

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Leetonia Project

Resident Experiences

O. H. 778

ANGELO NICOTERA

Interviewed

by

Theodore Carchedi

on

April 17, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: ANGELO NICOTERA

INTERVIEWER: Theodore Carchedi

SUBJECT: brewery, CCC, WPA, railroads, Depression, automobiles, bootlegging, area businesses, entertainment, Grafton, Cherry Valley, World War II

DATE: April 17, 1986

C: This is an interview with Angelo Nicotera for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Ted Carchedi, at Leetonia, Ohio, on April 17, 1986, at 3:10 p.m. This is a history of Leetonia.

Okay, Angelo, what can you tell me about your parents and your family? When did they come to the United States?

N: They came here in 1909.

C: They came directly to Leetonia then?

N: No, they went to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania then from there they came to Leetonia. Then he got a job down at Cherry Valley Furnace.

C: When did he start working at Cherry Valley?

N: Oh, he was about seventeen, he told me, when he started working there.

C: He was seventeen years old.

N: Yes, seventeen, eighteen years old when he . . .

C: Now, at that period of time, Cherry Valley was probably at the height of its . . .

N: The height or the peak. Then they had the Grafton Furnace. That was on the west end of town. He worked at Cherry Valley and he worked where they cast iron in the furnace, at the furnace.

He was there twenty, twenty-five years.

C: Set me straight on this. Did Grafton and Cherry Valley combine after a while?

N: No. They were two separate furnaces. Grafton Furnace, McKeefrey owned that. You could quit one job--my dad told me--and ten minutes after you could go down to Cherry Valley. But Grafton wasn't as big as the Cherry Valley Furnace. They used to make coke and everything down at Cherry Valley. At Grafton they didn't.

C: What exactly did they make at Cherry Valley?

N: They just made the raw iron.

C: The raw iron to be produced into steel later. Okay, so he worked there for most of his life then? You were born when?

N: I was born 1919, December 30th, in Leetonia.

C: So you lived all your life in Leetonia?

N: All my life in Leetonia.

C: The 1920's, you probably remember the late 1920's when the stock market crashed, 1929. Do you happen to remember that day at all?

N: No.

C: Do you remember the general time period when the Depression hit?

N: Yes.

C: Can you tell me how the Depression affected people in Leetonia and yourself and your family?

N: Well, I was about seventeen, sixteen years old when the Depression hit. They had a line downtown where you could get surplus. They gave you stuff that was important to your family.

C: Like what?

N: Well, they gave you butter, meat, and stuff like that.

C: Depending on the number of people in your family?

N: Yes.

C: Where was this downtown, where exactly?

N: The building was torn down. It was down where the Dollar

Bank is in Leetonia; it was between the Dollar Bank and the new building down there. They used to give surplus.

C: This was all free? Direct relief?

N: Yes, by the government. The people had to line up and sign up as you got your stuff. Then there was a little old man who used to meet me at the park and he used to tell me what he used to get. He would tell me to watch that they didn't give me this and that. He used to wait on me everyday, every time they gave stuff away.

C: He sort of took care of you?

N: Yes.

C: This was early 1930's?

N: Yes.

C: The businesses that were in town at this time, how did they suffer? Did they just go out of business completely? Do you remember?

N: I don't remember it. I remember they had the two slaughterhouses there. The one on Lisbon Road was Floding's Slaughterhouse.

C: Floding, I have run across that name. Can you tell me something about that family?

N: They had a slaughterhouse on Lisbon Road; they had a store in town. They used to bring their slaughter out there to the slaughterhouse and bring it to the store. Slater Meat Market, I don't know whether they had a slaughterhouse or not. There were a lot of buildings. I don't remember them. I know at one time they had thirty-two beer joints in Leetonia.

C: I get all different numbers. Some people tell me twenty-two, thirty-three.

N: I don't know where the thirty-two were at.

C: But obviously there were many beer joints. Why is that? Why were there so many beer gardens in such a small community?

N: Well, they had a brewery in Leetonia?

C: Oh, there was a brewery,

N: Yes.

C: I didn't know that.

N: It was right on Main Street. I just don't remember the name of it.

C: That was in existence when you were a young boy?

N: Yes.

C: Is that right. You don't remember the name of the brewery?

N: I do, but I just can't think of it right now.

C: If it comes back to you, just mention it.

N: Yes, it was right there where the tool works is . . . You can see some of the buildings. Do you know where the tool works is? You go down near the Catholic Church and right in back of it is the tool works, and it is between the tool works and the gargage back there. I think there is a building standing now. Scattergood's Brewery they used to call it.

C: Scattergood?

N: Yes, I am pretty sure that is the name of it.

C: Do you know when that went out of business?

N: No.

C: It was during the Depression though, the Depression era?

N: I guess they had good beer down there. The way I understand--I don't remember the 1930's that well; I was too young--they had the gangs there. My dad was telling me.

C: You're referring to the Black Hand? Let's hold off on that a second because I want to talk a little bit more about the Depression. Were you working at the time? Did you get a job? Were you old enough to work?

N: Well, the WPA [Works Progress Administration] came out. I worked with the WPA; I worked on the stone quarry.

C: The stone quarry?

N: Yes, that was in Tea Garden.

C: Tea Garden? Where is Tea Garden? I am unfamiliar with this area.

N: It is between Lisbon Road and Gilford Lake. About a mile out.

C: Would that be what is known today as Franklin Square?

N: No. That is way beyond Franklin Square.

C: Is it a town or community?

- N: Well, they just call it Tea Garden. I don't know if it's a nickname, or what it is. But they did put that road between Lisbon and Salem Road to the Tea Garden Road out there. They had a gang working on the road and a gang breaking stone. They would load it on the truck. Then they would bring it out there.
- C: What was a typical work day like for you?
- N: It was an eight hour day, but you had them in section, A, B, C and D.
- C: It was staggered?
- N: Yes, so many came out on A, so many came out on B. I worked there for a couple of months. Then my father got a job and they laid me off.
- C: Was that because there was only one person that was allowed to . . .
- N: No, then Struthers furnace started. People were bitching because I was working and they weren't, so they had to lay me off. I don't remember--it has been a long time--how much the scales were, how much we got an hour. But it wasn't too much.
- C: Did your father then go to work at Struthers?
- N: Yes.
- C: Was that Sheet & Tube?
- N: No, it was Haney's Furnace over there across the street from Rod and Wire. The superintendent from Cherry Valley went over there and he got all the Leetonia men to go over there and work. Half of Leetonia worked over there.
- C: Were the wages a lot better?
- N: Oh, yes, a lot of things were picking up.
- C: Can you describe some other experiences that you had during the Depression?
- N: We used to go out on the farm and thrash wheat, oats. The farmers used to feed you and give you a couple of dollars a day. You had to work from morning until night. It was rough.
- C: They were rough times?
- N: They were rough times.
- C: I remember my father telling me he worked on the railroad . . .
- N: I worked on the railroad.

C: Did you? What company?

N: Pennsylvania. I worked for forty cents an hour, tamping ties.

C: That was here in Leetonia?

N: From Leetonia to Salem, from Salem to Palestine. They had an extra gang; that's what they used to call them. They used to, if there was a lot of work between here and Salem, they put the extra gang of thirty-five to forty kids . . . We didn't go any farther than Palestine. Then I used to work up at McKeefrey's for ten cents an hour.

C: Which McKeefrey's?

N: McKeefrey's farm. Hoeing corn, picking potatoes and stuff like that.

C: Now that name McKeefrey is still around today.

N: It is still around, but it is not as big as it was. They used to have their own chauffers. He did. It wasn't like it is now. Now it is all torn apart. I think he had a thousand acres. He had a sheep barn, a cow barn, and whatever.

C: What about it now?

N: He gets subsidies, government free pay I guess.

C: He doesn't grow anything?

N: No, it's dead.

C: I have seen a picture of a mansion.

N: It is still there. At one time McKeefrey had a house for all the hired hands. If you worked there, he would give you so much a month and then he provided a house. He owns half of Leetonia.

C: What other business ventures were they into besides the farm?

N: He had . . . Remember when Tennessee Ernie came out with that company store? Well, down there at Grafton, that used to be his store too.

C: He owned Grafton Supply Company? That was down on Main Street.

N: It still is, but he doesn't own it anymore.

He used to have a grocery store. They used to work and then go down there and spend their money at the grocery store. That was big here at one time.

C: The grocery store was in town here too?

N: Yes, right down there in Grafton.

C: Can you tell me a little more specifically where Grafton is? I am still a little bit confused where that is.

N: West.

C: That is Main Street, going west toward Salem. I just wanted to clarify that.

During the Depression, did you have enough to eat on a day to day basis?

N: Well, we used to raise a couple of hogs, chickens, and rabbits. What they used to do at that time was everybody on the street used to raise a couple of hogs and then they would exchange meat. If we butchered we would send a couple of pounds down here and they would send it back. We had pork all the time. We had goats, chickens, and rabbits.

C: You were telling me about people stealing the meat and then selling it. Could you tell me a little more?

N: Well, when I was young they used to go out to the farmers like McKeefrey up there and they used to go back in the hog place, where they had the hogs. I know a couple of times they butchered hogs and they just left the insides and hauled it home. They never could catch them. I don't think these farmers slept half of the time because they were watching their stuff. We had people who would get up at three or four o'clock and get a basket and go around and get eggs. They would work a couple of hours and the farmer would give them eggs or potatoes or whatever.

C: It must have been harder for the people in town than it was for the farmer or the people that lived away from the houses. Is that true?

N: Well, around here there is a lot of farmers.

C: But in the town itself where they didn't have a lot of animals, it must have been a lot harder for them.

N: It probably was, but I know up here on the hill . . . I think everybody in town had a couple of chickens or a couple of rabbits.

C: They some how got by?

N: Yes, a little bit they got and a little bit they . . . Like everyone says eggs were ten cents a dozen. Farmers used to let you pick potatoes after they were done picking.

C: What were some prices of other things that you can remember?
Did you have an automobile?

N: My dad had a Model T Ford. That is another thing we used to do. Get in the Model T Ford and then go out to these farms and pick our share. For example, pick so many bushels of apples and then they would give you some. We used to pick cherries. My mother used to can them. We used to can all the time. We used to have about three or four hundred quarts. With the garden they used to can a lot. They put a lot of stuff in vinegar. Then they used to salt their hams and put them in fifty gallon barrels.

C: That carried you through the winter when you did all the canning.

N: All the canning. We ate sausage.

C: When your dad bought the car, did he buy it new?

N: No.

C: How old was it, do you know?

N: About a 1927 Model T Ford.

C: Do you know how much he paid for it?

N: We had a Model A; I think we paid eighty dollars. It was like a new car. But the Model T we used to go out in. My dad and I used to buy goats and sell the goats.

C: What if the car broke down, did you take care of it or was there some place in town you could . . .

N: You would just call somebody who knew something about a car, that's all.

C: Were there garages in town and mechanics?

N: Oh, yes, there were a lot of garages. We had a Chevy garage.

C: Do you know any of the names associated with these garages?

N: Anglemyer's Chevy Garage, I remember that one. But I don't remember too many. Before he died he had to have been here about fifty, sixty years. He had been there for quite a while. He used to sell Chevys. I remember the first one he [my dad] bought I remember when he bought the Model T Ford. He just told me he was going to buy a Model T. He came home with a Model T, but he couldn't drive.

C: How old were you then?

N: I was about seventeen.

C: This was about 1930? It must have been a little later than that. It must have been later on in the 1930's, because you were born in 1919.

N: Yes.

C: When did you start driving?

N: Well, at that time you used to go downtown to the drug store to get your license, your driver's license. I had to be around fifteen or sixteen.

C: Did you have to take a test?

N: No. For a dollar or fifty cents they would give you a driver's license.

C: Were there a lot of cars in town?

N: No, not too many. At that time it was easy. You went down there and told the guy you were sixteen or seventeen and they would just write it out, take your thirty-five or forty cents and that was it.

C: Tell me about bootlegging. You said you knew a little bit about that.

N: When I was young we used to have a shack we used to hang around. We didn't have any money to go downtown. We found a bootlegger. I used to go down there and tell him we wanted a fifth and he wouldn't give it to me. I would say it was for my dad and he turned around and gave it to me. We used to go up and drink. There were a couple of bootleggers. They sold. One of them was just all private. He wouldn't sell it to kids. He would make fifty, sixty gallons and he would call the trucker down and haul it away. But the other guy, you would go down there and he always used to sell you whiskey. If you were a little older he would get you drunk before you came out. Down here across from my dad's house, there used to be six guys and they used to go down and buy whiskey by the gallon; it was cheap.

C: How much?

N: I would say maybe a dollar, a dollar and a half or two dollars a gallon. Then they would play cards, and drink. One would fall and get drunk and the other three played and they would get drunk, until the last one and then they would all fall asleep. Then when they would sober up they would go down and buy another gallon and start drinking again. That was all they used to have to do. Sit under a tree. There was nothing else to do but drink and whiskey was cheap.

C: What did they make the whiskey out of?

N: Raisins. Dried raisins or whatever. They used to put it in a five gallon thing and then they used to put the lid on and let it boil and then they could tell you how they found out when the whiskey was done. They put in a teaspoon, lit a match, and if it would burn, the whiskey was ready to drink. If it didn't burn it wasn't ready. A lot of wine. They used to make wine. They used to come from Youngstown and sell grapes there and then they would make wine. A lot of bootlegging.

C: What did the law do about this? The authorities? Did they get caught?

N: Some of them got caught and some of them didn't.

C: What happened when they got caught?

N: They would fine them a little bit.

C: But they were right back at it.

N: A lot of bootleggers, we could smell it when they were making it. The smell would come out.

C: Where did they do it at, in the back woods?

N: No, they did it down the cellar, in the morning when everybody was sleeping. They used to go down there and get the water or whatever and start making whiskey.

C: Did you go to school?

N: Yes, to the eighth grade.

C: You went up to the eighth grade? Most of the people I have talked to in your age group, that is pretty much what they say; they all went up to the eighth grade. Why is that?

N: I don't know. The superintendent told me one time . . . I used to play hookey every Friday afternoon.

C: Who was the superintendent at that time?

N: I don't know. He used to tell me, "You are going to school." I told him, "One of these days I am going to quit." He said, "You can't." That's when I joined the CCC.

C: Why don't you tell me about that.

N: I got on the Erie train, me and a couple of guys. One of them graduated and the other one was going to graduate. We got on the train that goes down to Lisbon, to the courthouse that is

where the CCC started. I went down there and signed up and he said, "You have to be eighteen." I told him I was eighteen and I was really only seventeen. Two weeks later I got a letter that I had to go down to Lisbon. Then from Lisbon I went to the CCC in Carlton, Ohio. I stayed there six months.

C: This is about 1936?

N: Yes.

C: What did you do on the CCC?

N: Well, we went out on the farm and worked. Some dug; some gangs would find Christmas trees. There were gangs. If the hillside washed away then they would build dams. Then they would build four or five holes deep, where the gully was. That was how many you had to put in.

C: How about some of the WPA projects that were built in town? Do you remember any? The high school was one, wasn't it?

N: The high school, the post office. I think that is about all I know that was built.

C: Do you remember the people who worked on those?

N: My dad worked on the post office; he carried mud. They had to work for their money. That guy was always on him.

C: Who supervised it? Was it somebody from the government?

N: I don't remember. I think it was the contractor, but it was under WPA. They had their own foremen and whatever. Pizzie Construction built the high school.

C: That was the contractor?

N: 1936, 1937, or something like that. I don't remember when the post office was built, but I know that was a WPA job.

C: What building did you go to school in?

N: The old high school down here on Elm Street.

C: Tell me about that building. Was it two story, three story?

N: It was about four stories. It was an old school. From there I went to South Side. They had a school out at the South Side.

C: Where the present South Side School is there was an older building?

N: Yes, in front.

- C: Were there any other schools in town then?
- N: A Catholic school.
- C: St. Patrick's?
- N: Yes, but I don't remember any other schools.
- C: Did you attend the Catholic school?
- N: No. I was Jewish.
- C: You went up to the eighth grade in school then. Then you just went to work. After you went to the CCC . . .
- N: I came back. That is when I got a job on the railroad. From the railroad then I went to the strip mine.
- C: Where was that at?
- N: New Albany, Ohio.
- C: Where is New Albany? I don't know where that is.
- N: It is on route 46 between Salem and Canfield. I worked on an electric shovel at the strip mine.
- C: What did you do after that? Cherry Valley?
- N: No, Cherry Valley was gone. I went to Struthers then I worked at the strip mines again. Then I went into construction.
- C: Cherry Valley went out what year about?
- N: When it started picking up I know that there was about fifteen or twenty thousand . . . The businessmen could have bought it. They didn't want to spend their money; they were scared.
- C: The community could have bought . . .
- N: It was going under because of the Depression. These businessmen could have bought it for fifteen or twenty thousand at that time. They didn't want to buy it because they were scared. Then after the outfit from Pittsburgh bought it then things picked up a little bit. They could have bought it. Dr. Beaver and Dr. Nicolette and them didn't want to buy it; they didn't want to put their money into it. But after Pittsburgh bought it things were picking up, steel mills were picking up. They let it go for about fifteen of twenty thousand.
- C: So this Pittsburgh company came in?
- N: Navel Island, a guy out at Navel Island. That is who ran the Struthers furnace. They had a big one at Navel Island. Then

they would buy these little ones and turn down the competition.

C: What was this man's name?

N: I don't know. Paul Hanahan and Ed Dean were big shots in Leetonia. They ran the furnace.

C: Then after Pittsburgh came in, how long did it go after that?

N: Oh, I don't think too long. I know my dad was working down there. He was running a thing where you sent it up to the pile and the guy would dump it. It didn't take too long after, then they shut it down.

C: The mid 1930's?

N: I would say.

C: The mid to late 1930's. Okay, about some of the other businesses in town, 1930's and 1940's, was there a newspaper in town?

N: The Leetonia Reporter.

C: Were there any other newspapers? Just the Reporter during that time?

N: They did a good business and they never went out of business.

C: Who ran the newspaper? Do you know the gentleman's name?

N: There used to be an Arnold who ran it. The guy from Carlton, I can't think of his name. He died.

C: So it was a man named Arnold that ran it? Where was it?

N: Where was it located? Right on Chestnut Street right in town. Right there where the Rebecca Hall is right now. That used to be the Leetonia Reporter. They had a furniture store they tore down.

C: What other kinds of businesses do you remember? Who ran the furniture store?

N: Jack Woods. It was Crual & Woods. They were undertakers at that time and they ran it like a furniture store.

C: So that is where we get Woods-Redding Funeral Home? It is the same family?

N: The Woods, yes. That is the son. Then they had a butcher shop, a shoemaker . . .

C: Who ran those places?

- N: John Morrell ran the shoemaker's. Bailhart sold new shoes. Ed Holt was in Leetonia all his life; why he has to be sixty years in Leetonia.
- C: What did he do?
- N: He had a store like a five-and-ten. He sold everything.
- C: Just like the old type general store?
- N: Yes, he sold wagons and everything.
- C: These were all located pretty much on Main Street then?
- N: On Front Street the Holt Five-and-Ten was. Bailhart, that was the shoe store. Then we had a jewelry, a Marshall Jewelry. He was in Leetonia. We had the A & P in Leetonia.
- C: There was an A & P?
- N: That was located on Chestnut Street?
- C: Where was Chestnut Street?
- N: It's torn down. It is right below where the Dollar Bank is. Then we had a couple of restaurants. We had one restaurant. We had an old lady that used to sell women's hats. I remember she had a cat on the window all the time. Two butchers, a meat market.
- C: So it was a pretty booming town back then?
- N: It was before my time and I think over there was the old hotel that burned down.
- C: That was called Leetonia Hotel? That would be right by the tracks.
- N: Right across the street from the tracks. Then there was a company that made dishes.
- C: Oh, there was a pottery in town?
- N: It was over there across the street from the hotel. Right across from the hotel was a railroad station. They tore it down. There were two, the Erie and the Pennsylvania. They tore both of them down.
- C: The Erie and the Pennsylvania Railroad. The hotel and the station, how far are we going back right now, 1940, 1938?
- N: We are going to 1927, 1928.
- C: Oh, it's in the 1920's. But you do remember this?

- N: Yes, I remember because I was going to the South Side School and when the train stopped down there the guy used to tell us to come on in and we used to go to the engine. He used to tell us he was going to take us for a ride to Pittsburgh. This was on the Pennsylvania. But they had an Erie station in Pennsylvania.
- C: Could you hop on a train? A person wanting to take a train somewhere . . .
- N: Now?
- C: No, then.
- N: Yes, they had regular stops here.
- C: Where could you go?
- N: You could go to Pittsburgh, Cleveland. The train was a commuter. From Cleveland to Pittsburgh it would stop at every town.
- C: Did you ever ride it to other cities?
- N: I think a couple of times our family went to Pittsburgh to see my uncle. But I didn't ride it too much.
- C: How about the streetcars?
- N: Yes, they had streetcars. The round house was out here, at the south side. There was one that went to Lisbon; one that went to Salem; one went to Columbiana. I remember them. But I don't know if there were any that went to Palestine.
- C: What is a round house?
- N: Where the streetcars came from Columbiana and would turn around and go back. It was a loop. One came from Salem. I don't know if it went to Alliance or not, but they had tracks going toward Alliance.
- C: How recent were those around?
- N: They have been gone a long time.
- C: The early 1930's, late 1920's?
- N: I'm not going to guess, but it was late.
- C: But you do remember them as a young boy?
- N: Yes sir. I remember the feed mill because the old man bought stuff down there. Weikart owned that. McKeefrey's farm, if you would have seen it then and see it now, you would never believe it. This guy let it run down because he got all that free . . . with

the government.

C: Federal subsidies.

N: He has a thousand acres; he owned all of Leetonia.

C: What did he grow back then?

N: He grew everything a farmer would: corn, oats and wheat.

C: Did he have cattle too?

N: Oh yes. He had a cow barn, a sheep barn, a horse barn, all that. I remember one time my nephew joined the army and we went back there where the hogs are and that is about a half mile or a mile back and he said he brought a couple of girls back there and a couple of guys and they were going to have a corn roast, a weiner roast or whatever, and he started tearing down the hog things. The guy who lived up there, he reported him and I had to fix all them hog barns. They were down. They ran out of wood and they were going to tear them down. Then the guy squealed on him. My nephew was going to the army so I said well I'll go up with a couple of hammers and fix it.

C: Where McKeefrey's pretty decent to the workers?

N: They gave you a dollar a day, and you had to work ten hours for a dollar. When you worked there you had to sign in, when you went home you had to sign out and when you came back you signed in and signed out. Then it was a wonderful farm and then years after that--I don't know how many years--Holloway started raising beans there. They rented it to him.

C: Tell me about Firestone?

N: I don't know anything about that. McKeefrey, I guess somebody wanted it like Klinec.

C: Who was that?

N: Klinec. He's dead now.

C: What is his first name?

N: Richie Klinec. He worked down at the store down there. Hell, he started here when he was fifteen or sixteen years old. He was there until . . . He was a delivery boy for him. Like I said, when they worked at the farm or worked at the furnace they had to go down there and go grocery shopping. But he had everything there. He had groceries and on the other side he had pants and coats.

C: Was this family highly respected by the community?

- N: Oh, I imagine, yes. Of course this little guy had his show of fear and if he saw something wrong he would get out and tell you. He didn't sit around. If you would have seen it then, you would never believe it's the same farm. Down there on Washington Street he had four or five houses. On Center Street, all those houses belonged to him. On 344 he had a big house out there, a duplex house. I would say he had about fourteen, fifteen houses that belonged to McKeefrey's farm.
- C: Let's go back to the newspaper for a minute because we started talking about the Reporter. What kind of newspaper was it? What would you find in there?
- N: Just things around town. It was about three, four or maybe five pages. Just local news. They sold quite a bit.
- C: Sort of a gossip . . .
- N: Gally from Carlton used to run it too. He was a mayor and he used to run it. Fred Gally. He lived in Carlton and he ran it.
- C: After Arnold?
- N: Oh yes.
- C: How long did the Reporter stay in existence?
- N: It went out . . .
- C: Before the war?
- N: Yes. I think it went out . . . No, it didn't. When the war was going on I think it was still around because they used to take pictures of the guys.
- C: Was there a Leetonia Courier that followed?
- N: Yes, I think that came after the Reporter.
- C: That was after the Reporter.
- N: I think Jack Ripley ran that.
- C: As a young fellow growing up in this town, what did you do for entertainment? What was there to do? You worked a little bit, and you had quit school early, and you had gone to work on the CCC and had picked up other jobs along the way.
- N: During the Depression we never went downtown; we had a shack. We used to play cards and stuff.
- C: Was it like just a bunch of buddies that . . .

- N: Yes, we just fixed it up a little bit. We used to have a potato fry and stuff like that. I never went downtown much. We would just sit around and play cards. When we got tired we went home to sleep. Then we would come back in the morning.
- C: If you wanted to, what could you have done in town? What was available?
- N: Well, there was a poolroom in Leetonia. We played pool.
- C: Tell me about the movie theater.
- N: Yes, there was a movie theater. We used to ride around. Gas was sixteen cents a gallon. We could go any place. We had the Model A Ford. We used to go all kind of places, Lisbon, Salem, Columbiana.
- C: What about Kelly's Park? Do you remember that? Did you ever go there?
- N: At one time that was a park. There was roller skating in the park. My family used to go down there. They used to have burlesque shows toward the end.
- C: A burlesque show? What was that like?
- N: I was too little to get in. They wouldn't let me in.
- C: Do you remember hearing any stories about that?
- N: Oh, lots of stories.
- C: Like what?
- N: The coach used to go down there and then the guys would start messing around with his car. But they had a lot of burlesques down there. That was a nice little park.
- C: This is near route 11 going toward Columbiana?
- N: Yes, between Columbiana and Leetonia.
- C: You were starting to talk about earlier the gang, as you called it, the Black Hand. What can you tell me about that?
- N: My father used to tell me. I don't remember the gang.
- C: Tell what your dad used to tell you.
- N: My dad used to tell me when they wanted to do something they would tell you. The president, I mean the big shot of the Black Hand, they killed him in front of the Catholic Church.

C: Who was that?

N: I don't remember his name. They went up to the house and told him they wanted him to go for a walk. He told his wife that he didn't think he would be back. They shot him.

C: This was a guy in the organization?

N: Yes.

C: He was in a leadership position and they took care of him. Do you know why they did that?

N: No, I guess it was his turn to go. They told him they wanted him to go for a walk and they shot him right in front of the Catholic Church. Right at the steps.

C: Was he coming out of church?

N: No, they were walking together. They shot him right in front of the church. There was a lot of them in this town. Big ones too.

C: Can you tell me some names?

N: No, I don't know the names. I don't remember, but they had a gang here.

C: What did they deal in exactly?

N: I don't know what they dealt in, but they had Grafton furnace and Cherry Valley and they came in here. I don't know, they just manage it.

C: It was a good place for them to get started because there was a lot of people.

N: They had Sohio. They had a little garage between Sohio and the old hotel. That used to be a gas station.

C: That's Columbia Street.

N: Yes. Then on Columbia Street by the Sunoco Station there used to be a Hepner's Clothing Store. Then up above Columbia Street there was another grocery store and then up there where Barney Straub's is that used to be an old hotel.

C: Oh, his gas station used to be an old hotel?

N: Yes, they tore that down and then he put his gas station there.

C: Do you know the name of that hotel?

- N: No, I don't remember. It has been a long time. Then they had Weikart's store. It is still there. I mean they just sold Weikart's.
- C: Do you remember going in there at all?
- N: Yes, it was a little country store.
- C: What kind of things did you find in there?
- N: Just like any other store. You found meat, and then they used to sell ice cream. They used to go with a horse and buggy to sell ice cream around town. It had a little bell on the horse and buggy and they would ring the bell. The kids used to run out and buy ice cream cones.
- C: Did he deliver ice?
- N: Yes, he delivered ice when they had the iceboxes. I think that was the only grocery store up there. They just sold it a couple of months ago, didn't they?
- C: I don't know.
- N: I think it was about three months that they sold all the stuff in there. But they closed down a couple of years ago.
- C: Were there any other businesses that came around during this period?
- N: I can't remember. Leetonia for a little town, like you said if there were any cars there must not have been too many because the town was full of business. Like the beer joint, then they had a hat store. They had the Altimore's Five-and-Ten. That is where Nemenz is. They had a five-and-ten there. Then I didn't tell you that there was Holt Five-and-Ten. Down on First Street was a gas station. Where the post office is there used to be a poolroom, of course Spatholt's used to own it. Then down on the corner is a car wash that used to be a poolroom. I don't remember what was in there. Then across the street where that new building is, that is where Floding used to have their butcher shop. Then they had a wallpaper store. The old A & P was there. Nare's Hardware used to be in Leetonia for yeas too. Then there was Spatholt's Hardware. Then up the street the old post office was at the opposite corner of where it is now. They tore that down; that is where Nemenz is now. That used to be an old five-and-ten. Then across the street from there used to be Conkle's Bakery. They used to bake bread. They used to have a bakery there in the house. Up there where Dick Roose is, that is where the old Cherry Valley office used to be. That is on Chestnut. Make a right and it is on the left. That used to be the Cherry Valley office for the blast furnace. Then down in the front they used to have a row of houses they used to call

the red row. That belonged to Cherry Valley. Then up on the other side of the hill, there was another they used to call the white row. That belonged to the city. They had that.

C: Those were company houses. People that worked there could live there?

N: Yes, a lot of people lived there. A lot of them rented.

C: What was "Crazy Hill"?

N: That is right down here, right by the Catholic Church.

C: That's the hill . . .

N: It runs up and then there is another street and they dead end there. They called it "Crazy Hill".

C: Any particular reason for that?

N: No. Then they had another . . . There were Jewish people who lived on . . .

C: There were Jewish people in Leetonia?

N: Yes, they mixed with the Italians.

C: Did they?

N: Yes. Morris' Clothing Store, that was right next to the house by the OSI.

C: Was this Ray Morris?

N: I'm pretty sure, tha name sounds familiar.

C: That was a clothing store?

N: Then Mr. Altimore had a grocery store.

C: Which Altimore?

N: Frank Altimore. Then there was Guy Morrow. Morrow's Grocery Store on Main Street, right across from the doctor's office. That was an Italian grocery store.

C: You are talking what period of time now?

N: 1930's, 1929. We had three or four Italian stores in Leetonia: Altimore's, Morrow and Rose. They were up there by the Hi Ho. They had a grocery store. They used to talk a long time ago about a church across from Morrow's. I don't remember that. They had a junk yard going out towards the Catholic cemetery.

C: That is a picture of the old hotel?

N: A creek used to run right underneath.

C: There was a creek running underneath the hotel?

N: Yes. Every time the water would come up, the hotel would get flooded. They moved it back now. Yes, you know how that happened in California with the big lamp posts to hold them up. They never had a cellar under it. The water ran right underneath the hotel and every time it would flood it would flood the hotel. Then when the state came in they moved it in the back.

Pennsylvania Railroad. I remember when I was working on the railroad, they had those little houses where the watchmen stay and Erie was right across the track.

C: Tell me about the bee hive, the coke oven's bee hive. What is that?

N: Well, it was shaped like a round with brick, that is what they used to call a bee hive. Then on top when we were kids we used to go steal the tops of them so we could make some money. There used to be a junk man from Youngstown that came down and he used to buy them off of us. Maybe twenty-five or thirty cents a piece. That is when they started turning it down. They restored that now.

C: Some of that is restored.

N: Leetonia used to make all the coke. I think it was Cherry Valley. I remember that.

C: The hotel?

N: It used to flood. Then they used to close it down until the water went down. It would stink. It was a very strong Leetonia; it had all those stores.

C: It was a bustling community then?

N: Yes, this is where they built the Sohio.

C: Describe that?

N: That is the Leetonia Garage. That is the little gas station with the little pump.

C: Was that at the Leetonia Works?

N: Right on Columbia Street, right across from the tracks. Then they tore that down and built the Sohio. But the guy who owned that owned a lot of slot machines. He used to put slot machines all over.

C: Can you tell me his name?

N: His name is Tony Cimimelli. He used to have all the slot machines in Leetonia. He used to own the American Restaurant at one time.

C: The American Restaurant?

N: The Leetonia American Restaurant.

C: Where was that at?

N: That was right on Main Street. Right next to the bank. He had slot machines.

C: He wasn't associated with the mafia?

N: No, this was after. Slot machines were still around and the mafia moved out.

C: Let's talk about the period where the United States is going to enter into the war, World War II, the big one. I want you to tell me about your own personal experiences. Talk a little bit if you will about how the town reacted. What was the atmosphere of the town? What happened as far as the town was concerned? How did people adjust? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

N: Well, I left in 1942 and everybody was worked up about the war. Everybody went. I don't think there was anyone who didn't want to go.

C: It wasn't like people were avoiding the draft?

N: No, I never heard of anyone avoiding the draft. In 1942 I left and went to . . .

C: Why is that? Why do you think like in Vietnam there were a lot of people that left and went to Canada or burned their draft cards and they just refused to go? In World War II that didn't happen; you never heard of that.

N: No, I never heard of anyone refusing. I don't know. Well, Vietnam everybody was saying some of the kids that came back when they wanted to kill somebody they told them not to shoot. But they were allowed to shoot Americans. That is what they were bitching about. They said they were allowed to shoot at Americans but the Americans were not allowed to shoot at them. Some of the guns jammed up.

C: How about the town itself? Did you notice much difference with the people?

- N: Well, some of them bitched. They figured when these kids came back and told them what had happened they didn't like it.
- C: Were people pretty much behind the president with regard to our involvement in the war?
- N: Well, what can they say. When you are involved you're involved. People can't say not to do it. You have to go.
- C: So, you entered the war in 1942?
- N: I was drafted in 1942.
- C: Were you married?
- N: Yes, I had a child, a baby girl.
- C: You had a baby girl, and your family is back home here. What was it like for them back home during the war? How were they making it? Was it totally on your military salary or what?
- N: The only bitch I had was that my wife went down to the Red Cross and they wouldn't give her anything. She had to wait three months for my check. Every time she went down there, they told her to sell this and to sell that. Because I had a car. Right away the Red Cross said, "Why don't you sell your car?" Then my father, he was crippled. Nobody was home when I left. My brother sent him money. My wife had to wait three months. Every time she would go down there they would tell her to sell the car. That is the only gripe I have. They messed up in the army. It was three or four months before she got a nickel.
- C: So you went to the army. Tell me something about that.
- N: I went down to New Orleans and stayed there for three months. Then they made a railroad battalion. I got into a railroad battalion and went to India, China and Burma. I was in the railroad battalion for thirty-five months.
- C: What was that like?
- N: It wasn't bad. Then I got to be a cook, that was better yet. We brought stuff up to the front lines. Our company, we had five railroad battalions. 721st, 725th, 714, we were all in India.
- C: When you came home after the war, what did you do? Did you go into construction?
- N: No, I went to the furnace. I went to the strip mine and started oiling. In 1945 wages were a dollar and a quarter an hour and then they started going up and I quit there and went to the steel mill and from there I went to construction. That is where I retired.