

Bayside Historical Preservation Society Oral History Project
Interview of George Bruce Reed
Interviewed by Zoe Hendricks
July 24, 1997

ZH: OK. Today is July 24, 1997; we're interviewing George Bruce Reed. I guess the beginning question would be how you and your family first came to Bayside.

BR: Well, Bayside was originally a camp ground for the Northport Wesleyan Grove Campmeeting Association, and when I was a little boy, small enough so I wore knee pads. I remember one day...knee pads, they were down around the shore. That's when you could dig clams so I dug a lot of clams, and I put them in this pocket. Well, I had a pocket, there was a hole in this pocket so the clams kept going through the hole and collecting down around my knee. When we got home I had a whole pants full of clams.

ZH: Funny. But that was some years ago. Do you remember what year that would have been?

BR: Not actually, but in so far as I was probably ten or a dozen years old, and I'm ninety now. Oh it was probably around 1920. Does that sound right? (??) Don't look at me like that. I'm just talking. That's my daughter over there, incidentally.

ZH: OK. So if you were (born) in 1907, and you were ten years old, so that would be 1917.

BR: Well, I was born in 1907.

ZH: Did Bayside experience the "Roaring Twenties" as the rest...Flappers? Or being a Christian camp...was that in evidence in Bayside.

BR: No, we didn't roar around here too much. You see, originally Bayside was a chance for all the surrounding communities to hook up the horse, throw in a bundle of hay in the back end, put in a lot of beans, and beat it for Bayside, and over this ground now, which has been reseeded and all that sort of thing, there were trees that they tied the horse to, and some how or other, they'd get a roller full of clams and they'd take the clam shells off 'em and throw them where the horse was tied, something like that. You see, in other words they couldn't be bothered with disposing of them. Something as common as clam shells like on the beach, they're (?), were empty.

ZH: So when your family came to Bayside, would they spend the whole summer? What length of time.

BR: Hmm. Let me think a minute. Yes, generally speaking, have you heard of the Eastern Steamship Company?

ZH: Yes.

BR: Well, they used to have two steamers- one the "Camden" and the other the "Belfast", and they'd go between here and Boston, so they'd go back and forth, and they had a wharf down here on Bayside, and it was a great big wharf, and so they could call...I was going to say..call up, but they didn't have telephones then like they do now, but I think Joe Mesanno for instance, the boy was an Italian (town?) used to send up to Boston and get a bunch of fruit to come down. He was a fruit dealer, and he also used to send fruit to a little boat called the "Castine" over around the islands, that's Islesboro.

ZH: Did you ever travel the steamships yourself.

BR: Yes, yes. Captain Raleigh was on one, the "Belfast", and Captain Bradley was on the other. Yes, I knew Captain Raleigh because his home was up in Hampden, well Hampden is where I came from, you see.

ZH: I see.

BR: So yes.

ZH: Were they luxurious boats?

BR: Well, at least 30-40 staterooms. They were big boats. You ought to be able to find a lot of photographs, pictures of them going back and forth- there would be one in the morning and one in the evening. I know as a little kid I used to go down on the wharf, Bayside had a big wharf; I used to go down and on the wharf there was a runway, and anchored up on the shore side and on the water side the ramp would pull up or down, depending on the tide, so low tide they'd run her down there, and high tide it'd be up here, so at low tide, if you were going from the shore onto the boat, you'd run along there like that, of course if the tide was up here and you were trying to come up onto the boat, then you had to push your hand truck...a hand truck's two wheels, you know,

ZH: The majority of people that would come on the steamship. The people on the steamship, would they come for long, a lengthy stay? Would they come for just a short visit sometimes?

BR: I don't remember actually how long they came for, but I presume that they came for anywhere from a week to the season. In other words, this has been a summer community.

ZH: But were the steamship travelers relatives of people already in Bayside?

BR: I don't understand the question.

ZH: Were they relatives of the people in Bayside, or just anyone could come?

BR: Oh, anyone could come, but you see most of these cottages around here were what they called "society cottages" , meaning that when Winterport and Hampden and

Thomaston and all that sort...they originally came and put a tent up, so that they could stay in the tent overnight, or a week or so. Well, they got tired of putting the tent up and down and so forth. Oh, there was a kid that took a knife and ran up and down and all the tents collapsed once.

ZH: Oh dear, you don't know who that kid was?

BR: No, it wasn't me! I didn't do it! No sir, I didn't do it! I know I didn't do it. I wouldn't do a dirty trick like that.

ZH: OK.

BR: And there was Dickey. Charles Dickey. Kind of a sourpuss. I can call him a sourpuss now 'cause I'm an old sourpuss myself, but at the time he was kind of a (?) guy, and he was the baggage master around here, so anybody'd come and he would take the suitcase and...I'm going to shift just a little bit. When the boats originally came and stopped here, there was a fence between the land and wharf, so they charged, I think it was, two cents or a nickel or so to land here and come thought the fence and get here. Of course, if they came on a horse, I mean horse and wagon, they came in the back way and there was no charging 'em. Now, some people came out in the boat, and they came up to the fence, and Charles Dickey put out, I don't know if it was Charles Dickey, but somebody put out their hand to catch the ten cents, nickels (?) to the grounds, and they objected to the ten cents, so Captain Raleigh of the steamboat "Belfast", grabbed an axe, came down (?) fence, see, so that put an end to that. Of course, they run when? Drinkwater was delivering ice, that's in comparatively recent, oh, forty years ago, they didn't have refrigeration then as we have it now. Electric cords. There were damn few cords around, I don't think any of them had electric lights, it was all lamps, lanterns, and you had to be careful. I can remember my grandfather getting three or four lamps down here, and taking a newspaper and going inside the lamp chimney and cleaning the lamp chimney because newspaper seemed to pick up the residue, the carbon residue, see, and clean the kerosene...I had a kerosene lamp down here...oh Lord, oh, it's right over there, I guess. It is it on the...

ZH: Yup, and that was the entire...Well, can you remember when the first bathroom would have been coming into Bayside? What was that like?

BR: Well, originally, to get around that problem, they had the ladies' walk and the gentlemen's walk, and the ladies' walk was over at the foot of North street, and the gentlemen's walk was down...what was that name...oh well, it was this end of the campground. Of course, it didn't have any pull chain or anything like that. That was before the cast iron toilets. Did you ever see a cast iron toilet?

ZH: That wall-mount thing...the water closet on the wall?

BR: Yes, the water closet up there and the cast iron (hopper) on the floor.

ZH: Yup. Now with all the steamship folks, did they have many dances and...

BR: Did they have many what?

ZH: Dances, with it like a weekend event?

BR: stances??

ZH: With the steamship coming were there dances..

BR: Oh, dances. No, it wasn't that kind of a... dances!? I should say not! I'll have you understand that this was a very respectable neck of this Wesleyan community.

ZH: What was acceptable socializing?

BR: Socializing. Well, if you really want the truth, there generally was dancing on the porches, look around, slip-ups...that's not the word I want ???? Oh boy, it was more darn fun! Somebody get in trouble- we knew it! I mean, got in trouble. There was more than one kind of trouble, if you understand. Boy, that was a big subject. Yes, they were very religious. Darn it, get the hell out of there!

ZH: But then at church it was all very...they were large worship services? Everyone would come to the worship time?

BR: Yes, everybody that wanted to, of course. See, there used to be an auditorium in what is now Auditorium Park, and it was a big, wooden shell, and the stage up there that the minister would get up there.. "If you don't want to go to Hell..."

ZH: Fire and brimstone, huh?

BR: "You better change your ways." Now I remember when I was a very small boy, that stage had a office down on the lower level; you see the whole outfit was built on a hill going down to the water; I used to go in there and collect tickets. Tickets were different colors..blue, green, yellow..I don't know what the total (colors were)...but I do remember blue, green, and yellow, and I think..this is a guess on my time...but each color taken meant a certain religious leader, minister, reverend minister, would spout during the services. In the auditorium, there were a lot of wooden chairs that were held in place by..well, they turned the chairs over and put a ten-foot piece of board on there, nail them together, and then turn them back up. There were ten there, and ten there and ten there and ten there, and if you go round to the old cottages, (??) they all had some of those chairs. I doubt very much that they paid for them, but they all had 'em.

ZH: Do you remember the skating rink?

BR: Do you remember what?

ZH: Roller skating rink, somewhere in the village?

BR: No, You see I was not a roller skater here. Of course, I used to try to roller skate...I think that was out in Arizona...the only trouble was I went down "bang!" couple of times, and I got disgusted.

ZH: Yeh. So your family didn't live here year-round at all.

BR: No, either Hampden, Maine or Rockland. Up on the back road here...well, you don't care where it is...but it was up on the back road here, there used to be a dance hall. Now I was so small that I didn't appreciate what they were dancing, but I know it was there. Chet Perkins used to have a store here which was open in the summertime. I don't think it was open in the winter. They had to close it up; in fact, I remember the time they came- was it October, or was it September last October, when they came with the machines to roll up the sidewalks! (But I really don't remember that!) But I remember Chet all right. You know, Chet sold out to a fellow by the name of the name almost come back to me... but anyway, he used to sell groceries, and I have seen his wife weighing out string beans, and break the string bean in two so to get the right weight.

ZH: To the ounce!

BR: Chet liked to...he was a very good salesman, he knew everybody, and everybody liked him. He was a good salesman, that's the idea of course. He liked everybody. That was when he used to have on the platform two barrels: one barrel had molasses in it, and the other one had vinegar.

ZH: Kaye sent these postcard pictures along...

BR: Oh, that was the old...

ZH: ...different recollections..the Sailing School.

BR: Oh, well, the Sailing School was much later. Oh, I put that up. You see, this right here. You see this is a...that isn't the one I was thinking. This is the one that used to be.

ZH: An entrance to the village.

BR: Yes, an entrance. But I put one up. I think I...I remember I had a hell of a job getting that cross-beam on. It was hard work. It was a long, round oak (?) and I, getting to standing up along the two uprights.

ZH: This looks like such a long road. I don't know where that could be.

BR: You see that. Bayside is up there at the top, where the apparent road stops. This is the south shore, so that from here, here, Cove, Cove, Cove...

ZH: Kelly Cove?

BR: Yes, yes, Kelly's Cove, and that went up this way, and the village, of course, is up there, now Bobbie...Dan and Bobbie Webster, I think lived up..not this cottage, not that cottage, but the third cottage up from right there.

ZH: There is a cottage called the "Oriental" .

BR: Oh, I remember. Well, the Oriental was right here. It was right on this line, but it was the first cottage of the next line. Now, there was the Oriental, yes, but there was no line from there on up, in other words I'm trying to say it was just a single cottage; it didn't constitute a line but just where a line might have been.

ZH: I see. Were there people with ties to the Orient? I mean, what was the connection with anything Oriental- the name?

BR: No, I would guess- now this is pure guess- that Dan...that they were...wouldn't be the Tarratine tribe. What's the bunch that were the Pharoahs: Shriners. I would guess that it was just a name put on there by Shriners, I mean a single individual that was a Shriner, not three or four, I don't mean that. I just mean...you own a place...you know what this is? My name, this cottage is Oakundo.

ZH: What's that connection?

BR: Well, that means "Oak condo".

ZH: Oh, OK.

BR: You know, there's a fellow... this country...during the last war, you perhaps remember him..he had the name of Roosevelt. But the only reason that I'm thinking of that because he used to run up his eyebrows up and down like that.

ZH: Uh huh, expressive brows.

BR: Well, I'll tell you it was the reason he did that- sometimes he didn't like to see too much, see too well and so he didn't have to say, "Well, I'm sorry, we can't do that." He'd just kind of roll his eyes up like that, see, the old?

ZH: Do you recall any famous visitors to Bayside- famous people?

BR: Yes. Fellow by the name of R-E-E-D. Very famous, very famous. He was professor of ?

ZH: OK.

BR: Dan Webster was a surveyor in Bangor. (I don't know if it was Bangor or not). He wasn't famous or anything, but just a damn good surveyor. Now I was a surveyor, too. Yes, I used to survey out in the Philippines. That's a long way away. That's fact, not

fiction. That's where I learned my surveying, and I don't mean surveying this way; I mean surveying with a transit. You know out in the Philippines the first day they put me on the survey gang, I carried the transit...the transit is the optical instrument you look through, the telescope you look through, and so I carried the transit the first day, and then I saw that that was all right, and the next day, I had a gook, a Philippino that was carrying the transit and so forth. From then on I had the gook carrying the works and I was doing a little surveying. That was the Philippines, you understand.

ZH: Yes, yes. What of the hotel situation- the number of hotels, how many hotels...

BR: Here in Bayside?

ZH: Yes.

BR: Well, there used to be a big one, I don't quite see those, but there used to be a big one down there. Would that be the Narragansett House- would that be the name?

ZH: I've heard that, I don't know.

BR: I don't really remember the name, but there was a big hotel there with a turret on each end, so that the roof, you've got an ice cream cone upside down on both ends and a little...now that was torn down, fairly recently, I mean fairly recently- oh, twenty years ago or something like that. Of course, the auditorium; did I mention the auditorium?

ZH: Yes, but people didn't spend the night there. That wasn't an over-night facility. That wasn't like a hotel- the auditorium- you couldn't stay there, could you?

BR: No, the only thing the auditorium.

ZH: Were there ever more than one big hotel here? More than one.

BR: I think the answer is yes, and yet, I'm not so sure, because I was so small I wasn't quite aware. The place...the main hotel was right at auditorium park there, I mean, that's grass, you see. Now up on the back road there was a roller skating rink, did I mention that?

ZH: Yes.

BR: Right, and up there...I was going to say something about it, but I don't remember what it was.

ZH: Can you recall the location of the cottage that you spent the most time in as a young boy?

BR: Yes, sure, it was the Rockland Cottage.

ZH: And that is located where?

BR: Now, let me think. It's located on Auditorium Park, now Auditorium Park.. .did I mention the tents?

ZH: Yes.

BR: All right. Well, these tents lots people would come and stay in until they got tired of that so they built the society cottages, and when I came as a boy we always came to the Rockland Cottage because my mother came from Rockland.

ZH: I see.

BR: But I remember, for instance, right above the Rockland Cottage it was torn down, oh well, you don't care when it was torn down, right above there was the Hampden Cottage, and..

ZH: Can you recall any of your playmates names from early?

BR: No, generally I don't. I had my nose into about everything that I could find out, but when they hollared "Chow" I ran home. And you see, if there's more than two or three, you can't get away with so much as you can if there is only one. Of course, I would never admit going under Chet Perkins' store and stealing one stick of Oh Boy gum. Oh Boy gum used to be a stick about yeah long- about four or five inches, and I felt guilty about that for a long time. I don't know if I still feel guilty about it. Look, if you look under that railing out there, and feel around, you might find where I stuck that gum.

ZH: I could take it back to Chet.

BR: You know, I might try that again. You never know when it could be good. Don't wipe you nose like that.

ZH: I'm itching my nose! Oh, recorded for history now.

BR: Yes, yes, yes. Hey, by the way, I'd like to do something to you. I've got a pair of barber shears around here. I haven't got a barber chair, but you understand I can stand up and...oh, you aren't as thin up on top as I am. We'd take care of that. Of course, you'd only lose a piece of an ear, but that doesn't matter. You've got another ear, haven't you?

ZH: I guess so.

BR: Right.

ZH: Well, we thank you very much.

BR: Did you get what you want?

ZH: I think we've got a good amount.