 Transcript of Interview with George Barden - Part Two

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: Welcome to Mansfield University Voices, an Oral History of the University. This is part two of an interview with George C. Barden, area farmer and longtime Richmond Township Supervisor. He was also the great-grandfather of Brian Barden, Mansfield University Director of Enrollment Services. This Interview was conducted on July 27, 1973 by History Professor, Dr. Paul O'Rourke.

GEORGE BARDEN: Some of the first of the months were bad, probably [indecipherable]. And then a man by the name of either John Halpin, H-A-L-P-I-N, or a man by the name of Calvert, both worked for my father different times. And he and one of them men dug the cellar there, pick and shovel. And Cory Creek at one time come around right where that house stands. Used to be Cattail Swamp through there, and it was straight and change to go where it's run ever since and does yet. And back years ago, my brother and I went there. They was having water troubles, and it was a four-inch tile in there and that was running a stream of water through there the size of that, about. And they wanted a cement floor put in and that water run through, ditched under the floor so it would go into the sewer line that was laid. And so that took care of that situation there, and that...where that Cory Creek swung around through there, that was all field I suppose with horses and wagons back in them days when they did everything with--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Did your grandfather build this himself or have someone build it for him?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, I suppose a carpenter did the carpentering there, because he had these other businesses there, and he wasn't a carpenter I wouldn't assume. And he hired, because we had Charlie Ramsdel was a carpenter and Will Ramsdel was a carpenter. And Will was a paper-hanger and painter. I knew both of them men as a kid. They was old men when I was a kid. Well, Will Ramsdel belonged to our Odd Fellow's Lodge when I, back when I joined, but he died shortly after that. He used to come. We had a violin group, John Baines' father, Liam Baines, and Will Ramsdel and Ross Knowlton from Canoe Camp used to play violins and them three fellows would play and they'd play for dances, but they'd play up at the lodge. Nights after lodge they'd sit for half an hour, maybe an hour with their violins and play. What, we had in there was quite a lot of entertainment.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What, I get the impression that Mansfield in the 1880s, 1890s, it was sort of, almost a booming town, 1870s, 1880s.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, it would have been considered such then because you take your old smeltery and the sewer bed and your tannery and the college. It was always considered a college town, the town, the college made it. Of course the old Normal School made it, too. The girls' dorm is still there, the old dorm. But they changed all the front of that, which is a shame. I've got a picture here of that front.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What wall?

GEORGE BARDEN: ...and that was a beautiful picture of the front of that was where the steps and entrance went into that.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Did something happen to the, when these, a lot of these businesses failed and so forth, then the town sort of stopped growing or--

GEORGE BARDEN: The school then was the only thing. The foundry came in then, the old foundry, and that's down where the washroom laundry is now. Well then we had the steam laundry. That's over, that's now what? Automobile parts place on Cory Creek right by that little bridge, right below the firing plant for the college.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Would you, is it fair to say that the town was, that after 1900, people weren't quite as confident or as aggressive as they had been or--
GEORGE BARDEN: Well, you're going to hear it from different angles. When the smeltery burned, it never built back up. They made one blunder in the beginning, and that was a lack of foresight without a doubt, because you haul the iron ore from up here, down to that smeltery over here on Brookline Street to Smokey Road they called it on account of the smoke from the old smeltery. It's named Brookline Street starting there.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And then they changed it here quite a number of years ago, 50 years ago probably, to Brookline Street. You had to haul your pig iron then to the railroad station to ship it. You hauled your ore down there, run it through the smeltery, and made bars of pig iron. That's long cast iron bars. Then that was taken to the railroad. When your coal wasn't there, instead of building it on the railroad where there was plenty of territory and area to have built a switch off your railroad, and had the coal come down from the mines on the, with cars on the railroad, they hauled the coal, teams of horses, the ore was hauled naturally with teams of horses because there was no other way to get it down there. No trucks in them days. And your pig, every one of those three branches was disadvantaged, don't you see? Getting it over to the smeltery, getting you pig iron to the railroad station, getting your ore or your coal from the mines to the smeltery. Cost money.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see. Would there, is there enough ore up there now, do you think, that would justify--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well in World War I...that's a good question. In World War I days they came here in Ohio and Pittsburgh and different places from steel businesses to investigate. And as I recall the report on that was it ran very high in metal, but the vein wasn't shallow. They was about seven to eight feet of loose shale rock that had to be blasted and taken off. Of course today they would do that with modern equipment pretty fast. But then it was all done by hand drilling. I hold the drill and you sledge it down six feet maybe and put a charge of blasting powder in there, and then that all had to be scooped out with teams. No big equipment of any kind back in those years, modern like we have today.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now when did your father, is this the father's homestead here, or was he in some other part of Richmond Township?

GEORGE BARDEN: No, he lived, his mother died when he was 11-days old, and he lived with the family by the name of Lamb here, for a little time. I don't know just when his mother was buried up at Boulder, New York in a little cemetery. There's one whole, right through the center of that cemetery there's a whole row of those little old-fashioned, thin domes with Barden names on, where the ancestors, that was where they landed when they first came over from Vermont was up there around Penn Yan. That was all timber then, and they took up lots and they had to clear it. There was maple and beech timber mostly around the lakes there and lots of land.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What year was your father born in?

GEORGE BARDEN: '47.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And he came down here in--

GEORGE BARDEN: ’51, he was four years old.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see. And then he, you were saying because of his hearing problem he had to go into farming. And what year did he set up this farm? Do you recall?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well that would be a question. He started in working up there with hired men that they, grandfather of course naturally had to take charge of it until my father was old enough, when he was 21 or something. And he worked with men in the woods there with oxen clearing up and was getting land ready to get in the crops so they could raise something to feed themselves with and so forth, something to
sell. He kept sheep and a small dairy and raised a couple hogs every year and kept a flock of hens, and that was what the farm setup consisted of. And they'd clear off a piece of land, and I can remember when the back half, just about half of that upper farm there was all timber, and what he didn't want for lumber he piled, had the sod and piled up quite a lot of lumber to put up buildings to house machinery and stuff. And he'd pile that right in big piles, roll it up tideways they called it. Just get them all up in a great big pile high as this ceiling as long as they could roll them up handy. And then they'd burn that. Well if it didn't all burn, they'd go back maybe at night and work and throw that stuff all up again and burn it again, get rid of it. And I said one time later years when he was buying lumber to do something with, I said, “Dad, why did you burn all that nice timber that you burned?” He wanted to get the land to work. And he said it wasn't only worth two dollars and a half a thousand delivered to the mill. Now think of it. Two dollars and a half for a thousand feet of lumber. Look what you pay today. You can't buy a rough hemlock for less than a 130 dollars a thousand I guess.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And yet people were still engaged in lumbering, weren't they?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes, to get some cash, you know. Two dollars and a half was two dollars and a half. Buy a sack of flour, two sacks of flour and 50 pounds of sugar.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But it gives you some idea of how many trees they'd have to cut down to make a living at it.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes, well, some of them trees, big trees there, they'd cut two or three hundred feet of lumber out.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Is that what a lot of the early farmers would do? They'd spend part of their time raising crops and part of their time in lumber?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, clearing the land. If you could sell the lumber, if you could afford to haul it, sawmills, there was one in Canoe Camp, one in Lamb's Creek was the nearest and the only ones here. Goodall's run that in Canoe Camp for years. And well, maybe, if father felt that he needed some money to buy shoes and clothes and food for the family, so he'd think well, if I can get a few thousand feet of lumber to the mill and get 20 dollars, 30 dollars in cash, why that would take care of you six months, a year maybe.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You think he was probably about 20-years-old when he started farming?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, when he started farming, he wasn't married until he was an old bachelor. He was 29-years-old when he was married.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: So. Then he was married a year, year and a month, when my brother was born.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So he would probably be in his early 20s, would you say, when he was--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, yes, he worked with the hired men that grandfather--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, but when did he have his own farm would be when he was married.

GEORGE BARDEN: Not until he was married. Then grandmother, grandfather died when he was 72 with a gall bladder condition, and his wife went back to New York City where he picked her up when he was down there to a medical meeting one time. He had met some of the ladies there and got well acquainted and they corresponded for a while, and finally they married. And she stayed here with him until he died in 1884. He was born in 1812. Now see if my mathematics are correct. And he was 72 when he died, he died in '84.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This was his second wife.
GEORGE BARDEN: This was his second wife. Not my father's mother.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And he bought her and paid her off, he did, and she went back to New York because she had no relatives here in this area at all, and so she wanted to go back there and they paid her off.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What kind of farming did your father do? Would he, it was more than subsistence farming, wasn't it? Didn't he have cash crops?

GEORGE BARDEN: You didn't in those days if you sold milk and butter. I went to the store with my mother right down where the REA office is. You know where that is, I guess.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And she sold to, I think his name was M.S. Sheppard. Now wait. I didn't know his name. I think my wife would now. It was two old maid sisters that worked in the store with him. They did grocery store business there, and I guess some dry goods too. And my mother took her butter and eggs down to that store numerous times. Eight and ten cents a dozen for hen's eggs. Ten and eleven cents a pound for butter. And many of the old pioneers and Dick Hakes, who is on the borough council down here and he's a Baptist, his father and mother went to farming when they were married over in the country here, five miles, and I heard them tell about taking in their milk and butter down there to the store, this same old Sheppard there, for eight and ten cents for eggs and ten and eleven cents a pound for butter.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This is about the 1890s or so.

GEORGE BARDEN: Back…I was born in '91, and I was a kid when I went with mother and dad down there to do their weeks shopping. Went down once a week maybe to buy supplies, what they had to have for the week. But as far as the type of farming, they started in finally, well as far back as I can remember, which I'd have been a kid probably eight, nine, ten-years old. Cheese plants here around the country and butter plants. Moore and Rose was one of the old pioneers of our town. Come from way over on the State Road, had a big farm over there and his father owned the farm ahead of him. And he put up these little cheese operations making American cheese, and they sold locally here to the stores around the county. I don't know how much they ever shipped out, but that was the place to sell your milk, and you get maybe 60 cents a hundred.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So the only dairying really was, really the only cash crop here.

GEORGE BARDEN: Was butter. Most everybody had a small flock of sheep. Now my father kept about a 35 head group, flock of sheep, so he'd have 35 fleeces of wool to sell. He would shear in the latter part of April. If it come off nice and warm, the first part of May so the sheep wouldn't stand around all hugged up and shivering, you know. And then they'd sell that wool here and to be shipped out, manufacturing plant.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Maybe a big vegetable garden, I suppose.

GEORGE BARDEN: And, you mean on the farm?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, they always had, raised a good garden. If they didn't, they'd starve to death because you have everything in there that people grew at that time, tomatoes and cabbage and carrots and beets and radish and lettuce and onions and some garden potatoes. And then you'd plant a field of potatoes, too, maybe half acre or an acre. You'd sell some of them. You had more for your own use, and naturally you'd have a few potatoes to sell, 40 cents a bushel, 50 cents maybe if you had to dig them out of the cellar and deliver them.
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What kind of social life do they have on a farm? What do they do--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, back when I was a kid, my father had what they called the long sways. Some had a set of dickies. That was two short sleds and a box on there, maybe three seats or two seats, and my father would pick up a load close by and somebody else would pick up a load. And we'd go to a house in the community, and some, they could play an organ or an old-fashioned melodeon, which we have one of those. It's an antique. This was bought by father, and he took music lessons, even being deaf. And he used to sing in the Methodist choir as a young man. Can you imagine that?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Even though he was deaf?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes. I never could believe it myself hardly. Well anyway. But I know it's true because lots of the old-timers used to tell me about it. They couldn't understand how being deaf he could sing. But he'd watch somebody else, their lip movements, and he could talk with you if he was acquainted with you well or me and follow you in lip movements.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah?

GEORGE BARDEN: There's lip moving now, you know. They teach that.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Sure.

GEORGE BARDEN: --finger, one handed or two handed. But anyhow, what did I start off on?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You were talking about the sleigh rides and then--

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, they'd take the dickies. They'd pick up a girl, but we'd go maybe to your home or my home, neighbor's home we'll say, John Doe or Tom Smith. And somebody would play the organ or piano, if they happened to have one in later years. And they'd sing church hymns all the old, out of the old church books there. We'd sing for an hour, an hour and a half maybe, and somebody would think well, we better have some refreshments now. So the lady with apple pie or pumpkin pie and sweet cider or tea, coffee or milk or something.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Would this be on a Sunday generally or--

GEORGE BARDEN: No, any night you felt like going. Might be in the middle of the week, might be on a Sunday night and go to church on Sunday, people did in them days, and churches was filled up, seats were full of country people and town people. And wasn't like it is now, a half circle out front. Nobody dared go down and sit. They was too close to the preacher. So they would all get back, start filling the back seats first, then go down as far as necessary. But then they got down front more, and the older people sat more in front and the younger folks sat in with them. Families sat all in one pew. And you would have that certain...that was your seat, and you and her and your three children would fill that, see and they said well that's the Powers' seat. We don't want to sit down there. And it was a family and the [indecipherable] was a family for years. And the young folks left home and went to different things. One girl was nursing Sara and the boy was over here in the unemployment office for years down in Wellsboro, but that was always respect and honor. That's where the Powers' always sat, commonly spoken. And each family had that, a place like that in the church. There was no, not a marking.

Now I was, we was up in Vermont, Plymouth, Vermont there where Calvin Coolidge's birth place. I went through that on one of our trips we did. We went to a little church and sat in the pew where Calvin Coolidge's family sat and it was marked. American flag sat by it, and we sat in that seat we had. And there was a little bit of a short organ there, and Sara Hakes, Dick Hakes' mother played that, and we took up the song books and played some of the old church songs. Then we went up to the cemetery and saw where he was buried. Saw the whole thing, the bedroom where he was born. The old lady was still there handing out postal cards and pictures of the whole thing there, 83-years-old and she was the one that took care of Calvin
when he was a baby. Still was there. They took that over, what do you call those homes where they're in honor of Calvin Coolidge family, the Roosevelt's and the different ones of these people? Somebody suggested to do that. I saw in the paper just a few days ago who is some prominent man now, but he said no, I don't want it to be laughed at. In honor of the family.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: How about traveling in those days? Did people go to, have any reason to go to Wellsboro, except probably the county scene?

GEORGE BARDON: Well, they had a carding mill over there, and do you understand what carding wool is?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDON: They had a machine, and my father and many of the sheep owners would have a whole fleece of wool carded into rolls. And they were, oh, an inch through, maybe, in loose light. But this big machine had little teeth on it, pickers, and it picked that all in two pieces, run a great speed. And the burdocks or weed seed or any dirt or anything that was in there would fly inside the room. The whole side of the room looked like a mattress almost of filth there that come out of them fleeces of wool like seed trash and stuff that was, had grown fast in the fleeces of the sheep developed their coat of wool. Well then they'd take them, and my grandmother on my mother's side, she had a [pause in audio].

… after my father and my sister died. And we took her down to a theater one day and she had never heard a live theater. We had a little bit of a 10 cent movie house down there years ago, and there was a plate in down there, and I wondered just how the thing didn't work. But they had a little…if I remember right, there was sort of a black plate. You put that in a little machine there and you got a picture on the screen. House, no, Sax's Moving Picture House--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This was, this was when, by, in the 1920s when you first took your grandmother, or your mother rather?

GEORGE BARDON: No, no. Father died in 1928.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah, wow.

GEORGE BARDON: And my wife died in '29. This would have been after my wife died. I would say probably that summer. I took her down to Canton to see some cousins there, and around different places, what I had time to do. I was still a pretty busy fellow, but if I could find time to get away half a day or on a Sunday and leave her somewhere where she could visit with some of her cousins she hadn't seen in 30, 40 years, why I did that.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So life in this area was pretty much confined to Mansfield.

GEORGE BARDON: Oh, yes.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Maybe an occasional trip to Wellsboro, to the carding mill or maybe to the courthouse.

GEORGE BARDON: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But there were--

GEORGE BARDON: Unless you had business like getting a deed recorded or you wanted to get it stricken off the books. Now when I paid off my mortgage, I took the man that I had paid off and we drove a team of horses in the mud in the spring of the year, the old dirt road out here full of sinkholes clear through to Wellsboro, X deep to a buggy, some lots of places. Horses could hardly get through. I had a pair of young
horses. Beautiful pair of bays. And they...we got over there and went to the courthouse, and he told them, he says I came in to satisfy a mortgage with George Barden. He purchased a farm from me. And so they canceled that off the book that that was paid off. And so nobody had any strings on me yet, then.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But people would not generally go there for shopping or clothes or anything like that.

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, too far to go. Twelve mile, thirteen from Mansfield over. But we had good grocery stores. In where Franklin is, there was a grocery in the back end of that store, and cloth goods, everything, dresses and what have you in the other part of it. T.W. Judge Company, they had a meat market in the back end of their store there for years, and they had a grocery in where a lot of your, what, electrical equipment is on the, as you go in the store, it's on the left of you. And their other stuff, davenports and stuff of that kind, and clothing materials on shelves on the right as you walk in the store.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: There never was any social stratification in Mansfield, was there, where you'd have sort of an elite group in town, professional people who associated among themselves and then a working men's organizations or--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, you got down close to how I might explain it. You had a group here, and they called them the upper class, or at least they thought they were. Don't suppose under their shirt they was any better than some of us poor cusses. But the Ross's and the Hord's and, oh, fiddlesticks. If I could just think. Not so far from that, but they was, it was say about a half a dozen families, which you'd find in almost every small area, that they mention as the upper class. They had some money, and maybe in all these cases had been handed down, so they didn't earn it pick and shoveling themselves like some of us did their bread and butter. But they like going to church. We farm folks had to go if went to church, we didn't have any kind. Lamb's Creek or little village down there got a little church, and them people could go to that, and yeah, it's always been a church there since that was built. Here was Canoe Camp, Church of Christ at Canoe Camp. Mr. Clickner was their minister.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But most of Richmond you had to go in to Mansfield.

GEORGE BARDEN: But we had to go to Mansfield. That was the natural place for...might be the closest for them to go.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Well did these people have any literary clubs or any circles that were sort of exclusive?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, they did I suppose, yes, some. But not what we country people were so familiar with and probably read about them in our local Mansfield paper. It's always been published ever since I can remember, and I've got some of the older ones.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah, I've seen mentioned this Columbia Literary Society. Is that an example--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, those things have been built. They're newly born.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh.

GEORGE BARDEN: More modern days. They've got several organizations. School teachers back in the old Normal and the Classical Seminary didn't have the stuff you got today naturally because you've advanced so fast and the younger generations are more highly educated and want more things to entertain with than what we did. We had the Mansfield Fair. It was one of our biggest agricultural affairs. But as far as these literary clubs and things now. Now your churches, all your churches got two or three different groups.
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Sure. But how did these people sort of hold themselves apart from the rest of town? You mean they just socialized with each other or--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well I don't know what to tell you. How did you hold yourselves apart? Your people that lived on farms worked long hours and hard, and when night came, they was ready to go to bed.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah, but--

GEORGE BARDEN: Forget going out to things is the general thing.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right, but these maybe half dozen or so families in town, how did they sort of give other people the impression that they thought they might be a little better or--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, they dressed better and they had more money and they went to church, they wore better hats and better dresses and better suits of clothes, the men did. You saw lots of men coming. The superintendent of the Sunday school that I belonged to wore leather boots. And he was the superintendent of the Sunday school and he was loved by everybody, the rich and the poor because he had in his heart what it took to make every man whether he was rich or poor.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. But these other families, they tended to socialize among themselves, is that it?

GEORGE BARDEN: They socialized card games and--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Did they tend to live in a certain area, or was there a certain section--

GEORGE BARDEN: No, they were scattered around in the small towns. You couldn't do that like you could in Elmira and the bigger cities, you know.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. There was never a part of Mansfield that was the better part of town. It was just too small a place.

GEORGE BARDEN: No, they was intermingled in the medium classes then and then the poor kind of living mixed up. But the better classes was near the school naturally. They had bought homes or built homes near the old Classical Seminary and the Normal School and college later until they got older. There's no vacant lots anymore up in that area to build on.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And they went down over the hill, and, oh, I guess there's a building down there where the students rent. Well, yeah, there is. A couple of them was put up. We always called it the flat. Used to be Cattail Swamp when I was a boy, and you would go there and catch bullfrogs if you like the legs fried with butter.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This is over near the College Manor Apartments.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, down over the hill.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Down in that area.

GEORGE BARDEN: That was known as the flat.

DR. PAUL BARDEN: Was there anything within the church, were there any…did families of somewhat higher social position, did they have any special favors or prestige within the church?

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, I wouldn't say, although they might have been a little bit more apt to have been
deacons and some of the trustees and things of that kind with your church because they had, probably, a little better education. Yes, we would say they did have a better education. And they never had been really accustomed to hard work because you take the Ross's. Their father was the banker here, Ross and Williams Bank. And for years it was known as such, and then it became the First National Bank in later years. And so these Ross's, Charlie and Ed Ross, they came by their property through what their father would buy for them. And some of these others did the same thing, where my dad went out and the sweat of his brow cutting the timber off and carrying a farm, and working at hard work all of his life. When I started out, I started out pretty tough. Second generation or third here of us, what was it? Or my brother the same. He never farmed it. He, when he started out, he was 25 when he was married, and he took up mason work. He worked with William Barton, who was one of Mansfield's best masons, and one other fellow, Joe Deatman, he come over from All Saints Lorraine. You've heard of that from history.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: You know where it is. Sure. Just assuming in World War I days there when we got to the top of an [indecipherable] where we was knocking them off pretty fast, he said I know every foot of that ground. That's where I was born and grew up, he said, before I came to America.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What did, what of a young man growing up on the farm? You remember…what kind of good times do you remember from the 1890s and the early 1900s?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, you mean like myself, young man growing up on the farm?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, let's take our country school days. We had a ball team there, and we played ball every noon, sometimes night after school and kept in practice pretty well. And we would go around and play other schools like Lamb's Creek School and Canoe Camp and as far as you could get out conveniently and back home in a day. And we had a pretty good ball team for a country team. And so did Lamb's Creek. And you know Francis Kelley that used to be post master down here?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, he's a very good friend of mine, and we talk baseball when we get together. But they had a real team of Irish boys there, and I don't mean maybe. And they was Irish in disposition. And boy, they played to win. And if they didn't win, then they wanted to fight.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: That was Mansfield?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah. They would live in Lamb's Creek and went to school, to a little old country school down there. Still standing as a community house. This is the village as you drive into that village after you cross over the railroad and go down there.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: There were a bunch of Irish people down in Lamb's Creek.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, there were some there, yes, and, Pat Griffin. That sounds like Irish, don't it? Pat?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Sure. That's my mother's maiden name.

GEORGE BARDEN: Was it?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well good. Well they were good friends of mine, the Griffin boys. Their father, and he was an old man and he was deaf, and he worked on a section of the railroad. And he knew all the train
times. And Kelley, old Mr. Kelley was deaf, Francis' father.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was he a railroad man, too?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, he was section boss. And he'd watch his time. There's heavy gold watches, and they had to have them checked every so often in order, if you worked for the rail company. And he'd lay down, put his ear on the rail, and he said, “Boys, get that hand car off just quick as you can. There's an engine coming light with a caboose.” And they'd be going to the mines. Might be a New York Central engine caboose or Erie, either one. And they'd go up and hook onto a long coal train, take it down through in New York. But he could tell by listening to that rail, how close that was or how far off. And he'd put one ear, which was better than the other one, down on that rail and listen, and he'd tell the boys to get that hand car off just as quick as you can, and everything else is close to rail. So they try to do that. You look at this and we'll talk about that later.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh.

GEORGE BARDEN: That come out partition in the wall to a certain place in town. And…but the Griffin's and the Waters'. Alfred Waters is still living. He was caretaker for the water company for years here, Mansfield Water Supply. And he lives, he's alive yet and he's in his 90s, about 92, and he lives up in Lamb Creek now. I went down and seen him when he was celebrating his 90th birthday, and he said, “Of all the people that have been here today, George Barton,” he said,” I am more pleased to see you than any of them.” Because when he was justice of the peace elected by the voters of Richmond Township, I took all, and I was supervisor of our township, I took all of our legal documents to him to swear and sign before I sent them in to the state departments or anywhere.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So you remember playing baseball and what, fishing, hunting?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, I never had much time for that between work on the farm, helping my father was what I did. And working with my brother in town after I got to age, and I started tending mason when I was 12-years old carrying the hod when they laid down the hod. You know what a hod is, of course. A bricklayer's masons carry up the ladder on scaffolding and saw that off some because that would drag on the ground. But I tended mason work to my brother, as I said, he was 14-years-old. I mean, he learned the mason business, and then I followed him there summers when I was out of school.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You were saying you went into farming in 1913, and then you went--

GEORGE BARDEN: I bought this place in 1913.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right, this house where we are now. And you went to sign up for the army, and--

GEORGE BARDEN: And we registered.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Registered rather. And T.W. Judge went?

GEORGE BARDEN: Wait, Judge of the T, his father, Tom Judge was the T.W. Judge, Tom.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see. Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And his father--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But you didn't, you didn't go because you were exempted as a--

GEORGE BARDEN: Agriculture.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Agriculture.
GEORGE BARDEN: The young men of agriculture in fourth class because they needed food products as well as men, and they had pretty well got the quota. But if they'd took one more quota, if I'd been stalled off about 30 days, I would have had to gone. I'd have gone the next drawing from our district.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see. Now you went and sold bonds around the county.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now I'm certainly not accusing you of any of this.

GEORGE BARDEN: Okay.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: There's, studying about World War I, this was a period of coercion on people who didn't go along with the war efforts.

GEORGE BARDEN: That's right. Branded, right across the seat of your pants, as a deserter.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. Now was there much of this around here, do you recall?

GEORGE BARDEN: A few cases we had, some that I was familiar with, yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: That, what would this involve? A person wouldn't buy a bond or a person who--

GEORGE BARDEN: No. Their fathers bought a farm and maybe put a few beef cattle and some dry cattle and stuff that they could sell to cattle dealers and, you know, take them a little while and fatten them up and then sell them and bring on some more. Or put on a dairy, milk a dairy until the war was over, and then sell the farm again, go back to town. And we had some cases, and they did in every town where that happened.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And--

GEORGE BARDEN: He might be the only son, only child. No sisters, no brothers, and parents didn't want him to go, afraid he'd never come back.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, he somehow evaded the draft and went out--

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah. Well, if you got him in agriculture after agriculture became fourth class, then they could hold him agriculture until the war was over, unless they had got tight for men, murdered them off so fast over there that they had to collect more.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: Then they could take them.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Would there be any, how did, people around here wouldn't have liked that. Was there any way, did they--

GEORGE BARDEN: That's brought up yet. Not a lot ago a man was talking to me and wanted to know if I remembered some of those things--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Some of these people who didn't--

GEORGE BARDEN: --and I said I did because--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Do you recall any coercion against them? Was there any attempt to--
GEORGE BARDEN: No. Just talked about it and that was all. It was a disgrace, really, to think that somebody did that just to keep them from going to war.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. There was nothing in the county about…of course there aren't many people of German extraction here.

GEORGE BARDEN: You got to get down state, over to Liberty and on down.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And you go out [indecipherable] and you get into the German.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. But you don't recall any instances of people being forced into buying war bonds or anything like that?

GEORGE BARDEN: No. You went out, and if you was a good salesman just like you'd sell any product or paper, magazine or anything. And of course you'd use a little bit of pressure in an awful nice way if you was a good salesman. I never believed in being, when I got to, you can catch more flies, you know, with honey than you can with vinegar. But to go out and ball a man out and swear at him a little and so forth because he didn't feel he could afford to buy right then or something or didn't want any war bonds, he didn't believe in the war or something of sort. He pictured out the other fellow's son going maybe, or sons. Two and three sons went in some families and some of them never come back, one or two of them killed.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But there was no, none of this balling out of a fellow for that.

GEORGE BARDEN: Not in the sale of bonds, no. Treat your man that he ought to do it and be patriotic because it happened that his son didn't have to go. Maybe his neighbor's son did have to go, or two sons, see. And so he'd say well, the boys have got to be taken care of. They got to have food and clothes and ammunition and materials, war materials and stuff to use while they're over there. And we got to send money, and bonds is one way of getting it. And so in order to be patriotic, you ought to feel that you should do your share. Well some men say, “Well I can't buy one of them big bonds like you're trying to sell.” But we had a system where you could sell, I think it was as small as five dollars, and you'd say well, I pay out of my weekly salary or wages if you got paid every two weeks or every 30 days, and some of the farms, they only paid the men at the end of the month. But we tried everybody as we came to them. If he was a laborer and didn't get very much wages, well maybe he couldn't afford to buy a 500 dollar bond or 1000 dollar bond or 2 or 300 bond. He'd say well I'd pay five dollars a week for a month out of my pay check if you'll take it that way. I feel I should do something. Well I use to figure, just like the Bible says, if a woman don't have the 10 cents and that's the widow's money, that means just as much to me in a way if she goes without food almost to give that to something almost as much as the man that's worth a half a million and only gives 50 dollars or 100 dollars towards a hospital or school or some worthy cause, orphanage.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah. Now you became active in the grange movement around here. You're going to get a 60 year pin pretty soon, you were saying.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah. I presume probably that's might be over at North Grange now. And they have a meeting some night.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You joined 1913?

GEORGE BARDEN: I joined and sent my name in when I bought this place, April 1913, and in June they finished my last degrees to the subordinate granges. Now, I guess I told you yesterday that I went to state grange, to Allentown, in Allentown. You know where that area is probably.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: And I took the 5th and 6th degrees, the wife and I both there, and--
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now what you were telling us about your interest, your reason for joining the grange--

GEORGE BARDEN: I wanted this fire insurance on case if the buildings blew down or burned that I'd have money to put them back up with. Otherwise I'd been hit pretty hard to make my payments and build a new house, and the man that held the mortgage, he'd say “Well, George is going to put a house right up, pay the insurance over to him,” see. If I showed signs, got some material on the job, my lumber and a lot of the stuff and that I was going to build back just as fast as I could in order to have shelter over my head, which a lot of men had to have or move in some old shack somewhere maybe. Somebody would say well you can move into that old house of mine I've used for a tenant house. It ain't in very good shape, but until you can get built back. And it was a wonderful thing to have that insurance in case of fire when you was, I've got my wife's certificate in there and mine both where we passed those 5th and 6th degrees at Allentown.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: We should have took a 7th when we was down here to Williamsport. That was close by, but different things, don't remember just what all now, we didn't get there, and we'd like the 7th degree, too. You get up, that's your state and national grange degrees. You go on higher.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: The national, of course, is the highest you can go.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So I guess for most of the farmers here, it was the insurance and the fraternal aspect of it.

GEORGE BARDEN: That right. Your social side, getting your families together and discussing different things in your community. And along the same lines, your church when you had these little, where you'd go out and sing, nights. And another thing that we had in the grange, we used to plan there, we'd have what they called apple cuts. Well back in those days you had maybe a new, nice clean lath made into a big four-foot square thing that hooks in the ceiling and the eyes in this rack and you'd hook it up to ceiling. You'd have that full of apples that was peeled and quartered to dry. You made apple pie. You can make applesauce out of dried apples. You used to be able to buy them in the stores, and I guess some of the stores you can yet. They come in wooden boxes, about 25 pounds in a box. Like apricots, prunes. Same principle, only they dried them in your homes. And I can remember one in the old match longer ceiling that used to be out there. When I was a kid and used to come down and play with the boys and they'd steal out a handful or two, and their mother and dad didn't notice it. Put them in the pocket and you'd go outdoors and give me some of them dried apples.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This is what, this is what you'd have at the grange.

GEORGE BARDEN: And they'd talk about it and we're going out one night. Such a person's there and help them get their apples dried for winter and for the year, next year's apples was ripe yet. So your granges, that was some of your activities that followed along with grange activities.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: When would you meet? About once a month?

GEORGE BARDEN: Twice a month, first and third Saturdays, our grange did. That little book tells that the North Elk Run and Lawrence and some of these other granges, the nights of the week that they met.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Why didn't organizations like the Farmer's Union or the Farm Bureau catch on around here? Any idea?

GEORGE BARDEN: Didn't have any use for the Farmer's Union for one thing.
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What was wrong with that?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, you had a class of people come in there, and when you pay your man to the head of that 75 or 100,000 dollars a year and comes out, the fellow sweats his blood out out there on that flat in the boiling sun digging the dirt or digging, picking up potatoes or picking peaches, apples or what have you. And the principle of the thing, some of the things they done, if you didn't go along with them, why they'd burn your buildings or beat you up, and some of them, they killed people in them riots. And we had them come in here at the milk plant years ago.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: In the 20s or 30s or--

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, in the 30s. Yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And they wanted…their dues are pretty high, is that it? They wanted a lot of--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, yeah. You got to pay in if you belong to that and get the benefits of it, and you don't work if you're leader tells you not to. It's just like meeting you here. And all the unions we got today…now my son that works down to Lockhaven there, on that big dye plant that they put up there, 60 foot. I guess I told you about that, did I? Sixty foot tanks, forty-five feet in diameter.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well them fellows are all union men. You couldn't work there if you wasn't a union man. You see what happens now in any of these jobs. You go out there. If a, if a contractor takes on non-union labor, and the papers was just full of that just recently.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This is interesting. You mean Farmer's Union people came into the county in the 30s and intimidated people?

GEORGE BARDEN: Sure. They come down here, and we had to man a double-barreled shot gun. They'd walk 24 hours a day in the driveway down here, and they come down there, they was going to stop us taking our milk. I've got my old mob stick out here now that I had for that occasion.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: What did they want to do with the milk? They didn't want it to go to your--

GEORGE BARDEN: They'd dump it. They dumped lots of it, truckloads of it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: You were either going to join the union or you ain't going in here. And they told the truck drivers they wanted them to sign up, and some of them was fool enough to believe it, and they signed up in the union to pay in so much a hundred. Some of them owned a dairy themselves and delivering their own milk. Well they'd pick up a half a dozen neighbors and haul it in, get paid for hauling it and get a little extra pin money, you see. And these unions had just as well raise your fee. And one of them fellows was hauling all of our feed up here. I could tell you names, but I won't unless it's necessary. And they said to him what's your business, besides being a farmer and bringing milk in to the plant here. And he said, “Well, I haul feed for the Agway.” It was GLF then before it took over with the new name of Agway United.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Well, what did--

GEORGE BARDEN: And so he went then and told him, well, he said, “It's going to, I'm going to double my hauling fee on all the feed I haul.” And he was hauling it all then. That had to haul outside there if they picked it right up at the mill here, GLF Plant. And so they said, “Well, you needn't haul any feed then.” Well, all right. I wouldn't be surprised if they set the mill afire up here or dynamited it. We believed, the
farmer believed in cooperation, just like I spoke of somewhere's here. But when you get into this, you either sign up or we'll put some lead through your hide. Or you don't work, we'll smash up your equipment or burn your home or--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah. Did they talk in terms of a farm strike, of withholding milk from the market? Were they trying to push something like that across?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes. They wanted us to sign up with that. And then they would have said they had no plants to take care of the milk. We got plants. We bought these plants. We started out with 17 plants. They went into the pooling system in 1921. We had sold our milk. We had all of the members signed up in the old Dairymen's League Incorporated, 204 members down here.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: In the Mansfield-Richmond area?

GEORGE BARDEN: In this area, tributary to this big condensing and powder plant that was here. Well, all the dealers, like the Helvecia Milk Company in Wellsboro, now Borden's. I think Borden's bought them out a number of years ago, and they've operated there ever since. But they had what they called the…all of the big then, there was 11 milk concerns, like Sheffield Farms is one of the big ones. It had built a plant in the early days. And in the Dairymen's League, well, there was many of the others I can't name. I could name a lot if I want, but I won't because I'd have to go into about a dozen or 15 which I was familiar with. Smaller, not the big ones. But there was 11 considered the biggest. Well they would meet maybe once a month. They'd set the price of milk, what they'd pay you for that milk in Wellsboro for manufacturing in the tin cans down here into powder through the summer months when the flush season was on. If the condensory put tin cans like Galeton, that went into cases of tin can of instant evaporated milk. Troy, they had Nestles Food was in large-scale down the river here, and at Troy, they had a big condensory there. And all them big fellows met in New York, and they decided what they would pay for each one of these classifications of milk to the farmers in that area, depending on how many miles you were distant to get, ship your stuff in to the market for sale.

DR PAUL O'ROURKE: So this is the reason for your setting up cooperatives.

GEORGE BARDEN: So we believed in cooperation and not to strike ever. Have a milk check every month to meet income. Because in 1920, and I've got all that data in another box of files, I was secretary of our local branch. And New York office sent me a telegram and said your milk is not sold. Hold at all cost. That's all it said. Well I was green and young back then, and I went to our chairman of our co-op here, and we had what, we put one man in who was a live-wire, who was a business manager. And I went then and talked, and I wanted them to go down to the plant and see that nobody passed us and took their milk in because we wanted the dealers to sign up. Well we went to our dealer. I was one on the committee of, I think there was nine men of us, from Seeley Creek and Jobes Corner and Roseville, Mainsburg and Mansfield. That was the bunch of plants we bought. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You had received this message to--

GEORGE BARDEN: To hold our milk. So I went down to the condensory road. Well I stopped every ring…there was 200 men that belonged to their co-op, to the old Dairymen's League Incorporated. That was where the pool started, which is now the Dairy League and Dairymen's League Incorporated, Cooperative Incorporated. And then, now the Dairymen's League, Dairy League. And I went down to the road that went in down to the milk plant where the super-duper and the wholesale liquor house is there, and the cut-rate drug store and different, and shoe store and beauty parlor and everything's down there. And there was our powder plant and condensory. Well, no milk was going in. Just these four men came and went in, and one fellow came with his milk that we didn't get word to, but I called on the telephone pretty near all night to get word to all of them that the milk wasn't sold, to hold it, not to come with it. And this one member, he came and he said, "Did the dealers buy it?" And I said, "No, hold her." And he said, "I'll turn right around and go home and dump it in the manure pile. I ain't got a calf or hog or anything to feed it to, and I'm not going to monkey to make butter and try to sell it, because I haven't any equipment to make butter." Neither did anybody else. They passed out of state. We'd had a place to sell it for a number of
years, and all your old stuff had gone with decay with old age I guess. Well anyhow, the other three took theirs to Mainsburg. They made butter over there, the dealer did. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was this unusual, that you would…that they would hold it back?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, to the farmers, yes. We had never had a strike before. We--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: When was that?

GEORGE BARDEN: 1919. That was the first one we had ever had. I'd mailed all letters and don't find that in my files now. And then we had another strike later. We gave the boys in Wellsboro, because Helvecia people were a big, powerful concern, and they had plants in the west, too. But they come in and built that big condensory there, which is Borden's plant now, and we gave those boys 200 dollars. We paid a dollar a year dues into our little co-op, and lots of other locals didn't. Some didn't have any setup like we had charge any dues. But we did that so we could rent a place to hold our monthly meetings and have that money for telephone calls and for postage for letters and that stuff. And so we gave the producers there of the Helvecia plant around Wellsboro 200 dollars out of our treasure as a gift to help them get some cheese equipment to put up in old barn down by the railroad station.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This was another co-op?

GEORGE BARDEN: They had, old Dairyman's League Incorporated, they belonged and we sold our milk to these dealers, and that was figured out state colleges, like Cornell in Pennsylvania, figured out what was the cost, actual cost of producing 100 pounds of milk. Then--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You were just saying about the threat of the Helvecian, what is this? The Helvecian--

GEORGE BARDEN: Helvecian Milk Company.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Helvecian Milk Company. A private milk company.

GEORGE BARDEN: Private. They were a large company. They had plants in the west, too. Here they made all that milk around Wellsboro. For a bit they took all of it whether it belonged to the…there was the Cooperative Incorporated.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: Or whether you was an outsider, an individual. Then they said we won't take any of the fellows that sign up in this Dairymen's League setup.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: When was this? About when did they say that?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, that was in 1919 or else 1920, the second strike of all the dealers. Now they was all the dealers in our milk shed, the 11 big ones understand. Jobes Corners, there was a [indecipherable] plant, no railroad there. This is, this was on the railroad, Seeley Creek. That's down this side of Elmira. And Cray Valley's inland. Jobes Corner's inland. Jackson Summit was on the railroad. [indecipherable] run a plant up there. Now these are the amounts of money. Seeley Creek, $35,450 they threwed in the hat to buy their plant and help buy the others. Jackson Summit, patrons up there that belonged to Dairymen's League, and finally he shut them out and wouldn't take any more Dairymen's League milk. And he went into bankruptcy, and we took those plants over for what he owed us for milk. And there's what the men up there threwed in the hat.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: $15,250 for Jackson.

GEORGE BARDEN: --250 dollars. That was just a small--
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And this is all in 1920.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And so this is really the year you were setting up the Dairymen's League, is that right?

GEORGE BARDEN: That's right, that's right. The pool this was called. I'll show you that in a minute.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And all these are the figures that--

GEORGE BARDEN: Each community.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: --cost the community.

GEORGE BARDEN: And Jackson Center, that was a little inland place off rail. There was 7,200 them boys put in. Here's Roseville, a little village over here, $12,862.94. Now where that 94 cents come, some men said well George, I haven't got a thing to sign up, only my milk checks because the Mansfield Dairy Company went into bankruptcy notice for three months milk. None of us got any cent for it. So I'll sign up my August check, we'll say. So that figured up maybe there's 94 cents on the end of a milk check where you got that. Otherwise you wouldn't have any cents on these. Mainsburg, that's inland over here four miles east from Mansfield. There was 13,450 there. Here's Mansfield, 55,895.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: That was collected from how many farmers, that 55,000?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, we had 404 patrons of that plant, and we finally signed...we set a date for the president of the company and went and told him. I was on that committee, too. I was one of the men that was appointed by the locals. And we'd give him his choice of taking them four men's milk or taking 200 men's milk. Well boys, he says, you have got me. You fellows have got the milk and I've got the plants, and the plants are no good to me without the milk.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So in other words, you forced him to sell out, was that it?

GEORGE BARDEN: Sign up. I'm coming up to that on the next page.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: [indecipherable] was inland. There was 3000...there's a total of $174,107, and there's that 94 cents down here, see.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now that's--

GEORGE BARDEN: That's the total, $174,107.94 of all of that territory. Now--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now, could I ask you why was all this done in 1920? Because there had been a collapse--

GEORGE BARDEN: That was the second strike in 1919. They struck and closed the plants, and we didn't have a darn thing to do with it, to feed the hogs and calves or throw it out in the ditch and let it run away. Then they signed up.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So apparently dairy prices were going way down then. This must have been the basic reason behind this.

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, yeah. Farmers sold out. They didn't know what to do when dealers wouldn't buy
the milk and told them they never would sign up again to take the milk, but they did because they had hundreds of thousands of dollars.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So in 1919, you were able to get them to bring the prices up by a short strike.

GEORGE BARDEN: That strike came on, and they didn't--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was that a strike just for Mansfield or all over, all over Tioga County?

GEORGE BARDEN: Oh, no. That reached over a lot of New York State. That was all...there was league members. There was 55,000 members.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, that was no small thing. And now, they were not union. They were cooperative. We didn't want the strike. We wanted to sell our milk. We went and begged them to take it, and they wouldn't take it until they got ready to take it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. But now in 1920, you apparently decided that strikes wouldn't--

GEORGE BARDEN: Something has got to be done. We didn't want to never see another strike because some men it ruined. Sheriff sold them out, bankruptcy took them, and one thing or another.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So, and the only answer then was a cooperative.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well here was the regular meeting. Let's come on down here. To this date 151,000 plus has been turned in to the head organization of the Dairymen's League. Now I went with our director to the railroad station and sent a telegram through the New York office.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This is November of 1920.

GEORGE BARDEN: November 13, 1920. That's following this, see.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: That was October 14th, and First National Bank turned in to head league to this date 151,000 plus. You see, we had that much signed up, and some of that was in milk checks that they hadn't got. And when they got the dealers to pay, if they did get on their feet, they had to pay up again in order to get the milk. Then the difference between that figure, which we had the money right down here in our bank, and I went to the railroad station with our director, and that's the figure that's here in the minutes. To this date 151,000 plus has been turned in to the head organization Dairymen's League. And we wired through that we had that money ready to go out and do business.

Now, on this committee, we went to see the president of the company, and I spoke about once there that there was nine of us, I think, altogether from the different plants that went, was appointed by our local setup, group, organization. And we told him that we knew that we couldn't raise what he wanted from the plant, what our purpose was there. Well here's December 10th, 1920. Special meeting, see. John, he was our director, gave a report on the transfer of Mansfield Dairy Company plants. These plants are to be purchased for 225,000. Now, he said...why, when we told him that we was either going to build or buy plants can't carry the members. We didn't never want to see another strike because it froze a lot of men out that lost their shirt and all they had to pick and shovel or something, anything you get to do, give up the farm. They had to. He said, “Them plants are worth a half a million dollars.” He said, “Why Nestles Food has offered me 275,000 for them three different times,” and he said, “You fellows couldn't buy them, pay for them.” He said, “If you bought them, you could never pay for them.” Well, so I had a lot of mouth like I have now for a young fellow, and I said, “Well, we realize that, that we couldn't raise that money to pay down 275,000, which you said you would take. How much would you want for a down
payment, and how long would you give us to pay for it?” Well he finally said if we could raise 37,500 to pay down, that he would give us five years to pay for the plants. Well I thought 37,500 to pay down...so as I said, I was...we was running a thrashing machine that year, and I would clean up and take this W.W. Allen here, our banker with Seeley Creek or Jobes Corners, we took in 11,000 one night in Jobes Corners there. He'd say Tom, Harry, John, come up here and sign up. Put 1,000 in there. Put 500 in there.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Who was he saying...these were farmers?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes, the farmers that was patrons of Seeley Creek and Jobes Corners plants. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But were these plants still privately owned?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes, the Mansfield Dairy Company owned them, and this Warren Rose was President, Mansfield Dairy Company, and the rest of the board of directors and money men in it was down in New York City and he was out here, yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: And we had this big plant down there, 400,000 dollar plant, which we bought on top of this debt on our shoulders.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So this is...this Warren Rose was saying he wants 275,000 and 35,000 down or so.

GEORGE BARDEN: Nestle offered him 275,000 three different times. He said it was worth a half a million. Well then he said you fellows wouldn't know anything about milk plant equipment anyhow. I said, “We'll admit that, too. But I said we're going to have a board of appraisers come in and appraise these plants and we'll know.” And so we went out to work. As I said, I'd go and take this Will Allen here, cashier and big man in their bank at that time, and we'd work maybe, stay to a meeting and sign up money, men and money, and might be midnight when I got home some these meetings. Get up at 4:30 the next morning, get my dairy milk and chores done, go and thrash all day. Well you can see some of what some of us fellows were going through.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right, right.

GEORGE BARDEN: How I had stamina enough to ever go through what I went through--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You'd get home at 4:30 in the morning.

GEORGE BARDEN: Get up at 4:30 every morning.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Get up at 4:30.

GEORGE BARDEN: Milk our cows and get our breakfast.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: You'd be home at night from these meetings at what time?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, might be around, sometimes some of the long distance ones out and some of the long-winded ones you'd set there and argue. Maybe somebody would say well you know it's 10 minutes to 12 o'clock. It's time we closed up and got home. Midnight.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: But anyway, we went out to see what we could do and signed up money. And I know I'd post some of my neighbors that was close to home here because I could get more close to home than I could by driving out eight, ten miles. So I got other fellows to go out some of those areas and work. And
some of them I pulled out of bed, woke them up and told that I had something very urgent, I wanted them to get up and listen to me for a few minutes and told them what we were doing. Well, the man would say I'll give you 200 or I'll put in 300 or I'll put in 500 or 1,000 or I'll sign one months milk check out of the three that I've got coming. And so we got 37,500 in two weeks as initial payment was what we had to have when we reported back to him whether we was going to do it or not.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see. But you already had this 170,000 or so in the bank.

GEORGE BARDEN: We had that, we had that amount I just showed you there in the bank, 151,000 plus. So we was hitting for this…we had the appraisers come in. They appraised it for 225,000, and he said, “How much money you got?” President of the company did this one enrollment. And I was the guy some of them, our president even of our local branch, he pushed me. He said, “Well George, you're young and pretty keen,” he said, “you do the talking and we're right behind you, the rest of the committee.” So I done a lot of the shooting off the wind myself. And I said to him, “Well, we've got the initial payment.” And he said, “How much?” And I said, “That don't enter into it. You said if we could raise 37,500 pay down, you'd sell us the plant. And we're going to buy it at our appraised value or we're going to build plants because we've got the money to do it.”

Well, I said again, like they did the time they had the strike and we went in and wanted the four men to sign up that was out and bragging that they got sent 100 more and that he paid them four, sent 100 more than we got that belonged to the old Dairymen’s League Incorporated. So he said again, “Well you fellows have got all the men signed up now, and you got the milk, and all we got's the plants, and the plants are no good to us without all that milk.” So I told him that the appraiser, the board of appraisers, who milk men from New York City and different places where they really was in the big way, appraised them plants for 225,000. “Well my God,” he said, “that's only junk prices for the equipment in there.” I said, “All right, all they are is junk, if you don't have any milk to put in them.” So he sold us the plants and we paid 35,700 to pay down towards that 225,000, and we issued certificates in 25 dollar amounts, and we sold…issued them for these men with the amounts that each individual, and I've got all that list somewhere's, either in my files or here. What each man put in. Well if you put in 200, then you'd get eight 25 dollar certificates, wouldn't you?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well then as they paid them off, they might spin the wheel and draw two of your numbers, certificate numbers. So you'd get 50 dollars of it paid off, two certificate numbers. All right. Now you get a hundred dollars worth of it paid off that time. And so we paid them off in that way until all…in five years, every dollar of that was paid back with six percent interest of that 225,000 that we bought every man and his money back in five years.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: He got all this money that he advanced back.

GEORGE BARDEN: Every bit of it. We paid it all off. And we bought that 400-410,000 we give for that marketing station down in Jersey City right across from an area in New York. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So this is December of 1920 that you finally bought, I noticed that that was the entry there.

GEORGE BARDEN: That date there was when we sent the telegram returning that money.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So you were one of the organizers then, in this.

GEORGE BARDEN: When I went to the mill and grinders, and don't think I didn't…these are my minute books and all these other old books here. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah. You got three books here. These are the minutes of the local Mansfield Chapter or the countywide--
GEORGE BARDEN: Just our Mansfield branch. Well, in this, one of these others, there's 1917. I had something more I was going to show you. Here's where you paid in. If you signed up 12 cows, a cow was an amount, you paid three dollars. Here's the annual dues. Each member paid in a dollar a year annual dues. I told you about us giving 200 dollars out of that to the Wellsboro boys, producers there, when the Helvecian Milk Company refused to take their milk and they had the strike there. We gave them that, to help equip their little, that barn for a cheese operation.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This was 1919?

GEORGE BARDEN: 'Till the strike was over.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now you say this is 1917 here.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, that's where these names begun, and it was written in as they signed up.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now what were you setting up in 1917? You bought the--

GEORGE BARDEN: These were the members that signed up the cows they had, whether they had the two cows, there's five cows, ten cows, there's two dollars and a half, see, 25 cents a cow.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, what were they getting for that then in 1917?

GEORGE BARDEN: That gave you membership into the organization. You had a certificate to show that you was a member of that co-op.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, so as, were you, but you had nothing concrete yet. You didn't own any place yet.

GEORGE BARDEN: In '17 we didn't. We still was selling the old Dairyman's League Incorporated and fighting the dealer to take our milk. If he didn't want to take it, we closed his doors and you keep it until I get ready to take it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Well what did that do?

GEORGE BARDEN: We didn't want it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah, what did that dues go to then, that went to--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, that paid the expenses of your board of directors, into New York City monthly meeting and hotel expense and car mileage they got. No salary of any size. Not a five dollar bill or a one dollar bill. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see. When was that set up? When was that set up, that league in this area? Was 1917 the first year?

GEORGE BARDEN: 1917, February 1917 I signed up down here in the high school. A man came in, an organizer from up in New England States or in New York, northern New York. Can't remember which now. And we spent an evening down there and signed up a lot of--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was it hard to organize people around here?

GEORGE BARDEN: When you didn't have any market for your milk, you was like a hungry tramp. Something's got to be done quick. So if you saw a chance to have a little something of your own and get it paid for and have a market 365 days in a year, you went along with it.
DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Well it was not too hard to sell then.

GEORGE BARDEN: No.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Not really.

GEORGE BARDEN: If you was a good salesman. It was 1918, see.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah. What had happened to bring milk prices down so low in these years?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, surplus milk. Everybody, every farm through the country had a dairy practically.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was it the war or something that had something to do with it or--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, every dealer, now this, I told you a while ago there when the war was on I produced all I could. Put on, kept a few more cows, and everyone did. Some put on 10 more cows, some five more cows. Said the boys over there got to be fed. The dealer didn't want any more milk. When the war closed, they thought they was going to have to feed Belgium, France and Germany even or enemies there for years to come. That was common talk.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: But they, Germany was a very progressive people, and they got back on their feet, and in about two years they was almost 100 percent back in production again of stuff, foodstuffs.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So by 1919, with all this milk production you had, you were, you were faced with a catastrophe then.

GEORGE BARDEN: We had surplus milk and dealers didn't want it. They said their warehouse was full of powdered milk and cheese and butter and stuff. Can't move it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah.

GEORGE BARDEN: We sent from down here five carloads of powdered milk over to Germany from this, our Mansfield plant and went the great long bill of lading there about two feet long. Went to New York City by rail from here in the Erie, to Elmira, Corning and the New York Central and to New York City and then by certain dock there and then by certain boat to a certain place in Germany. It was the darndest bill of lading you ever saw made up. And they shipped five carloads out of here. Now to show you something more, I want you to just glance at this. I'll get around, will that work if I step around this side?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Sure.

GEORGE BARDEN: Now if you'll notice, this is the first day, September 23, 1920, Dairy's League Co-op Association. This was where we signed up for members for the pooling system before Dairy League was organized, way back, you see, in 1920. All right. These are the names that I've signed up just as fast as I could sign them. After we had the meeting and we had a lawyer there, we had our director there and the big grange hall was packed, standing room, no seats, clear back to the doors and down the stairs clear out onto the street. Farmers come from all over creation there to this meeting, to hear this lawyer and our men from the New York office talk.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: September 23, 1920. This was this meeting.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, and Bradley Fuller, our attorney, he said, somebody asked a question, how much are you going to pay us for this milk. He said, “We won't promise you one cent a hundred. We're going into this blindfolded, and we're not going to take the abuse from the dealers any longer. We want a
co-op, but we're going to have a market for milk 365 days in the year with a milk check every month. And that's our aim, and that's the only thing we can tell you we're doing today. It's on new men's hands what you want to do.” So these are the men's names that I signed up that day. These are the number of cows that they had. Here is the witness that signed the contract, every one of them. See those names there?

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. Yeah, George Barden.

GEORGE BARDEN: Here's a few that was brought in by other fellows. These are the places where they'd been delivering their milk. Covington, they delivered them cheese. Covington had a big Swiss cheese operation up at Covington. This was Mansfield and there was Roseville, that little land over there. Here's Lawrence Corners, Group, he belonged to, Carp Colby, he belonged to a little organization, Dairymen's League over there. Well here's these others, Well I signed 25 men there just as fast as I could write them. Well it was time in the afternoon when they had to break to go home, but I mailed these contracts September 29, nine days later, 25 of them to New York City. September 23, 1920 was the date that that 25 men signed. And the witness that signed all of them...here's my name and so on down. Every one of them I signed up. I went out nights and rainy days and any time I'd meet them on the streets or anywhere I could sign up a man, I signed him up. And we go on here. And here's your, and the man that signed them up again is over here. And here's his cows and here's--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right. This is your name on here. So you must have signed up--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well this is what brought me my job at the Dairymen's League. When they found out the work that I'd done, then they wanted me to go to work on the road. And that's how I come to become a tramp after we bought the plant.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, I see. Well you must have signed...oh, my goodness. You must have signed up at least...this just goes on here. What, about 200 men would you say? Maybe more than that.

GEORGE BARDEN: Here's your number over here. There's 197. Here's 200.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Right, and it goes on. More than that perhaps.

GEORGE BARDEN: In every bunch of them that I sent in is down, the number that I sent in and the date.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Well, you got, you got a total of about 250 I suppose here altogether.

GEORGE BARDEN: Now some of these fellows, there's two on here, Henry Nelk and Charles Hogendorf, and they sent their note to Helvecian people to Wellsboro, and I said, “Now wait a minute before I sign you up.” That was the day down at the Grange. I said, “Wait just a minute, gentlemen.” They came together and they were going home together because they said we've got to get home to milk. The meeting broke up. And I said, “The Helvecian people won't accept your milk. What are you fellows going to do with your milk, continue to dump it?” “No, sir,” he says. “You fellows buy them plants, we'll haul our milk to Mansfield here to put it in with the rest of you.”

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Was there any opposition from banks to what you were doing?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yes. Terrible in some places. Troy fought us like the dickens. The old [indecipherable] over there with their big banker and the big man, big farm.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: He just though, what did he think this was, socialistic?

GEORGE BARDEN: He said the farmers won't to stick together, they can't stick together. It never happened, it never will. Businesses bid. Our bank down here was with us, united.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Is that right?
GEORGE BARDEN: Yes.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Who was running the bank then, Ross? Was the Ross family it?

GEORGE BARDEN: No. That was turned over into the First National Bank of Mansfield. Now let's not forget that before you go.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: We'll go into that. Let me ask you about the--

GEORGE BARDEN: This other stuff, you ask me all the questions you want to now, and I'll try and answer.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So then you became an organizer after this, and you traveled around New York and you still--

GEORGE BARDEN: Pennsylvania.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh, and you still kept your land here.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, and I kept a hired man, hired help.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: And how long did you do that?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well I was gone 10 years, then I came back and I…they wanted me to run for supervisor, which I did. And then I had the township roads, and I was elected chairman the first year that we went in to a meeting. We had a fellow that had been in there, had been secretary…what is it, commerce. And he had been a big shot in politics.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Who, Wilson?

GEORGE BARDEN: No. William V. Wilson of Blossburg, he was too. But Phil Dewey was the fellow down at Gains.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Oh.

GEORGE BARDEN: Thirty miles from here. And my Lord, I got practically every vote, and I almost fainted away. And that's no joke because I thought good heavens, ain't a man here today that could lick Phil Dewey. He's been a popular man in politics down Harrisburg for years now.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: That was 1930 there then. Let me ask you, let me ask you this, now since the farmers were producing too much milk--

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, right. There was no control over it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: --the cooperative couldn't have…oh, the cooperative tried, in addition to marketing it for you at a lower price, it also tried to limit each farmer. Was that right?

GEORGE BARDEN: Well, we talked that, but there was no way to do that because man said I've got a mortgage on my back and I've got a family to feed and I've got to pay off that mortgage or lose it. And--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But there was some sentiment around here--

GEORGE BARDEN: I just can't hold out a portion of my milk, but the only way you can get the dealer to take it was to put it in his warehouse if he didn't have an out, and he didn't like to do that, store that and have to pay the farmer for it, see. I know a lot of those things entered in to the situation, what led us up to
have plants of our own.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: I see.

GEORGE BARDEN: You sell the fluid and adjust to it now…what they used to do, they'd sell a distributor down in New York some 100 cans of milk a day. We'd ship out of here two carloads and a half with them 44 cans of milk a day from New York. And then you had to do something else. Maybe you'd separate a certain percentage of your milk into cream and ship your cream, put your skim milk into powder so the powder milk we had here. And we bought the skim milk from Seeley Creek in here. At one time it held…skim milk was shipped cream from Addison plant, Addison, New York. And they brought the skim milk in here and made it into powdered milk. Did it from Towanda, Bradford County. Same as that milk we brought in here.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: This is interesting you were so successful because I just read today there was a bank in Mansfield set up by the grange.

GEORGE BARDEN: We had First National, that's right. We had a First National Bank here, and poor business...board of directors...a bunch of Jews come in here. They was going to corner the market on clothing and pork I guess it was, two outfits. And the bank made a tremendous loans way down to the danger point. And then these fellows, like Jews always did in the milk business, they'd come in and operate and buy your milk three months and promise each month the next month we'll be able to pay you fellows off, if you'll have a little patience with us. Next about 90 days, they got three months milk, so they'd fold up into bankruptcy and close up the plant and go back to New York. And then another new one would come out, and he'd buy your milk for a month or six months or a few months.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But this was this Grange Bank that had--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well this Grange Bank, that folded up.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: For that reason?

GEORGE BARDEN: No. Poor management was what done it.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Just poor--

GEORGE BARDEN: Since they loaned to them Jews, and the Jews went into bankruptcy and the clothing business and other businesses.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So I can see why that fellow at Troy didn't, was sort of skeptical that this would work because--

GEORGE BARDEN: Well when this bank closed, Dairymen's League Incorporated, the old Dairymen's League even wasn't thought of. My folks had their money in there. It was the Grange Bank and they thought it was a good, sound lot, and they was as far as that was concerned. But the men, the main cashier, he went to the board of directors and talked with them and they finally said let them have it. We're here for new business and if they want that amount of money, why we'll take care of them. If we didn't, the other bank they thought would. And when you got two banks, they don't like to lose a big deal.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Now let me ask you about this check you have here. It's pay to the order of Dr. John Barden, 38 dollars.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, he's my father's brother. And this lady--

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: 1898 was the year.

GEORGE BARDEN: Now this lady here was one of the, or the owner, or one of the owners. Her and her
brother, Morris State Farm's right down here this side of the dairy mart. The big barn sits right across from the Gulf Station up on the bank there. I helped build that barn for a contractor after I left the milk business. And that big, heavy wall that's right down there along that, right across from the gas station, you drive along the road there. I took my township crew men, they come out here, the borough council, they want me to go and lay that wall there. And I wanted to lay it with cement mortar, but the borough thought they was too poor, so I put it up dry. And those are the big stone out of the old river bridge before they put the concrete across when this road was built.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: So this was signed, the check was signed K. Myra Swan.

GEORGE BARDEN: She only had…she was a grandmother to the Babe Thompson that built this…he built the Atlantic Gas Station over on Main Street, and he had another Atlantic Station down where the other bank is. Well that's the post office building down there and Bell Telephone Office. And my brother built that Bell Telephone Office down there by the bank entrance by the railroad crossing.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: The Mason.

GEORGE BARDEN: On Main Street, yeah. And this woman here evidently owed Dr. John medical in that amount. Well in overhauling the house there, down here on the farm, they found this in a partition. Well Babe Thompson, I always called him, C.M. Thompson, C. Morris Thompson is his name, and his wife is still alive. She found, or got this. They found there were several of them, but she distributed them around, I guess, to some of the people she thought might be interested in pioneers of the town, and knowing Dr. John M. Barden, so she gave this check to me. Well I was tickled to death to get it, and I said well, I'll put that with my antiques. That's quite an antique looking date.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah, 1898. Right. Is that 1898? Yeah, 1898.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, the year of the Spanish-American War.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: Yeah, right. Let me ask you a quick question. You were supervisor of WPA roads projects during the 30s.

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: People used to say WPA stood for We Poke Along. Was that true around here, or did the men put in a hard day’s work?

GEORGE BARDEN: Every man that come to work to me that wasn't an old man and crippled I told them I've got just one policy. I said I never ask a man to do a bigger day's work than I could do myself, and that was my motto all of my working life, and I don't care who he was.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: It wasn't, you weren't, now you're a republican, and you were, that didn't stop them from putting you on, though. Apparently you didn't, politics wasn't important to you getting on.

GEORGE BARDEN: Well I must have had something they wanted. I don't know what else.

DR. PAUL O'ROURKE: But around this county it wasn't controlled by the democrats too much, was it?

GEORGE BARDEN: Yeah, pretty much.

MUSIC

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: That concludes the two-part interview with George C. Barden. These interviews are not copyrighted, and we encourage your use of them in your own historical research.