Interview with Dr. Margaret Seitz
June 11, 1984
Interviewer: Chris Frazier

I. This is an interview with Dr. Margaret Seitz at her home, 411 Lore Avenue, Wilmington, June 11, 1984. This is Chris Frazier speaking.

Dr. Seitz, I think first we should establish your relationship with John and Catherine Gibbons.

A. I'm the great granddaughter of John and Catherine Gibbons. My grandmother was Anna Gibbons who was their daughter -- Anna Gibbons Seitz who was their daughter.

I. And she married --

A. And she married Jock Seitz and they lived on the Brandywine up at Free Park which is up the hill from the Gibbons House.

I. The house is still there, isn't it?

A. Yes. The Shieldses lived in that house. They greatly extended it. But that's the original part of the house is the house that Jock and Anna Seitz moved into.

I. And Jock Seitz came from --

A. Jock Seitz came from Alsace in 18 -- the end of 1871. He had fought in the Franco-Prussian War on the French side and although he's German, and I sent for the material from Alsace, practically all of his ancestors had German names. He wanted to be considered French like Aunt Pauline said that he always wanted to be considered French and he fought in the French Marines in the Franco Prussian War. And then when the French lost and Alsace was ceded to Germany, he said he did not want to live under the Kaiser. So, he came to this country and worked in the duPont powderyards. A number of people came from Alsace at that time. I can remember there was a Kindbeiter family who -- the family lived up the Brandywine.

I. Yes, that name is familiar.

A. I have a friend whose grandmother or great grandmother was by that name -- Father Hazzard who is pastor at Corpus Christie Church. His mother was a Kindbeiter and they came from Alsace. And I think Mrs. Hazzard is still living and she is related to Ella Fitzharris, somehow or other.

I. When were Anna and Jock Seitz married?
A. They were married at St. Joseph's on the Brandywine and I'm not sure of the exact date. My father was the oldest of the family and he was born on June 25, 1875. So they were probably married in 1874 or 1873. I think the records are at St. Joseph's.

I. Probably. And how many children did they have?

A. They had six children. They had three boys and three girls, and all of their children lived to maturity -- of the Seitzes. Uncle John was the next and Aunt Catherine who married Kelly -- who married Michael Kelly -- and then Florence -- Aunt Florence -- and Uncle Charles, and then Aunt Pauline. Pauline and Florence never married. Charles Seitz married.

I. And what was your father's name?

A. My father's name was George.

I. George Seitz.

A. Hm-mmm. He was named for his grandfather. Obviously because in the genealogy that I secured from Alsace that name appeared as Jock Seitz's father. George Seitz. And they lived at Free Park.

I. Your father grew up there.

A. Yes. And they tell the time he would visit his grandmother down the hill. Mrs. Gibbons.

I. Catherine Gibbons.

A. See, that was 18--. He was born in 1875 and they lived there until '85, so he was 10 years old.

I. He would remember a lot. Do you remember from him?

A. No. See I was just six years old when he died. He died with pneumonia. As a matter of fact, Anna Gibbons who was my grandmother -- her father, John Gibbons, her uncle who was -- let's see, it was William Gibbons and her sister, Margaret Gibbons, they all died with pneumonia. And as I have been working up in the house there, I'm wondering if it had anything to do with the dampness in that house.

I. Could be.

A. Yes, because all of them -- the whole family was wiped out with pneumonia.
I. And they weren't that old, either.

A. No. My grandmother was -- well, she would have been like 51 or 52. And the same with with Aunt Maggie and the uncles.

I. Do you remember your grandparents?

A. No. I was -- I was born after they died.

I. And what was your mother's name?

A. My mother's name was Margaret Collins. My father and mother were married in St. Paul's Church the 23rd of September, 1903.

I. And was she a local girl?

A. She was a Delawarean. Her family came over with the Revolution. Her ancestors lived out in Hockessin and Ashland area. They were English and Irish and Quaker. I checked my great grandparents on my mother's side are buried at the Friends Meeting House in Hockessin. Their name was George and Jane Collins. So I did some research on that side so that they were both Delawareans. A number of generations.

I. Very interesting that you can trace them back.

A. Yes. And we're still here.

I. And you're still here, yes.

A. And they came -- of course, my mother's people were not immigrants because they came over with Peter and Hugh Collins came over before the Revolutionary War and they fought in the Revolutionary War. But on the Seitz on the Collins -- on the Seitz side, Jock Seitz came over to avoid tyranny in the Alsacian area and John Gibbons came over to get away from the English oppression. There were just two immigrants came over. And then, of course, their great-grandson is my brother and he's the judge of the court and those two were admitted to citizenship. An example of what our country is. Opportunity.

I. Where did your parents move after they were married?

A. At first they lived just a short while on Delaware Avenue. And then they lived at 1629 Lincoln Street which was the house that John Gibbons had bought and he thought he
would retire and go there. But, of course, the poor soul died before he had a chance to retire. He was 63. And my parents lived there until they came out to this place in 1919.

I. And how many were in your family?

A. Oh -- my mother had seven sons and then she had me.

I. Eight children.

A. I'm the youngest -- came at the very end.

I. So, you all grew up in this house?

A. Yes. We all grew up here.

I. And all of your knowledge of your grandparents comes from other people.

A. That's right. My brothers -- Collins, my brother -- older -- well, he's my youngest brother but he's several years older than I -- he said he remembers visiting my grandfather at Free Park. They would go out to visit him. And he remembers -- he said that my grandfather came out here to Gordon Heights to visit Jock Seitz -- to visit before he -- well he had to have some sort of operation and he went to Philadelphia. And came out here to say he was leaving and then he died. He died of euremic poisoning. Kidney problem.

I. Was he fairly young?

A. He was in his 70's.

I. Well, he lived to a good age, then.

A. Yeah. My father was only 52 -- 53 he would have been. My Uncle John was 58. When he died. Uncle Charles was in his early 70's and the women lived -- Pauline was in her 80's and so Pauline, Florence and Catherine were all in their 80's. When they died, the women. A heartier lot.

I. Pauline and Florence, of course, lived in the Brandywine Manufacturers' Sunday School and did you visit them there?

A. Oh, yes, I visited them. And Florence Seitz was a telephone operator and she worked there in that house. And then when they moved the office in town, the house -- the office was turned into a house for Pauline and Florence. They were very friendly with the duPont family.
I. Yes, I have heard that.

A. Chick Laird he used to call Florence the Duchess of Free Park. And there was another -- Mrs. Silliman's mother -- Pauline and Florence used to pick violets and ship them to them by express out when they were up like in New England or somewhere during the spring and summer. At the violet season. And they were very close to the members of the duPont family. As a matter of fact, they lived there rent free. And Mrs. Silliman fixed up the house for them and they didn't have to pay anything there. They lived there and kept it up. Of course, it was kept in apple pie order. And when Chick Laird, for instance, they said was a boy, he would come down and have cookies there -- the homemade cookies and things. Probably some of the same cookies that we give out.

I. Probably from the Cookbook. Ella Fitzharriss remembers them as very elegant ladies who wore beautiful hats.

A. Yes, they never went out with hats and gloves.

I. One of them was quite tall.

A. Yes, Pauline was very stately.

I. Very stately. A beautiful woman.

A. And she had beautiful white hair and a nice sense of humor. And both of them were good cooks. And it's such a shame they went through their things without saying -- the pictures and things -- and they tore up all the pictures because they said they didn't want anyone making fun of them. They had a load of material.

I. Isn't that too bad.

A. And she gave my brother, Collins, Jock Seitz' citizenship papers. She fortunately didn't tear those up. And that's when I gave those to the Museum.

I. Well, what do you remember about visiting them?

A. Oh, I used to go down there on like Saturday afternoon or Sunday. And they always had something delicious to eat. And as an adult they would have me out like for my birthday and invite people out. And Florence would make these fancy -- she had something to make fancy butterballs. And they served them in a silver butterdish. And I still have some of the recipes. There's a delicious lemon torte that Pauline made. And they were just fine. And I think in the Cookbook there, she made a hot butter sponge cake. It was really delicious.
I. Well, it's good those recipes are still around.

A. Yes. My cousin in New York had a lot of them. She got the recipes. I had some of them. But the pancake that we had was Catherine Gibbons' recipe -- after my mother and father were married, my father took my mother to visit Mrs. McPherson. She had moved in to town with her daughter and son. They had Harry -- they had three children -- Harry and John and May. And they lived up on Delaware Avenue not too far from Lincoln Street. And as a young bride, my father took my mother up there to see Mrs. McPherson because he was friends from the Brandywine. They'd go "up the crick," they used to say. So, Mrs. McPherson gave my mother that recipe. She said,"Here's a recipe that was George's grandmother's." And she gave my mother that recipe.

I. That's the one with the rosewater.

A. With the rosewater, yes. That's how we got it initially and then, of course, other members of the family. But my mother tells the story about going to visit Mrs. McPherson. And she was friends with them afterwards. And I can remember as a small child visiting Mrs. McPherson on Delaware Avenue. She was a little lady and sort of wispy in appearance. She had -- like her head -- she had her hair up in a knot on her head. And she was a really lovely little lady. She seemed ancient to me.

I. Yes, I'm sure she did.

A. As a child she seemed real ancient. She probably was. Up in her 80's I guess at that time. But, her daughter, May McPherson, worked for the Public Building in Wilmington. And after my brother, Collins, became a lawyer, he from time to time would see her. He'd come home and tell my mother, "May McPherson was asking for you." Only at that point she had married a person by name of Stout so she was May Stout at that time. As you know they lived in the house right next door to John and Catherine Gibbons.

I. There's a new phonograph that they found of theirs. You'll have to see that when you go over there.

A. Oh, good. I haven't found it. I have a picture of the what would have been the Museum building -- some of these Museum buildings. I don't know where it is but I'll have to look.

I. Yes, that would be fine to have -- make a copy of that.
A. And I have -- I just found it -- I've been going through stuff -- the old Kodak camera that Jock Seitz had. I don't know whether they'd be interested in it or not -- it pull's out. It's probably close to a hundred years old, I guess. Turn of the century.

I. Yes, that would be fine, I think.

A. And then I have a daguerreotype of Anna Seitz -- Anna Gibbons Seitz. If I can find it. Everything was put away. And we had never -- I had never moved -- never lived anyplace else and I haven't thrown anything out. So, it's somewhere in this 11-room house. But where?

I. When your aunts lived there, were they any other people in the area or not?

A. Across the street where the Belin house is there was a lady -- I think it was called Triano -- it was an Italian name. They lived there and they were very nice to Pauline and Florence. And then the head of the maintenance -- what's his name -- he lives down in the Blacksmith house. He was there and they used to always be very solicitous of Pauline and Florence. After the first snow came, they always managed to get the snow plow down there so that they wouldn't be isolated. They would check in on them.

I. They drove?

A. Pauline drove until she died. She was way up in her 80's. Pauline drove; I shouldn't say Florence. Florence did not drive. But Pauline drove until the day she died. And she dropped dead. She was getting ready to go up to church at St. Joseph's on the Brandywine. And dropped dead on the floor there. My brother went in and found her. He had a key. So he went out and found her.

I. Was someone living in the Seitz house then? Farther up the hill?

A. Yes. Shields were there.

I. Do you remember the Gibbons house and that area?

A. I remember the walls. We would go down there -- walk down there to take a look at it and I can remember saying -- Pauline saying that was my grandfather lived there. But I never. And she was the youngest of the family. Let me see, she was born in 1890 or 1891. So that she would not have known him. Because he died in 1985. But Florence would have. But Pauline -- Pauline was extremely close to her father. Her mother died in, let's see, my
parents were married in 1903 and my mother said that Anna Gibbons -- or my grandmother had died about two or three years ahead of that. She was dead before my mother.

I. Around 1900.

A. Yes. My mother didn't know her. She died before my mother met my father.

I. Well, what was the Gibbons house like at that time?

A. It was a shell. The walls were there and Collins said -- I was talking with him and he said he remembers going down there. And the walls and the roof had deteriorated. But, it was visible as a house. And you would walk down. It was weeds around it.

I. No path or anything?

A. No. Well, the road went down but when you went up -- the porch wasn't there. It was the stone -- the walls were there. And then when you came up toward -- where you go up and make the bend for the church, you used to be able to go straight ahead and meet the road coming in. There used to be able to either make the circle or come straight. When you visited Pauline and Florence. You didn't have to go clear in by the church. But that now has been closed off for a number of years.

I. And there weren't any other houses there then?

A. No, just the -- the blacksmith house and the one across the street, the Belin house. And then up around the bend there was the Shields and the then the one by the church.

I. Now, stories that you hear about your grandparents you got from your brothers.

A. From my brothers. And my mother. She would tell stories about them. My Brother Collins said he remembers going up there and my grandfather was very proud of his garden. It was out the back -- you'd go out the back door from the house. And he said like on the left-hand side, he remembers it was all grape arbors. And on the right-hand side it was all squared off into vegetables. And he would make -- well, he made the wine every fall after the grapes, and the one side of the cellar was lined with wine kegs.

I. Oh, he had his wine cellar.

A. Wine cellar. He had his wine cellar there. And I've given them the material -- the wine press and then there's a wooden plug there and there was a mallet -- I don't know what they call it -- the funnel. There were a number of things they had that I gave them.
I. The wine press is in the Gibbons House.

A. In the Gibbons House, yes. And the bottles. The amber bottles.

I. Yes, they are there.

A. Not many of them left but what were left I gave them. Pauline had given those to my brother.

I. It's good those things were left.

A. Yes, I'm glad. And then the dishes that are there I got out of the garage which is the carriage house. She had a lot of stuff stored up there and after she died, I took my nephew out and he got all the stuff out because my cousin, Jock Kelly, he didn't want to be bothered with that. He was just going to throw it out so that's why I took the stuff and brought it back.

I. Now, were all the dishes in the sideboard -- are they from the family?

A. Yes, there might be one or two that are not, but practically all -- the turkey roaster, and the blue dish on what do they call it -- the cupboard by the stove, we had that here. And I gave it to them. We used to fill that with -- (Telephone ringing). And I have a cousin in Washington, Jock Kelly, who was Catherine's son -- that would be my father's sister's son. And then there's one in Philadelphia, Rosemary Kelly. She came down at the time they had the opening and she was extremely upset when she saw the Manufacturers' Sunday School because she was even -- she would come down in the summertime and visit Pauline and Florence. Very, very close to them. And it upset her to see the house torn apart.

I. Quite a change.

A. It was. I had been out -- had seen it in the making so it didn't have the same impact on me that it did on her.

I. What do you remember about your grandparents from other family members? said he

A. Well, my father -- my father was a very strict person. Jock Seitz was very strict. And he -- until -- my father was 28 and my mother tells me that until my father was 25, he turned over his pay to his grandfather and then he paid him his -- gave him back his spending money -- his allowance. But all of them -- that was an old European custom, I guess. But he was a very strict
person that way. My mother, of course, didn't know his mother, but apparently she was the recessive -- the dominant-recessive -- she was the recessive person in the Seitz marriage -- Jock and Anna.

I. Anna was.

A. Anna would be the recessive. And, of course, you've heard the story about when Anna wanted to marry Jock, John Gibbons objected to it.

I. No, I haven't.

A. Well, he objected to it. He said he didn't want her to marry some foreigner. And they come over here and leave a family over on the other side. So, he went to the priest and St. Joseph's on the Brandywine and had him checked out. They wrote back to Alsace. ________ is where he came from in Alsace -- a little town called ________ . And wrote back to the priest there and checked out his family. And found out that he was an honorable man and then he let his daughter marry. But, I can remember my grandmother -- My mother's mother lived with us and I used to say, "What was grandfather Seitz like?" And she said, "Well, he couldn't speak English." Said he had an accent; you couldn't understand him. And, of course, this is just what I hear. MY father -- my brother was saying that he used to have people come out from town and he was very proud of his garden. And I can remember my mother saying that Mary Jane Walker was the name of the lady. She had been my father's school teacher. And she came out to visit there in the country. She would come out on Sunday. Apparently, that was quite a thing. They would get the trolley out to the Brandywine -- up the crick, and then they would come out for dinner. And when they would go back, they would be loaded -- in the summertime -- be loaded with vegetables. And things.

I. He spoke French.

A. He spoke French and German. And an interesting thing, even though he didn't like the Germans, he didn't want to live under them. He was a Catholic. And when he would go to confession, he would go in German and he would come in to Sacred Heart to the German priests who were Benedictines -- they were German. And would come in and go to confession, as they say, to Sacred Heart in German, and yet he didn't want to live under the Germans but yet he had the fluent tongue. Of course, understandable because he lived under German rule and had to know it fluently. But it was amusing that he was so anti-German and then turn around and have the little quirk. He was a fairly tall man and he liked to work in his garden. I have a number of pictures of him. He had a mustache and he was very happy that my mother had all these boys. My brother said he was very proud
of the fact that he had grandsons. He had Seitz grandsons. My uncle, John, he had daughters and my Aunt Catherine had just the one son, but of course, he was a Kelly; he was not a Seitz. So, he was real proud of the fact that he had grandsons. But he was not too lenient with them, my brother said.

I. Not with the grandsons, or the sons.

A. The grandsons, nor the sons, no. He was strict. And -- Pauline Seitz was very proud of the fact that her father had been in the French Marines -- the French Legion. They had his discharge, but no one can find it now. So I don't know whether my cousin in Washington has it or it just got lost. We did have the copy of John Gibbons' discharge from the Civil War and I gave it to the University of Delaware library because I was afraid I couldn't keep it and take care of it the way it should be. And I called them after the Gibbons house opened, and they can't find it. So, I never called back. I told the people at the Museum and I don't know whether they ever followed through on it or not.

I. I didn't know John Gibbons was in the Civil War.

A. He was in the Home Guard in the Civil War. And the cane that's in the -- I shouldn't say it's up there -- I don't know -- but I gave them the cane that he carved in camp.

I. Yes, the black thorn?

A. No, it's the Union Forever. It's a cane that's all carved with patriotic symbols on it.

I. I know there's a black thorn cane.

A. Yes, I gave them the black thorn cane, but I gave them the other one, too. I think they said they were afraid of the dampness in the house and they didn't leave it there. And that somebody would take it, too. The six bone dishes that were Catherine Gibbons' I gave them and at least one of them has been taken from the hutch -- there are only five there now. Somebody has a souvenir from Hagley.

I. I'm afraid of people taking things like that.

A. Yes. I know one of them is gone.

I. That's too bad. Because everyone asks what they are -- they're very interest in it.

A. Well, they still have five of them. I think Sally Wright said she was going to suggest that they glue them down.

I. I think so. They should.
They were glued down at first. Well, the glue dries. But, Collins -- my brother -- that's where I -- and my mother gave me the most information. My mother was fond of Jock Seitz for a father-in-law.

I. Your grandfather.

A. My grandfather. He would come -- she said he made a habit like on Sunday morning, he would come down to the house on Lincoln Street to visit the children on Sunday morning and would bring them things. And that was John Gibbons' house. It has been torn down now and the Daugherty Funeral Home has a parking lot. But, they lived there. Can't think of much else. Pauline and Florence, I do remember visited them until they died.

I. Any family stories that came down about John and Catherine and any of their children?

A. Well, the one that I told you about was John objecting to the marriage. I guess -- this was because of my mother -- my mother's family in particular they were Methodists and prohibitionists and my father's family always had the wine. And there was always wondering whether people drank too much. My mother felt that way about it. Because in her family it was not --

I. That's the way they were raised.

A. That's the way they were raised. But Jock Seitz never lost any time and John Gibbons didn't, either. They were honorable employees of the duPont Company. There was one thing about Jock Seitz -- my mother said that he had a pension from the duPont Company and he felt that the duPont Company owed him nothing. That they had paid him a salary his whole life and that that was really their generosity in giving him a pension after he retired. And Pauline and Florence, too, were extremely loyal to the duPont Company. They felt that -- I can recall as a young person, I worked for the duPont Company -- oh, I guess, for about eight or nine months total and then I went on and got my degree in psychology and went to the Department of Labor. And I remember Aunt Florence saying, "You're giving up your pension." Well, I was about 21 or 22 at the time. But she felt that that was an honor to work for the duPont Company. And they would be considered that anything they did for you was because they were such wonderful people. It wasn't that you earned it. Because when you worked for them, they paid you. And that was what you bargained for.

I. For just your labor.
A. Yes. Of course now, you have the fringe benefits and all and the current set-up, they don't consider it. You get your due now.

I. What did your grandfather do? Was he a powderrmill worker?

A. He was a powderman. And Pauline was in the accounting department. She worked entry machines -- some sort of machines at that time they were very, very simple and she did some sort of posting machines. And Florence was a telephone operator. When my father died, I remember my mother saying that there was 103 years of unbroken service with the duPont Company in the family. But we don't have anybody now working. My brother worked -- George -- worked for a little while. He was a chemical engineer. He worked over at Deepwater. And in World War II he went into the service and when he came back, he didn't go back. They were extremely loyal to the Company -- the whole group of them -- the whole family. Sort of a paternalistic relationship as we look at it in the present situation. And they knew the people.

I. Knew them very well. On the site and on the property.

A. It was adifferent relationship altogether.

I. Everything has gotten bigger since then. Did they talk about activities at the head in the community like dances at Breck's Mill or?

A. They had band concerts. Alfred duPont had a band and my father was in the band. In the book there I see his picture and I gave them a lot of music that was left. But when my parents were married, Alfred duPont's band played at their wedding. It was in the evening. It was sort of an unusual situation -- an evening wedding. They didn't used to allow it at all. But apparently they must have. My parents were married by Father Connelly -- John Connelly who was a friend and they were married at St. Paul's Church in Wilmington and she said that people were commenting because they were married in the evening and had an orchestra at their wedding.

I. Well, maybe that was the only time the band could come and play.

A. I'm sure it was, I'm sure. Because they worked Saturdays. As I say, it was 1903 when they were married. So that was probably the likely reason.

I. Any other activities you remember your mother talking about?
A. They had picnics, too. They used to have picnics. And particularly Fourth of July. It was the big time they would have family picnics. And on the Brandywine they were all one family like -- up in the different -- like up in Free Park people would get together and have this. And there were a lot involved with church suppers, too. My mother was serving at the church supper and that's how she met my father. They had played for the orchestra -- the duPont orchestra was playing there. And after the entertainments, the ladies fed the orchestra members. And father Connelly said to my mother, "Here, I want you to meet a young man." And he introduced her to my father. And that's how they met. That was about 1900 or 1901. A lot of the life surrounded the church. Most of them were Irish and most of them were Catholic.

I. Yes, I think a lot of life did revolve around the church.

A. And St. Joe's on the Brandywine was founded in 1848. And they were active there.

I. Christmas celebrations?

A. Yes. They used to string popcorn, she said, and put it on the trees. And they had -- now we think of -- if they would put in the stockings, they would put an orange. And they had turkey at Christmas and that was a big deal, to have a turkey at Christmas. Of course, now we have it all year round. But they had a big time with the turkey and they stuffed the turkey. And my mother got that turkey roaster. We had that in our house. We used that. Because we had a big family. The others didn't have a big family so we got that. And I still recall as a little child having that pea soup on Friday. Because before they did away with the laws of fast, or abstinence on Friday, they didn't eat meat. And one of the recipes -- they called it pea soup but it was made with fresh peas and new potatoes and it had a milk base to it and they cooked the drop dumplings on top and they puffed way up. And that was Friday dinner. And another thing they used to have was -- I can't find the recipe -- boiled apple dumplings. They would put them in a -- they would make the dough and have the apples and used nutmeg. And they would fold the dough over and then they would slip it in a muslin sugar bag and pin it and they would drop that in boiling water and cook it until it was done. And then they served it with milk. They would heat the milk and put a little bit of sugar and vanilla and the milk. And you poured that over it. And that was Friday supper.

I. The pea soup and the apple dumplings.
A. The apple dumplings would be supper individually. That wouldn't be a dessert. They would use that. Later on my mother would make it and she would use it sometimes as a dessert. And then they had chicken and dumplings. They would have these drop dumplings with the creamed chicken. I never cared for it myself, but they had it.

I. You at what was put in front of you.

A. That's true, they did. Although I personally didn't. My mother always catered to what I liked. But, that was a much later time. And my mother always made that pound cake for birthdays. That was the birthday cake. And she had the big turk's head pan, they called them. Instead of calling them tube pans, she called it turk's head pan. And that was the great big birthday cake. Any persons' birthday, they had that.

I. That's delicious. Anything you remember about activities or celebrations?

A. They used to have fireworks.

I. Just on the Fourth of July?

A. Yes. And they had sparklers, they called them. And you could make -- as they burned, they gave off like a flow of sparks.

I. That's what they have now when you go out and somebody has a birthday celebration in a restaurant sometimes they bring a sparkler.

A. Oh, yes. These would be different colors. The thing that I recall were the picnics and church affairs and band concerts. And the dances.

I. They had them at Breck's Mill.

A. At Breck's Mill. And they visited a lot -- the families. Sunday afternoon. I can remember as a small child, of course, we lived here. They would -- my father had cousins lived in West Chester. They were his grandmothers' family, the Daughertys. Catherine Gibbons was Daugherty and he had a cousin -- Ellie and Katie Daugherty were single ladies and then their sister was married. She was Louise Daugherty Myers. And they would come here like for Sunday dinner. It was a great thing to visit families for Sunday dinner. And not necessarily let you know; they just would arrive.

I. And you had to have the food.
A. And you had the food. Now it's in the freezer and you take out two chops and thaw them. But we always had a roast on Sunday. That was what we had then people came.

I. That was the entertainment.

A. The entertainment. And they would visit and talk about the family comings and goings.

I. Well you had a fair number of relatives in the area.

A. Come down and reminisce about the different things. I remember my mother saying one of my father's cousins had visited my grandfather after my grandmother died. And they were speculating as to -- he was going to take a trip back to Europe again to visit his family. And they said he might be going back to get another wife. You know how people talk. Because he was a widower.

I. Did he ever go back?

A. He went back once, but then that was all. He took my father and my Uncle John back to visit. And he had a number of family.

Tape I -- Side B:

A. For Catholics to keep records because of the English. But in Alsace I have the records back a couple hundred years from the Seitz family -- the different names -- Stumpf and Myers and all German names.

I. Did anyone else from his family come over?

A. He had a brother that came over and went to Buffalo but he disappeared. In those days communications were very poor. And then he had a nephew that came over by the name of Eugene Martin and there is a Martin in the genealogy that I got back. He had another name and my mother tells me the story that when he came to Seitz, Jock's -- he stayed with them until he married -- he worked at the powderyard, too. So, my grandmother Seitz said it was like Michael Martin. And she said, "Oh, that's a terrible name for a Frenchman, we will call you Eugene." And that stuck with him. And then he married a person by the name of Shackshill who was Alsacian descent. I can remember her, too. Mrs. Martin. And she had an accent. As a child that impressed me -- that they had the accent. Because my mother's family was so American that I still remember visiting her. And they lived on the first lane that -- after you pass the duPont High School -- the old duPont High School. The left turn there that goes down to Breck's Mill.
What's that called. Is that Breck's Lane?

I. Yes, Breck's Lane.

A. Well, they lived in one of those houses on the right hand side going down. I can remember visiting there as a child. And it was Eugene and Constance Martin. And that was my father's -- would be my father's first cousin -- my grandfather's sister's boy.

I. Are any of that family still in the area?

A. Yes. There was one, George Martin, was a son and he was a brother from the Oblates. Back in the days that in order to be a priest you had to be perfect and he had had polio and had limited use of one hand and in those days they didn't admit anyone to the priesthood who had defects which is a rather interesting thing. And then he was a Brother rather than a priest. But that generation is all dead. The last of them, my cousin died about a year ago. But then the next generation, there are cousins in the next generation. One of them, as a matter of fact, she's in the Order of St. Joseph and she lives up at the Convent at St. Helena's. She's at St. Helena's. I see her. She's in the Convent there. And her sister who married a Burskey -- a Polish name -- she was interested in family history and she has been trying to find out about her father's family. No-- the wife of Burskey was trying to find out about the Martins.

I. Well, that should be easy.

A. Yes, because I have all the material. But they live here in the area.

I. It's interesting how many families have remained in the area.

A. Yes, so many of them have. And my immediate family -- my brothers -- well the one that was in the service never came back, but the others came back and settled here again.

I. So you can have a family picnic on the Fourth of July. Have the Seitz lived in that house all the time your grandparents -- in the Shields house?

A. That's right. They lived there until grandfather Seitz died in 1921. And they lived there until then. And
then after he died -- it was a company house -- so after he died, Pauline and Florence moved down to the other house.

I. Where is he buried?

A. St. Joseph's on the Brandywine. And there's Annie Gibbons. They have a lot there in the lower cemetery, as we call it. Anna Gibbons and Seitz is buried there. But Catherine Gibbons and John Gibbons and Margaret Gibbons and Charles and William and the other one -- I've forgotten the younger boys name -- they're all buried up by the church. There's a Gibbons lot and they're buried up there. My father and mother are buried at St. Joseph's. And one, two three brothers are buried there.

I. You have lost three brothers?

A. Yes. I've lost four. The one who was in the service is buried in Arlington. Let's see, one, two, three, four, five brothers are there. Five brothers right in that lower cemetery.

I. So you really are --

A. In this area. That table was Annie Gibbons' table with the marble top. We have other things around, but I've given some to --

I. Yes, you have. You've given quite a few things to the Museum.

A. My nephew once said, "I don't know whether I can give that to the Museum or not."

I. No, I don't think so. It's in excellent condition.

A. I can't think of anything else.

I. No other family stories ?

A. I'll probably think of them after you go. Maybe I can get Collins to tell me more.

I. Yes. He probably remembers.

A. Yes, he remembers grandfather Seitz. I remember Pauline and Florence, but Collins is older.

I. Yes, you were too young. The Sunday School was complete -- I mean there was running water and inside bathroom, wasn't there?

A. When they lived there?
A. Oh, yes, it was a beautiful house. It had -- Mrs. Silliman had put in a modern kitchen. It was a green tone, beautiful cabinets and counter space. And on one side of the kitchen they had an old deacon's bench that was their grandfather Gibbons. And my cousin took it to Washington and said he was going to give it to the Museum but he has never gotten around to it yet.

I. He likes it, I guess.

A. Probably. He did give them their parlor set, though. They have that, but it's not in the Gibbons house. They have it stored. I don't know why they didn't put it in the Gibbons house. Someone told me they have it stored. I can recall that in Pauline and Florence's house. It was a platform rocker. And Pauline played the piano. That was one thing Jock Seitz liked music. And each one of his children he gave music lessons. My father played the clarinet; Uncle Charles played the clarinet; Uncle John played the violin and Pauline was the piano, and Florence was the voice. She took voice lessons. He believed in. And it was unusual for persons -- they weren't wealthy people, but he just believed in music.

I. Now, that organ there, did that belong to the family?

A. The Gibbons. That was the Gibbons and that came through a cousin -- I've forgotten the name.

I. Who played that?

A. Well, they would have that. That would have been in the next generation back. I wouldn't have known. It was probably Anna Gibbons and Margaret Gibbons. Would have played it.

I. Would they have taken that up to the Seitz house when they lived up there? Were they musical?

A. I don't know. Could have. Because they were both dead before my mother was married. So they could have.

I. Did they have their own family band to play all those instruments?

A. I don't know. They played in -- Uncle Charles and my father played in the duPont band. Uncle John went to New York early on. He went to the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy. He was a pharmacists. And he worked for Imer and Ammand, the pharmacy company in New York.
And they tell -- another funny thing. This was back in the prohibition days. He had a tonic. They called it Ionatone. He patented it. And there was amusement. Some said there was so much alcohol, people were taking it -- very popular. He made a lot of money on it. That's just one of the stories they told.

I. Do you remember anything about family pets?

A. My father had a dog named Lightening as a child. And he would go down to visit his grandmother. I forgot about that -- who told me that story -- my mother, I think. He had this dog, Lightning, and he would go down to visit Catherine and John and Mr. Alexander Burns lived on the corner. Apparently, he was a character. And he would be out in the back yard taking a bath in a wooden tub. And my father would -- much to his grandmother's horror -- take sticks and throw sticks and the dog would jump in the tub with Mr. Burns. He was what -- 10 years old? Eight or 10 years old. And lively., I guess it would cause a furor and he'd come down and complain to Mrs. Gibbons.

I. I wonder if he would jump out of the tub and chase him?

A. Probably. But that was one of the stories. My father was a practical joker. Not a mean one. But he had fun. And that was one of the stories they told about him.

I. Where did they go to school, St. Joseph's?

A. No, they went to -- well, yes, St. Joseph's. But then my father went to Wilmington High School. And then after Wilmington High School after he was married, he went to the Christian Brothers College in St. Louis. For math and for engineering. But he had married at that point. That was when he was living out there in St. Louis. He went to the Christian Brothers College. And he had a professor by the name of Brother Regis. When my brother France was married -- when my brother France was born, he wrote to this Brother Regis out in St. Louis and he said I have my second son; we call him John Francis and the Brother wrote back and said if you call him Regis, he'll have my full name. So, that's how my brother got his name -- John Francis Regis. He got the John from my Uncle John; and Francis -- my mother had a sister Francis and they were their maid of honor and best man at their wedding, so the second child was named for them. Of course, they had so many boys they could name them for practically everybody.

I. Give them all two or three names.
A. And they did. My mother went wild with names. Alfred Joseph Pyle and John Francis Regis Collins, Jock.

I. Collins was named -- she named him after herself.

A. She wanted to keep her identity.

I. Yes, I guess she did. With all those boys. Anything else about the area that you remember?

A. Can't remember. It was a great thing when they were kids. Here again this is from Collins. They would go down to the Brandywine to fish -- take some poles -- and Pauline Seitz used to take her nephews down to fish. I never did, but she used to take her nephews down.

I. And they would swim?

A. Oh, yes. And another thing they made was ice cream. They would make the ice cream on Sunday. And they would take turns grinding it. Or, if they couldn't get turns, whoever ground the ice cream got to lick the paddle. Put it on a plate and they got to lick the paddle.

I. Those ice skates in the Gibbons House were they anyone's that you know of?

A. No. My father said that they skated on the Brandywine there. It would freeze over. Of course, that was before pollution. When the river was just water and it would freeze over early. And they would cut the ice and make the ice cream. They would store it, too; they could store the ice. And make the ice cream. But that was a big thing. That was a 4th of July thing, making the ice cream. And they would go pick blackberries -- wild blackberries -- and make blackberry mush. And my brother Collins still loves that. And Pauline and Florence used to make it for him. And he just ate it with cream -- just put some cream on it. And sometimes not even that. It's very good over ice cream.

I. They had bushes, probably, and they went and picked them. Wild bushes.

A. Yes, wild bushes. And they picked wild strawberries, too.

I. Well, it was probably a very nice area to grow up in.

A. Yes, it was. It was a rural area, yet little communities. And they were happy. And the families were well knit. And if something happened to one, the neighbors would pitch in and help. If someone needed something.
The problem among the Irish, they had drinking problems. It was demon rum, my father used to say. And a number of saloons along the Brandywine, up the crick there. And they were all run by Irish. That created a problem.

I. Still does.
A. And the children -- I can remember my mother using a term -- "Rush the growler." Have you ever heard that?
I. No.
A. She said that they used to have the kids go to the saloon and get buckets and bring them back to their drunken father. You have to realize my mother was a prohibitionist. But she said that the children would be sent to the saloons to get the liquor -- I guess it was beer. It wouldn't be anything else; the buckets would be beer -- and bring them back. And she said that if it had ever happened in her family, she used to think what would she do, and she thought maybe she could put poison in it. She was a prohibitionist from the time she was born.

I. Did they have livestock?
A. They had chickens. They didn't have large livestock. They didn't have pigs or anything. At least, the Seitzes didn't. But they did have chickens. And they alwa ys had a pet dog.
I. So they could go gather eggs.
A. And there were farmers in the area there, and the farmers would come down with the milk and the butter.
I. Yes, you do hear of that throughout all of those communities.
A. And they would come with eggs for the people who did not have chickens.
I. Yes, they seemed to have pretty much what they needed. pound cake
A. We figure that makes takes eight or nine eggs. I don't know how often they made it.
I. Probably not -- special occasions.
A. Yes, a pound of butter and eight or nine eggs. I can't think of anything else -- stories to tell you. Collins remembers vividly how neat Jock Seitz kept his garden. It was all in squares and well manicured.
I. From other people I've talked to, I get the impression that the women were very fastidious about their linens and they liked to set a nice table and entertain their friends with maybe not a full dinner, but cake and tea. Things like that.

A. Yes. My grandmother would rather have tea and a piece of bread on a linen tablecloth than she would a banquet on oil cloth -- they used to call it. And I had the linen from the family -- loads of it -- of Irish linen tablecloths. And the one that is the one there that I gave the museum with the Lord's Supper is about 150 years old, I guess. But they were great for the linen. Sort of liked to show off a little bit, too.

I. When they entertained -- to bring out their good linen.

A. In the parlor. I still have some of the little napkins that Pauline had from her mother -- from Anna Gibbons. Tiny little napkins. I have them out in the drawer there. Don't know what I'll ever do with them, but I have them out there.

I. Well, I'm sure someone in the family would love to have them.

A. Well, of course, the mortality rate-- there aren't that many left.

I. Somebody said things disappear, too.

A. Particularly if someone -- this isn't very nice to say -- but like if the woman of the house died and some people would come into the house, things would be taken.

I. Yes, help themselves.

A. Maggie won't need this anymore, so I'll just take it.

I. Which is kind of too bad, too.

A. I can't think of anything else at the moment.

I. Well, I'm sure you will.

A. Well, I'll check with Collins again, too.

I. And you have photographs and things.

A. I'll ask Collins a little more about what was his impression of Jock Seitz.

I. Yes, he probably would have a pretty good impression.
A. Yes, he would, because he was about six or seven when grandfather Seitz died.

I. Yes, I think we do have pretty vivid memories.

A. Yes, he would have that because I remember, you know, six or seven. I have asked him a good bit and he told about the different things they grew.

I. Do you remember the inside of the house -- does he?

A. I didn' ask him. I can ask him.

I. About the furnishings.

A. There was mission furniture. We used to have it out on the sun porch. It was square with slats in the back and there were two cushions. Very uncomfortable.

I. And that was from their house?

A. From Seitz' house. The slats were a little bit larger than the slats on the crib. It was homemade furniture. They did a lot of their own. They were their own laborers. I can remember -- well, it's years ago now since it was there. On our sunporch. But I can remember having it out there. And before that -- that was when we moved it that far, but as a small child we used to have it in the sitting room upstairs. There was a rocker and a straight chair, and a table, and then this settee like, they called it.

I. And that came from the Seitzes?

A. From the Seitzes, yes. I think when my father got married, he got it. It was that far back. I remember giving it to a cousin and I think it's gone now. I couldn't keep everything in the house. I wouldn't have room enough to walk around.

I. Well, I think you've done very well. You've given so much to the Museum.

A. There just isn't anything else I could keep in the house. That table there -- that drop leaf table -- that was my mother's -- about 150 years old. And the clock that just struck -- I think it was Canterbury but I can't remember the name -- Alfred duPont gave that to my parents as a wedding present.

I. That's beautiful.
A. What I've done -- I've put notes -- labels on the backs of things and under things so that if something happens to me, my nephews and nieces will know where it came from. And I've tried to assign different things to different ones.

I. So they can have family keepsakes. Some of these terms in here -- Green's Almanac. Do you know what that is?
A. No.
I. Larkin chest?
A. No.
I. That must go back.

(End of tape)

Transcribed by Ellenor R. Wharry