

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU History of Leetonia Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 835

GRAHAM KEARNEY

Interviewed

by

Paul Merz

on

October 27, 1981

GRAHAM KEARNEY

Mr. Kearney was born in Leetonia in 1891. His parents were both from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; his mother was a sister of William McKeefrey. Mr. McKeefrey was an industrialist in Leetonia beginning in the late 19th century and ending during the 1930's.

Mr. Kearney was vivid memories of Leetonia during its heyday as an industrial center and of his uncle, William McKeefrey.

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INTERVIEWEE: GRAHAM KEARNEY

INTERVIEWER: Paul Merz

SUBJECT: Early Leetonia, pig iron, mining, William
McKeefrey, the Depression, railroads

DATE: October 27, 1981

M: This is an interview with Graham Kearney for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Leetonia, Ohio, by Paul Merz, at his home at 519 East Lincoln Avenue in Lisbon, Ohio, on October 27, 1981, at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon.

Mr. Kearney, I would like you to tell me first when and where you were born and what do you remember about your youth. Take me as far back as you can.

K: Jokingly, I report that I was born in the backyard of a blast furnace, and was born in a brick home which originally was on a farm where the furnaces were built. As I say, I was brought into this world by a veterinarian who had, somehow or other, received a medical degree. They used a pair of forceps to do so. The marks of those forceps are on my forehead and the back of my neck. My mother was badly hurt at that time and it was quite an ordeal for her.

I was raised in what I called "Irish Row". "Irish Row" consisted of four, little houses in which the Kennedy's occupied one, the Clark's occupied another, we occupied the third, and the Sculley family occupied the fourth. Those people don't realize the heroines of the day have to include the wives of those four families. The Kennedy's, he was a coal miner, Mr. Clark was a laborer around the blast furnace, my father was a clerk in a grocery store, and Mr. Sculley was a blacksmith for our blast furnace department.

Those women rose mostly at 5:00 in the morning. They prepared the dinner bucket for their husbands who had to go to work, if they were on day turn, at 6:00 in the morning. Then, they were able to get the children up, get them dressed, and get them off to school with their breakfast before they started the days work. Now in those days the system was this; we washed on Monday, we ironed on Tuesday, we cleaned up on Wednesday, we either were called on or went calling in society on Thursday, Friday we baked, Saturday everybody took a bath, and Sunday we had a great big dinner by those poor, old women who had to stay and get it and we went to church. That was a regular routine.

M: That was a typical week?

K: That was a typical week.

M: Where was that row located in Leetonia?

K: It was on West Main Street.

M: The McKeefrey Furnace was between Main Street and the tracks?

K: Yes, that is correct.

M: How are you related to McKeefrey?

K: Mr. McKeefrey was my mother's brother and my uncle.

M: Did the McKeefrey's settle here in Leetonia?

K: They came here from Pittsburgh with a Mr. Hofius.

M: About what year?

K: In about 1886 or 1887.

M: You were born?

K: In 1891.

M: So it was just shortly before you were born.

K: Yes, that is right.

M: Was your father from Pittsburgh?

K: He came from Pittsburgh, all of my people were born in Pittsburgh on my mother's side.

M: What brought Mr. McKeefrey to Leetonia?

K: He was a salesman for the pig iron furnace of Mr. Ster-

man at Sharon. He wanted to go into business for himself, he was very aggressive. One of those rugged individuals that built America and that is the reason he went into the pig iron business himself. A lot of people don't understand the trials and tribulations of a blast furnace. It is like a human person, a human being, it runs twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and it can be sick and cause you a lot of trouble. Now, to operate those furnaces it costs an awful lot of money because we needed about 300 tons of iron ore to make 150 tons of pig iron.

M: About half was waste.

K: Yes, we needed 100 tons of coke to make that iron and we needed about thirty tons of pluckstone to make that iron. We had to pay for the freight on that. Generally, we paid for the ore on ninety day notes. At one time, some of the manufacturers and rugged individuals never got credit. We had as high as 40,000 tons of pig iron in our storage yard. We kept on making and couldn't sell at the time, and we had thousands and thousands of dollars invested in that. That is why the pig iron business was a very hard business to be in. You were either a prince or a pauper in the iron business.

We were gradually put out of business by the fact that we furnished some basic iron, some Bessemer iron to the steel companies. The steel companies built their own blast furnaces, then when they had excess iron they went out and competed against what we called the merchant furnace, so we finally had to file bankruptcy.

M: That was about 1930?

K: Yes.

M: Just at the beginning of the Great Depression?

K: Well, we were through the Great Depression at the time, and we tried to operate but we finally had to give up because we could not find a market. In the early days, we shipped pig iron as far west as Colorado, up into Maine, and over to Philadelphia.

M: Mr. Kearney, you say we, what part did you play in the McKeefrey iron . . .

K: Well, I say that because of the fact that I was a relative. I had minor positions in there and minor official duties to do. I was a salesman for them. As a member of the family, I speak of we. Not that I was . . . My two uncles and grandfather were the operating owners and officials of the furnace itself.

M: Mr. McKeefrey really provided the spark?

K: He did. He was a tremendous developer and a go-getter.

M: What kind of a person was he?

K: I would say he was rugged. When he started for something he had, what I think today is necessary for a person to succeed, the desire, the aggressiveness, and the perseverance to go through with it. He had all of that and he faced many trials and tribulations. The worst part of it is when people like that fail, nobody comes around and says, I am sorry Mr. McKeefrey. They don't say that he provided them with a livelihood years and years before, that has been forgotten.

M: He did fail?

K: Oh, yes. In that respect he had to give up. He was sovereign when he died, but the different plants had to be sold off. One went bankrupt and the others just . . . In our coke plants and our coal mines, the coal gave out. It was exhausted and we couldn't operate any longer.

M: Mr. Kearney, it is no secret to you, probably, that in Leetonia there was a mill that was planned but never built.

K: That is true.

M: What kind of mill was it, and what happened?

K: It was to be an ordinary steel mill. Our, I say our because I belong to the family, furnace was taken in as part of the development. The men in Massillon, two steel operators in Massillon, were the ones who were to do the operating. Our money was supposed to have been gotten from the Second National Bank in Pittsburgh. Tellings and Richards were the financial operators who provided that. Unfortunately, when things got going they took off for Europe and we had no source of revenue. A group from the First National Bank took over the Second National Bank and of course this proposition was thrown out, which led to the famous headlines in the Cleveland Press one time, "Boom! Bubble. Bust."

M: Did people in Leetonia invest in that?

K: They did.

M: And they lost their money?

K: They did.

M: Did Mr. Mckeefrey lose money on it?

K: Oh, yes, but he was able to get the furnace back to operate. He did because he provided a few years after that. He provided work for the people of Leetonia.

M: Do you remember a Union Iron Company?

K: The Union Iron Company may have been originally part of Leetonia Coal and Iron. I don't remember it as a going factory in Leetonia.

Now, if you want some odd things, I can tell you this; at the age of six I saw my first streaker, but he was a male. The reason for that, it was roomy in the house . . . I don't have the time to explain the conditions under which those people lived who worked at our blast furnace.

M: Good or bad?

K: It was bad.

M: Was that typical of the time though?

K: Oh, yes. Both blast furnaces used the same processes and here a man on our blast furnace worked twenty-four hours a day. The day turn was from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., the night turn was from 5:00 in the afternoon to 6:00 the next morning, or thirteen hours. Now, they reversed that every two weeks and the man going on night turn went on at noon and worked through until 6:00 the next morning. The one going off night turn had worked from 5:00 in the afternoon up until noon. The conditions were that these people would rent a house that belonged either to our furnace or to the Cherry Valley, and they would take in roomers.

Unfortunately, they had another system of before going in the home they had a long bench, and over the bench were a number of wash panels and each one was hung on a nail. They had his towels there and his soap. He stripped himself to the waist and washed off before he went into the house.

Well, this proprietor came home that day and did that. When he entered the house, they had not heard him coming and he found something in the bedroom which he did not like. By the time he got to the kitchen and got the butcher knife out of the kitchen table drawer, the friend he didn't like was out the door ahead of him without a stitch on. He was forty feet behind him. When they passed the street away from me, the streaker was heading forty feet and the other fellow was just holding his own. The reason for the streaking was the

butcher knife in the man's home.

M: Those things happened then as well as now?

K: Oh, yes. Now, the other something I like to bring forth; we had a police force in our day which I felt was second to none.

M: Is this in the early 1900's?

K: Oh, yes.

M: Before 1910?

K: Before 1900, see this was when I was six years old.

M: Late 1800's then you are talking about a police force.

K: Yes. It consisted of two men, a marshal and a patrolman. When they went to arrest somebody, they arrested him. When they took him to the jail, they were walking or they were carried in, but they went to jail. The two brothers, Donnelly, where one was "Big Red" and the other was "Little Red", they were all right until they got a little whiskey in them and then they started to raise the devil out in Grafton. The neighbors stood it so long and then they sent for the policemen. That day when they arrested them, I was standing on the terrace of the Sculley property eating a piece of homemade bread covered with homemade butter and jelly. When these two men came down the street, Charlie Fritz, the patrolman, was handcuffed to "Little Red". Eddie Davies, weighing about 165 pounds, was handcuffed to "Big Red". Just as they got in front of me, "Big Red" is 210 pounds and six foot two, he turned and grabbed Eddie Davies by the throat, put him up against the a telephone post, and began to choke him. Today, the good at heart would have said that Charlie should have gone back and said, "Now, "Big Red", you let little Eddie alone. He is trying to be your friend. Now, don't hurt Eddie, he is your friend and he wants to take you down where you can sleep this terrible thing off." By the time Charlie and his broken Dutch had gotten that over, Eddie Davies would have probably been out. Instead of that, he pulled his mace and it took four blows with his strength to stun "Big Red" and break the hold. They took him to jail.

Now, there was another item that is very interesting; they also could get the women when necessary. There was a lady who had two loves, whiskey and the other fellows' chickens. She was notorious for raiding chicken coops at night. She saw Charlie Fritz coming up the street about a block and a half away and she felt that maybe he had a warrant for her. So, she

stripped all of her clothes off, hid them, and was sitting in a rocking chair smiling freely when Charlie came in. She said, "Well, Charlie, if you have got a warrant for me you are not going to fill it." Charlie looked at her and said nothing, looked around and could not find the clothing, went upstairs and found a bed with a blanket on it. He came down, picked her up, wrapped her in the blanket, put her over his shoulder, and started downtown. Four doors below he found a wheelbarrow and dumped her in the wheelbarrow. Again he started, and then one of our funny boys started to laugh at him and he deputized the funny boy and the two of them took her to jail.

M: He was no one to fool around with?

K: Oh, no. Our police department, you didn't fool with. In those days that was the attitude you used or they would have laughed at you.

M: Was that a pretty rough time then, in the early 1900's?

K: Oh, yes. The police, at that time, had four elements to use. They had the mace or the club, they had the handcuffs, they had a billy, and they had nippers. The nippers have been obsolete now I think for some time, but it was an instrument that you slapped on a man's wrist and then by a slight turn, he would think you were going to take his wrist off. That pain was so intense. Once those nippers were on a man, he went to jail.

M: Were the people that lived in Leetonia in the early part of the twentieth century, the early 1900's, were they primarily Irish people?

K: I wouldn't say that because it was a peculiar town. The Irish were generally used as laborers. Some went as coal miners, but the majority of them were laborers in and around the blast furnaces. They were so cheated later on by the Italians who practically went through the same process as the Irish had done. In the early days, I think, Leetonia could have been said was settled by the Germans because into the eastern end came the Mennonites, the English Lutherans, and German Lutherans, and the Methodists. All of the hills, what we call Quality Hill, was the Presbyterians and in Grafton were the Irish with the Roman Catholic Church.

M: So Grafton was really West Main Street?

K: It was West Main Street. They called it "Potato Town" and they had all kinds of names. It was a peculiar situation in Leetonia, Center Street, which was supposed to have been the center of town, was practically

in the west end because they thought the town would increase and enlarge towards the west. Instead of that, it enlarged towards the east. So, originally the center of town is within a quarter of a mile from our town limit on the west side, Center Street.

M: In the early twentieth century, how many people were employed at the McKeefrey Iron Works?

K: I would say about 100 or 150. There were more at Cherry Valley because they also had their own coke ovens.

M: You didn't have coke ovens down at McKeefrey?

K: Not at that time, we did in the beginning but we discontinued them when we were able to buy Connellsville coke, which we felt was a more profitable fuel to use in the reduction of the iron ore.

M: What period of time did you cease using your own coke ovens?

K: I would say somewhere around the early 1900's.

M: Do you know if those ovens are still in existence?

K: There are remnants of them, yes, particularly near the Cherry Valley Furnace.

M: Do you know of any down at McKeefrey's?

K: No, they are covered up now and if they ever strip the coal, which is in the west end of town, they would find abandoned mine cars and abandoned rails that had never been pulled out when they shut the mine down.

M: How about unions, was there any talk of . . .

K: We never had a union in Leetonia. It was tried once or twice but it didn't go over.

M: Why, do you know?

K: Because it wasn't wanted by the proprietors and it didn't have the standing it had later. I think in the early beginning there were some of the people who were trouble rousers, but in the early days the owners of those places were much more human than the owners of the big corporations today.

M: I don't understand.

K: The reason for that is that they took care of their people. We operated the furnace many times just to

keep the people working.

M: What were the living conditions like for the workers?

K: As I have said to you, the living conditions were the same as for myself at one time. When we lived in that little, four room house on "Irish Row", we didn't have any water in the house except maybe one spigot.

M: But that was typical?

K: Of all of those and the "Red Row", as we called it, there was only one spigot and that was outside for any number of the people, one for each house. The out-houses were then very much in use. As I say, that pattern of the day, when Saturday came, you were washed. Very few people had a bathtub, you were washed in a washtub.

M: How did that work in the wintertime?

K: Well, the only room probably in most of these houses that had any heat was the kitchen. The kitchen was the home of everybody. I have been in homes where the children got up and they all came down to the kitchen in their nightgowns. They were washed in the kitchen, and they were started in the kitchen because they didn't have bathrooms. The heating was all either by stoves or by grates, fireplaces.

M: What did you use for fuel?

K: Coal.

M: Did you dig your own coal or would you buy it?

K: Very few people did, but a lot of people would take their own wagon and go to the coal mine. Most of the coal was done by legitimate coal miners.

M: Then you would buy it from a distributor?

K: We bought it from a legitimate coal miner. Now we had two seams, the number six and the number three. The number three coal was very hot but it contained a lot of iron pyrites, which gave it a tendency to clinker. Mostly those that used the number three coal had large clinkers that they had to take out of their ash bins. It would hamper the fire if you didn't. The number six was a much better, clear burning coal.

M: Is that what you used?

K: That is what we used for fuel, then gas came in later and I think electric heating came in after gas. Prior

to that time, some people had base burners in which they could burn hard coal, if they could afford to buy it, in the different living rooms.

M: By 1910 you were approximately twenty years old, nineteen years old, what did you do for entertainment?

K: Mostly in the early days, our own dances were held. When we were growing up we had birthday parties for the young people. When they got a little older than that we had dances, and that was the main entertainment of the people in that day. Of course, when the snow was pretty heavy we had sled rides. Once in a while we would come to Lisbon from Leetonia. Then during the summer we had Sunday school picnics down at Shelton's Grove and generally all of us would go down on a hay load.

M: What was Shelton's Grove?

K: Shelton's Grove was equally distant from Leetonia by five miles, Salem by five miles, and Lisbon by five miles. You pass through it going from Lisbon to Salem and it is known as Eagleton's Glens and was known in my day as Shelton's Grove. It is five miles from each one of those communities.

M: I think the dance hall is still standing, isn't it?

K: That is a question. One time it had a merry-go-round, as we called it, and horses and carts were on long poles. There was no floor, it was a sawdust floor and you swung around on that. They had one place where you could . . . You get your finger in and pull out a ring, if you were lucky enough to pull a brass ring, you got a free ride. Those were things that happened.

Each church, I believe, generally had their own church picnic down at Shelton's Grove. We had the harvest home picnic and the dances. Then we young people . . . Later on with the building of the Y & O and the Y & S made accessibility to East Liverpool, to Salem, and to Youngstown very easy for us. In Liverpool we had the Locksprings Park where there was a big dance hall. In Youngstown we had Idora Park, again a large dance hall, and in Salem there were other private dances up there. So, dancing was one of our main entertainment features.

M: Distinguish between the Y & O and the Y & S. What was the difference between the two?

K: The Y & S operated between Youngstown and Leetonia, now which came first I don't exactly remember. The Y & O operated between Salem and East Liverpool. They were two distinct railroads.

M: Were they streetcar lines or railroads?

K: There were only two electric roads; the Y & O, the Youngstown and Ohio River, and the Y & S, the Youngstown and southern.

M: They were electric?

K: They were electric.

M: They were streetcars?

K: That is right. Our railroads were the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago, which belonged to the Pennsylvania Railroad and what we called the Erie branch of the Niles to Lisbon. They had a joint station at Leetonia.

M: Now, the Y & O ran from Salem to East Liverpool?

K: Yes.

M: Didn't they come into Leetonia also?

K: Oh, yes, it went through Leetonia.

M: On it's way to where?

K: From Salem to East Liverpool and from East Liverpool to Salem, it had to pass through Leetonia.

M: So Leetonia was like a hub or center.

K: Yes, it was the hub of two railroads. If you wanted to go to Youngstown from Lisbon, you came to Leetonia and changed cars. Salem, you had to do the same thing.

M: You get on the Y & S to go to Youngstown?

K: Yes.

M: Mr. McKeefrey, I would assume, was born around the time of the Civil War, since he was your uncle.

K: I believe shortly after.

M: What do you remember about the McKeefrey estate? What do you remember about being up there as a boy?

K: His first home was what we called the "White House", it was halfway up the hill. Then when he built his larger home, which is now standing on the property of Mrs. Eustis, who is his daughter, that was built farther up.

M: She would be his granddaughter right?

K: No, Mrs. Eustis is his daughter.

M: Is she still alive?

K: Oh, yes.

M: She would be then, approximately, your age.

K: She is a cousin of mine, some four or five years younger. They live in this house now. It is a tremendous house to describe it. We had a family tradition that we went to my uncle's for New Year's and Thanksgiving dinners. We went to my grandfather's for the Christmas dinner.

M: Where did your grandfather live?

K: My grandfather lived on Walnut Street. It is that large home which you see is practically now abandoned.

M: The Gibson house?

K: Yes, Mrs. Gibson owns it now.

M: That was your grandfather's?

K: My grandfather owned it. He bought it from the estate of C.N. Smick who was originally a banker who failed because of unsecured loans he had made to the Templeton Company in Ohio.

M: Your grandfather's barn is now the funeral home.

K: That is right. My aunt sold it to George Wood, Sr. He moved it up there and turned it into a funeral home and his own private home.

M: Let's go back to the McKeefreys and the McKeefrey estate, tell me some things that you saw there as a young person.

K: In what ways?

M: People that you saw. Do you remember any social gatherings of well-to-do people?

K: One of the social gatherings every year was the Fourth of July party that my uncle gave. The different people, his friends, were invited out there on the Fourth of July and at dusk he started a fireworks display and all of the people from town would come up and watch that display. The rest of us would be in the house and after the display was over, we were treated to ice cream and cake.

M: That was in the early 1900's?

K: Yes, we also bought the first gramophone.

M: I have never heard of a gramophone.

K: It is either a phonograph or a gramophone. I thought it was a gramophone. It was the one that originally had the dog and the cone-shaped speaker. That was the original one that he had and the original disks he had were cylindrical, they were not flat.

M: Did the people that visited the McKeefrey estate come in on trains?

K: There was very little visiting. My uncle's social contacts and business contacts were in Pittsburgh. He spent most of his week in Pittsburgh or in Cleveland and they had very little social contact because Mrs. McKeefrey generally stayed at home. Most of the people that came there were his relatives from Sharon or her relatives. They came and visited quite frequently. We were there of course, his family was there, and actually we would go up to the farm and play. As a child I played on the farm and different things like that.

M: He always considered Leetonia as his home.

K: Oh, yes. He was born in Pittsburgh but Leetonia became the place he settled and which, I think, he was very proud of.

M: When do you remember the Italians coming into Leetonia?

K: The first Italians that I knew in Leetonia were the Bernard's, Ciminelli's, and the Zill's. They preceded, I believe, the Nicolette's and others, Altimar's, their descendants are there now. The first three families that I remember; the Ciminelli's, they were cousins with the Zill's, and the Bernard's.

M: Was that in like 1920?

K: Earlier than that.

M: Before 1920.

K: I was just a young boy when I knew all of these people. In fact, the Ciminelli's lived in Grafton and we passed their home many times. The Zill's home also as we would go to and from my grandfather's home that was farther in the west.

M: Did they come primarily to work in the furnaces?

K: They did.

M: Were they well received by the people who were already there?

K: I don't think there was too much friction about them coming in because the Irish didn't want their children to work in blast furnaces. So, they struggled. Most of the descendants of the Irish became lawyers, doctors, dentists, and so forth, or went into business. Unless it was necessary for somebody to take the Irishman's place, the laborer around the blast furnace, and they did that. They followed in the wake of the . . . Then they, themselves, as they prospered, did the same thing.

M: Do you remember any Polish people or Czechs?

K: Very few Poles. There were some Rumanians, and quite a few Hungarians in Leetonia.

M: And they worked around the furnace?

K: They all worked around the blast furnace.

M: You said that Mr. McKeefrey employed between 100 and 150 people.

K: That's right.

M: Were more employed at Cherry Valley?

K: Yes, because they had the coke ovens which they operated.

M: Was there keen competition between the two furnaces?

K: No, we worked very closely with them. If we had a part that they needed, we gave it to them and vice versa. Our competition was in the sales and, of course, we competed in the quality of the pig iron. Generally there was enough to satisfy both requirements for selling. One person would give us, say a 500 ton order, they would give Cherry Valley a 500 ton order. Most of the people were very friendly.

Of course, there is one sales item that I like to bring up. We had what is called white iron and we only made it when the furnace was sick. It was an item that was very hard to sell and the only people that could buy it were cast iron pipe makers. I was sent to Chicago by Mr. McKeefrey to try to sell 1500 tons to the McCloud, I believe it was, cast iron people who owned plants in New Philadelphia and down there. When I approached to gentleman about the matter he said, "Well, you are a

very nice man but if Billy McKeefrey wants to sell me any white iron, he should call me." I had quoted the man \$15 a ton. I went back to Leetonia and told my uncle, he reached for the telephone and called this gentleman. Niceties passed between them, one said, "Well, you have some white iron to sell, Billy?" "Yes." "Well, what do you want for it?" "Fifteen fifty," and he made the sale. That gentleman, it cost him \$750 to buy that iron from Mr. McKeefrey than from me because I had quoted \$15.

M: That's amazing. Did you have to ship primarily by railroad?

K: Yes. No pig iron ever left our place by truck. Pig iron in the early days was made in what we call a casting house. The molten iron was run down into great big sand beds, and let out there into this long truck. In the old days, when it cooled we had to take great big two-handed sledges to break it into what we called pigs like that. Those pigs were loaded in gondola cars and sent out to the iron yard. Then the iron carriers, there was a metal anvil on the ground and they would pick these up from the bottom of a gondola car and drop it on the anvil and break it into two pieces. The way we decided what the iron was, we looked at the size of the grain. If the grain was large it was soft iron, the closer it was the harder the iron was. Each one of those different grades of iron had a different ability to satisfy the firings of the day depending on what kind of castings they wanted to make. If it was a ductile casting, generally they used soft iron. It made it easier, I would say, to put it in a lathe and to shape it and things like that. The other iron, the stronger iron, was used for other purposes.

M: How about danger? What was it like to work there?

K: Very dangerous. We had many a time where a man slipped over the hot iron and it would take off a foot. We had what was know in those days, and they still have it today, hot blast stoves. The gases that we produced in the blast furnace used to be exhausted to the air. By containing those gases which were very hot, bringing them back, and putting them through these hot blast stoves, which were a series of brick, I heated them up and then we would change that stove and send cold air through that. It became hot air and we sent hot air into the blast furnace which increased our ability to reduce the iron ore.

M: It would charge the furnace, make it hotter?

K: Yes, it would because it was hot air when it went in in the beginning. We had a flue to carry that and lots of

times I replaced some of those flues, if there was an explosion those flues would come up. We very seldom had, or I don't think we ever had, that a fellow fell into that flue house and into that flue from that, but it could have happened.

M: What about compensation for a man who was hurt, was there any such thing as that?

K: There was to a certain extent, but none officially. In other words, I remember when I was in parochial school, they came down one day and reported that Mr. Holloran, he had a family of six or seven, had been killed by an explosion of dynamite. He unloaded all of our ore from the big hopper cars we brought in. Sometimes it froze on the way to the furnace and we had to use dynamite to get it out of the cars and in a premature explosion of that dynamite he was killed. Mr. McKeefrey made every effort he could to place those children in jobs. The oldest boy was given a job as an office boy, from there into a bookkeeper, from there he went into the iron business and became head blower of the Republic Steel Company, that was Jim Holloran. The other boys and other girls were saw to it that they got a business education. That was the only way in which those people themselves, the owners, would try to compensate if anybody was actually hurt. There was no legal or official way of compensating those people at the time for their injuries.

M: How about the town itself, was it safe then? Was there crime at the time, was it the kind of place that you could walk around at night?

K: Most of the crimes were thieving and as I say, if you consider getting drunk and getting arrested a crime. Fights were very well established. I used to think, I used to say so, that all arguments were settled by your fist either in the alleys or in the outhouse at school. That was the way you settled them and if you wanted to fight all you had to do . . . These people in the barroom got into an argument, "We will see who is right. Come on out in the alley." The winner of that fight was generally the one who won the argument.

If you want some scary things I will tell you what happened. One night we were coming home from my grandfather's and we had to pass a saloon run by "Nigger" Ross.

M: "Nigger" Ross?

K: "Nigger" Ross, but "Nigger" Ross was not black. He was a very black-skinned Italian. He ran a Paduan system. He would go to Italy and bring back twenty or thirty

people, Italians, bring them into the country, put them to work around the blast furnace, he had a contract on ore and coke, and he only paid them enough to exist. They never would have gotten ahead. One night when we were passing the place we saw a large crowd outside of "Nigger" Ross's saloon. "What is wrong?" Somebody had slit "Nigger" Ross's throat from ear to ear. They were in there sewing him up. "Nigger" Ross lived.

M: Where was this located in Leetonia?

K: On the west end of town.

M: Was that the normal way of doing business for your uncle then? Would he hire, would he have a man to provide the labor?

K: Oh, no. He would hire the man, the man could do what he pleased. A man would take a contract to unload ore or coke for us. He could get his own men.

M: Oh, I see. Whatever way he did it, that was up to him.

K: Yes, we had no interference with that because we gave him a contract on unloading ore.

M: What about in the furnaces?

K: What do you mean?

M: Working around the furnaces.

K: That was all day work.

M: They were your employees?

K: That is right.

M: But "Nigger" Ross would provide the contract workers?

K: It was all his responsibility.

M: How about the Ku Klux Klan, do you remember that at all?

K: Yes, it came here and became very prominent in Lisbon more so than in Leetonia. The leaders of the Catholic church just felt, It will come and it will go. We paid very little attention to the Ku Klux Klan in Leetonia.

M: You are Catholic?

K: I am Catholic. I had married a Protestant.

M: When did you leave Leetonia?

K: I left Leetonia in 1921 when I was married. I lived there practically thirty years.

M: When did Mr. McKeefrey die?

K: I just can't remember that but it was somewhere maybe in the 1970's or maybe before that. His wife had preceded him in death.

M: So he lived a long life.

K: Yes, he lived up into his eighties.

M: Flashback to the Klan for just a second, it was primarily an anti-Catholic thing then.

K: In the beginning, no. A lot of people don't understand that, but in the Civil War after the South lost, there was an influx of carpetbaggers. There was an influx of men sent down there who wanted to take everything they could get out of the South and take it away from them. That organization was really formed to protect the interests of the southern people. It was not particularly anti-Catholic, of course at the time, the South was largely Protestant and not Catholic. Later on the original charter of the Ku Klux Klan made it that only a member couldn't be a Catholic or a foreigner. Now that did, I think, exist which would take in almost all of the races that came in here. It was probably an organization of southern people, but it was originally started to protect the southern people from the carpetbaggers and those governors sent down there to run the states.

M: Do you remember any instances in violence in Leetonia connected with the Klan?

K: We had none in Leetonia. The only one I ever knew of was a boy who went to one of the meetings with a gun, and he was arrested for carrying a gun. He was a Catholic, but he was not . . . No, there was never any violence, never confrontations here like there was in Indiana. Indiana was the hotbed of Ku Klux Klan at that time.

M: In the early 1920's?

K: Yes, that is right. In the early 1920's.

M: Mr. Kearney, did you serve in World War I?

K: Yes, I was a first lieutenant in the ordinance department, inspection part.

M: What part of service did you see, where did you see service?

K: Only in inspection work.

M: In this country?

K: Oh, yes. You see, I was one of the civilians who had a college education in engineering. A classmate of mine, I met his sister and she told me that he had received a commission in New York City. She said that if I was interested to write him, and I did. I was supposed to go to New York to get my commission because the head of his office was a Cornell man. I went to get my recommendations, the three letters. I got one from Father John Cavanaugh who was a native of Leetonia and the first John Cavanaugh to be president of Notre Dame University.

M: He was a native of Leetonia?

K: Yes, the first John Cavanaugh to be president of Notre Dame University was a native of Leetonia. He has a big family. Interestingly, Patrick Cavanaugh and his wife sat behind us. We had pew number one, the Cavanaugh's had pew number two and they were the old fashioned Irish ejaculators. Every time the priest would say something, "Glory be to God. Thank God. God Blessed." Mr. Cavanaugh, as I remember him, his first mode of transportation were a yoke of oxen. He pulled his cart, brought his grain into town, he was a farmer, went to the coal mine, got his coal, and took it back there.

Now, he was one and Colonel Morgan of the Morgan Engineering Company was the second, and Colonel Weibreck of Alliance was the third. Colonel Morgan gave me a letter of recommendation, an introduction Major Fuller in Washington D.C., and that is where I went to enter my application for a commission. Sometime in early November it was sent to me and I was told to report to Washington. I was sent to the Bethlehem Steel Company for two months training before I was sent to the Otis Elevator Company in Yonkers, New York. I had inspection there and then later on I carried out on it and was given a job in New York City in the main office. So, I had two offices at the time, one in Yonkers, New York and one in New York City.

M: What was Leetonia like during the 1920's?

K: I thought it was a very cozy place. We had a large number of very nice people and I would say it was one

of the most successful areas that we have. For instance, we had as high as five barbers, four bankers, three blacksmith shops, five carpenters and contracts, and five cafes, but that didn't tell the story about liquor consumption. It was always a standing joke that Leetonia had a saloon for every 100 people. When we had 2,500 people, we had twenty-five saloons a speak-easy. We had two dentists and we had five doctors at that time.

M: This was in the 1920's?

K: This was 1916. We had eleven lodges, some of which were the Masons, the K of C's, the Eagle's, and Rebecca's, Odd Fellow's, Pythian Sisters, Knight of Pythian, and Eastern Star.

The three main industries at that time were the two blast furnaces and the Crescent Machine Company, which had been formed in Leetonia and had earned quite a reputation as a manufacturer of woodworking machinery. In fact, one of the first jobs I received in the ordinance department was to contact the inspector wardens in the Hawaiian Islands and send a request of inspection and receipt to him to check on two machines that were sent there by the Crescent Machine Company prior to receiving the order. After that we had to get them paid and they could only be paid on the receipt of a certificate inspection. I had to send that to the Hawaiian Islands to an ordinance inspector out there to sign it.

M: Where was that machine company located in Leetonia?

K: In the eastern part of it. It first started out as a small shop. Men named Willison and Harold started it. They were successful and they moved across the street on to West Main Street and built a three story building. They continued their success. Then they went to the eastern part of town and purchased a large area there and set up three departments; one machine shop, one was the foundry or the pattern shop, and the other was the assembly plant.

M: Where at on the east side of Leetonia?

K: I would say just almost to the outskirts of the eastern part of Leetonia. It is now occupied, I think, by a rubber company.

M: National Rubber.

K: National Rubber now owns the Crescent. It folded years later. At one time we had a pottery in Leetonia, we had a nail mill there, and we had a boilerworks which

was very successful. Those were the things that we had, we also had our own light plant.

M: You produced your own electricity?

K: We made our own electricity. An interesting story is that Mr. Thoul, who owned it, was sitting at his dinner table one night complaining to his family. He said that the accountants demanded that he lower his rates. He had one of the spitfire kind of daughters and she said, "Lower your rates, why should you? You are the only place in town they can get electricity, they can't get it anyplace else. I am going to that meeting with you tonight." She went to that meeting and they came home with raised rates.

M: End of argument, huh?

K: That was the end of the argument. He got increased rates. At one time we had our own brewery, which we later sold out.

M: Where was the brewery located?

K: On the south side. It was operated by a man named Louis Segall.

M: He is a German?

K: German, oh yes. See, we had the German Lutheran Church later combined with the English Lutheran Church. Then we had these, I would say, offshoots and the different churches, Church of God. We don't have many of those in Leetonia but we have a number of them here in Lisbon. The Leetonia people stuck pretty well to the original churches that were left in there.

M: The Great Depression must have brought a great change to Leetonia. Is that when those businesses folded?

K: Oh, it did, yes. It hurt us very badly because the fringe operators were practically forced out of business, cars were not sold and so forth, and how many grocery maybe have gone out of business on that account, I don't remember. It was very tough for them.

M: What was it like for you during the Depression?

K: Fortunately, I was able to exist because I was working for my uncles and we continued to operate the blast furnace, and I continued to go on the road and sell.

M: The McKeefrey Furnace operated during the Depression?

K: Oh, yes.

- M: I thought it folded when the Depression began.
- K: No, it operated during that period. Now, not as full as it did before, but in addition to that we had two coke plants and I was selling coke. I sold pig iron up until 1933.
- M: Where were the coke plants located?
- K: Well, they were in Uniontown, near Uniontown. One was between Brownsville and Uniontown and the other was between Uniontown and up the Monongahela River.
- M: Someone told me that there is a town in West Virginia named after your uncle, McKeefrey, West Virginia.
- K: Very unfortunately, we bought coal acreage down there because our other coal mines weren't working out. It was successful for a short time, during the big strike of the Ohio coal miners. During that period we prospered because our coal could be placed in the Ohio consuming points. After that strike was settled and the Ohio mines opened up, all of that business that we had was gradually lost, so we finally folded. From what uncle told me, we dropped one million and a half in the operation of that mine. There is one of the sad things, the people whom we gave work to didn't come around and say, Mr. McKeefrey, I am sorry that your coal mine has shut down. Years and years he operated that mine continually at a loss.

One of the interesting factors in those days was that we were a commercial mine. In other words, we had to make different sizes of coal and sell them to different consumers. Therefore, under the conditions which we operated, we would sometimes have an excess of lump, an excess of egg, or an excess of slack. We expected to burn that excess in our boilers. Well, our fireman was very willing to burn the lump and the egg, but to fire slack you had to fire often and thin and they resented it. So, they waited one day until Mr. McKeefrey and I and our superintendent were down in the bottom of the coal pit, which is a shaft mine. Our pit bottom was eighty feet below the Ohio River which is only about two-fifths of a mile away from our mine and we had a stream of water four inches coming into the mine at all times and our pumps had to keep operating. They waited until we were three quarters of a mile to the pit mouth and they overloaded the boilers with coal and the steam went down. We had no means of moving, our transportation was electric cars and our lights were going out. Fortunately, we had a telephone system between the mine and the office and our superintendent called the assistant superintendent. He went over with two or three

others and took over firing the boilers and gauged the steam up and we were able to come back to the surface, which doesn't leave me a very kind, friendly feeling for labor.

M: What was it like in that mine? Tell me what the mine was like.

K: A mine of ours was, I would say, not . . . There were three or four different kinds of mines; low vein, medium vein, and high vein. The coking coal was high vein, you could practically walk into that mine. The medium vein you generally went in on a bend and then you had to take out the top to make working . . . That is when you had to use wood and blocking to keep that up.

M: What do you mean a bend, you had to go in on a bend?

K: You had to go in bent down. I have been in mines in West Virginia that you couldn't straighten up in. Now in three foot mines they used to tell a story of our local miners. The way they got back to the face is they rolled back in. As they rolled back in they found that they were back and they had to roll back out. One day, they rolled in, most of them, and they rolled in with a ladder in the back, so they called a day off and took a holiday.

That was another very tricky situation. We operated a coal mine near Leetonia in that little vein. When the coal miners decided to have a holiday they didn't tell their wives. They would have their dinner buckets packed and then go on a holiday. Most of the wives took care of the paychecks and when they would come to the mine where we had deducted a day off because they didn't work, there was hell to pay. They said that their husband had gone to work. It was rather nasty for a time but what caused it all was the miners took a holiday when they pleased.

M: What did they use for lights in the mines?

K: Originally they had what they called miners lamps. They had a powder of some kind which made a gas, I have forgotten the name of it.

M: Carbide?

K: Carbide is what they used in those lamps. Then they were able to electrify them. The open light and the closed light . . . Now the gases in a coal mine were very dangerous so generally there is a mine inspector that goes in at a period early to the interest of the miners. He goes to all sections of the mine and tests

the gas. If he finds it safe, the miners go in to work. Unfortunately, there are rules and regulations about that; don't light a cigarette or use a match in a mine under any conditions, no matter how wet it is. One of the best friends the coal industry had, I can't think of his name at the time, he was going through a mine and somebody in his party lit a cigarette. He was killed and one of his boys was killed in that mine because of the explosion which occurred while lighting that cigarette.

M: How would the mine inspector detect the gas?

K: He did it with gaslights and with machines they had. They had different apparatus to which they could test the gas.

M: Wasn't there a story about them always having a canary with them or something?

K: Yes, there were times when they used birds.

M: Do you remember those times?

K: Only by hearsay.

M: That was before your time.

K: Yes, it was only by hearsay because generally the mine inspector was in action when I, especially was when we operated down in northern West Virginia. We put that mine in in 1921 and we closed it in 1936. As I say, we dropped a lot of money.

M: Is the town of McKeefrey still there?

K: It is but all of the acreage has been bought by the Hannah Coal Company. There were several mines down there; the McCabe Mine and there were four mines right along in that area and we were one of the four. They finally closed, all of them, because of the depression in the coal industry. I remember a time that I was in conversation with Tom Millsal, the president of the Burton Steel Company. We were talking about another subject and he told me when Eisenhower was elected, Joe Well was the head of the pottery industry, hopped a plane and went down to see Eisenhower, and asked if he was going to give him protective tariff for the pottery industry and the coal industry. He said, "No, there will be no protective tariff."

Liverpool at one time was the pottery center of the world. It is limited now to four or five potteries and they are only working part-time, due to the fact that we have no protective tariff. Now, during the success-

ful years of McKinley and Hannah and those types, we had a protective tariff.

M: Local industries flourished?

K: All over the country. The result was that industry thrived at that time.

M: Let's flash back to 1936 and Mr. McKeefrey when he got out of the McKeefrey Furnace, when you quit producing iron. What did he do then for a living?

K: We still had a few coke ovens to work and we had a limestone quarry which we tried to operate, but he generally retired. I had left the business before that, I had sort of seen the handwriting on the wall and I developed my own business.

M: And that was what?

K: I would say starting in 1931 or 1932.

M: What did you go in to, what kind of business?

K: There was coal that they wouldn't sell that I knew of a market for. They wanted to sell their own and, of course, I wanted to broker coal and that is what I did. I brokered coke and coal, limestone, and sometimes a little pig iron. Then I was able to pick up what we call broken "bisqueware" and broken insulators and I could sell those to the steel mills for making furnace bottom or different kinds of pipe metals. It was that which I used to make up my own business. Being very fortunate and having very good suppliers and having very good customers, I was able to do pretty well.

M: If you could take me back to Leetonia in the late 1920's or early 1930's, what would I see? What would the town be like? What would Main Street be like?

K: It was not as prosperous as it was ten years prior.

M: During the 1900's?

K: The Depression hurt it and as I say some had to fold, some combined and others just went out of business.

M: Those decades that you lived in Leetonia, the time from 1900 to 1910, would you say that was the best decade?

K: One of the best. I think the period which this book is identified with, 1916, was a very prominent and a very well satisfactory . . . This was three years before the big Depression.

M: We have touched on so many different things.

K: Yes, there is very little more I can tell you, except maybe a story or two.

M: I am willing to listen.

K: Well, we had a famous character who was known as "Scrubby". "Scrubby" was a poacher and "Scrubby" was a good man to have in your corner, but "Scrubby" paid very little attention to poaching rules. As I say, he had other occupations. For instance, he loaned us some tents to go down to Shelton's Grove to camp in.

M: Was this when you were a young man?

K: Yes, my little brothers wanted to go camping. Somebody said "Scrubby" had tents, so we borrowed them from him. We went down and erected them on the platforms that Shelton's Grove had. While we were there Mark Shelton came up and looked around and asked if everything was satisfactory. We said, yes. When we returned to Leetonia, one day my brother and I were sitting on our front porch when this person passed. He stopped and asked, "Was Mark Shelton around those tents when you were there?" "Yes" "Did he say anything?" "No, why?" He said, "They were his tents." They ran picnics down there and they used tents during the summer. When the summer was over, he would fold the tents up and put them on the second floor of the open air dance hall and put plank over them. "One day," he said, "I found them. So that night a girlfriend of mine took a one horse wagon, she held the horse and I took the tents."

M: He didn't recognize them as his own tents?

K: Oh, no. Another time this gentleman was blamed for blowing up the Presbyterian Church, he and another gentleman, and he was jailed for it. He said that he had a wonderful time there and was very mad that his sister came down and bailed him out. I won't go into any of the details of the reason why he so wanted to stay in jail, but they were good.

M: He was in no hurry to get out?

K: No.

M: How did it work . . . For instance, when you lived in "Irish Row", if you went to the grocery and you didn't have money to buy groceries or for a doctor? How did you handle that kind of thing?

K: Most of the laborers that worked at the mine, we had a grocery store.

M: A company store.

K: A company store, and they dealt with the company store.

M: Did they have to?

K: No, it was not compulsive but it was convenient because we had order day. For a percentage we would give them an order against their pay and that way they could go and get groceries. Then, of course, we would deduct it from the pay when the time came.

M: Plus a percentage?

K: Oh, yes. They had to pay a little percentage for us giving them that order to get groceries at the store.

M: Why wouldn't they draw their pay and then go to another store and buy it and skip the percentage?

K: Maybe they got it a little better, maybe they didn't like our deal. They couldn't take our order down and spend it someplace else, they had to spend that at our grocery.

M: The advantage of buying at the company store was that they didn't have to have the cash.

K: That is right, they were given credit.

M: Was it normally a struggle from one pay to the next for those people?

K: Yes, they didn't have . . . The most successful man I knew was Mr. Sculley. He was our blacksmith, but he had an average pay a little higher than the others. That man was able to raise a family of six very nicely and he was also able to buy stock in a local building loan concern and at one time became president of it. He was probably one of the most successful men who worked on a salary to create an estate.

M: At the McKeefrey Iron Works?

K: Yes, he was the blacksmith and he was a marvelous company man. He could make almost anything that we could machine. When we wanted a part made, he would go out around to the scrap pile. He would walk around there and pretty soon you see him pick up a piece of steel or a piece of iron, bring it back, shave it into the form we wanted, and they would machine it and use it. During the summer I used to be one of his strikers. I swung a sledge for him in the blacksmith shop.

M: As a young person?

K: Yes.

M: What was it like to work in a blacksmith shop?

K: It was not too hard. We didn't do big work, we made some horseshoes and we made different things. Striking wasn't heavy blows, it was generally a pounding with a sledge raised about ten or twelve inches and brought down. It wasn't that heavy swing that was necessary for any time. We didn't do work like that.

M: How did you heat the metal, with charcoal?

K: No, to a certain extent, yes, but with coke and then air.

M: You would force air into the. . .

K: Forced air to make a white heat in the iron forge. There he would get it up to. . . There would be iron or steel dripping off of the piece and then he would start to form it into the shape you wanted. It was a rough formation but they could take it and machine it then into the part that we needed for a machine that had broken down.

M: How about livestock, how many head of horses did Mr. McKeefrey and the family own?

K: I think he had maybe two pair of driving horses and the rest of them were farm horses. I suppose he had maybe six or eight farm horses, Belgians, to do the pulling, the plowing, and so forth.

I have an interesting story for you about the blast furnace. A man named Wesley Bates had a contract with us to remove all of our debris and dump in into a yard. He had a number of two-wheel, iron thumb carts for every fifteen or twenty number of horses and his job was to do that. In those days, some of the tired businessmen, such as he, would go to Pittsburgh for the weekend. Where they went was their business. Unfortunately, Wesley went to this place which was raided about midnight. He and the inmates and other guests were taken before the judge. The other guests were used to it, so when their name was called in front of the judge . . . What is your name? Jerry Smith. What is your occupation? Laborer. Fined dollar and costs.

Wesley couldn't stand that. So when he was called up the judge said, "What is your name?" "Wesley P. Bates." "What is your occupation?" "General contractor for the Salem Iron Company." "Fifty dollars and

cost."

M: He didn't know?

K: He learned.

M: They took excursions to Pittsburgh?

K: Not excursions, they just decided that they were tired and needed a little rest and vacation. They would go in on maybe Saturday morning and come home Sunday night.

M: They could do things in Pittsburgh that they couldn't do in Leetonia.

K: That is right.

M: How about gambling, was that a big part of life then?

K: We had gambling, but it wasn't of a professional nature either in Leetonia or in Lisbon. It was individual poker games.

M: Friendly?

K: Yes.

M: When I asked you about the horses I meant like around the mill itself.

K: Around the mill itself were these horses owned by Wesley Bates.

M: Oh, you subbed all that out?

K: Yes, we contracted him to remove our debris.

M: How well were the horses taken care of?

K: He took care of them in a good way. It was his business to keep those horses in good working condition.

M: When were horses replaced by trucks?

K: We never used a truck because our furnace practically went out of business, you might say, before we discontinued work with Wesley. It was cheaper for him to take it over than to get a group of trucks.

M: You used the furnace into the 1930's?

K: 1936, I think it finally closed up.

M: Somewhere in there he switched to trucks.

K: I don't remember too many trucks, no.

M: How large of an area did the McKeefrey holdings, the mill, the furnace, cover in terms of a football field? Was it larger?

K: That would be very hard for me to give you that area because it extended from the street corner where we had our iron yard and several places like that to clear west of Leetonia, including the two story home in which I was born. It was a good half mile along Main Street that we owned.

M: And then down to the tracks.

K: Down to the tracks and we owned a couple fields across the tracks.

M: How about World War II, what did you do during World War II?

K: I was in the service, I was located in Lisbon here. I was chairman of the rationing board here.

M: In Lisbon or Columbiana County?

K: There were four in the county, I had the Lisbon board.

M: You were pretty active that way?

K: Oh, yes. That was quite a chore. At that time, it was much easier than it is today because it was a matter of conservation and people were willing to go along and try to conserve their gas and so forth.

M: For the war effort?

K: Yes, that is true. They wouldn't do it today, but they did then.

M: Did you find any people that wouldn't?

K: Yes. During that period we had maybe four to six. Some were, It doesn't apply to me.

M: Excuse me now, you said that period, you mean during the entire war?

K: No, during the rationing days which did take a good bit of the war.

M: You only had four to six people who wouldn't go along.

K: That is about right. There were the ones that, It

doesn't apply to me and the others were, I am going to beat the game. Of course we cracked down on them to our ability. They had to work hard to get anything they got out of us once we knew they were gypping us.

M: How did that rationing system work?

K: It worked very nicely. We were given for gasoline three types of books; the A book, the B book, and the C book. The A book everyone had, it gave you a certain amount of gallons of gasoline. The B book was for those who traveled back and forth to work. The C book was, I would say, people that were on call, I felt, twenty-four hours a day.

M: Like a physician.

K: A physician, a priest, a minister, and people like that or a policeman. We did go all extreme to give them so if they were ever called . . . The first night it went into existence, which was at midnight, I had a telephone call at two in the morning from one of the local gas stations which was open. The man said, "Mr. Kearney, there is a trucker here from Indiana who has no gas and he has no tickets. Well, I do." I said, "What did you call me for? I have just looked at my watch and it is a quarter of twelve. You know that it doesn't take effect until twelve." He said, "Oh, that is right, Mr. Kearney. My watch must be fast, thank you." I never did ask him the next day how many people got gas that night at a quarter of twelve.

Those were the things that you did and there were many other things that you did. Like the Methodist church, they operated a food stand at the fairs and they were not supposed to do that. We arranged it so that they could.

M: You were pretty flexible in it then?

K: Oh, absolutely. I had gotten in a conversation, things first started out as county. Johnny Burns was the man and he asked me to be his assistant. He said to me one day, "Pat, why are the people mad at us? We didn't take these things from them. The only way they can get them back is through us. They should be friendly with us." From that had formed two methods of rationing to me, positive and negative. Negative, you tried to keep the people from getting it and positive, you try to help them to get it. We took the positive stance. Anybody that had a fair story, we gave them gasoline. Many a time, people would like to go to see their children in the camps but they were not supposed to go. I would create a business trip for them and give them a B book with the understanding that any gas that was

left in that book would be returned to me when they returned, and every book was returned to me. They were very honest with me as I had been with them.

M: You don't think that would be true in 1981?

K: No, because the people today are, There is nobody who is going to tell me what to do. That is the main trouble with America today. We used to have . . . The First Amendment, it was wonderful when we stayed within the law. Now we have the First Amendment without the law, and that is going to tear us down someday.

M: What brought that change about in people?

K: I think lack of parental care and influence, lack of enforcement of the law, and lack of those people who would be the leaders that are sort of laughing it off.

M: Not taking it seriously?

K: Absolutely.

M: Is that one of the biggest changes you see as you look back over the years?

K: Yes, I think in the attitude of the people. There are a lot of people who don't realize that they can't have those good things without an America. We have to have the America first, therefore we must have adequate protection and a better economy. To get it, we hope they can work it out. We have given these people, because we were strong enough and financially able to give them all of the things we have given them. We can't continue it, we are going broke. It has to stop someplace. Unless we have that country and it's protection, how are we going to take care of the people.

M: The thing that strikes me, you said that when you were a young boy and people were in need, their needs were provided for but not necessarily by the government.

K: Largely by people who were friendly, who were, I would say, generous. For instance, the Demming Company over in Salem, no one ever got fired from the Demming Company during the Depression or any other time. They kept the employees on. Where my brother works today, at Eli Lilley, during the big Depression they had the walls of the office washed down three times a week just to keep people busy. There were people of that kind living in those days that don't exist today. Everything is controlled by big corporations, if you are not making money then you shut it down. They didn't in the days which my uncle and the Demming's started out in business.

- M: Mr. Kearney, I don't think everyone in Leetonia would agree about your uncle. It seems like there are a lot of hard feelings there. Why?
- K: Socially he was not inclined, although he did belong to the Masonic Fraternity. He was worshipful master for two or three terms. His business obligation, his sociability, which I say was largely male in his connections in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. Of course, Mrs. McKeefrey was very austere and unfortunately her daughter is the same way. Speaking freely, she doesn't go out of her way in any way to be friendly with the Leetonia people, so there is naturally a resentment about that. I don't think they feel that way about me.
- M: No, I don't think they do either. Do you think Mr. McKeefrey used the town to enrich himself, would that be fair to say?
- K: Only as a businessman, he didn't use the town any more than other people used the cities in which they were located.
- M: He didn't abuse it in your opinion?
- K: No, I don't think he did. I remember an article written by T. S. Arnold who at one time was the editor of the Leetonia Reporter. A long article, which was very good, "Why Knock Them?" He went on to say what the McKeefrey's had done in the way of providing business livelihood for the people in Leetonia. That it wasn't our mistake that the iron mill blew up. It was the people in Pittsburgh who caused it all.
- M: The collapse of the iron mill.
- K: Yes, that is right. It wasn't Mr. McKeefrey's fault. We had hopes. In fact, my uncle said to me one time, "You are going to have a dandy job in the future when we get this mill going." So, naturally they felt it was going to be a success. Now, other mills which were started after that were very much a success, one in Lowellville, one in Warren, and another one in Detroit by certain members of the same group that were going to start ours.
- M: Why was it that the one in Leetonia didn't get off of the ground?
- K: It was because of the way it was being financed. As I told you, Tellings and Richards were the men of the Second National Bank. They absconded with some money from the bank and the bank was taken over by the First National Bank. They saw this as an investment, they

didn't approve of it, and they threw it out.

M: Isn't there a story too about the coal and the iron ore running out?

K: Oh, yes. The local ore petered out a long time ago and that is the reason why the small furnaces, such as the ones in Struthers, here in Lisbon, and other places, went by the board. They weren't large enough in the first place to reduce iron ore except in what we call kidney ore here.

M: Wasn't that very pure ore, very high-grade ore?

K: No, it was . . . When we called it kidney ore, it was in stones in the shape of a kidney. You had to crack heat up and crack off the outside shell before you had the ore. You only produced one or two tons a day, maybe or one or two tons maybe an hour in those furnaces. Largely, it was turned into pots and plowshares and eventually we started to make nails in this area, and that helped. The same way in Leetonia. They had a good sized nail mill in Salem but that closed up. I have forgotten the name, it was one of the branches of the corporation, they finally closed it.

M: Of the McKeefrey corporation?

K: No, of the United States Steel Corporation.

M: Oh, United States Steel.

K: Oh, yes. They had a number of plants out here in a different one of their groups. Sheet and Tin Plate was one, we had one in Wellsville, had one here in Lisbon, and they gradually folded as the corporation began to make larger plants in larger places. They generally located on the river for transportation, especially of the coal from up in the Connellsville region. The ore was all brought to the head of the lakes and railed into the different places of manufacturers such as Youngstown, Warren, and even here when we were in business and also into Pittsburgh and down to Wheeling.

M: You got ore from up on the lakes when you were in business?

K: Oh, yes. We operated on Lake Superior ore.

M: Do you think not building the canal was a mistake?

K: Here in Lisbon?

M: I am sorry, down from Ashtabula into Youngstown.

K: Well, they had one going at one time, you know the pipeline.

M: No, I am not familiar with that.

K: The pipeline is guiding coal. They would pulverize it down at the mine, put it into a slurry, and pump that slurry through pipelines up into Cleveland where it was there dried and then used in making coke or used in the furnaces or something like that.

M: Where was that mine located?

K: All those mines in southern Ohio. Hannah was one of the leaders of it.

M: Do you think that would have been a better way to get the iron ore down rather than through Indiana?

K: Iron ore was always shipped by rail. There is no other way of doing it. If the canal had been successful, actually it would have been a help but it didn't succeed. We stated a canal here years ago in Lisbon, it started to be a success except that the railroads came through, one to the south of us and one through Leetonia. Their ability to produce and deliver was so superior to the canal that the canal folded.

M: Let's go back to Mr. McKeefrey again, did he ever, to your knowledge, mix with people like Carnegie? I mean they would have been about the same age time in there, the same period.

K: He knew them all. In fact, it was nothing for him to have a lawsuit with someone.

M: You mean be . . .

K: If there was something or other they did to him, he would immediately sue them.

M: Was he successful in suing people like that?

K: Sometimes. Sometimes he wasn't. There was one thing you couldn't do, you couldn't take advantage of him. He would fight back.

M: He was that kind of a person?

K: He was, what we say, a striver. To give you an instance of if, we were not treated very well by the B & O Railroad in the sale of our fuel. Mr. McKeefrey and his army, I was the army, went to Baltimore to fight it out. We were turned down by the purchasing agent and we were turned down by the superintendent of the coal

for engines and we were turned down by the vice president because he had the coal buying under his own personal control.

M: He wanted to farm it out to people that he knew?

K: Yes, he had his friends that he gave all the fuel orders to for the railroads.

M: Would he get something out of that?

K: Naturally, he would either have a percentage of the mine or get paid on the side.

M: Was that a common practice in business then?

K: With the B & O Railroad. As I go along I will explain to you why. The railroads used what we called "double resipostery" to create business. In other words, if I, as a broker, were able to give them transportation over their railroad, to repay me they would give me an order, for say fifteen or twenty cars of coal, at a certain mine. That mine had given them business. So, in that way it was a "double resipostery". I got a little out of it and the mine got a little out of it and the broker got a little out of it from the mine.

The B & O didn't do that. We went down that day and after those unsuccessful tries we went up to see the traffic manager. We took him to lunch and in the course of conversation Mr. McKeefrey said, "Do you think it would hurt us to see the president of the railroad about this?" The man said, "No. Are there other means? You can take that chance." We went back to his office and we made the appointment. We went in to see the president, he was a very fine gentleman. Samuel Willard had worked himself up from a track walker to be president of the B & O Railroad. We explained the situation to him and Mr. McKeefrey said, "Now, I understand that if I give you an order for 100 cars of coal, you will give me 400 cars of transportation." "Fifty will be enough," Mr. McKeefrey said. That was unfortunate because Mr. Willard then turned to the telephone, called this vice president, and told him to give Mr. McKeefrey an order for twenty-five cars of fuel coal and see what he could do for him in the future.

That certainly was rare. He said to go down to the purchasing department and we would get the order, which we did. Before we went down there we thought we would go back there and see the traffic manager. Just as we went in the traffic manager's main office, the coat-tails of this vice president were going in his office. One of the help came along and I said, "Wasn't that so

and so?" "Well, yes," he said, "What is wrong?" He said, "We generally go to him, he doesn't come to us." Mr. McKeefrey said, "Let's get out of here." I said, "No, let's see what is happening." He came dashing out of there and he spotted us and he came over and he shook his fist under Mr. McKeefrey's nose. "You weren't fair to me," he said, "I said I would do what I could for you, but now I have got an order to give you an order for twenty-five cars of coal." He stomped away. We went into the traffic manager's office and he was laughing because it had broken the ice. From then on, railroad fuel for the B & O Railroad was bought on an approval or okay of the traffic department. This vice president's purchasing hold was broken.

I asked the man later, "Who else has this happened to?" He said, "Well, the Quinlan Brothers went over his head to the president and didn't get away with it. The Phillips Oil Company decided to put in a deep mine up in Butler and he was against any more mines on the B & O Railroad until he found out what Mr. Phillips was going to do in the way of making good coal, and he forgave him. You, he will never forgive. You went over his head and you got away with it."

Mr. McKeefrey was, what I would call, an individualist and a fighter for all he wanted. It wasn't on his part, it was the fact that he didn't have time to associate with people in Leetonia. He didn't have the time to do it because he was away from Monday morning until Friday night.

M: Did you ever travel with him?

K: Yes, many a time. A good many times I went on inspection trips with him to our limestone quarry, to our coke works. Then when we were buying this coal mine, we went down into southern West Virginia several times to look at coal operations, and I was always with him.

M: What title did you have in the company?

K: I was assistant secretary and a director. I had a fake stockholder membership. In other words, so many shares were put in my name which made me eligible to be on the board of directors and also as a minor job, assistant treasurer, assistant secretary or something like that.

M: What do you mean fake?

K: How do you mean?

M: Did you use the word fake? I thought you said fake.

K: No, I was assistant to these different operators be-

cause I had stock in the company and I was made a director. You had to have a certain number of directors and, of course, the directors were always, most of them, Mr. McKeefrey controlled so that gave him a chance to control the company.

M: He mad sure that the directors were people that . . .

K: Yes, now he had outside directors on the blast furnace. The last time we operated we had the vice president and the president of the First National Bank of Pittsburgh on our board of directors, also the Rhodes brothers. There were four and there were five of us that Mr. McKeefrey controlled of the McKeefrey Iron Company which operated last.

M: Did you meet in Leetonia?

K: No, you were incorporated in Pennsylvania or in Delaware and our meetings were always held in a private office we kept in Pittsburgh. We always had to go in there for business meetings.

M: You traveled by railroad?

K: Oh, yes.

M: How long would it take you to get from Leetonia to Pittsburgh by railroad?

K: On a combination, two hours. Mr. McKeefrey had enough influence and did enough work with the railroad that he could have the flyer stopped either to pick him up or let him off.

M: The flyer was like a direct or non-stop . . .

K: It would be going from Pittsburgh to Cleveland and the only stop it would make would be at Salem and Alliance, but they would stop it for us to get off at Leetonia when we were coming out from a meeting or when he was coming home.

M: Something you could help me out with, along the tracks in Leetonia was there some kind of a trough that the engines would pick up water?

K: Oh, yes. West of Leetonia they had their big tanks there and they kept these long troughs filled with water. They were wide enough that an engine had to scoop. As he would go through that he would scoop the water up into his water tender. Oh, yes, they could take water on a fly.

M: Without stopping?

K: Oh, yes.

M: How long were those troughs?

K: I would say, two or three hundred yards. They were all located west of Leetonia.

M: As many times as I have seen engines, I never remember seeing the chute on the side. Where were they mounted at?

K: They were probably not on the engine but on the tender.

M: The car behind the engine.

K: Yes, we called that the tender and it carried the water. Then the coal we used as fuel was also in that tender.

M: Of the jobs that we have talked about, the railroad, the furnace, the saloonkeeper, where would a person make the most money if he had to work?

K: I wouldn't say that any of them ever made too much money as a clerk in any of those enterprises, as a storekeeper or working for the stores. If a man owned a shoe store he might be able to make better than a living if he owned it. Some of these people who were cobblers or plumbers were able to make enough money in doing extra work like that. The average man, clerk, didn't make too much money.

M: I think that is about all.

K: I hope I helped you.

M: I am sure you did, I know you did.

END OF INTERVIEW