

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

CALLIE NEWMAN

INTERVIEW 1502

This is an interview with Callie Newman on February 27, 1992 by Bill Edwards for the Transportation Task Force.

Mr. Newman: I was born April 14, 1916.

Bill Edwards: You're a little bit older than I am then, but not much.

Mr. Newman: I never had to pay to ride the street car. The street car was five cents. (laughter) But I had the privilege to ride.

BE: Where did it go? That was before I came to New Bern. When I came to New Bern, they were sitting on the side track out there at Park Avenue.

Mr. Newman: The street cars would start, say, at my house, the fifth block on Spencer Avenue. That was the last stop because we were the last house. A few years later it went all the way to the end of Ghent which is another block and a half. All on the other side of Sixth Street was built after 1946. Say I got on the street car at my house, we'd go down right the middle of Spencer Avenue until we got to Queen Street and we'd cross over the railroad track and make a left hand turn and we'd stay close to the sidewalk on Queen Street.

We stayed there and went two blocks til we got to Pollock Street. We'd turn right and be on Pollock. We went all the way down Pollock Street and go on down to Middle Street. It's on the track. You can see it down there right now. Well, at Middle and Pollock, we'd turn right and went all down to South Front Street.

BE: Which is now Tryon Palace Drive.

Mr. Newman: Correct. We'd turn left. We then went on down South Front Street to Craven Street and we'd turn left again onto Craven Street. We came all the way down Craven Street and stayed on Craven Street until we got to Queen Street. When we got to Queen Street, we'd turn left and went up to the depot and Pinnix Drug Store.

BE: I wasn't aware of that. You've seen that picture that the woman painted of the station?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: So that's correct then?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: Okay. I thought that was wrong. Did they use the tracks of the Coastline Railroad?

Mr. Newman: No. They were closer to the sidewalk.

BE: I see. They didn't use the same tracks?

Mr. Newman: No. All right, we got to the depot. Well, the motorman got out and he turned the trolley around. He went to the other end where he drove it, came back to Craven Street, back to South Front Street, back to Middle Street, back to Pollock Street, and coming up Pollock Street, we stopped at Nettie Huber Pinnix's house (Paul Cox's house). He got out and threw a switch and the street car then would bear right onto Metcalf toward Broad. We went across Broad til it got to New and he turned left onto New til it got to what we called Frog Pond and then he would bear right onto Bern. He

stayed on Bern Street all the way til he got to what we called back in those days the water tower where they changed the train's people. Well, that's as far as he went that way. Then the motorman would get out and he'd switch the trolley and get changed at the front and came all the way back to Bern Street, back to New Street, back to Metcalf Street, to Pollock Street. He'd turn on Pollock and went down here a few feet and got out and switched the track, and then he came on back towards Ghent on Pollock til he got to Queen. When he got to Queen, say it was the end of the day, he got to Pollock Street and he got down to McCarthy's store and he would bear left and came on up left til he got to Ghent. When he turned and bear right coming down the middle of Ghent, he got out again and made a switch and put the trolley in the barn for the night.

BE: Where was the barn?

Mr. Newman: The barn was right across from Ghent school between Spencer Avenue and Park Avenue.

BE: That's where the trolley's were when I came to New Bern. They were stored there. They were out of service.

Mr. Newman: Yeah. They went out of service in 1929.

BE: I came in 1939, so they'd been out of service ten years when I came to town. There was sort of a pavilion out off Park Avenue. What was that?

Mr. Newman: That was the Ghent casino. The Ghent casino was built and the street cars came out there. Right in front of my house there was a street car switch and they could bear

left and went right on through Teddy Shapou's house. Only Teddy Shapou's house wasn't built then. Right through there and went up one block over to Park Avenue. They came out there for circuses, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus and things like that. They had Gorgeous George. He wrestled there one time. Also, Marcus Block. (Showing a picture) New Bern High School played baseball and football here.

BE: That was near the casino?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, on the same grounds.

BE: That's not far from where the present YMCA is, was it?

Mr. Newman: Bill, I don't want to say it, but I think the present YMCA is really right on that foundation. This was between 5th and 6th Street on Park Avenue across the railroad track. It could be a few feet different.

BE: This was all a wooden building, wasn't it?

Mr. Newman: All wood. They had dances there. Even when I was a senior in high school, we played basketball in that building. It's about to fall down, but they still played basketball in there.

BE: You didn't play in Stanley Hall, did you?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, I played my senior year there, 1934.

BE: This was gone then?

Mr. Newman: Yes, oh yes.

BE: What happened to this? Did they tear it down or

burn or what?

Mr. Newman: Well, it's cold winter. People tore it down. I think the wind had something to do to it too. I've had others writing me wanting to know some things. One man says it was blown down. Another man says that the street cars, started in 1915. They started in 1913. Well, I'm not getting in an argument with nobody.

BE: Rev. J. W. Hamm preached in New Bern in 1915. Where did he preach?

Mr. Newman: I think that's the man that did all the preaching at approximately where the New Bern fire station is, the Number One fire station. That was empty grounds then.

BE: This man fixing up a history also?

Mr. Newman: I tell you who is doing that. Marea Kafer called me and wanted to know would I let Dot Odum Richardson interview me.

BE: Well, that's the same project I'm working on; except, I have transportation primarily, but they want to get other thoughts as well.

Mr. Newman: That's fine. I'm not contradicting nobody, but if you read this right here you'll see that the street cars were started in early 1913 and went to about 1929.

BE: What we're after is your memories.

Mr. Newman: Well as I say, I was the fifth house in Ghent. The one right below you on the corner was the first or second house, the Bartling house. There was a house over on Rhem Avenue. It got burned down or something. The house on

the corner of Second Street and Spencer Avenue, a great big house, it was suppose to be the first and the Bartling the second. One or the other, first and second, but we were fifth.

BE: When we came to New Bern, we stayed in Carrie Duffy Ward's house where the architect, Raymond Fuson, later stayed.

Mr. Newman: That brick house.

BE: Yeah, right. That's where we stayed when we came to New Bern in 1939. Do you remember anything about the ships down at the foot of Middle Street? You've seen that picture, I know, of the market ships down there and market dock.

Mr. Newman: I do know that in the thirties that Raymond Maxwell brought all his own stuff to New Bern on barges. I'd see them come in here from Baltimore, Maryland. Raymond Maxwell was a big operator. He sold groceries in New Bern. He did not own it, but he had barges or tugs that went to Baltimore and he bought nails and tin roofing. You see some right down there on END Street. Dr. Hand has a building down there that's kind of tin that came from Baltimore. He brought sugar in here and supplies. He could bring it in on water cheaper than he could bring it in on railroad. That's what he claimed.

BE: What did he do with that sugar? (laughter)

Mr. Newman: I don't even know all about that. I know he was big enough that when he got caught, his sugar was in feed bags. He was that big that he had his sugar put in feed bags.

BE: Any of it go to North Harlow, you think?

Mr. Newman: Well, he was accused of it. I don't know. He was on trail for it. As the judge said down in Wilmington, he said he didn't see how such a man could have such a good reputation and do what he did. He never served no time.

BE: Well you know, the Maxwell's were an institution in this area.

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah.

BE: I'd eat breakfast down with Bob McGee most mornings and he'd tell us about working for Harold. He never did work for Raymond.

Mr. Newman: Raymond was the boss and Harold was a salesman.

BE: I know, but you know, Raymond died and Harold took over. Bob McGee worked for Harold.

Mr. Newman: Bob McGee? Do I know him?

BE: Probably. He lives right here in Country Club Hills. He was a salesman for Maxwell for a long time. Then he went to work for a company out of Charlotte, I think, selling wholesale groceries.

Mr. Newman: I might know him.

BE: You probably would if you saw him. Have you ever been down to the docks when those boats were coming in and going out down there?

Mr. Newman: I've been down there to see it. T. M. McCarthy and Sons, sold groceries and nails and general



supplies and building supplies. I've been down there to get nails. Mr. Maxwell would have nails that he'd get unloading off the barges. That was about the mid thirties, '35, '36, '37. Right next to Stevenson Wholesale & Building Supply was Baugh Fertilizer.

BE: I remember that.

Mr. Newman: They had their fertilizer come in on barges. Right next to Baugh Fertilizer was another little warehouse that stuck out in the water. Would bring freight in. I think they called it Carolina Norfolk Boat Company or Shipyard Company. They brought in all kind of freight.

BE: Didn't they handle passengers at one time also?

Mr. Newman: My mama came here around 1908, and she'd go down that thing and get on a boat and go to Elizabeth City on a boat and from there she'd get on a train and go on to Norfolk and go on north.

BE: But you didn't do that personally?

Mr. Newman: No. Going north, I went down to the depot and got on the pullman train. That train came up from Morehead City. When we got to Goldsboro, we were unhooked, the pullman was. We caught up and got attached to a mainliner.

BE: Coastline?

Mr. Newman: Coming out of Wilmington, and we'd wake up the next morning in New York City.

BE: That was the Norfolk Southern then, wasn't it?

Mr. Newman: I would say yeah. There was two railroad tracks. The one closest to the depot, it went direct to Norfolk. That was a passenger train too. The one I'm talking about came out of Morehead City to Goldsboro and we'd unhook there and hook on to a mainline coming from Wilmington.

BE: That was the Atlantic Coastline in Goldsboro.

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: Then you went on to New York City from there.

Mr. Newman: We'd wake up in New York City. I can remember the summer time people going up there. Most every time we went north, the Stevenson's went north; Eleanor and Helen Stevenson. They seemed to be on the same train. They would be gone for a whole summer. They had relatives in Atlantic City. Our relatives were in Jersey City.

BE: Where'd you do most of your playing when you were a youngster, around Ghent?

Mr. Newman: All in Ghent. I didn't get downtown until I was in the seventh grade.

BE: You didn't associate with the wharf rats then, did you?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, they went to high school. Wharf rats every bit. There was one building I really hated to see torn down. I went to first grade the first year that Ghent school was a school in 1922. Riverside school opened the same year.

BE: I didn't know Riverside was that old. My children went to Riverside.

Mr. Newman: That building was started in 1922. Both schools started the same year.

BE: Ghent and Riverside.

Mr. Newman: Yeah. Ghent school was later changed to Eleanor Marshall School.

BE: I remember that.

Mr. Newman: Some of the Ghent boys became famous. Jack Tolson became a Lt. General. He was a paratrooper in the Invasion of Normandy. He is distantly related to Genevieve. His daddy, right across from the Episcopal church, had an electrical store. Bill Bartling, who lived on the corner from you, worked for him. Then somehow, Bill got on with the city and he became the head of the water and light department for the city.

BE: Tolson Furniture Store was on Broad Street and Middle, wasn't it?

Mr. Newman: No. On Pollock Street. They had a big fire on Pollock Street, then the Metropolitan Club built there. It was next door to Tolson's Electrical Company. If I remember correctly, they moved around on Middle Street for a while, then they moved up there on Broad and Middle Street right next to Baxter's Sporting Goods Store. I call it Baxter's Sporting Goods Store, it was a barber shop back in those days. You could go in there and turn to Tolson and walk in there and then make a turn when you get in and come out on Broad. They stayed there til Hubert, Jr. took over and then they moved out

on 17 South.

BE: I vaguely remember Mr. Turner.

Mr. Newman: Charlie Turner. He didn't go to school here.

BE: No. I came here in 1939.

Mr. Newman: You were right out of State at that time.

BE: I was still a student at State.

Mr. Newman: Charlie Turner married a school teacher named Myrtle Minton. They had no children. He was a bookkeeper.

BE: Wasn't Albert Willis some relation to Mr. Turner?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. Albert Willis' mama and Charlie Turner were brother and sister.

BE: That's what I thought. That's where Mary Turner got her name. I thought there was some connection, but I wasn't sure.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, that's correct. They lived next door and used the same driveway.

BE: That off Broad?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, right next to Darnell's filling station. Both houses are still standing. I don't know who lives there. I think Betty Tracy lives in one.

BE: I believe you're right.

Mr. Newman: I don't know who lives in the other one.

BE: I don't know either. What are your memories of the fire department? You have any particular memories about the

fire department?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. I remember the big fire. I was six years old. I might have been four years old. Anyway, we could see the smoke, but we had to stay in Ghent. I can remember running over to Rhem Avenue and the fire department coming from Kinston, North Carolina and came down Rhem Avenue. They had to go from Kinston to Trenton, Trenton to Pollocksville. That other Trent Road wasn't there then.

BE: What was it?

Mr. Newman: Rhem Avenue was the street.

BE: Does that connect with the old nine foot road to Pollocksville?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, somewhere up there. I can remember when they put that Trent Road in there. Back in those days, they didn't have no machinery. They had mules and pans they called them to haul the dirt around.

BE: Drag pans. That's a far cry from the way it is now, isn't it?

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah. But a lot of people had jobs. The fire stations, going right back to Turner Tolson's now, that was the Atlantic Fire Company. They kept a horse there. Then around there, I'll call it City Hall, on Craven Street, the courthouse used to be upstairs. There was a fire station downstairs called the Button. Right next to "Favorite Things" is a driveway where you go in there, and they kept the horses back there. They kept the wagons out front. They'd get the

horses and hook them up and go to the fire.

BE: Did they have the bridle and harness suspended where they could drop it down on the horse?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. That's right.

BE: That's where, what was his name? The horse's head is up in the firemen's museum.

Mr. Newman: He died going to a false alarm.

BE: Right. You never were a fireman, were you?

Mr. Newman: No.

BE: Mr. McCarthy was your uncle, is that right?

Mr. Newman: Cousin. His mother and my grandfather were first cousins. I try to tell people different when they try to tell me, but I don't argue with them. Just like they say I gave the money they gave the property for the church. I try to tell them that he gave it, but you don't need to argue with people.

BE: (laughter) You waste your time.

Mr. Newman: Cause they know more about your business than you do yourself.

BE: I know. I've run into that too.

Mr. Newman: The other famous person, I call him famous, a boy named James Sawyer. He lived on the same block you did. I don't know if you know him or not. James and Glenn Sawyer. I can't say which one of them, James or Glenn, he's one of the famous heart surgeons in North Carolina. He's at Bowman Gray. I think James went to State. I think James is an

engineer around Chicago with some railroad out there. Glenn is the famous doctor in Winston-Salem. He's nearly retired now. I say Glenn would be approximately seventy years old. William Beard lived in the last house on Spencer Avenue. He's dead now. He died young.

BE: What did he do?

Mr. Newman: He was a graduate of West Point and did something that was good.

BE: Military?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: Jack Tolson got to be a General, didn't he?

Mr. Newman: Lt. General.

BE: Lt. General. Wow! Three stars!

Mr. Newman: He just died about a month or so ago.

BE: Is that right? I thought he died quite a long time ago.

Mr. Newman: No.

BE: Was he about your age, my age?

Mr. Newman: I'll be seventy-six in April. I'd say Jack was already seventy-seven or getting close to seventy-seven.

BE: He was pretty young in World War II then, wasn't he?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. He was the leader of the paratroopers. He was in the Invasion of Normandy. This is no famous thing, but we had a famous bootlegger on Rhem Avenue. The old bootlegger, he come up Rhem Avenue one day, the first, third block from the right hand side he lived, and he pulled

in. He drove Chrysler '77's. I must have been twelve years old. He pulled up there one day. Two cars of them, and the cops are right behind them. They pulled in there to the garage and jumped out and closed their doors right quick and as soon as they heard the cops come up and bang on the door, they went right out on Trent Road cutting right across from where Dr. Hammond lives. They pulled right out and kept right on going.

BE: (laughter) Did they have the still on Spencer Avenue or was that just their distribution point?

Mr. Newman: That was the distribution point. The only still I've ever known in New Bern was Big Boy Parris. We walked in those days, and we were coming home from our show downtown and we got right there by Big Boy Parris right close to Tryon Palace, (They been trying to sell that house for years.) and we smelled something. So about two days later, the cops raided the house. He had a still upstairs in his bath tub.

BE: What was the name of the man who had the buggy works there on Pollock Street?

Mr. Newman: That was on Broad Street. Mr. Waters.

BE: He was the one that built the gasoline automobile, wasn't he?

Mr. Newman: No, on the buggy. It was electrical automobile.

BE: Well, there's a vehicle in the Hall of History in



Raleigh of Mr. Water's, is that it?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. There was some building there on Pollock Street just past Tryon Palace going out. There was a great big building back behind one of those houses there.

BE: That's where I'm talking about the man who made the liquor.

Mr. Newman: I thought that was the buggy works.

BE: No. The buggy works was on the corner of Broad and Bern. He had a house on the corner and the buggy works right next door. After he died, his family made the brick houses into apartment houses. They stayed that way until Tommy Coleman bought that corner and put those new brick stores there.

BE: That's across from the old bus station then, isn't it?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. Across from the church.

BE: Yeah. Broad Street Christian Church. So, his buggy works would of been where the...

Mr. Newman: Right in front of that church. There's a house they have there and then he's right up next to the house.

BE: Is his house fronted on Broad?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: Okay. I know the place you're talking about now. I don't remember it, but I know where you're talking about.

Mr. Newman: That stayed there until the time Tommy

Coleman started buying up a lot of stuff. I think they owned a house there where the "sausage plate breakfast, sausage sandwich", well, that building is still the same building nearly.

BE: Country Kitchen, I believe they call it.

Mr. Newman: Yeah. Tom bought some kind of root beer here from Florida.

BE: I remember that.

Mr. Newman: But that same building is about the same building because it was a drive-in.

BE: I remember that. Tom Coleman started it, didn't he?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. He bought all that property.

BE: When did the Catholic school start, Callie?

Mr. Newman: St. Joseph's started in approximately 1926 or '27. (interruption) O. C. Crump came to McLawhorn and wanted to buy the house on Broad Street. So, McLawhorn sold it to him for \$10,000. He made \$2,000 and lived there about two years. He was a Gulf dealer in Wilmington. He put the front of that hotel up and he put a brick addition on the back of it, and he opened up a hotel there. The day before he was suppose to open the hotel up, he sold it to Gonsalvo who was a big operator in hotels up in the Virginia area. Mr. Gonsalvo sent the Miles family down. They worked for him. They came from Belhaven, North Carolina. Dan and Fred, and there was another, operated the Hotel Queen Anne. Another boy that came to New Bern with them and made a success after he left New

Bern, was Axon Smith. He was the bell captain.

BE: I didn't know that. He was the one that started that place at Belhaven.

Mr. Newman: That's right.

BE: What's the name of it? River Forest Manor. So, he started out as a bell captain at the Queen Anne?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. The Miles came from Belhaven area.

BE: I didn't know that.

Mr. Newman: I don't think Louise come from there, but Fred did.

BE: Louise was Fred's wife, wasn't she?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. They had one son. He's done very well in Myrtle Beach.

BE: Then Emily was Fred's sister, wasn't she?

Mr. Newman: No. Emily was Dan's daughter.

BE: That's right. Fred had one child, you said, a son.

Mr. Newman: Yeah. He was the same age as Robert King Davis' wife's child, Todd Thorne. Todd and his mama lived over at the Sloan estate when Fred ran that club over there.

BE: Trent Pines Club.

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: I remember that quite well. I've been out there a number of times.

Mr. Newman: That fellow made Fred many a dollar. That bartender from Richmond, Virginia was in charge of those dice and in charge of the bar.

BE: I'll never forget that drink Louise Miles used to make out of gin and vermouth. They were strong as horses.

Mr. Newman: We had to walk a plank to get to the street car. When the WPA come along and fixed that center lane there, paved the streets, they did away with the ditches.

BE: That center lane was where the trolley tracks were.

Mr. Newman: That's correct.

BE: How far out Spencer did the trolley go?

Mr. Newman: It never went further than Sixth Street. That was a block and a half on the other side of my house. You were here then. We called it End Street, now they call it First Street; 100, 200, 300, 400, 500.

BE: Sixth Street is about the last street that goes through to Park Avenue, isn't it?

Mr. Newman: Now they have another street, but it was then.

BE: That was about where this Ghent clubhouse was, wasn't it?

Mr. Newman: No. Ghent Casino was right across from my house. It was on the other side of Park and on the other side of the railroad track.

BE: I guess where you lived you could hear the fire whistle pretty easy, couldn't you?

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah.

BE: It might knock you out of bed, would it? (laughter)

Mr. Newman: Yeah. Especially if the wind was blowing

that way.

BE: That was a steam power plant then, wasn't it?

Mr. Newman: Yeah. I can see it right now. I worked at the store, and the black people, that's how they made their money. They had a horse and a wagon and the wagon could lift up and dump it out. They had to go all day to Roper Lumber Company out on North Craven Street. They would get the sawdust out there at Roper Lumber Company and bring it by a mule or horse, load a wagon out to the power plant, and they would dump it and go back out and get another load. As fast as they would bring it out there the city would use it.

BE: They would burned sawdust then.

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: Did they burn coal too?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: I guess that was a steady progression, those wagons going back and forth.

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

BE: I don't suppose a wagon full of sawdust would last too long in that boiler, would it?

Mr. Newman: I wouldn't think so. Just like that man standing there burning chips out there on Highway 70. I've never seen the place there. I just can't imagine chips lasting long.

BE: I can't either. But they say they're getting all they want. I went out there before it was finished. I

haven't been out there since it was finished. (This is Bill Edwards representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1500. I am interviewing Callie Newman. This interview is number 1502. It is being conducted on February 27, 1992 in New Bern, North Carolina.)

END OF INTERVIEW

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