

Interview with Mrs. Esther Callis (Berlin Nursing Home, 641-0180) and William Voshell of Preston, MD., 8/7/87.
Present: R. Dodds

Mrs. Callis is the grand-daughter of Capt. Wm. H.H. Perry, former captain of Minnie Wheeler. Mrs. Callis was raised by her grandparents on their house, "Herdland" on the outskirts of Choptank. The house which is still standing, used to have a pilothouse eagle above the porch and an old steamboat lifeboat near the front fence filled with flowers. Capt. Perry was named after President Harrison, who died shortly before Perry was born. His brother-in-law, Capt. Charles Willis Wright, was another Wheeler captain.

William Voshell lives just outside of Choptank and is a lifelong farmer and local historian. His family are related to the Wrights, another prominent family in the area. He is brother to Rebecca Voshell (673-7642) of Choptank who first suggested contacting Mrs. Callis.

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Present are Mrs. Callis, Mr. Voshell, and Richard Dodds.

Dodds:

...Society about two days ago to see if they have it.

Callis:

I hope they do.

Dodds:

I'll find out, ya.

Callis:

But my grandfather was the Captain of the Minnie Wheeler and the Easton was built for him, but Captain Wheeler died, I think or he sold out. There were three lines that went up the Choptank River, the Wheeler Line, The Maryland Line, and oh dear what was the other one? However they, the Pennsylvania Railroad bought them all out, and they became the BC&A. I guess you knew all that. My grandfather was the Captain of the Minnie Wheeler, and his brother-in-law was Captain of the Choptank.

Voshell:

Your grandmother's brother was the Captain of the Choptank.

Callis:

I have a picture of him here, if you'd like to see it. Let me see.

Voshell:

Do you have that book you loaned me and I mailed back to you?

Callis:

Yes I do, and I was just looking for it. I can't see very well. It might be on the bottom. How do you see there, William? It might be on the bottom shelf over here.

Voshell:

I still got crab blood in me.

Callis:

I could see anything up to a few years ago, and then I got a cataract. Here Uncle Charles. Now lets see, the Choptank was a Wheeler boat, too.

Dodds:

This is Captain Charles W. Wright.

Voshell:

That's her grandmother's brother.

Dodds:
Right.

Callis:
I've been on the Minnie Wheeler many a time in the Choptank, too.

Dodds:
Is that right? I'll have to ask you about that later. This came out of ... what's the name of the book.

Callis:
Wye Ancestry.

Dodds:
Wye Ancestry, right.

Callis:
Uncle Charlie wrote this. He dug up all the Wrights. I thought that you might be interested in knowing, maybe you know when my grandfather was born February the 8th, 1841.

Dodds:
Now this is Captain Perry.

Callis:
Captain Perry.

Voshell:
And William Henry Harrison was elected in November 1840. And he died one month after he was inaugurated. So, they named a baby after the President.

Callis:
Now I guess that Grandpa was born before the President died because he was inaugurated in March, and died a month later.

Voshell:
He died a month later, back in April.

Callis:
He made such a long speech, standing out in the cold rain, that he caught pneumonia.

Dodds:
I didn't know that before. Now just getting back to you, now your birthday is this month, so when...

Callis:
I was born in 1900.

Dodds:
1900. In Choptank, or just outside it?

Callis:
No, I was born in Baltimore.

Dodds:
Baltimore.

Callis:
But my mother died when I was 3 years old, and my grandfather and grandmother lived on the Choptank River, in Choptank, or on a farm just outside of Choptank. They were my father's parents, so they took me and raised me.

Dodds:
So you're related to both the Perry side and the Wrights.

Callis:
My grandmother was a Wright.

Voshell:
Her grandmother was Willis's daughter.

Callis:
Willis Wright's daughter.

Voshell:
Born in 1825. She's Willis's great-granddaughter. Your great-grandfather was **Willis**.

Callis:
Ya.

Voshell:
Didn't uncle Emmett say that he planned the buildings there?

Callis:
Uncle Charlie, He's fancied himself as an architect, I think.

Voshell:
Well, Mr. **Willis** Wright built the house in Choptank...

Callis:
Uncle Charlie planned it.

Voshell:
Oh, Uncle Charlie was the planner?

Callis:

See they lived out in Poplar Neck. And then when my great-grandfather retired from farming, they went to Choptank. And I think they lived with mom for a while, while this house was building in Choptank, and then they moved to Choptank. And then when Grandpappy died, then Grandma came to live with us. He died in 1907, I think.

Voshell:

Your grandmother, what was her name? She was a Pachett.

Callis:

Ya, Margaret Pachett.

Voshell:

Well, your father came with his mother, Aunt Fannie, and Aunt Fannie's mother, you weren't along.

Callis:

That was my great-grandmother. I wasn't.

Voshell:

And his car. Now did his car come on the steamboat, too?

Callis:

Ya.

Voshell:

That's what I thought.

Callis:

It probably did.

Voshell:

And that next day until after dark, and when he cranked up, he had to light his lights with a match.

Callis:

Ya. Had a tank of acetylene gas or something like that. It was on the running board. That was along about 1906 or so.

Voshell:

What was your great-grandmother's name? Aunt Fannie's mother.

Callis:

Margaret.

Voshell:

Oh, ya, Margaret. It used to say on the church windows in Choptank...

Callis:
Oh?

Voshell:
... "Willis and Margaret Wright."

Callis:
Really? In Choptank? Which church? The Old Side?

Voshell:
They used to put the stain on the church windows, when I was a kid, and had different ones' names on them. But I do remember Mr. and Mrs. Willis Wright's name. Willis and Margaret Wright.

Dodds:
Well the Wrights were a big name, big family in the Choptank area, 'cause I was reading, we don't have the actual book, but we have a copy of the book memories of Choptank. That was done for the bicentennial, and they talk a lot about the Wrights in....

Callis:
My grandfather had a slew of brothers and they all lived there.

Voshell:
Where's your father's picture?

Callis:
Over there.

Voshell:
Which one?

Callis:
The first one on this side.

Voshell:
This is Harry... [?]

Callis:
... With a fez on.

Voshell:
With a cap on?

Callis:
Ya.

Voshell:
This is Harry Perry.

Callis:
Ya.

Voshell:
Hey, a good looking man. He shows Perry.

Callis:
Ya, he looks like a Perry.

Voshell:
Who are the other two?

Callis:
My husband. Those are Jim, my husband.

Voshell:
Both of them?

Callis:
Ya. All the other pictures are him.

Voshell:
Oh, ya, I see it now.

Dodds:
In that book there appeared that other picture of Captain Wright.

Callis:
Ya, that's when he was young. That's when he was Captain...

Dodds:
In his uniform.

Callis:
Ya.

Dodds:
Ya, nice picture.

Callis:
Ya, that's when he was the Captain of the Choptank, I guess.

Dodds:
He had a long handlebar mustache.

Callis:
Yes, he always had that.

Dodds:
Did he?

Callis:

Ya. He lived to be very old. Let's see, when did Charlie die?

Dodds:

He was the man who did that book on the Wright family.

Callis:

Ya. And this is his picture in here.

Dodds:

Ya. When he was a little bit older, obviously.

Callis:

After he retired from steamboating he was an inspector of hulls in Baltimore.

Dodds:

For the steamboats, of course.

Callis:

For all ships that came in. I guess that was a federal job, I don't know.

Dodds:

I think it was a federal job. You must remember your Grandfather fairly well.

Callis:

Very well. He died in the 1930s.

Voshell:

We remember them, don't we?

Callis:

He was 91, or something like that, wasn't he?

Voshell:

Something like that, ya.

Callis:

He died in 32 and he was born in 41, so that makes him 91, or something.

Voshell:

He was still courting. He bought some woman two new cars and a Jersey cow. That's when he died.

Dodds:

William was telling me a few stories on the way up in the car, and he was obviously quite a character, your Grandfather. He was a very

interesting man.

Voshell:

D'ya hear about the story? Uncle Emmett'd tell it over and over. Had a drunk on the boat. He was sitting on these bags of wheat piled up. And he had his knife, and he cut the bag, and the wheat ran out on deck. I forget who the Purser was. He started talking to him, and he cut at the Purser, and the Purser ran up to Uncle Henry. Uncle Henry comes down, he gets on him, and Uncle Emmett said that the fella cut uncle Henry's arm right through his uniform sleeve...

Callis:

I've never heard this story. It must have been a good...

Voshell:

So that old Captain went and got an oak 1 x 3 and whacked that fella right on the head with it. They say he fell on deck, trembling like a steer that'd been hit with an axe.

Callis:

Goodness me.

Voshell:

Mate said "Captain, you've killed him." Said "Need to kill him, cut a Captain." "Put him in the hold, shut the hatch."

Callis:

(laughing) Oh dear.

Voshell:

I think that Uncle Emmett said that he was on the boat at that time, and Uncle Henry was wrapping his cut.

Callis:

Oh, for goodness sake.

Voshell:

You never heard that one?

Callis:

Nope, I never did. William's Uncle Emmett was my grandfather's nephew.

Dodds:

Apparently he was quite a wild young man when he was growing up, this Emmett.

Callis:

Oh, Emmett? Ya.

Voshell:
Emmett was the greatest man we ever knew.

Callis:
Emmett, he had a failing, though. He bent his elbow.

Voshell:
He bent his what?

Callis:
He bent his elbow.

Voshell:
Oh. Oh, ya.

Dodds:
Drinking.

Voshell:
He drank enough whiskey to float a steamboat!

Dodds:
William was telling me about the time when Emmett was serving with your father on the steamboat.

Callis:
Oh, I never knew that.

Dodds:
And they had a little adventure going through the Delaware River Bridge. With your grandfather's fleet. I don't know if you want to tell the story again. It was a very funny story.

Voshell:
Uncle Emmett, you know, he told us a lot. After Aunt Eva died, and we bought the farm. He moved his trailer in there in with us, and, golly, we'd enjoy Uncle Emmett. He was a teenager. Aunt Fanny took him when he was 12.

Callis:
When his father died they took care of him.

Voshell:
No, no, his father died when Emmett was 2.

Callis:
But his mother died too, didn't she?

Voshell:
When she died, he was 5.

Callis:
Oh.

Voshell:
They go back to grandma Covey. When Emmett's 12, he goes down Aunt Fanny's; Down there farming on the horse farm. Well, Aunt Fanny buys him a runaway colt from the Harris's. They were Padgetts, too.

Callis:
Ya, Aunt Harriet was a Padgett too.

Voshell:
And old lady Harris had a runaway colt. So Aunt Fanny bought her cheap, and give her to Emmett to break. Pretty soon Emmett had her to a road cart and he drove her by the house, and Aunt Fanny come out. He hadn't had her hooked up before. Emmett said "horse' ll kill you." Emmett hollered back to Aunt Fanny "I'll break her." So, pretty soon they were driving. I think he was 16. Aunt Fanny tells the Captain to stop in Cambridge and buy Emmett a new carriage. So he had a new carriage. Then he gets with.... Who was the guy who worked for Aunt Fanny?

Callis:
Harry Hubbard?

Voshell:
No. Name another one. Lot of 'em. Will Goober. Will Goober in your and my day.

Callis:
Ya, and Harry Hubbard was in my day, but before that, I don't know.

Voshell:
Anyhow, he was Aunt Fanny's main farmer.

Callis:
I bet it was Harry Hubbard.

Voshell:
Maybe it was. But anyhow, Uncle Emmett, this guy goes to Jim Hubbard, the old guy that sold whiskey, and they get drunk.

Callis:
Uh oh.

Voshell:
Aunt Fannie and Georgie go to the camp Saturday afternoon. So, Emmett and the farmer do the milking. Soon as the women leave they milk, they get on the road cart, and go to Jim Hubbard's and buy a jug of whiskey. And by the time they get him Emmett couldn't make

it to the house. So they'd hauled straw in the compound. Dumped cartloads, a great pile of straw as big as this room. Well, Emmett couldn't make it to the house, so he falls in the pile of straw, and when he wakes up Sunday morning the sun is shining. There's Aunt Fanny and Georgie a-milking. They get a cow in the corner, put a rail across, and milked her. So, Emmett's on this pile of straw, so he's shamed of himself. He keeps pulling straw over himself. And the cow look at that like that. And the cow jumps like that. All the other cows run out, spill Aunt Fanny and Georgie's milk, and then they find Emmett.

Callis:

Guess mom's bark was worse than her bite.

Voshell:

Then Uncle Henry said that if Fan can't handle him, then he'd take him on the boat. Now, Uncle Emmett was only 21. He was there the day I was born. He was 21 the next week. So, papa had him down the well at the barn to clean the well out. Emmett was dipping the buckets, and the man'd pull it up and spill water back on him. They got the well clean, then went to dinner. I was born 11:00 in the morning. Emmett was supposed to be watching Wesley. Mother was afraid she was going to have one baby, the other one'd fall in a well and drown.

Callis:

Well Wesley's my age.

Voshell:

A couple of months younger. Mama told Granny "woman, get Emmett a drink of whiskey." She poured Emmett a shot of whiskey. Y' see he had to go change his wet clothes, put on clean clothes. So, anyhow, Aunt Fanny couldn't handle him, so Uncle Henry took him aboard the boat. Uncle Emmett told us this when he was living there this summer after Aunt Eva died. He got to be too much for the Captain, so he and the Captain had a row, up here by Cambridge or somewhere, coming up the river. So Uncle Emmett told Uncle Henry "When I get to Choptank, I'm going ashore." Old Captain "No, you can't do that, I'm your guardian. I'll just show you. I'll be on the gangplank" Said "I don't care where you are, I'm going ashore, if I have to jump overboard and swim ashore." So, the old Captain knew he was slicked. He got up past Secretary, and he said the old Captain came up to him, said "Emmett, if I let you steer, will you stay with me?" Emmett was smart. Ya, he'd let him in that pilot house, get ahold of that steering wheel.... So, then Emmett's tooting the whistle and there's the wire that led down to the engine room. Give it a little ring. Give the Engineer signals. So, he's telling the Engineer what to do and he's blowing the whistle. Uncle Henry got mad said "I told you, but I ain't gonna let you blow the whistle, and I ain't gonna let you tell the Engineer what to do." So,

They're coming down the river from Denton, or from Tuckahoe. And the Captain would shave then lay on his bunk and take a nap. And they come down. And when they get to Dover Bridge, Uncle Henry'd wake up and he'd blow the whistle for the man to open the draw, and ring the Engineer to cut the power off. Let her float through the draw. So, this day Uncle Henry overslept. Emmett's ahold of the wheel, and she's wide open. And of course he couldn't blow the whistle. He didn't want to. And he couldn't tell the Engineer to slow down, and he didn't want to. And the draw was open. The guy had opened the draw because he saw the boat coming. And he took his sights and he was going through that draw at full speed. He said he was doing pretty well. The river was fairly calm, but the stern of the boat snubbed the bridge. He said the Captain come out of that bunk like a hornet's nest 'been hit with a clod. Said they almost run over the railroad bridge before Uncle Henry could tell the Engineer to cut the power off.

Callis:

Wasn't the mate in the pilot house?

Voshell:

I don't know.

Callis:

There's be a first and second mate there.

Voshell:

But he did leave Uncle Henry, because he worked on an ocean liner.

Callis:

He did?

Voshell:

Ya. He said. And he worked the tugboats in New York Harbor.

Callis:

For goodness sake, I didn't know all that.

Voshell:

And he worked the street cars in Philadelphia. And he wasn't 21 until Lombard. And all that happened before, because 1904 Mother sold him her half of the farm. So Emmett was the hottest one I ever knew. What he couldn't do wasn't worth doing.

Callis:

Did he have 13 kids? I think he did.

Voshell:

Ya, Aunt Eva got 13. Maybe he got another one on the side. He was a nice man though Esther.

Callis:

Oh, ya, I was fond of Emmett.

Voshell:

He was honest and right. You know, I believe mother just about give him her half of the farm. 'Cause she and papa could go in there, and it'd be better than him under grandpa. She had half the farm, and it was paid for. But she wouldn't do it. She wanted Emmett to come home and get to own that farm. So when he come home, and he got 21 he wanted it, she must have let him have it real cheap. I do remember he'd come over, pay her money when he sold his tomatoes. That's after I can remember.

Callis:

He did pay her, then?

Voshell:

Ya, I'm sure he did. Anyhow, Aunt Eva died in Christmas week 1951. Being Emmett, he had a sale. He sold everything he had, and he drew the biggest crowd that Poplar Neck ever had. Until he had nothing to sell. There had been a house full of goods. Well Mom said, they said "I should have that, I want this, I want that," "Well look girls, I want you to have all of this, but a public sale is fair for everybody. Now, if you got something that mom intended you to have, then you just outbid your sister, and if she outbids you, don't be mad with her, be mad with yourself because you didn't put another bid on." Now that's sense talking. Alright. They up, sold everything in the house. And Leonard Colby, see he was cousin to us anyhow, he was good auctioneer, he makes the announcement "Ok now we're done with the household, were going to sell the tractor, the discs, the plow, one thing, another and then we're gonna sell the farm." And old Schnooks Blades was under the little shed where the well was, 'cause Charles had dug a brick well. And there was a little dairy house there, and there was a shed over that well. Schnook's standing under that. Lloyd Cannon was Across the road with me on the wood pile. And old Schnooks hollers at me, he says, man made Preston Trucking, and their payroll is better than 2 million a week.

Dodds:

Ya, big company.

Voshell:

He's a man that made it. So He's hollering across at me "Hey Bill, Said he's gonna sell the farm. You know, you got that in your pocket now." Old Cannon turned around and walked home. He wasn't a bidder. So then they got ready to sell the farm. There is two or three bidders well, we were gonna buy it, no matter what it costs. And Leonard couldn't git' em but 8, 000. They wanted 10. It was worth 10. They wanted 10. He hoped for 12, because he had Cannon and me

bidding against one another, But Cannon didn't bid it. I don't know what Cannon's so dumb for, but he went home, course he'd made us pay more for it, but I wasn't gonna miss Charles's farm. And old Leonard he hollers around "8,000...8,000," boy he couldn't get anybody to say a word. Uncle Emmett's standing there. He was sober. Under the drips of the barn, you know, a little rain, had his corduroy coat over him. Didn't have his arms in the sleeves. You know Emmett. He expected Emmett to say "No sale." And Emmett leans over, spits tobacco, drips coming down, splattering on his toes, said "Who's bidding, William?" "Yup." "Let him have it."

Callis:
Meaning you.

Voshell:
I call that an honest man. I wish I'd given him another \$2,000.

Call is:
Last time I saw Emmett, I stopped in, I guess it must have been back in the 40s. When did he move to my grandfather's farm?

Voshell:
1926.

Callis:
1926 he moved to ...

Voshell:
The twins were born in 1925, March, and Jimmy was born down there in '27, July.

Callis:
While he lived on our farm he still had his.

Voshell:
Ya.

Callis:
So he kept his 'till after Eva died.

Voshell:
When she died, Emmett solded it. You know, Emmett was either up 't the top or on the bottom.

Callis:
Well, where did he go after she died? Did he sell our farm, too?

Voshell:
No. He sold that before.

Callis:

The last time I saw him, he was sitting on.... I'd stopped in at Fred and Murray's. That must have been in the 40's, because it was while I was over in Queen Anne. And he was sitting on the edge of the porch.

Voshell:

You and Gene stopped in there?

Callis:

No, It was while I was living over in Caroline, over in Queen Anne's. Gene wasn't there. I had a house guest, and we stopped in to see Fred and Marie. Emmett was there. He was setting on the edge of the porch. Where did he live after he sold all of these properties? Where did he live after he sold all of his properties? When did he die? When did Emmett die?

Voshell:

54.

Callis:

So, he didn't live very long?

Voshell:

Sold his farm in 52, and he died in 54.

Callis:

Where'd he live after he sold all his....

Voshell:

Oh, Well he come to our house. Then he found out he had diabetes. He wanted Rebecca to give him his shots. She said "you got 4 daughters, go to one of them. She ran him off. That hurt his feelings. So, he left.

Callis:

Aw.

Voshell:

So he went over to Marie's; pulled his trailer over into the backyard.

Callis:

I didn't know what became of him.

Voshell:

But he left Aunt Eva once you know. Went to Dr. Lemon. He lived upstairs in the chicken house in a paid room. I bet a thousand times he wished he hadn't gone there, but he's too stubborn to go back. Old Lemon was a hard one, too. Francis came home from the

army. And every time she got a dollar, Francis'd take it away from her. So he quit giving her money. He goes over to Lemon's to tend to his chickens. Of course Aunt Eva still made him give her money. But he was a pretty good guy.

Callis:

What's that, a marker?

Dodds:

This is just a copy of the front of the book that was written on Choptank. How long did you live in Choptank?

Callis:

I lived there eight years, and then....

Voshell:

She lived on a farm. I'll show it to you.

Callis:

My father never remarried after my mother died. He remained in Baltimore. He was in business there. When I was about 11, he felt that I should go to a city school, and that sort of thing. So, he bought a house in a suburb of Baltimore, and we all moved to Baltimore, including my great grandmother. She was still living. Ya, she didn't die until 1922. My grandfather and grandmother, and my great-grandmother, and me. We all moved in with my father.

Dodds:

Is that right?

Callis:

Well, he lived alone in an apartment.

Dodds:

Quite a change from Choptank and Baltimore.

Voshell:

I think Dorthy Dooland came to school in 1912.

Callis:

And the Doolands rented our farm.

Voshell:

I think Dorothy started school in 1912.

Callis:

Somewhere along there.

Voshell:

I think she was the only one going to school.

Callis:
No, Dorothy wasn't the only one.

Voshell:
She's younger than I am.

Callis:
She went to Poplar Neck.

Voshell:
Oh she did?

Callis:
Dorothy, and what was the other one's name? Oh, well. Anyway....

Voshell:
Virginia? No. She had a sister Virginia.

Callis:
Well, Dorothy was along my age, William.

Voshell:
Is who older than I am?

Callis:
Ya, we went to Poplar Neck. One room schoolhouse, out on the county road. (laughs) I loved it. I learned more there than I did in the city schools.

Voshell:
That's where mother learned to write. That's mother's hand writing.

Callis:
She went to Poplar Neck schools, too.

Voshell:
"Miss Judy Kelly." Look at that. That's good handwriting.

Callis:
Miss Ella Harrison was there when I was there.

Voshell:
Miss Ella Harrison was your teacher?

Callis:
Ya.

Voshell:
Well, you had a good teacher.

Callis:
I sure did.

Voshell:
Better than you got in Choptank.

Callis:
I went to Choptank schools. We lived between the two schools. Choptank was a two-room schoolhouse, thank you. And the Voshell's all went to that school. I went to Poplar Neck. Well, they thought that maybe I'd better go to Choptank. So, I was transferred to Choptank. I hated it. I wanted to go back to Poplar Neck.

Voshell:
You quit and went back.

Callis:
I did. I only stayed two weeks.

Voshell:
First time I went to school was September 6, 1909. And you were going to school there. Then you quit.

Callis:
Ya, I guess that's about the time I did that.

Voshell:
Mildred Fluharty was there too. You remember her?

Callis:
I don't remember. **Miss** Gosalee. Goslee, or something like that, was the teacher. She was one of our teachers.

Voshell:
Miss Gilette was our teacher.

Callis:
Gilette was one, ya. Goslee was the other. I didn't like either one of them. I don't remember you being there, but Wesley.

Voshell:
You were only there a few weeks, and then you went back.

Dodds:
I was in Choptank, about a week and a half ago. I spoke to Estelle Wright.

Callis:
Oh, Mercy. She's still living?

Dodds::
She's 97 years old.

Callis:
She's in this book. 97.

Dodds:
She is still living in the house.

Voshell:
When's her birthday?

Dodds:
I don't know.

Callis:
I'll tell you in a minute if you want to know.

Dodds: .
Ya, she had a fall not too long ago, and they had a nurse in with her, keeping an eye on her. I think they were trying to talk her into a nursing home, but she doesn't want to move. She told me about the school. The Choptank school, the Daniels school..

Voshell:
And she's 97.

Dodds::
97. She's been living in that house for 95 years.

Voshell:
I don't think she was born there. Did she say that she was?

Dodds:
No, She's lived there all but two years in that house.

Callis:
Was she Jimmy's daughter or Walter's?

Voshell:
Jimmy's. There was Nelly, Stell, and Myra. Then Walter had 5 daughters

Callis:
Mary...

Voshell:
Mary, Louise, Dot, Anna. And Anna's still living.

Callis:

Anna is. How 'bout Mary?

Voshell:
Mary's still living.

Callis:
She was living in Salisbury, the last thing I heard of her.

Dodds:
I guess Miss Wright would have been born in 1890. She's 97 now. She was telling me that she rode on the Minnie Wheeler many times.

Callis:
Sure she did.

Dodds:
You mentioned that you were also on board her do you ... how well do you remember that boat? Do you remember what the inside looked like?

Callis:
The typical steamboat is all I can say.

Dodds:
Ya. Did you travel in and out of Baltimore?

Callis:
Oh, yes.

Dodds:
Ya.

Callis:
See, those boats stopped running when I was quite young, so.

Dodds:
Ya.

Callis:
So, I don't have a very vivid memory of them. Because I think they came up the river maybe a couple times a week maybe. The BC&A bought them out. They didn't run very long after they did. I remember the Choptank, and the Minnie Wheeler.

Dodds:
Then you were obviously were on board when your grandfather was the Captain.

Callis:
Yes. I was never on it after my grandfather...

Dodds:
Left. Yes.

Callis:
And then he sort of retired around that time. But he did work in the summer, because from Claiborne to Baltimore the Cambridge was the boat that.... People took the train, and went to Claiborne get on the boat, and went to Baltimore. You did that all in one day, instead of overnight like you did in the riverboats. And then my grandfather was Captain of, they had two boats that they ran in the summertime when there was heavy traffic to Ocean City, you see.

Dodds:
Sort of a relief Captain.

Callis:
He was ... well the two boats ran every day, and he was the Captain.... What was that boat's name? My age is catching up with me.

Dodds:
Cambridge and the Tred Avon was it?

Callis:
Yes, the Tred Avon. He was Captain of that. And Captain.... Who was the Captain of the Cambridge? I used to know.

Voshell:
Willie Perry got to be a Captain.

Callis:
Yes he did. He was First Mate of the Cambridge.

Voshell:
He was a handsome young man.

Callis:
Yes he was. With that black curly hair, mmmm.

Dodds:
Well if you were sailing on the Minnie Wheeler when your grandfather, you must have gotten a little special treatment, I suppose.

Callis:
Sure, I got the pilot house.

Dodds:
You got the pilot house? You got the tour? They let you steer her?

Callis:
No.

Voshell:
Well, Aunt Fanny often went and took a trip.

Callis:
Oh we used to go to Baltimore, because, you see, my father used to live there. And we'd go up maybe once a month or something like that. And then there were two other boats, bigger boats, that came up the river. They alternated. The Cambridge, no, the Joppa, and the Avalon. And then they scrapped them, and built the Dorchester, and the Talbot. And they couldn't get them through the Dover Bridge. They were too big for the Dover Bridge.

Dodds:
Sounds like it was a really busy place at one time.

Callis:
So then, instead of going all the way to Denton, they ended their trip in Choptank, well, Windy Hill really. They'd lay there, and turn around, and go back.

Dodds:
One thing that people often remember about the steamboats is the good food they served on them.

Callis:
They did.

Voshell:
Is this Kenner's Esther?

Callis:
Ya.

Dodds:
Do you remember much about the cargos taken on board or taken off at Choptank?

Callis:
Oh yes, whatever was being shipped.

Dodds:
Wheat? Cattle?

Callis:
Calves mainly.

Voshell:

Do you have any other pictures of your father?

Callis:
Oh dear.

Voshell:
I never saw much of Willie Perry, but he wasn't as good as Emmitt.

Callis:
Look, William, see that big book on that box? The big black book?
The one right on the box.

Voshell:
He was the great Harry Perry.

Callis:
I suspect that they're dusty.

Voshell:
There's Kennersly. I enjoyed our trip there. You know that Wesley
and I stopped in there one Sunday?

Callis:
Yes, I bet he did.

Voshell:
He showed us William's shotgun. You got it?

Callis:
No.

Voshell:
Sold it?

Callis:
No.

Voshell:
Lost it?

Callis:
No. One of my nieces, Of whom I'm very fond, Gene's Niece really.

Voshell:
Still got it?

Callis:
He has it. And he comes down.... He lives over near Annapolis. And
he comes down here near Church Creek, I think, to go goose hunting

every year. Before you said anything to me about the gun, I told him that he could have it. So, when I broke up, I had to give it to him, because I'd promised it to him. I keep promises. And I was sorry afterwards. He come down to see me a couple weeks ago, and I asked him about the gun. He said he took it all apart, and cleaned it, it was rusty....

Voshell:

Didn't it have some gold on it, or some brass?

Callis:

Brass. It was an english gun. An English trading vessel came up the Choptank, and Uncle Richard who was my Grandfather's Uncle, was going to California in 1849, to the Gold Rush, and he gave the gun to my Grandfather, and that's how come I had it.

Dodds:

Been around a while.

Callis:

It was a single-barrel....

Voshell:

Richard was Ellis Perry's father. Nat Blade's wife. Wasn't he? Was that the Richard you were talking about? Mother called him Uncle Rich?

Callis:

No, no. Uncle Richard, no, he wasn't married. He went to California, and.... His daughter came after the earthquake.

Voshell:

And he left a gun.

Callis:

No, my Grandfather had the gun then. He gave the gun to my grandfather when he started out in 1849 to go to California. After the San Francisco Earthquake, one of his daughters came to visit. Cousin....

Voshell:

Your Grandmother brought her over to our house.

Callis:

I guess she did. The earthquake was 1907, and I guess.... Her name will come to me. I'm sorry, names escape me, and then they will pop in when I am least thinking about them. Well, anyway, she came to visit about 1908, I guess. She told hair-raising stories of the San Francisco Earthquake.

Dodds:
I'd imagine.

Callis:
That's one of Gene's nieces.

Voshell:
Who's the pretty girl?

Callis:
That's one of Gene's nieces.

Voshell:
Oh, one of Gene's nieces.

Callis:
Yes. When she was a bride. She's a Grandmother now. And that's the other niece.

Voshell:
They're sisters.

Interruption in Tape

Callis:
Did you hear me William?

Voshell:
Ya. I thought he said that the sailboat was up in Marsh Creek. Wes Seeney was on it. Wes Seeney were gonna go up the Choptank.

Callis:
I don't think that boat could get up Marsh Creek.

Voshell:
Oh, maybe. Gosh, no, because they had to pole out those creeks. They couldn't sail.

Callis:
The creek wasn't much wider than this creek, so I don't think they....

Dodds:
So he just dropped everything and left?

Voshell:
Ya, and at 14 years old. What'd his family do?

Callis:
They didn't know where he was.

Dodds:
They must have been worried for a long time.

Callis:
Sure.

Voshell:
They must have known where he went because he went with Wes Seeney. And Wes Seeney was on the Minnie wheeler with him.

Callis:
Carmine. Captain Carmine. You ever heard of him?

Dodds:
Ya.

Voshell:
Ya.

Callis:
Well, Captain Carmines mother was, I think, my grandfather's Aunt. I don't know. It involved a relationship there somewhere. I know he was a cousin of my grandfather.

Dodds:
I've just been writing to the descendants of the Carmine family in California.

Callis:
They're in California now?

Dodds:
Ya. Some of them are anyway. Trying to remember the last name.

Callis:
Benson?

Dodds:
No. Its not Benson, although I do correspond with a Benson.

Callis:
Edward and Crayton?

Dodds:
No. I can't remember the name now. Its a married name. They came to the museum several years ago, because we have a plaque in the museum to...

Callis:

'Course I suppose that there are many younger ones than I am. So, I knew Edward and Crayton.

Dodds:

They were interested in Crayton. In fact, Crayton was the Coast Guard Admiral.

Callis:

That was their Uncle.

Dodds:

Ya.

Callis:

That was Emiline Benson's brother.

Dodds:

He was the one that interested them, because we have a plaque to him. He was a good friend of the museum in the early years. And apparently we had one letter wrong in the plaque, so we had to re-cast the whole plaque. It cost us about \$250.00 to have that done. But anyway, that was the way I got to meet them. I brought my camera with me. Mind if I take a picture of your Grandfather? Because this is the original picture that was used, wasn't it? For the a....

Callis:

Steamboat books.

Dodds:

Ya.

Voshell:

We got a picture of him with his white mustache.

Callis:

Ya, I have one, too, but I don't know where it is. It's in that box, no doubt. See that box over there? that is full of pictures of everybody.

Dodds:

This wooden box?

Callis:

Yes.

Dodds:

This is a nice picture of him. I like that. But I think there's enough light in here to make it.

Voshell:

Olive Deneau drew that. See she got all of Willie. You can't see it. That's Sally Perry's, or maybe Tom Deneau's daughter.

Callis:

Tom Deneau. Is he around my age?

Voshell:

He married Bill Ed Perry's daughter.

Callis:

Who's Bill Ed Perry?

Voshell:

He's cousin to William. Cousin to Uncle Henry, and Charles Wesley. David. Bill Ed went to the army with our Grandfather. Our grandfather was Charles Wesley.

Callis:

Charles Wesley was our Grandfather, I know that.

Voshell:

He was 17 in September, and he went to join Abe's army in October. Bill Ed went with him. This is Bill Ed's granddaughter that drew that boat. She lives in Choptank. I thought you knew that. You know Miles Deneau?

Callis:

Certainly I know Miles Deneau.

Voshell:

Well, that's Miles's sister.

Callis:

Oh.

Voshell:

Drew that boat.

Callis:

Miles sister?

Voshell:

Ya.

Callis:

That would make her around my age.

Voshell:

No, she's about Rebecca's age.

Callis:
Well, same generation.

Voshell:
Ya. Same generation.

Callis:
He and Tom, Miles Deneau, and.... What was his brother's name?

Voshell:
Lee. Lee died of tuberculosis.

Callis:
Lee.

Voshell:
They went to Poplar Neck school with you.

Callis:
Sure they did. And there were two Coveys, Jim Covey's boys, that went to school with me.

Voshell:
Lee and Nelson.

Callis:
Nelson. Yes.

Voshell:
Nelson's still living. He's mother's first cousin. But he's not as good as we Perrys, so.... I think he's on the lift a little.

Callis:
On the lift?

Voshell:
He's around Perry's age, Or he's between Perry and me.

Callis:
Ya, I guess he is. I know he went to school when I did.

Voshell:
Nelson did? Oh ya.

Callis:
And Fred. Wasn't there a Fred?

Voshell:
Fred who?

Callis:
Fred Covey.

Voshell:
Covey?

Callis:
Ya.

Voshell:
Gray

Callis:
Gray, and Lee. They're the ones. There were two of them I know.

Voshell:
Lee was a year younger than Wesley, and I think Nelson was a year younger than I am. Gray was a year younger than Perry.

Callis:
I know they went to school when I did. Lee and Perry. Lee and Gray.

Voshell:
I guess that Elizabeth Sanders got that old Wright Bible.

Callis:
I don't know the Wrights.

End of Side One

Voshell:
Our Grandfathers were cousins.

Callis:
Ya.

Voshell:
Your Grandfather, our Grandfather, and Olive's Grandfather.

Callis:
Now wait a minute. Which Willy did she marry? Art Willy?

Voshell:
No. That's a Willy bunch that came up from Cambridge.

Callis:
Well, the Willys, Monroe Willy, Art Willy's mother, she was a Wright.

Voshell:
She was a Wright.

Callis:
She's Uncle John's daughter.

Voshell:
She was John's daughter. Ya.

Callis:
John Wright. Lived in Choptank.

Dodds:
How often did your Grandfather get home when he was working on the boats?

Callis:
Well, he'd get home.... If he came up the Choptank River, we'd go down to the wharf to see him.

Voshell:
He'd probably walk on up home while the boat was tying up.

Callis:
Ya. But, when he was on the Tred Avon, of course, he didn't get home as often. He'd get, I think, every other weekend. I don't know exactly. He was home all the time in the winter. It was only in the summer that he was on that boat, and sometimes during harvesting season, peached, and potatoes, and things like that. He'd take a boat and go down to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and haul them.

Dodds:
Wearing his Captain uniform when....

Callis:
Oh, sure.

Dodds:
Must have been pretty impressive, I'd imagine.

Callis:
Ya (laughs).

Dodds:
Especially to young people.

Callis:
I used to love it. Y' see, my great grandmother used to live with us, and she had two sons, Uncle Charlie and Uncle Joe. Well, Uncle Joe was a mariner, too, in a way. He was an Engineer on the

Merchants and Miners Line boats.

Dodds:

Ya. Steamboats.

Callis:

He used to go to Boston, I think. Once in a while Uncle Charlie and Uncle Joe would come down to see their mother, and if my Grandfather was home, and my father happened to be there, 0000000, they'd gather around the sitting room stove in the winter, and tell these yarns, and I would sit back in a corner so they wouldn't see me and send me to bed (laughter).

Dodds:

Must have been fascinating for you.

Callis:

It was. Oh, my Grandfather told me a story, he used to tell me sea stories. He'd go up to put me to bed, and he used to tell me stories until I'd go to sleep. He told me one, about one time there was a hurricane or something, and the top of the mast broke, and they sent him up with an axe to chop it down, or something or the other, and the boat reeled over, and the axe fell overboard, but he fell on deck. So I don't know whether that was....

Dodds:

He must have had....

Callis:

He may have had an imagination.

Dodds:

Oh, I don't know. He did travel quite a bit to become seasoned, when he was young. Before he came back again.

Callis:

Well, he went to South America with Captain Carmine. I think he worked his way up to First Mate, or something like that.

Dodds:

Oh. Did he sail with Captain Carmine then?

Callis:

Ya.

Dodds:

Ok.

Callis:

Ya. It was his ship that he ran away to.

Dodds:

I've seen a picture of Captain Carmine's ship. This one was called the Nellie. I don't know if that name rings any bells.

Callis:

No, it doesn't. A sailing ship?

Dodds:

A sailing ship. She was built before the Civil War, so she may be long gone by then.

Callis:

Well, it was before the Civil War that.... He was over 14.... He was born in 41, that would make it 50 something or the other.

Well, ya, he might have sailed on that. We have a picture of Captain Carmine's ship.

Callis:

That's interesting.

Dodds:

Ya, That's from a painting. The people I spoke to you about were descendants, who live out in California, have a painting of this ship, and underneath is Captain Carmine's name, and the name of the ship.

Callis:

Well, Eveline Benson, she was Eveline Carmine, and she married a Benson, and after he died, she married a Wright.

Voshell:

Washington Wright.

Callis:

Washington Wright. And she had a son, and his name was Benjamin. So, I don't know what's become of him. He was much younger than me. But the Benson boys were around my age. And they were a couple of ... whatever. They were ornery kids in school, and they were really ornery.

Dodds:

Ya, that's a nice picture. Your Grandfather was kind of a stocky man.

Callis:

Yes.

Dodds:

Big in the shoulders, ya.

Callis:

He wasn't a huge man. He wasn't tall.

Dodds:

I hear he had a reputation for keeping the crew in line.

Callis:

I think he did.

Dodds:

He didn't take any nonsense.

Callis:

No.

Dodds:

Can you think of anything else that might be of help? I hope, one day, to write an article, or a little booklet, on the Wheeler Line, and your Grandfather will play a big part of that, because he was probably the most well known Wheeler Line Captain. Do you want me to put that back?

Callis:

Yes. I have something else that might interest you.

Dodds:

I'll move this stool out of the way.

Callis:

'Course, I'm looking for it, and I won't be able to find it.

Interruption in Tape

Callis:

I hadn't heard that story.

Voshell:

It was in the bootlegging days.

Callis:

No, it wasn't.

Voshell:

We asked about him being a soldier, or navy man, and he says "No, I was bootleggin'."

Callis:

Eastern Shore was dry then. That local option.

Voshell:

He was shipping, he was on sailboats then, and he said that he did go to the Gulf of Mexico, 'round New Orleans, and they were hauling out whiskey, maybe by the barrels.

Callis:

I don't know what they did with it, however, what he did do was; during the war he ran prisoners.

Voshell:

No doubt. I don't remember him telling that.

Callis:

Prisoners to a prison for ... you know.... I think it was somewhere around Norfolk, Down in Virginia. I'm not sure just where. Libby Prison?

Dodds:

Libby Prison is in Richmond.

Callis:

Libby Prison.

Dodds:

The big Confederate prison.

Callis:

Then that's where he was. He was hauling prisoners.

Voshell:

They'd probably chain 'em in the hold.

Callis:

I guess so. I don't know. And I guess they were Yankee prisoners that he was hauling.

Dodds:

Yankee prisoners. They said he must have had an interesting life in the early years. Quite a character. Very nice.

Voshell:

Can I take another good look at.... Oh, he's a grown man here.

Callis:

Oh, yes. He was not a boy.

Dodds:

I'd say in his early 20s. Could take care of himself by then.

Callis:

Its probably dusty. I don't know what ever happened to the other side of this.

Dodds:

Ya, they often lose them.

Voshell:

That's one of the oldest, Esther, one of the oldest I ever saw.

Dodds:

Probably is. That dates before the Civil War.

Callis:

That's well over a hundred years old, that's for sure.

Dodds:

Ya. Well, as I said, one day I hope to do a little article, or write something on the history of the Wheeler Line.

Voshell:

Well I got this out of a book that you....

Callis:

Well that was a book I let you have....

Voshell:

And I mailed it back to you.

Callis:

Ya, I have the book, and I can't find it.

Voshell:

Have to come back and see you again, Esther.

Callis:

Ya.

Voshell:

I got this out of your book, and I mailed the book back to you. You were living in Philadelphia.

Callis:

Is that Captain Wheeler? That's Uncle Charlie.

Voshell:

Ya.

Dodds:

That was out of Steamboating Days, Wasn't it?

Callis:

Ya. Man in Easton wrote that. What was his name? Wrightson or something?

Voshell:

One thing has got on my mind the last few years. How in the mischief did all those buildings get built on that farm? Even the privy was lathed and plastered.

Callis:

It was, and it had two windows in it.

Voshell:

Who put all those buildings up?

Callis:

Grandpa had them done.

Voshell:

I thought the farm was Uncle Henry's and Aunt Fanny's.

Callis:

It was.

Voshell:

Well, did they borrow money?

Callis:

I don't know where they got the money, and I'm not asking.

Voshell:

I don't know, but that was a great place. They had an eagle out over the porch thing.

Callis:

Ya.

Voshell:

That porch was built, and that eagle, all the steamboats then had an eagle on the pilothouse, and this was an old boat that had been...

Dodds:

Broken up.

Callis:

Torn apart, or whatever they did with the old ones, and he got that eagle. I forgot what the name of the boat was. I did know.

Dodds:

Is the eagle still on the house?

Voshell:

No, it got knocked down, but we have the....

Callis:

See, William lives near there. The last time I saw it was when you took us around there, when they had the centennial in Choptank. That was '76.

Voshell:

Boy I'm sad that Margaret Wright died.

Callis:

Ya.

Voshell:

I'd heard about her all my life, but only two days did I know her.

Callis:

She was quite a gal.

Voshell:

She was great.

Dodds:

It must have been nice growing up in that house in Choptank, I'd imagine.

Voshell:

We have a picture of the weathervane.

Callis:

There's a picture of it in there. You want to get that box out? I think its on top. I hope.

Dodds:

That's ok. The house is still standing.

Callis:

The house in Choptank is still there. Its a nice little house. Its right on the river. It's lovely. Its where my great-grandparents lived. And my Grandfather's place is a mile out of Choptank, and that house is still there.

Dodds:

It had a name to it, didn't it?

Callis:

Perry House.

Voshell:

There was a weathervane on the barn with the name on it. I got that.

Callis:

Was it? I didn't know that.

Voshell:

Weathervane on the barn.

Callis:

With Perry on it? I didn't know that. Maybe I couldn't read that.

Voshell:

It is pretty well shot, but its still got Perry. That must have been the barn. It certainly wasn't on the house.

Callis:

Ya, it was on the barn.

Voshell:

Then there was a wooden water tank, windmill to pump water up to the top of the barn loft, and they had running water in the house.

Callis:

I guess that we were the first house in the county that had running water in the bathroom.

Dodds:

Really?

Voshell:

Papa built the second one in 1914. And they were so poor all their lives that I never passed out of the 7th grade.

Callis:

We had that big wooden tank in the barn. We had an artesian well that was 400 feet deep, I think, and we had a pump in the kitchen, and we also had a windmill that pumped the water up.

Voshell:

Uncle Henry put up a tile silo there, and the damn buggers that bought it bulldozed it down. See, an old tile silo, that's really a landmark. If i had a tile silo, I'd never tear it down.

Callis:

Wasn't everything gone when we passed there 10 years ago, 11 years ago? Seems to me there wasn't anything left but the house. We didn't go up there. You asked if we wanted to go up, but the yard was full of cars....

Voshell:

It makes me sad to go by there.

Callis:

The yard was full of cars, and I said that I'd love to go, but it looked as though they had company, and you know...

Dodds:

Ya.

Callis:

...intrude, so....

Voshell:

Grandpa's place, its been raped robbed and murdered.

Callis:

You took us up there that Sunday that we were down, and the house was falling down.

Voshell:

Ya.

Callis:

And I was horrified that you'd let it fall down.

Voshell:

It's not ours. We never owned it.

Callis:

Uncle Charles's place? You owned the place.

Voshell:

You mean our farm. I took you and Peggy up there.

Callis:

Ya. And the house was falling down, and I was horrified that you'd let it fall down.

Voshell:

I've got a picture of that house, and I want olive to re-do it. I'm going to put Olive work, I've got some work for her.

Callis:

Uncle Dave's house. Now that burned down. How'd that catch fire?

Voshell:

Roland Blades rented it for his southern colored people, and they were burning brush in the front yard, and a spark fell on the shingles, and they called the fire company, and they got it out....

I don't know where that picture is. I got some made. But Olive can do that. 'Course you aren't going to get Olive to do things perfect, but that's not bad. That girl's Grandfather and our Grandfather were cousins. He was a Perry.

Interruption in Tape. Interview Resumes In a Moving Automobile.

Voshell:

This is back in the 20s. My younger brother and I were probably 20, and them in their late teens, and we'd get our fertilizer in the fall, that we'd put on when we sowed wheat. So this year the fertilizer come, and they were shipping it on a sailboat. The sailboat ties up at the steamboat wharf. I don't know whether they had any deal with them or not. But they winched the fertilizer up, and let on our wagon. We backed a two-horse wagon out to the end of the wharf. So we were going down after a load, and the steamboat was tied at the wharf at the end of Main Street, taking on canned goods, tomatoes. Their schooner was tied at the other wharf, the farmers getting fertilizer. So, we come along. Steamboat's tied up at the Main Street, or the Tanning House Wharf, and the schooner on the other wharf. I don't know if the schooner had a deal with the steamboat company or not. Anyhow, Captain Cochrane, Russel Cochrane was Captain there. That was the last of the steamboat days in the early 20s. So, he comes around the other wharf and he tells the captain of the schooner that he'd be an hour or so loading canned goods. Then he give him a toot, and then he's to drop out in the stream, let him use the wharf. That old Captain Perry, he wouldn't toot anything. He'd run the steamboat in there and sunk the steamer. They might have had an agreement that the sailboat was to tie up to their wharf. The sailboat was hauling fertilizer cheaper than the steamboat company, evidently, or he wouldn't have, the sailboat wouldn't have been there.

Dodds:

It is hard to believe that there were three wharves there at Choptank.

Voshell:

There were three wharves there in Wheeler's day, but now there are When Wheeler quit they only had two wharves. There were only two wharves in my day. I can't remember the third wharf. I know Phil Adams printing the Minnie Wheeler running in '38. He must have been asleep.

End of Tape