

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Coal Mining Project

Smith Stewart Road

O. H. 480

JESSIE CRISTO

Interviewed

by

Judy Rasmussen

on

August 14, 1978

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: JESSIE CRISTO

INTERVIEWER: Judy Rasmussen

SUBJECT. Mine -- appearance and location

DATE: August 14, 1978

R: This is an interview with Mrs. Jessie Cristo for the Youngstown State University Program, by Judy Rasmussen, on the Smith Stewart Mine, on August 14, 1978.

Mrs. Cristo, can you tell me a little bit about your family background?

C: I was born in Vienna, but my father and grandfather lived in Vienna and knew a lot of the history of the land of Vienna.

R: Where did your relatives come from?

C: My grandfather came from around Utica, New York, and my grandmother came from Canada. Her grandfather was a Revolutionary War general.

R: Do you know his name?

C: Major Green. There is a monument in Washington for him right below the Lincoln Memorial Monument.

My dad lived here on Rt. 82 in Murray's Corners. It's on Ridge Road. Part of that farm is what will be the new airplane factory if it ever turns out.

R: What did your father do for a living?

C: He was a farmer and real estate man. He knew all the land around here.

R. What can you tell me about the Barber Mine?

C. The Barber Mine used to be used as a dump. When we first moved out here everybody took their cans and dumped up there. It was pretty well cleared there then. They used to do a lot of hunting there.

We had this heavy snow in March; it broke down telephone wires.

R. What year was this?

C. It was in the 1950's. After the snow this friend of mine . . . we watched this big tree slowly disappear. People made fun of us and told us we imagined it, except her husband. He kind of believed us because he had lived in the mine country, Pennsylvania. Finally it disappeared and we started throwing stones down and we couldn't reach the bottom. It would be quite a while before you heard the stone really hit water. We've always said there was an underground river around here. We figure maybe that was it. We knew the mines were closed on account of we couldn't get rid of the water.

R. Where is the Barber Mine?

C: It is about a quarter of a mile from here. It is fairly close to the road.

R: Warner Road?

C: No, Smith Stewart. That's why I was worried about it. If it had been back okay, but there were many children around here, many dogs, many people going into the woods.

R: What did you do when you found the mine, about closing it up?

C. That was the trouble I had. No one seemed to want to do anything about it. First I talked to the trustees and they were up at the property. Then I talked to the county commissioners and they didn't want to do anything about it. Nobody did anything. One day one of the commissioners stopped at my house.

R. What was his name?

C. Darryl Williams. He stopped at my house and passed the buck again. I said, "That's all right, just leave the mine. I might want to get rid of my husband some day. That is a good way to do it. All I need to do is put him in a wheelbarrow and wheel him out." His eyes popped open, but still he didn't do anything.

A week before, Mrs. Sugar called me and she had seen a young woman that had a young baby in her arms, and she threw the baby in the mine. She called me to get the telephone number when the car would come down. I didn't get out there in time. I wanted to get the license number. We can't swear that it was a baby, but it was wrapped up as a baby.

My brother-in-law suggested that I write the bureau of mines in Columbus. He got me the name and address and I wrote. I got petitions all around this neighborhood. The bureau of mines contacted the owner and they filled it in with a bulldozer twice.

R: Do you know who the owner was?

C: Yes, he is still the owner and he won't sell it. He is still in Cleveland. I've forgotten his name.

R: Do you think there is anymore coal down there?

C: They say there is. They couldn't get it all out because of the water. It has been bulldozed twice, but it's open again.

R: Is it closed off by anything?

C: I think there is a fence around it.

R: It was a shaft mine then?

C: I think it was.

R: Do you ever remember the mine being active?

C: No. That was in 1872 when they took coal out.

R: Your grandfather has put together a scrapbook; can you tell me anything that you've read in there?

C: Just that there were a lot of saloons in Vienna in those days. There were three houses where we live because we found the three wells in our yards.

R: What about the mining, was it pretty big from what you read?

C: Yes. For a few years mining was very good around here. They did strip mining on Warner Road during the Depression.

R: Do you remember anything about that?

C: No.

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4

R What about the other mines?

C: There is one around the corner and one on Warner Road.

R: How did you find out about them?

C. I've known all my life.

R: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW