

INTERVIEW LOG

Oral History #60

Interviewee: John G. Earle

Interviewer: Richard Dodds

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Location: Unknown

Topic: History of shipbuilding in the St. Michaels area
and information on the builders, mainly in the 19th century.
The Chesapeake log canoe.

Comments:

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START SIDE A

Richard Dodds: ...and I do have some questions, but why don't we just continue on with what you're talking about with Thomas Kirby and Son. Do you know when they went out of business, John? I haven't seen a date.

John G. Earle: I can't put a real date on that. Somebody else undertook to operate the yard just as a repair yard and it was in the twenties. I was in college then so I may be able to find that in Lowndes Johnson's diary.

RD: I was just curious...I could probably find out from the land records, too, maybe. I think Thomas Kirby died in 1925.

JGE: Oh no, I think he died earlier than that.

RD: You think it was earlier than that?

JGE: I think he died in 1915.

RD: Okay. And he had the two sons John and William.

JGE: Johnny and Billy. I think Johnny was the grandson.

RD: The mold loft that they had down on the yard John...I have been told as you go down the lane it was on the left hand side where that big shed is now.

JGE: Yes, yes.

RD: Sort of a small building with a porch on the front.

JGE: I don't remember any porch, but it was fairly long and narrow. It might not have been as long as some of those schooners, but the loftsmen had a system of overlapping the lines and that may have been what they did. If they had a set of lines that was too long for that mold loft...

RD: You said the floor was pretty weighty by the time (unintelligible--both voices at once.)

JGE: Well, yes, but I doubt that it was like that. You see the last vessel that they built was a steam barge called the *Emma K. Reed* and she was built in 1901, so I was just an infant at that time (laughter).

RD: A little bit before your time.

JGE: A little bit before my time. What I'm getting at is the interval between the time they last had laid a vessel down there would have been sometime in 1900 or 1901 and the time that I saw it was probably 1920. Well there was 20 years and I think the building hadn't had any repair and it was just going to rot.

RD: What other buildings were there from the yard that were still left when you went there, John? Do you remember?

JGE: Mainly the shed over the marine railway mechanism and you've been told that they had a horse there.

RD: One horsepower?

JGE: Well, they all did that in those days. You had nothing but muscle power. Oh well, of course, by 1900 they had steam powered boats. It was only some big railway maybe at Sharptown or something like that that used that. Only, of course, in Baltimore. And, I don't even know when they started steam power. I suppose they used horses too at one time.

RD: I understand, too, that they didn't use any power tools in Kirby's yard.

JGE: Oh, no. There weren't any power tools then. In the steel shipyards building steel vessels, they had air tools and my first job away from home was in the summer of 1917 and I had a friend that was my sister, Clara's friend, and he was with the DuPont Company in Wilmington and he knew the superintendent in Pusey and Jones Yard and I spent half of my time out in the yard as a ship fitter's helper and then I went up into the mold loft and that was my first experience in the mold loft. They had a beautiful mold loft, but oh gosh, was it hot. It was a modern steel and glass building, but they had no air conditioning. They had to just open these windows and let the breeze flow through if there was any breeze on some of those hot days in July and August where there was no breeze and it was hot. But, they had...I was always interested in the number of half models. They had built a lot of yachts and

I wondered and wondered where those models went when the yard was sold. They finally got out of shipping. I went down there later in the 1930s representing an engine builder that was supplying two diesel engines for a tanker. In fact, it was the second tanker of that same design and the same power plant, but that was before I went to work for those people. But, I think I got around there at that time including up in...I must have asked somebody, because I had no official business up there.

RD: You're going to be interested to know we've tracked down the old sign from Thomas Kirby—the yard sign from Thomas Kirby.

JGE: Oh have you?

RD: It's over in a restaurant and hotel on the western shore, strangely enough. It's got a half model as part of the sign.

JGE: Yes.

RD: And then it's got you know...(unintelligible).

JGE: Oh, I'd like to see that.

RD: And St. Michaels, Maryland at the bottom. It's quite a nice sign, but we haven't had any luck so far getting the owner of the restaurant to consider donating it.

JGE: Oh, you haven't pried him loose.

RD: No. I've gone up and taken some photographs of it. I'll show you if you come down.

JGE: Is he holding it for big price or something?

RD: No, he just hasn't responded to our letter, but we're going to write to him again.

JGE: How far away on the western shore is it?

RD: It's at College Park. Not a Ramada Inn...one of these big chains out there that has a restaurant and it has a lot of nautical themes. Somehow, they got this sign. But at least we know where it is, anyway.

JGE: Yeah, well, that's a help. I hope the place doesn't burn down.

RD: John, I'm just going to go through some of the more recent builders and then go back to the early builders, but some of the canoe builders I know very little about, do you know anything about Sam Blades?

JGE: Yes. Sam Blades worked with Charlie Tarr and I remember going down with Lowndes Johnson and talking with Sam Blades. Sam Blades was a quiet sort of individual. He was good workman and Lowndes was under the impression that he was the better canoe builder. Charlie Tarr talked big. He was one of those, but they worked together and I suppose they built a good many canoes.

RD: So he probably helped with the building of the *Magic* and the *Mayflower* and some others.

JGE: I would think so, yeah. Yeah, the *Mayflower* was the original name of the boat that is known today as the *Margaret P. Hall*. You understand that.

RD: Yeah. How about Charlie Tarr...did he have a boat shop anywhere? Did he build them pretty much anyplace around town?

JGE: I never saw any shop. In fact, he stopped building canoes by that time. There weren't any new canoes being built at that time. It took somebody like Johnson Grymes with plenty of money to go down to see old John B. Harrison and get him fired up about building a canoe and then this undertaker...he had almost a twin of the *Flying Cloud*...it was called the *Jay Dee*. The undertaker's name was John D. Williams.

RD: Up in Easton, I think.

JGE: Yes, right here.

RD: How about Horace Turner. Do you know anything about the black people.

JGE: No, I think I've heard of him, but I don't know anything about him. I don't know what canoes he built.

RD: I know he talked to me about Greenbury Coffin a little bit.

JGE: Yes. Well, the reason I know about him is this friend of mine in Philadelphia...he lived just across the street from where I lived and he's the same one that had this camera, but he was a stock broker and of course, he knew a lot of people and he was a garrulous individual and that it seems that

he knew of the son of Greenbury Coffin, the builder on the other side of the Delaware River in New Jersey and he called him up and made an appointment for us to see him. He had been with the United Fruit Company—banana boats—and we went over there to see him and I got quite a lot of information about Greenbury Coffin, his father. I think I have notes on that conversation.

RD: Yeah, we've got a copy at the Museum about two pages of notes I think that you did John. We've got a copy of it, yeah that you must have given at some time.

JGE: Those notes could be better to follow than my recollection now. This has been 50 years. It was in the middle thirties.

RD: Do you know where Greenbury Coffin lived exactly, or where he had a shop?

JGE: He at one time was living at Claiborne and he built a—man in Baltimore I'm trying to think—his business was bicycles (laughter) when bicycles was big business and he built a big canoe for him and I can't remember what that is. It ought to be in those notes.

RD: I think it's in the notes, yeah.

JGE: And then, of course, he built the *Belle M. Crane* and I took the lines off the *Belle M. Crane* because Ruth Star Rose owned it at that time and I guess she sold it right there at Pickering where she lived and I got I think a good set of lines. Now there in this book you were looking at and may have a set of them.

RD: Were they here in Brewington's book too.

JGE: I think they did.

RD: That's all right, John.

JGE: No, but I can go and get the book.

RD: That's okay. I can check that.

JGE: I think so. I think the *Belle M. Crane* was in there because she was one of the larger canoes up until the time of the *Flying Cloud* was built. Of course she was built with a square stern which sort of made her a bastard canoe, but anyway...

RD: I went to see the *Flying Cloud* down in Dave McQuay's yard. She's down there.

JGE: Yeah, but of course, since then I think they made a rule that it had to be a sharp stern canoe so she got a new stern.

RD: Yeah, and you can see it, because they took the paint off down there and you can see where the alterations were made. Joe Liener and I were looking at it. John, I often come across references—just changing a little bit—to the series of motor boats called *Fairbanks I, II, III* and I think there was a *IV*. Do you know much about those boats, where they were built?

JGE: I think incidentally, Chapelle...I guess it was because he was hard of hearing, but I didn't know he was hard of hearing that many years ago...but, some of those boats...not all of them...were built by a man named Landon. Well, with his bad hearing or something, he couldn't distinguish between Landon and Lambdin (laughter). You have that catalog of...

RD: The National Watercraft collection...

JGE: Okay, so, you'll find a lot of mistakes in there of Howard Chapelle's. I think some of them were because he didn't hear very well.

RD: Yeah.

JGE: Or maybe he just wasn't paying attention. I don't know. I never was with him when he interviewed one of these people. But, I got along with him, but he and Marion Brewington got into a big hassle with... They got so they didn't even speak to each other I think. One of these hassles was who designed the *Constitution* and Chapelle said that he could identify the famous man in Philadelphia, oh, anyway...

RD: I know who you mean.

JGE: Anyway, Marion said he had documented evidence that this other fellow did it. Now both of these names have slipped my mind now. I can't even remember some of the people I saw yesterday (laughter).

RD: That's all right. I was just curious about these boats. They seemed to have made a big splash around here and I think that some of them, not all of them, were the draketail and the draketail sterns.

JGE: Well, Landon, I don't think he ever built one of them. But he might have.

RD: Where was this Landon? Where did he work?

JGE: Well, the best way I can tell you he was about where that Town Creek restaurant is in Oxford.

RD: Okay, in Oxford.

JGE: They changed the landscape so much nowadays, it's hard to pinpoint.

RD: Well, the owners of the *Fairbanks* I assume were the Fairbanks family over in St. Michaels area.

JGE: I'm not so sure of that. I think they had Fairbanks Morse engines built in Beloit, Wisconsin, and they were two-cycle, two-stroke engines. I prefer the English term—two-stroke cycle.

RD: Right. You think that's where the name came from then?

JGE: I suspect that was it. Now you may find something about them if you read carefully *The Rudder* or any other magazine—boating magazine—around 1909 or '10, that's when they flourished. As a kid, I used to like to see them go by. They seemed fast. I don't know, some of them may have gotten up to 20 miles an hour. I don't think they ever got to 20 knots, put it anyway.

RD: It's faster today.

JGE: But, it was a stripped down thing you know and lightly built. I don't really know. I thought the draketail boats were started down in Dorchester.

RD: You know, Chap theory was that the origin of the draketail work boats lies in this Fairbanks series, at least maybe *Fairbanks I* was a draketail and he believes that instead of the standard theory that they copied it from the naval torpedo boat destroyers.

JGE: Well, I have not been able to verify that. For instance, they had torpedo boat destroyers in the Spanish-American War, but none of them were ever pictured in a book that I have on that look anything like the draketail boats. So I don't know, it's awful hard to pin down some of this traditional stuff.

RD: I know. Um, let's move back in time a little bit, John.

JGE: I mean that should be easily verified by going back into the naval records.

RD: Yeah, we tried to do some of that. I think around the First World War period there were some of that type that were built with that type of stern.

JGE: First World War?

RD: Yeah.

JGE: Generally, those four stackers were cruiser sterned instead of sharp sterned.

RD: Yeah, well we'd be talking about smaller craft. He's talking about (unintelligible) more like a large patrol boat almost.

JGE: Now, Herreshoff built one or two of those and then he swore he'd never build another boat for the navy because the navy people interfered with him and made him do things over again...

RD: Too much bureaucracy.

JGE: Yeah. And I presume this boat started out as his design, but that's all pretty well...everything that Herreshoff did is pretty well documented and so I haven't burdened my mind with that. I haven't thought about it for years.

RD: John, about the prolific Lambdin clan now. I think Robert Dawson Lambdin was the father and then he had a number of sons.

JGE: No. Robert Dawson Lambdin was the son of the old Robert. I think the old Robert married a Miss Dawson and then Robert Dawson Lambdin was I think the youngest of the sons.

RD: He was named exactly after his father.

JGE: His father with his mother's middle name or maiden name as a middle name.

RD: Okay.

JGE: No, and he never participated in the shipyard business. He went off on his own. I used to know and talk with him and I have some of his manuscripts with his handwriting in one of his books.

RD: I think I saw it. He has a rather scrawly type handwriting.

JGE: Yeah. At that time I didn't know how to identify the builders. I never heard of the custom house records until about the middle thirties, so I got into them in 1937 on the fifth floor of the custom house in Baltimore. That's where they were and dirty. They were all tied up in these bundles. Of course you couldn't tell what the color of the tape was because of all the dirt. And when I got down to the National Archives, I learned what red tape is literally (laughter). But they were tied up with this what had been red tape into bundles and you had to open up the bundle and unfold them as well. I spent a lot of time down there. I had a couple of weeks between jobs. Well, anyway, I just bought a car...the first one I ever owned. It was a 1937 Ford and I had that in Baltimore. I drove to Baltimore with it, but that's when I first got into carpenter certificates where I could find the name of the builder and then at the same time, these Works Progress Administration—we called them the boondogglers—well there were a couple of them up there on the fifth floor at the same time and they had this system of the man would open these documents and read them off and the woman would write them down and then I have right there a book of Dot Brewington. I don't know how she did it, but she made a typed transcript of which I have a copy and the Maryland Historical Society has a copy. But the funny thing was, I went over—this was only a few years ago—the Maryland Historical Society and talked with Dave...I forgot his name...and I said I'm missing one of the pages in this thing and I'd like for you to make me a Xerox copy of the page out of your book. He opened up their book and they had two pages, so when the books were put together, they had missed one, so he just gave me one of the pages. They were carbon copies, but that's where this is. Now in the *Maryland Historical Magazine* sometime in 1941, I think it was the two men that wrote the book on the War of 1812 privateers. I'll think of it after a while. But anyhow, they went to see, old Mr. Lambdin who was at that time the only survivor, but he was in this old man's home—there was one on West Lexington Street in Baltimore—and I think I went to see him there. But I do remember that Lowndes and Graham Johnson...we went together to see him while he was still living in St. Michaels. I think his wife had died.

RD: Where was he living when you went to see him, John, do you remember?

JGE: He wasn't living in that house that the Lambdin's owned, I think it was along Water Street, but in a smaller house. But, Cranwell and Crane were the two men. I think both of them went to see him and he reeled off a lot of stuff and they wrote it down and published it in the *Maryland Historical Magazine*. Have you a copy of that?

RD: Yeah, we have in fact what may be a typewritten manuscript of that which is a little bit not the edited version, it's the full version.

JGE: I see. Well, the old man had a pretty good memory, but it wasn't infallible and I've been intending for a long time to write up notes to correct some of those things and I should do that because maybe I'm the only one that can. I don't know. Anyone else who had gone through or has a record of the carpenters certificates could do it, but I've been familiar with that for so many years and I should do it. But there's a hell of a lot of other things that I should do, too.

RD: Well, the Lambdins apparently leased a property building down there along the wharf, didn't they for most of their boat building.

JGE: Yes, that's right.

RD: He also had a shop, I believe off the house. I guess it was Chestnut Street. Recently it was torn down last year, but apparently it was a shop where he built a number of canoes later on. I don't know if you came across anything if there was a separate shop.

JGE: No. But he didn't always work in St. Michaels. He talked about going to Brooklyn. Well, at that time, I didn't know there was a Brooklyn just outside of Baltimore and that's where it was. I thought he meant Brooklyn, New York. I thought maybe he was working in the Navy Yard and just what he was doing up there, I don't know. Then, of course, his big story was the canoe he built for the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893.

RD: The *Chesapeake*.

JGE: The *Chesapeake*, and it's too bad somebody didn't get that canoe back. I don't know whatever became of it.

RD: We'll find out.

JGE: Oh, I think somebody...I don't know what they did with it because some people took her out on Lake Michigan and tried to sail her and they capsized it and I think one or two people were drowned and that gave her a bad reputation. But if you don't know anything about a canoe, you better just stay out of it and none of them did ever sail a canoe. It wasn't a racing rig that she had. I think a photograph of her is extant somewhere.

RD: We were fortunate about a year and a half ago, to acquire Robert Lambdin's account book...

JGE: Oh, good.

RD: which hadn't been known until that time I think, but it had all the figures for the cost of *The Chesapeake* and for a number of the canoes that he built.

JGE: Oh, this was Robert D. Lambdin.

RD: This was Robert D. Lambdin.

JGE: I thought you meant the shipyard.

RD: No, this is Robert D. Lambdin. Was Robert Lambdin, the father, he was the main shipbuilder in the Lambdin family.

JGE: He was and he started out in Baltimore. When I say he started out, I don't know where he started or learned the trade, but anyhow, he was working with a man named Butler. I think it was Lambdin and Butler in Baltimore and then he came over to St. Michaels and set up on his own. Then he had these other two sons. They had long names. Do you have them?

RD: I've got George W. Lambdin and W. A. Lambdin...Washington, I think...W. A. Lambdin.

JGE: Yeah, I knew the whole name...what were those initials.

RD: I think it's Washington A. Lambdin and George W. Lambdin were the two that were involved helping in the business.

JGE: Yeah. I may have a Lambdin file upstairs or did I ever give you one?

RD: There was something here on the Lambdins, too, John and I think you listed here the full names.

JGE: Yeah, I think I did in there.

RD: Yeah. Uh, you got George Washington Mowbray Lambdin, William Adolphus Duncan Lambdin.

JGE: Yeah, those are the names.

RD: And then Robert Dawson Lambdin.

JGE: Yes. Those were the three sons of the old Robert's. His father...I mean the grandfather of Robert Dawson Lambdin...he had a shipyard on a farm over on the northwest branch of Harris Creek and I found out something about him when I was working on the Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution. They were trying to get spars and everything that you needed for building a vessel and this was old Stephen Steward working over on the West River and he went and saw Robert Lambdin and wanted to buy some...I don't know whether it was some timber or spars or what which he needed very badly and the state of Maryland was out of money and the paper money that they were offering—people wouldn't take it. Well, anyhow, he tried to buy this stuff—this material—from old Robert Lambdin and Robert Lambdin said he wanted red money—gold coins—and they didn't have it and he wouldn't give up. I don't know where he was going to get it. Nobody else had it then either, but I was sort of amused at that, but I have run across—there's a stack of those land records and I find those Lambdins going way back, but I can't find that any of them. I've made notes, too, and I've found shipwrights mentioned in those land records, but I haven't been able to identify any that I ever heard of except out of those land records. There was one...where did I find that one? Well, I think it was in the records of St. Michaels Parish. Here were two shipwrights that had died the same day and what I suspected is they were launching a vessel and something went wrong and men have been killed after a ship started to move, you can't stop it, but I never found anything else about it except this evidence that these two men, both shipwrights, both died the same day. Now I think there was some accident that

happened to them..

RD: How about Edward Willey?

JGE: Edward Willey started out down in Dorchester County and he built some vessels down there. I think he was on James Island or Taylor's Island. Well, James Island...there isn't much left of it now and there was at that time very little distance between James Island and Taylor's Island. I think there's quite a wide space of shoal water now, but he was building down there and he moved from there to St. Michaels. No, wait a minute, it seemed to me, did he go to Baltimore? I don't think so. I think he went from...I might get myself confused with the Lambdins. He started out where Kirby took over when he got too old I guess.

RD: His yard was where Higgins Yard is now.

JGE: Yes, oh, that was all Kirby's and well, you have all of those photographs taken by Thomas Sewell and some of them show such buildings as there were. You see this big old roof covering the pawlish (ph) machinery before the railway and Lowndes said that old horse—you had to step over the chain. I guess when the chain was taut, it was this far above the ground and he said that old horse never fazed him and he just stepped over it very carefully.

RD: He just kept on going.

JGE: I never saw this, but Lowndes Johnson did. But, any rate, I have seen that book that you brought back, a pretty good record of the vessels that Willey built in St. Michaels.

RD: Well, okay, Thomas L. Dawson...do you know much about him?

JGE: All I know about them I think they were up in that cove.

RD: Somewhere on this side of the Lambdin operation?

JGE: Yes, well, beyond it from when you look at it from the Maritime Museum...that dead end cove right there. I think they were up there. Now, Bill Bodenstein might have run across something on that. I think he would be a good one to consult about that. He knows more about those places in St. Michaels than anybody else now I guess. Because he worked at it.

RD: Yeah, Bill's a good source for that.

JGE: But, all I have on them are the names of the vessels they built.

RD: Do you know anything about the builder or where he came from?

JGE: Well, there was a big family of Dawson from Bayside. They go way back to the 17th century. No they didn't come from somewhere else. They were Talbot County natives. I think there again, there were a father and a couple of sons working. I'll tell you something about them. You know what they called a square stern bugeye?

RD: Were they called a square stern bugeye?

JGE: Yeah, or what a square stern bugeye is or was. Up here around St. Michaels they called them square stern bugeyes. They were schooner-rigged vessels looking exactly like a pungy, but down in Somerset, I don't know what they did in Dorchester, they were called she pungies because they had centerboards.

RD: I heard that term before.

JGE: Well, now the *Kessie Price*, my friend, Frank Moorshead and his sons sailed it up on the Bay for a long time. She was one of them built in 1883 and I think it took all the income of a Philadelphia lawyer to keep it going and of course, after he died, they got rid of her right away because it was just too expensive.

RD: Well a she pungy down that way had a centerboard.

JGE: Well, so did these square stern bugeyes have a centerboard and they had the monkey rail and the knight heads just like a bugeye, but they had schooner rigging.

RD: And what was the term used up this way for them?

JGE: A square stern bugeye.

RD: A square stern bugeye

JGE: Yeah.

RD: So many variations on these boats. John, getting to a little bit more complicated family and that's the Spencers. I've read a bit about Colonel Perry Spencer of being one who I understand had a couple of yards.

JGE: Well, the problem with them is that they go back beyond—most of my research work was done with the federal records and the Spencers...first of all, the first 10 or 11 years, let's say, from 1789 until 1800...those records were very unsatisfactory to work with. Now, they'd say some vessels built on the Choptank River, and I guess even the top people didn't know how specific they needed to be, but they tightened up the rules and by 1800, they were making pretty good records, but the Spencers were really building earlier than that and, oh yes, then of course we've all been trying to figure out who was the Henry Spencer that built the *Enterprise*. Now, I think that was some clerical error when they put down Henry instead of somebody else and whether it was the Spencer family up in Kent or the ones right here in St. Michaels. Now, are you aware of the fact that the town of St. Michaels wasn't even named at the time of the Revolutionary War?

RD: Yes.

JGE: I mean here Matthew Tilghman having to go up and down that road all the time unless he had his slaves rowing across the river or something like that, but he passed through there and in some of his letters relating to—well for instance the barges. They decided they were going to lay the barges up because the French had come. Well, the French weren't able to cope with these pickaroons or pirates or whatever, and the British didn't seem to even know about it, but they thought that the French fleet down the Bay would solve all the problems. So, here came the fall of the year and they were going to lay these boats up anyhow and they sent them down to Church Cove on the Miles River and that was the only designation they had—Church Cove—and the name of St. Michaels for the town was finally settled. I don't know when the term St. Michaels district first started. Of course, Lord Baltimore had the name there because his taxes were collected on the feast of St. Michaels and All Angels, you see.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

JGE: (missing dialog) lose some vessels, but, Dr. Harrison didn't know anything about vessels. I mean what they called a ship might not have been a ship, although, there was one of 450 tons and that probably was a ship. I think that was so-called tonnage in those days.

RD: Well, of course another name that you're familiar with, John, and that was William Harrison of James. I'm very curious. I guess you may know is what does the James refer to in that name?

JGE: Oh, he was a son of James.

RD: Oh is that what that means.

JGE: That's what that means because there were so damn many Harrisons.

RD: Is that why?

JGE: Yeah, and you'll find others. There was William Harrison of William or William Harrison of John or something like that. This one happened to be William Harrison of James.

RD: Okay, because you know sometimes that's used to refer to a place they come from.

JGE: No, no. This means it was his father.

RD: His father?

JGE: Because there were too many William Harrisons around.

RD: He apparently was quite a prolific builder.

JGE: Well, actually, I don't think he was a shipwright at all.

RD: Is that right?

JGE: He contracted I think Thomas Kemp...not Thomas Kemp...but Joseph Kemp built some of them for him. Every once in a while something slips through that you get an inkling, but the number of vessels...he lived at Mt. Pleasant and whether he actually had his shipyard there or not, I don't know. I would not be surprised to find that he didn't have any shipyards. But, he would contract and he was the one that procured the contract from the real buyer and yet Joseph Kemp or some of the others, too, would actually build the vessel.

RD: But his name would probably appear on the carpenter certificate.

JGE: Oh, but you remember, it was this loophole because the law said that the way this thing read they had a printed form for the carpenter certificate. They didn't always use a printed form but, they followed the language of it. But, say the vessel of so and so built by me or under my direction. Well, there was the big loophole and he could do that.

RD: He could legally sign it then.

JGE: Well, then he would get into...for instance, I found more or less by accident...let me see, did they call it a carpenter certificate...they called it a...it seemed to me it had a slightly different, but it was obviously the same thing, basically. From Pusey and Jones up in Wilmington, on a steamer that they had built, and it was signed by the vice president of the company you see.

RD: Interesting.

JGE: Well, that was perfectly legal.

RD: Sure.

JGE: So, there may have been some these yards, not the real small ones, but where the owner....I'll tell you one, I suspected just this. This old John Bartlett who was building vessels around 1850 and he signed the carpenter certificates and the Bartlett family all thinks he was the shipwright, but he had been to New York in the shipping business or something like that, and apparently he found out that there was a demand for vessels and he came down here and set up a shipyard at Easton Point, not on the old Bloomfield property, and Mrs. Leonard smoked out some of that without looking for it, but, yes, he had the property down there and he suddenly died—had a heart attack. He had gone to Baltimore and died while he was in Baltimore; but he's one that I don't think he had any claim to be a ship carpenter or a shipwright. Now, I understand the shipwright was really the skilled man.

RD: But his name kept on appearing.

JGE: Yeah.

RD: Impey Dawson is another great shipbuilder.

JGE: Well, he was just one of that Dawson family.

RD: The same family as Thomas L. Dawson probably.

JGE: I think so.

RD: Yeah. Did he have a yard or something, John, do you know? Or was he more itinerant type.

JGE: I really don't know. I don't know anything about their yards. But, if you want to know, I think I have a genealogy. See my mother was a Dawson, but not related to this crowd. There was a Thomas Dawson in Philadelphia and his father had come from Ireland as a matter of fact and he was a pharmacist and he came down here shortly after 1800 and set up a drug store which lasted until my time and one of our lawyers said they never incorporated it, but they had these shares. I've forgotten how many different owners there was of this drugstore. Well, I'm going to get this book, because it has all this Talbot County.

RD: Well, if you can put your hand on it.

JGE: I can put my hand on it very quickly.

RD: Okay.

Microphone turned off.

JGE: (missing dialog) century there was a very highly respected man down on Bay Shore by the name of Thomas Impey. That was a surname and this is a Dawson book that I picked up in a bookstore in Philadelphia. I used to haunt the bookstores...old bookstores...and this book was published in 1874...now the contents: New England and here's Maryland. The family of Rouse (ph) Dawson in Talbot on 215 and 228. (Flipping through book). There's a lot of stuff here. I'm just going over it. (Still flipping through pages.)

RD: So this Impey Dawson was named after this Mr. Impey then.

JGE: Well, there was a connection with...let me see if I can find it. Well, in this Dawson book, he apparently does not appear as a certainty, but...here, here's an Ellen Dawson, daughter of Richard, married November 13, 1867. Daniel Hope...there used to be a Hope's hardware store in St. Michaels. In 1873 they resided on Sharps Island. I never heard they built any vessels out there. I was looking for Impey Dawson in here. As a matter of fact they have a whole section here with all of the Dawson in the index.

RD: Well, it doesn't really matter that much John. He's obviously of the Dawsons of Talbot County.

JGE: Look, I can look this up at my leisure and not while you're sitting there waiting and I will let you know what this connection is, but I don't want to keep you waiting. My time is running a little bit short.

RD: What time do you have to leave here, John?

JGE: Well, I have to change some clothes first.

RD: Oh, okay.

JGE: I could leave here at a quarter of. I think there are going to be a lot of people at this.

RD: Well, we can wrap it up now. I have just one other question, John. I've come across a George Barrie. Did you know George Barrie?

JGE: I did indeed. Well, he gave those to Lowndes Johnson, but do you have his book?

RD: I don't know. What I have come across, is a number of photographs that he took and was curious as to where his photo collection is now.

JGE: Ah, I think Frank Moorshead knows his daughter and she has recently retired and Frank lives not too far from her and he has been in touch with her. Now, what I wanted to do was to get hold of a scrapbook that he had because he had clippings for a lot of interesting things that I've never been able to find anywhere else and I want to go there and borrow the thing long enough to take it to a Xerox machine and make copies of those. Now whether she still has the photograph negatives, but Newport

News has copies of them. But what the hell it is...they want an arm and a leg for those things. Now what I plan to do is go up there and this will be later on...it may be in June...I have a granddaughter whose picture is up there who is graduating from high school and I'm not sure, but that will go into June...but Frank Moorshead and Liz have invited me to come and spend at least one night there at their house and he will make an appointment to see this Georgine Barrie, George Barrie's only child and she's no longer young, but I'll find out about the photographs. Frank Moorshead may know more about it.

RD: I was curious. I've come across a number of his and they're excellent looking pictures that he took. They all seem to make quite a study of the Bay.

JGE: Well, I have his book. In fact, I have Lowndes Johnson's copy of the book. All these books that they got out were poorly bound. I'm going to let you take this one with you and you can read this, but it has a lot of very interesting information.

RD: Okay. Let me wrap this up now.

END OF INTERVIEW