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MORRIS ADAIR  
SEPTEMBER 7, 1978  
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During the summer of 1978 while on a photograph hunting expedition at "Dales" Barber Shop in the city of Sherwood, Dale Smith, the barber, told me about many of the "old-timers" that come into his shop to reminisce and get their haircut. Indeed, during my morning stay, a number of long-time residents dropped in to do just that.

Dale told me of a 92 year old man by the name of Mr. Morris Adair, who worked many years in the Sherwood City bank. Unfortunately, Mr. Adair had had an unfortunate fall and had broken his hip. He was now living in the Chehalis Care Center, a senior citizen home. Although his bones might have been broken, his spirit had not. On September 7, 1978 we conducted what I thought to be an intriguing oral history.

Born in Astoria on January 3, 1886, it goes without saying that he has seen tremendous change in the world around him. During the recording session he recalls the atmosphere and the attitudes of the country and its people during the Spanish-American War of 1898-1899. He even sings a popular ditty of the day about the war.

Mr. Adair spent most of his working career in a bank or examining banks for the state government. Many of the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the economic slumps of the immediate post-World War years, he sees through the eyes of a businessman and financier. Therefore, the tape gives a unique perspective on the important events of the city of Sherwood and the nation as a whole.

INTERVIEW WITH: Morris Adair at the Chehalam (sp?) Care Center, Newberg, Oregon  
DATED : September 7, 1978  
CONDUCTED BY :

Good afternoon, Mr. Adair. To begin, why don't you just go ahead and introduce yourself.

Well, I'm one generation removed from being a '49er. My father arrived at Astoria by sea with his family, and they arrived in Astoria on April 3, 1849, and he had gotten a job - he had been appointed by the President - what was the President's name - Polk, as first \_\_\_\_\_ on the Pacific Coast. Of course, there was nothing at Astoria at that time; I think there were three houses and five men. All the rest of the men had gone to the gold mine in California. The first vessel to enter the Columbia River - the first vessel that was legally entered on any port on the Pacific Coast was the Doladora. A bridge ... of a vessel that its foremasts, forward masts are schooner rigged and the aftermast is a \_\_\_\_\_ sails. I'm getting all too far ahead.

This ship came into the port?

Yeah. There was another vessel entered in San Francisco until the fall of 1849 so the work that was established in Astoria was the first port on the Pacific Coast that was legally entered.

So your family settled there, then?

Yes, and I was born and raised in Astoria.

What year were you born?

I was born on January 3, 1886. Incidentally, I'm seven days older than Fred Meyer. I didn't go to school until I was 14 years old, brought up on a dairy ranch on Young's Bay west of Astoria. There were eventually two, three boys and two girls in the family. Father had the first cream

separator in Oregon. In 1899, we disposed of the animals and equipment on the place and went into Astoria to go to school. Up to that time I was ... mother was \_\_\_\_\_ so she could get ahold of me. And ..

What were those years like; do you remember much from your very early years. Do you remember much of your very early years from 1886 to 1900. Do you remember much going on, that much of the political events at that time or ...

Yes, I remember the Spanish American war. My father had a job working for the government at that time building the first jetty in the Columbia River. That was in 1889. And he worked for the Corps of U.S. Engineers off and on from '89 until oh, 1905 - 06. And my first pay check job was working for the U.S. Engineers as reading a tide gauge that was on a pile at the wreck of the Sylvia Deglass (sp?) - now that's where it entered the Columbia River in about 19--, 1800 and, well, just about the same time my father came. \_\_\_\_\_, they just found it, it was on a reef, there was a reef there and the Corps of Engineers was removing this reef and they were surveying at the same time - sounding what the depth was and how far, the progress they were making in removing this reef they had discovered. I worked two summers there; then the summer of 1904, I got a job working for the Astoria and Timber Railroad as a carpenter's helper and eventually spent a good deal of time digging in a tunnel, right under where the Clatsop (?) Crest is - you ever been to the little park between, well Gobal (?) and Astoria?

How about the Spanish American war; do you remember news headlines and things like that - people talking of that?

Oh, yeah, yeah.

What were the emotions at the time of people living in your area?

Well, they had one song as I remember - A Mother's Gift to Her Country's Call Was a Story Yet Untold. She Had Three Sons, the Only Ones, Each Worth

His Weight in Gold. As They Went Away, She Was Heard to Say "They Will Never Return Again" - and the idea was one of those boys had \_\_\_\_\_ fought against the United States. And the, say, question came up and this song was to show that the whole thing had been united and no ill feeling between the northerners and the southerners, and I remember that.

That was sung during the Spanish American war too - this was sung during the Spanish American war or was this referring to the Civil War?

It was the Spanish American war - the Spanish American war they were all American, but it was to show there was no ill feeling between the southerners and the northerners. At the time of the Spanish American war we were all against Spain and they counted the country had been united and there was no ill feeling about the blacks.

So the war was felt to be a righteous war, then, the war itself against Spain?

Yes, it was claimed that Spain had sunk the battle ship Maine and it sunked and sunked and that was never proven and their byword then was "Remember The Maine." Everything was "Remember The Maine," and to show there was no ill feeling, well the negroes were kept separate. My brother graduated from West Point in 1904 and he went into the 10th Cavalry and he the next four or five years went at war with anybody after the Spanish American - we weren't at war with anybody, but the negroes were kept separate, just didn't mingle. And my brother went into the 10th Cavalry in 1904, he went into a negro regiment where the negroes weren't allowed to become officers. The negroes, they had a negro regiment - the 10th Regiment - the 10th Cavalry was for the negroes and they were all negroes and they couldn't possibly according to the law become an officer over white man. And the next four or five years no war and then in 1916, why communication was still terrible. They - my brother in this 10th Cavalry and Aranza (sp?), a Spaniard, was

coming over into our country and robbing and killing Americans and that's when Pershing was sent down into Mexico in 1916 and my brother went along with him with his negro regiment; there were several regiments went in and my brother went in and I had a letter from him - I don't know how he got it out, but I finally got a letter from him. He couldn't say much he said because everything was censored that came out and that was in June of 1916. And one night the Oregonian called me up about midnight and asked me if I'd heard anything about my brother and I said, "No, I hadn't heard a word for a week or ten days." Well, he said, "There's a rumor out that he was killed." And I said, "How true is it, that rumor." Well, he said it's saying that he was killed at the Battle of Karazel (sp?). It was he and his company were ordered not to go any further into Mexico and my brother wasn't in command, he was a Second Lieutenant - he was still Second Lieutenant there for oh, seven or eight years. And the Oregonian said that they had some pretty good authority that he had been killed and the word did come but that there had been a battle; the Mexicans had ordered them not to take another step forward and the Captain who was in command he said he wasn't going to let them trying to tell him what to do and they said they were going ahead and so they were fired on. And the Captain, they killed him right away.

The United States adventure into Mexico ended fairly inconclusively for the United States, did it not? Weren't they after some marauder or raider? I've forgotten his name right off myself.

Yeah. Wild man. I tell you they were raising Cain ...

Border towns, and things like that?

I guess they were robbing and killing. I think they were doing mostly robbing, but they were robbing Americans, and on June 16th my brother was ..

I heard he lived for a few minutes so he was taking - he ran out of ammunition - he was taking ammunition from the dead soldiers for his use - kept it going there for quite awhile and they finally got it with a fatal shot.

I'd like to change subjects at this point. Coming back here to this particular area, when did you come to Sherwood, when did you move to Sherwood and why did you move to Sherwood?

Well, I'd - I was - in 19-- , right after World War.

World War I, around 1918, maybe?

Well, I was so far behind when I did start school in Astoria that I was ... didn't go to college, I'd be too old, so in 1900; the Lewis and Clark Fair came in 1905 and I got a job as messenger in a bank in Portland in 1905, that was the year of the Lewis and Clark Fair and I worked in a Portland bank until 19-- , well it was after the war was over, 19-- 1918 - 1919?

Well, the San Francisco fire was in 1906 and at that time I was still working in the bank in Portland, and I worked in the bank in Portland until 19-- .

It was after World War I, you say.

It was after World War I.

And then you went to Sherwood at that time?

Now, I got a job, went to work for the State of Oregon in the banking department in 19-- , I think it was about 1920. I got a job working in the State Banking Department and stayed with the State Banking Department. Well, conditions got pretty bad. I know a lot - after the war the banks were going broke and as I remember there was a pretty tough time there. I stayed with the Banking Department until - off and on - until I went to Sherwood in 1933, I went to Sherwood, gave up the State banking job

and went into this bank that - it was a branch of a group of banks it was headquarters at Hillsboro and I stayed with this bank. It changed its ownership and I finally left the bank. I was too old to get under the pension law - the rules of the U.S. National. I left the U.S. National - really had to, but at that time they couldn't put me under pension or anything, I was too old.

Well, in 1933 you arrived in Sherwood - that was right in the middle of the depression. That must have been a tough time for banks.

Yes, it was tough. The original bank had been closed. The original one, that was established in about 1906; it was established during the rush, good times, followed the World's Fair - Lewis and Clark Fair. So 19-- , my connections with any bank was severed in 1955.

You're reading that off your watch there - is that what they gave you when you retired?

Yeah, that wasn't much pension, but \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ . They got to give you that. Yeah, well at least your watch still operates, then. You're still wearing it; that's one advantage.

It gives the date - 1955 - that's when I gave up the bank.

Very nice.

And I was on the Council of the City of Sherwood about 19-- , oh, I'd say about 1936 until 19-- , oh...

An approximate date would be fine. 1957 or so?

Yeah, about that.

I asked the question about when you first began in the bank at Sherwood. When this original bank closed, did all the people in the Sherwood area lose their money then?

Well, this was before - the bank was closed there before I had anything to do with it. This Bank of Sherwood - that was the name of it - was private



local people and there weren't any banking laws in Oregon for the state - they didn't have any banking laws until 1907 after they found out they had to have some laws - just worked under an ordinary corporation, partnership. There wasn't a state bank in Oregon - no such thing - the real estate office would take deposits and there was nothing backing them at all except just a corporation. Back in 1906, that's when a lot of money was lost in Oregon because any little real estate or any little business was taking deposits and using the money. So there was no banking laws until 1907 in Oregon.

How about when you first arrived in Sherwood, then. Now was there much ... did people keep how much money to put in banks at all, or people borrowing money from the banks at that time?

One of the first things (end of side 1 of tape)

One of the first things that he did when he was inaugurated - and that was in March, you know, March 4th was the inauguration day and that was set years and years ago. His predecessor, oh...

Hoover

Hoover held on until March 4 and on March 5, I think it was that day or March 6th, somewhere along in there, FDR froze every bank in the United States, no matter how big they were, they were closed, every bank, and no bank was opened until they were examined so the whole country was at a standstill when FDR took over.

You were out at Sherwood at this time?

Yeah, I was in Sherwood at that time.

And this \_\_\_\_\_ kept the banks from collapsing, then?

I was in this bank, well country-owned bank and we closed the bank and we were closed, I guess, they had to call all their examiners in the country were examining banks. And \_\_\_\_\_ been in the banking business for a long

time; been a bank examiner for a good many years, why I ...

All right.

The State Banking Department took me in as an examiner.

All right, you can continue with your story then.

The Banking Department was required to examine the banks that were going to be open.

They examined the Sherwood Bank then now?

Yes, and they wanted - they had to get more men so I got on as an examiner for the state and I've been an examiner for them seven or eight years before and I was examining these banks for FDR's New Deal.

When you were examining them, what were you looking for?

Well, just to see if they had assets that were good - some assets were just valueless, you know.

Did you examine the banks around Washington County then - Hillsboro, Sherwood?

Well, I -- after things moved over why there was a branch -- you weren't allowed to have branches at all you know; a branch wasn't permitted after way late. After all the bad times, branches weren't permitted.

Each had to be a central bank, then?

Yeah, and I forget when the branches were permitted. I was working for the State Banking Department long before the branches were ... Oh yes, after the branches...

How about this Sherwood Bank, then, did it have enough assets to keep open?

Well, they were opened later on.

What was the function of the bank, more or less at this time - to provide loans for people out of work?

Under the New Deal was putting people onto jobs. For instance, the town of Sherwood never had a high school until after the New Deal came and the

New Deal some place put up money, built that high school. I think it cost \$60,000, and it didn't cost the people a bean - it was in this New Deal money being used, that was being used to take care to provide jobs for workers. Now, to think of building a school like that for \$60,000, you know. They're remodeling it now and I suppose they're paying probably a million on it.

Then the building of the high school provided jobs for the local men in the Sherwood area?

Yeah, well there wasn't enough - they hauled men in from Portland to work on that. Then that same way with that lodge up there at Mt. Hood.

You're speaking Timberline?

Timberline Lodge. They raise Cain about FDR but he really, I think, saved the country.

Was Franklin Roosevelt well liked among the people of Sherwood, then?

Oh, yes, everybody liked him.

Did a lot of people convert from Republican to Democrats during the depression?

I don't think they paid any attention to it. He was a human being and..

I worked for the State Banking Department not a solid time - I started in 19-- , I think I said about 1918, 1919. 1919 I started in and I worked again there when there was a bad depression.

Well, during the depression in the Sherwood area, how many people were living in that particular town?

Oh, about 3 - 4 - 500 people.

It hasn't grown tremendously since that time, has it?

No, there's nothing there - no industry. They had the cannery - that only worked in the summertime. And later on they had ... and it went broke ...

and then later on they had a cannery that was in pretty good shape and as I understand the whole thing went to pot in the last few years. Now, I notice in the Oregonian that the town had petitioned Washington County CRAG business, whatever that is.

The Planning Department's ...

The CRAG, you know.

Columbia Regional?

Yeah, they had to petition them to add on to the/<sup>city</sup>limits a piece of land between Sherwood and Tualatin that is already being used as a little kind of a saw mill in there and they want that to come under this CRAG business and they can be an industry. They wanted an industry and they were going to do it by having this -- that land is already squatted on by that lumber yard, but they turned it down. I don't know what their reason was; the city limits was big enough without going into this.

So you think the reason why the town never/<sup>really</sup>grew was there was no industry, no jobs in other words? How about the 400, 500 people that lived here, lived there, when you had the bank.

I think there were about 300 - 400.

What were these people doing?

Well, every one of them had a cow right in the city and some of them had as many as six cows, I know. Sometimes they'd usually have them staked out but they'd usually get away and get into somebody else's pasture. They were living off of the place when I went there to a pretty darned extent because of all these cows, and they all had chickens. There's quite a lot of eggs shipped out of Sherwood - that's what they were living on, eggs and milk, and the railroad, that brought a little business.

That railroad's still running. \_\_\_\_\_ only one in the country. Do you know of any other railroad?

That's the Southern Pacific line?

Yeah, the Southern Pacific. Then the Southern Pacific, you know, this Oregon California land grant - that was a big deal for Oregon, really.

The Southern Pacific made lots of money. I guess they changed their name; they're in AMTRACK now.

When you were working in the bank, you must have come in contact with people who had money obviously. Were there any wealthy persons that were living in Sherwood or were they all pretty much ...

I'll never forget one loan that I made; there was a bum came into the bank and he said, "We've got a couple of chickens down here in the gulch but we need some bread to go with it." And I said, "Well, here's a dollar, go get some bread." And he thanked me and he went down - I guess they had bummed quite a meal I guess - built a fire. And in just exactly a year, a year after he came back and slapped down a silver dollar and said, "Here's the dollar that I owe you." And I thanked him and everything and then he said, "I'd like to borrow another dollar." You know you don't see that any more.

Huh, in other words, the banker was more or less the citizens, the town's friend more or less.

Well, the highways - they didn't walk on the highways weren't any good - so crooked. Wasted time, had to give up the railroad; the railroad kicked them off so - that industry is gone; no bums on the railroad any more, so I've seen a good many changes in my 92 years.

Was there ever any bank robberies when you were working in the Sherwood Bank?

No, I've never gone through a bank robbery. I see they had one a day or

two ago \_\_\_\_\_. I've never had a gun pointed at me.

Have never had any attempts, then, at the Sherwood Bank?

But they did, shortly after I left. Shortly after I left they were held up.

I think they've been held up about three times.

Well, how about - what was downtown Sherwood like; was it pretty much like it is today back in the '30's?

About the same. The only difference was if they had - they had some disastrous fires. There was one terrible fire in 1911; that was just about the time the Fortune and the Fords were coming into existence, about 1907, and the story is that a very fine race horse was put into one of the stables, in a livery stable, and somebody didn't want this horse to win and they set the stable on fire - that was in 1911 - they set the stable on fire and burnt the horse up and nobody knew who did it and the horse didn't go in the race, he was burnt up. Oh, this was a tough town.

Was it a tough town when you were living there too? Was there quite a bit...

No, it has been quieted down when I went there. FDR had been through it and cleaned it up, got people on their feet. That building that's cross corner from the bank - got the date on it up there - that was when it was a pretty live town; I think it's before 1911, 1912. Sometime, if you ever go in there, why you look up at the cornice clear up at the top and the date is there - pretty tough town then.

How about the World War II years in Sherwood. Were the men and women working together for the war effort?

Oh, the women became welders. Yeah, I knew three or four women that ...

And the women then as now became welders during the war.

They were working Portland - shipyards?

Shipyards, yeah, and they bought a bus. There were busses then to get you to the shipyard - there were busses.

They would go to work in Portland on the bus, then?

Uh, uh.

Were you in the town itself during the war, then?

Yes, I was -- well, what was I doing?

Were you still working in the bank at that time? During the war?

Yeah, but I had made up an application to go to -- I really was too old -- but I made application to go to Officers Training Camp and I was instructed .. I took a kind of an examination there. There was an organization operated by each Sheriff in the county - they had a kind of a training school. I know I had an authorization from - I guess it was the State of Oregon.

You weren't able to become an officer, then, because of your age?

\_\_\_\_\_ report for training at the Precidio in San Francisco; I was instructed to report there immediately - I guess it was the day before the \_\_\_\_\_ bomb and I asked the Sheriff what to do. He said just wait and let them tell you what to do; I never heard a word from anybody, I never got IN so I don't get any benefits at all. But if the war had gone on with time for me to get into the training school - I know they sent a man up - we had a home guard, you know, and that was really kind of a training school - I was a Lieutenant at the home guard - the Portland home guard until the war was practically over.

When the war did end, there must have been quite a boom in the banking business; more people wanting to borrow money to build homes?

No, no, nobody had any money to loan. Right at that time was just about the toughest time that the state ever had. A lot of these boys they returned, you know, and they'd say to their dad, "We're going to run the ranch, you take it easy." Well, the boys would - or the banks would say to the boys, "Well, you just get your dad to sign this - endorse your note." The boys

didn't know anything about running a farm. And the loans the livestock made up, sale itself, oh, \$300 a head, and then in a few months the bottom dropped out and you couldn't get more than \$30. And these poor farmers that had given the ... put the place in the hands of the son were stuck with all these endorsed notes they'd endorsed. They were about the toughest times right there in 19--, right after Yeargemo, or whatever that..

Uh uh, Hiroshima, right.

My son went into the ... he had to fool around a little while in the ship yards until old enough to enlist ... he wasn't, I forget what the age was but probably 15 I guess -- he fooled around in the ship yard for awhile; then he went into the Navy -- this is before the war he went into the Navy and went ashore there. ... it was Easter Sunday, I remember, he spent a whole year right there after the war was over, and then they mustered him out; he was out for two years and during that two years he went to Oregon State and took up Engineering and he just about got through and the Navy Department called him back to go on a mine sweeper. Well, after two years of freedom and studying he had to go back to this mine sweeper and he was on that mine sweeper for oh, about a month.

Um, so the men - young men - returned to Sherwood then, found new jobs, or money to borrow from the bank, or way to pay their debts then?

Well, they \_\_\_\_\_ was doing pretty well. There weren't very many men around. The veterans there at one time, you know, they made a raid on Washington. They marched from where their home town was and all joined in and got there to Washington. I guess FDR was still in office then ..

I know that happened after World War I - did this happen about World War II then, also?

I think so.

Truman must have been in office then.



But, their houses - not much change in the town; well, I haven't been in the town for two years, been laid up with this doggone hip and I have one leg is short and I got, they think \_\_\_\_\_. Don't suppose I ever will get any \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you ever form an attachment to the town of Sherwood - did you like it?

(END OF TAPE)

Interview questions  
Morris Adair

1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

WHERE WERE YOU BORN? 1886  
WHEN?

Endowed notes

2. FAMILY ROOTS

Voladora

3. SETTLEMENT IN SHERWOOD after WWI

WHAT YEAR?

1933 ~~WWI~~  
Depression

WHY?

4. REASONS FOR TOWN'S EXISTENCE

MR. SMOCK

FARMING COMMUNITY?

A PARTICULAR INDUSTRY?

5. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TOWN

MAIN ST.

STORE

LIVERY STABLE

BLACKSMITH SHOPS

STREETS / MUDDY, PAVED?

Shoes in ashamed  
of it.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

BUILDING ON THE SURROUNDING HILLS

OUTLYING FARMS.

6. BANKS' ROLE IN TOWN

PROVIDE LOANS FOR BUSINESSES, FARMS, RESIDENTIAL HOMES?

SAVINGS.

WERE YOU BANKING IN SHERWOOD DURING THE DEPRESSION?

DURING YOUR YEARS YOU MUST HAVE SEEN MUCH FLUCTUATION IN ECONOMY?

INFLATION

RECESSIONS

HOW HAS FEDERAL GOV'T DECISIONS AFFECTED SMALL TOWN BANKS SUCH AS IN SHERWOOD?

SUPPLY OF MONEY?

ETC?

- BANK ROBBERIES.

• PARTICULAR INCIDENTS

Interview questions  
Morris Adair

7. ~~The~~ CITIZENS OF TOWN

PROMINENT

MAYORS, WEALTHY, ETC

COMMON FOLK

8. GROWTH OF TOWN.

9. YOUR OWN PAPERS