Nancy Yasecko: Brevard County Historical Commission Oral History Video Project. Interview: Norris Andrews at the Porcher House Cocoa, Florida. January 16th 1994. Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko. Cameraman: Robert Gilbert. Equipment: Camera Sony DXC M7. Recorder Sony BVW-35. Copyright: Brevard County Historical Commission 1994.

Robert: Rolling.

Nancy Yasecko: Five, four, three, two, one. Tell us who you are and where you were born and a little bit about how your family came to be here.

Norris Andrews: All right, my name is Norris Porcher Andrews. I was born in Jacksonville although my parents lived here. There was no hospital here and my mother was an old mother. So she always went up to Jacksonville for the birthing of her three children. I have two older brothers. [00:02:00] My family came here. I have two sides of my family came here. My father's family, the Andrews side came from the Hardee side and they came here in 1868. Then my Porcher family came here in 1895. They came here on their honeymoon. They married in Atlanta and came down and my grandfather had bought property up on North Merritt Island. That included a grove and a little old shack and that's where they moved in and they lived there, did I say 1895? I meant 1885. Because in 1895 they moved into town into the big city of Cocoa. Lived right next door to this house here and then ...

Nancy Yasecko: Did you know your grandmother?

Norris Andrews: I knew both of my grandparents. I didn't know them well because they died ... My grandfather died when I was five. My grandmother died when I was three. But I knew them and I do remember and I guess maybe it's because my mother told me so many stories about them and told me things that I probably would remember. It's the reason that I do remember them very well.

Nancy Yasecko: What can you tell us about what they thought it was like here when they first came?

Norris Andrews: My grandmother Porcher used to tell my mother because my grandmother Porcher was brought up never living in a home. Her father was a writer and they lived all over the country and they always lived in apartment hotel or just a hotel and she had never cooked a meal, she had never washed any clothes, she had never done anything like that. In fact,

that side of my family the ladies of that side of my family were considered to be very bohemian. They all smoked and they were very, very bohemian. When she married my grandfather and moved down [00:04:00] here they moved to North Merritt Island. Now, if you think we have mosquitoes that are bad now you cannot imagine what they were before the advent of DDT. The mosquitoes were just when I was a child were terrible.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me again what their names were. I'm not sure.

Norris Andrews: My grandmother's name was Byrnina Peck Porcher. My grandfather's name was Edward Postell Porcher. He came from Charleston, South Carolina. My grandmother was born in New Orleans and lived in Atlanta but as I said lived all over. Her father was a writer and a teacher and he taught [Tulane 00:04:47] and he taught I think at Harvard.

Nancy Yasecko: Is that Henry?

Norris Andrews: That was Henry Peck.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you know who was in Florida very early on?

Norris Andrews: Very early on.

Nancy Yasecko: 1840.

Norris Andrews: 1840's he came and he was quite a prolific writer as I understand. I guess he was sort of the Danielle Steel of his day. He wrote about 70 novels or something like that which is I think very prolific. I can't imagine, I've never read one of them. Isn't that awful? Never have but anyway, my great grandparents built the house that was just north of this house here. It was a cute old frame house. It was what they call a shotgun house. You could open the front door and the back door and shoot a gun straight down the hallway. And the rooms of course went off of that. That's where my grandparents moved to from North Merritt Island.

My grandmother had I believe six full term pregnancies, eight pregnancies altogether but six full term and only five of those children lived through infancy [00:06:00] and then only four to adulthood. Everybody went to St. Luke's Church up on North Merritt Island. It's a little Episcopal church that my grandfather gave the land for and helped to build it. It's still in the existence today. The cemetery that's there that's where all the Porchers are buried also.

Nancy Yasecko: They were up there in the grove area for ten years.

Norris Andrews: Right.

Nancy Yasecko: It must have been pretty primitive.

Norris Andrews: Well, that's what I want to finish telling you about I guess. I got off about the mosquitoes but my grandmother said they had cheesecloth at the windows to keep the mosquitoes out and they would burn camphor fires around the house at night because camphor wood mosquitoes don't care for that at all and the smoke from the camphor wood is what kept the mosquitoes away. Can you imagine that in the dead of summer as hot as it gets here having camphor fires around your house and cheesecloth at the windows where air doesn't get through? Oh, it must have been awful.

Anyway, my grandmother had all these children and didn't leave North Merritt Island. She used to tell the funny story, she used to tie a rope around her waist and then a rope around each of her children and tie that rope to the rope around her waist and put them in the row boat that they had and row out in the middle of the river and cry because she wanted to leave so badly. It was so bad. She credits the LaRoches [00:07:39] for saving her life. That was the family that lived up on North Merritt Island that taught her how to do everything.

She didn't know how to cook or do anything like that. My grandfather used to hunt for the table everyday but the only thing he ever brought home was duck and after they moved to the big city of Cocoa my grandmother [00:08:00] said, "I never will eat duck again as long as I live." And I don't believe she did.

Nancy Yasecko: Now, why did she tie the rope?

Norris Andrews: In case one of them fell over she could draw them back. Tie the rope around the waist and then one to each child and tie that to their waist. Then, if one fell over she could just haul them back in without losing one at sea.

Nancy Yasecko: I wonder if anyone ever ...

Norris Andrews: I don't think so. That was her precaution because there were so many of them.

Nancy Yasecko: Boy.

Norris Andrews: Yeah and my aunt was born with a club foot. I really do think that she probably had a club foot because ladies in those days use to lace themselves in even when pregnant. The doctors always felt because it was not a congenital thing it didn't run in the family, but that's what it was caused by. And then, when she was about six my grandmother took her to New York to a surgeon and they straightened her foot out and they came back here and the sad thing is is that child died of double mastoid which you never hear of anymore but she died at seven years old. She did get to get some new shoes. She only had one pair of shoes in her life and she got to have a new pair of shoes before she died. So she was real pleased with that.

Nancy Yasecko: That does bring up the point of the medical services in the area.

Norris Andrews: From what my mother told me, there was one doctor, a Dr. Hughlett and he lived just across the street here and he used to check the river everyday because the river was the mode of transportation of course. Everybody went everywhere by sailboat and if you needed the doctor and lived on Merritt Island or down south in Rockledge or north up toward Sharpes you raise [00:10:00] the flag at the end of your dock. And that way the doctor knew that he was needed.

For all my grandmother's children the doctor only arrived for one delivery and that was my uncle and that's because it took her four days to have him so he finally got there. But my grandfather delivered everybody else but that's the way the doctor came and of course back in those days you couldn't dial 911. If you got sick they did all the home remedies that they knew to do. Once the doctor did get there he usually stayed until you got better. That's oftentimes why he couldn't get there for other people because he was with somebody else at the time.

Nancy Yasecko: How would he know about these signals?

Norris Andrews: He had a spy glass and he would look through the spy glass as far as he could see to all the docks and check them everyday to find out who needed the doctor. When he was away, I guess he didn't check it and so if he didn't come you just had to do the best you could do. People survived at least enough to keep us all going.

Nancy Yasecko: You mentioned that the water was the major transportation. Tell me about the kind of different boats you've heard about people used.

Norris Andrews: I really don't know the kinds of boats. I had an uncle that used to build boats. He built sailboats and he built powerboats over in Merritt Island. When I was a child we had races in the river. We had powerboat races. Guy Lombardo, the band leader used to come down and race his boats in the powerboat races. The river was the mode of transportation until the bridges came in. I think the first bridge across the river was about 1928, maybe a little earlier [00:12:00] than that but prior to that everybody went everywhere as I said by sailboat.

Then, my grandfather Porcher had a steamboat. He converted his sailboat to a steamboat because that's also the way they transported citrus fruit when they grew the citrus on Merritt Island and then they brought it over to the main land. They brought it by steamboat or by sailboat and sailed in here and then my grandfather Porcher was the first man in the citrus business to wash and polish the citrus fruit. Everybody else didn't even bother to wash it, they just brought it from the groves and I imagine just wiped it off and packed it in barrels in Spanish moss.

But my grandfather Porcher packed it in regular bruce boxes which are that thin wood box and packed it in that and he would wrap each piece of fruit in paper. It was like a tissue paper with his citrus label on it. Then of course it was shipped by steamboat. I think there were two steamboats and I remember my mom said that one of the steamboat's name was the Ella and my mother when she was born was pre-mature. She was the only one of the children born in Cocoa. When she used to holler and cry when she was an infant my aunt used to say she sounded just like the Ella coming down the river.

The Ella and the other steamboat would come I think twice a week they would make their stop and they would offload the supplies and then there was like a travelling store that went along with them. They would load the citrus aboard these boats and they'd go back to Jacksonville and offload them there for a rail head [00:14:00] that went on to New York to the fresh fruit market that was there. That's why so many, you see a lot of pilings as you go south on the river road. A lot of those were packing houses that went out into the river so that the steamboat could stop and pick up whatever they had to ship at that time. Then of course in the 1920's when Mr. Flagler brought his railroad through that everybody started shipping through by the railroad then.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's talk a little bit about the citrus business. How did they start the grove? Was there a grove there when ...

Norris Andrews: My grandfather Porcher bought an existing grove from an Englishman and his name was Tippin and the family until they sold those groves always call it the Tippin block. Anyway, he bought the existing grove there and then of course added to it. I do have an interesting story to tell you about this Englishman. This Englishman used that grove as a winter getaway for himself and he had a hunting lodge on the grove. He would bring friends from England and they would hunt because of course Florida was full of bear and deer and all kinds of wild game and ducks and that sort of thing.

They would hunt and this Englishman also had ostriches and they raced them. This was all on North Merritt Island. I guess the Englishman got too old and decided that he would sell it and that's when my grandfather bought it and then married my grandmother and came down here. Now, my great grandfather from my father's side of the family I think that he came down and his closest neighbor was Eau Gallie. [00:16:00] I think he probably got the seeds from the Indian River seedlings either from Titusville or from down in Eau Gallie and started his own groves that way.

Nancy Yasecko: Citrus is not that easy to grow.

Norris Andrews: No, it's not. It really isn't. Of course they started with Indian River seedlings, everything grew from the seed and as it progressed then they started I can't think of the name.

Nancy Yasecko: Grafting.

Norris Andrews: Grafting, thank you. That's what they started doing was grafting on different roots. Prior to that they all just grew from seeds. I think old Dummett Grove up in Titusville which is the first of the groves in this area I think those were all just Indian River seedlings they called them. I always thought the fruit was good but oh boy did they have the seeds in them, 28 or 30 seeds for every orange was mostly seeds. That's the way it first started and then of course the other citrus came in.

Nancy Yasecko: They would have had their groves well under their management by the time that big hard freeze came in?

Norris Andrews: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you hear any stories about ...

Norris Andrews: Yes, my grandmother on my father's side used to tell terrible, terrible stories about that and how bad it was that freeze because the first freeze came in December and was just enough to defoliate the trees and to ruin that crop but it didn't do any tree damage. As soon as a tree, any bush gets frozen the leaves fall off et cetera and the weather warms up which it did in this instance. Then the sap rises and the tree again tries to put out leaves.

Just about [00:18:00] the time this was happening and the new little shoots were coming out the hard freeze came in February. She said it sounded like cannon fire going off. When the trees would burst open, when the sap would freeze it sounded just like cannons going off all over. They had a really, really rough time. There were six daughters, they only had six children which was an amazing thing. All six were girls and they all survived well into their 80's and 90's except one aunt. I did lose one aunt in her 50's but everybody else survived into their 80's and 90's which I think is very unusual for a pioneer type family like that that they'd have six children and all six lived.

Nancy Yasecko: Going back to that freeze, what happened after the freeze? Were all the trees dead?

Norris Andrews: All of the trees were killed. So they cut them back and literally started over again and it takes seven years so that's when they started growing alternate crops and they started with pineapples, they grew a lot of pineapples because it only takes two years for a pineapple. It actually doesn't take two years. A plant will live two years and you can grow fruit within a year. They grew pineapples and that became quite a crop for us here. They also grew cabbages and shipped them.

They grew all kinds of dried beans too, they later would dry like pea, field peas and things like that. They grew those. Anything between the rose of the trees while the trees are growing again and it would take ... Well it takes a tree about seven years to bear again after all that damage. Of course some of the trees were killed all the way [00:20:00] and they couldn't be saved, those had to be dug up and replanted. It was a terrible, terrible time. They all were exceedingly poor and it was a big thing when they had meat on the table and that sort of thing. It was a terrible, terrible time.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess all those sisters would have been working in the groves then?

Norris Andrews: They were, yeah they were. They hadn't been prior to that but they all had to learn to work and to do the things that they normally hadn't been doing. The ones that were ... My grandmother used to say the ones that were too good to work in the fields they had to do all the house work and the sewing and that sort of thing. Because I don't think my great grandmother was a well person. She suffered I think a lot with kidney problems as she grew older. She was not as able to do the things so the girls had to do them.

Nancy Yasecko: It must have been a real shock.

Norris Andrews: It was a real shock.

Nancy Yasecko: How they think years later.

Norris Andrews: That's right, they still talk ... In fact, those sisters all lived here except for ... They really all lived here except for one. She moved away for a while and then came back. When they get together they still would talk about how one didn't do something and the other ones did.

Nancy Yasecko: There weren't as many mechanical advantages either?

Norris Andrews: No, no, everything was done ... Everybody in my family anyway you had your house and then you had the outhouse that they all had bathrooms I don't mean that but the outhouse was the wash house and they literally washed in a pot with a fire under it for the water and scrub the clothes that way and rinse them and hung them out. Then did the starch [00:22:00] and ironing and the ironing was done with putting the iron on the stove and getting it hot. It must have been terrible. I can't imagine.

I only like wash and wear and it definitely wasn't wash and wear. Of course the chickens and everything had to be killed. You didn't go to the supermarket, you just went out and caught a chicken and cut his head off and dipped him in boiling water and pluck him and oh, awful. Terrible things you had to do. I'm glad I guess I didn't come along then but when I was a child we also we did a lot of those kinds of things but not as I got older, thank goodness.

Nancy Yasecko: Not because you had to.

Norris Andrews: No, it really wasn't except during the war you really had to. When I say the war that's the second world war because that was the war in my life.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's see if there's any other questions I might have. You mentioned a little bit about hunting.

Norris Andrews: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What kinds of animals did people hunt?

Norris Andrews: Deer, they also hunted bear, mainly they did bird shooting at least my family did the bird shooting more than anything else. My grandfather Porcher well into his 70's would bird hunt every Saturday and that was for the table on Sunday. Normally it was all quail. As I said, my grandmother wouldn't allow duck back in the house. Duck was enough but quail and as a child I can remember coming for Sunday dinner here and having quail every Sunday. There were of course two kinds of meat on the table and one would be quail. The cook fixed the best quail. I can still [00:24:00] to this day and I've tried to order it when I've been out and it hasn't been anywhere near as good as that was when I was a child. Quail and I don't know that they had many pheasant here or anything else. I know they did have an abundance of quail.

Nancy Yasecko: Sunday dinner was a special thing?

Norris Andrews: Oh yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What would you find on the table at a Sunday dinner?

Norris Andrews: Oh gosh, there was with my grandfather being from Charleston, South Carolina there was always rice. He had a criteria that you had to hear the rice hit the plate or the rice wasn't any good. It couldn't be what he call Yankee rice which was gummy. It had to be the kind of rice that you could hear it. Then there was always two or three kinds of vegetables and homemade biscuits and then either a beef roast or pork roast and then quail as I said if you were lucky enough.

My grandfather one time when he went quail hunting he came in and we all gathered around, he used to hunt in his old Cadillac. He traded cars about every two years and he would drive to Detroit and get the car. He would watch them put it together on the assembly line and then he would drive it back to Florida. He would ride the train to Detroit and drive this Cadillac back. Then, he would convert his old Cadillac into his hunting car and that meant that he put dog cages all around this car because in those days of course they had a running board on the car.

He had dog cages around on the running board. This one day he came back in and he had shot a snake and it was a rattlesnake. [00:26:00] It was this big around and it was tied. The neck of it was tied to the headlight of the Cadillac and the tail with rattles about that long was tied to the tail light of this Cadillac. I have never ever seen such a big rattlesnake. I've seen some big ones, this was huge. That may have been because I was only three, four, five years old but I remember that snake. It to me was this big. We used to catch lots of snakes around here too. My brothers would always catch them and keep them for two or three days and then let them go. Usually the black snakes.

Nancy Yasecko: Would you have a home garden?

Norris Andrews: Yes. Right out here. On the south side of the house here there was a cistern because the house had rainwater and then right in front of the cistern was the garden area. We always had a garden for everything. My mother also had roses.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of things would you grow in the garden?

Norris Andrews: Carrots, cucumbers, green beans, tomatoes, squash. I don't think we ever tried to raise corn because I think it was always too hot here for corn. Things like that, nasturtiums. Used to have nasturtiums always were around the garden and you know in thinking back I don't know if that was to keep rodents out. I really don't know but then my mother would always use the nasturtiums greens in salads too. I guess that's the thing to do now but for a while I guess we didn't do it but we always had them in our salad anyway. [00:28:00]

Nancy Yasecko: I'm trying to think, what about on special occasions like Christmas?

Norris Andrews: Oh Christmas. In this room that we're sitting in right now was always where our tree was because this was the living room. In my family, the tradition was we went out where BCC College is now we would go out there and cut our Christmas tree. That was a big thing and we always do it Christmas eve and go cut our Christmas tree. We never got a perfect one so dad always cut branches from other trees to add into our tree and he'd wire them all in and we come back and we put the tree up and then Santa Claus always decorated our tree.

We would go next door to the church and go caroling and have hot cocoa at somebody's house and come back home and everybody put their gifts under the tree for each other and then we go to bed. Of course the tree

would just be up just with nothing on it and the next morning it would all be decorated because Santa Claus always came and decorated the tree before he left everything. When I got older my parents told me the funny story because they would also go out on Christmas eve and they came home about one or two in the morning after having a lovely time at a party and they were decorating the tree.

Just as they started up the steps one of our cats came flying around the corner and went up the tree and pulled it over so they had to start all over again. Of course we didn't know anything about it but those were fun, fun times. We would come down in the morning on Christmas and have our stockings and then we had to have breakfast and before we did anything else and then we would open our gifts after breakfast. We always had to have breakfast before we did [00:30:00] anything else.

Then, of course the big Christmas dinner and play all day. The year I got skates I wouldn't come in to Christmas dinner until I learned to skate up and down this front side walk. My father, I can still say, "Oh please let her make it this one time so she'll come in and eat." I held Christmas dinner up for about an hour until I learn to stand up on those skates.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you hear any stories about ...

Robert: We would have to change tapes to get extra room.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay, we'll do that. Brevard County Historical Commission Oral History Video Project. Interview: Norris Andrews Porcher House Cocoa, Florida. January 16th 1994. Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko. Cameraman: Robert Gilbert. Equipment: Camera Sony DXC M7. Recorder Sony BVW-35. Copyright: Brevard County Historical Commission 1994.

Robert: [inaudible 00:31:41].

Nancy Yasecko: Five, four, three, two ... Did you hear any stories about the early Christmases out in the grove country or what they would have done out there that was ...

Norris Andrews: No, but you know I have pictures and we didn't talk much about [00:32:00] Christmases when they lived on the grove but as I said I do have these pictures and I do need to get some copies made because they were rather pitiful looking little Christmas trees. They look like it went out and just cut a branch off of something and put it up on a table and decorated it. It was really kind of sad looking. I guess we've gotten so

commercial now. That was Christmas to them and even back when I was a child which wasn't that long ago but you know we only did Christmas for two or three days.

As I said we didn't get our tree until Christmas eve. We left it up till really 12th night, that was a big thing to leave it up that long till about till the 6th of January. We didn't do all the shopping and all these things. Everything was done within a week of Christmas. I guess even in my day, when I was younger my grandparents probably thought that was very flamboyant all that we did because of these pictures that I've seen that it certainly didn't look like anything that anyone would have now. A decorated branch sitting up on the table.

Nancy Yasecko: Other holidays were celebrated in different ways around here like 4th of July was something special.

Norris Andrews: Usually, I can't really talk too much about that but I was fortunate enough when I grew up that my parents we went to North Carolina, Western North Carolina every summer so I really wasn't here for the 4th of July. I think they did. I do know the tales that I have heard about [00:34:00] May Day and the picnics that they used to have which was down where the old Brevard Hotel is now. That was called Oleander Pointe and there was nothing there. They used to have community picnics down there at May Day and they'd have the May Pole and a big picnic where everybody would bring either their own or covered dish and the entire town would participate in it.

That's really what I heard more and they'd have boat races and they'd have little sailboat races for the children or row boat races that type of thing. Always to do around the river. My grandfather had a little cannon. It was about this long I guess and he used to use that for the boat races and that was the starting gun because it could be heard. We used to fire it even when I was a child and my mother got afraid that it would blow up on us so she made us stop doing it but my brothers and I used to sneak and do it when she wasn't around. Pack it up with all kinds of stuff and a little mini ball and blow it away out in the river. It was a lot of fun too.

Nancy Yasecko: The river was central to so many things I guess.

Norris Andrews: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: You all must have done some fishing.

Norris Andrews: Yes. I would say we probably fished everyday. That was one of the things, kids come over from school and watch TV. We used to come home from school and go fishing. During the citrus season when tangerines were in season we used to have the best time casting. We put not a hook but just tie the line around plugs of the tangerine and throw them out for seagulls because they used to love ... Seagulls are like pigs of the air, they will eat anything. We'd cast this out [00:36:00] and the seagulls would catch it and we'd reel them in and that sort of thing.

Just be silly and play out on the river, in the river and fish all the time. There were a lot more fish and I tell this story and it is very true, mullet you know jump then they don't bite the hook. They are vegetarians and they jump for light also. Almost all of fish do but mullet particularly do. We used to have a little row boat and then my brothers as we got older we had a little boat. It was a row boat but it had an engine in the center of it. Not on the end of it but in the center and look like an old coffee maker.

This machine, this motor did. We'd have more fun in that boat but in the morning sometimes we would find six or eight mullet and they'd still be alive would have jumped in our boat overnight. There were so many mullet in the river. If you had a lantern out there they'd jump up on the dock even. They jump to the light and I would think they'd probably still would do it, we just don't have as many mullet as we used to.

Nancy Yasecko: Would you eat the mullet?

Norris Andrews: Yes, in fact in the citrus business if you had a good year my mother would say in the citrus business it was either feast or famine. You'd either be going to Europe one year or you'd be eating mullet and grits the next. Yes I ate a lot of mullet. We'd eat it fried and have it with grits or hominy as it was called in my family but it was actually grits and greens and that was awfully good. Cornbread, I'd like to go home and have that tonight.

Nancy Yasecko: There were other fish too I guess. [00:38:00]

Norris Andrews: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: What other ...

Norris Andrews: Trout, Sheepshead, Sailor's choice, I can't think of any more. That would be about what we catch here. Then, of course we catch what we called toadfish. They are like the little blow fish. They've got a little muddle skin

on their back and then they blow up. They blow up with air when they get frightened and they do that so that the bigger fish can't swallow them. That's the reason they get all fat and they have this little spines that come out on their tummies when they blow up like that. We used to catch them and tickle their stomachs and make them blow all up and do all kinds of dastardly things with them like use them for foot balls. Very bad. Not nice to do. I'm ashamed I was mean like that but I was. We used to drop kick them off the docks to see how far they'd go when they were all blown up, terrible. Do you used to do that?

Nancy Yasecko: They are just irresistible.

Norris Andrews: They are. They are just a lot of fun. Of course catfish. We would do some pretty bad things to the catfish too.

Nancy Yasecko: Those blow fish are just asking for trouble.

Norris Andrews: They are. They just ask for trouble when they do that.

Nancy Yasecko: They've met children anyway. What was school like here?

Norris Andrews: School, school was great. I went to Mrs. Guice's [00:39:41] kindergarten. We didn't have public kindergarten when I was a child. School started in the first grade but I went to Mrs. Guice's. I think I went probably two years. I don't remember that well and then I went to Cocoa Elementary [00:40:00] School which is where Scotty's is now, the elementary school and the high school were all right there and it was right on US1 because the street that runs behind Scotty's now was US1 in those days. That's where I went and I still remember all my teachers that I had in grade school.

Nancy Yasecko: Can you say their names?

Norris Andrews: Yes. I had Mrs. Waller for the first grade. I had Ms. Bergen [00:40:31] for the second grade. I had Mrs. Wolary [00:40:35] for the third grade. I had Mrs. Williams who by the way still lives in my condo where I live now, for the fourth grade. Ms. King for the fifth grade and Ms. Daniels for the sixth grade. Then of course we went just on the same yard but just across the sidewalk the junior high and high school and then you got to change classes and have all different kinds of teachers and that's where I lost track of all of them. I don't remember, but a few of those teachers. I still remember all my grade school teachers.

Nancy Yasecko: What was the grade school classroom like?

Norris Andrews: As I recall there were probably 20 to 25 of us in a class. There were always two classes for every grade believe it or not even though the town I think the population of Cocoa was only about 2,200 or 2,500 people but we still had two grades. They had the little desk that connected. The desk part and then the seat of the desk in front of you came off of the back of your desk, the front of your desk. It had a little inkwell over in the side because we still used where you dip your pen. We still use those kind of ink pens and they had those.

[00:42:00] Yes, the little boys are still dumping your hair in the ink well if they could get it, that sort of thing and that's the way it was set up and with the black board up at the front of the class. It was just a whole lot of fun and it was the big thing to be able to beat the erasers at the end of the day. Clean the erasers, that was just it. That and be a patrol man to get everybody across the street, to wear the belt for being a patrol girl or boy that was a big thing. My mother when she went to school and my father they both went to school here in Cocoa too. They did not have to start school at six years old.

It was not a law that made you do that so neither of my parents started school until they were ten years old. Now, I don't know if that was because of fear of them getting sick. I don't know why but my father started school and my mother both and they made up classes. They jump classes as they went along. My father jumped four grades in one year. I think it took my mother two or three years to do that but anyway it was an amazing thing. My father graduated from high school at 16.

Right at the same place that I went to school my father went to school. My mother did not. My mother was older than my father and the school was in a different place. That's what she used to say, "I didn't even go to school with your father. I was so much older and I used to push him in a baby carriage." She was four years older which wasn't a whole lot. Anyway, I think their school was very much the same as ours.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you study Latin, Greek? [00:44:00]

Norris Andrews: I didn't. No, they didn't offer that when I went to school here. Because their courses were limited in what they could teach it was a bad time in the state of Florida when I got into high school.

Nancy Yasecko: When was that?

Norris Andrews: That was in the 40's. It was right after the war and I guess books were hard to come by. Really they didn't offer those. If you took Latin, you could only take Latin one one year and then they offered Latin two the next year so if you were coming up to take Latin one and they were offering Latin two you had to wait an extra year. I did take Spanish. I was sent away to school. I went to boarding school in Charleston, South Carolina. My brothers went away to a school in Jacksonville, Florida. They went to the Bolles School which was a military school in Jacksonville and that we all graduated away from here but I have lots of friends that graduated from here and did real well.

Nancy Yasecko: How did you get to school?

Norris Andrews: I either rode my bicycle or my mother or father drove me to school but most of the time I rode my bicycle.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess there wasn't too much traffic.

Norris Andrews: No. We came home for lunch. See, back when I was in school they didn't have ... You could come and go from school. It wasn't like you were restricted in any way. Everybody went home for lunch or brought their lunch or you could eat at the cafeteria. There again right after the war they didn't offer the food at the cafeteria. Not until a few years down the line [00:46:00] did they start that again. You'd either take your lunch or go home for lunch. Then, of course I know you probably heard of the Dixie Restaurant. There was a Dixie Diner which was right next to the school, the high school. I used to eat there almost every lunch time and I think everybody from this area did too after you got to be a teenager you ate at the Dixie Diner every lunch time.

Nancy Yasecko: I think most folks are still eating there.

Norris Andrews: Yes, I think they definitely are. Still go eat lunch at the Dixie.

Nancy Yasecko: That's an institution, that place.

Norris Andrews: It really is.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah, I guess it's changed somewhat but it's still ...

Norris Andrews: It's changed a whole lot because it was just I want to say it was a railroad car and I think it was. I think it was an old maybe like a trolley car or something. It was very small, had like four tables in it and then of course

the counter that you could sit at. It was just fabulous and then they tore that down and built a smaller little concrete block building for a long time. They had that and it's progressed to what it is today.

Nancy Yasecko: When you were in high school, what would you all do for fun?

Norris Andrews: Gosh, then you have to remember this was the 40's and it was very restricted. There was not a whole lot to do. We did have a skating rink. It was a tent and it was out in West Cocoa. I'm trying to think of what it was close to today. About where Warren Wooten Ford is today. They had across the street from that and they would put up a tent with a wood floor [00:48:00] and that was our skating rink. It was up off of the ground. We would do that and we went to the movies a lot. The movies changed in those days every two or three days there was a different movie.

Nancy Yasecko: Where would you have gone?

Norris Andrews: Right uptown here.

Nancy Yasecko: What was it called?

Norris Andrews: Let me think of what the name of it was. This is terrible.

Nancy Yasecko: Was it the Aladdin?

Norris Andrews: No, it wasn't the Aladdin. That's what it was it was the State Theater when we went. I used to have to dust the furniture here in this house for 25 cents a week. I dusted the hall furniture and it's all teak and it's carved teak and it was very tedious but I made a quarter to do that. That's what I would use to go to the movies with. You could go to the movies in those days and it was 9 cents to get in. They didn't sell drinks in the movies but you could get a candy bar and popcorn and probably spend another 10 cents I think popcorn was about 2 or 3 cents for a bag and a candy bar of course was no more than a nickel.

You could come home with change. You could go and stay all day in the movies. You go Saturday morning after you got through with your chores and you could see the main feature and then they always had a cowboy movie and then they would have a serial, an ongoing like Batman or something like that. Then, they would have short subject that was usually funny and then a news reel. I mean, you could stay all day and you could see it as many times as you wanted. It didn't matter. There have been many time where I've sat through the whole thing two or three times and

with mother coming in to get me and dragging me out [00:50:00] saying, "You've been here enough."

Nancy Yasecko: Was the theater air-conditioned?

Norris Andrews: Yes. It was lovely when it was hot. Naturally you'd want to go stay. My grandparents used to go to the movies every night. They would walk from here uptown to go to the movies just because they loved movies and then it was cooler. Then we got to drive-in. I'm trying to think when we got to drive-in, maybe about 1948 and that was on Merritt Island and about where Walmart is on Merritt Island now was the drive-in movie. We would go there.

Nancy Yasecko: Was that the barn?

Norris Andrews: That's where the barn theater yes came to be eventually but before that it was just a drive-in. Then there was a drive-in where you went to eat like McDonald's of course there were no such thing as McDonald's or Burger King but there was a drive-in over on Merritt Island. That's where everybody gathered to have hamburgers after and you're out on a date. Then there was the Tiger Den here which was part of Cocoa High and they had a jukebox and a dance floor and a Coke machine and we would go and do that and dance.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of dance?

Norris Andrews: Gosh, I guess the girls, the kids call it today slow dance. That's what it would be, slow dance and jitterbug. All the boys knew how to dance. That was just the pre-requisite. I don't think many young boys know how to dance nowadays. They're not into that but back in those days all the boys learned how to dance. They either got their big sisters to teach them or their mother. [00:52:00] Somebody taught them to dance anyway so they wouldn't miss out.

Nancy Yasecko: Sounds like fun to me.

Norris Andrews: It was fun. A lot of fun. Then we went to the beach a lot too. That was a big thing to go to the beach.

Nancy Yasecko: It's quite a treck from here I guess.

Norris Andrews: Yeah, when I was very small it would take about an hour and a half to two hours to get to the beach because you went across the wooden bridge

into Merritt Island you drove across Merritt Island and went down South Banana River Drive. You went all the way down not quite to the end of South Banana River but about to Horti Point a little bit south of the Horti Point. There was another wooden bridge that went across and came in to the middle part of Cocoa Beach about where Minutemen Causeway and that's the way you got to the beach.

Then of course everything was a dirt road, all Merritt Island was dirt roads and then once you got across the wooden bridge all of Cocoa Beach was dirt road. You might get stuck two or three times and if you happen to meet somebody you either had to back up until you found a wide enough place in the road or they backed up whichever and nine comes out of ten one of you would end up getting stuck. You always carried a shovel in the back of the car and some boards to put under the tires and a machete so you could cut palm fronds to put under the tires. You actually went and stayed all day.

You didn't go back and forth to the beach. Then when my parents were young and my grandparents they used to go to the beach and stay at least a week to a month because you sailed. You'd sail down south on the river, go around the point of the island and sail north on to the end [00:54:00] of Banana River and then get off and usually they would have sent somebody over ahead and they would have somebody who lived over there had a mule in a wagon and they would come get you and all your supplies and go to the house you were going to stay in and you'd stay a week as I said week or more because it wasn't worth it. It would sometimes take you two days just to do that sail down around the point of the island and back up where you wanted to go.

Nancy Yasecko: They'd take everything?

Norris Andrews: You'd take everything with you. Right. If the weather got bad or something, sometimes it would. You'd have to spend the night on the way. They had a good time though, they used to enjoy it. Life I guess was a lot slower even though we had to do more mechanical things like washing and that thing. It's still was a lot slower.

Nancy Yasecko: People also seem to entertain themselves or seems like almost everybody could play some kind of instrument.

Norris Andrews: All right. That's right. We read a lot more and played a lot more games I think too. Cards games and that sort of thing that people don't play now, they really don't.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. Let's move in to some other area. I guess you wouldn't have any personal memories but maybe you would have heard stories about the stock market crash and the depression and what it was like around here.

Norris Andrews: I heard lots of stories because my grandfather and my father lost their business and how bad it was. My parents were married the year of the crash. They were married in April of 1929. Then, of course the major crash happened in October. [00:56:00] My brothers and I we're all born in the depression. All depression babies. They are not that many of us. People didn't have so many children when it was a bad time in fact I guess having three children back in those days was a good many for a lot of people. No, I don't except to just know that it was a bad time and that my grandfather and father lost everything.

Nancy Yasecko: You say lost the business, what would that have been?

Norris Andrews: It was the Buick business. They were Buick dealers here in town, automobile dealers.

Nancy Yasecko: Some part of the family still had the grove.

Norris Andrews: Yes. That stayed. It was hard times but there were still a need I think any time that there is a depression, times get bad but when you're in agriculture people will still eat. The product is still used in some way. It's just not as plentiful maybe and the price is down but it is still used in some way. That is people still drank orange juice and still eat oranges and it was still shipped up north. My father and grandfather used to say the way to get through a depression is either work for newspaper because people always buy newspaper to look for a job, work for the tobacco industry because they are getting nervous and smoke more, that's not true now of course. Work for the liquor industry because they definitely drink more or be a farmer because then you could always eat. I don't know how true all those are but anyway that's what was told me. I guess [00:58:00] it really was pretty bad all the way around.

Nancy Yasecko: What about the prohibition days here? Speaking of liquor.

Norris Andrews: Speaking of liquor, I think a lot of bathtub gin was drank in this house and in all the other houses around here and I think I was telling you the story earlier that my parents were married in April of 1929. Of course that was in the depth of the prohibition. They wanted to have champagne at the wedding and so the sheriff of Brevard County who was a very good friend of my families got the champagne for the wedding. That was the wedding

gift to my parents was the champagne for the wedding. I thought that was pretty good.

Nancy Yasecko: I heard stories that some of the rum that was coming off the islands also is landing not so far from here.

Norris Andrews: Yeah, it didn't land very far from here. This was really used a great deal in this area for running rum through it. It really was. I don't really know a whole lot about that just stories my parents told me about making bathtub gin and how they would strain it through a sieve with a cloth in it like cheesecloth. After a particular party they had made this bathtub gin and the next morning the sieve and the cheesecloth had a big hole eaten in it. They were very concerned that they had drunk and consumed all of this bathtub gin but my mother said, "We must have been very strong because nothing happened to anybody."

They worried about that I know for a while. They used to have some wild times in those days [01:00:00] with the prohibition. We lived in Daytona when I was a very small baby. Speaking of that era and we stayed, we lived in a house we rented a house up there. My father was there again in the automobile industry and had moved up to sell cars in Daytona. I was about four months old when this took place and we stayed in a house that Al Capone had been in. The FBI knocked at the door one day and asked if they could search the house. They found some bullet shells behind the bathtub in the bathroom and so my mother always loved to tell that story how we stayed in one house that Al Capone had lived in. It was a wild time. I'm sure it was something.

Nancy Yasecko: Another ...

Robert: We're short on tape again, if we can change it?

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah, let's do it.

Robert: Okay, Nancy.

Nancy Yasecko: Brevard County Historical Commission Oral History Video Project. Interview: Norris Andrews Porcher House Cocoa, Florida. [01:02:00] January 16th 1994. Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko. Cameraman: Robert Gilbert. Equipment: Camera Sony DXC M7. Recorder Sony BVW-35. Copyright: Brevard County Historical Commission 1994.

Robert: Okay. [inaudible 01:02:20].

Nancy Yasecko: Five, four, three. Tell me what it was like around here during the war, world war two.

Norris Andrews: World war two, WW2, this town was much like any other town I guess and that everybody was in the war effort. Being on the coast and here in Florida we had black outs that were mandatory. Everybody's house had black curtains at the window so that you could have lights behind but they could not be seen from the sea or from the air. Everybody had their headlights on their cars painted, the top half of the lights on the cars were all black so that you could still see the road but there again it was very difficult to see it from the air or from the sea.

Everybody saved tin foil and rubber bands and the war effort was everybody bought bonds and particularly here we had air raid warnings a lot, we had a lot of practices. My brother one time was one of the wounded and he was placed in a little apartment that's right down the street and in the hallway of this apartment with these various wounds on his body so that the Red Cross could [01:04:00] practice how to pick up the victims and what to do for them when they identified these wounds.

Nancy Yasecko: Pretend wound.

Norris Andrews: It was a pretend wound and they forgot him and he was missing and my mother panicked because she didn't know where he was and he had fallen asleep up in the hallway of this apartment house but they lost him for two to three hours. He really was among the missing. We had I think it was six or seven ships sunk off of Canaveral here and my mother was part of the Red Cross motor corp. It was a group of women here in town who had station wagons and they formed what they call the motor corp and they equiped these for small ambulances.

When these ships were sunk my mother would go to the cape or along the beach wherever the survivors came in and would pick these men up. By this time we had a hospital, we had a hospital built. Wuesthoff was built I think in 1941 and we had a hospital by this time. The very badly wounded if they didn't fit into Banana River into the hospital there they were brought to Wuesthoff here. Then my mother and the other women in the motor corp would bring the rest of the survivors of the ship here. We've had China men staying here, we've had Dutchman, Scotchman, that's a funny story.

The Scottish boat when it was sunk was supposed to have a load of Scotch whisky aboard as well as a load of sugar and of course the

Germans didn't have any idea of what these tankers and these ships were carrying so they just sank them all, it didn't matter. The next day after this ship was sunk, the one that was supposed to have the Scotch whisky in it [01:06:00], all the man in town that could together these boats were out at the beach rowing these boats to get the liquor out of the hulls of these ships before the thing sunk all the way. That was quite a story of everybody going out there to try to get the scotch out of the ships.

Nancy Yasecko: Did they get any?

Norris Andrews: Yes, they surely did. My father being among them. Yes, they got a good bit… What do you call those people who salvage and who run around and take things from the sea? I forgotten what they call. Not beach comers or something else that they … It's not scavenger but it's something similar to that anyways what they were all calling each other after this.

Nancy Yasecko: Not pirates?

Norris Andrews: No, not pirates but almost like a pirate but that was the war and of course everybody there was a curfew, you couldn't be out on the streets. As I said we had a lot of air raid warnings here and because there were boats, there were U-boats or German subs that hung off of here and you'd hear them depth charging. Because from the Banana River naval air station that was used for training, for the training of the navy pilots but they also ran daily reconnaissance out over the ocean and they would drop depth charges from boats.

I mean from the airplanes as well from the boats that they sent out trying to … I think they did sink two or three of the subs because a lot of oil and clothing, et cetera, would wash ashore. I don't know if that was from the ships that were sunk of from the actual German submarines that they sunk.

Nancy Yasecko: That was kept pretty quiet. Would you read about these things in the newspaper?

Norris Andrews: Pretty much they would be in the newspaper [01:08:00] but mainly it was the talk of the town more than anything else, more than newspaper articles. Then we had a Japanese family who lived here and they sold vegetables and they would come by the house on a weekly basis and sell vegetables and that sort of thing. Just before World War 2 broke out the family disappeared, they just left and nobody knew where they were and later we heard that they had been picked up trying to leave the country.

They were going as steerage I guess on a boat and in the vegetables and the eggs that they had, they had hidden maps of the entire Coast of Florida and that's what they had been doing here for all that time that they had lived in and growing the vegetables. They were absolutely mapping the edge and all the Coast of Florida and I think the East Coast of the United States for the Japanese. Of course that was a big to do around the town with all that going on but you'd get waked up with the depth charges going off.

Then when my older brother was an aircraft spotter then we had towers all around the county that had the regular aircraft spotters that went up on hourly. I don't know, maybe they were up two or three hours at a shift and go up there with binoculars and look for airplanes and then call it in if they saw anything that resembled an enemy aircraft of any sort.

Nancy Yasecko: You could hear the depth charges all the way over here?

Norris Andrews: You sure could. They'd go on for hours at a time over and over again.

Nancy Yasecko: I think I remember someone telling me a story about a ship that was hit that was full of shoes [01:10:00]?

Norris Andrews: I didn't hear about that one.

Nancy Yasecko: People going up and down the beach looking for mates to the shoes?

Norris Andrews: Oh my gosh. No, I didn't hear about that one, only the Scotch whisky one which … They wanted to have a party obviously.

Nancy Yasecko: There must have been some rationing as well?

Norris Andrews: Yes, there was rationing and that's how I got a cat one time was from rationing. My mother as I told you we went to North Carolina, Western North Carolina in the summer and we had a farm up there. As gas rationing got worse we couldn't afford to go in the car up there because we didn't … My father for two years rented a freight car and he put the car in one end and our horses and dogs in the other end. Then the people lived in the center and that's the way they … My mother and I weren't allowed to go, it was only men that were allowed on this trip.

Mom and I would ride the train up and they would go in this box car and they outfitted it all. It was quite looked like a travelling circus actually. The rationing and mother would save all of her meat stamps in order to

buy food for them to go on this trip in the box car. Because it would take about 10 days, they may get put off on the siding in New Smyrna or some place in Georgia and sit there two or three days before they got them back on the main line and went on. Even though they went as perishable free but mom would save these stamps and go up to the butcher and the butcher said, "Every year you do this to me and no, I don't have any extra meat but you can have this," and he pulled this kitten up from underneath the counter.

I think I was seven years old at that point and I had German measles and mom brought me this cat home [01:12:00] and that cat lived until after I was married. It was close to Valentine's Day so I named her Valentine but that's the meat rationing story but we have green stamps and red stamps and I don't remember what bought what. I know the red stamps bought meat but I'm not sure what the other stamps were used for.

Nancy Yasecko: Maybe gas?

Norris Andrews: They might have been used for gas and then you had an A sticker or B sticker in your car on the windshield, it said what kind of gas you could buy, how much and that sort of thing and I know we had a B sticker. My father did not serve in the service and I'm really not sure why, I think he tried to enlist but I don't know whether he had a health problem, I don't know. Anyway, I look back now it was really a time. We all saved a great big silver foil, made big silver ball and we had one … I guess it was this big around, we turned it in and we thought that was going to save somebody, I don't know, I don't even know what they did with it the silver foil. Don't have any idea what it went for but everybody avidly saved it anyway.

Nancy Yasecko: It was after World War 2 that a lot of things changed around here because people who had gone into the service didn't necessarily come back to live in their hometowns. Some people came down here and stationed at Banana River station and to a great place.

Norris Andrews: That's right. Some never left, some stayed, in fact Buck Buchanan of MacMillan Buchanan Insurance Company here [01:14:00], he came, he was stationed at Banana River and he met Mary and met Lib his wife and then he never left. He came back here after the war and they were married and he has never left the area and he's now one of the port commissioners. A lot of people did that they stayed, a lot of people didn't come back and they decided to move on. I guess it was about 1949

they've decided they had closed Banana River Naval Base and totally closed it and demolished it in their minds.

Then I think it was about 1949 they've decided to reactivate it, only make it an air force base and make it Patrick Air Force Base as a tracking and housekeeping station for the down range. My brother married the daughter of the first general that was there, General Richardson and my brother is married to his daughter. They came down and as I said I think that was about 1949 that they reactivated and made that because they had decided that they were going to try to do more with the missile industry. Because the Germans had done so much with the missiles during the war and we had captured a lot of them so decided to use their minds.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah, how would you say the area changed when the missile men started arriving?

Norris Andrews: Whew, such growth and the sad part of the growth is the growth was good in a way and that it brought industry and it brought all [01:16:00] kinds of good things to the area. It also brought a lot of bad things to the area and mainly Cocoa Beach it brought some bad things too. Because back in those days Cocoa Beach still had the dirt roads, Cocoa Beach was still not organized enough for the growth that took place, it was such rapid growth. City water was not even over on Cocoa Beach and so about 1958 or 59 they decided to put the city water over to Cocoa in these huge pipes.

Then all the influx of all the Patrick workers and the downrange workers started coming in with all the big companies, RCA, PanAm, all the fore runners of the ones that are here today and there was not enough places for people to live. They started living in these water pipes as they were cutting the water in to the Cocoa Beach, people were living in those water pipes and places to live were at a premium. In fact Patrick because of its great growth it couldn't put all the people on Patrick that belonged there so they started renting the motels. I think there were three or four motels on Cocoa Beach at that point and Patrick just took them over completely and put a lot of their personnel in those motels.

People just could not find … Nobody could get a telephone, it was chaos and because of that, because there were no rules and regulations that said, "You cannot build this, you must build that." There is a lot of what I call get rich quick trash that was built on Cocoa Beach and that was what [01:18:00] was so sad. People just coming in to make money on it and not

to make it so that it was nice and it would last a long time. That was the sad part of it.

Nancy Yasecko: How did the old Florida community react to these people that are coming in?

Norris Andrews: They weren't too happy about it they're again … I think the change was too rapid about like asking the old Orlando people how they like having Disney, they don't, they don't care for that. It would be different if you didn't feel like you were just taken over and consumed and people say, "Well, this is the way it's going to be whether you like it or not or whether you don't want it there." I think the people in Anaheim, California feel the same about all of these places that have these tremendous influx of people that come in and the roads are not good, they're not wide enough and they don't go in their proper places. The sewer systems are not good enough, the water system, everything is just chaotic and so the old timers don't care for that but they adjust, they adjust or they leave, one way or the other.

Nancy Yasecko: About how long was it do you think before that first rush of growth stabilized?

Norris Andrews: I would say that it had probably stabilized by the mid 60's and then of course we had the Apollo fire where the original astronaut was killed one of them and then the other two with him. Of course anytime anything like that happened it immediately stopped the forward progress of the missile industry. Then we went into a lull time again [01:20:00] and there again the builders of homes and businesses had these starts and they couldn't get rid of them. A lot of people went bankrupt in that time frame because we have always depended so on I would say defense and on the military spending and on the missile industry itself and now space.

Anytime that you're so dependent, let something happen such as the recent Challenger accident and everything kind of really goes downhill for a while until it stops and starts up again. I have to think back in history, it's probably a good thing we didn't know how many people Orville and Wilbur Wright lost in learning how to fly. Because there were a lot of people killed in that but the American public was not made privy to that or we might not have an airplane today if that had been the case. The same with people who discovered that the earth was not flat like they thought, but round. I think that it shouldn't slide back. I think progress should keep going. I guess it's just human nature to slow down and maybe it is for the best to safety wise anyway.

Nancy Yasecko: Would you take an interest in the launches?

Norris Andrews: Yeah, I used to, I've gotten very kind of blasé about them now. Yeah, and I saw the Challenger accident I was working just about nine miles from it and that was very, very sad, very sad. Yes, I used to watch the launches particularly the funny ones back in the early [01:22:00] days where more of them went the wrong way than went the right way, that was funny. Watched one one time over on the beach that looked like a jumping jack before they finally blew it up. They were having trouble blowing it up even … No, they couldn't do a thing right, no.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's see. What else that we got here on the list. Hurricanes, any big winds you remember coming through here?

Norris Andrews: Well the worst hurricane that I remember going through was in 1944 and it washed out both of the causeways. I told you when I was a child there was a wooden bridge that went from Cocoa over to Merritt Island and then in about 1941 or 42, I forgotten when. I think it was was pre World War 2 or to our major involvement in World War 2. They put in the causeways now between Cocoa and Merritt Island and Merritt Island and Cocoa Beach and in that hurricane of 1944 both of the causeways were washed out so that couldn't get to and from the beach.

I remember this house has a basement, has a full basement and we had about three feet of water in the basement. We were without electricity and without water for about five or six days and all communications to the State of Florida were down. Because my mother happened to be in North Carolina closing up the house for [01:24:00] the summer and my father and my two brothers and I were here because we were in school. My mother was terrified because she couldn't talk to us for the better part of a week.

I don't think she could get back into the State of Florida either. That was 1944 and that was of course long before they ever named hurricanes. I can't remember, I don't remember if it was October, September, October, it must have been sometime around then, maybe it was even November, I'm not sure.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you remember the storm itself?

Norris Andrews: Oh Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: What was it like?

Norris Andrews: Just like about any big wind that you hear. It was all the trees standing almost at a right angle to the ground. A constant blowing, it's not like gust like we have now but the constant blowing. I think the eye must have pass very close because I know it got very calm and then it started up again. We must have been close … I don't know that the eye went across us but it was very close anyway because it did calm down and then started again. One hurricane my dad took us to the beach so that we could see the ocean and that was phenomenal, I had never seen waves and never have to this day seen waves.

They must have been 20 feet coming in that they didn't break on shore at that but coming in they were just phenomenal. You could stand with your raincoat and hold your raincoat up and the wind hold you up. That was really something and that was a hurricane too when I was younger but not the one of 44, that was a terrific one then [01:26:00].

Nancy Yasecko: How would you know they were coming? Did you not know?

Norris Andrews: I don't know that we did know. I don't think there was any preparedness, I don't remember that. I guess maybe they looked at the sky or something and said that there was something coming, I mean I really don't know, maybe they did hear it, maybe the adults did but they didn't talk about it very much.

Nancy Yasecko: They knew about hurricanes?

Norris Andrews: Of course, oh yeah, yeah. My grandmother was born here in 1875 and she said to her knowledge we have never had a direct hit of a hurricane here and she died 1965. There was a place over on Cocoa Beach that you could literally stand in the middle of this little spit of land and you could throw a rock in the ocean here and a rock in the river on this side, it's close to Patrick, it is all been filled in now. She said to her knowledge that the people who lived over there told that water had never crossed that spit of land which means that we really never had a real bad hurricane here, thank goodness.

Nancy Yasecko: The newspapers certainly covered some of the locals?

Norris Andrews: Oh, certainly.

Nancy Yasecko: What was the paper here like?

Norris Andrews: The Cocoa Tribune oh golly that was a nice little paper. It covered everything from soup to nuts. My great grandfather came down here and owned a newspaper. I don't remember the name of it but it wasn't of course the Cocoa Tribune. Mr. and Mrs. Holderman came and I'm not sure that they bought an existing paper or whether they just started the Tribune and that had [01:28:00] to have been back in the early 20's I think. Prior to that we had had a newspaper but everybody looked forward to the Tribune coming out, it used to come out three times a week. When I was a child it came out once a week and then it got up to three times a week and then of course she sold it to the Gannett Newspaper.

Nancy Yasecko: How was the mail delivery in those days?

Norris Andrews: It was good. My grandfather was a postmaster. It was good, it was fine. I think everybody in my family always had a post office box and the only people that I knew of who lived out in the country ever had mail delivered. Everybody else went to the post office to either get their mail, to ask for it general delivery or to get it out of your post office box. Until really very recently I would say in the last 25 years or so you can just put Cocoa, Florida and it will get to you. Because everybody in the post office knew everybody so you wouldn't even have to put a post office box on there you just say Cocoa, Florida it would be delivered.

Nancy Yasecko: Where was the post office?

Norris Andrews: When he first was the postmaster uptown in Cocoa Village there's a little building, a little mall area now called Magnolia Mall and it's behind the Myrt Tharpe [01:29:42] Pavilion and that was the original post office where my grandfather was. Then where the federal building now is on Brevard Avenue that's where it became the post office, it was built after my grandfather became the postmaster. [01:30:00] I think that was after World War 2 also.

Nancy Yasecko: I'm trying to think about places in town that were landmarks we talked about the state theater and post office. There was Travis Hardware?

Norris Andrews: Right. I used to love to go to Travis Hardware and just look around and watch the men work because men who worked at Travis Hardware went to work there when they were young men and worked there until they retired. They used to have the ladders that they rolled around and went up on the shelves with these ladders to get the merchandise down. Then of course Travis was out over the river so it always smelled like the river

and it was great. I'm sure a lot of people now don't like that river smell but see that smells like home to me, that river smells neat.

Nancy Yasecko: They had a lot of stuff in that in building.

Norris Andrews: Oh, a lot of stuff. A lot of stuff.

Nancy Yasecko: Seemed like no matter what you wanted.

Norris Andrews: Anything you wanted you go to Travis you could get it.

Nancy Yasecko: That's right.

Norris Andrews: Forerunners of Sam's.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's see what else. A couple of restaurants.

Robert: That's about the last question.

Nancy Yasecko: I was picking up, yeah a couple of restaurants, was there a one called Myrts?

Norris Andrews: Yeah, that was Myrts but she was fairly … That's been a fairly recent. There was one called the Hob Knob which is where the arcade is now. As a matter of fact it's kind of where there is a hair shop there now and this and that kind of a cute different kind of gift shop and that's where the Hob Knob was, it was a restaurant. Then of course up at North in River Drive there was Hubbs Inn that used to be an old [1:32:00] fish warehouse and they turned into a restaurant and it was wonderful, it really was. I'm sorry it went away.

Robert: Go ahead. [01:32:00]

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. This is Brevard County Historical Commission Oral History Video Project. Interview: Norris Andrews Porcher House Cocoa, Florida. January 16th, 1994. Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko Cameraman: Bob Gilbert Equipment: Camera Sony DXC M7 Recorder Sony BVW-35. Copyright: Brevard County Historical Commission 1994.

Robert: Go.

Nancy Yasecko: Five, four, three, two, one. You were going to tell us about when your great grandparents first came down?

Norris Andrews: Yes. My great grandfather Gardner Hardee was from, close to I think Hardeeville, South Carolina and he had five brothers and they all served in the war between the states, the civil war or whatever you want to call it. Anyway, he had been a courier on Longstreet staff and he had been wounded and was in a hospital in Richmond at the time that the war ended. It took him the better part [01:34:00] of a year, six months I think for his leg to heal and then which left him with a leg about half inch shorter than the other.

Then another six months to walk home to South Carolina because of course he just didn't start out walk, he probably stopped and worked along the way in order to get food, et cetera. By the time he got back home he found out that their place, their plantation had been in Sherman's line so everything was burnt to the ground, his parents had died and everything was just scattered. Most of his brothers had gotten home and they tried very hard to put things back together and start raising crops again but the taxes were so high and it was just eating them alive.

By this time the "carpetbaggers" were there really doing their thing. The story in my family goes is that the five brothers got very upset because evidently their cotton that they had grown have been confiscated. They went into town and burned it down and they escaped the five of them and three of them came to Florida and two of them struck out for the west. Now, whether the two that went to Texas have ever been heard from, I don't know but the three that came to Florida they stopped at North Florida on the way. Now, they were on I think mules and horses both because they came back to nothing and for them to get a horse back in those days was very, very expensive.

But anyway, they stopped and two of the brothers stayed in North Florida and my great grandfather came on down here. [01:36:00] Now, when stopped in North Florida he picked out the land that he wanted from the land office and came for this area and he came down and he swam the St. John's River with his horse and came over only to discover that he didn't have the land that he picked out he didn't have the proper deed for it. Because it was the meets and bounds description from this tree to that rock, et cetera and it didn't match what he had picked out.

He went back up to the land office and got the proper papers and came back and swam the river again and came over and settled in what is now Rockledge, in fact he named it Rockledge. His name was I said was Gardner Hardee and his closest neighbor was in Eau Gallie and he

eventually after he built a place to live, et cetera, went down to Eau Gallie and they had a visiting cousin from North Florida and he married her and they had six daughters one of which was my grandmother.

Nancy Yasecko: Her name?

Norris Andrews: Her name was Mary Elizabeth Hardee, only they nicknamed her Minnie when she was young and she was always known as Mini Hardee. In fact I believe that's what record state in all the land transactions that she ever did, it was always Minnie but her given name was Mary Elizabeth.

Nancy Yasecko: Why do you suppose he chose this area?

Norris Andrews: I don't know. I guess he liked the way it looked on the map. I would imagine he liked the idea that it was an inland a waterway and my grandmother used to tell the stories that when she was a child and before then the Indians who were of course in a [01:38:00] reservation down south and it would have been South of Fort Pierce in those days. Long before Miami was opened up and that section of South Florida but they used to go to Titusville which was then called Sand Point by canoe and they used to camp on the property that was my grandfather's.

My grandfather was very friendly with the Indians and they would go back and forth in their canoe and it was true story that they always kept one Indian sober when they did that so he would get the rest of them home. They would camp going north and coming back south and also President Cleveland, Grover Cleveland came and he docked at my great grandfather's dock and my grandmother said she was 12 years old and she had picked a bouquet of flowers and she gave it to Mrs. Cleveland. I guess the Cleveland's, I don't know whether they stayed with my great grandfather and grandmother, I'm not really sure about that. Anyway, that kind of tells you a little bit about that side of my family too.

Nancy Yasecko: Are there any stories about what it was like trying to eek out a living down here at that time and what could he do?

Norris Andrews: There again, I think what he did was farm just regular crops and hunt for his meat and live off of the land until he could get his citrus and in the [interim 01:39:40] he also grew pineapples. He owned the south tip of Merritt Island and that's where he grew an awful lot of pineapples was on the southern tip down where the dragon is now. Down on that south tip was a big pineapple, I don't know what you call them farms, I'm really

not [01:40:00] sure what you call them but anyway pineapple plantation maybe, that's it.

Nancy Yasecko: Haven't heard that. I don't know how good they were.

Norris Andrews: I'm not sure either. Anyway, that's what he did to get going.

Nancy Yasecko: A change for a southern gentleman most probably raised in a plantation to find himself thrown into starting over completely.

Norris Andrews: Right. Totally, totally, with absolutely nothing. Everything gone to come home. I think he went into the war when he was 16 or 17 and I think he went in toward the end over the last two, two and a half years of the Civil War. He was blind in one eye, one of his brothers had shot him in the eye with a bow and arrow when he was young. I guess he couldn't or wasn't anything other than, I say he wasn't anything other than a courier on General Longstreet staff. I guess maybe because of the blind eye, really I don't know.

Nancy Yasecko: He obviously saw some action.

Norris Andrews: Yeah, he did. He lived until 1928 so my father used to tell a lot of stories but he used say that he knew there were no ghost because during the Civil War after a battle he said many, many during the time that he have to get off of his horse and lead his horse around the battlefield. The bodies were so thick on the ground that you couldn't walk with the horse across the battlefield, there were so many bodies. Horrible time I guess in history.

Nancy Yasecko: It was here, this is before the steamboat were starting to [01:42:00] run or about the same time?

Norris Andrews: I think it was fairly soon after that that the steamboat started.

Nancy Yasecko: With civilization?

Norris Andrews: Yeah, yeah, and little civilization but not in this particular area, I don't think. Eau Gallie had people living there and of course there'd been people in Titusville prior to this. Titusville was known of course as Sand Point and I guess according to my grandmother was quite a rootin tootin town like a lot of duels and a lot of shoot them ups, a lot of rough and tough people and of course Colonel Titus came to town and cleaned up, hence it became Titusville. Prior to that I guess it was pretty rough.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah.

Norris Andrews: Like Jacksonville it used to be known as Cow Ford.

Nancy Yasecko: Where is that?

Norris Andrews: Jacksonville.

Nancy Yasecko: Jacksonville.

Norris Andrews: It used to be known Cow Ford.

Robert: undecipherable

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. When you say he picked out his land, was he homesteading?

Norris Andrews: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess a lot of people were doing just that.

Norris Andrews: Yeah, a lot of people homestead and of course I think the government tried to get a lot of people to move into Florida. It was an excellent time to get them because coming back and really the carpetbaggers and I don't mean to make this sound but it was pretty bad with people taking advantage of people in distress. Coming in and loaning the money, exorbitant interest rates in order to pay back taxes and to get started again. Then of course they couldn't meet these payments and they would confiscate the land from them or their crops or whatever and not work with them so they got a really bad reputation.

Nancy Yasecko: During that [01:44:00] time of homesteading there were a lot of blacks moving down in Florida too. Were there black homesteads around here at that time time do you know?

Norris Andrews: Not to my knowledge, I don't know. I know my great grandfather had been given a slave when he was born and the slave was about the same age and the slave went with him to war, stayed with him the entire time. I think my great grandfather credits him with saving his leg when he was wounded and came with him here to Florida even though he was freed, my grandfather had freed him long before. Here comes somebody in.

Robert: Rolling.

Nancy Yasecko: In five, four, three, two ... When the Seminoles came through do they ever trade with your family?

Norris Andrews: Yes, they would. As I said they stopped and I think they used to go to Titusville or Sand Point about once a month for supplies and then go back and they camped every time. My great grandfather would always go to their camp fire because he was always invited to come to their campfire and eat with them. Only my great grandfather, I don't think my great grandmother was ever invited to any and then of course none of the girl children but only him. He would go and eat by the campfire and drink with them and they would buy whiskey, they were allowed a jug of whiskey I think in Sand Point.

My great grandfather told the story that they were really I guess pretty dirty looking people and he worried the first time about drinking from the same jug because they pass the jug around this campfire. He just put it up to his [01:46:00] lips and pretended to drink and the Indian sitting next to him grabbed him by the throat and said, "Hardee no drink. Hardee lie," he said, "He started drinking." He never anytime after that, they offered him something he didn't ask what it was he just ate it and it obviously didn't hurt him because he lived to be 88 years old. "Hardee don't drink, he lie."

Nancy Yasecko: When was this house built?

Norris Andrews: This house was built in 1916 and my grandmother Porcher designed it. She was an artist, an amateur type artist but she's still loved to draw and I have two or three of her paintings. Anyway, as I told you she had never lived in a home anywhere but she'd been and I think in a lot of homes and a lot of places. I think she took a little of this and a little of that and drew this house and it's never had an architect look at it.

Then my grandfather just hired a local contracting people from around this area and built it. The coquina that is here it's built out of coquina, that coquina's that is here came from the basement and that that they didn't have enough, they got it from Rockledge because there's a lot of coquina underground in Rockledge obviously. That's how this house was built as I said in 1916 and I think they moved in 1917.

Nancy Yasecko: Is it on the same property that your great grandfather [01:48:00] would have?

Norris Andrews: No. See those were two separate families altogether. This was on my mother's side this family. Yeah, and the Rockledge is the Hardee side of my father's side of the family is Hardee. It's very difficult and I often laugh and say I'm related to almost everybody in town on one side or the other.

Nancy Yasecko: That does happen in small towns?

Norris Andrews: It does.

Nancy Yasecko: You know everything about everybody. What about the politics?

Norris Andrews: Golly, what about the politics? I really don't know much about the politics in town. I do know my father served on the council prior to and during the war years World War 2. I know he was acting mayor for a while but I really don't know too much else about the politics. I've been involved with them more recently than I have in the past.

Nancy Yasecko: I heard some stories about early, early days electioneering and voting that sounded pretty wild but I can't credit them.

Norris Andrews: Yeah, I really don't know. I do know my great grandfather Hardee, Gardner Hardee was a state senator and his brother one of those who stayed was a governor of Florida and hence Hardee County which I'm not real sure where that is over around Ocala [01:49:39] I think, I'm not real sure.

Nancy Yasecko: Those were back in the days when the state house in Tallahassee was quite a scene I understand.

Norris Andrews: Yeah, it really was quite a scene.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you remember any memorable court case, court house figures [01:50:00], sheriffs?

Norris Andrews: No, I'm sorry. I don't remember those.

Nancy Yasecko: It's okay. We don't expect you to know all these things. You mentioned the one doctor in town, Dr. Hughlett.

Norris Andrews: Hughlett.

Nancy Yasecko: Was there a dentist?

Norris Andrews: Yes, there was a dentist, it was Dr. Daniel was the dentist that I knew rather that my parents knew. I think Dr. Daniel had retired and his son was an orthodontist over in Orlando when I was young. Then of course there were other dentist that came to town after that but I think Dr. Daniel was the only dentist I knew that my parents ever spoke of and Dr. Hughlett.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay, the Brevard Hotel was certainly a magnet for some northern visitors.

Norris Andrews: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell us about that.

Norris Andrews: Back from I would say the late 1800's to the late 1920's Cocoa was really a winter mecca and there were, I counted them one time, and I think there were six or seven hotels up and down the river just from Cocoa into Rockledge and of course the Brevard is the only hotel we have left at this point. Before Mr. Flagler opened up the south part of Florida with his railroad, people stopped here and this is where they wintered. There was the old Cocoa House in Cocoa which was out over the river much where the Sun Bank is now. There were some lovely, lovely hotels [01:52:00].

Nancy Yasecko: These were big hotels?

Norris Andrews: Big, oh yeah and the Indian River Hotel which is now where the, not sure what they call that, Indian River Villas I think they call it now down at the corner of Barton and Rockledge Drive and that was where the Indian River Hotel was.

Nancy Yasecko: They probably had 50 or a 100 rooms do you think?

Norris Andrews: Lovely, at least, yeah. Now the Brevard Hotel has I believe 60 rooms and the Cocoa House probably had 30, I would think 30 or 40 rooms. I would think the Indian River Hotel easily had a 100 rooms, I think so. Then there was one called the Plaza Hotel which is where the Rockledge Presbyterian Church is in Rockledge. Now that was all across there, Valencia Avenue, it was all the Plaza Hotel. A lot of winter visitors came and stayed there.

Nancy Yasecko: What would they do when they were here?

Norris Andrews: I think rock on the porch and probably sail and play cards and shuffle board and probably badminton. I'm not sure what all they did as a matter

of fact I think they probably read a lot and I know they wrote letters an awful lot, things that we don't do any more, we don't write letters except when we absolutely have to. I think they did an awful lot of letter writing.

Nancy Yasecko: Did they interact with the local community much?

Norris Andrews: Some did, some did. Because they became regular winter visitors here some definitely did. Much like Cocoa Beach is now [01:54:00]. In the winter some of them are regulars that come every year and you do get to know them.

Nancy Yasecko: Would they bring in bands and entertainment? Do you recall hearing about it?

Norris Andrews: I'm sure they did, I'm sure. Because we did have a band shell that was just across the street here and I think, I really think they used to have … I remember when I was a very small child my parents used to go to dinner parties a lot and my father always wore a tuxedo and my mother always wore a long dress. I think they did an off a lot of entertaining and I know they did a lot of things with bands and ice cream socials and that kind of thing on a Sunday. Of course with the advent of World War 2 a lot of that stopped, a lot of those things came to a halt, was no more.

Nancy Yasecko: The world really changed?

Norris Andrews: Really changed an awful lot with that.

Nancy Yasecko: What about the land values, I mean they changed too?

Norris Andrews: Yes, tremendously, tremendously. Even in my lifetime I know we purchased a piece of property over on Cocoa Beach in 1960 on the river and paid $2,750 for the lot and that was, I said mid 60, if I said 50 I meant 60. My father and mother owned four lots on the ocean that I think they paid $250 for across about where the surf is now. I think they sold them for $2,000 a piece and my father thought he had … well he actually had made quite a bit of money but I remember his words at the time when he sold them is, "Nobody's [01:56:00] ever going to want to go to Cocoa Beach. Who's gonna want to be over there in the mosquitoes, sand spurs and palmettos?" Times change.

Nancy Yasecko: I hate to think what that property would be worth today. Imagine there are some of that, from people who've been around a long time.

Norris Andrews: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: I wish.

Norris Andrews: If only I had saved it, if only. My grandmother Porcher though, Gus Edwards was a major settler of Cocoa Beach and my grandmother gave him or loaned him, I'm not sure which, grandmother Porcher the money to put the first sidewalks into Cocoa Beach which were about where the surf is now south. I don't believe they came north at all, they're just a few of those what we call boom time houses just south of the surf there which were built about probably 1922, 1923 in that area.

Nancy Yasecko: Wow that if I had … Also during the depression of course a lot of people didn't pay the taxes.

Norris Andrews: That's right.

Nancy Yasecko: The beach land, they had sell it or just let it go.

Norris Andrews: Right, and just let it go for taxes. My parents had two or three friends that moved here after World War 2 and bought up that land for taxes. It was like, I don't know like ten cents on the dollar, it was unbelievably inexpensive and then turned around and sold it to the Hilton and places like that, made a great deal of money. They probably had more foresight than those people who had been here a long time.

Nancy Yasecko: They knew a good thing when they saw it.

Norris Andrews: Right, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess that's true. Did you ever go out to the Canaveral Lighthouse?

Norris Andrews: I have been only a couple of times before the cape came in to the Canaveral [01:58:00] Lighthouse. We used to go up that way an awful lot because we had friends of my families owned a beach cottage and we used to go spend a lot of time there, it was up toward the Canaveral Lighthouse.

Nancy Yasecko: Which family is that?

Norris Andrews: It was the Scotts, George and Sue Scott. They lived on South Merritt Island owned a beach cottage, it wouldn't be too very far from where the port is now in that general area was where it was.

Nancy Yasecko: I pretty well gotten through these things I'd say. Is there anything that you?

Norris Andrews: I can't. The whole time we've been talking I've been trying to think … I think I've touched on almost everything that I can think of right now. Of course when I leave here you understand.

Nancy Yasecko: Of course that's [crosstalk 01:58:52].

Norris Andrews: I would be I should have said so and so.

Nancy Yasecko: There must be at least another story you could tell about mosquitoes?

Norris Andrews: My brothers and I we used to do the most foolish things. When we were kids in the summer, of course it was very hot and you'd have on shorts and a t-shirt. It used to be that you can't play outside because the mosquitoes were too bad. It would be one of those days and we used to bet each other to see how long we could run out and spread eagle like this and stand there and see how long you could stand it. You would be black with mosquitoes in about 60 seconds after you went outside and it was to see how long you could tough it out and I never won. I was always the first to say, "I can't stand it anymore," and why we didn't get sick, I don't know. Because too many mosquito bites will give you a fever not [02:00:00] like malaria or anything but like a dengue fever which is not good, it's bad but we never got sick.

Nancy Yasecko: How long was the record for that?

Norris Andrews: I think my brother could hold it about three or four minutes and I couldn't last a minute, I really. I can still remember you'd go brushing them off and put your arms would just be bloody because there would be just so many of them. Just awful.

Nancy Yasecko: Did your mother know?

Norris Andrews: No, of course not, she would have, "No, no." That would have been verboten. We did a lot of things we weren't supposed to do. We used to play in the packing house here all the time, my grandfather's packing house went out over the river and we used to play there and ride the machinery. The boxes were built up on the third floor in the packing house and they were sent down a shoot and you could ride down the shoot and then the machinery actually picked it up, chain driven machinery.

We used to ride the machinery all the way to the packing bins, all the way through the washer and everything. Not very good, that was verboten also and play in the paper room, as I said we … My grandfather wrapped each piece of citrus, paper was delivered in bins about the size of this table and they were stacked in what was called the paper room and they would stack them up and you get up and ride them back like this, sway like that, that was also verboten but we did that, did a lot of things.

Nancy Yasecko: It was fun.

Norris Andrews: It was a lot of fun and why we didn't get hurt but really never did. We had a huge alligator that lived under the packing house and my father tried for years to kill him and he finally succeeded. He was trying to always get our dogs [02:02:00] and dad worried about him getting the dogs and us too when we'd swim in the river.

Nancy Yasecko: Why was he so hard to get?

Norris Andrews: He would disappear, he would just sink down in the water and you couldn't see him and if you don't hit him exactly right and daddy was not a gator hunter obviously but he finally got him.

Nancy Yasecko: How big was it?

Norris Andrews: He was about 12 feet long. He was a good size, good size and then I think he lived under that packing house probably his whole life.

Nancy Yasecko: All right.

Norris Andrews: I don't see gators like that in the river anymore.

Nancy Yasecko: Thank goodness.

Norris Andrews: The wildlife wouldn't let him, the wildlife commission wouldn't let him live there, they move them on.

Nancy Yasecko: We're at the end.

Robert: I know.

Nancy Yasecko: All right.

Norris Andrews: That's it.

Nancy Yasecko: That’s a wrap.