

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Clay Industry

Area Historian

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LESLIE CUPPY

Interviewed

By

Tom Hess

on

October 20, 1976

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: LESLIE CUPPY

INTERVIEWER: Tom Hess

SUBJECT: Early brick industry, Clay mining  
Death of the industry at New Cumberland

DATE: October 20, 1976

H: This is an interview with Mr. Leslie Cuppy concerning the clay industry in Northern Hancock County, West Virginia. The interview was taken on the 20th of October, 1976, at the Christian Church in New Cumberland.

Mr. Cuppy, you just start and tell us what you remember about the clay industry in your youth here in New Cumberland.

C: In the beginning of the clay industry a man by the name of John Gamble was in Holberg's Run doing some excavation there and he discovered this great vein of clay. In later years, a man by the name of Freeman from Pittsburgh mined clay and it was Key Loaded from Pittsburg to the yards where they were made into brick. Later years, they discovered that it was cheaper to have the factory right where the clay was produced where they had plenty of coal and wood. He had hauled this clay there from John Gamble. In 1832, James Porter--then a young man--moved into a small house near the present site of W.B. Freeman's Brickware and started to manufacture brick. This was the first brickyard located in Hancock County. Then from then on two years later, W.B. Freeman started a works near what is called Freeman's Landing which became a very know landing belonging to the river men along the river. These bricks were manufactured by hand and they molded after the clay was ground. They could only produce about 3,500 brick a day. In later years they increased the

production of brick to more than that. From the beginning of Holber's Run to Rack's Island, there was just one manufacture after another. In the beginning the only outlet they had was the Ohio River which flows past the city of New Cumberland and they...these keel boats were made right here in town where they would hold probably about 10,000 bricks. It was quite a feat for the men to navigate the boat by pole and tow line then down the river. They were often exposed to the weather elements which in later years, boats took over their place. In later years, if you would travel off to the side of the river, you would notice the great clay piles near the Madison East Bank, The industry which was grinding this clay made at least 50 to 60,000 brick a day.

H: Tell us where Holberg's Run is by modern day locations?

C: It would be about a mile south of New Cumberland.

H: Going towards Reardon?

C: Yes.

H: And it comes out under what is now Route 2?

C: Yes.

H: Is that anywhere Manford has his garage down there or is it back this way?

C: Yes, that's where it is. There used to be a brickyard right there. And then there was two below there at one time.

H: you are going downstream aren't you?

C: Yes. **There** were two out at Holberg's Run too but it never lasted, it was too far away from the river. There were also two out at Harden's Run but they were the same way. They were abandoned in later years because they were too far away for getting their shipments.

H: It seems as though being close to the river was very important; it was your transportation.

C: It was your transportation. There were no roads, no railroads, nothing but Indian paths through the woods here at that time.

H: What time are we talking about?

C: Early 1800's.

H: Before Porter came in 1932?

C: Yes. Porter actually was the first man to start a brickyard. Freeman mined clay out of Gamble's mine; Gamble owned the mine and they took it to Pittsburgh.

H: They went upstream against the current.

C: Yes, with tow lines and poles. These were keel boats as they call them. They floated. It used to take two days for them to bring a keel boat from Wheeling to New Cumberland. Now when they went to Cincinnati and to the St. Louis and those places they sold boat and all; they never brought them back. They just rebuilt them. They had three or four carpenters here that built these boats right here in town. Then when it got bigger, they used the tow boats.

H: Let's back up to Gamble and Freeman. Why did the clay go to Pittsburgh? What were they doing with it in Pittsburgh?

C: Making brick. That's where they hauled it for the brick. This clay was from ten to sixteen feet high and it was overlaid with two feet of very good coal. This coal had high sulfur for coal where when you were firing it or burning it a lot of times you would run it like iron.

H: Did they utilize the coal too?

C: In later years. They didn't at first; they used mostly wood at first because it was in abundance then, but later years, they used the coal.

H: They vein of clay was sixteen feet?

C: In some places, ten to sixteen feet. There was always a good vein of clay.

H: Is that vein worked out by now or is it still being worked?

C: This first vein...But there is a rule that goes through here.

H: What is a rule?

- C: It is a solid well; they call it a rule. It took them seven years to go through it to get to where the clay went. Now today, the yard that is there is going behind that rule and is getting the clay behind it. They drilled wells to test it to see if the clay was there. This along the river is pretty well worked out. There is some clay there yet, but there are two different places they mined. They had to do this at night. It took them seven years to go through. It was just solid sandstone.
- H: Why did they have to do this at night?
- C: They were hauling the clay out through the day; they couldn't throw out and get rid of it because of the interference with the haul; they hauled it with mule train. There were two men, a driver and a brakeman. They would haul seven or eight cars at a time, out in this mine.
- H: You said in 1932, Porter started a brickyard here. Let's start with that time and what do you remember about the industry, the clay industry, building up here at New Cumberland from that time as it goes on?
- C: Beginning from that time on, it kept people seeing the possibility of this kind of building works. Then Porter started work known as Black Horse at the lower end of the Ridge Avenue. The rest of it was above New Cumberland. One after another. They changed hands so many times. In fact, there were several different people. There were the Garliks, Cullens, Cuppys, Venigans, and the Money Pennys. They had three brothers had a brickware up at the mouth of Deecut. They had them but at different times. That kept going until...
- H: Whenever you say, above New Cumberland, you are talking about upstream?
- C: Right.
- H: It had to be toward, and below is toward Reardon. Deecut is about where what is today?
- C: It is about a half a mile above New Cumberland. It is where the run comes out, goes under the road, and railroad. That was Ed and he works there. John Cuning Graham works there; John Cuning was an uncle of mine. George Cuppy was in with Money Penny's and the troupe--for a while. He was my dad's brother.

- H: Are these all brick works?
- C: They are all brick. Later some of them built sewer pipe works. I have very little history on it. The Black Horse was a sewer pipe works at one time and the Mitrified Arctic company bought it and they changed it into a brickyard to make brick for their own partners.
- H: It seems like the big question is...There are a lot of other things made out of clay besides brick, why was New Cumberland you might say, the brick center?
- C: Because that is where it started. It began at New Cumberland; it used to be called the brick capital of the United States at one time.
- H: New Cumberland was the brick capital of the United States?
- C: Yes. They called it that.
- H: I think that you said one time that they sent brick as far as New Orleans?
- C: They did. Of course, the mills, Pittsburgh and Wheeling began to get bigger all of the time and they took more brick and more clay.
- H: Do you mean steel mills?
- C: Yes. They took more clay than they do nowadays which changes the system. There were two clay works here where they just ground nothing but brick and ground clay for founderies and for mills of Pittsburgh. Towards the last of the season, they would take around eleven million bricks a year plus about twelve thousand ton of clay.
- H: Can you just help me picture what it would be like in a clay mine? What it would be like to go into one of these clay mines?
- C: In the beginning, they had little two-wheel carts that they hauled them in, and mules. Later, they put the tracks in there. They started in the hill, about twelve feet wide and the height of the clay was a cribbing, that's the first part.
- H: Cribbing is wood that holds...

- C: Poles. It is cribbed over so that the loose stuff wouldn't fall apart. After you got back in there, this Clay was in solid string or solid mass. They just mine that. It is about ten or fifteen feet high, as high as the clay goes. It is probably twelve to fourteen feet wide.
- H: Is this clay soft or hard when they take it out?
- C: It's hard.
- H: Stone?
- C: No. It is like a stone. They bring it out and then they go in there and they make rooms. The men work in these rooms; there are usually two men to a room.
- H: In other words, they leave some clay stand...
- C: Yes, pillars, they call them pillars. They leave these pillars to help hold the roof up. They have posts all around there too. Every so often they post. This modern day, they have bolts that run up the roof that helps; they don't post as much. In those days, they used a lot of posts.
- H: You worked in the clay mines?
- C: I worked there two winters; I broke on a mule train. They brought the clay out in the winter, pile big piles, and let it air. A lot of times they turned a hose on it and watered it. It helped mellow it and wash it down. At first they made brick for the mill, but in the last few years, they made paving brick too. They were a big block; they brought them out in a square and then they pressed them into a block. The blocks would stick so they could put sand and stuff to mold them together on the pavement.
- H: Was there any waste that had to be moved out of these mines?
- C: Sometimes they had accidents. Men were killed in the mines. My father going back on a shot too quick, it didn't go off.
- H: What's a shot?
- C: A shot is where the dynamite or powder where they shoot the clay; they have to drill holes in there, into the surface of that clay. They pack powder in there, they

blow a lot of it and in some place you dynamite. It was mostly powder, black powder. When they were packing that, after they got their powder and the cap and everything in there, they would put it...Sometimes they used a fuse to run it back in there. They would hit that cap and put it off. That would blow the clay out. They would blow half of the upper part out at one time and then they would go in there and blow half of the upper part out at one time and then they would go in there and blow the bottom out. Then they would build their track back farther and they kept going back that way bringing the clay out.

H: Was the floor of this mine stone? Did the clay layer lay on a stone layer?

C: Yes, there was stone. Sometimes they would have to take up the bottom layer to squeeze a layer, but usually not very often.

H: You mentioned one time about the mines on this side of the river were tilting so that they drained themselves.

C: That's right. The mines on the West Virginia side sloped up. When you went on the highest side, the clay went down. It sloped that way. They had to pump their mines over there a lot, cut their water out. But the water here on the West Virginia side, gravity upset.

H: Is there different kinds of clay in different mines?

C: It is all about the same right through here, this section.

H: Would that dictate what could be made out of the clay? A kind of clay may not make china ware?

C: It would make brick. It wouldn't make china ware; that is a different kind of clay. The clay is different.

H: Your brick clay would make your tile though?

C: Tile, brick, and sewer pipe.

H: For that reason, the industry right around here was tile, and brick, and sewer pipe mostly.

C: That's what they were getting. Of course, we had other factories come in here later.

H: You told me something about one china...

- C: The Chelsea China, when John Porter, became what they called a brick king here at one time; he got control of pretty near all of these brickyards in later years and steamboats too.
- H: What year are you?
- C: I'd gather around 1850; I'm just guessing on that.
- H: Before the civil war?
- C: Oh yes, this was all before the civil war. Him and others--I never found out who the others were--started this Chelsea China Company and they made china. It burnt down once and they rebuilt it. It had changed hands; it has been a porcelain works, a china works.
- H: Porcelain, is that out of the same basic clay product?
- C: No, they made it out of the same as dishes are made out of. They made it a dish works and then they went into another kind of pottery ware for hotels and things. It has been going now for a good while. The last part of it was a shell plant for the war. It burnt down.
- H: Do you mean the Second World War?
- C: The Second World War.
- H: So that china works existed in different phases clear up to the 1940's?
- C: Yes. Then we had foundries, steel foundries, grate iron foundries, and we had a stove works here at one time. At different times it changed hands, see. It came in as coal and then the railroad went out to the creek and brought the coal in...
- H: Here in the mid-1800's it sounds like...You said that New Cumberland was the brick capital of the world. Today we find one rather small brickyard in New Cumberland. What turned this all around? What happened?
- C: The worst part was the paving industry, the cement, and blacktop came in and took it. Where they paved the brick before, that was down away with and finally phased out. When the Mack Company owned it, John Porter seemed to have control of most us. Somehow, Joe and John Mack got a hold of all of these works. That is when I worked for them. It was known as the Mack Manufacturing

Company. They started and when they sold, it was from Philadelphia; they owned a bank there. They paved a lot of Philadelphia with the Mack block. Some of the first roads paved around here were paved with Mack blocks. They would make 50 or 60,000 brick a day. That was compared to 32,000 which was all that a yard could make by hand. That was a good day's work back in the beginning. In later years, they got machinery to do all of that and bigger engines to crush the clay and they could do it faster. I remember four of us boys, when I was sixteen or seventeen years old, used to handle 50 to 60,000 brick every ten hours, six days a week up there. We got \$1.45 a day. That would be about 15,000 brick for each man. We took them off of the belt and put them on the car.

H: You just sent some brick to Philadelphia. It sounds like maybe a railroad has gotten involved or something.

C: They bought the branch of the railroad in 1886. Then they began to ship by rail. Of course, that cut out a lot of the river shipment too. They still had some. John Porter owned a boat there and so did a man by the name of Garlik. Several different men owned their own boats here in later years.

H: About when was it that the paving brick industry started to really be hurt by these new road materials?

C: I would say in the 1940's.

H: Up through the 1930's there was quite a bit of brick manufacturing still.

C: Yes, all of these works were run. Except the clay is made what you call dry brick, what they are making now is strictly mill brick.

H: What is the difference between a mill brick and a paving brick?

C: A mill brick comes out of a machine that is cut in squares as a plain brick. A paving brick goes through a press; it comes out plain; it's, that's how I got my fingers cut off, pressing brick, making Hillside brick. They made different kind of paving brick and then they made other arch bricks for building things too. They made that during that time. But mostly it was building brick. They had a knife on the side of the die that pressed the side off. They paved that on a hillside so that the horse pulling a load up the hill, their corks

would catch in this rig and that held them and kept them from slipping back.

H: You used a couple of words that some people today wouldn't know. What is a cork on a horse?

C: They would put them on the shoes to pull.

H: Sort of like claws on the horse's shoe that grab ahold?

C: Yes. Now it is already made in the shoe in the summer, but they have a different shoe in the winter time that they drive corks in. They are different shapes and come to a sharp point where if they hit on ice, that breaks into the ice and holds them, and keeps them from slipping.

H: Special bricks were made where you were going to lay a hillside in other words?

C: That's right.

H: And if you were going to just be laying a flat road someplace, it would be a different brick?

C: Plain, pressed brick. It had cracks around or little grooves around it.

H: You mentioned that you lost some fingers in the making of these bricks. What are the circumstances around that?

C: I was pressing, feeding the press, and it came down on me when we made the hillside brick. It took a thumb and two fingers off. That happened about 1909. I was seventeen years old when this happened. I went to work in the brickyard when I was thirteen years old for 50¢ a day. I worked there for twenty-some years before I left and went to oil fields on the farm.

H: Were there many accidents in the brickyard?

C: Once in a while. Not that many, but once in a while they would have an accident. Several lost their fingers in these presses.

H: What happened like in your case or others who have lost their fingers, today we have workmen's compensation?

- C: They didn't have anything then. I never got anything, only my wages; that was all. They paid me my wages, that was all. As far as compensation, there was nothing like that.
- H: What if a man were hurt more seriously where he wasn't able to work anymore?
- C: I couldn't say how he got along that way. There was nothing unless the company gave him something; they might do that. That is the only thing that I can answer in that case.
- H: But it was company policy that you didn't have anything. Did you have a union there?
- C: No. You did or you didn't. There were very few unions around in those days.
- H: Can you remember when the first unions started to show up?
- C: No, it was after I left the yards.
- H: When did you leave the yard?
- C: I left the yard in about 1924. I left there and went out with my father-in-law in the oil fields and into farming.
- H: One time, when we were talking before, you said that when the brick business was going real good around here, they brought in labor from the south.
- C: They did. That was when men were scarce. That probably was during the First World War, I think if I remember right. They never kept them very long. They would come in here with a carload, they would work awhile, maybe a few day, and then they would skip on into Pittsburgh.
- H: Now, are we talking about black labor?
- C: Yes. They could hardly hold them. Finally, they practically all left when men got a little more plentiful. When this first started, I think that is what brought work in was the labor market. There was a labor market here, see. I have always believed that that is what brought Weirton Steel, which is Phillips Sheet Plate Company. There was always good work. I told you this before, but I can remember when there were seventy-five railroad cars with stuff that went out of

this town every night, six nights a week.

H: Brick or clay or sewer pipe?

C: Brick, clay, sewer pipe, foundry, pottery, and all of that kind of thing, coal.

H: Even the coal was shipped out?

C: Yes, we had mines out at the creek and the railroad. The railroad went out to Harden's Run to these mines. They kept an engine here to haul this coal back and forth.

H: We've sort of concentrated on the brick yard and the paving brick and so forth, what about the pipe works?

C: They were put in sewers. They were made for sewers in these towns. That was the way that they made the sewers in those days. There were a lot of pipe works around most sides of the river; there were three on this side and for a long while they ran but towards the latter years, the American Pottery Company was so strong that they paid them to keep them shut down, not to run them. If they got any orders, they turned them over to the Pottery Company. On the other side of the river, the Ohio side of the river, people by the name of Strattons had three sewer pipes that were individual. There was one at Empire, one at Kelly's above Toronto. In latter years, there were two up around what they call Port Homan. They are all gone now, except this one in Toronto is still making pipes.

H: Is that Call's?

C: Call's Pipeyard. They are still running.

H: You told me about what took the brick business out. What took the clay-pipe people out?

C: They brought in iron pipe and things like that. They took the pipe business. They hardly ever put in these kind now, except around homes; they use lots around homes where they are milling. It seems like coal does a big business down there.

H: When the paving brick business sort of died away, is there any reason why they wouldn't go to making brick for home building or something like that?

- C: Well, some did. Some made building brick. The brick through here is a little different than what they made back in the wire cut. This is pressed and dampened very little and dry pressed, they called it. It comes in loose into a press and is pressed automatically. you don't feed it. The ground clay comes into this mold and the press comes down. I don't know how many ton pressure, four ton pressure that pressed that paving brick into paving brick. They used that. This was done with cream clay right out of the mine. Before, the other, they aired it, so it would be more miller, I suppose that is the reason. We used to make a huge pile. All winter we would mine that coal. At first they would mine in the summer too, right around the clock. They piled that to air all winter through the freezing. It made it easier to round too when you put it in the crusher.
- H: Was the clay the same kind of clay that they would use to make house building brick out of?
- C: Yes. They could make them out of it. Some of the houses here in New Cumberland were made up here. Some of them they just stacked in the kilns a little different and glazed them. Now, sewer pipe is glazed with salt. With the last firing, when they let her start to die down and cool, they go around and I don't know whether it is one or two shovelfuls of salt that they put into the furnace and that puts that glaze on your sewer pipe.
- H: We have talked about getting clay out and you just told us a little bit about the presses that mold the brick. How about the kilns that we see along the roads, most of them are abandoned right now. What did they do and how did they work?
- C: They have burners to charge those kilns.
- H: Men?
- C: Yes, they were all men and they had to do it through knowledge and experience because they had to guess work at it. They had a place in the door where they would run the thing and bring certain brick out of it, crack it, and test it. Then they tested the settlement of the kiln and went by that. The brick was dried but there wasn't a clear dry place for them. They had to dry them so many days to get the moisture out of them. Then they raised the steam up until they had a certain heat in there and they burnt that so many days.

H: They had steam in there?

C: Not steam, I mean heat. They raised that up for so many days and then when it was done, they kept testing it to see. These brick were made with a hole in them so that they could run a hook into that hole and drag them out. Then they sealed that up until the next time. They did that thirty times a day, twenty-four hours. That's the way that they did it. Now they have got electric some way gauges that can gauge all of that and it was a lot easier for a man handling that. In those days, they burnt coal and they had to clean those furnaces out twice a day.

H: Where was the heat generated?

C: They had like a fire box; they had bags in there.

H: In each side?

C: All around, there were maybe eight to ten of them. They fired in these holes at the top. They had a door there that they shut and then they had a place that they pulled the heat right out through them, the ashes.

H: Each one of the kilns had its own furnace like or several furnaces right on it?

C: Yes, maybe eight or ten. In the place where they fired, inside there was a bag there which made the heat go up. Then it went down through the floor and out into the stacks. Some of those kilns had maybe half a dozen stacks on them. But later years they had just one great big tall stack and the fire would go down through there and up through the stack.

H: You have an empty kiln sitting here now and you are ready to make brick. When you were working in the brickyard, how did you go about it? Load up a kiln and fire it for me.

C: We had tunnels that we dried the brick in at night. I did that for one year, tunneling cars.

H: Where are these tunnels?

C: They are right connected with the brickyard. You take them right out on transfers and transfer them from the presses to these tunnels. There are two men doing that.

H: On little carts like?

C: Yes, on little cars. They held about three or four hundred brick. The head man was a tunnel man and he tunneled these cars. He had to keep pushing them down so they could build the tunnel up and then they shut it up. The steam, they drive the steam. They had another transfer and the transfer went clear past all of these kilns. When they got down to that kiln, they had tracks they laid into that kiln. Then they just run the car off of the transfer into the kiln. There were eight men in there, Four tossers, and four setters that tossed these up and placed them until they filled the kiln. They kept backing that track out.

H: Did they fill the kiln soild or did they have to leave cracks through the brick?

C: The way that they set the brick left the cracks through the brick. They did so many this way, so many this way.

H: How many bricks would go in a kiln?

C: The later manufactories of the brickyard.

H: Once you filled the kiln, how long are those brick going to have to be in there?

C: I think ten to twelve days.

H: That long! And you keep the heat up on them all of the time.

C: You keep raising it until you get to a certain heat. When you know that you've gotten to that cerain heat, then you hold it there until they are burnt off. Sometimes they would make a mistake and get too much heat and spoil some of the brick.

H: And you could get different finishes and so forth by different amounts of heat?

C: Yes. It depends on your heat, how high you get. A paving brick, they tested them. They would take a kiln off as soon as they cooled enough for a man to get in there, he would go in there and take ten bricks out of different places throughout that kiln. Then he took them and put them into a tester. Now that tester had iron and brick life in it. He put those in there and weighed them again. He figures what percentage of loss he had. That's the way they tested. A lot of these

towns had a certain test and the brick had to come up to the test.

H: They had their specification and if they ordered from one brickyard, they had to meet those specifications.

C: They had to meet their specifications.

H: You had to let the kilns cool down.

C: Oh yes. They had to cool down before you could get in. They went in and it looked pretty hot sometimes. It had to be cooled enough so that you could handle the brick.

H: Then you would put them on the carts and bring them back out?

C: Wheelbarrows. They used wheelbarrows to wheel them out and they loaded them right into the cars.

H: Into railroad cars?

C: Yes.

H: Boxcars?

C: Yes.

H: Were they loaded with straw or anything like that?

C: No. They were packed in there and braced and that's all. Building brick is packed with straw, but the paving brick was packed solid.

You know the Atkinson house down there. That was burnt right up here at the end. The color, they glazed that someway, I don't remember. But I do remember that I was working there about the time that they burnt that kiln of brick. Atkinson was a timekeeper for the Mack Manufacturing Company. He had that brick burnt; they burnt him a whole kiln full.

H: Somebody could come in and put an order in to have a particular brick for a job and the company would more or less custom make that brick.

C: This company didn't. They were mostly on the pave brick, but they did make that for him. Some of these other works, it was made out of just the common brick. They take the custom Bloom building down there. It is

regular common brick.

In burning these bricks, they put seven rows of what they call the wire cuts in the bottom, so that they get the hard brick up in the pavement. They used them for mills at that time. That was before they had these fire bricks and things like that.

H: Are fire brick that they use in the mills, are they made any differently? Does it take any different material?

C: They are using the same material, the same clay. The only difference is that they bring it right out of the mine, grind it, and put it right into the brick. I guess the air is no good for the mill brick the way I understand it. I was out in this mine, out of curiosity one day because I wanted to see it. It is all together different.

When I worked in the mine, they had probably sixteen to twenty men in there digging clay. Five men dig this clay, most of it is machinery now. They drill it, shoot it, load it, haul it out, crack it, and get it ready to haul up to the works.

H: You are referring to the mine on Crescent Mine Harden's Run?

C: Yes. It is all together different. They are back on this rule that I'm telling you about. They are mining the clay back out.

H: You were saying that this Crescent Clay Mine is behind the rule. Where does the rule run out?

C: It runs right out on Harden's Run. It dips there and goes down under. They go behind that. My father-in-law had a clay mine right over here and he ran around. But up above here they had to go through it. It was a union and Rockside mine would tunnel right through it; they don't even have to post it; it was solid rock, just like going through a cave you might say. They had sixteen to twenty men working the mines beside the driver. Now five men do all of that work; shoot it, load it, bring it out. It's done all by machinery and belts and things like that.

H: It is always interesting to people collecting history the names of the companies and the people who were important. You mentioned a Mr. Gamble and a Mr. Freeman and Porter, could you give us the name of some of the

companies and the men that were...If you started down at Gamble mine down there and go upstream, what would you run into, who would you come in...

- C: Since Porter...A lot of them. Philip and Beal was one of the companies that formed a partnership. That was about 1837. Thoman, Freeman, Porter, and Beal supplied the whole market then. There was John Ford Anderson, Thomas Anderson, has an old site. These changed hands among themselves. There were Cullen Brothers, the three Money Penny Brothers Company owned, there's Cunningham and Graham, there was Trupe and Anthony Company, they had a mine. Garlik, Cuppy, Money Penny, they all had different names. I got them all mixed up and I can't tell you one each straight.
- H: That's okay. I guess it is a good cross section. Was this a money making business, did these then become prosperous?
- C: They seemed to be. Some of them retired. There was a man by the name of Rob who was in the business. He left here and went to California. Daniels, J.N.N., Money Penny's split up split up a time or two. Isaac Gibbons and Shay Porter opened a yard opposite Black Island. Gibbons selling his interest to Porter and Company. The firm was known as Shay Porter which was again changed in 1876 by Shay becoming the whole owner of the whole yard. Trupe bought the place opposite of Black Island and started a bank under the name of Trupe & Son and manufactured brick until 1877 when the yard passed into the hands of Ethan Cooper, present owner.
- H: When the Mack Company, I suppose, died, I don't know, they sold out to a Wheeling bunch. This Wheeling bunch ran it for a while and they changed it to the Crescent Brick Company. Before that, John Porter seemed to control the whole thing. The Mack Company got a hold of it, I don't know how. They sold out to the Wheeling bunch--I suppose the heirs did. The Wheeling bunch didn't run it very long and they sold it out to a Pennsylvania firm that owns it now. They still work under the Crescent Brickyard name. It is the only one work left, the rest are all gone.
- H: They made what kind of brick?
- C: They made what you call a dry press brick for mills, all mill brick.
- H: We see a lot of H. K. Porter Companies on both sides of the river. Is this related to the Porter that you have

referred to several times, John I think.

C: John Porter. There were several James Porters, Bob Porter...I don't know how many Porter names were mixed up in the brick business, but they were mixed up with these people, part of them. Toward the last, John Porter owned all of the brickyards except the Black Horse, I think. He might have owned it at one time. I knew him claim on it. I don't know who owned it before, but the Brannen boys ran it. I worked for them for one summer. I tempered the clay for them.

H: Crescent makes mill brick. Porter up here makes mill brick. Porter on the other side of the river in back of Toronto makes mill brick.

C: That's a different Porter. I think that's a big Porter Company...That's not the same company up here. Porter actually is one of...Margaret Porter's son is still in that. That has changed hands. A refraturation company owns that now. Most of the Porters are gone except Benner and he is up in his nineties. Jim Porter was married to a cousin of my wife and he has one boy in it yet.

H: That's in the Porter Company at Newell?

C: Yes.

H: And you say that the Porters on the other side of the river is a different company all together?

C: Yes. They own works in Wellsville too. I don't know how many works that they have throughout the country.

H: This is all mill brick?

C: I don't know whether Porter over there makes all mill brick, but he does around here. He may have works at other places where he may make other kinds of brick, I don't know.

H: The mill brick that we talked about are the brick that are used to line ladles?

C: Ladles and furnaces and things like that. They use a lot of brick in the mills. But they don't seem to use as much clay as they used to. Chapman and Valentine both

have clay works. Chapman's is right over here on the back road. They would ship five or six cars a day out of there, six days a week. So would Valentine. Sometimes as dust, sometimes as flake. If they flaked it, that kept it from blowing away.

H: They just sent the raw clay to the mills?

C: Yes.

H: The mills didn't make it into brick?

C: No. They used that lime in their furnace for brick. It was kind of like a mortar. In the brickyard, they used mostly sand and clay for their mortar then that burnt into...The bags they would build right out of the brick right from the mill. By the time the kiln was burnt off, they would burn into this bag. The bag was a round thing and each fire box had one.

H: Would you say that this use of raw clay seems to have pretty well died out?

C: They may use some of them, but I don't think that they use as much. They went to different companies. Firing six cars a day, and went out on both end places, that was a lot of clay. You figure that and a lot of times there were six to ten cars a brick beside the coal and other things made up of the seventy-five cars.

H: When we get up toward Newell, we find that there is one of the biggest china making places in the world. Is there any clay different up that way?

C: Yes, that is shipped in here.

H: Their clay is shipped in?

H: Yes. They don't make it out of this clay.

H: They don't use domestic clay for their china?

C: I think there is flint mixed with it too. They used to have one right in Liverpool, right near the pottery, a flint works.

H: That's very interesting. Can you think of anything else that you think would help us to record the history of the clay works?

C: I don't think so. I think that about covers it.

H: Oh, let's talk about wages for a little bit. You mentioned your own wages. Were you at the bottom of the scale or...

C: Labor was only \$1.30. We made 10¢ a day more than labor. They could get labor for ten dollars a month plus board or sixteen dollars a month without board. Brick was sold pretty cheap at that time. They run about ten dollars a thousand.

H: What do they run a thousand now?

C: I don't know what they sell for. They are over a hundred dollars. They had one trouble here...They had trouble in England was shipping brick into New Orleans as balance for the ships coming over to get the cotton. It almost wrecked this business right here for a while. Finally, the sugar plantations helped them out down there and they got Congress to pass a tariff law that protected them and then they picked right up again. The sugar plantations helped them because they were trying to get a tariff on sugar in order to protect their sugar plant which they did in later years.

H: About what year are we talking about?

C: Around 1830's, 1840's, 1850's, something like that. A citizen of 1838, a small trade had opened up with the sugar plantations of Louisiana which had been boldly supplied with brick from England. This new market for brick grew very rapidly and foreign manufacturers seeking to gain their lost trade so overrun that state with English brick that they were sold as low as ten dollars a thousand. The city of New Orleans and Charley excluded our brick from that field. The contest continued for several years, the English sending their bricks as balance from vessels coming to New Orleans with cotton manufacturers had to trip a two thousand miles to navigate in carrying brick to market. About the year 1843, Congress in answer to the petition for an increase in tariff rate upon foreign brick demanding the protection for the home of industry.

H: Congree did protect the clay industry as early as 1847.

C: Yes. About the year 1837, bricks were made very cheaply. Good hands could be hired at ten per month with board or sixteen a month without board. Fire sold from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per barrell. Pork was two to three cents for a pound. While boats of lumber did not cost more than one-third of the present prices paid for them.

H: 1837 is a little bit before you were here. I'm not trying to put you on or anything, but where did you get your prices?

C: I do research in different places. I have been working on this for twenty years. I started to write a history of New Cumberland. Three of us worked on this short story of New Cumberland and it took us a year and a half to get what we got. When I first became trustee in the library, they asked me to write a book on it. I started researching for different things and I hunted around.

Another thing about the Cuppys...When I was a little fellow, I used to hear an aunt say, "When we owned the brickyards..." I know my uncle, John Cuppy, my dad's brother-in-law, owned a brickyard. We lived with them at the time when I was just three or four years old. I could remember her saying that we owned the brickyard and had done this and that, especially on Sundays. I didn't know anything that my uncle owned this works until I got to researching and I found it through these different people.

H: How much had wages changed by the time that you worked there about seventy years or so later?

C: One time I was in the doctor's office and there was a man in there from another Brick Company who was doing the same job I had done. I asked him how much he got an hour. He said that they just got a raise which made it \$3.10 an hour. I got \$1.45 for ten hours a day back in those days. So that is more than twice what he was getting in one hour that I got in ten hours. There had been an awful lot of differences.

H: That conversation that you had with this man was a recent conversation, wasn't it?

C: About four or five years ago. It's now higher than then because wages have gone up since that time or two. In ten hours I got \$1.45.

H: Were there men that worked for less than that?

C: Laborers only got \$1.35. The water boy got \$1.00 a day. I carried water two summers at one brickyard and I parted brick one summer and parts of two others.

H: Did the miners get paid more?

C: I don't know what their wages were, but they got so much a ton.

H: Piece work?

C: Yes. I forget now what I got when I was breaking in the mine, but it was less than two dollars a day. I don't remember.

H: Did they have any benefits at all?

C: None at all.

H: How about vacations?

C: Never had a vacation. We had most of our vacation in the wintertime. For years there, they worked like the dickens through the summer but you loafed most of the winter.

H: Why is that?

C: They didn't ship any brick except...They made kilns full and maybe pile some out, so they shipped most mill brick, very little paving was done in the winter.

H: Paving wasn't done in the winter?

C: No. We would loaf all winter. Then long about March after the danger of floods were over, we would start up. One year we quit in November, just about a week before Christmas they would shut down.

H: Were there things like Christmas bonuses or things like that?

C: No, nothing like that. You just got wages, that's all. If you worked overtime, you got straight time. I worked at one place up there where we didn't get overtime at all when they were making a whole bunch of different kind of brick. We had to change dies every night, but we reneged and they were supposed to pass but the boss wasn't putting in for it. After that we got paid overtime. We only got paid what we were getting an hour.

H: There was no time and a half or something like that?

C: No, nothing like that.

H: Did the company have a doctor or anything like that?

C: Just their doctors here. When I got my fingers cut,

they took me to Doctor Munn, right where the funeral home is now. They had a wagon that they set up; they called it a wagon. It was like a wagon but it was an automobile, but it was built more like a wagon.

H: Were there ever any strikes?

C: Not when I worked there. They did have them across the river. We used to have a lot of fun then. We got less money that they did across the river. I think ten or fifteen cents a day then. And they were striking for more money, but they came over and worked at our works while they were striking. We used to tell them payday that we wanted to pay them West Virginia money instead of Ohio money. (Laughter)

H: Is there anything else?

C: That's all that I can think of.

H: Thanks ever so much.

END OF INTERVIEW