories to my kids, when they were younger, of all of his escapades with Thomas Edison. And he at one point thought that he was an inventor and had this burnt sugar that they tried to sell; they had loads of it over there! And I guess Mrs. Speed did quite well with it for a time, selling it. But he had a really unusual, typical eccentric-type existence over there.

**Doyle:** Burnt sugar,you said?? What did they use that for?

**Babcock:** They sold it, for candy. And he had a gas –not a gas- oil stove in his kitchen that he used for heat. And the way he had his oil supplied to the house was: he had a gravity feed from the tank, in the yard, which ran into the stove. And to this day we're amazed that the house never burned down. But he had it figured so that it supplied heat for him for the winter. And I'm not going to tell what he did for the summer! I'll tell later –

[Much laughter]

But it was quite ingenious. And, he also had a hammock over there, that hung from the ceiling. And as kids, mine just absolutely loved to go over there. And he used to let them rock that hammock from one end of the house to the other, 'cause it ran sideways to the house; and it was quite a thrill to the kids to listen to his stories and be able to ride that hammock as they used to, growing up.

**Doyle:** Now, he obviously had a wife. Did they have children?

**Babcock:** They had one son, who I understand through stories that he told was involved--and I'm pretty sure--it was with Decca Records. Someone around here will know I'm sure and will tell about that if I'm not saying the right record company. But I know that the son had several gold records that he had made in New York, and was quite wealthy from his business that he had. And I don't know just what his title was in the company, but I know that he was very high up in that industry.

As I was growing up, the people in Quonnie that lived up on Route One were Martha Crandall, Martha and Cleve Carpenter (and her husband was a Senator for many years). And I spent a lot of my childhood over there at their house. And the Curries, Dick Currie and Frances Currie. And Dick's father had a shop on the other side of his house, which is now where the people that sell the canoes live.

**Doyle:** This is Dick—

**Babcock:** Currie—

**Doyle:** Dick Currie--

**Babcock:** The Curries—they had relatives that lived down at the breachway, the Kings. And Dick and Doris – young Dick and his wife and George and I have been friends for many years. And Dick has passed away now, but those were the people that I grew up with around here. And the other elderly person that I remember were Hannah Greene and Tom Clark and his wife—

**Doyle:** Can you tell me anything about what kind of people they were? Or any little incident that you remember?

**Babcock:** Mostly when I think of those people, because of my age I think of them as being very elderly. And Mrs. Blakely –there was Martha Crandall, the Currie cottage, the Carpenter cottage, Frances Currie, then Mrs. Blakely – and I never ever knew her to have any friends. But I did go to her house a few times, and she was really quite a nice –but she was a very old lady. And Hannah Greene lived next door, which is where the Mashls lived, and their place is for sale now. And then of course the Masts that I remember that lived in the saltbox house, which is now Galapagos; and then Tom Clark and Mary Clark who had the Clark property across from West Beach Road. So it seemed like all the people that lived relatively close to me were very old. But they probably weren't as old as I am now!

**[Laughter]**

But I just thought of them as very ancient.

**Doyle:** Did you get your milk from Mr. Clark?

**Babcock:** No. As I was growing up, the Hutchins had East-West Farm. And so previous to that, my grandfather had a farm—both grandfathers. But my grandfather Ennis, my mother's father and mother, had a big farm in Cross's Mills. And their home is still there. So we got a lot of vegetables and milk and meat and chickens and everything from their farm, after my grandfather wasn't as able to farm. But we –after that, previous to – just before World War II, we got a lot of products from East-West Farm. So I remember the Hutchins kids –which we were up with Dick and Bob and John and Louie, and Mary Lou. They had a huge farm, and we never had anything but raw milk. And milk has never tasted the same.

**Doyle:** And, did it taste good to you?

**Babcock:** Oh yeah, oh yeah! Yeah; we lived on milk.

**Doyle:** And – tell me a little bit about Maurine Summerfield –

**Babcock:** Maurine Summerfield, who has just passed away at 98, lived up in a house in back of the First Baptist Church, at the head of East Beach Road. And they bought what they called the Fort, in 1956. And it was a government building that was built for the purpose of [during World War II] being in contact with the coast and also that ammunitions place that is down where Blue Shutters is, across the street, now where they have the mural on the building. And those two buildings were interlocked somehow through the government for spotting - -they said they weren't looking for submarines; they were looking for bigger ships. But the house was built with a turret;

the walls were a foot thick. To go into Maurine's bedroom, she had to literally bend down to her waist to go underneath a [rock?] because the walls were so thick, they couldn't do anything with them. Even though they made a beautiful home out of it, it was left that way.

And the mount for the turret, for the gun, was still there when she sold the house. But the people that purchased it when she sold it were swimming-pool people; they had the equipment to [deal with ] the walls that were too thick, to tear them down or do whatever they had to. So I'm sure it's much more habitable than it was when Maurine had it. But it really was amazing that they built that building to look like a home. And it truly was a fort. It was built to house twelve people. And they had the living quarters for them, and as I say the observation to be able to watch the ocean. But we think of the ships that would be out here that would be a danger to the coast as being submarines. But from what the information the army gave them, it was there for the purpose of getting destroyers and tankers.

**[End of story]**

#### **ADDENDA**

October 18, 2009: Conversation between Jean Babcock and transcriber Charlotte Duryea Hohl. Ms. Babcock wished to insert the following information in connection with her recollections of Buckner Speed:

A tree in Mr. Speed's yard was a gift to him from Thomas Edison, with whom he was very friendly. When small, the tree was brought from Florida to Rhode Island. Despite doubt as to whether it would survive this northern climate, it has since grown to enormous proportions and has become an attraction for sightseers to the Powaget section of East Beach, Quonochontaug. It is probably a purple beech or similar kind. Ms. Babcock visited the Thomas Edison museum in Florida and there found many other trees of the same kind, confirming the story of the Edison gift.

\*Ms. Babcock also corrected the name of her grandfather, given in the original tape as Horace Hillyer Burdick, and added the middle name Hazard to her brother Howard's name. Both changes were made on October 18, 2009, during the telephone conversation with the transcriber.