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PAUL D. JOHNSTON

APTOS AND THE MID-SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AREA FROM THE 1890s THROUGH WORLD WAR II

Interviewed and Edited by
Elizabeth Spedding Calciano

Santa Cruz
1973

Paul D. Johnston
April, 1966

Standing in his living room with his rifle, trophies, and case full of sharpshooting medals which were won in local, state and national competition.

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1965, the Regional History Project received a call from Michael Bergazzi, a long-time Santa Cruz lumberman who had been one of the Project's first interviewees. He urged us to interview Paul Johnston of Aptos who, he said, had once worked for the South Pacific Coast Paper Mill and had been a resident of mid-Santa Cruz County for most of his life. This proved to be an excellent recommendation. Although it turned out that Mr. Johnston's official connection with the paper mill was limited to a few hours of odd-job work in his youth, he nonetheless could describe the paper mill and its workings with considerable detail. To our surprise and pleasure, Mr. Johnston also had extensive knowledge of the Santa Cruz County fruit industry, particularly apple packing and shipping. Indeed, we discovered that he had once been a champion boxmaker in the days when good wooden apple boxes were essential and the cardboard carton undreamed of.

Mr. Johnston spent several years of his youth in the Capitola-Soquel area. Thus he could talk to us about the nature of the local schools, the part-time jobs he held, and land use in the mid-county area, as well as volunteer such little-known information as the fact that the city of Capitola's first sewage line was the old paper mill flume, an intriguing example of turn-of-the-century ingenuity.

Mr. Johnston was born in Vancouver, Washington, in 1889 and moved to Capitola in 1899. He has lived in the Aptos area since 1905. Aptos is now experiencing a tremendous population growth with the inevitable changes such growth produces -- housing developments, shopping centers, road and sewer districts. Thus we listened with great interest to Mr. Johnston describe the old village of Aptos, its businesses, schools, and water supply, the types of entertainment and modes of transportation available, and the village's volunteer fire department -- he was long an active member. He talked about the men such as Claus Spreckels, Claus Mangels, F. A. Hihn, and Rafael Castro who, in the years before the turn of the century, were the large landowners in the greater Aptos area. He also described with detail the coming of the modern real-estate developers, specifically the creation of Rio Del Mar and Seacliff, and discussed with us the rum-running and mountain stills of the Prohibition era. He was also able to give us a great deal of information about civil defense in Santa Cruz County during World War II.

The interviews were held on November 16, 1965, October 20, 1966, and November 7, 1966, in the dining room of the Johnston home which is located at the west end of Aptos Village. The interviews were transcribed and edited for continuity and clarity. When this task was nearly complete, we phoned Mr. Johnston for an appointment, only to find his

number was no longer in service and that there was no other listing for him. The editor stopped by his house on several occasions, but each time there was no answer, so with sadness we put the interview in the back of the filing cabinet, feeling that this was going to be the Regional History Project's first uncompleted manuscript. However, in 1971, several articles which quoted Mr. Johnston appeared in the local newspapers, so late that year we stopped once again by the house at the west end of the village, and this time we found Mr. Johnston at home.

We had been impressed at the time of our interviews with the care Mr. Johnston took in answering our questions, and we were doubly impressed with his thoroughness in checking over the manuscript we gave him. He made numerous small changes, particularly wherever a sentence might be misleading or ambiguous; in several spots he inserted a paragraph or two of additional information, and very kindly added several pages of information on the Johnston property and the Loma Prieta Lumber Company. He was concerned that the material in his manuscript be accurate, commenting that much local history that is written is simply not correct.

Mr. Johnston owns a number of old photographs of the mid-county area. He graciously loaned several of these to us, and we reproduced for use in this volume the four pictures of the Rio Del Mar Esplanade area seen on page 146; the Aptos covered bridge (page 83); the South Coast Paper Mill (page 31);

and the Frontispiece. The view of Aptos Village (page 83) is from the University Library's collection of regional photographs.

Copies of this manuscript are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, and in the Special Collections Room of the University Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This manuscript is part of a collection of interviews on the history of Santa Cruz County which have been conducted by the Regional History Project. The project is under the administrative supervision of Donald T. Clark, University Librarian.

Elizabeth Spedding Calciano

February 12, 1973
Regional History Project
University Library
University of California, Santa Cruz

BOYHOOD YEARS

Coming to Capitola

Calciano: When did your family come to this area?

Johnston: In 1899. We came to Capitola to stay six weeks, and we never got money enough to get away.

Calciano: Oh my goodness. Well, how old were you when you moved here?

Johnston: Ten years old.

Calciano: And what did your father do?

Johnston: He was in Alaska in that time, and we hadn't heard from him for about, oh, two years or more. He went up there in the gold rush in '98, see, and we thought he was dead. We never heard from him. And at last we got a letter that he was up there and he had the scurvy, so we sent money enough and he came back down to Capitola and stayed there for a year or two. But his mother still lived in north Yakima they owned lots of property up there -- so he returned there. He wanted my mother and the rest of us to go, but she didn't want to go, so we still stayed down at Capitola, and I've been here ever since.

Calciano: Well where did you come from before you came to Capitola?

Johnston: We came from Vancouver, Washington. I went back there forty years afterwards, and I had a hard time finding our home. And when I did find it, there was a great big Standard Oil service station sitting where we used to have our home.

Calciano: Oh dear. Why did you come down to Capitola? That's a long way from Vancouver.

Johnston: My father lost all our property in 1894 in the depression. We lost everything we had. We had three big ranches, I think it was, and each ranch was a section of 640 acres, and we had two big houses in town, which he had mortgaged, and you couldn't raise two cents on it. He lost everything we had, and so he got out and went to Seattle and went to work stevedoring. That was during the Gold Rush in Alaska. He received five dollars an hour, and when he got enough money, he got the gold urge, too, and he went on to Alaska. We came to California. We had friends at Capitola.

Calciano: Oh, is that why?

Johnston: We had friends, old friends. We come down here to visit them. We were going to stay six weeks, but we liked it, so Mother went to work, and we started to school.

Calciano: What work was there available for a woman back then?

Johnston: Well, she worked for the F. A. Hihn Company. She was the seamstress, and during the off months when the hotel wasn't running, they had to take all the sheets and pillowcases and all the linen and everything and work them all over and get ready for the next summer season. So she took care of the linen in the hotel there for several years.

Calciano: I see. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Johnston: I had one brother and one sister, and they're all gone now. I'm the only one. I'm the Last of the Mohicans. (Laughter)

School in Capitola and Soquel

Calciano: When you came down here, when did school start? Was it September like now?

Johnston: Yes, it started about the same as it does now. In those days Capitola only had four grades. I lived up by the English Colony[1] which is now called the El Salto Resort. It was at the east end of Capitola, up on the bluff. I lived up there, and I used to go to the Capitola schoolhouse. The school was right across the railroad tracks, practically about a block from

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Note:The English Colony was owned by two English families, and later was

where the new school is. They had a little bit of a square schoolhouse. There wasn't any other buildings around there. Miss Kate Leonard was the schoolteacher at that time. In later years she taught in Soquel. She was one of the oldest teachers, I guess, and she taught longer than anybody in the County. We had four grades. Our Northern schools were so far ahead of the ones here in California that when we come down here they shoved us forward; I went two grades ahead.

Calciano: Two grades?

Johnston: Yeah. I went right into the fourth grade. So I was only one year at Capitola. And then I had to walk from Capitola clear to Soquel to go to school. And in the wintertime we had to walk, too. No buses. And there wasn't any bridge like there is now. They only had what they called a summer bridge. It was near the freeway down where the cement bridge is now going from Capitola to Soquel. You had to go down in and cross the creek. They put a little bridge in there with some planks about two feet above the water, and you went down and come out on the other side. That was the summer bridge they called it. Well it washed out every winter the first heavy rain. I pretty near got drowned

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bought by a Mr. Hanchett. P.D.Johnston

there one time. They hauled the mail from Capitola to Soquel. Every morning it came in on the 8:15 train. I knew the fellow; his name was Pete Comstock. Mr. Ord had the contract to carry the mail. Pete was Mr. Ord's stepson, and when the old man would let the boy carry the mail, then I'd ride. I'd wait for him in the morning, and then I'd get a ride to school. I wouldn't have to walk the mile. So I used to go with him, and he was a daredevil, too, so one morning it was a big flood and the creek was up. All they had was an old white horse and the buckboard and the mail sacks in back, and this little buckboard only had a little railing around it in back to hold the mail from falling off. We got down to the creek, and it was way up, and the summer bridge was gone. He says, "Do you think we can get across there?" And I says, "Pete, I don't know. If you think you can go, okay, let's go." And he went in there, and we pretty near got swept down the creek. The rig swung around down the creek, but the old horse didn't fall down; she kept her feet and drug us out on the other side. And boy, we pretty near lost the mail sack and everything else. (Laughter) I'll never forget the old white horse, though, and the way the old springboard flew around

down the creek. Brother we hung on. Boy, if we'd ever got in that water, we'd of drowned; we couldn't swim in it. There was logs and everything coming down there.

Calciano: Good heavens!

Johnston: That creek used to really come up and be a raging torrent. Trees and everything came down it to Capitola. Why you never seen such debris down there; it was terrible. It backed way up clear to the foot of that Depot Hill, and there'd be logs going into Capitola. Sometimes you'd get a high tide, and there'd be big logs up there in the streets. It'd take them two weeks to clean the place up so you could get through there. When the summer bridge washed out, then we'd have to go up past the old Averon place and come down the hill there where the old County corporation yard was on the hill. We'd come into Soquel that way from the Capitola depot or go way down through Capitola, cross the creek, and go up Britton's hill on the other side under the railroad and go around by Daubenbiss to Soquel. That's the only way you could get to Soquel in winter. Later I lived right across from Averon's home. The Ewell dryer was there then the last years when I worked for Augustus Noble. Then

later on we lived up right above the depot at Capitola. The second house above the depot.

Calciano: The depot that is still there?

Johnston: It's still there, but it's been remodeled. When I came to Capitola, the depot was across the street on the west side, and all it was a little boarded shack. It was about eight feet wide and maybe ten or twelve feet long. It had a window in it and one door, and on the window they had a little scale where you could send away express. And they had platform scales outside that they moved in at night. And there was no depot building. That was the only depot there was. And they had a great big painted sign up between the road that goes down the hill to Capitola and the road that goes straight ahead to the bluff above Capitola. The sign was in the space between them. It said “Capitola by the Sea” and showed a big bathing girl on it, and it was there for years. And the trains all stopped below the road, down along the Glen Buela we called it. It was a big park down in below the tracks. There were picnic tables and everything. And they used to picnic down there and hold barbecues.

Calciano: Did the school in Soquel go through eight grades or nine grades?

Johnston: Nine grades in Soquel. I went through the ninth grade.

Calciano: Now how old were you when you finished that about fifteen?

Johnston: Well, they had nine grades, and then you had to go to Santa Cruz for high school. And there was no way until they got the street car in Capitola, then the kids could go on the car, you know, to high school. But before that you had to have a horse and rig or had to walk, and you couldn't do that in the winter.

Calciano: So mostly kids just finished the ninth grade and that would be it?

Johnston: Yeah, practically all of them. Well, you take in those days they had some young fellows going to school there with mustaches, you know. They'd work all these ranches around there, and their dads would work them right up until it started to rain. They only went during the rainy season. They couldn't go to school the rest of the year. No, they made them work. They all had to work for a living.

Calciano: Well were you about fourteen or fifteen when you finished your schooling?

Johnston: I got out of school at pretty near sixteen. 1905. I came to Capitola when I was ten years old. My brother, he was fifteen when he got out. He graduated. He was

the valedictorian. I think there was five in his class. I had more in mine. We had a pretty big class. I think there was about a dozen in it.

Part-time Jobs

Calciano: What was your very first part-time job while you were still in school? When you were a little boy?

Johnston: Well, the first job I had was with the popcorn stand. They had the merry-go-round down there in the flat at Capitola. It had one of those steam calliopes on it. Boy, we used to have quite a time on it.

Calciano: Was that at the Capitola beach?

Johnston: Capitola beach. Yeah, they had a merry-go-round there every year all summer. I don't know where they came from, but they came there and stayed the whole summer.

Calciano: How old were you when you started working at the popcorn stand?

Johnston: I was still going to school then. I worked summertime there.

Calciano: What would you say, twelve or....

Johnston: Around 1900. I was about eleven years old. In those days they had a band at Capitola. A fifteen-piece band that played every afternoon and evening out there on the beach, you know.

Calciano: Who paid them?

Johnston: The F. A. Hihn Company. The Hihn Company owned the hotel. They had two hotels in Capitola. The one up by the depot was run by Mrs. Lewis. She was from the Donner party, you know, that was....

Calciano: Oh, Frazier Lewis's wife?

Johnston: That wasn't Frazier's wife. Frazier was the boy. This was his mother.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: Frazier had two or three sisters. There was Carrie and two more. Susan was my Sunday-school teacher at Capitola when I was little, up at the Episcopal church up on the hill about 1900. They run the hotel in the winter up above, and in the summer she run the big hotel for the Hihn Company down below at the beach. It was opened up about the first of June and stayed open till the last of September. Then it closed for the winter. They had their own electric power plant and laundry. It was right where the Capitola Theater is now. They had a powerhouse there that furnished lights to Capitola for the hotel and the street lights. Mrs. Lewis was some woman, I'll tell you. And she must have been seventy-five years old then, and she run both those places.

Calciano: Was she a rather short woman?

Johnston: Yeah, real small. Wiry woman. Yeah, I can see her just as plain right now as if I was talking with her. And Frazier, he was the only son. He was quite a hunter and fisherman, and later he went into the candy business and run the candy store in Capitola. And he invented Lewis's famous chocolates.

Calciano: Oh, Victoria chocolates?

Johnston: Yeah, Victorias. After his death I think the American Legion or somebody, he donated it to them, or they bought it or something. He had the candy store in Capitola a good many years. The Lewis's were a wonderful, remarkable family. The girls, I don't think any of them ever married. Two or three girls and Frazier; he was an old bachelor, and he never married. There's not very many of the old-timers left any more.

Calciano: Right. Now you said your first job was helping the popcorn man. Did you do that for several summers?

Johnston: Yeah, I did that for three or four summers, and then he wanted me to go to San Jose and work. After I graduated. He had a candy store in San Jose on North First Street. His name was Hines, Shorty Hines. They called it Shorty's famous crisp. That was his advertisement. A big sign. And boy it was, too. It was wonderful. He had a concession out at Alum Rock Park

in San Jose. He wanted me to go over there and work for him, and I went over there, but I got another job that paid more. I was working for a drugs outfit. Made more money. I wished I had of worked for him, because he got murdered over there. The kids that worked for him out at Alum Rock Park, one of them got to taking ... you know, knocking down on him and so he let him go, and they knew that he worked out there Saturdays and Sundays and had to hold the money over because the banks were closed. When he come home Sunday night, he had all this money, and the kids were laying for him in the driveway. Two or three kids about fifteen years old, and they held him up in the driveway, and one of the kids in the excitement shot him, killed him. And they put this young fellow in prison in Folsom, and he was in for life, and before his term was up he was the cause of eleven more getting killed up there. When they put him in, because he was young they didn't give him the death penalty, and he caused one of those big prison breaks up there and there was eleven more killed. Just one kid. Shows you how things turn out that way you know. Lot of people don't believe in capital punishment, but me, I think they're like a mad dog, something like that.

Calciano: Well when you went to work in San Jose, was this after you were through school? Or was this a summer job again?

Johnston: No, this was just after I got out of school. After I worked over there, I came back to Capitola. I didn't like it in San Jose.

Calciano: Why?

Johnston: I went over there in the fall, you know, after I got through working in the fruit here. Well, it was along about this time of year [October], maybe a little later. It was winter. I know it was rainy, and I didn't like it over there in the wet and everything. I stayed all winter though. It was 1909. I came back over here, and I started to pick cherries. It was the first part of June, the start of the fruit season; we picked cherries and then apples. I made lots of cherry boxes.

Calciano: Did you have any other jobs when you were a boy?

Johnston: During the time I was going to school, I worked for Augustus Noble, and I milked from nine to eleven cows every night and morning and went to Soquel School.

Calciano: When you were just a young kid?

Johnston: Oh sure. My brother did it for several years before

me. Then when he left and went to San Jose, then they was going to have another fellow come in, another young fellow to do it, and I went over there and talked to Mr. Noble. He says, "Well, you're pretty small. You ain't old enough." I says, "Well, you give me a try. If I can't do it, all right." But I did it. Boy, I got up at five o'clock in the morning and milked nine cows and then go home and get some breakfast and go to school. After school I would run all the way home, because in the winter it got dark early you know. You get home at 4:30 and had to go right over and round up the cows. Sometimes those cows were way out by Soquel Drive. You had to go way out there and get them and drive them back a mile around to the barns and feed them. A brewery was running at that time in Santa Cruz, at Ocean and Soquel Avenue, right where the drive-in is now. And we used to go once a week every Saturday. I would go with either Mr. Noble or Ed Noble, and we'd go in there. That was along about 1903. I was only thirteen years old. And we'd go in there and had big fifty-gallon barrels on the back of this two-horse wagon, and we'd go in there and fill them with malt, see. That they made the beer of? It's barley malt, and boy, it smelt good, you

know. (Laughter) 'Course Ed would go in and get a drink of beer, but I was too young for anything like that, so I'd sit in the wagon, and we'd fill all these barrels up. It'd take about eight barrels, if I remember right, on the rack. These fifty gallon hogsheads, you know. And we'd bring that out, and we used to feed that. Besides cows he raised pigs that were wonderful. They were these little black short square pigs, you know. That was something new in those days. All the local pigs were big gangly things, but he brought these black pigs from back East, see? And so we fed those middlings. You don't hear about anything like that now. It's ground up. It must be ground up barley or something. It was like flour, you know. Middlings they call it. I don't know, when you come right down to it, whether it was wheat or barley or what. But we took the malt, and then we put a couple of handfuls of middlings on top and the cows were crazy over it, and they gave lots of milk, and they fed that to the pigs, too. And then of course they had so much milk that we made butter, and I got a dollar a week and a two-pound roll of butter a week. And then the chickens were all over the barns and everything, so every week I'd round up all the eggs.

Mr. Noble gave me a dollar a week and two quarts of milk a day and then two pounds of butter and all the eggs that you want. They had lots of chickens around there. Had lots of eggs. So that was a lot of money in those days. That was half your living practically.

Calciano: Yes, that would really help.

Food, Hunting, and Preservation

Johnston: Then in the winter, of course, we hunted and fished. There wasn't much work in the winter. You just hunted and fished, see? Fooled around.

Calciano: Could you earn enough in the summer to keep going all winter?

Johnston: Well, we lived off the land pretty near. Kill all the game and everything. In those days, why for four or five dollars you could buy groceries enough for a month. Now you go around and take five dollars worth of groceries home in a paper sack.

Calciano: Right. (Laughter)

Johnston: Four bits for a side of bacon, you know. Gee whiz, you could get a whole sack of sugar for a dollar, dollar and a half.

Calciano: This would be how big a sack?

Johnston: Hundred-pound sack. You could buy sugar by the hundred

pounds. When it got up to four dollars a sack, why we thought that was terrible. Flour was sixty-five cents for 25 pounds. I remember that. I got some of these old papers that have got some of those things in it. The prices, you know. It's comical when you read them. You take four bits for a side of bacon, but when you figure it out, that was half your wages. Now you pay eight dollars for a side of bacon, you get sixteen dollars a day. What's the difference? They got it all figured out.

Calciano: Yes, it works out.

Johnston: Sure. The only thing now, if a person is a little bit thrifty, you can save more than you did in those days.

Calciano: You can?

Johnston: Why sure you can. There's no argument there. But who will go out now and have a garden? Nobody's going to do that. Everybody had their own garden then; they grew their own onions, potatoes, and things like that. It would be everything you needed. For five dollars we'd get a barrel of flour; we used to get big boxes of macaroni -- I think they were sixty-five or seventy-five cents, great big square wooden boxes of macaroni in those days.

Calciano: How many pounds of macaroni were there?

Johnston: Well there was five or ten pounds in them. I don't know, but it was a lot you know. Now you pay that much for a little pound sack of it. We raised all our own tomatoes, and we had macaroni and things like that.

Calciano: Did people use macaroni a lot? That's Italian food.

Johnston: Yeah. Everybody did. Oh yeah, sure. You were lucky to get it. But Italian cooking, that's where I learned how to make enchiladas and all those things. I like macaroni. We used to call it, in those days the kids used to call it plentybowl because we had plenty of it.

Calciano: Plentybowl! (Laughter)

Johnston: I remember when we were kids we used to have that, and we'd have our tomatoes and put it in and make a Spanish sauce and with macaroni it makes a wonderful dish.

Calciano: Makes me hungry.

Johnston: Used quite a bit of olive oil, you know.

Calciano: Where did the olive oil come from?

Johnston: Well, we used to get it in cans, and at that time it was practically all imported, you know.

Calciano: But it wasn't too expensive?

Johnston: No, it didn't cost too much. Get a gallon of it for a dollar or so.

Calciano: And then you did a lot of hunting?

Johnston: Oh yeah, we always had quail. The country here was alive with quail in those days. And pigeons by the millions; I'm not kidding you there. Between here and Capitola, over where Cabrillo City is now[2], you know, where they're building all those houses now, that used to be the airport, see? And before that it was just big vacant fields all the way from here to Capitola. And all these fields, there was all horses then, and they'd put all the fields in grain. And those pigeons would come down there in the winter just by the hundreds and thousands in a flock, and the farmers would shoot them and do everything in the world to keep them off. The grain would come up an inch, and they would just pull it up and get the grain see. And they'd be out there by thousands. And I've seen them out there over at Monterey Lane (it used to run around one side of that field -- it was all one big field) and I've seen hunters all the way around there, and

*Ed. note: The subdivision site is roughly the area between Monterey Avenue and Park Avenue, bordered on the east by the Capitola Elementary School.

I've seen them go away with barley sacks full of pigeons. Five or six bags of them. What they done with them, I don't know. Used them for fertilizer or something. They shot them just to try to keep them off the ground to save the grain.

Calciano: Could they use them for food?

Johnston: Oh you could, but you can only eat a certain amount. I've seen fellows go up there and get barley sacks full of them. I just had an old air gun, you know. They'd wound a pigeon, and he'd fly over and land in one of these eucalyptus trees, and I'd just go over there and find him and shoot him in the eye with the air gun and get more pigeons than we could use that way. Oh some of the people canned them. They did everything.

Calciano: Canned pigeons?

Johnston: Oh yeah. They canned any kind of meat.

Calciano: It doesn't sound very good.

Johnston: They had quart jars. They put down deer meat or pigeons, it didn't make any difference. Now everything is frozen.

Calciano: That's right.

Johnston: They put the meat and everything down and covered it

with tallow and put it in a Mason jar and put the lid on it. Perfect. Kept just the same as canned fruit or anything else.

Calciano: You'd have to boil it or something first?

Johnston: Oh yeah. They cooked it. I never done it, but they used to take deer meat or pork or anything like that. They either put it in brine or put it down and covered it with fat and kept it that way in jars. The old folks did that. I never done that, but I've seen it done. Now everything they put in the deep freeze.

THE SOQUEL PAPER MILL

Calciano: You said that when you were a little kid you were allowed to play around the paper mill.

Johnston: Oh yeah. We run all over that mill. Hide-and-go-seek and everything else.

Calciano: It must have been kind of a dangerous play spot.

Johnston: It was in a way. They'd chase us out once in a while; we'd go back in the other end. (Laughter)

Calciano: What was the name of the mill? Was it called South Coast Paper Mill, or had it changed the name?

Johnston: I don't know what they called it. I couldn't tell you. I've forgotten.

Calciano: Were the O'Neils the owners?

Johnston: Yeah, they were the owners, and they lived right across the street from the paper mill, and they had their office right just across the street. At that time there was three bridges in Soquel. There was another bridge went right across where the paper mill was at.

Calciano: Where exactly was the paper mill?

Johnston: You go up Cherryvale Avenue, and the first road up to the left that goes down in there, there was a bridge there and the paper mill sat right at the west end. Right at the end of the bridge there.

Calciano: What's there now?

Johnston: Well, there's houses there now, last time I was up there. The old San Jose Road used to go up and turn right at the ice plant -- you know where it is -- turn sharp right and come around behind the Horatio Angel's house sitting right on the corner there. Horatio Angel, he was in with Angel's General Merchandise store. Right back of Angel's home was O'Neil's home and paper mill office. I think Negro has that now. They had a dairy in there later.

Calciano: Was this Edward O'Neil or Frank O'Neil?

Johnston: The last I remember about the mill was old Ed. Seems

to me Ed was the one that had charge here.

Calciano: And was a man named William Callaghan also an owner, or was he no longer involved?

Johnston: Who?

Calciano: William Callaghan.

Johnston: Callaghan, I think he came in later, but when I knew it ... I think he was in there for awhile, but whether it was at the last or in between, I don't know. At that time when I came here in about 1899, they were running twenty-four hours a day as long as the weather was good. When the creek would come up and get riled up, then they couldn't use the water, and the mill would shut down, see?

Raw Materials

Johnston: All their paper came in to the wharf at Capitola on the Gypsy, a little steamship.

Calciano: Well now, in earlier days they used to use a lot of straw from the countryside. Did they still....

Johnston: Well, they didn't use so much. Up here they used practically all rags and scrap paper. They made a very tough grade of paper that they used for butcher and heavy wrapping paper. It was a kind of a pink shade, see? It was very heavy. And these rolls that they took

off were about three feet through when it was finished and maybe, oh, three or four feet long. They were immense big rolls of paper. Weighed four or five hundred pounds apiece. And they'd take those down and ship those out on the boat to San Francisco, see? Or by frieght at Capitola Depot. It all went to the city of San Francisco. Practically all of it. I don't think they sold any of it around here.

Calciano: How would they get it down to the Gypsy?

Johnston: Well, it was Gene Boyle; he had two beautiful horses ... I can remember those horses just like they were here now. They were great big beautiful bays, heavy immense big horses. And he had a team, and they hauled all this material back and forth. They'd take the paper down and store it in a warehouse and bring back the rags and material that they were making paper from.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: So they had a load each way practically all the time. And when they'd come in with the boat on every Saturday, why all the kids ... we were all down there, naturally. See that was one of the events in those days. When the old Gypsy came in there at Capitola,

we'd he out on the wharf and watch them unload. And they had a little tramway that ran out to the boat, and they'd take these big bales up and put them on those little cars, and then they'd haul them up in this big warehouse and stack them up, and then they'd haul them up to the paper mills later, see? Up at the paper mill they had only a small warehouse up there. They only hauled it up there as they sorted and used it, see?

Calciano: You mentioned the other day that you collected stamps from the scrap paper that was brought in.

Johnston: Yeah, we had a wonderful collection of stamps. My brother sold his about twenty years ago, I guess, and he got over two hundred dollars for that collection of old stamps he had. Well stamps came in from all over the world into these offices, commissioners and everything. Imported into San Francisco. And all those old letters come down in these bales, see? And we'd get up there when they were sorting and sort all these letters out. Fellows didn't mind it. Wonder we didn't get a lot of diseases, too, you know, in those days. Never seemed to bother us any. We got all the stamps from all over the world. Every stamp that you could think of.

Calciano: How marvelous.

Johnston: Boy the kids around Soquel, they really had some stamp collections. I wouldn't be surprised if some of those old-timers got some of them yet, you know.

Calciano: What did you do with your stamp collection?

Johnston: My brother had the stamp collection, and I had a bird-egg collection; that was my hobby.

Calciano: His was a little bit more profitable.

Johnston: Well I had every kind of a bird's egg you could think of. They don't go in for that anymore. Wouldn't allow them to anyway, I guess.

Calciano: I guess not. Now you said they didn't use straw anymore by the time you....

Johnston: No, they didn't use straw.

Calciano: Nor any wood?

Johnston: All they used was this fiber that came off these burlap sacks; that gave them the fiber out of there. They ground it all up. They had a machine that just ground it all up.

Calciano: They got these burlap sacks from San Francisco too?

Johnston: Yeah. All these bales had burlap around them. It was all done up so they didn't lose all the small paper out. It wasn't sacks; it was just big burlap. Then all

the rags, too. They used all these rags that came in, bales of rags. They used to have them instead of the straw. I know they used straw in a lot of these mills, but they didn't seem to use much of it up there.

Power Supply

Johnston: But they used cords and cords of redwood for the boiler. They piled it up down there in front of the mill. They had hundreds of cords of wood they'd burn every year for that big furnace.

Calciano: I thought they used water power, didn't they?

Johnston: No.

Calciano: The water was just for the processing?

Johnston: That was just for washing and for all that cleaning up and all.

Calciano: I've read that when they first started out they did use water power and had a motor for emergency use; they must have changed.

Johnston: When I can remember, it was all steam power; the whole thing. They had all their water and everything, but it

South Coast Paper Mill
Soquel, California 1894

was all run by steam, see? They got plenty of water come down that flume, you know. They had an overflow. You can see in that picture where more water than they used came down.

Calciano: I was wondering about that.

Johnston: It came back into the creek. And when they shut the mill down, then they turned the water off. Practically all of it in there. A lot of it run down this flume, because this flume had to be in operation all the time too. Down at the end it was the sewer line for Capitola.

Calciano: Oh it was?

Johnston: Yes. It run all the time; an amount of water run down through it, see? They used that flume for two purposes: to get rid of all that acid and everything, and to take care of all that sewage down below. We went up to the dam one time when they were.... That was in 1909 when I came back from San Jose and came over here, and I went to work, and we were putting in the dam. It was along about the first of May, I think. We went up at the end of the flume about two miles above Soquel, and they built a little dam in there, see, to take the water out and into the flume, and we worked on it.

The Process

Johnston: But you can see the paper mill was a big long building. Rollers run all the way down through the middle of it; you can see the long part of the building. Up on the back end it was two stories. The boiler room was underneath. And that back end was where they unloaded. They went up there and unloaded all the rags and stuff in this loft up above, and then when they sorted it, it went down a chute down into a big vat.

Calciano: When they sorted it, what were they sorting?

Johnston: Well, they sorted all the different rags and the papers and everything. They went into different piles. The rags were all chewed up, and the papers, naturally when you soak it up this beater, why it beat it all up. It came out just like pulp, and they put a lot of acid in to take the color out.

Calciano: The acid was put in the vat?

Johnston: Yes. This big vat had a big arm that went across it. It turned, see? This thing, it was just like your fingers; it had forks on it. It come right around this, through this, and churned this all up to a regular pulp. It was thick. You would take out a whole bunch of it. It was wet, watery, but it was just like

chewed up paper and rags altogether. That fiber was all in it, and that's what held the paper together, see. The burlap and rags and everything. They used that like they did straw in these other mills I think.

Calciano: I see. Okay. So then it came out of that acid vat....

Johnston: It came out of this big vat, and it came out on some kind of a big belt, and then it run on this belt and run over these big rollers; it went from one roller under and over and down. Oh it must have had a dozen or more of those big rollers, and these rollers were heated some of them. That dried this pulp out on this belt, and when it was dried, all this fiber held together; it was paper when it come out the end, a heavy wrapping paper.

Calciano: How would they heat the rollers?

Johnston: They heated these rollers with steam. They used four-foot wood for furnace fuel.

Calciano: The same way they made the power for the engine?

Johnston: Yeah. It was all four-foot wood that they burnt in these boilers to generate the steam to operate the rollers. I remember the rollers were about six or eight feet apart, and when the paper went along these rollers, it created electricity underneath. If you put

your fingernails underneath there, the electricity would shoot out along your fingernails, and when you put your head under there, your hair would stand right up just perfectly straight. Kids used to get a kick out of that. Wonder we didn't get our hair in some of those rollers. That was a funny thing. The fellows [the workmen] were always playing tricks on us. We'd go around the mill, and if you didn't look out, why they'd have a can of water over the door, and when you'd come through, they'd jerk it off on you. They did everything in the world. The devils. They had to get a big kick out of this you know.

The Workmen

Calciano: About how many men did the mill employ?

Johnston: They hired I guess about ten or twelve men. And they run from the spring after the heavy rains. Along the first of May they'd go up and fix the dam about two miles up above the creek and then the mill would start operating. And it would run then up till the fall heavy rains, and then they'd have to shut down when the water got muddy.

Calciano: Well that's just a half-time job; I mean just seasonal....

Johnston: Well, it was more or less, yeah. The fellows had to

... in the rainy season, why they'd go down to the saloon and play cards or something, you know. That's about all they had in those days. It used to rain for months. The climate here has changed. I've seen it rain at Capitola in February all month and never see the sun. And we'd have maybe fifty inches of rain a year, and now we have half that much. Average rainfall now is about twenty-five inches, see? But all the old-timers, I knew practically everybody that worked in the mill. And when I got big enough, I used to take odd jobs and used to be with the Nugents. They work always in the mill. The old grandfather and the father and all the Nugent family lived right across the creek from the paper mill, and I used to stay there about half the time. There was six boys there. My folks moved to San Jose, and I came back over and stayed right there with them. We used to take odd jobs in the mill when they'd want somebody extra to do some work. Had to fix the flume or do a little work on the dam. We used to get a dollar a day for twelve hours. (Laughter)

Calciano: Well were you through school, or....

Johnston: Still going to school, and we'd work in the vacations, and even after I got out of school I worked there

maybe once or twice. Odd times. There weren't so many regular jobs like there are now. And the mill didn't run any in the wintertime hardly. When we had our rainy weather, why it shut down maybe sometimes the middle of September and wouldn't open up again till next spring, you see. And I remember the old whistle used to blow at noon and six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock at night.

Calciano: Did the men have an hour off for lunch?

Johnston: No, they'd just work right through. They'd sit down and eat around the machines or any place they could. The mill never shut down. It just kept rolling. But sometimes all the men would be working, and then like Mr. Nugent or somebody had to do some special work, why they'd take a couple of us young fellows along to work when they couldn't get anybody else. We'd get a dollar a day, and *we* thought that was a lot of money. But we worked, too. You had to put out as much work as a man or you didn't work. Didn't fool around with you any. Ain't like nowadays, you know. Kids make more in one hour now than we used to make all day working twelve hours.

Calciano: Yes. That's right.

Johnston: They don't realize how easy they got it now. Just like

when I worked up there in the woods. We'd go to work six sharp in the morning until six sharp at night, see. If we got a dollar and a half a day, we got a lot of money.

Calciano: Yes, that was. You know ten people doesn't seem very many to be running that whole plant.

Johnston: Oh, must have been about a dozen, I think. There were about six on a shift.

Calciano: And they had two shifts?

Johnston: Had two shifts, yeah.

Calciano: For a twelve-hour day?

Johnston: From six to six, yeah. Twelve-hour shift. They only got about a couple of dollars a day, I think, in there. Two and a half was top wages in there. Engineer maybe got two and a half.

Calciano: Did the night-shift people make more money than the day shift?

Johnston: No. They changed every week or two. Shift over. They'd work 18 hours, and then they'd shift back so they'd change shifts. I remember one of the old engineers was by the name of Mills. Lived up on top of the hill the other side of Soquel there. He was there for years, and another old-timer that worked down there was named Hussey. Bob Hussey in Soquel. He could tell you a

whole lot about the mill, too. His folks lived there. He's still alive. He's over in Soquel. You know him?

Calciano: No, I don't.

Johnston: Well he could tell you a whole lot, too. He's a little bit younger than I am, but I know he's one of the old-timers over in Soquel now.

Calciano: Did he work there?

Johnston: His dad worked there; he didn't.

Calciano: How long did the paper mill run?

Johnston: Well, it must have run, oh, up until 1912 or long in there some place.

Calciano: What happened to it?

Johnston: Well, that class of paper, and the expense of bringing everything down -- the old Gypsy quit running, and to get things down by freight and everything, I guess they couldn't make any money at it. They shut it down and Mr. Maddock, he was the manager of it, they lived on the Main Street in Soquel. He was the manager, and he moved from Soquel up to Lebanon, Oregon. He got a good paper mill up there that he was superintending. I guess that they got so they couldn't make any profit on it here. Transportation was the whole thing.

The Flume (Capitola's Sewage Line)

Calciano: I want to ask you a little bit more about the flume. You said it became the sewage system for Capitola?

Johnston: Yes. The flume started about two miles up the creek and carried the water down to the mill, and in the mill they had a great big box at the end of the flume that was about ... oh ... four feet wide and maybe six feet deep and eight or ten feet long, and the water flowed into it and all the sand and everything that came down the flume would settle into this sandbox so that none of the muddy water or the dirt got into the mill itself, see? And then after they'd used the water (they'd run it through all the tanks with the acid where they made the paper, you know, and the pulp) why it ran into another flume, and that flume carried it all the way down through Soquel on the right hand side of the creek clear down as far as where the Disco store is now. It went across the creek right there, and then went on down to Capitola past the big old sugar mill that used to set in there where all those houses are now back of the Catholic Church. It was only big fields in there, and this sugar mill had been obsolete for quite a while then, but all the machinery was still in it, and this flume went down past it.

Then below the old sugar mill at Capitola, from there down to the railroad trestle, there was only one building in there, and that was the big livery stable run by Johnny Collins. And this flume run all the way down through there and through the campgrounds, and after it got to Capitola, the flume was used as the sewer. All the toilets and everything in the campground were built over this instead of modern toilets. Of course they had just box toilets, and they were set over this flume. All this ground above the livery stable along Soquel Creek was all free campground. All the campers came down there. They'd come down there maybe the first of June and stay up till school, see? September. They come in there from Hollister, San Jose, all over, with their families. And we had whole families. We knew them all just like you would your own friends. They'd come here year after year, and we would write back and forth to them during the winter. And then the flume run down through to where now is that block of buildings across from where the post office used to be. They had the Hawaiian Gardens there later, and they had a big block of toilets over the flume on that block. The hall there was over two hundred feet long, I guess. They

called it the big hall (it was a skating rink later) and in back of it the flume run along there, and they had the community toilets in there, too, for all the campers. See these were all cabins in the flat, and the Hihn Company rented all these cabins, and they didn't have any toilets. When you had to go to the toilet, why you had to go a block or more, see? It was different than it is now. But the houses along in front, those five or six houses along the front, they're still there. That's about the only thing Capitola has left on the front. Then the flume went over and went to the hotel and all the hotel emptied into it, see?

Calciano: Yes.

Johnston: And it ran out into the bay there, oh, about a hundred yards or so, and that was the end of the paper-mill flume.

Calciano: Well now originally had the paper-mill flume just been built to get rid of the paper-mill waste?

Johnston: That's right. But when they got down there they used it for the sewerage.

Calciano: Did the Hihn Company pay the mill for the use of it?

Johnston: Oh no. They had to give them permits in those days for putting it through there.

Calciano: Oh, I see.

Johnston: See it was all underground after it came into the free campground now where all those cottages and everything are just back of the Catholic Church there. It went underground. And then it came across the creek right up by the Disco store in a big pipe, swung across there, and then from there on down it was the sewer for Capitola.

Calciano: Why didn't the paper mill just dump their water back into the creek?

Johnston: Well, they couldn't have. Even in those days they wouldn't allow them to. This acid would kill everything, fish and everything else. Yeah, they had to have such a strong acid to bleach all these rags and colored paper. Of course they didn't have so many colored papers as they do now, but all this colored rags and everything. I don't know what kind of acid they used in this big vat, but it was terrific. I know you'd get burnt if you fell in it or anything. One of the boys fell in it, and he got scalded before they could yank him out. He had his clothes on, and before they could get his clothes off, he was pretty badly burnt.

Calciano: How terrible!

Capitola Fishing Fleet

Calciano: You mentioned a warehouse a little while ago where they stored the rags and papers. Where exactly was it? Right by the wharf?

Johnston: Yeah. It was right at the end of the wharf where those apartments are now. You know the Venetian Court on this side? It was across the street on the other side where the other apartments are. A big warehouse there. And where the Venetian Court is was all the fishing village. That was where all the fishermen lived in cabins. There was about a dozen or more little fishing shacks there on this side. And then during the winter they used this warehouse for another purpose, too. During the winter when it was rough, why they couldn't use any paper or anything, so they stored all their boats and all the launches in there. In the warehouse, see?

Calciano: Oh. Now was this warehouse owned by the paper mill, or was it rented by it?

Johnston: I don't know whether they owned it or not. I think it was on Hihn Company's property. I think it was more than likely that maybe the Hihn Company had something to do with it. But I know that they stored all their boats in there during the winter. And then in the

spring, why Mitchell, he was an old-timer, he had two launches there, and I'd go down there, and I was crazy at the time to go fishing, you know. And we'd go down there and work on his boats and scrape and repaint and get them all ready for the summer season. And he kept them in there during the winter.

Calciano: Were the launches used for fishing, or for tourists, or....

Johnston: The launches were for sport fishing; they call them party boats now. Each launch took out six fishermen, and they furnished all the lines and bait and equipment. The launches were named the Capitola and the Bessie.

Calciano: Was the fishing fleet mainly made up of Italians or Portuguese?

Johnston: All Italians, practically, and there must have been, oh, fifteen or twenty of these lateen sailboats that the fishermen in those days went out in, and they had drift nets. They'd go out about four o'clock in the afternoon, and then they'd set these nets and drift all night and come back in the morning with all the catch of the fish. And we used to fish, too, down there off the wharf. We used to go out trolling in a boat my father owned. He bought a sixteen-foot boat

when he came here. I've caught as high as twenty salmon in the morning there, and we used to get ten cents apiece for them. And we'd bring them in and throw them on the wharf. There were so many fish in the bay at that time that you never knew what you were going to catch. You could catch a salmon, a sea bass, a barracuda, skipjack, yellowtail, tuna, anything. You didn't know what you had when you hooked a fish. You'd bring it on the wharf and throw it on this pile, and then all the campers would come down there, and all they paid was ten cents for a fish no matter what size it was. You wanted a twenty-pound salmon, it was ten cents, just the same. At the end of the afternoon, if it wasn't all sold, why Herman Gehring, he had a fish market there and had charge of the wharf at that time, and he'd box the fish that was left, and I think it was four-twenty or something in the afternoon the train went through to San Francisco, see, and they'd load all that fish on. They got a cent a pound in San Francisco for it.

Calciano: How much?

Johnston: A cent a pound. Salmon. Now it's about ninety cents a pound.

Calciano: Yes. That's what I was thinking! I'm curious. You said

that the campers bought the fish from you directly, from little kids, so how did the fish market man make his living?

Johnston: Well there was plenty. Everybody made a little bit, but they never made much. He had charge of everything. But you could get all the fish you could carry home cut up, you know, if you didn't want to take it home and clean it yourself. Get it at the market for two bits; you could get all you wanted. But the people come and stayed for months in those days. All the old-timers from Hollister and Gilroy and San Jose -- they'd come with their families. Come in horses and buggies in those days from Hollister and all over. The Frenches and all the old-timers. Come over there and stay all summer.

THE FRUIT INDUSTRY

Boxmaking

Calciano: When did you first come to Aptos?

Johnston: Well, I came out when I worked for Nobles over there at Capitola. They had at that time lots of apples. They had I guess every year about ten or fifteen thousand boxes of apples, besides all those cherries. The Ewell Fruit Company moved in over there and put a

vinegar plant up and a dryer.

Calciano: Where?

Johnston: Right across from Averons, practically, on Capitola Road. And we lived in that cottage there, and Mr. Ewell boarded with my mother, and I started in making boxes for the dryer, you know. I made boxes there for him, and I got so I was an expert at it, so then I started in to making boxes, and that's the way I happened to come to Aptos over here. At that time Hihn used to ship out of Aptos. We shipped about 225 carloads of apples a year besides 200 ton of dried apples. Maybe 225 tons some years. So there was a good many thousands of boxes of apples. They used pine boxes that were made every year, and I got to be an expert boxmaker. You see in those days that was my trade. And then afterwards I learned to pack apples, and I worked in the fruit over here for years and had contracts here. I was second highest boxmaker in the State in 1912.

Calciano: In number made, or....

Johnston: Well, we had to nail these boxes, apple boxes, on a form. You had a stripper with nails in it, and you had to make these boxes. I got so that I could make 120 of

those apple boxes an hour.

Calciano: My goodness.

Johnston: That's one of them every half minute, you know. I could have taken first prize, but I had been packing for about six weeks, and I hadn't been making boxes. In those days they had an Apple Annual in Watsonville. They had really an annual there then -- along about, oh, from 1905 to about 1912 or so, along in there. They used to hold it down at the old auditorium. It's torn down now. They used to show the apples and things by the carloads, see? Now you go down to the fair and they show a few boxes. But they had a big boxmaking contest down there every year with all the fastest ones in the State, see? I went down there, and everybody laughs to see this kid coming up there with a boxmaker's hatchet, and the bench was too high, and I had to put box heads down and nail some slats on to hold them together so I could get high enough up to work at this bench, you know. They all started to holler, so I had the stripper filled, and I put the first box out before anybody else. But I had one of these Fresno strippers, and every-time I had 25 boxes, I'd have to stop and throw more nails in it and fill it. See I didn't have my self-feed stripper with me,

or I could have just kept going right on, you know. Then this other fellow would jump me a box or so. But even at that I made 99, I think, in an hour from a cold start and your bench ain't loaded or anything, see? And he only made 101. He only beat me two boxes, and the judges ... he made his boxes poorer than I did, and they debated for a half an hour before they'd give it to him. Had too many shiners and things, and I got a silver watch. It was all engraved and everything.

Calciano: What's a shiner?

Johnston: Oh, the nails would drive out of the box. The ends would point out and you'd get hooked on it, see? In those days, well, they thought a whole lot of packing and boxmaking, you know. Now everything's paper boxes and cartons. You don't see an apple box any more. Things have really changed.

Apples

Johnston: I have a picture here of some of the old packinghouse crew along about, oh, 1915.

Calciano: Apple packing?

Johnston: Yes, apple packing. Like I said, they used to ship

about 220 carloads of apples a year out of Aptos. That's green packed apples, see?

Calciano: All out of here?

Johnston: Yes. And besides that they shipped along 200 ton of dried apples.

Calciano: Well I always thought Watsonville was the shipping point.

Johnston: Oh, in the vicinity here, we had the finest apples in the County. They used to take all the first prizes at the apple shows and everything. Watsonville claimed all the glory of it, but Valencia fruit was the most wonderful fruit in the county. Yes. For years they took all the prizes and first places at the Apple Annual.

Calciano: Are most of the orchards that produced these prize apples, are they still there?

Johnston: Well the apple industry here, it got so bad for years that they couldn't make any money on it, so they just let them go.

Calciano: Depression years or what?

Johnston: What caused a lot of that was the apples come in from the Northwest, you know. The Northwest had red apples which looked a lot prettier than the Newtown Pippins.

The stores all went for these red apples.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: Now they raise a lot of Red Delicious apples around here, which they never had in those days. They were practically all Newtowns and Bellflowers. The Bellflower was a wonderful apple, but is a poor keeper, so they gradually went off the market. They put in more Newtowns and Reds. At one time they raised a lot of Winter Bananas here, but those apples, too, were poor keepers.

Calciano: They would spoil?

Johnston: Yes. They were no good for storage. So now they raise practically all Newtowns and Delicious and apples that keep good in storage, and the Delicious is a wonderful apple. And there's another apple that's known as Howard's Special. Pete Howard, an old gentleman up in Pleasant Valley, was the originator of it. He propagated it, and I think Day's orchards out here now has quite a few of them. And he gets quite a good price for them now. He's selling them in San Jose.

Calciano: What do they call them?

Johnston: Howard's Special. It was a red apple, too, if I remember right. It's a very late apple. They're still

some of them on the trees yet that haven't been picked.

Calciano: I notice in these old pictures that quite a few women worked in the apple sheds.

Johnston: Oh, yes, the apple sheds there was all handwork in those days. They sorted the apples all by hand, and that was before the day they had graders, you know. They sorted them by hand. It used to get so cold over there when the womenfolks were working in the apples that along this time of year [October] it would get so cold in the packinghouses that we'd go out and start a big fire behind the packinghouse and heat up a lot of bricks and take them in and wrap them in newspapers, and the womenfolks would stand in an apple box with their feet near these warm bricks to keep warm because it was ungodly cold.

Calciano: Oh my!

Johnston: Oh yes. I've seen it so cold over there that you'd have a refrigerator car come in with ice in it, and then we'd have to throw all the ice out, because it would freeze the apples, and if the apples froze, they'd turn brown and rot right away. So we'd throw the ice off these refrigerator cars along in back of the packinghouse, and it would be so cold that that

ice would stay there in piles until it would rain. It would warm up and rain, and then it would melt. Stay there two or three weeks this time of year.

Calciano: Well where were these sheds?

Johnston: Well one of them is still over there. They has that flea market in it you know. That's the old Hihn Company's packing shed. But right across where the cement is over there, when I first came out here in 1905, MacDonalds had a packinghouse there, and later, after MacDonald had it, why the Fruit Growers Association had it for several years. Al Underwood and I had a contract there for the packing and loading the cars for several years.

Calciano: Oh. You were a shipper then?

Johnston: Yes. Well, I took the contracts to load and pack. I was a boxmaker and packer.

Calciano: Did you buy the fruit from the orchard and sell it to the commission agents, or....

Johnston: No, we worked for the Association. All the growers formed an association. They brought the apples in there and then we got so much a box to pack it. They sorted and graded it, and we packed it and nailed it up and loaded and braced the cars.

Calciano: Braced the cars?

Johnston: Yes. You had to load the cars, and then in the doorway you had to put bracing in them so that the load wouldn't shift and damage the fruit. We had that for several years, but the last year I had a partner by the name of Albert Underwood. That was Mildred's mother and father. He and I had the contract for that last year.

Calciano: When was the last year you did it?

Johnston: Oh, it's been so long ago I've forgotten now. I wouldn't want to say.

Calciano: Would it be in the teens or twenties?

Johnston: Oh before the twenties. It was along about the First World War.

Calciano: And why did you stop?

Johnston: When the fruit slowed down. The orchards were starting to get old, and the prices were so low for a while there that the growers couldn't make a profit. And then in later years the trucks came in here and hauled everything to Watsonville; they shipped the apples from there, and the trains stopped coming here. You couldn't do that in the horse and buggy days; you had to pack them here. So they just gradually done away

with the fruit industry here. But in the earlier years, we started making boxes along about the first of July. Boxmaking was over about the first of August. The fifteenth of August they started to pick Bellflowers. And then September the Newtowns would come on. And we'd work in the Bellflowers and there was a few Gravensteins, not very many. And then the Nawtowns came in. We worked in those, and then they had two or three other varieties of apples, late apples. In an average year we'd work up until about, oh, the middle of February before the fruit season was over here.

Calciano: Oh! Would the apples stay n the tree that long?

Johnston: Well, they'd let them stand in the orchard. In those days they picked them and then it used to rain a lot, so one year I remember, one of the last years I had the contract, it rained so heavy that we didn't get the apples in out of the orchards until the middle of March, some of them.

Calciano: Well had they been picked and were sitting in boxes?

Johnston: Yes. They used to pick everything in apple boxes. They call them California boxes. They were different than these Oregon boxes. I think they were about four inches longer than the Oregon boxes which were almost

a square box. These were longer; they called them California boxes.

Calciano: How big?

Johnston: Well, they were 28 inches long, and I've forgotten what they were the other way.

Calciano: So those apples just sat in the boxes in the orchards, and it rained on them and everything?

Johnston: Oh yes.

Calciano: Didn't they rot?

Johnston: Well, some of them did, but the weather, as I told you, it was so cool in those days that they could stand out there for months, and the apples that fell on the ground off the trees, even when they were pruning along in March and April, you know, you could still find apples on the ground that were still good yet.

Calciano: You said you started making boxes about July, and you finished packing about January. What would you do the months you weren't....

Johnston: Well, then we used to go and pack oranges, you see. By that time we were down in the oranges. My wife was a wonderful packer.

Calciano: You would go down South?

Johnston: Yes. We'd go south just like the swallows. Stay all winter. We'd go down there about February. We worked several years at Ojai. That used to be called Nordhoff; it's several miles out of Ventura. Ojai Valley. We worked up there. They had magnificent oranges. We worked there for several seasons.

Calciano: Did your daughter go with you?

Johnston: Oh, no. That was before her time.

Calciano: I see. Because I was wondering how you managed her schooling and so forth.

Johnston: Well, we were married five years before we had any children. Getting along in years.

Calciano: A few minutes ago you said something about a packinghouse that used to be out here where some cement now is?

Johnston: Yes. MacDonalds. The cement is right in the middle of town here, right in front of the flea market. The cement foundations were put in during the War (World War II] to make a cannery. The packing sheds didn't have cement floors -- they were all wood plank.

Calciano: There was a cannery here?

Johnston: Yes. Watsonville Frozen Foods bought the shed and put in a cannery.

Calciano: What did they can?

Johnston: Oh they canned everything. Apples, peaches, vegetables. They hauled everything in by truck here. After the War, when they could get railroad cars again, it was too expensive to can here, so they moved down to Watsonville where the railroad cars could get in. This building is all torn down now.

Cherries

Johnston: I used to make cherry boxes, too. I used to make all the cherry boxes for a big Los Angeles firm, Meyers, Darling, and Hinton. They used to ship the shook up here by the carload, and then we'd make these little 30-pound lugs and ship all the cherries back. At that time they all practically went to Los Angeles.

Calciano: Why was that?

Johnston: Well, they got a better price down there for them. San Francisco, they used to flood the market too much up in the city. Soquel, in those days they got lots of money out of their cherries, because they used to come in at a time after all of Santa Clara and all the other cherries were over.

Calciano: Oh. They could harvest them a little later?

Johnston: Quite a bit later. This one [pointing to a picture] is of one of those orchards over there at Nobles. That's

in the freeway, right in the middle of the freeway about where the Coca-Cola plant is. He used to have a cherry orchard there. I think in 1914 we shipped over thirteen tons of cherries from his orchard.

Calciano: I didn't think cherries were a very big crop down here.

Johnston: Oh, at one time in Soquel, that's all they raised practically. Apples and cherries. They shipped tons and tons of cherries out of Soquel. They went by express from the Capitola Depot.

Calciano: Which kind? Royal Annes, or....

Johnston: Oh Royal Annes. But they used to have Black Tartarians. They were an early cherry, you know, black cherry. Later on they came in with Bings. But the first original old black cherries were Black Tartarians. First came the early, soft, white cherries. The cannery cherries. They had lots of those in those days. In later days they had Royal Annes and more Bings. They were a better keeper than the other.

Calciano: Well the Royal Anne, though, is a canning cherry, isn't it?

Johnston: Yes, it's the kind they make these maraschino cherries out of, too, you know.

Calciano: Oh really? I didn't know that.

Johnston: The small ones, but we picked the cherries from Noble orchards over there -- a young fellow by the name of Will Gross, he and I had the contract to handle all of Noble's cherries one year. And some of those cherry trees over there -- the crops were so heavy that they had to prop all the trees. And those Royal Anne cherries were almost as big as the plums you know. He had an immense crop. So I saved one tree, and they had all talked about somebody picking 500 pounds of cherries a day, and I said, "I'm going to break the world's record." And one afternoon -- I saved this one tree -- and I started at one o'clock, and by five o'clock I picked 525 pounds of cherries. One afternoon. On one tree!

Calciano: Oh my goodness!

Johnston: You could set your ladder and pick a whole bucketful and never have to move. And one of those buckets hold thirty pounds. A lug of cherries.

Calciano: Amazing.

Johnston: One afternoon. And there's nobody ever picked any cherries like that I know. (Laughter) Nobody ever even come close to that. We had five pickers over there. They were old-timers. There was myself, William Gross, and Charles Peck and Felix Lodge were all old-timers,

picked cherries all their life, and Al Underwood. And they'd average from 350 to 400 pounds every day. We used to get a cent a pound for picking. In those days that was the standard pay.

Calciano: What year was this roughly?

Johnston: Well, that was along about oh, 1910 to about '13, '14, '15. See the cherry crop came in before the apple crop. We'd pick cherries, and we used to make cherry lugs, too. We had a contract from Meyers, Darling, and Hinton of Los Angeles. They used to have a buyer in Soquel,an old-timer named George Stoddard. Just all he did was buy up cherries and fruit, or plums. They had quite a few plums around Soquel in those days, too. That's when the Santa Rosa plum first came in, you know. He was the buyer for Meyers, Darling, and Hintn in Los Angeles. And all the fruit left here by express at four o'clock in the afternoon, and it was in Los Angeles in the morning, you know. It got out of Capitola at four, and hit the main line at Pajaro Junction and then went right into Los Angeles.

Calciano: Well now were most of the people who picked cherries and apples local people, then? Not migrant workers?

Johnston: The apples people came in and picked, but most of the cherries were local pickers pretty much.

Calciano: You mentioned Felix Lodge. What would he do the rest of the year?

Johnston: Well, he picked apples, pruned fruit trees, and everything like that. Most of them worked during the peak season. They were old-timers. There was Felix Lodge, Mike Lodge, and Charlie Peck was another old-timer. Jay Whipple, and Al Underwood, and a fellow by the name of Carr, Baldy Carr. We called him Baldy, but I think he's still alive. I think he lives up Soquel Creek. Last time I saw him was two or three years ago. He's one of the old, old-timers about. But he taught me how to pack apples. Jay Whipple and Carr. At that time I was a boxmaker, and they had a press, when they packed these apples. You had to put them in a press and put the lids on. And I was a fast mailer, so I used to do that, and there were only two of them packing at the time, so I says, "How about teaching me how to pack apples?" So that's the way I learned. Whipple and Carr showed me how to pack apples.

Ethnic Groups

Calciano: Well now Watsonville used a lot of Chinese.

Johnston: Well at one time, yes, but the Chinese did sloppy work. And the Americans and the Slavonians moved into

Watsonville, and the Slavonians took it over practically. All the big outfits are Slavnian.

Calciano: When the people came over from Yugoslavia, did the old-timers here resent them coming in and taking over the apple business? Or did nobody mind?

Johnston: Well, the Hihn Company, as long as they run their packinghouse here, it didn't make any difference. It was later years that the Slavonians come in here and took this over. They bought Hihn out after the old man Hihn died and Fred Hihn Jr., he died, and then the Hihn Company estate was divided up and then was gradually sold. The heirs took over, and gradually it disappeared. Different parties bought in here.

Calciano: Well, was there much prejudice against the Yugoslavs?

Johnston: No, there didn't seem to be. 'Course some of them did, you know. The only thing was they cut the prices. In Watsonville they made boxes for four bits a hundred. I wouldn't do it. I got sixty-five cents a hundred always. When they were getting four bits in Watsonville, I got sixty-five cents. I figured I made better boxes than they did. Hihn always paid sixty-five. The MacDonald brothers tried to get me to make them for sixty, and I said, "No." I said, "You get the Slays to make them if you want," and so they paid me

sixty-five. I did that one year for MacDonald; he bought Nobles' apple crop over there. Nobles had quite an orchard, must have been around a hundred acres or so in there, because it run from way back to the old original house clear up to Soquel Drive. All that freeway and everything goes right through the middle of it now, and all those homes are in there, and that was practically all orchard, all but a field out next to Soquel Drive, which was where they had the cows in there for pasture. But they had forty or fifty acres at least in fruit. They run it until Augustus Noble died, and then the place was divided up there, and Walter, he sold the old ranchhouse that had a beautiful old adobe house on it. One of the oldest ones in the County, and it was in perfect condition, and the people bought it, and first thing they did, they tore this old adobe house down.

Calciano: How awful!

Johnston: Yes, the first thing they did.

Calciano: That was Martina Castro's old home, wasn't it?

Johnston: Yes. That was. Nobles had it; they used it for a milkhouse. They used ne end of it.

Calciano: I have a couple of loose ends that I want to tie up. I

started to ask you about whether the Chinese did packing in this area. I know they did lots of it, but did....

Johnston: Oh yes. At one time out here they had a few Chinese, but not very many out here, but they had at Capitola. Nobles' place. They had some apples out there, they called them Virginia Greenings. They were a green apple, and they was harder than a rock. You couldn't hardly bite them. You couldn't hardly cut one of them. And the Chinese -- they were a very sweet apple -- they packed those and shipped them to China. Virginia Greenings. It's something that I'll bet you the average person never heard of or never seen them. The Nobles had quite a few of them, and the Chinese bought all them, and they come down here and packed them at Nobles Ranch and shipped them to China.

Calciano: I've always heard that the Chinese were very fast at packing.

Johnston: Oh they were fast, but they can't compare with a white. We could beat them hands down. After the white people started to pack, it's just like anything else, they never make a false move. They figure every angle to gain speed. See, like making boxes. It got so that the Chinese were like a joke compared to what the

white fellows could pack. If they packed thirty or forty boxes in a day, they thought they was doing good. We got so we could pack 150 a day with large fruit.

Calciano: Oh my!

Johnston: Yes, apples. My wife packed over where we had the contract, and she'd pack over a hundred a day, every day. And get four cents a box.

Calciano: That would be good money, wouldn't it?

Johnston: Oh, we made all kinds of money. We'd work only about half the year, about six months; the rest of the time we just laid around the beach here and had a good time. (Laughter) That's the reason we kept the house here all the time. We was only here about half the time. Rest of the time, why, we worked in cherries and apples and the oranges. One or two years we went down in Imperial Valley and packed cantaloupes along in July. I got down there one year, that was 1912, it was the year before I got married. Went down there with one of the boys that packed here who came from the South. He had the contract there; he worked for me up here and then we'd go down there and work at Ojai for him. He had a contract in Imperial Valley packing

cantaloupes after the oranges were over, see? I went down there and went to work for him and got down there and it was 126 degrees in the shade and there was no shade. All they had out in the cantaloupe patch was some palm fronds over some two by fours. It was so hot that you went out and that heat would burn right through your shirt. We were packing at Calexico. That was right on the Mexican border. I talked to an old-timer, and he said, "Well, it's warming up." I says, "Well, if it's warming up, I'm not going to be here when it's hot." (Laughter) I got to thinking about Santa Cruz and the sea breezes. But about the packing, when the white people took over, why, pretty soon, it's just like athletes or anything else, they were trained right for it, and they were really fast and good. The Chinese couldn't compete with a white fellow.

Calciano: This was the years before there were many Japanese?

Johnston: We never had many Japanese in here at that time. There was only one Japanese; he worked for the Hihn Company over here, and he nailed up n the press, the apple press. But when they'd get a lot of big fruit in, we'd pack and we'd swamp him, you know, and he couldn't keep up with us. Then about that time the Japanese

Mikado or somebody would have a birthday, and he'd have to lay off for a day or two. I've never seen so many Japanese birthdays and the like. (Laughter) Then I'd have to quit packing and go nail up, and that would cut me down, and I didn't like that either.

Calciano: Oh, I remember what I was told. Someone told me that the Japanese were fast compared to the Chinese. Is that right?

Johnston: Oh, yes. The Japanese were more like the white people. They figure all the angles too. There was no lost motion in that. They later had quite a few of them in Watsonville, but we never had very many of them out here. We never had any Japanese out here until they started working in the strawberries.

Calciano: Speaking of ethnic groups, Watsonville had Danes and Yugoslavs, and Santa Cruz had Irish and Germans and so forth. What group was out here? [The Aptos area.] Just all mixed up, or was there any particular country that had a lot of people in this area?

Johnston: Around here, well there were a lot of Danish people right around here.

Calciano: There were?

Johnston: Yes. Larsen and, well there were Petersens, and Johnsons and Johansens and Jessens and Jensens. There

were a lot of Danes. And there were quite a few Dutch. All the MacDonalds and Jansse and all them were Dutch.

Calciano: MacDonald was Dutch?

Johnston: Yes, MacDonald, they were all Dutchmen believe it or not.

Calciano: What's your name, English?

Johnston: Well, yes, we're English and Scotch -- everything, just plain American. Got all kinds of nationalities.

SIGNPAINTER, POSTAL CARRIER, AND PROPERTY OWNER

Calciano: After you went out of the apple packing contract business, what did you do?

Johnston: Well, I learned the sign painter's trade, and that was my trade. I followed it for years.

Calciano: Oh? And then you mentioned you worked for the post office.

Johnston: I quit the sign business. I got tired of it. I worked for a big outfit in San Francisco. They find out one class of work that you do, and that's all you do you know, just day after day. It gets monotnous. Now I was good at all this freehand signs on windows, sales stuff, see? And that's all I done. So I thought, "Oh the Dickens with it," I had to come home every

Saturday to the house we kept here, and then the baby come along, and my wife and daughter were here, and I was in the City all week and come home Saturday night and go back Sunday night, and I just quit. That's a little too much. So I just quit. I come down here and I took the job rural carrying. Passed the examination; 'course I was a veteran, and I had a little preference above everybody else. I took it. That was 1922. And Arthur Free was the Assemblyman for this district, and I took an examination and passed it, and Emmet Rittenhouse, he was on the Central Committee here, and he called me up, he was a good friend of mine, Emmet Rittenhouse, and he says, "Do you really want the job?" And I says, "Yes, I want to be outside all the time." Only a few hours a day, and I still painted signs in the afternoon, so I took it, and I was on there for pretty near twenty-five years for the post office. There is only one person been there longer, and that's Charlie Spencer. He's the postmaster now. He's been here around thirty years. He can retire anytime he wants.

Calciano: Why did you retire?

Johnston: Oh I quit one day. I just got sick, and I was sick for several months. The doctors didn't know what was the

matter, but afterwards they found out I had an ulcer. I got over that, went back to work for a month, and I started feeling poorly again, you know, so I just up and quit. I started in and made more money in one year after I got out than I did in the other twenty-five that I worked.

Calciano: Doing what?

Johnston: Well I did everything, you know. I had the garage business here, and had the AAA California Auto Association Tow Service for twenty-six years.

Calciano: Is this your garage here? [Pointing out the window to the Mobil service station next to Mr. Johnston's house.]

Johnston: Yes. I own from the bridge all the way through the town of Aptos to the buildings owned by Arne Jensen.

Calciano: I see. Well, how long have you had the gas station?

Johnston: Well, the gas station ... the first gas station was a Shell. That was 1928. Had one pump.

Calciano: And that was here?

Johnston: Set right in front of where the garage is now. I leased it to a man by the name of Bickmore. William Bickmore. I have a lot of his pictures. Here's one of them right here that was taken. He was quite a

photographer. And he took those at the old Hihn Company lumber mill when they were building it. That was about, oh, 1890 or someplace along in there.

Calciano: They're wonderful pictures.

Johnston: He had a lot of wonderful pictures. That was his hobby. When he died, I went over back of the garage one day, and the son was out there, and he had all these throwing them in a fire. And I says, "What're you burning those up for?" And he says, "Well, they're no good to me. They don't mean nothing." And I dug out all I could. Some of them were burnt and other ones were gone, you know. But I got a lot of good photographs.

Calciano: These are beautiful! How did you ever decide to buy this property?

Johnston: A fellow by the name of Joseph Martin owned it, and nothing would do, they were getting old, and they wanted us to have it. That was all there was to it, the wife and I. He was an old Portuguee, a wonderful old gentleman, and him and his wife, they thought the world of us because we rented this house from them for years, and when we went away, we just still rented it so we'd have a place to come back to. We paid five

dollars a month year in and year out till 1922 when he died.

Calciano: Did you want to buy it, or....

Johnston: Yes. The wife wanted to buy it. She said, "Well, why not buy it?" I didn't want to tie myself up here, but she talked me into it. So we've been here ever since.

Calciano: Were you sorry?

Johnston: No, we could have done worse.

Calciano: It's a lovely place.

Johnston: It's home anyway. My wife was here when she was young, went to school. They used to live up here at the Mangels ranch. They'd come down here every day and went to school to Miss Theresa Lenard, she's dead now. She was the schoolteacher over at Aptos School. At that time there was only ten or fifteen children went to school over there. My wife graduated from there. She always used to come here and look down at the ocean and always liked it, see, so she wanted to buy it. I said, "Well, okay, if you want to buy it, we'll buy it". At that time, why property wasn't worth anything, and the old gentleman, he sold the original buildings from the garage through town for $5,000. That's all we paid. And then I bought this other piece

from the garage to the bridge down there in 1922, I think. That's about it.

Calciano: You have the land down below?

Johnston: It was in 1922 we bought the original place, and in 1930 we bought this last piece. We've got about five and one half acres. They're quite flat down there on the creek. Bought the granddaughter a horse. A mare and a beautiful colt. We've got a donkey and two horses down there now.

Calciano: I remember you saying you were going to do something with the land.

Johnston: Well, they've been after us for ages. A lot of the lodges, they wanted to build a community hall of some kind down there. It's right on the creek, and it's got everything down there.

Calciano: How do you get there?

Johnston: Well, we've got a good road down to the bottom of the hill.

OLD APTOS

The Business Area

Calciano: Your memories of the town go back to about 1905, don't they?

Johnston: I came out here and started work in 1905.

Calciano: About how many people were in the town?

Johnston: The town hasn't changed a great deal. Right in town the population is about the same. But the old-timers, there's not very many of them left.

Calciano: But was the town a hundred or five hundred or what?

Johnston: Oh, there wasn't a hundred in the immediate area; out of town there'd be a lot.

Calciano: Not even a hundred?

Johnston: A lot of the people who went to school here at the time I come, the Bakers, Spencers and all, they lived up above Forest Glen in there and Trout Gulch, and they had the Valencia School at that time, too. It was up on top of the hill, and so things were divided up. There wasn't too many people here in this school across the bridge here. I don't think there were more than twenty-five pupils here at the most. They had one teacher for all the grades. Up to the eighth grade.

Calciano: What buildings were in town? What type of businesses?

Johnston: Well the businesses in town were pretty much the same. We had a big general store at that time that was run by William Verhoeff. Leonard had it, and then William Verhoeff, and then Verhoeff and Pete Jansse had it

together, and then it was run by Van Kaathoven from 1922 till he closed it and sold to Fred Toney. They sold it to Arne Jensen who has the TV shop.

Calciano: Is that where Wing's is now?

Johnston: No, it was right down at the Red and White Store that was run for years by Van Kaathoven. It is right down where that television shop is now, right in that building there, see.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: And the post office was in there at the time when I went to work for the post office. It was in the grocery store. Post office was about six by eight feet. (Laughter) Just a little cubbyhole. Then in later years -- about when Hoover came in, somewhere around there -- they enlarged it and moved it to the other side of the store. It was about twenty by twenty when they moved it. That was before Roosevelt was elected President. Then when Roosevelt was elected, they moved the post office over to my building. It seems like every time a new President was elected, they'd move the post office. When FDR went out they moved over to Toney's building.

Calciano: Which building was that?

Aptos Covered Bridge Circa 1890

This bridge once traversed Valencia Creek to the east of Aptos Village. In the background (A) one can see the storage tank for the village water supply; the tank sat on top of the local blacksmith shop. Behind the house at the right stands the Ocean House (B), one of three hotels in the village. The Bay View Hotel is hidden behind the Ocean House.

Aptos Village, 1919

To the left is the Southern Pacific depot (A), the Bay View Hotel (B) before it was moved, and (C) the blacksmith shop. On the right hand side of the street are (D) apartments, (E) a small grocerystore, (F) a hay barn, and (G) a poolroom with a horse trough in front.

Johnston: That was over on Trout Gulch Road, just before you get to the Flea Market. He built that building for them. Then the next thing, they moved it over to that new building behind the gas station there. [At the other end of the village from Mr. Johnston's house.]

Calciano: It certainly has moved around! What other businesses were here when you first came out here?

Johnston: We had more salons than anything else.

Calciano: I've heard this.

Johnston: Well, they had ... let's see they had ... one, two, three, four saloons. Five saloons in town.

Calciano: Oh my!

Johnston: Five saloons in town, when I came out here. And then they had two grocery stores and they sold all kinds of merchandise in those days, general merchandise; they sold everything. You take the big store, they had everything that you could think of, you know. Dry goods and everything. Hardware, everything. It was quite a store. It was run by William Verhoeff and Jansse for years after Leonard sold it to Verhoeff.

Calciano: Who ran the other country store?

Johnston: The other store was just a grocery store. It was run by Bob Menefee. That was along about 1915 I think. But

they had three hotels.

Calciano: Who stayed in these hotels?

Johnston: Well, on Saturdays the crews working up in the woods, they'd come down and bathe and get cleaned up and have a room at the hotel. The fellows that didn't live in Santa Cruz or Watsonville. They'd stay downtown here over the weekend, you know, and then go back to work Monday morning.

Calciano: Were they a rough type, or....

Johnston: Oh, they had a good lively bunch in those days. They drank a whole lot you know. Even in Prohibition, why, they had two or three bootleggers out here. They used to imbibe pretty freely, you know. (Laughter) Had quite a time. In early days they had lots of Filipino woodchoppers, you know. And there were quite a few Indians up around Valencia, and they'd get a hold of a jug of wine, and they'd really get rough.

Calciano: Were there any Indians around in 1900?

Johnston: Well, there was a lot of half-breeds around, you know. They're practically all gone now. The last one was one that lived up at Valencia for years. We called him Willy. I don't know what his name was. That's all I ever heard. He was harmless, but he was a wild-looking bird I'll tell you. (Laughter) Kids were all afraid of

him. Never forget; the game warden arrested him down here for getting clams out of season one time, you know. But the Indians had a privilege; they could hunt or fish anytime they wanted. The game warden took him in and the judge turned him loose. (Laughter) But he was a real old original Indian. I don't know where he came from. He lived in Valencia for years.

Calciano: When did he die?

Johnston: Oh, he died ten, fifteen years ago. You know the valley Indians used to come over and camp around here. When they were putting in that golf course at Rio Del Mar, when they were grading it, the bulldozer dug out a 125 mortars; a fellow from Watsonville came over and packed them all up and took them to Watsonville.

Calciano: Where did they find them?

Johnston: Well there used to be a spring by Bush's Gulch there, and they used to have a camp in there. It's in Seascape now, below Sumner Road.

Calciano: Do you mean that gulch where the sewer plant is ... the one that goes down to Hidden Beach?

Johnston: Yes, that's it.

Calciano: Why was it called Bush's Gulch?

Johnston: Because there was a man named Bush that used to own

all that property in there on this side of the trestle. The old house is still there, and one of Bush's sons still lives there.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: But the rest of the community in Aptos has not changed a whole lot. About the same amount of people.

Calciano: There wasn't anything like a livery stable or anything like that?

Johnston: No, we never had any livery stable right here in town. Closest one was Soquel or Capitola. Everyone out here had their own rigs.

Calciano: Soquel was always a much bigger town, wasn't it?

Johnston: Oh yes. It was quite a place, Soquel was.

Calciano: Was there any town rivalry. Did people living here really feel that they belonged to the town?

Johnston: No, everybody went to Soquel to all the dances at the Odd Fellows Hall. The Odd Fellows used to be quite the thing in those days. In Soquel, if you didn't belong to the Odd Fellows, why you wasn't anybody at all.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Everybody in town belonged. (Laughter)

Calciano: Is that ring you're wearing an Odd Fellows ring?

Johnston: No, I belong to the Masonic Order.

Calciano: That's what I thought. So you didn't join the Odd Fellows?

Johnston: Well, I did. I belonged to the Odd Fellows for a few years. I wasn't much of a lodge member.

Calciano: Well, aren't the Masons sort of like the Odd Fellows?

Johnston: I joined the Masons in 1922.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: It won't be long and it'll be fifty years if I live that long. My son-in-law, he's master of the lodge at Soquel now, Leo Bass.

Calciano: Very good. Were there any churches in Aptos?

Johnston: Oh yes. We've always had churches. We used to have a nice Catholic church right up here where the cemetery is. They tore it down. They used some of that material, I think, to build that recreational hall at Capitola. Had a nice little church up there. Then we had n the back street a Baptist church.

Calciano: Why did they tear the Catholic church down?

Johnston: I don't know why they tore it down. 'Course it was too hard in those days to come over here for services. Now they got another Catholic church.

Calciano: Yes. When did that Poor Clares get started?

Johnston: Oh, that one hasn't been there too long. Some gentleman died who owned that property, and he deeded it to them in his will, I think, that acreage over there.

Aptos Schools

Johnston: I have a picture of the old original school in Aptos. I don't think there are two or three of those pictures around, if there are that many.

Calciano: Where was it located?

Johnston: That first school was built by Castro on his property. It stood about where that bar is now called John Anthony's. [In 1972 the bar is called The End Zone. --P.D.Johnston]

Calciano: When did it get torn down?

Johnston: Well they tore it down when Dr. Miller bought that property there.

Calciano: Who was Miller?

Johnston: Well he's the dentist that owns that property now.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: But that schoolhouse was only 15 by 20 feet. Then later Spreckels donated the land for a larger one at the west end of the railroad trestle. It was larger -- about 30 by 50 feet. It had one teacher and eight

grades.

Calciano: Where exactly was it?

Johnston: Over here, right across the bridge. This little red building, you know. I think it's a church now. You know, right across the trestle.

Calciano: Oh! Before you get up to the Safeway and everything?

Johnston: Oh yes. Just this second building on the left. Arano's old house sits first, and then the old red schoolhouse.

Calciano: Arano's house?

Johnston: It used to be Arano's, and now I think somebody by the name of Palmer lives there. They have a glass shop there.

Calciano: When they built the new school, did they stop using this one altogether?

Johnston: Oh yes. This one here was too small. About 1928 was when the school district built a new grammar school. That was on property donated by Monroe, Lyon, and Miller on Valencia Road just out of Aptos. Three rooms and an auditorium. Now we have four grammar schools and a high school.

Calciano: Yes. The district has certainly grown.

Johnston: My wife and I helped pick the site for that school.

Calciano: How did you happen to be involved in getting the

school site?

Johnston: Well Monroe, Lyon, and Miller offered Aptos a new school site, so all the residents called a meeting -- this was about 1927. I happened to be at the meeting, and I was working at the post office, and they appointed me and a couple of others to see if we thought that it was a good place to have a school. And we thought it was pretty nice, you know, with all the trees, and the children could play there and not be in the way and get hurt. Traffic at that time, of course, wasn't as bad as it is now. A few of the people didn't want it over there; didn't want it because it was over there and didn't show from the highway, and they says, "Well, we are building a nice school over there and nobody can see it."

Calciano: Oh!

Johnston: At that time we traveled around a good bit of the State, and everytime you come to a school, you had to almost stop and slow down, so we decided it would be better over there away from the highway where the kids could play and no trouble with anybody getting run over and have any trouble of any kind. After we'd accepted it and built the school, then everybody

thought it was wonderful. But before, there was a whole lot of them that didn't like it. They thought it was a great detriment. After we'd only had the property deed about two weeks, then Rio Del Mar, they had a chance to sell that to somebody, and they wanted to give us more acreage over here, right where the freeway is now, see? And we wouldn't give it back to them. (Laughter)

Calciano: This was from the developers of Rio Del Mar?

Johnston: Yes.

Calciano: Well were you the school board, or.... I mean how did you legally accept it?

Johnston: I was one appointed on the committee to investigate it for the school board. I think Mrs. Spencer was one of the trustees at that time, and also Harry Baker. The Spencers were always into everything to go ahead in the community, you know.

Water Supply

Calciano: Where did Aptos get its water supply?

Johnston: Aptos's first water supply was a well down on my property here. The water from that was pumped up into a tank on top of the blacksmith shop which was in a building where the Aptos Market is now. It was pumped

up by horse power. The horse pulled a lever around in a circle which operated the pump and forced the water up into a tank above the building to create the pressure. Then after Spreckels bought all his property with water rights in Valencia Creek, he put in a small dam up Valencia Creek near a big spring and made a flume out of lumber that came down to a knoll back of his ranch home, which was located where the Rio Del Mar overpass is now. The water from this big spring emptied into this first reservoir, which acted as a sand trap, and from there it overflowed into a much larger reservoir, which would be in the middle of the freeway overpass now. Then from this larger reservoir, he run a four-inch cast-iron pipeline into Aptos and then across the bridge on the west of town and down the hill to the beach, so they could have water for his cottages and bowling alley at the beach. It followed the down grade of Valencia Creek to the beach. Once he put that in, then Aptos got its water from this four-inch line, and it's still in use.

Calciano: Does the Soquel Creek Water District own that now?

Johnston: Yes.

Calciano: And was it Spreckels's home, or the first reservoir,

that was where the Rio Del Mar overpass now is?

Johnston: The home. The north end of the freeway overpass is where the barns and corrals were. The home was a little east of the overpass where Elden Day's home is now [on Monroe Avenue]. Elden Day built his home over the old cement foundations of the Spreckels' home. And the first reservoir was up on a hill above Louis Dutra's house over there in Rio Del Mar. Right up above Monroe Avenue. That reservoir is no longer there; it's now the Valencia school ground. And when they built the entrance into Rio Del Mar, they tore the big circular reservoir out, and ne man got killed. It was built like a big saucer made of brick, and he kept digging under these bricks, you know, and it collapsed on him and killed him.

Calciano: That was when they built that big arch-like entrance to Rio Del Mar?

Johnston: Yes, and then that arch got torn down when the freeway was put through.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: You know, the Soquel Creek Water Company now has a well down near the creek on my property. It came in artesian and flowed about 5000 gallons a day for a couple of months. After they put in a big pump and

motor, they pumped it steady for two days and a half at 12,000 gallons an hour to clear it of sand and to see if they could pump it out. After they stopped pumping, it was back artesian in about one half a day. Now they pump about 500,000 gallons from this well a day.

Calciano: Is that well near that original one you mentioned where they pumped it up on top of the blacksmith shop?

Johnston: Yes. About seventy-five yards from the other one.

Calciano: When did electric lights come into Aptos?

Johnston: Oh, we've had electricity here for a long time. I don't know just when it came in first. It used to be Coast Counties.

Calciano: Where did you used to go to vote in the old days?

Johnston: Oh, we used to vote over at the fire station after we started it. Before that we used to vote at the school.

The Volunteer Fire Department

Calciano: When did the fire station start?

Johnston: The fire department was all volunteer up until around 1921.

Calciano: I thought it was all volunteer until recently.

Johnston: That's right. But until around 1921, we didn't even have any equipment worth mentioning. All we had was a fire bell in the middle of the village between the Bay View Hotel and Van Kaathoven's Red and White Store. This bell would call out everybody to a fire. And all we had in those days was a few lengths of one and one half inch hose coiled up on the front wall of Van's Store, and we had about three hydrants in town to hook up to. I put in two by my buildings, and there was another one over in the middle of town. After we had a couple of bad fires about 1921, we bought a Locomobile truck from Cunnison Brothers in Soquel. I went over, and I think it was eighty dollars I paid for the chassis. And I brought it over here, and Ralph Mattison and Bud Pasha and Van Kaathoven and four or five more of us -- Bill Horstman, Charles Winslow the blacksmith, and some of the rest of the boys -- we put a body on it and two big chemical tanks. We didn't have any water or any way to carry any water, so we just made a big chemical outfit out of it. It was all right if we got to the fire the first few minutes after it started, but if you didn't get there fast, why you couldn't do much with it. But even at that, we saved the lot in several cases. (Laughter) And we paid

that first truck all off in one year by just giving dances and contributions every time somebody had a fire. If we got there quick enough to put it out, then we'd ask for contributions. (Laughter) If we didn't get there in the first five minutes, why we didn't get anything.

Calciano: That's funny! And the people would just ring the bell when there was a fire?

Johnston: Yes. They had the bell sitting right out in the middle of the town, and someone would go over there and ring it, and it stood there for years, and one day Bud Pasha (there was a fire someplace) and he went over there to ring it, and the whole thing come down. Lucky it didn't hit him on the head.

Calciano: Yes!

Johnston: But we soon learned our truck was too small an outfit, so we decided to form a fire district about 1929. When the district was formed, we got enough money to buy a good little Ford pumper made by Van Pelt of Oakdale, California. That fire truck could carry about 400 gallons of water and was equipped to pump out of the creek or any tank. Then the next thing we added was a tank truck.

Calciano: Where was the fire station?

Johnston: The first fire truck was stationed in one of my buildings where Wing's Market is now, but that was too small, so we moved across the street where the American Legion Hall is. We remodeled it and got a big siren, and we had a good volunteer fire department. We were rated the best volunteer fire department in the State of California.

Calciano: When was that?

Johnston: All the time up to when we switched over to a paid fire department. That siren tower, by the way, was used all through the War as an observation tower for the U.S. Air Corps warning system.

Calciano: Double use! What happened to the original fire bell? Johnston: We took the old fire bell to Valencia and put it up above Fred Grow's house, right above the Valencia Hall, for air raid warnings, and somebody stole it, for the brass that was in it I guess. Either that or for a keepsake. We often regretted that, because later on I went to pick it up and was going to bring it down and put it up in town for fire drills, and when I went up there it was gone.

Calciano: That's a shame.

Johnston: Then later they got so much more equipment, they built

a new building over in the middle of town where Menefee had his store. They had three trucks in there, a tank truck and two regular fire engines.[3]

Calciano: Let's see, we just went over to a paid fire department about two years ago.

Johnston: Yes. The year before last.

Calciano: I remember. Our taxes jumped like crazy.

Johnston: We've got ten men, I think, on the fire department now. Ten of them all paid firemen. And it all started from that little truck that we got back in 1921.

<u>Entertainment</u>

Calciano: You mentioned dances. Was dancing one of the most popular entertainments here?

Johnston: Yes. That's right. You had, oh, once or twice a month they'd give a dance. We used to have our own hall. It used to sit over in Aptos, corner of Valencia Road and Valencia Street -- I think they call Valencia Road Trout Gulch Road now. The hall was right on that

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*Note: After they built the new firehouse where Menefee's store was, it was only a short while till it became too small, and they decided to move again. They had bought another big engine, which was at that time foolish, as our smallest truck can pump all the water that's available from our small four-inch main. Anyway the fire commissioners wanted to move. So they go clear out to the edge of our fire district on the west and build a big new firehouse, right in front of our new grammar school [Mar Vista School]. I call it the Soquel Eastside Fire Department. Every time there is a fire, they have to drive down through all the heavy traffic to get anyplace. -- P.D.Johnston, 1972

corner, and we had a nice little hall there.

Calciano: Who owned it?

Johnston: It originally belonged to the Hihn Company. Then the Hihn Company sold it and the old town hall was torn down. And the fire department, by 1930 the firehouse was too small to hold our meetings, and the old schoolhouse was vacant and in bad shape, so the Volunteer Fire Department got permission to make it into a town hall. It was badly in need of repairs and needed a new floor, and we put in a stage on one end. We didn't have any money, so Mr. Van Kaathoven, Ralph Mattison, and I went on a note for $800.00 at the bank to pay for it. Then everybody pitched in and paid off the note in about a year by giving dances and card parties and other social events, and we received donations from different people. The Ladies Aid Society -- they did more than the Chamber of Commerce does now. When they wanted anything, they went out and gave a few dances, and pretty quick they had it. They wanted a new piano, why they gave a couple of dances and have a good time over there and donations with supper so much, and they had what they wanted.

Calciano: Were there ever things called church socials?

Johnston: Oh yes. There was all kinds of box socials, and they

had a lot of their entertainments over there, and once a year they'd give a play of some kind you know, and all the old-timers in it; used to get quite a kick out of it. But things were more social than they are right now, you know. There was no place to go, and everybody came to these things from all around Valencia and as far as Capitola and Soquel. They'd have it so crowded you couldn't hardly get in there. The dances, at least half of them would be standing out in the street, you know, between dances.

Calciano: I've heard about Lunbeck having dances.

Johnston: Oh, Lunbecks, they used to have quite a time up there. Three of them, and they used to play a bass fiddle and a violin and an accordian. They used to really go to town. My brother, he used to be quite a pianist, and we had a violin, piano and drums, see, or saxophone. Sometimes five musicians, and they had really good music. In those days I used to play the drums, and we were, why from September on, we were dated all through the winter. They'd come out and get you months ahead, you know, to be sure to have good music.

Calciano: You did more things, didn't you!

Johnston: Well you had to. In those days you did everything. And you had to do them pretty good, too, or else somebody

else did it. We used to make lots of money playing for dances. And we danced all night. You'd start at nine o'clock, and the dances as a rule closed at two, and then they'd take a collection and play till five or six in the morning.

Calciano: Pay you extra?

Johnston: Yes. That's right. We would get two dollars an hour after two a.m.

Calciano: What years would that be?

Johnston: Oh we played for years. From 1912 to 1930. I played at dances way after I was married. We got even down to just piano and drums. Just two of us would go. Last playing that I done was with a fellow by the name of Espen Larsen. He's dead now, and Norman Hansen, he could play by ear. He could play anything. Just hear it once you know.

Calciano: What did he play?

Johnston: He played the piano. I played the drums. I had a set of tuned cowbells, you know, and a kettle drum, and a couple of cymbals. We played everything. Those old pieces, when they play them over the radio now, you know, it kind of brings back old times.

Calciano: I bet.

Johnston: "Margie," "Roll out the Barrel," "There's a Tavern in the Town," and all those old-timers, you know. "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "Coming Around the Mountain." Along about 1900 in there.

Roads, Railroads, and Bridges

Johnston: Believe it or not, we had five trains a day go through here. Passenger trains alone, besides the two or three freights each way.

Calciano: Oh my goodness.

Johnston: It was in 1938 when they took off all passenger train service.

Calciano: A lot of people would go from Watsonville to Santa Cruz?

Johnston: Oh yes. There wasn't automobiles then like there is now, you know. Everybody used the trains. If you wanted to go to Santa Cruz, why you took the train. It was 20 cents from here to go to Santa Cruz on the train. You could go in at nine o'clock in the morning, come back at four something in the afternoon, or eight thirty at night, something like that. There was five trains each way to Santa Cruz and Watsonville. Then later, why they started a stage service that ran from Watsonville to Santa Cruz. And it was started by a man out in Pleasant Valley, a man by the name of

Hitchings. He started a stage service that went from Santa Cruz to Watsonville. It ran for several years until some other stage line bought him out and took over you know.

Calciano: About what year was this?

Johnston: That was a long time ago. Must have been around, I'd say around 1915.

Calciano: That late?

Johnston: It started, then gradually, why, stage lines started up everyplace. Automobiles.

Calciano: Oh, automobiles?

Johnston: Yes. Automobile stage line.

Calciano: Oh, an automobile stage line. This wasn't horse-drawn?

Johnston: Oh no. This was automobile. That's the first auto stage, you know.

Calciano: Oh, I see.

Johnston: Before, the old horse stage line used to stop at the Aptos Inn, which was just torn down.

Calciano: Where was the Aptos Inn?

Johnston: The Aptos Inn used to be an old hotel. It was located where the cut-rate gas station is now; the station that sits in front of the post office building. And the stage line turned right there, but they didn't have any bridges in there, and it turned away and went

right down the hill there and crossed the creek down below and up around the other side. There were no bridges.

Calciano: Oh, Soquel Drive didn't go up by your house there?

Johnston: Oh, no. In the horse days there was no bridge in here. This was a sheer drop-off where this bridge is, about thirty, forty feet right into the creek. They went down that sidehill. The old road is still there.

Calciano: It is?

Johnston: Yes. Part way down the hill. You can see where it was.

Calciano: When did they first get a bridge here?

Johnston: Oh, that bridge, I couldn't tell you when that first went in. They were covered bridges. This cement bridge was built in 1928. The road used to go right across where all those buildings sit now that are owned by Mr. Hall. It went right straight along the side of the railroad tracks, and you had an L turn over there. Went right over and turned under the railroad tracks. Too many people, as soon as they got automobiles, why they come down there and into the creek. We used to have to go down and get them out of the creek.

Calciano: Heavens!

Johnston: Several people got killed there, so they decided to build another bridge. They put this n the curve side.

Nobody's went in there since. Other side of town is the same way. They had a bridge over there, where the underpass is now, you know, where the road goes down the other side of the track; that was the covered bridge there. The old Aptos covered bridge. They later put in a steel frame bridge.

Calciano: When did the covered bridge get torn down?

Johnston: Oh, that covered bridge must have been torn down sometime before 1900. It must have been somewhere along in there. And then the steel bridge was torn down about 1920 or so when they paved the highway with cement. That's the old highway --Soquel Drive we call it now. They had a big redwood tree along n ne side of the steel bridge, and one night they had a dance down at the hall, and somebody come running up to the dance hall and said there's an automobile in the creek, and we went down there, and in those days there were touring cars, you know; they had fabric tops, and they had the top down, and they'd been to Watsonville and coming home to Santa Cruz, and there was four in it. We could only find three of them. The other fellow we looked all over and, well, he had been in the car, they had had a few drinks, you know, and we looked and looked, and at last, why somebody looked up in the

tree, and here he was hanging over a limb. He hit this limb, and it knocked him out cold, but he was hanging up in the tree over a limb. (Laughter) But they took all those bridges out and straightened the highway out, and then we never had any more trouble.

Calciano: Oh goodness.

Johnston: A lot of funny things happened.

Calciano: You never had any trolley cars out here, did you?

Johnston: Electric cars?

Calciano: Yes.

Johnston: No. It just went to Capitola, came across the bridge and made the circle and went right back to Santa Cruz.

Calciano: You mentioned there were five passenger trains coming in here. Was there a depot here?

Johnston: Well, yes. There's a picture of that depot here. They had quite a depot over here. They tore it down along about 1940, something like that. It was one of these freight and passenger depots. We had Lloyd Bowman as county surveyor at that time. In 1927, when they surveyed this area here for the new bridge, they made all the maps up, you know, and they come out and were showing me the map. My houses used to set here where the garage is, see? They were on this side. When they

wanted to make this turn, the right-of-way went right through one of the houses fifteen feet and the other house it went through about three feet, you see. Both the houses were setting close to the bank. I said, "We will give the County the land, if you will move the houses back off the road. I'm not going to move the houses." Bowman said, "Oh, we couldn't do that. They aren't worth anything anyway." So they were going to condemn the property. We went in there, and the Board of Supervisors were going to file a condemnation suit against Paul D. Johnston and his wife of Aptos. And I got up, and I said, "Wait a minute. What are you going to condemn it for?" I said, "I offered to give it to you, if you'll just move the houses." And they sat up and took notice and said, "Well, we didn't know about that." So they took it under advisement, and then they come out and moved the houses, and oh, golly, Supervisor Reanier and Bowman got mad. I had tenants in the houses, and I had to move them all out when they were moving them. And they wouldn't connect up the sewer for three months or more, and I had to get a lawyer. Pretty near got into a lawsuit. In 1929.

Calciano: How did they decide to put the road through there?

Johnston: So they could make a slow curve under the railroad

trestle. When they drew up all these maps, all the road was sixty feet wide, and I asked Bowman, "How do you get a sixty-foot road through a forty-foot hole?" and he says, "Why, what do you mean?" and I says, "Well, the railroad depot from my buildings is only forty feet." He said, "That can't be. My engineers never make a mistake." I says, "Well, they did. You want to measure it?" I went and got the steel tape and went and measured it, and it was forty feet, six inches, and they had a sixty foot right-of-way running through that hole, see? Boy, was he mad! He went back and had to make all the maps all over again.

Calciano: They didn't tear the depot down at that point, did they?

Johnston: They didn't tear the depot down till 1940. In '38 all the passenger trains were taken off. But the road program, as far as the roads are concerned, those people in Rio Del Mar are simple-minded if they voted for it out there.[4] Look at the County roads. They don't keep up any of these roads.

Calciano: They don't?

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*Ed. Note: At the time of these interviews, the people living in Rio Del Mar were having heated debates on the advisability of setting up a road assessment district to bring the roads up to County standards. If the roads met these standards, the County would assume responsibility for maintaining the roads. Eventually half

Johnston: No. This road out here [Soquel Drive] they haven't touched since 1928. Only just patching. Take my buildings -- they used to have boardwalks all through town here, eight inches above the road. And they just kept building around and patching it up, so we had to tear the boardwalks out. And now if you get a rainy year, or get a big rain, you are going to flood all the buildings, and then I'd have to sue the County. But it won't do any good. No. You could go all over the State and come back here and tell the time when you got in the Soquel road district with your eyes shut in the middle of the night, because you can't hardly stay in the car. (Laughter) That's a fact.

Calciano: What do you think the problem is?

Johnston: Well, we had better roads when we had a road superintendent. Our Supervisors used to have a road boss we called him, and he'd come out and he'd supervise. Each district had a road boss, and he'd argue for what he wanted in his part of the County. And we got more then than we get now. We don't get a thing now. They don't touch them. We used to have good roads here. Now we've got the State highway. We should have a lot more money for these roads. They get enough gas tax out of these

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of Rio Del Mar formed such a district.

gasoline stations. You know this little gas station out here? [Next door] It's three or four hundred dollars a month for gas taxes alone right here, see? Look at all the stations around here. Look at the thousands and thousands of dollars of gasoline taxes, and we get nothing for it. We should incorporate out here. We'll never get anything until we do. We could start right here and incorporate Rio Del Mar, Aptos, Seacliff and the Terrace [Aptos Terrace], and we'd have everything all in there paid for. We'd start right out in the black. We never would go in the red. We've got our own fire department. Ten paid firemen over here. As good firemen over here with as good fire equipment as they've got in Santa Cruz or Watsonville or anyplace in the State. We've got ten paid firemen over here. We've got our own sewer system. It's all in.

Calciano: The roads are the only thing.

Johnston: That's right. And you get a lot of this gas tax back if you're a city. Every city is allowed five or six hundred dollars a year for the State using their roads. You get so many different taxes. Up here in the Rio Del Mar Shopping Center, there's about twenty-five businesses now. They pay twenty-five dollars a year

for a license. Right there. There's around here, I think the last statistics was that between here and La Selva Beach there's about 250 businesses.

Calciano: Oh my.

Johnston: Don't seem possible, does it?

Calciano: No, it doesn't.

Johnston: But when you start to figure them out, right here in town you run into dozens, see. To get all that, all we'd have to do is we'd have to have some kind of city hall. And we'd have to hire a couple of police officers and cars. And if we had these policemen, they wouldn't be breaking in every night. The other night right down the street here, they threw a rock through the window here and stole all the tape recorders and everything out of there. About five o'clock in the morning. I heard the noise, but I thought it was some truck going over these bumps. I don't know what's the matter with these people. They could get roads. We could put in our own roads. And you could put them in the way you want. You don't have to have six or eight inches of rock.[5] That's a lot of nonsense. Up here on the Terrace where my daughter lives, they went in, the

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*Ed. Note: Mr. Johnston is referring to the standards the County set for roads that are to be dedicated to and maintained by the County.

property owners themselves, in Arden Way up here, if you ever go out there, you should look at it; they got a nice little street there. And it cost them a dollar fifty cents a foot.

Calciano: Is that all?

Johnston: That's all. On each side. That's three dollars total a running foot. Well for a lot with a hundred feet frontage, it was less than $150.00. For a good road. They say, "Oh, well, it won't hold up," but it's been in there now about five years, and here a year ago this fellow come in there and retopped it again, and it cost them about 35 cents a running foot to get it retopped, and it was just like new again. Then they wanted to charge them out at Rio Del Mar something like twelve and a half dollars a foot. I think they figure on blacktop. A mile only costs $5,000 to blacktop everything.

Calciano: That would be about a dollar a foot.

Johnston: Oh, that's for the whole road. And then they want twelve and a half dollars out there per foot.

Calciano: Well, there's an awful lot of work that has to be done, according to the. contractors.

Johnston: Well, yes, according to their standards. But they

don't need all that out there. It's not used for big heavy hauling or anything. They don't need all that. Cement curbs and gutters. Rolled curbs are good enough for anybody; that's only blacktop. They do it on all the State highways, on the freeway, those rolled curbs. They build them up about 8 inches high; you see them all along there.

LARGE LANDOWNERS

Spreckels, Mangels, and Hihn

Calciano: Speaking of Rio Del Mar, I wanted to ask you about its early days.

Johnston: Down in the flat there, they used to have a big flour mill. This flat in Rio Del Mar.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Oh yes. That was one of the first flour mills in the whole County, I guess. About 1865. Right out in the old flat.

Calciano: How long did it run?

Johnston: Oh, it run for quite a few years, I guess. I've got the name of the fellow that run it and everything in my abstract.[6] He had that bottom land you know. Then

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*Note: The old flour mill was owned by James Bremman and John McHugh. --

Spreckels bought all that, and he put a bowling alley in and cottages and a bathhouse.

Calciano: Was Spreckels still living when you first came here to this area?

Johnston: Well, I saw him off and on, but the original family didn't come down here much after 1900.

Calciano: Was the old man dead by then or not?

Johnston: I don't know whether he was still alive or not. I worked at the sugar mill down there at the town of Spreckels. That was in 1906. I worked two winters for two or three months. Spreckels built a sugar factory in Watsonville first, then he closed it down and went down to Spreckels in Monterey County, which is right in the middle of the beet-growing country. That factory in there, it's still operating. The only one that I knew of the Spreckels family was Miss Mangels, a sister to Spreckels' wife.

Calciano: Oh! The Mangels and Spreckels families were related?

Johnston: Oh yes. They were related. Their houses were built almost identical.

Calciano: The Mangels family was an important family back in the early days, I guess.

Johnston: Oh yes, sure, the Mangels were. The firm was Tillmann and Bendel in San Francisco. They were a big wholesale grocery and spices and all that in San Francisco. One of Mangels' daughters married Mr. Tillmann and was a sister to Claus Spreckels' wife.

Calciano: Was this a summer place for them?

Johnston: Oh yes. They bought this around 1865 or '70, I think. It was whenever Spreckels bought up all this. Spreckels gave them that land. They owned this piece that adjoined Spreckels on one side and Hihn on the other, see? Spreckels came into here on an angle. Spreckels owned n two sides of them, and Hihn owned the upper end of it on the north side.

Calciano: Did Spreckels also have a hotel down here?

Johnston: No. They never had a hotel.

Calciano: I read somewhere that Spreckels had a hotel near the beach.

Johnston: Well, there wasn't any hotel down around the beach there or anything I know of. There wasn't anything down around the beach at all. He had a bowling alley -- it was right in after you cross this little cement bridge on that road that goes right in through the middle there to the beach. That bowling alley sat

right on that little ridge right there.

Calciano: What little cement bridge?

Johnston: That little cement bridge in Rio Del Mar. You know where you cross it, you go down under the underpass and over the little cement bridge down there in the flat.

Calciano: Oh, on Spreckels Drive.

Johnston: So that bowling alley sat right in there, and you went around the hill, and before you went up the hill there were eucalyptus trees, and right in those trees there was eight or ten cottages there.

Calciano: Who lived in the cottages?

Johnston: They were for Spreckels' guests. They were used like a hotel.

Calciano: Was the bowling alley for the same type of bowling we do today? Or was it lawn bowling?

Johnston: No, it was real bowling. There were two alleys and pool and billiard tables.

Calciano: What else was on Spreckels' land?

Johnston: It was all hay. All these fields were all hay, see. Spreckels had cattle and race horses. That was about all there was.

Calciano: You've mentioned Hihn several times. Did you know him?

Johnston: Oh yes. I know all the Hihns.

Calciano: What was the old man like?

Johnston: Oh, he was an old German. He was quite an old character, the old fellow. Smart old guy, you know. He bought all this land up here for a string of beads or something.

Calciano: Really?

Johnston: Yes. He bought some of it, but the way he got most of his land, he'd lend money, and then they couldn't pay, and then he would foreclose. I don't think it cost him but 10 or 20 dollars an acre, the whole thing, if that much. Spreckels bought his with cash. I got all the data on Spreckels, when he bought it and everything, and how much he paid for all of it.

Calciano: Oh, how do you know that?

Johnston: Well, I've got the abstract to this property. That was before Spreckels ever came here. It was bought from Castro.

The Johnston Property

Johnston: This here property that you're sitting on now was bought directly from Castro.

Calciano: I see. Rafael Castro?

Johnston: Yes. And his wife.

Calciano: You bought it from him, or there was somebody in between?

Johnston: No. People bought it before I did. I've owned it since 1922. The fellow that bought it, bought it along in the 1900's. 1906 about. The fellow that had it a little while before him was named Silva. He had it about 1900 or something. The fellow that originally bought it was by the name of Jessen. He was a blacksmith. A number of other people owned it before that, too, but it goes back to Castro originally. I have the old original of the abstract of the property here right back to Castro and right up to date. The Leonards bought a piece at about the same time. It was resurveyed in 1915 -- William Verhoeff had bought the store from Leonard. He was the first store owner. Later it was owned by Jansse and Verhoeff, and Mr. Van Kaathoven bought it about 1920. When Pat Walsh died, it was resurveyed, but all the old landmarks and trees and so forth were gone. Where this surveyor started, nobody knows. He had the Leonard property over on my land by about fifty feet and also took in Van Kaathoven's store. They kept after Mr. Van Kaathoven until he paid Leonard $800.00 for a quit claim deed. I owned a nice lot over at Seacliff Park, so in 1924 I

gave Mr. Van Kaathoven my lot in Seacliff Park for this disputed strip to clear up all the titles to the property. So Van Kaathoven deeded it all to me, and then I give him a quit claim deed to the store, the beauty shop, and the television, and all that along in there. My property runs right up to it, and then along behind it right up to the bar, and then it comes down that hill. There's a creek on the south and west side. I have all that in there. It would cost you a lot of money now. Old Martin, he was an old Portugee, and so about 1915 he paid about $75.00 for an abstract of title from the time Castro owned it right up to that date.

Calciano: How wonderful.

Claus Spreckels, continued

Calciano: Now Spreckels' purchases were legitimate purchases, not foreclosures?

Johnston: Spreckels paid cash for all his property.

[Ed. Note: Mr. Johnston added the following seven pages to the manuscript in April, 1972.]

The first two pieces bought by Claus Spreckels was all land south of the old County road south of Aptos,

including all of Rio Del Mar and east from Aptos Creek to the Leonard ranch at La Selva Beach. He bought this parcel from Don Rafael Castro's daughter, Mrs. Marie Hipolito, for the sum of $4,500 on November 4, 1872. On the same day, he bought all land north of the County road from the Aptos Creek n the west to the Valencia Creek and old Watsonville highway on the east, to the junction of the La Selva Beach road, to the Leonard ranch on the Monterey Bay, and north to land owned by the Hihn Company. This included all but a few small ranches in this piece of land that had already been sold by the Castro's. This piece was bought from Vincente Castro and the deed recorded on the same day, November 4, 1872, for the sum of $5,500. The third and last parcel included all land west of Aptos Creek, all Seacliff Park to Borregas Gulch or the land owned by the Porter-Sesnon estate on the west, all Aptos Terrace, and as far north as the State steel bridge across Aptos Creek on the way to the State Park above Aptos (Nisene Marks State Park). This parcel included the old original Castro home between Aptos and Seacliff Park. This last parcel was bought from Rafael Castro, recorded November 26, 1872, for the sum of $5,000. This gave Spreckels all this land

with Aptos Village sitting right in the middle. Spreckels later bought a few small pieces and also sold off a few small parcels.

The Loma Prieta Lumber Company

The Loma Prieta Lumber Company owned all the land which is now Nisene Marks State Park, around 10,000 acres. It was all bought from Rafael Castro about the time Hihn and Spreckels bought theirs. They bought all the Hinckley Basin, which took all land east of Soquel Creek watershed, east to the Aptos Creek and to its ridge between Aptos and Valencia Creek ridge almost down to Aptos. The Hihn Company owned the west, north, and east boundaries of Loma Prieta Lumber and Spreckels owned part of the south boundary. The company bought this for the redwood timber and started their mill about 1890 above Aptos. They had a lumber mill and town three miles above Aptos with a school and express office and a couple trains a day in and out. This mill run until about 1904. In 1906, it was moved around in the Hinckley Basin, and the mill was covered up in the 1906 earthquake and thirteen men were buried alive above Olive Springs. Only one man got out of the bunkhouse alive. When they felt the

earthquake, all the men ran out of the front door of the bunkhouse and right into the slide except one man who ran out the back and wasn't caught in it. Mr. Hopkins was one of the big stockholders in the company. Mr. Hopkins was associated with the Southern Pacific Railroad and head of the Loma Prieta Lumber Company. They also sold lots of split material from here: railroad ties, grape stakes, posts, and lots of tanbak for the tannery in Santa Cruz. They had a big lumber yard and store on a spur track at Opal Cliffs where the trailer park (Surf and Sand) is now just at the top of the hill above Capitola. They had their own engine; it run from Loma Prieta town above Aptos to Opal Cliffs twice a day and hauled lumber from the mill -- also split stuff. This commissary department or store carried everything the people needed or used and could be charged against their month's pay. This train made two round trips a day. After the earthquake in 1906, they came back from the Hinckley Basin and rebuilt the sawmill above Aptos about 1915. Between 1906 and 1915 another company operated at Loma Prieta; it was called the Molino Lumber Company. They only handled split stuff and tanbark. This was all packed out of the hills by pack trains by mules that I think

were owned by King Brothers. Later, about 1915, Loma Prieta came back and put in a narrow gauge railroad. It ran from Loma Prieta on the Aptos Creek up a steep 1500 foot incline to the top of the ridge between Aptos Creek and Bridge Creek into the Hinckley Basin from this side. They hauled the empty cars up this steep incline with a big donkey engine which operated this hoist up to the main line above the hoist, and the train, a Shay engine, drew the cars along the ridge on a steep grade over into Hinckley Basin where they were loaded and returned and dropped down this incline to the Southern Pacific tracks below and loaded n S.P. cars and shipped. After Loma Prieta Lumber had cleared out the Hinckley Basin, they came back to Loma Prieta and put in a track up Bridge Creek, which still had a lot of good redwood timber near the ridge of Hinckley Basin. They built a big camp in Bridge Creek and cut down all the big redwood trees for the mill for lumber. They also made a large lumber camp up on the west ridge of Bridge Creek and run the railroad up to it. The cookhouse was run by Mr. and Mrs. Haufman; this was in 1918. I helped build this camp just before the U.S. entered the First World War. In 1918 they had a very heavy winter; it rained a

lot, and the tracks all slid out and wrecked everything. The company decided to leave all the down timber they had cut, over 5,000,000 board feet, as it would cost more to get out than it was worth. After the war, about 1925, they sold this down timber for split stuff, ripped up all the tracks, sold the old Shay engine, and that ended Loma Prieta Lumber Company. They put in a watchman, a Mr. Teck Cathey; he was there until the Marks took it over. Then later the State of California took it over from the Marks family for back taxes and made it into a State Park.[7] The park road now is known as the Hopkins right-of-way; it is fifty feet wide from Aptos to old Loma Prieta town or mill. [End of Mr. Johnston's addition to text.]

Rafael Castro

Johnston: Rafael Castro had a big house right over here across the creek. A big house with a veranda all the way around it; they lived there. And then the relations to the rest of the Castros, a lot of them lived out here

*Ed. Note: The editor asked Mr. Johnston about the State's acquisition of the land since she was under the impression that the Marks family had donated the land. Mr. Johnston stated emphatically that contrary to the public impression, the land had not been donated, but had gone for back taxes. He said that he did not know all the details of the transaction, but that one unusual aspect was that there had been no public advertisement for bids as is customary with tax sales.

for years on that Mar Vista Road. Some of the old houses are out there yet.

Calciano: On Mar Vista?

Johnston: Right opposite this Blue Pacific Trailer Park over there.

Calciano: That's on the other side of the freeway?

Johnston: One of the houses is; Dan McCarty lived there, and then another relative had a house on Mar Vista on this side of the freeway. And the old Castro house used to set right square in the middle of the freeway. It was a big building, and it had a porch all the way around it, a veranda. Afterwards they had a fellow raising chickens over there, and we called it Leghorn Castle. They had a lot of Leghorn chickens over there. One night it burnt down; I don't know what year, it's been so long ago. Must have been 1925 or somewhere along in there. Joe Arano was still alive, I know, when it burnt down. Arano used to be Castro's bookkeeper, see?

Calciano: Oh?

Johnston: Yes. Joe Arano. That's the way he got his money and built the hotel about 1870. And old Arano, he claims that Castro has money yet hid around here someplace in cans under some oak trees or something. Old Arano,

when the old Castro house burnt down, it wasn't even cold and he was over there digging for it.

Calciano: Did he find any?

Johnston: No, I don't think he did ever find any. Whether Castro had any or not remains to be seen, but Arano ought to know; he was his bookkeeper, see.

The Arano Family

Calciano: The Aranos had the Bay View Hotel, didn't they?

Johnston: Yes. The hotel. Originally they owned the first house across the bridge there where Palmer's Glass Company is now. Arano's old home was the first post office here.

Calciano: How many Aranos were there?

Johnston: Let's see, there were three girls, Rose, Stella, and Amelia, and two boys I know of, Alfonsa and Edward. Old Joe Arano ran the Bay View for years with his daughter. Joe ran the bar and Amelia the dining room. The oldest girl, Rose, she died and left two daughters, Kitty and Alice Baumhouser. They lived with Amelia for years until one married a Payton in Watsonville and the other died. Alfonsa went to San Francisco to live and used to come to Aptos every summer n his vacation. Stella went to San Francisco

and married a man by the name of Sur. He had a large undertaking parlor in the city. She had one son by Sur named Roland Sur. The husband died, and she remarried a man named Costella. Ed Arano was an engineer for the Southern Pacific Railroad for years on the main line stationed at San Luis Obispo. Later he came back to Pajaro (it's called Watsonville Junction now) and built a nice home on a hill above Aptos that John Stenovich now owns. Ed sold the hotel to Fred Toney after Old Joe died. After Ed Arano died, Stella, his sister, came to Aptos and lived several years and then moved to Santa Cruz after her son Roland died. They lived on the hill in Ed's new house. The hotel used to sit right on the corner of Soquel and Valencia Road. Right n the corner. The hotel had a porch in front like it has now and then clear down the side. So Toney jacked it up and moved it over where it is and built those other buildings in where the hotel used to be.

Calciano: I see. Why did he move it?

Johnston: Well, I don’t know why he moved it. But he wanted to build other buildings in there.

Calciano: Where the pharmacy is?

Johnston: Yes. He built that all in that corner there. And then

later, why he bought the packinghouse. Hihn sold the packinghouse to Paul Alliger, who I was trying to think of a while ago. He bought the Hihn Company orchards. He was a Slavonian from Watsonville. He bought all the apple orchards in Valencia from Hihn. He owned them till the apples weren't worth anything and the orchards were old, and then he sold it to some Los Angeles outfit. They had it for a while, and then the outfit in Los Angeles sold the packinghouse. They bought the orchards, but they had no use for the packinghouse since they hauled all the apples loose right down to L.A., see? So they sold the packinghouse to Fred Toney. He still owns it.

Calciano: Do you mean where the Flea Market is?

Johnston: Yes. That's the Hihn Company's packinghouse. That's the Flea Market now. The Hihn Company had an apple dryer and Ralph Mattison also had an apple dryer. They had two dryers in town here.

Calciano: In Aptos?

Johnston: Yes. They had two big dryers in here.

Calciano: What were they like?

Johnston: Just to dry, well as I said before, they dried over a couple hundred ton of apples a year here. Takes about

seven tons of green for a ton of dry.

Calciano: I see. Oh, about the Arano hotel, does the hotel still rent rooms?

Johnston: I guess they do.

Calciano: And in the earlier years, did it have working people, or did it have tourist trade in it?

Johnston: Well, it used to have lots of both tourists and regulars. Spreckels, he didn't have room enough in those days to keep everybody. He had big crowds come, and lots of them stayed at the hotel too. That was quite a place in those early days. Then the old man Arano died, and Ed inherited the hotel, and Amelia Arano had all the apple orchard out by Deer Park Tavern. All the land that belongs to Shorty Butriza now, that used to belong to Amelia. She used to own both sides of the road.

Deer Park Tavern

Johnston: Before the freeway ran through there, that was a County road. Where Soquel Drive is now and all the rest of where the freeway is now was all orchard on that side. See, the whole place was orchards in there. And Shorty's place used to be right down in the middle of where the freeway is now.

Calciano: The Deer Park?

Johnston: The Deer Park, yes. The State had to move it up on the hill when they built the freeway. First it started out there as a teahouse by Hattie Sweet. They used one of the old houses out there. It belonged to the Larsons I think. It belonged to Spreckels. (Larson was the superintendent for Spreckels for years in the old days.) Hattie Sweet took that old house and made a teahouse out of it back when Rio Del Mar opened up, see? That was about twenty years ahead of the times; she didn't make a go of it, of course. Then Shorty come in, and they built the Deer Park Tavern.

Calciano: When did he come in?

Johnston: When Rio Del Mar opened up out there. Shorty and his partner Fat Butler run that Deer Park Tavern out there for a long time, and it was right in the middle of where the freeway is now. The State moved it up on the hill and put the freeway in there.

Calciano: Did they make it bigger when they moved it up?

Johnston: Well, a little bit. They changed it around a little, improved it a little bit from what it was, you know. And I think a little bit larger, too.

Calciano: He owns all those apple orchards, too?

Johnston: Yes, he owns a lot of property in there; that's an

unclassified zone, too. My flat down here was R1B2; I think that's 10,000 square feet to a lot, which they shouldn't do, I think. It's unconstitutional to tell you what you have to do with your property.

Calciano: Well now that land up where Deer Park Tavern is now, was that ever part of Rio Del Mar development?

Johnston: No. That was all Amelia Arano's orchard. Spreckels sold all his holdings. There used to be the line fence in there. It comes right up to the County road, you know, below Shorty's tavern. He's got his orchard in there. That fence used to come right straight down Rio Del Mar Boulevard into Soquel Drive. Amelia was the last owner and sold the orchards to Shorty. You used to go right in as it was the same level as Soquel Drive, see?

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: Before they built the freeway up. And if you'll notice that orchard of his as you go towards Santa Cruz, back of the tavern it's lower than the road. Well, that orchard used to come right out to Soquel Drive. It was all orchard in there.

Calciano: I see. Why did they make the highway so high?

Johnston: Well, they took it off that hill up there, and they

figured it would be the easiest place to put it, and they built up along the lagoon, because that was all swamp in there. They took care of that too. And Shorty, when they built the freeway, he was closed up for several months while they moved his building. Those buildings that are on top they moved from down below. Shorty used to have partners in there with him. First one was a big fat fellow. Fat Butier was his name. From Watsonville. I think he just passed away here a while back. Pretty near the same name as Shorty's. They've had a cold storage plant out n the other side of Watsonville, out on the Chittenden Pass Road. I think it's his brother. And Fat got sick and sold out to Shorty and went down, I think, to the Appleton Hotel, the bar down there. They had my big deer head in there [Deer Park Tavern] for a while. Had it up over the bar. And old Fat, when they used to come in there, they'd have a few drinks, and he'd tell everybody how he'd killed this big deer up in Deer Park.

Calciano: It was yours?

Johnston: Oh, it was my deer head, but I didn't have any place to put it, and I'd rather have it out there. They had it out there for several years. Old Fat used to have a

few drinks, and he'd tell them how he got up early in the morning and sneaked up there in the foggy morning and shot this big deer. I've got a picture of Deer Park taken in 1890. See that white fence there was eight feet high. They had elk and all full of deer and that's how Deer Park got its name.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: Yeah. That's the old Soquel Road. You see these, weeping willow trees are still out there yet, and I'll have to go out there and take a picture now, sixty or seventy years afterwards, just to show how it is now. I try to take these pictures every so many years to give you an idea how things change.

Calciano: This is just beyond Deer Park? It's on toward Watsonville?

Johnston: Yeah, it's right where that slough is. The State now is putting in a little culvert out there. I looked the other day, and they're putting in a culvert about eighteen inches wide. Why that's the biggest joke I ever saw. Why when you have a rain here, a four-foot culvert wouldn't take the water that comes down there. They were putting in a little drain, the most it was eighteen inches. (Laughter) Engineers too. You know, that drain has to handle the water from here clear out

to the summit, and all of Day Valley water comes right down through here. And they're putting a little drain there about eighteen inches. I was watching them put it in the other day. I thought to myself, wait till they get a big rain.

Calciano: What're they going to do? Are they going to drain out that lagoon?

Johnston: Oh sure. A whole lot of water comes down through there. I've seen it, in the old days, the water clear over the County road out there. There was a big lake all up in there, way out from Rio Del Mar entrance clear out by Rob Roy Junction, just one big lake, see?[8]

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: But we haven't had any rains for a long time.

Rio Del Mar Development

Johnston: Here's a picture of the Rio Del Mar beach. Right down where the flat is, where all the houses are, that was

Rio Del Mar
Before the development of Rio Del Mar, Aptos Creek each winter would form a lagoon covering the area now known as the Rio Del Mar Flats, the Esplanade, and Beach Drive. In the following views of this area, (A) marks the hill that was Rio Del Mar Boulevard could extend to the Esplanade. The dirt and sand in

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*Ed. Note: The State later redesigned that section so as to preserve part of used by the rare Santa Cruz salamander.

the hill marked (B) was used to fill in the lagoon, and in the last picture, the spot marked (C) is where hill (B) used to stand.

Left: Aptos Lagoon, 1910. Claus Spreckles' bowling alley and billiard parlor (D) can be seen in the background. Mrs. Johnston's aunt, Mrs. Jorgenson, is in the canoe.

Right: May, 1900. Christina Jensen (later Mrs. Johnston) and her sister Clara on the Seacliff bluffs overlooking Aptos Creek and the lagoon area during one of the periods when the lagoon had washed out to sea. (E) is the 8 foot fence Spreckels built across the mouth of the lagoon; it would wash out each winter and be rebuilt each summer.

Left: Aptos Beach, 1904 Clara Jensen is second from the right. (F) is the Spreckels' bath house. The bowling alley is out of the picture to the left.

Right: Rio Del Mar, 1938, showing the Rio Del Mar Hotel (G), cottages (H), Beach Drive (I), location of future beach homes (J) and (K), an apartment building (L), and a cottage which later became a liquor and grocery store (M).

all lagoon too.

Calciano: It was all water then?

Johnston: Yes. The creek used to back up there.

Calciano: Well, it doesn't now. Do they have the creek entrance dug out more?

Johnston: Well they filled it. About six foot fill, the whole flat.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: That's all filled in around there, yes.

Calciano: Where the beach is now?

Johnston: Yeah.

Calciano: I didn't know that.

Johnston: Yeah, sure. Here's another picture of it. I wouldn't take anything for that one. It used to be all lagoon in there. Used to shoot ducks in there in the winter. That was our duck pond.

Calciano: Oh!

Johnston: See this fence across here? Spreckels wouldn't sell it; they wanted to make a big hotel down here instead of at Del Monte, see?

Calciano: Oh?

Johnston: Spreckels wouldn't sell it to them. It was said they gave him twenty thousand dollars a year to put a fence across there.

Calciano: Why?

Johnston: Keep people off the beach.

Calciano: So that Del Monte would be successful or what?

Johnston: Well they didn't want them to start anything over here, see?

Calciano: Because they were starting it down there?

Johnston: Yeah. See this here shows the old bowling alley. See up there? And this is the hill they cut down. They took this hill when they cut down and filled all this flat land in, see?

Calciano: I see. So the ocean is out beyond the fence?

Johnston: Sure. This lagoon here used to come out and run clear down there to the sewer plant, down where all those houses are would be all lagoon every year. That used to be all just cattails and logs and everything down in there. I've got a lot of pictures of it.

Calciano: Well now, did the Rio Del Mar Company fill the dirt in?

Johnston: Yes. Over where you went up the hill there was a big pyramid out there, a great big sand dune there, must have been 75 or a 100 feet high. Great big round dune there. They took draglines and drug it clear out across the flat. They put this cement wall over there by the creek, and they just filled it in level with

it.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: Drug the whole thing, all that hill over there. Before that, that was our duck club down there. (Laughter). Shot all our ducks down there in the wintertime. It would just fill up full of water; that whole flat would be a big lagoon, and then it would get so full that it would run over the beach, and soon as it started over the beach, it just washed right out and emptied the whole lagoon, see? And then the tides would fill the sand up again and it would fill up again. It would do that, oh, every month or so, you know. It would flow out into the ocean and then it would build up again. It used to back up, and as the currents run that way, the creek would run right out and run right down along the bluff where all those houses are on the beach now and empty way down there by the sewer plant. That would be all lagoons. All the way down the beach there, and full of trout. Boy we used to catch some wonderful trout in there.

Calciano: Oh my!

Johnston: Fly fishing you know.

Calciano: And it was the Rio Del Mar Company that filled it in?

Johnston: Yes, the fellows that had Rio Del Mar. Monroe, Lyon, and Miller, they were the ones. First it was Sumner bought it, and George Humes was the agent that sold it to Sumner; he was the boss for the Hihn Company for years. He got in with Sumner, who was a Los Angeles millionaire, and he come up and bought it from Spreckels, and they formed a company. First it was Townsend, Ambler, and Zagman were the original promoters of Rio Del Mar.

Calciano: What year was that?

Johnston: Well, that was along about 1922, right along in there when they started to open it up. And then they went broke and Monroe, Lyon, and Miller took it over, and then Lyon dropped out of it, so it was the Monroes and Millers. The Millers are still in it. Let's see, Ambler, he went to Seacliff and had a partner over there; Ambler and Morgan opened up Seacliff along about 1926, I think it was.

Calciano: So the Spreckels family held the land until 1920 or so. Did they?

Johnston: Sumner bought Spreckels' holdings. George Humes at that time was a superintendent for the Hihn Company for years, and then he got in somehow with this Sumner who was a real estate promoter down at Los Angeles.

Sumner sold to Townsend, Ambler, and Zagman; that's where Rio Del Mar originated.

Calciano: What did the local townspeople think about this? The old-timers?

Johnston: Well, they didn't think much about it. They used to have big times out there, and everybody had a good time....

Calciano: Did they have any kind of publicity or anything?

Johnston: Oh yes. They had a lot of publicity. They used to bring in buses from Fresno, Sacramento, Stockton, and all over. They'd bring them down here and have big barbecues every Sunday for all the people who came down. Sell them lots, stay all day, and then take them home. Sometimes they stayed over. That's what they used the hotel for.[9] A lot of these people stayed in these cottages overnight, and they had a big barbecue here during the day. They used to have it out in the racetrack.

Calciano: Racetrack?

Johnston: Spreckels' old racetrack. It's called the polo grounds now.

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[*] Ed. Note: The Rio Del Mar Golf and Country Club Hotel on Rio Del Mar Boulevard overlooking the ocean. In its last years it was known as the Aptos Beach Inn; it burned in March, 1963.

Calciano: That's right. [The low flat area just north of the Rio Del Mar interchange]

Johnston: After Rio Del Mar took it over they started playing polo there. There was sort of a league, and they played Santa Cruz and Monterey and other teams around. Pretty near every weekend there was a polo match either out here or in Santa Cruz. And they had barbecues there for a while, and they also had them right under those oak trees where you used to go in the Rio Del Mar entrance, you know, where those first houses are, on the left; they had a lot of barbecue tables in there. Beautiful. Bring them in by the busloads. And the Rio Del Mar Hotel, there was only a dozen rooms in it. When they built that, you know, Rio Del Mar, they built a lot of these cottages over there. The reason they're so funny shaped is that all they were just bedrooms and that's all, and a living room. You see there was no kitchens or anything. You couldn't cook in them or anything. That was just a room, and you had to eat at the hotel.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: That was all there was. There was dozens of them. I don't know how many they had all over there. They just built them all over the place, see? When they rented

over the weekend, you paid so much. A hundred dollars a week or so. You come down and you stayed and ate at the hotel.

Calciano: Were these all built to look alike, or were they all different?

Johnston: Oh no! They were all built different. They were built nice, too, you know. Stone and most of them were all stucco at that time; the buildings were pretty near all stucco type, you know.

Calciano: Spanish type.

Johnston: Yes. And they had an airport right where Cliff Drive is. That was all airport there. From there clear to the sewer treatment plant.

Calciano: Oh, no!

Johnston: Yes. That road there was just an airstrip. Well, you'd have 25, 30 clients come down here over the weekend.

Calciano: Now this was in the twenties?

Johnston: That was along in there. After they built the hotel. Must have been along about just before the Depression. About '26, '27, '28, along in there, after the hotel got to operating. Boy they had quite a place running there at one time. They had a beautiful bathhouse down there too.

Calciano: That's the one they just wrecked the last part of?

Johnston: No, that was the beach club down on the beach; the State wrecked it just lately.

Calciano: Oh, you're talking about something else?

Johnston: Yes. They had a beautiful Spanish bathhouse right down here where the cement wall is in the creek down there at the front. You know where it is caved in?

Calciano: Yes.

Johnston: It set right out there on that side. Beautiful.

Calciano: What happened to it?

Johnston: Well, when the State took it over, they tore it all down and took all the material and built a place down at the Big Sur with it. They never built anything here since. Down here every summer before the State took over, they'd block the creek up, and they'd have boating clear up past the cement bridge in the flat, you know, and the kids all swam in there and everything.

Calciano: In the creek?

Johnston: Yes, if you wanted to. They could have it again, but I don't know, the State don't do anything. The way they used to do it, they had a cement wall in the middle there, and they put in 3 inch planks about 8 inches wide and as wide as the creek; dammed the creek up

until it run over the top. They dropped the planks in on both sides of that cement piling that was in the middle there. Then in the winter they took them out and just let the creek go. Since the State had it, the walls are all starting to fall down and everything else; they haven't done a thing with it.

Calciano: Yes. It's too bad.

Johnston: The promoters, Townsend, Ambler, and Zagman, they sold a lot of lots and people started to build houses, see, a few homes. But they went broke, naturally, like practically all these subdivisions do when they sell them. Like Seascape is going through that same thing now. They got in all the roads and the golf links started and the water company and then they went broke. Zagman, seems like his mother had lots of money. She was putting up most of it. And then Monroe, Lyon, and Miller came along. That's the Millers that are out here now,

Calciano: Carlyle Miller?

Johnston: Yes, and his brother. Monroe was in it and the two Millers that are out here yet. Carlyle and his brother.

Calciano: I didn't know he had a brother.

Johnston: Yes. This brother, you know, his wife got killed down there at the hotel. Shot.

Calciano: Oh, I had heard something about that.

Johnston: She was shot twice in the head. 'Course that's gossip, you know.

Calciano: Well, so the Millers and Monroe formed a company and then what did they do?

Johnston: Well, Monroe died, see, and then Carlyle, he's the lawyer, some way they took over, and they got the biggest part of it now, I guess, of what's left.

Calciano: Oh really! Now was that the company that built the big hotel?

Johnston: Well Monroe was in n that, you know. Lyn and Monroe was the one that started most of the beach club and all these cottages and the hotel.

Calciano: Well when did that first company go broke?

Johnston: Well, they only lasted a couple of years; they put in the roads and the other things. Just like Seascape over here. They're trying to do the same thing -- they put in all the roads and the gutters and water lines and the electricity and everything, and then they run out of money, and then somebody comes along and the next fellow will make something because everything, all the preliminary things, are in and they make

something off of it.[10] Now the County's holding the bag, because they had to pay for all those roads and everything out there, see? Nobody will buy anything out there, because if you buy a lot out there, you lay yourself liable for all these bills. So until they get that straightened out, they're not going to do anything out there. Now they've been trying to get this million dollar road going in there n Sumner Avenue. But it's up to the public if it goes. Now I read in the paper where they've got somebody interested in it again that wants to take over, but they only want to develop the choicest part of it, and you'd be stuck for the rest, see? So I don't know. Somebody'll get a hand out of it, somehow or other someway, there's no doubt of that. I've seen these things come and go. Seacliff went broke two or three times you know.

Seacliff

Calciano: Seacliff? Was it an organized development once?

Johnston: Yes. The ones that was over there were Ambler and Morgan and they developed Seacliff, see?

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*Ed. Note: At the time of the interview Seascape was behind in its taxes and undergoing such severe financial problems that its future was in doubt. It later acquired additional financial backing and in 1972 appears to be a successful development.

Calciano: And what was this? Just lots, or....

Johnston: Yes. Just small lots. I think that they made the lots too small. A lot of them were only about 50 foot by about maybe 75, something like that. Some of them were only 50 foot. Build a house on it, you haven't got room for a garage there. You had to buy two lots if you wanted to build. But those lots, at that time lots on the bluff sold for about $1200 apiece. I bought one of them. I paid $800 for it. I was painting signs at the time, and I took it all out just in land, so I got one of the lots right out on the bluff there for $800. Now it'd be worth about $25,000 or $30,000.

Calciano: When was Seacliff opened up?

Johnston: Well, it must have been along in the middle '20s. Just before the Depression, because the Depression came, and that's what ruined them over there. During the Depression there'd be four or five thousand people down there every day on them beaches. Nobody had any money, and all the kids in Watsonville and Santa Cruz, all the kids and everybody would be down there. They spent their time down there you know. Some people by the name of Bowles run the concession. Had hot dogs and soda water for the few cents that the kids had to spend. Why they just played football and baseball and

everything down there. Every day the whole beach was just loaded.

Calciano: This wasn't a State beach at that time, was it?

Johnston: No. Those homes that were built in Seacliff, they were sold with the understanding that they had the privilege of the beach, see? Then the State comes along -- I can't see why they didn't sue the State. I can't see how they got away with it.

Calciano: Oh. Because that was part of the beach that they had paid for?

Johnston: Sure. All the sales were made that way. Rio Del Mar was the same way. But then the State comes along and condemns it and takes over. Well all the people that used to be down there at Rio Del Mar, all like the Hale brothers in San Francisco and all those big people that had a lot of money, they had the first original houses on the beach, and they all sold and got out as soon as the State took over. They knew what was coming, you know. You'd have a whole lot of people in there that were undesirable. They come down only just for the weekend. They don't care what they do or anything. Things are not like they used to be. It's funny how they move into a community like this because they like it, it's rural, and then as soon as they

live here two months they want to change everything. They come out of Los Angeles because they don't like it there, and then they come up here and tell you, "We don't do that in Los Angeles." They want to change everything. I have a picture here of Seacliff when the ship had all the amusements on it. See it? They had a big dance hall and everything on that big concrete ship. It was quite a place.

Calciano: Who brought the ship in?

Johnston: It was bought by the California-Nevada Amusement Company and made into amusement concessions. They had a dance hall, a dining room, a curio store, a fishing tackle and bait shop and so on.

Calciano: You mentioned an airstrip on Cliff Drive. Our map librarian was talking to me the other day about an old map he had seen that showed an airstrip in the Capitola area that had Camp McQuaide written on it. I wondered if you knew anything about this.

Johnston: Well that Capitola airstrip used to be used by the Coast Artillery Camp for summer training. Like the militia go to Camp Roberts now, all the men used to come over here for their coast artillery training. Finally it got so big that they moved it over to Camp McQuaide down there where that Advent camp is now.

They had 700-800 acres in there.

Calciano: Why did they need an airstrip?

Johnston: Well it was just a little airstrip. They used to have planes take off that would tow the targets for the Coast Artillery. Then they also had tugs out in the bay that pulled targets two, three hundred yards behind them.

Calciano: When did they move over to Camp McQuaide?

Johnston: Well, it was before World War II ... about 1935 or so. After they moved out, they made a big airport there at Capitola. Fellow by the name of Russell Rice, he was a good friend of mine, he ran it for a long time. And after that stopped, he went up to the Scotts Valley airport and ran that till he retired.

Calciano: Why was it closed down?

Johnston: Well they subdivided it in there. Used to all belong to Hihn. The old man died, and the Hihn heirs, they sold it all off and it got subdivided.

Calciano: Had it been called Camp McQuaide when the encampment was in Capitola?

Johnston: No. I don't know where that name came from. Some general or something probably, but that name came when they moved down to the area that's now that Advent camp. General Hardy used to be head of it. He was the

son-in-law to Hinkle of Santa Cruz.

Calciano: Oh, Hinkle's Cash Store?

Johnston: Yes. That's right.

Beachcombers

Johnston: You know down here by Treasure Island Spreckels had about ten or twelve cottages. They were three or four rooms, and he kept lots of guests in those cottages down there. Right after you go across the cement bridge down in the flat, they were up in those eucalyptus trees by the side hill. There wasn't all those eucalyptus trees in there then, but they were gradually all torn down. All the beachcombers down at the beach when Spreckels closed the beach up, why they carried away all the windows and doors and everything. They built cabins along the beach. There was several cottages that those beachcombers lived in on the beach down there. There was three houses right around the corner of the bluff right at Seacliff. There was three of them that they built in there. Mr. Lyon went down there one Sunday after they opened up Rio Del Mar and had the beach all cleaned up down there. Those fellows wouldn't move off the beach. They wasn't on his property either, but he went down there one Sunday

with a couple of gallons of coal oil when they were gone and threw it all over and lit a match to it. Sunday afternoon when everybody was down at the beach, too. Burned them up.

Calciano: Well, my goodness, did he get prosecuted?

Johnston: Well, they had no legal claim to them, I guess. Just camping on the beach. They wasn't on his property, but he didn't want those old shacks there. Spreckels built his cottages right in those eucalyptus trees. There was about, oh, ten or twelve cottages there. Nice little three-room cottages -- a kitchen, little dinette, and bedrooms in them, see? And they were all furnished. But these beachcombers, they just took everything, and gradually all the doors and windows and beds and bureaus and everything were all gone. These beachcombers had them down on the beach.

Calciano: Were these beachcombers all along the beaches?

Johnston: There were several houses along the beach. New Brighton had a couple, and there was three right here at the mouth of Aptos Creek, and then farther down in some of those gulches there was a couple more down there down near La Selva Beach.

Calciano: Were these people that never worked?

Johnston: Oh, they just lived off the beach; clams and fish and work a day now and then, that's all. Down here by the Aptos Creek at the beach there was a fellow by the name of Miller; he was a German. During the First World War they had a lot of trouble with him. He was a regular Kaiser Wilhelm man, you know, and one afternoon they got into a big argument, and the guys out in front of the saloon -- of course in those days they had big water troughs, you know, for the horses to drink out of, and when the fellows would stop to water their horses, they'd go in and have a beer. They had this big argument one Sunday morning, and the guys threw Miller in the horse trough! That cooled him off. He was a waiter in the Saddle Rock Restaurant in Santa Cruz. The old Saddle Rock; it run for years. It was right along there by where Leask's store is now, on that side of Pacific Avenue, see? And they worked all summer there as waiters, and then in the wintertime in those days there wasn't anything doing. They would lay the waiters off in Capitola and Santa Cruz, and they come out here and lived in those houses all winter, see? They made enough money, and they'd just come out here and bum all winter. And later this Miller got a concession down at the Boardwalk, and we named him

Hotdog Miller, and he made a million dollars down there. He had that concession for years, and he bought one of those big hotels right across the street from the Santa Cruz beach, and when he died, he was worth all kinds of money.

Calciano: Oh, my goodness.

Johnston: He had that hotel right across from the giant dipper there.

Calciano: So he did all right?

Johnston: Yes.

Calciano: Most of the German people in this area, I imagine, were not pro....

Johnston: Oh no. Just some of the later ones that come over. He was one of the later ones. My mother-in-law was German, and when she was back in Germany in 1913, all of her brothers worked in the Kiel navy yards, and one took her down through there, and when she came home she told us, she says, "Germany's preparing for something, because they got just stacks and stacks of things stacked up." Parts, see? She knew it when she came home in 1913. Before the war started. She was over there in 1912 and came home. I got a postcard that she wrote from there, and she said then that

Germany was preparing for something. When the war broke out, she never heard from any of her folks again. It was pretty rough. All her relations were in Germany see. My father-in-law was a Dane from Schleswig-Holstein, and they had no use for Germany, see? They fought over that piece of ground there back and forth for years. And I was in on this side.

Calciano: Oh yes. You were in the War.

Johnston: Oh yes, the First World War. I never got into any of the fighting, but I was in it.

Calciano: What was your wife's maiden name?

Johnston: Jensen. Christina Jensen. Christina Henrietta Jensen. Take a whole newspaper to write it out.

Calciano: How did her family happen to be in this area?

Johnston: Well they came originally from Germany. Her father came first, and he settled back around Chicago or Minnesota or someplace. And her mother, she came over from Germany to get married. They come over here, and then they moved out here to California, I think it was Calistoga, up in Northern California. And then they moved to Fruitvale, and he worked for Tillmann, the big wholesalers in San Francisco. That's the Tillmann that owned part of the Mangels ranch property up here.

Tillmann married one of the Mangels girls, and Spreckels was married to one of them, see, so that's the way they got all together. Two houses. The old Spreckels house and the old Mangels house are practically the same, only just the trimming is a little bit different. I get them mixed up now until I sit down and study the trim.

Calciano: You mean the pictures of them?

Johnston: Yes.

Calciano: The Spreckels one burned, didn't it?

Johnston: Yes. Spreckels' home burned down.

Calciano: And Mangels' is still there?

Johnston: Oh, it's still there. It looks just like Spreckels', only the trim is a little different. But I have pictures of both of them. And the Jensen's came down here from Fruitvale. Tillmann's had a great big home there in the horse and buggy days. 1899. Jensen came down here from Fruitvale; Mr. Tillmann wanted somebody to take over this ranch and run it down here, so he moved down here in 1899. That's the year I came to Capitola. And the girls went to school here at Aptos and finished school here. And then Tillmann died and the relations come in and took the ranch over. I was married up on the Mangels ranch in 1913.

PROHIBITION

Rum-Running

Calciano: This is changing the subject a little bit, but I've heard several times that during the Prohibition years, Rio Del Mar was one of the few beaches you could land on, and a lot of liquor came in through here.

Johnston: Oh, they unloaded it in here by the boatloads.

Calciano: Really?

Johnston: Oh yes. Some of the kids were down there having a picnic one night about ten or eleven o'clock—they were having a weenie roast, and the gangsters came down there and herded them all up in a bunch and kept them there till after one o'clock and unloaded right here on the beach. Right here at Rio Del Mar. Unloaded their stuff, hauled all their stuff out of here in trucks, and then let the kids go home. But they held them there with rifles, you know, till almost two o'clock in the morning.

Calciano: Was this shipped in from Canada or Scotland....

Johnston: Most of it came from Canada. Most all of it in fact. They had a pretty slick way of unloading it, too -- like a breeches buoy.

Calciano: Like a what?

Johnston: These breeches buoys, you know, like they throw a line out to another boat and hook it on, and then they just run a little trolley car between them.

Calciano: Oh. Between the big boat and shore?

Johnston: Yes. And the beach. Of course here is an easy place to unload. You come in here some days and there are no waves at all. They generally came in here when the moon and tides were right. You could look on the tide table and tell that.

Calciano: New Brighton and Aptos were the main areas?

Johnston: Yes. All the way down through to Rob Roy -- it's La Selva Beach now. We used to always call that Rob Roy. There were a couple of cabins down there that they used. And the undersheriffs went down there one time. One of these undersheriffs -- I don't wish to name him, but he's still living, I've known him all my life -- they said that he was....

Calciano: Involved?

Johnston: You know, he had a chance to make a lot of money. That's too easy coming in. They couldn't stand it. So he said they went down there, and they used to pick up some of the boys from here to go down to find one of those cabins that was all full of cases, you know --

well, they weren't cases; most of the bottles came in sacks, and they had little, kind of tules packed around them, and those bottles were all in these sacks, about six in a bunch, and they'd bring them in there. They had two truckloads out of this one cabin down there at Rob Roy that they raided. When they got to Water Street, why the officers in the sheriff's car were kind of in front, and when they got to Ocean Street in Santa Cruz, one truck went north and one south. Well they couldn't chase them all; one truck got away. (Laughter) Everybody laughed. They had an idea who got it, because they used to confiscate all this stuff, you know. And down in the County corporation yard they had a couple of these garages, and they had them full of liquor stored by the sheriff. In 1929, when I came back from Camp Perry, and Ed Falconer, who used to be a taxidermist here in town, he was the head of the County corporation yards, you know, and in charge of it, and he took me out there one day and showed me all this stuff in there. And of course a lot of these officials, when they wanted some of this liquor for parties, they knew where it was, and when it came time they was going to do away with all this, why there wasn't anything left

in there. (Laughter) Only empty bottles.

Calciano: Oh my.

Johnston: They just gradually disappeared.

Calciano: Was more liquor landed here than down around by Monterey?

Johnston: Oh yes, Monterey was too rocky. This was nice beach here, and there was two or three roads. It was easy to get out from here, you know. There was this one here, the Rio Del Mar Hotel down here, you know, and they could get down there. Anyplace along the bay. In Seacliff they'd come right in, and they used to load it right n this cement ship until the ship got all shot to pieces there. Then they got to putting a night watchman out there.

Calciano: Did the liquor that came in here supply a good part of California?

Johnston: Well I don't know where it all went to, but....

Calciano: Or was it just for this county?

Johnston: No, it went everyplace. Nobody knows how much they landed here, because sometimes you'd go down there, and there'd be loose liquor cartons and papers all over the beach where they'd unloaded. The fellows used to go down there and work; they'd give them maybe $20

or so for a couple hours work. They'd work like the dickens for two or three hours. They'd give them $20 and sometimes a couple of bottles of Scotch or something, you know.

Calciano: The local people?

Johnston: Yes. Young fellows. There are two or three fellows around here yet that used to go down there, but I never did. I don’t know why they'd want to get tangled up in it, but some of the fellows did. They thought it was kind of a lark, too, you know.

Calciano: Were many local people involved in the negotiating to bring the liquor in, or was that done by outsiders?

Johnston: Practically all outsiders. There wasn't anybody local that I know of. Some of them that did know about it, they just turned their back and didn't want to get involved with it. Those fellows could play rough. You didn't want to monkey around with them.

Calciano: And the law enforcement agencies would sort of shut their eyes, too, I guess?

Johnston: Yes, and they used to ... well, every so often they'd go down there and clean up on them and make people think they was doing a whole lot anyway.

Mountain Stills

Calciano: Do you think there was quite a bit of bribery?

Johnston: Oh yes. There was a lot of them would take a handout. It's like these two truckloads we were talking about. They never knew where it went. Those fellows had it sold, you know. A whole truck load would just disappear like that. Then they'd find the truck a few days afterwards up some lane -- off on some side road where they'd unloaded it, took it off and left it.

Calciano: I seem to remember that a police commissioner was charged with accepting bribes or something, during....

Johnston: Yes. That's right.

Calciano: So was that rather unusual, for anybody to be charged with it?

Johnston: Well, some of them out here, we had two or three fellows up here that had a still. They got word that they were going to raid it from somebody you know. It was up around Ben Lomond, so they moved from there up to Trout Gulch. There's a big spring up in there, see, in Trout Gulch, and I come down the road on the mail route, and I see a coil laying in the road. They'd lost it off of the truck the night before. So I picked it up just for fun and threw it in the back of the mail truck, see? I brought it into the post office, and they said, "Where'd you get that?", and I said,

"Well, somebody's moving in up here. It's part of their still that they lost." It was a big coil about three feet long, a regular coil, see?

Calciano: Yes.

Johnston: And we had it there, and it was two or three local guys here that were in on it, too. A good friend of ours, her name was Manning; her brother was in the Prohibition Service, and he worked out of Sacramento. So I told her, "Well, you better tell your brother to come down. They've got a still they're going to open up above Aptos." And they let it get all ready and all set up and running, and the first 50 gallons that they run off -- bingo! They took them in. Closed in on them and they caught these fellows. But one fellow always took the rap for the whole bunch of them, see? And so this poor guy, why he managed to take the rap; he got fined so many thousand dollars, and so many days in the can -- I don't know how long -- but the people that are supposed to be respectable, why they get somebody to cover up for them.

Calciano: I have heard, I don't know if it's true, that some fairly prominent Italian families were involved in running stills and....

Johnston: Well, between you and I, the Italians, and I got lots of good Italian friends, but the biggest part of the bootleggers, about 90% of them, were Italians.

Calciano: Was this because they were already growing grapes and had the wherewithal?

Johnston: Oh I don’t know -- wine, up here every one of these fellows that had vineyards, they all bootlegged wine. But they never did much about selling wine, because the Italian people are always used to drinking wine. You were allowed to make so much for your own use; I've forgotten how many hundred gallons, a couple of hundred gallons or more a year.

Calciano: There's still a limit on how much you can make for your own use.

Johnston: Well I don’t know what the law is now, but at the time they allowed those Italian families a break there. You know, they drink it with their meals just like people drink coffee or tea. And they don't drink it like the average person does, anyway. Most of them dilute it with water when they drink it. They don't drink it straight.

Calciano: I see.

Johnston: They cut it in half with water. They drink it more

like a lemonade or something. Which is good, really. I like it myself that way.

Calciano: Well now, the ones that ran the hard stuff in off the beaches, were they mostly Italians, too? Or they were more like gangsters, I've heard.

Johnston: Oh they were regular outlaws. They were gangsters, you know.

Calciano: But the bootlegging you were talking about was local stills?

Johnston: Most of this stuff that came in here went to the City or San Jose or someplace.

Calciano: Yes.

Johnston: But these stills, all they did, they made pure alcohol, you know. Five gallon cans of alcohol. They had stills running around here in the hills all the time during Prohibition. The way they caught those mostly was they watched where they bought their sugar, see? And they would run in here with a big truckload of sugar, and then all these other guys would come in with small trucks, and they'd unload it here over back of the freight-house over here at night. Of course they knew when it was coming in and nobody else did, but many a night they unloaded over here a whole big truckload of sugar, and the trucks would be going all

directions.

Calciano: Oh, so that was an underground activity, too, because....

Johnston: Well sure. I never said anything. I didn't want to get mixed up in it. Officers knew it, too, but those fellows played rough, you know. You don't want to monkey around with that. They'd just as son shoot you as not.

Calciano: Well now wait, do you mean the gangsters, or also the men making alcohol with little stills out in the hills?

Johnston: Oh sure.

Calciano: They played rough too?

Johnston: Those guys were rough too. You bet your life. If a still got knocked over here, they'd just move someplace else. There was a lot of them in Monterey, down there, because there's lots of good water in a lot of those streams up in the mountains there, and they had several big stills running in there all the time.

Calciano: You said they made the pure alcohol. Then would they flavor it somehow so that....

Johnston: Well then these bootleggers ... they'd distribute it,

you know, and then these bootleggers would get the alcohol, and then they'd cut it down, and they'd take burnt sugar and put in it to color it and flavor it to suit themselves. Some of them did a pretty good job, too. Some of it tasted pretty good. (Chuckle) I know when we used to go deer hunting, why the fellows would like to take some along, and we'd get a gallon of alcohol, you know, and then get some juniper, essence of juniper, and make the finest gin that you ever tasted.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Oh sure.

Calciano: Oh my goodness.

Johnston: Friends of mine, they're both dead now, but he liked gin, and so we used to always get a gallon of that, and then these farmers around here, why any of them, why they'd give me all the wine I wanted, you know. I didn't go up and impose on them, but they wouldn't sell it to me. I was working the mail route, and every Thanksgiving, why there was always bottles of wine in every mailbox on the route. (Laughter)

Calciano: Your year's supply!

Johnston: Oh sure! They knew that I wouldn't say nothing.

Italians are good-natured that way anyway, you know. They're a great people. There's a few of them that are rascals all right, but we got those in our own country, too, you know, all nationalities. Some of these old-timers that came over from Italy are pretty fine old guys. When they go out to have a barbecue or something, they have some wine, and they like to sing and have a good time, and they don't bother anyone. But you take a bunch of American guys go out like that, one of them gets a few drinks, and then he wants to fight somebody right away. (Laughter) We got a lot of fine Italians in the country.

Speakeasies

Calciano: Well now Aptos during the lumbering years had a lot of saloons.

Johnston: Oh yes. By my place they had a big saloon here with a big water trough out in front there. Everybody come along in a horse and rig, why they watered the horses there and they all had to have their beer or drink.

Calciano: Well now, when Prohibition came, were they just out of business?

Johnston: Well there were a couple of bootleggers in town all the time, see.

Calciano: Were they pretty open, or did you have to....

Johnston: I owned the building here when it was a poolroom, see, down where the market is now, but I got rid of it because they bootlegged in there and everything and got an undesirable element, so I got rid of it and made it all into a store. But it was a poolroom and bar for years and years, and had been way back to 1880 or somewheres along in there.

Calciano: That's where Wing's store is now?

Johnston: Yes. That's right where that Peppermint Parlor is and Wing's, see? That place of Wings used to be all apartment houses in there. I had about six apartments in there originally.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Yes. And between Wings and the other little store there on the end where the Peppermint Parlor is, that was a poolroom and bar and a barbershop. It burnt down in 1934, I think. Right along in there. The poolhall, one night they went out and it was raining, and I guess somebody threw a cigarette in the wood box. They had a big wood stove in there. Burnt down. So I built up a new building and then rented it as a drugstore.

Calciano: Well now, these bootleg guys, were they pretty open,

or did you have to know where to go and go through secret doors and channels?

Johnston: They knew everybody here. They knew who he was, and it was easy to just go in and buy what you wanted.

Calciano: Did they have to pay protection money to the police?

Johnston: Oh they did. There's no doubt about that, because when they run the poolroom here, I had one of these officials tell me, he says, "You're crazy. You ought to go out there in the poolhall and run that yourself. You can make a million dollars out of that." I says, "I don't want to get tangled up in anything like that." I could have too.

Calciano: I guess you could.

Johnston: Sure, because they'd telephone out everytime they were going to raid a place. The poor officers never had a chance. There was some leak someplace in there. Some of these officers, you know, that would take pay. Who it was, nobody knows, and you never will know. But they'd telephone out just like when the Rio Del Mar Hotel was running. That thing was just a big gambling joint you know.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Oh sure. That house that still sits up there [next to

the hotel site] was just full of slot machines.

Calciano: Oh my goodness, I didn't know that.

Johnston: You could go down there and play your head off.

Calciano: Oh my.

Johnston: And they unloaded the stuff right n the beach there. You could get any kind of liquor you wanted. Or anything else.

Calciano: No wonder it was a fashionable place.

Johnston: Sure.

WORLD WAR II

The Aptos Militia

Johnston: You know this beach is an awfully good landing place, and it had to be patrolled all during the War.

Calciano: That's right. You were active in Civil Defense here, weren't you?

Johnston: Yes. We had quite a militia out here. Had about 60 men, I think. We had to handle all the blackouts and road blocks and everything.

Calciano: Aptos had its own militia unit?

Johnston: Yes, in the early part of the War we did.

Calciano: Had your militia been organized at all before Pearl

Harbor Day, or was it just after Pearl Harbor that you got organized?

Johnston: Well, after Pearl Harbor. See, I was in the First World War, and I belonged to the Legion in Watsonville, so Pearl Harbor, why they called me up right away in the afternoon so we could get started getting organized. We didn't know if the Japs would stop at Pearl Harbor. It was a good thing they did, because if they'd have come over here, if they'd have followed it up, we didn't have anything here to stop them. They would have chased us back over the Sierras. We would have been over there yet, I guess. Once we got organized, though, we'd have made them a lot of trouble, too. We had sixty fellows here that could really shoot, you know. They were all deer hunters and good shots. It would have been like the Minutemen, you know. All the good rifle shots. And then after that, why then we went into rifle training. We trained all the Watsonville Police, and I was head of the training, and we trained over 800 people in rifle training.

Calciano: For militia-type training?

Johnston: Yes. How to handle a rifle, you know.

Calciano: This was still during the War? A part of the War effort?

Johnston: Yes. That's right. And then we had the militia over here. We had about sixty members, and we drilled five nights a week here on the school grounds. They were really good, and a lot of the boys from them went right into the Army, and some of them were the highest marksmen down to Fort Ord and at Hunter Liggett.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Yes. We trained these boys, and they could really shoot. I'll tell you.

Calciano: You knew how to teach that.[11]

Johnston: Oh, I've been back to Camp Perry several times and shot on the State rifle team, and when you went back there, you got all your expenses paid, and you had to go through small arms training school. That was part of the program. That's what they were supposed to use us for. In the case of emergency, we were supposed to be a small arms training program. Set it up. That's the reason they called on me from the Watsonville American Legion.

Calciano: What were the feelings here the first few weeks right

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*Ed. Note: Mr. Johnston is a marksman who has won a number of State and

after Pearl Harbor?

Johnston: Well, we were on needles and pins. We didn't know what would happen. And then one day I was out on the mail route up here on the Terrace, and I see this ship come flying across the bay wide open and the Jap submarine come up there right outside of Monterey. I think the submarine shot at that boat twenty-six times, but they was so nervous, too, that they didn't hit the boat. (Laughter) It come into Santa Cruz and laid in there for about five days and wouldn't go out again.

Calciano: What? Our boat?

Johnston: Yes. Till they run this submarine down.

Calciano: And there was a Japanese submarine here?

Johnston: Oh yes. It shelled this boat right here in the bay. Oh yes. It shot at it 26 times.

Calciano: Oh my.

Johnston: Yes. And they was so close to it -- they was too close, evidently. They overshot all the time. The captain, he was so mad, he said if he had had a 30-30, he could have knocked the Japs off the submarine with it. Right on top of them. Came up and surfaced right along side of them.

Calciano: Oh my goodness. Well, were there many Japanese subs up

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National competitions.

and down the coast?

Johnston: Well, I don’t know how many, but there were a few all the time. Two or three times one afternoon they bombed out here. Whether it was a submarine or what it was, those dive bombers come in here, and the water from those bombs came up hundreds of feet in the air. Whether it was a submarine or not, we never heard. They kept everything mum, you know.

Calciano: You just saw the action and speculated?

Johnston: Yes. They were straight right out from here.

Calciano: These were our planes that were doing the bombing?

Johnston: Yes. They come in here. See this bay out here is about ... it's over a mile deep out there, pretty near two miles in the channel that runs from Moss Landing up to Monterey. They call it the Monterey Channel or something. It's about two miles deep out there. So these boats that come into Fort Ord, 'course we saw them in there afterwards all the time. They loaded all the ships with these landing barges, see? They come in two or three hundred yards from shore (it's pretty deep there) and then these barges take the soldiers and equipment out. They just went out in a circle and took them off one right after another, and boy, they

loaded those boats in just a few hours.

Calciano: These were troop carriers?

Johnston: Yes. All the troops and all their equipment. Nobody said a word. 'Course there's a lot of hearsay, too, but up above Davenport, Jap submarines were up there before the War, you know, getting all the data on the depths and all the reefs and everything. At that time we had lots of these Japanese fishermen from Monterey, and some fellows up by Davenport saw them refueling one of these Jap submarines up there with diesel oil.

Calciano: Oh?

Johnston: That's what I heard; whether it's true or not I can't say since I didn't see it myself. But before the War, about half the fishermen in Monterey were Japanese. They knew the coast like a book.

Relocating the Japanese

Calciano: What about the Japanese people living around here? Were the local people really scared of them, or were....

Johnston: Oh yes. In the first few days they rounded all of them up. Men, women, and children. They had a big concentration camp right down around Salinas, see, and then later on they moved from there to Tule Lake up in

Northern California. A lot of the old buildings are up there yet.

Calciano: In retrospect, do you think that was wise or necessary?

Johnston: Sure. You couldn't tell what those.... Those officers, they were real radical to the old Emperor, you know. Yes, the only way to do is to round them up and get them out. You didn't have to worry about them, too, see? They had quite a time here. It was funny afterwards, but it wasn't funny at the time, you know. You didn't know what was going to go on. And then things were different then. After Pearl Harbor, they had all our ships, the biggest part of our Navy was all gone, you know. On the West Coast we didn't have anything out here, only just the fellows that were willing to take up arms for themselves. Oh, they'd of had a fight. I don't care whether they were fine soldiers or not. We know these hills like a book, see. I made up my mind, I had the garage with all machine shops and everything in there, I was going to wreck those. They wasn't going to use anything in there.

Calciano: Well now, the local Japanese, the ones that ran the strawberry farms around here....

Johnston: Well some of those were from the Japanese Army, too,

you know. Right across here they had a big strawberry patch where the freeway is. We could see it from the house over here, and the fellow that run that, he was a Japanese General. He had one of these big swords, you know.

Calciano: Oh really?

Johnston: Yes. And they used to get out in the middle of that strawberry patch every Sunday, a whole gang of these Japanese, and they'd have a conference out there, see? This fellow over here was an officer. They held a meeting over here about every Sunday. They'd get right out in the middle of that strawberry patch and sit in a circle, and I guess he was telling them what to do in case something turned up. They'd get right out there where you couldn't tell what they was talking about, and you wouldn't know anyway unless you knew their language. But it shows you how they had things all figured out. And as son as the War started, why the next day we grabbed them all and went through and took all their guns away from them and everything. Confiscated everything. All their guns and ammunition. And then the government decided in a couple or three days, I'll say a week anyway, they had them all in concentration camps. This fellow over here, he had his

uniform and sword hid in the woodpile over there. They found it, and my brother-in-law got the sword; I don't know what he done with it, whether my brother-in-law has it now still or not. Oh boy, it was just like a razor.

Calciano: Those are heirlooms, aren't they? Handed down in the family.

Johnston: Well, he had one; whether he gave it away to somebody or not,I don't know, but he used to have it.

Calciano: Did the man ever ask for it back after the War?

Johnston: No, I don't know what ever became of this fellow. He never came back here anymore, but we had some pretty exciting times for a while, you know.

Calciano: What percentage of the Japanese do you think were loyal to America?

Johnston: Oh there was lots of them. The biggest part of them were all loyal. The biggest part of them were raised right here, and they don't care what goes on in the old country. But there was a few of the older ones that were still loyal to Japan.

Calciano: And there was no way of sorting them out?

Johnston: Well how could you sort them out? Like this war in Vietnam. They all look alike. You don't know who is your friend and who's not, you know; they all look the

same. It was just the same way with the Japs, so the only thing you could do is you'd just have to round them all up, see. And then the ones that were loyal, they picked them out and took them, and they had one regiment just of Japanese boys, you know. And they did some wonderful fighting over in Italy and those places. They were terrific.

Calciano: They probably felt they had to prove.... They worked doubly hard I think.

Johnston: That's right. And they had lots of good American friends, too, you know. You've been a friend of one of them all your life, practically, and then it turns up that it's something that's hard to believe, you know. You don't know what to do.

Calciano: So was every single one of the Japanese moved out, and then some were allowed to come back?

Johnston: Well the ones that were loyal. They took them and they put them in a separate regiment. They were all Japanese.

Calciano: Well, what about women and children?

Johnston: Well, the children, all of them went, you know. They took them and put them in concentration camps. And they held them there till after the War was over. Well, it would have been dangerous for them to walk

down the street.

Calciano: That's true.

Johnston: There were lots of radical white people, too, you know. What would have happened to them would have been hard to tell. But we had a lot of excitement there for a long time.

Blackouts and Beach Evacuation

Calciano: You mentioned that we had blackouts here.

Johnston: Oh, yes. We had alerts and all. Every time they had a blackout, why we blocked off all main roads and all the roads to beaches here.

Calciano: You did?

Johnston: To the beach, yes. Stop all the traffic. Stop everything.

Calciano: Would you stop a car and then let it go on through, or would you just....

Johnston: No, with a blackout we'd just run them off the road so the military traffic could take over. They set there until we let them go, see?

Calciano: Did you have very many of these blackouts?

Johnston: One time we had five boats come in the bay, and they didn't know what they were. Afterwards they found out

what they were. They were going down to Fort Ord to load troops, see, and they slipped in here at dark, but nobody knew what they were, and they had a blackout, and we moved everybody from all the homes in Rio Del Mar and Seacliff at the beach. We moved them a thousand yards off the bay at 8:30 one night.

Calciano: Really? Well, how did you mobilize? By phone, or....

Johnston: Yes. We called each one of the different ones. He picked up so many men, see. There used to be a road came out of Seacliff up by the shopping center. We would block it off, block this road off [Spreckels Drive] and Rio Del Mar and La Selva Beach, and nobody could get off the beach, see? We didn't know if they were going to land here or not with those boats coming in.

Calciano: Right. Were they there by mistake?

Johnston: No. The government brought them there under sealed orders. They come into Fort Ord and loaded up with soldiers and then took off again. We moved everybody out, even the crippled people and everybody. We loaded them up and took them up to this Valencia Hall. That's where everybody gathered, and they had cooking utensils and supplies and everything to last ten or

fifteen days.

Calciano: How long did they stay up there?

Johnston: Well, the alert went n after dark, and it was one or two o'clock in the morning before they called it off.

Calciano: Who had given you the orders to mobilize everybody?

Johnston: Well, the American Legion in Watsonville used to, and the Army officers, you know. Along here they patrolled this beach continually night and day, you know, after the War started. We had too many Japs around here. Of course, we had a few dry runs, in other words preliminaries, before this blackout came. Everything during that blackout moved pretty slick.

Calciano: What year was this? Right early during the War?

Johnston: Yes.

Calciano: Do you know what month it was?

Johnston: Well, I couldn't tell you what it was. It was in the wintertime I know. It was right after the War started. Nobody knew where the Japanese fleet was. We thought those five or six boats coming in there, those big ships were troop carriers, see, for the Japs.

Calciano: When you had this big blackout out here, did Santa Cruz and Watsonville participate too?

Johnston: Oh yes.

Calciano: They had their militia?

Johnston: Oh you couldn't have a headlight on your automobile after you come over the hill. Everything on this side was blacked out for months, you know. You couldn't have a light at night in your house. Everything had to be blacked out.

Calciano: Well this first time when you were all so alarmed with the boats, did you have to go from door to door to tell people to get their lights out, or did they already have their blackout curtains up?

Johnston: They had them out right away, the next day after Pearl Harbor. Oh, sure. You had to have your windows all blocked up, either black paper over them or big heavy curtains. The fellows would drive around, you know, in the cars: if they could see a stream of light in anybody's house, they would go up and make them take care of it. You couldn't see a bit of light anyplace around here. It was really black at night, I'll tell you.

Calciano: How long did the blackout last?

Johnston: It lasted pretty near all the War. We didn't know what they were doing after they got cornered over there. Even at that, a couple of submarines came over here

during the War, and they shelled the oil plant down by Goleta down there and up at Seattle. They were pretty nervous. We trained over at Aptos school for months, and then after they got organized good, then they took all of these and put them in Santa Cruz. Some of the fellows were elderly, you know. They were really too old for active duty, but the young ones, they went all in, and this was Company C out here, and they had a company in Santa Cruz, and then they absorbed the younger ones that were in our company here after they got really organized and set up, and they went all the way into Santa Cruz.

Calciano: When did your militia disband? After the War?

Johnston: Well, that was in ... oh, I don't know. I got some papers in there somewhere. I could look it up.

Calciano: Well, was it roughly at the end of the War, or....

Johnston: No, this here in Aptos was before the end of the War. We all went into Santa Cruz, the ones that were still young and wanted to go in; they went in to Santa Cruz and we disbanded out here, see? My wife, she was on this air observation. We've got her arm band yet. An arm band that the government gave her, and they gave her a nice letter for the service she put in. The hours you know. She had hundreds of hours. We used to

sit up on the roof from two o'clock in the morning till four. We manned this post over-here twenty-four hours a day. That's twenty-four people a day that had to be on that, you know. Two-hour shifts.

Calciano: Two people at a time?

Johnston: Yes.

Calciano: For two hours.

Johnston: Yes. So my wife and I, we took the graveyard shift. It was after twelve o'clock, generally from two to four o'clock in the morning, because it was hard for lots of people to do that. I didn't go to work over to the post office till after nine o'clock in the morning, so it was all right with me. I'd rather do that.

Calciano: And you watched for what, planes? Or also for boats?

Johnston: Yes. Planes and everything. And we kept coffee on for all these kids that were patrolling the beaches. They all came up there, you know. There was somebody in there every hour going one way or the other.

Calciano: Where was the observation post?

Johnston: In the American Legion Hall. Back of that we had a tower up with a big siren on it. That's the same siren they got on the firehouse down there.

Calciano: Was the siren for calling the militia?

Johnston: Oh yes. For blackouts, and then they had trial runs, too, you know. They would black out the whole district and....

Calciano: But I thought the district was already blacked out?

Johnston: Well, it was, but they'd have, like for an invasion, these practice runs every so often.

Calciano: Oh, blocking off and so on.

Johnston: Sure.

Calciano: What else was part of your invasion test? You'd block the roads and evacuate the people.

Johnston: That's all we did here. Just block the roads and wouldn't allow anybody on the beach to go in or out, see? But the only time we had the real thing, had to move them out, was we got that order from Fort Ord to move them out 1000 yards from the beach. They got mixed up some way, I don’t know how. Things at the first of the War was all mixed up terrible till they got it straightened out. After they got it straightened out, why things run smoothly.

Calciano: Were Santa Cruz people evacuated back from the beach too?

Johnston: I don't know what they done with Santa Cruz; I didn't hear.

The Army and the Coast Guard

Johnston: They had these coast defense guns, and they knew if anybody came in here, there'd be a lot of shooting along the bluff. If they tried to land in here, why this is about the only beach along here in between here and San Francisco, why it's the only place they can land. And then they would go 100 miles overland to the City. Less than a hundred miles, come around in behind them, and this beach here, they protected this pretty good here. It seems like that some officer wrote an article that this is one of the only places that they can land on the coast here. Any amount of beach you know.

Calciano: Right. That's true. It's all rocks and bluffs both north and south of Monterey Bay.

Johnston: Sure. Here was made to order, you know. And then they had this big Fort Ord down here, too. They'd of knocked it out right away. They'd of moved right in there -- they'd of had a base camp made to order, you know. Between here and San Francisco there's no beaches at all. Half Moon Bay has got a harbor there now, but they never did anything there. All the rest of it is just all bluffs. Here they could have landed right on the beach. So the Navy and Coast Guard, they

patrolled the beach all night and all day. Some of them rode horseback and jeeps. They patrolled it continually.

Calciano: Were people still allowed to use the beach for swimming and stuff in the daytime? There was still pleasure?

Johnston: There wasn't nobody going down there. Oh, we went down there walking around, you know. No, they didn't hinder us. We went clamming and things, just the same, but they had a check, and they knew everybody. In a little while they practically knew everybody living here. They would come in here and have coffee, and the Army patrolled the coast all the way up on that coast road, too, continually, all night and all day, rain or shine, it didn't make any difference. Every hour they were just going in every direction. Over there at the firehouse we had coffee and cake and doughnuts always for them, any time they came in there, so pretty soon you got acquainted with all of them. And they also got acquainted with everybody, and if they didn't know somebody, they made it a point, these officers, to find out, and there was two or three of us they'd ask. I worked in the post office, and I knew everybody around. And to get a job, why they used to always

contact the postmaster, Charlie Spencer; he's postmaster now, and he worked with the FBI a lot. We had all the dope over at the post office, and they used to have us check on anybody if they wanted to ... especially if they wanted any kind of a government job in the shipyards or ammunition or working in those jobs, they really got the lowdown n you. They didn't fool around or take any chances.

Calciano: What information would you people supply?

Johnston: Well, everything from where he was born, and if we knew him, and we even checked on his age to see if he was lying about it.

Calciano: Was there any checking of his mail and this kind of thing? If they were suspicious of somebody?

Johnston: Well, no, the only thing that we done in a case like that, we'd notify them of what letters went through, and that's up to them. They could do what they pleased about it. We had one case here of counterfeiting. Two of them were over here about halfway between here and Soquel. They had a house over there, and there was two of them in there for a long time, and they checked on them for months. We'd get these letters, and we'd check where these letters came from and their postmark and everything, and the day they came in, keep track

of all that. And when they did catch up with them, they got them up in Denver, Colorado. They didn't want one; they wanted the whole gang, and when they got them, they got the whole outfit. They got two or three hundred thousand dollars of counterfeit bills.

Calciano: When was this?

Johnston: Oh that was along in the thirties. But as far as the mail was concerned, we never touched it. We just got the postmarks, and the day it was delivered.

Calciano: You got return addresses I guess?

Johnston: Yes. We got all the dope on them. When they moved, why then we'd notify them quick. More than likely they knew it, too.

Calciano: You mentioned some of our planes bombing some target out in the ocean. Where did the planes come from?

Johnston: They had bombers at Salinas. They were the closest ones here, and then right out of Watsonville they had two or three big blimps, you know. They patrolled this here all the time.

Calciano: Blimps are kind of vulnerable, aren't they, in time of war?

Johnston: Oh they are, but they can see an awful lot out over the water you know. It ain't like that you were in the

war zone. These would patrol all the way up the coast and back, day and night. They patrolled all the time you know. They were based practically where this new highway that they're building in Watsonville is, right just past the golf links out there where they've got a lot of cattle pens in there now. That used to be where they had the blimps in there, the Navy.

Calciano: The Navy?

Johnston: Yes, the Navy. And then the Navy had an airport in Watsonville, you know, and they trained all the young officers out there. I don't know how many hundreds of men they trained there all during the War. Land-based planes, see? And then their last thing that they had to do was they had to go out here and land their plane on a carrier. Now that was the final test. But boy, those little carriers are pretty short.

Calciano: Especially the World War II ones.

Johnston: Well, those little midget carriers only took very few planes, you know, and they had to be good. Some of them washed out right there. They couldn't make it. They gave them two or three tries, and if they couldn't make it, why that was it. They couldn't fool with them. But Toney's hotel was all full of Navy

fliers, the old hotel over here. And Camp McQuaide was a coast artillery camp. They trained hundreds of thousands of men down there.

Calciano: Were there shore batteries there aiming out?

Johnston: Oh yes. They had everything there. They had a big battery up here this side of Capitola hidden, and then all the way up the coast. They had them all along here see.

Calciano: Now who manned those? The militia, or....

Johnston: No, that was the Coast Guard. Some of those places up above Santa Cruz you can see yet. They had disappearing guns; they'd come up, fire, and drop-back out of sight. At Capitola, right out here, they had 250 men in that outfit. That was the closest one there was.

Calciano: What was the range on those guns?

Johnston: Those guns didn't shoot too far. They shot maybe ten, twelve miles.

Calciano: So they could cover Aptos?

Johnston: Oh they covered the whole bay here from the other side and this side. Twenty miles across. They could get anything.

Economic Impact

Calciano: Getting back to the blackout for a moment, you said you couldn't have car lights on. How did you drive at night?

Johnston: You had to drive without any light.

Calciano: How dangerous!

Johnston: The army trucks all had little bits of blue lights that came out below their headlights, the side of them you know, light blue. You could see them coming, but they didn't show you any light. Oh, nobody drove at night, you know. Well, nobody had any gasoline. You only had three gallons a month or so. That don't last very long.

Calciano: Is that all?

Johnston: We had so many tickets. I had a lot at the station here. The only thing the War hurt me was the sugar, and I had two or three women in Rio Del Mar used to trade extra gasoline tickets for sugar, because they didn't drink their coffee with sugar in it, so I gave them my gasoline for their sugar tickets. (Laughter)

Calciano: I guess rationing hurt the gas stations' business, didn't it?

Johnston: Well yes, but we were better off here than anyplace, because they took your gasoline ration for July,

August, and September, those three months, and that's our biggest months here. We was hardly ever out of ethyl gas. People came from all over, because our quota was so high here. They came from Watsonville and all over, the people who wanted ethyl gas. We never was out of gas. This station at that time was one of the best in the County. There was just this one station in Aptos. We used to sell a lot of gas. During the summer months we used to sell around 50,000 gallons a month. They took our quota from those highest three months we had, see?

Calciano: You were doing okay.

Johnston: Yes, we were. Of course Santa Cruz was the same way, but all these other towns that were inland, why they suffered, because all their gasoline business was even lower in the summer during those three months.

Calciano: I guess that the tourist business was cut way down during the War years?

Johnston: Oh yes. You couldn't travel anyplace. You had to get permission to travel on the train or anyplace. Everything was all troops. You could hardly get anyplace.

Calciano: Did the hotel owners and restaurant owners have rough going financially?

Johnston: Sure. Most of them just moved out and got into a defense plant or something. Everybody around here was working in the shipyards practically. Wasn't anybody around here at all. If you weren't working on the shipyards or something else, all the retired people was working on these observation posts, you know.

Calciano: The way that you and your wife did?

Johnston: Yes.

Trans: Laura Wills

Typed: Doris Johnson

Digitized: TriAxial Data Systems

Elizabeth Spedding Calciano was born in Iowa in 1939 and lived in Ames, Iowa, until her college years. She received an A.B. cum laude in history from Radcliffe College in 1961 and an M.A. from Stanford University in 1962. She is married to a physician and is the mother of three children. The Calcianos moved to the Santa Cruz area in 1962, and on July 1, 1963, Mrs. Calciano became the Head of the Regional History Project in a half-time capacity. Since 1967, she has taught a course on the history of Santa Cruz County for University Extension. She has also been a guest lecturer in other Extension courses and has been a speaker at several local and national oral history conferences.