

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Leetonia Project

Resident Experience

O. H. 781

ANNA DEFFENBAUGH

Interviewed

by

Theodore Carchedi

on

April 18, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: ANNA DEFFENBAUGH

INTERVIEWER: Theodore Carchedi

SUBJECT: Cherry Valley coal mine, ethnic groups, streetcar system, school days, businesses, recreation, churches, Black Hand, Depression years, transportation

DATE: April 18, 1986

C: This is an interview with Anna Deffenbaugh for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Ted Carchedi, in Leetonia, Ohio, on April 18, 1986, at 3:15 p.m. This is a history of Leetonia, Ohio.

Anna, tell me a little bit about your parents and your family.

D: My father and mother came to Leetonia in . . . I don't know what year. I had five brothers and I have lived in Leetonia all of my life but for four years when my husband was transferred to Youngstown. We lived in Mineral Ridge four years. Then we moved back to Salem for two years and then back to Leetonia and I have lived here ever since.

C: You were born where?

D: I was born in New Waterford.

C: You were born in New Waterford, Ohio?

D: Right before they moved to Leetonia.

C: What year was that when you were born?

D: 1895. I'm ninety-one.

C: Can you tell me something about how it was when you were growing up in Leetonia? What was your childhood like? What kinds of things did you do on a daily basis as a young, little kid besides going to school and whatever? Did you go to school in Leetonia?

- D: Yes. I went to school in Leetonia but I did not graduate. My class graduated in 1913, but I quit school when I was in the first year of high school because my mother died and I stayed home.
- C: You had to help take care of the house?
- D: Yes, I did.
- C: Where was your father working then?
- D: He was a check weighman they called it at the coal mine. When the coal came up in the cars, he kept a record of all the different miners and put down how much coal they brought up.
- C: Where was that? Where was the coal mine?
- D: The coal mine was right up here.
- C: Could you describe that for me?
- D: It was called Cherry Valley coal mine, but it is all torn down now. That was the last place he worked. We always lived around the coal mines. He never dug coal; he always did office work.
- C: So you went through the first year in high school and then you came back.
- D: Then I quit because I had to stay home and help for my family.
- C: Where did you attend school, what building?
- D: The old high school up on Elm Street.
- C: At the old high school?
- D: It is torn down now.
- C: The years of entering into the World War I era, does that bring up some memories for you?
- D: Yes.
- C: What was Leetonia like during this time, like 1915 through 1918?
- D: It was very active in those days because the two furnaces were here. Now they are gone, of course. We had a lot of people in Leetonia then. A lot of foreign people came to the furnaces to do labor kind of work.
- C: In the labor force, a lot of immigrants came here?

D: Yes.

C: What kind of backgrounds did they come from? What kind of people?

D: Italians.

C: A lot of Italians?

D: A lot of Italians, yes. They did labor work at the furnaces here.

C: What about the businesses in town? Can you tell me something like what type of businesses there were?

D: There was a regular drugstore, a jewelry store, meat markets and so forth. Just an ordinary, little town. We had lots of saloons.

C: I keep hearing that.

D: Twenty-seven saloons we had at one time. We aren't proud of that though.

C: The community is not proud of that?

D: I don't know how other people viewed it, but I sure wasn't proud.

C: When United States entered into the war, what was it like--the general reaction of the town, the people of the town? What was their reaction to American involvement in the war? Can you tell me something about that? Were they for it, against it? Do you remember that period?

D: Everybody was excited and sorry and the general reaction . . .

C: Just what you would expect right?

D: Yes.

C: Do you know people who went into the Army who were drafted back then?

D: Yes.

C: Can you tell me some of those people?

D: William Mazy was a good friend of mine; he went in and came back.

C: And he lived through the experience of World War I and came back?

D: Yes.

C: Do you know Mr. Duko because he is still living today and he

is a World War I veteran?

D: Yes, I suppose that would be Andy.

C: It is Andy, Andy Duko.

D: Andy Duko, yes, I know him. I know his children. His daughter works at the grocery store.

C: What about the prices of goods back then when you went to the store?

D: I don't know about the prices so much but I know you bought bananas by the dozen and they would weigh out your beans. They didn't package them in those days. Everything came in big barrels like pickles. When you bought pickles, you bought six or three. Sugar, they always weighed that out for you.

C: So nothing was packaged.

D: You went into a store and stood in front of a counter and told clerks what you wanted and they waited on you. No standing in line like they do now.

C: Was it easy for your family to live on a day-to-day basis? Did you have enough food to eat every day?

D: Yes.

C: There were no problems as far as that?

D: I had five brothers and they all worked as soon as they were old enough. My oldest brother was a conductor on the first line on the Pennsylvania. The second brother was chief chemist at this furnace over here.

C: Cherry Valley Furnace?

D: Cherry Valley. Then the next brother had a grocery store. Then the next brother was a foreman in a foundry in Salem and my youngest brother sold automobiles.

C: Where did he sell automobiles, in town, here in town?

D: No, Columbiana mostly.

C: So altogether, how many people were in your family, brothers and sisters?

D: I didn't have any sisters. I had five brothers and my mother and father.

C: That was enough.

D: Five brothers is a lot.

C: That's a lot is right. Did you ever work during this time?

D: I never worked. I stayed home all the time because I kept house for my father and my five brothers. When they all left home and were married, that left my father and me. We lived together until I was married and my husband moved in here. That is why I lived here all this time.

C: How old were you when you got married?

D: Twenty-seven.

C: That was considered kind of old back then, wasn't it?

D: Yes, it was. I was an old maid for several years.

C: That's normal today. Girls got married in their teens back then.

D: Maybe my having so many brothers had something to do with it.

C: You had to take care of them, right? More or less, you were like their mother practically.

D: Yes. My youngest brother was only five years old when my mother died. She was fifty-three when she died.

Then we went through that terrible Depression from 1929 to 1932. We didn't have any social security in those days.

C: Was your father working at this time?

D: Off and on. Nobody worked steady very often and if they did have a steady job, they would only work maybe one or two days a week.

C: What year did you get married?

D: 1924. I had two sons.

C: Did the Depression hit in 1929?

D: I think it did. It was pretty well over in 1932, wasn't it?

C: It went well into the 1930's. It started to get a little better in town from what I understand, about 1933 or so. The furnaces started picking up and everything.

D: That was about all the work there was in Leetonia, just the two furnaces.

- C: Because the other business were just like small shops?
- D: Yes. Tool shops . . . I guess the tool works is still here.
- C: Do you remember a nail factory?
- D: Nails? There was one in Salem but I never knew one in Leetonia.
- C: Your husband, where did he work?
- D: He worked at the Bliss Mill in Salem; he was a machinist.
- C: When the Depression hit, was he still working? Was it off and on?
- D: Yes, he would work and then he was transferred. That is why we moved to Mineral Ridge. He was transferred to Youngstown.
- C: As you were growing up and you had all of your brothers at home, did you have an automobile at home?
- D: An automobile, no. I never drove. My father never had an automobile and several of my brothers never had one until they were married and two of them never had an automobile.
- C: Did your husband have one?
- D: Yes. He drove back and forth. After the streetcar line didn't run anymore, he had to drive to work in Salem.
- C: Can you tell me something about that, the streetcar?
- D: It started to run in 1908. I am sure of that date. I think during the Depression is when they closed, quit running. That was a good thing for Leetonia, because it went from East Liverpool to Salem and then from Leetonia to Youngstown and into big business. But then, of course, when there was no work, nobody rode the cars.
- C: Did you ride on the streetcars?
- D: Yes.
- C: A lot?
- D: If you went anywhere, you had to ride on that trolley bus. Then later on you rode the buses.
- C: How much did it cost to go on the streetcar?
- D: Twenty-five cents from here to Salem round trip.
- C: And you are talking about 1930's or 1920's?

D: Yes, 1920's.

C: Then as the Depression came no one could really afford to ride on them so they went out of business?

D: I suppose.

C: What about the railroad line? Could you take a passenger car?

D: Yes. We had good passenger service in the 1920's. The Pennsylvania ran before the diesel engines. The trains would stop in Leetonia. There was a milk train that brought milk; they called it the milk train. That went twice a day. We had good service.

C: A lot different than it is today, right?

D: Yes. We used to have four tracks going by but they took off two and right now we have just two tracks going through town. The diesel engines were all big and long trains compared to twenty-five and thirty cars which used to be considered a big train. Those would have 100 more than that.

C: Those were the steam engines. You knew those were coming through town. The sky got dirty and . . .

D: There was a lot of smoke.

C: Smoke, a lot of smoke. Can you tell me anything else about the Depression years, how the town was affected?

D: Everybody learned to help their neighbor during that time. If you had a little bit more than you needed, you gave it to your neighbor or helped somebody who didn't have as much as you did. That was one good thing of it, but that's about all. There weren't many people who had more than they needed themselves.

C: Did you raise chickens or anything like that to help?

D: Not here we didn't. We didn't have any space for anything like that. We got along; we weren't hungry or anything. We didn't have much choice of what we ate. People would exchange with you and give you something in return.

C: Going back to World War I, did you have a ration during that period?

D: Oh, yes. Sugar and flour and all those things, you were only allowed a certain amount.

C: Were you given coupons like during World War II?

D: I don't know.



- C: Do you know how much you were rationed? Do you remember how much sugar you were allowed to use a month or get?
- D: No, I don't remember that.
- C: I would like to go back a little further to when you attended school. What was it like attending school in Leetonia? Can you tell me about your teachers, how the day went?
- D: When we went to school, the teachers told us what to do and we did it. There wasn't any foolishness like there is today in school. You weren't allowed to take your lunch. You had to walk home for your lunch. I walked from Elm Street up to Wilson Street. Do you know where the old school used to be?
- C: Yes.
- D: We had to come home for our lunch and go back before one o'clock. We had an hour for lunch, and we had to walk home and walk back.
- C: Why couldn't you take your lunch to school?
- D: We weren't allowed; I don't know why. You had to ask permission for any reason if you had to bring a lunch. If your mother wasn't home or something unusual like that, we had to ask permission to bring our lunch. Then you sat in your seat in the schoolroom when you were able; there was no cafeteria, no monkeying around.
- C: What were your teachers like?
- D: They were nice and friendly. When they told you anything, they expected you to do it and you didn't talk back to them or anything.
- C: Not like today, right?
- D: It is amazing what these kids get by with. We looked up to our teachers. We thought they were something special and they tried to help us and teach us to do right.
- C: Why is it so different now? Why was it like that back then when it is not that way today? Why don't kids respect their teachers like they used to back in your day?
- D: I have often wondered. I think it is because their home life is different. When we came in from school, our parents were home and we did the chores and did what the parents told us. Now when the kids get home from school, their mother has gone to work. They go around on the streets and pick up all of this bad stuff.

C: You didn't have that leisure time that kids have today.

D: No. We had to help at home. We had chores to do.

C: So it was a more disciplined life that probably would contribute to that.

What subjects did you study at school, do you remember?

D: Geography, grammar, arithmetic, and physiology.

C: Do you remember any of your teachers' names?

D: Yes, Tilly McNulty and Edith Aiken. Edith Aiken was my seventh grade teacher and Tilly McNulty was my eighth grade teacher. I was an ordinary student. I wasn't smart, but I wasn't the dumbest. The teachers in those days if you were a little bit slow at arithmetic or something, the teacher would stay in after school and help you and teach you if she thought you really wanted to learn or if you were behind in your grades. Now I think the teachers just look at the grades, go home and just interested in their salaries.

C: Did your husband attend school?

D: Yes. He graduated from the eighth grade; he caem from Zanesville.

C: Zanesville? So he went to school in Zanesville all of his education?

D: Yes. In those days people didn't graduate so much. If you went through the eighth grade, why, you were allowed to quit school. They didn't make such a to-do about it.

C: Yes. The people who I have talked to who lived there in that time, most of them went to school up to the eighth grade, if that.

D: Yes. Some quit. They had to go to work.

C: Right. When the Depression hit, then a lot of them . . .

D: Just quit.

C: Right. They had to help out with the family.

D: That's right, yes.

C: You mentioned during the Depression that a lot of immigrants came into the community, Italians.

D: They were here, a lot of them, before the Depression hit.

Leetonia was a booming town at one time when both furnaces were running. There were a lot of people here. When the Depression hit, of course, then when the furnaces went down, Leetonia was like it is now.

C: What was the population at the height of this prosperity? Were you ever able to get a rough estimate?

D: I don't know. I wouldn't have any idea.

C: After the Depression and people started getting back on their feet and you saw the coming of World War II, what was Leetonia like during this period, just prior to World War II and going into World War II?

D: It stayed pretty much the same.

C: Did you have any family members who were drafted into the military?

D: I had nephews.

C: Can you tell me something about that?

D: They all came back but one. I guess it would be a great nephew who was killed, but that would be the Vietnam War.

C: I mean World War II.

D: No. I don't think anybody was killed from the family.

C: What was it like in town here during the war?

D: What do you mean?

C: We talked about rationing during World War I. Were things rationed during the war?

D: No, not too much.

C: Mr. McKeefrey owned Grafton Furance as they called it.

D: Yes. Floding had a big meat market. They had a market in town and they did their own butchering.

I don't know how to put it. There was such an organization I think. There was a man by the name of Ginther who always said the Black Hand cut him in the neck.

C: Someone told me that story before, but this is the first time I heard that name.

D: Ginther, he was a blower. This is the story. I couldn't prove

it, but this Ginther was a blower over at Cherry Valley Furnace. There were a lot of these foreign people and he demanded a certain amount of money from all of those Italian immigrants who didn't know any better. Somebody waited for him and cut his throat. They didn't kill him, but that is the story. I couldn't prove it. That was Ginther. He was a blower at the furnace.

- C: Are there any other stories that you can relate to me about that?
- D: No, that's about all. There was a lot of trouble. There were people who would get drunk and have fights and everything and the police were very much on the job in those days.
- C: Would you say there was a lot of hostility between the various groups, say the Italians and the Irish? Was there a lot of conflict between the different ethnic groups?
- D: Yes, more or less.
- C: Can you cite any specific examples of that?
- D: They used to have company houses as they called them. There was a row of white houses right up above here on the hill. The red row was down where Sharon and Dave lived, up that hill. They were always fighting. The company who furnished the housing . . . They had to pay rent, of course to the furnace company.
- C: The was called red row?
- D: The red and white rows. All of the old-timers would remember those rows.
- C: Did they segregate the Italians from the Irish?
- D: No.
- C: Or did they live basically within?
- D: Yes.
- C: They were integrated in the same housing projects?
- D: Wherever they had a chance to live, that is where they lived.
- C: Do you remember the hotels in town?
- D: Yes. It was the Columbia Street Hotel. It was down there.
- C: By the railroad tracks?
- D: Yes. Then there was the Ferguson Hotel.

C: Where was the Ferguson Hotel?

D: It would be on the corner of Front and Walnut Street where that old man lives. The hotel burned down.

C: When?

D: A long, long time ago when I was just growing up.

C: 1920's?

D: 1910's. That was the Archie Ferguson Hotel and William Andler ran the Columbia Street Hotel.

C: Some of these other businesses, how about the newspaper itself, The Reporter? Was there a newspaper prior to The Reporter?

D: I don't know, not in my time.

C: Can you name any other businesses like along Main Street or Front Street, say before the 1920's or into the 1920's that were around then? Do you remember any of those businesses like restaurants or hardware stores?

D: We had a hardware store.

C: Do you know the people who were involved in those stores?

D: Spatholt's had the hardware store and the Beilhart Brothers had a shoe shop and George Johnson ran the jewelry store. Fred Weidmyer ran the drugstore. Slater and Floding ran the meat market.

C: Butcher shop?

D: Yes. We had a little nickelodeon as they called it in those days. It cost a nickel.

C: Movies?

D: Yes.

C: A movie theater?

D: Yes, it was a . . . They just had still pictures like slides.

C: Where was that at?

D: That movie house was right on the corner where Roose's drugstore used to be.

C: By Main Street there, on the corner of Main Street?

- D: Yes, on the corner of Main Street and Chesnut. I think the building is empty now, that brick building.
- C: Can you describe to me what it was like going in there? Can you describe that a little bit for me? What did you see when you went in there?
- D: Just pictures and they had a woman piano player. When the pictures would be running, say, horses, why, she would play something appropriate. If it was a death or anything, she played something sad. It was as dark as anything. The first thing they would put up on that screen was, "Ladies, please remove your hats." In those days women wore hats with plumes on them. The people who sat behind them couldn't see. It said, "Ladies, please remove your hats." I can remember so well when they first started that because some of the kids said, "When must we go out? How long can we stay?" They said, "You can stay all night if you want," with a nickel.
- C: What a bargain!
- D: Usually when you saw the "show" you were ready to go home.
- C: What other forms of entertainment were there in town as you were growing up as a young girl?
- D: There was a skating rink out by Kelly's Park outside of town. A man by the name of Kelly built it and he had a skating rink out there, a roller skating rink. There wasn't too much to do. We went for walks or a buggy ride or something like that. A bunch of us would have a picnic.
- C: Tell me about Mr. Greenamyer.
- D: He was a very popular citizen and he had been the head of that bank for a long time.
- C: Do you remember the name of the bank?
- D: Building & Loan.
- C: Is that on Main Street in town?
- D: Yes. It was at the same place that it is now, only it's a new building.
- C: Do you know what happened to him? Do you know the story behind that?
- D: The story is that he committed suicide, but I don't know if it is true.
- C: Why did he commit suicide?

- D: Because he was in trouble, I think, and he thought that everyone would find it out.
- C: Was he embezzling funds, was that it?
- D: Something on that order. I don't know what. I never heard the particulars on it, but I know he committed suicide.
- C: How about churches in the community? Were there more churches back then? What denominations were there? Can you tell me something?
- D: The same ones that we have now.
- C: They were the same ones?
- D: Of course, they had the Pentecostal services or something like that. There were those kind of churches that started up in an empty building and then they just stayed maybe for a summer and then closed up. We had a German Lutheran church here years ago and that is gone now.
- C: Where was that at?
- D: On Lisbon Street. They came over to the English Lutheran church and the Catholic church and the Presbyterian.
- C: Where was that church located?
- D: On the corner right by the South Side School. They tore it down. They preached German in that church.
- C: Oh, they preached German?
- D: They always had at the German Lutheran church.
- C: Did you attend that church?
- D: No. I belonged to the English Lutheran.
- C: And there was no mixture of the two until later or what?
- D: No. When the German Lutheran closed down, they didn't have enough members to keep going. Then those people, nearly all, came to the English Lutheran. There wasn't any difference, only that we spoke English and they German.
- C: Was there a large element of Germans in town?
- D: No. There was a fair amount of Germans, not too many, but there were maybe six or eight families, something like that. They were families.

- C: Were there any people living, like before your time, before your family came to Leetonia, or before you were born that might have told you something about the town, say going back into the 1800's? Was there anything they might have told you about the town that you weren't aware of?
- D: No.
- C: Do you remember the brewery?
- D: Yes.
- C: What was the name of the brewery?
- D: Seigel, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Seigel.
- C: It was a family operated [business]?
- D: Yes. That was a bunch of German people who came before my time and they ran that brewery and some of their relatives ran the saloon in town, but they made the beer.
- C: They stocked the saloons probably, right?
- D: Yes.
- C: No wonder there were so many saloons.
- D: Yes. It didn't have to go far. I can remember on occasion when you see on the television the brewery wagons with a string of horses. I can remember when they came to Leetonia. Everybody stopped and looked at them. They were just perfect; those horses were beautiful.
- C: Like the Clydesdales?
- D: They had a fancy harness on them. There were eight horses.
- C: Those were the Clydesdale horses?
- D: I don't know what kind of horses, but they were all matched and then they drove a big brewery wagon full of beer, Budweiser.
- C: Is there anything else you can tell me, anything in general that you can tell me about the town that comes to mind that we haven't covered?
- D: We used to have two greenhouses. One was right here. Two of the houses that were here had a big greenhouse. They had a big business raising plants and all kinds of flowers.
- C: What was the name of that business?



D: Wolfgang.

C: Are we talking about the 1920's here?

D: Yes, early 1920's. They did a big business. They raised tomatoes and cabbage plants and all that and then the farmers and the people who had gardens would come in strings of automobiles waiting to be waited on for flowers at decoration time. They had a good business. But now that is all torn down and the people died and nobody else took it over.

C: You say after World War II things really started slowing down in town or would you say even before that?

D: I don't remember that it was too much different, only the people were going to war and that always makes a difference in a town. You have to keep going like before as best you can.

C: Were there as many businesses intact after the war, after World War II as there were before? Can you recall that at all?

D: I don't think there was much difference but gradually the stores closed. The people would go to the big markets to shop and that did away with the stores.

C: Like grocery . . .

D: Like the grocery and meat stores; we don't have anything like that now.

C: How many children did you have?

D: Two boys, David and Carl.

C: I can't think of anything else.

D: I can't think of anything either.

C: Thank you very much.

D: You are very welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW