

***This interview is for the Barbara Morgan Harvey Center for the study of Oil Heritage. This interview is with Mrs. Carolee Michener, a local oil historian, an author, and a long time journalist. The interview is being conducted at the historic Hoge-Osmer house, located in Franklin, Pennsylvania, on November 14, 2008. The interview is being conducted by Neil McElwee***

McElwee- Good morning, it's November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008, a beautiful fall morning in Franklin, Pennsylvania. We're in the historic Hoge-Osmer house in Franklin and having a conversation with Carolee Michener. Mrs. Michener is much-beloved in this community in Franklin, Venango County, and the Oil region. She is recognized as the dean of oil historians, general historians I might add, and a long time professional in journalism, and I would say that she shares the honor with Bud Pelaghi as being the dean of journalist who are with us. It's a real pleasure to have you here this morning Carolee and, and welcome.

Michener- Thank you, Neil.

McElwee- Alright, we are of course in Franklin. Remarkable community, it's a beautiful still thriving community. It's a wonder to behold in so many respects. It's a small place, and yet over the last 150, 200 years it has been prosperous for a number of reasons. Much of that prosperity goes back to the oil industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that extends up into at least the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I liked to kinda explore that a little bit with you Carolee and lets just talk somewhat of the miller family for example, Charles Miller. The impact he had on the Franklin community, and on the oil industry in the country for that matter.

Michener- Well, Charles Miller came here really because of the oil. Franklin was a little village with about 900 people. You know a lot of dirt streets, and you know we had an iron factory and a few other things, but basically it was just a little rural village. But it was also the county seat. So that, since it was established as that, that lured some people here. He came here from New York State with the idea of having a little store, and he had what was called "The Buffalo Dry goods Store." But he was very shrewd, very smart. So he was a young man of 22 or 23 when he came here, and he ran the store for a while, but he soon learned that the money to be made was in oil. So that's where he put his niche it was in oil.

McElwee- Now, lets set the stage here, lets explain to folks. Crude oil that his concerned ended up refining and processing. That might be the better way for it. Something known as Franklin heavy crude. Much different actually than the balance the crude around here. Could you tell us a little more about that.

Michener- Yes. It was much different. It had 30 to 32 degrees gravity compared to 28 for the other oil that was found around here. And it was a natural lubricant. People used it on their machines as it came out of the ground actually, you know. And the first well that was drilled here was several months after Colonel Drakes well in Titusville, and man by the name James Evans who lived just down the street from where we are sitting now actually. Down along French Creek. He had drilled a water well . He was a blacksmith, and drilled a water well, but it always smelled like, you know crude oil. And the water wasn't very good obviously that

came out of it. So he finally found somebody that would loan him a little money to make his own tools. He kicked down his water well deeper, about 72 feet, and he got Franklin heavy crude, when it's what came from the ground. And that was the first of a number of Franklin heavy crude wells that came. The field is quite limited, it's in Franklin, it goes out to Sugar Creek and it goes up the river just a little ways and you're going to get that type of oil.

McElwee- Yeah, yeah, I've read that Patchell Road up on French Creek is the other, I suppose that would be the Western limited if you will, and then over to two mile run.

Michener- Right, Yeah, Two Mile run, yeah. It's fairly limited where you are going to find it. That was what some of the early refineries were based on. Most of the early refineries of course made aluminates for lamps. And the first refinery that was started here was actually by George Bissel and his partners, and it was over along French Creek, but they were strictly for fuel for lighting lamps. And but there was another small refinery called The Great Northern, that started down at where French Creek goes into the Allegheny River, and they made a lubricant that was called Hendricks. And Mr. Hendricks owned it. And they lasted on a short time, and then it was leased to a man by the name of Colonel Street. And he changed the name of the lubricant to Galina. Because of the lead sulfide that was used in the process of refining this. But it was still a heavy oil and it was used for that. Well then, that's when Charles Miller came into the picture. He was 26 by then. He knew that he was going to make his money or felt he was going to make his money in oil. Not drilling oil, but processing it. And he bought it, and well Colonel Street had been paying Mr. Hendricks a dollar a barrel for the rights to use his patent in the manufacturing. Charles Miller was shrewd enough to buy the patents. So he bought the Patent from Mr. Hendricks and paid him like 300 dollars a month until he got it paid off, the 6,000 dollars paid off. That was a shrewd move.

McElwee- Yeah, I agree. We tend to forget that part of it. Everybody knows about Charles Miller's great salesmanship talent. But we forget that he did buy that early Patent which allowed him to do what he did. Well, they had a fire down there right?

Michener- Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah they had a fire, and there wasn't too much said about it. WE only had a weekly newspaper, and of course they were covering you know the whole county and the whole area, and they didn't go into great detail, but they did talk about the fire and how this Franklin's new steam engine from the fire department was pulled by man power across the bridge (laughs) that's right down here at the base of the hill and pulled it across and up to fight the fire, but it was too far gone. But later on it was around 1912 I think that somebody did an interview with Charles Miller, and he said that he caused the fire. Because he said that he had come back from Omaha with a whole bunch of new orders, and he was all enthused so he flooded the boiler too hot. (Laughs) and it caught the business on fire. But there again, they were certainly limited in space down there. I mean if you look at the terrain today, you wonder how they had refineries and railroad and a road and everything else between that hill and the creek. So, they bought the old dale refinery, which was over in the 3<sup>rd</sup> ward of Franklin, but also along French Creek. Nice, level land, and they you know

had plenty of room to expand. So that gave them the opportunity to turn that from a refinery that made aluminates to one that made their lubricating Galina oil.

McElwee- Now here we had some serious investors. That took part in that Samuel Dale property of construction. Who were some of those fellas?

Michener- Well, John Coon was one of them, a man by the name of Austin was another one, and there was a plumber who was related to the Mr. Austin, and they invested in it to get the money to move. But he was a shrewd business man. I mean in addition to being a super salesman, he was also a shrewd businessman. And by that time he had turned his little store over to his brother-in-law, Joseph Sibly, and soon Joseph Sibly was also out of the store, and he was into the oil business too, yeah.

McElwee- Right, lets just talk, we will come back to Charles, the story is so huge you just can't stop it right there, but this is a natural point to bring in Joseph Sibly a bit more.

Michener- Yeah, Joseph Sibly developed a type of signal oil to also be used on railroads, and that is the main place where Galina oil was used. Now, it was a lubricant for many other things. I mean you could use it for any type of machinery, but railroads were the big thing, and railroads of course were up and coming all across the nation. And that's where Mr. Miller, you know and Mr. Sibly, both of them concentrated their efforts on the railroad. That's what really made the railroads roll, and it made the company roll too.

McElwee- For a moment, could we recall where Charles Miller's first house was, and where Joseph Sibly's big house, the big houses where the first big houses. I know Joseph Sibly was right down here where the Post Office in Franklin is today.

Michener- Yeah. Yeah.

McElwee- That's not the one most people remember as the Joseph Sibly house, but that was there.

Michener- Yeah, he had a large house there, and interestingly enough when they sold the land to the Postal Department in the 1920's to build a Post Office there. They took his house and move it a block and about a block and a quarter down the street, and it eventually became a rooming house and so forth, you know.

McElwee- Now gone unfortunately.

Michener- Now gone, yeah. Now gone yes. But we do remember Mr. Sibly for building a property called River Ridge. He built a huge stone house at River Ridge. He built stone houses for his employees, and so forth, and had an experimental farm there for a number of years. But it was all based on the money he made in the oil business.

McElwee- And comes off I suppose more with Sibly than Miller. The man was really a farmer at heart.

Michener- Yeah, I think a lot of the early industrialist were farmers. They grew up on farms, and they knew they, knew farming you know. And Miller and Sibly together had a stock farm in at the edge of Franklin for many years. Raised thoroughbred horses, thoroughbred cattle, and so forth you know. They were very good and very generous in their sharing with the other farmers around here. They provided them many times with good blood lines and their you know...

McElwee- Good Stock.

Michener- Yeah, good stock

McElwee- Good genetics stock

Michener- Yeah, and Mr. Sibly particularly brought in many people to talk to the farmers in the area about farming, about how to prune trees, how to plant things, how to diversify their crops. He hosted many large gatherings for farmers.

McElwee- I like to think of these fellows as the early Penn State Agricultural School. (Laughs) It wasn't just all Penn State at the time. They played that role.

Michener- Yeah, at one time when a man from Penn State was here, just when they were starting that cooperative extension work, and so forth. And he said if every county had somebody like Mr. Sibly you wouldn't have to have us really. Basically, that's what he said you know, because he did so much.

McElwee- Lets go back to Charles, he is such a huge person, huge presence, when he was alive and he still is today actually in Franklin. I think it's the Alpaca house or that property where he had his first home. I could be wrong in that, we both know that he eventually went up there into Miller Park and developed it. Let's talk about Miller Park. It's a special residential area. Franklin has beautiful residential streets but the Miller Park is the crown jewel to the whole thing.

Michener- Yeah, Miller Park used to be called Galina hill, because they drilled oil on it. And then eventually they decided in the early 1900's that we needed some places for more homes, and they developed that up there. And it was Mr. Miller and his children that developed it.

McElwee- Most of those big houses are somehow related to him.

Michener- A lot of them are related to him (McElwee laughs). You know if you go back far enough they are related to his family or friends and people who were in business with him and so on and so forth.

McElwee- Typically you just move up there.

Michener- Interestingly enough, they also developed where the prospect hills stock farm was. That was developed into a housing area for less elaborate houses. They were sold quite reasonably,

and one of the big selling points of them was of course they are up on a hill and that you could buy these lots quite cheaply, and they were above the fog line. Because Franklin could be pretty well covered in fog with the river and the creek here, you know early in the mornings.

McElwee- Well you want to be above that fog line (laughs). Particularly if you have arthritis (laughs).

Michener- (laughs) That was a selling point for them, yeah.

McElwee- Charles Miller was very active in his church, the great Baptist church.

Michener- He was very active in the First Baptist Church of Franklin. He supported it. They even have a stained glass window with his photo in it. So it, you know he didn't actually authorize that. So it was authorized by others in the church. But it is interesting you know, but he did much for that. He was also I mean we can trace so many of the Franklin industries back to him. It was not only, he knew all the railroad people in the country. He, as I said, was a super salesman and he would go there. When the Union Pacific was having trial runs to figure out which oil to use or lubricant to use on the railroads. They had a fire test, and if you could go, whichever one could go the most miles without catching on fire, that was the criteria. And of course Galina oil won hands down, except it's interestingly enough for a company in Cleveland, Ohio, and it was never identified as to who they were. But they could also go that far but their oil cost about twice as much as his. So he went over until Galina oil was used in about 95% of the railroads in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. And he had crew of salesman that he brought in every year to Franklin. And they would get a pep talk, and be treated and wined and dined, whatever you know. And they would go out with their kits and so forth to go sell their oil to the railroads. But because of these contacts, he knew so many people in the country and he brought in what eventually became the Chicago Pneumatic tool company. It was the Grand Tool Works and the Chicago Pneumatic, and they merged and he brought those in. He brought in Coburn Manufacturing from Cleveland, and Coburn stayed here through World War I, and in the early twenties it closed. But when Joseph Joy wanted a place to move from Indiana he went to Coburn in Cleveland and asked him if he would support him in a move. He said yes, go to Franklin and open that building I have there and you can have it. So that's how Joy Manufacturing, which is still a major employer came to Franklin

McElwee- That's really fascinating.

Michener- So you know there is a lot of links to Charles Miller.

McElwee- Yes.

Michener- And when there was a process developed where you could make carbon copies. We take these things so for granted today that, you remember how they used to make carbon copies and notepads?

McElwee- Yes.

Michener- Ok. When that processed was developed, he persuaded those people to come here and open General Manifold and Printing Company. Which stayed here for well, till about fifteen years after World War II, you know. So it, so there is all kinds of links to General Miller. He was a promoter and he knew how to, he loved Franklin. He also built his own railroad in Franklin. The Jamestown-Franklin Clearfield-Railroad.

McElwee- That's the big bridge going across the river right?

Michener- Yeah, the big railroad bridge that goes across the Belmark. Which is now part of the bike trail.

McElwee- Boy, you can't, can't forget the Belmark bridge if you were ever out in the middle of it. (laughing)

Michener- No, that's for sure. (laughs)

McElwee- I can't make it all the way across. I can tell you that right now. My wife has to lead me (laughs) because it is so high. And I think of him every time.

Michener- Yeah. (laughs)

McElwee- Well, Charles brother- in-law, Joseph Sibly, had his own story. His own historical story if you will. Although, of course they were very close none the less. Was Joseph Sibly's wife Charles Miller's sister? How did that work? There was a, there was a (inaudible)

Michener- He was, Joseph Sibly, was a brother of General Miller's Wife.

McElwee- Ok. Alright. Alright. Sibly is kind of an independent character within the Galina operation. The signal oil was actually manufactured in the Galina Factory, the old Samuel Dale property. I believe he was the first one approached, I'm not sure of this you can tell me, by John D. Archibald Standard Oil, standard oil rep. They, standard oil, wanted to buy both of those concerns.

Michener- You're right.

McElwee- I believe Sibly agreed first, actually Miller really never did agree (laughs), am I right on that?

Michener- I'm not, I'm not positive. Anyway, they bought out three of the stockholders and became the controlling interest. But you know Miller and Sibly kept their own stock. And Miller was hired on to run the company. The original report which came out in one of the, not the main weekly paper, but one of the smaller weekly papers. Said that they agreed to pay Miller \$10,000 a year to run it. Which was pretty, you know a lot of change in those days, but also he was a major stock holder and they kind of gave him free reign. Although, Archibald and some of the Standard Oil people were on the board. Most of this stuff does not show up in

D-Transfers or anything. It only shows up in the charter books at the court house(laughs). So you have to go explore the charter books, and then, but you don't find it in D-Transfers, you know. I was naïve enough at one time to think I could go to the court house and find out what all Standard Oil owned, and found out that you couldn't do that. It wasn't possible. So you have to go to the charter books and go back from there.

McElwee- Of course there were other oil men in Franklin

Michener- Oh yeah.

McElwee- We could just keep going on and on. But let's go, let's lead to The Eclipse. I'm going to start by Doctor Albert Egbert. Who ended up living here in Franklin in the early part of the decade of the 1870's. I'm not sure just when he moved here.

Michener- I think at 1860's he probably moved here.

McElwee- He moved into the house next door to this one, exactly. His success was up at, on Oil Creek at the, I call it the Egbert and hide farm.

Michener- Right.

McElwee- Very successful as a producer. And with that great success he invested. And a lot of these investments were made out of Franklin, and into some Franklin activity. You want to kinda take off from there.

Michener- Well, the producers in 1872, decided that they needed to have their own refinery. They needed to place to sell their oil, and of course this was Franklin heavy crude. The first Franklin heavy crude sold for 25 to 30 dollars a barrel. But by this time it was down to about 5 dollars a barrel, and then it went even lower than that. So, they decided they'd bring in a man by the name of Doctor Tweddle, who was from England, and he had a process for turning you know oil into lubricants and so, and various other things. So, they hired him and they bought an 8 acre tract of land on a smith farm. Which is just North of Franklin, between Franklin and Oil City to put in a refinery. Now, Doctor Tweddle had a lot of smarts as far as the machinery and things he needed, and that was his investment in this. The producers were investing their oil in this. They never did have enough capital to get off the ground, but many of the producers at Franklin including: Doctor Egbert, the Mckeln, and Scrants, Fee who lived out at the very edge of the Franklin heavy crude field in a little place called Gallaway. They decided they would put their oil in this investment, but they never had a lot of capital in back of them. And they weren't really particularly swift as far as running a refinery, and they found out that Doctor Tweddle wasn't either. I mean he knew the process, and he knew how to do it, but they weren't in business more than a couple of years before they were into bankruptcy. They first they after Doctor Tweddle left and went to Russia, and he was going to start a refinery there. Well they hired a banker by the name of Ian Patterson. He came on board and he got it a little bit more financially sound, but he also

didn't know much about refining. So they hired P.R. Gray, who was a former ??, but he also had a little refinery called the Amber Refining Company, which was bought by Standard Oil and closed, so they put him on board. Well, they still had to go for Bankruptcy. And about 9 months after bankruptcy, it was sold to Standard Oil. And Standard Oil kept P.R. Gray on as their manager. And, if Standard Oil hadn't bought it, I think it just would have probably faded away. But they bought it and there was a lot of land there, and they knew that they could expand and develop it, and that's what they did. And they ended up by having about 125 acres there, you know. So it, and it was constant expansion.

McElwee- For younger people, that, and even I didn't come here until 12 years ago or so, you really have to look at the old photos of The Eclipse. So it went all the way up to Two Mile Run, or the O.M.G. area, people might be familiar with that, or just beyond what is that, it used to be beyond Burger King. This was a huge, huge facility. I recall, certainly the largest one in the oil region and it may have only been second to the Atlantic refinery in Philadelphia. It was a big, big.

Michener- At one time it was called the largest in the. And actually it was, carried the Atlantic name through practically all of its history, because Standard Oil also owned Atlantic. And then it, after the break-up of the Standard Oil Trust, it became strictly Atlantic. But then, before that it was always called Atlantic. It was The Eclipse Works of the Atlantic refining company. But they made some 125 products during the course of their life, 80 year span, and it was, they made every product known to, that you could make from petroleum at that time, you know. Eventually, of course they went from aluminates, they went into gasoline. Carried many names, several names that they used, you know.

McElwee- Different brand names.

Michener- Different brand names and so forth, you know. And paraffin was a big thing, because our oil is paraffin based, and they made a lot of wax, a lot of it was shipped overseas.

McElwee- Do you recall a name S.C. Lewis?

Michener- Oh, sure.

McElwee- Could you tell us a bit more about it.

Michener- Well, S.C Lewis was the plant manager at Eclipse for many years, and he lived in Franklin, and he was just a man that was brought here by Standard Oil, and, and one of things is that they, their people that they brought in to run it all lived here in Franklin. I mean he lived here for many years. He was kind of a world traveler, brought back many interesting things from his travels, you know. Shared them with Franklin people.

McElwee- I understand his first wife died.

Michener- Yes.

McElwee- And to honor her, he put in one of those beautiful windows they have over at Saint Johns Church.

Michener- Yes. Right.

McElwee- Of course our audience won't be able to see this today, but I have had the pleasure of looking at them. Just wonderful, just beautiful.

Michener- Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They have a full array of Tiffany windows in their Church, and most of them can be traced back as memorials given by people that were in one way or another involved in the oil business. It's hard to tell who is directly involved, and where the spin offs are, but, but, you know many of them were people that were involved in the oil business one way or another.

McElwee- And, and you were telling me in a conversation earlier that the Eclipse Plant itself, much is gone, a few big concrete forms, but the offices still exists on Route 8. Why don't you describe that to our audience.

Michener- Okay, well the first offices for the Eclipse were in Franklin. They had them in buildings, and they kept track of things through the telegraph and later the telephone. You know they were hooked up to the refinery, but then they built this large office building along Route 8, and it was large at the time, you know. It doesn't look so large today, but its uh, but you know, and since then its been a furniture store, now it's offices, it's a number of offices. So forth, but the building is still there.

McElwee- Right, just above the Salvation Army, for those who might be familiar with that part of the, part of the area. Duncan Macintosh, another big name associated with (inaudible).

Michener- Duncan Macintosh was also a man that came here with the Eclipse, and uh, he built a large home called, it was called Glenmoy for many years, and the home still exists. It's out on Route 322. Just east of Franklin.

McElwee- Big stone house.

Michener- Yeah, um-hm.

McElwee- I don't know who's in there now. I think the Easterseals was there for a while. I think they might still be.

Michener- Well, its, there's been a variety of offices and things there. It was a religious community, nuns there for a while. And, but its now a place called turning point which is a facility for youth.

McElwee- Recovering. Beautiful, beautiful place though.

Michener- It is a beautiful place.

McElwee- What still exists, much is gone of the old refining industry, but what still exists are some of these houses that were talking about, the Galina Signal building itself. I think that was built around 1901, 1902.

Michener- Yeah, yeah, and that's odd. And that is not near the refinery. It's over in the main part of town. Yeah. Yeah.

McElwee- We still have, we still have a lot to look at (laughs).

Michener- Yeah, one of the things, legacies that General Miller and, and later years he was always called General Miller, because he was a General in the National Guard. And he was a Civil War veteran, and a great promoter of the Civil War Veterans who were here in Franklin. Many of the Civil War veterans actually including my um, great-grandfather who was a Civil War Veteran and would probably never would have never got off his farm out in um Mineral Township, if it hadn't been for General Miller, but he would pay their way to go to all these G.A.R. conventions. If they would guarantee they would wear their uniforms and participate in the parade so. But one of the other legacy's that he left Franklin was he had a night school. And it was started uptown in one of the buildings that still exists uptown, and later on after they built the Stewaffe's Building in the early 1900's it was moved down there. And at first it was for any young men who wanted to go. Everything was paid for as long as they would show up and go and study, and then they could go and get a better job, and later on it was opened up for women too.

McElwee- Oh, is that right (laughs).

Michener- So, it uh, yeah. So it was a, and I knew at the, when I first started to work for the newspaper here. Two or three people that worked in various businesses around town, one was in banking and one was in an accounting firm, and they told me that that's how they got their early training and their start, you know. They were older people at that time, and that's how they learned and you know, which was a great thing really, you know for the town.

McElwee- Now the Eclipse, and the Galina I think both shut-down in the 1930's, am I correct on that.

Michener- Um, the Galina was sold to Valvoline in 1931, and they hung on for, into the nineteen, early 1940's, and then eventually, I mean they didn't do much, I mean it was still just, just the fringe of it. The Eclipse closed in 1937. Most of their, some of the people transferred to Port Arthur, Texas, some transferred to Philadelphia. Some retired, some stayed on in Franklin for various other reasons.

McElwee- In fairness, it's because the decline in the fields.

Michener- Oh, sure it was. Yeah declining in the fields around here. I mean Franklin heavy crude fields were starting to play out. Now they were still, they still segregated Franklin heavy crude through the Wolf's Head Refinery in Reno, up until I'm thinking it was the seventies, 1970's,

and then they quit segregating it and it ran through with all the other oil. But for a time, you know,

McElwee- It was processed separately.

Michener- Yeah it was processed separately. Pennzoil ended up by owning, but they also owned Wolf's Head at that time, and they um, most of the heavy crude fields or a lot of the heavy crude fields. But then they quit segregating it, and it um.

McElwee- Lets switch to River Ridge. It overlooks, its across the river. It's up in ??, it over looks the old Eclipse site.

Michener- Right, uh-huh.

McElwee- Various groups around here give tours, promote tours. Your organization, Venango County Historical Society does. But I also have never had a chance to visit it or see it. Why don't explain it a little bit to a larger audience. What River Ridge was about, and what it looks like even today.

Michener- Well, the main house, which everybody calls a mansion, and it is quite large, because it has a couple large wings on it. And it is much the same as it was when it was built, although, you know, a lot of the decor has certainly been changed, because it was sold first to a group called the White Fathers, which is a Roman Catholic organization, and they had their seminary there. And in later, now it belongs to a religious group called Life Ministry's. Which still does retreats there, and so forth. But a lot of the fancy décor of course is gone. And it was sold off at auction really by the family in the 1940's. But it was Mr. Sibly's dream to have this experimental farm. And he brought in people from, he brought in a person to run his green house from Holland, and he, and he brought in stone masons from Europe to build many of the buildings. Many of those families still live around here, they still have ties here. But he did a lot of experiments on different products.

McElwee- Artichokes. They were known for their Artichokes. That didn't go too well. (Inaudible)

Michener- Artichokes, yeah. No, no it didn't go too well. No unh-uh. Artichokes were being developed as a, a thing that I think they thought would help diabetics, or something. But I don't think it ever materialized. But as I said before, I think some of the programs they did for farmers were just such a big thing for this area. I mean, one woman told me that she went out there as a little girl and they gave them all a sack lunch, and it had a hard boiled egg in it. (Laughs) And she just thought that was wonderful, you know (laughs). So it uh, and uh but you know they, I mean he didn't spare any expense in doing these things, you know. He was the politician. Charles Miller was not really a politician as such. I mean he didn't run for elective office or anything, I think he was mayor at one time, but that was really more of a, you know, just a one term thing, you know or something. But, Sibly was the politician, you know. Both, you know, and he was in Washington D.C. for, you know, about 10 years.

McElwee- Right, and in his time in the Nineteenth century, early twentieth century, he was famous.

Michener- Oh, yeah. They said when he went to Washington the first time, Washington saw its most elaborate sign of horse flesh. Because he took all these great horses with him to run his carriages.

McElwee- Right. I know he had a railcar. You see the siding even today. Railcar right there along the Allegheny River, below his estate area, his farm really, it's what it was. And he, he invited famous people to go with him when he went to Buffalo.

Michener- He had a boat on Lake Champlain, I think.

McElwee- Right. Right.

Michener- Yeah, and there is a picture of him with McKinley at this boat, and so forth you know. And Charles Miller got his own railroad car too. I mean they traveled in first class when they went.

McElwee- They lived well. (laughs) Very Well.

Michener- Yeah. Yeah. And Charles Miller one time, I think if I remember correctly, it was three-thousand acres along Kissimmee River in Florida.

McElwee- Oh is that right? I've never heard that one. (laughs) Good for him. (laughs)

Michener- I'm sure it wasn't worth what it is today. (Laughs)

McElwee- No. (laughs)

Michener- But you know, he got around. He was on the board of several different railroads too across the country.

McElwee- Railroads are a major part of life around here.

Michener- Oh, yeah.

McElwee- This is who they sold to, and it did very well. Joseph Sibly was considered Standard Oil's man politically in Washington. And he was, we won't debate that. He was.

Michener- But it was his constituency too.

McElwee- Exactly! That's the point I would like you to make.

Michener- Yeah, I mean you know, it was.

McElwee- People around here worked for Standard Oil.

Michener- Sure they did. Yeah. You know. Whether they knew it or not, that's who they worked for. And, uh, The Eclipse had a policy of always trying to stay one step ahead of a Union organization being started at the refinery, particularly The Eclipse refinery. And they paid well, you know. And they seemed to be able to do that.

McElwee- This was a prosperous community from the 1860's on. May have even been before that.

Michener- It was prosperous, and it was interesting because when you go back and read the old newspapers, you find out a lot of little things, you know. Like when we would be having a down turn, you know and so forth, and people needed work, you know and so forth. Like people like Robert Lambert who started the first bank here, I mean they were a prominent family, but they would hire people to go work on their farm or to do something, you know. A lot of these people were gentleman farmers, and they needed people and they needed people to build roads, and they needed this and that you know. But every time there was a down turn, you would see a note in the paper, and so and so hired ten or fifteen or twenty people to go help to work, you know. You know, you had to do was show up and work, and you'd get paid, you know.

McElwee- And you touched on something that's foreign to today's mindset. These were very wealthy men. They built their own roads, they built their own infrastructure. This wasn't municipally sponsored.

Michener- Oh sure they did. Oh, yeah. No. No.

McElwee- They'd pay for it.

Michener- Yeah. They did.

McElwee- It's a good place to live, constantly. No question

Michener- Yeah. Uh-huh

McElwee- Well, lets move now into the twentieth century. I'm not going to let you get away without commenting on some of what you've been so much involved in. Perhaps our viewers can see some of the many different books that you have authored or worked on as a project as an editor. You're known for this. Your background is—I'm not sure really what your background is. I know you worked for the Herald for many, many years. You were the editor of the Herald.

Michener- Yeah, I started with the news Herald right out of high school.

McElwee- Oh, did you. I didn't know that, I didn't know that

Michener- Yeah, it's a simple background (laughs), very simple.

McElwee- Well, you like to write. There's no question about that. Did you come write that naturally (laughs)?

Michener- I started writing when I was in eighth grade, so I guess it was, it probably natural.

McElwee- Would an eighth grade teacher be proud of you? Do you remember her?

Michener- Oh, yeah.

McElwee- Good, good.

Michener- Well we had refinery's started in the twentieth century too, you know. The Foco was was started, and actually.

McElwee- And that's, that's one I. That's right.

Michener- Yeah, yeah.

McElwee- I read about it, I hear about it. It's in your work. I know it from your work. Truthfully, I don't know a *thing* about Foco.

Michener- The Foco was a, started as a fairly small refinery, and it was out on Route 322 going west out of Franklin. Just outside the city limits. It was a small refinery, and it was started to use Franklin heavy crude again. Graham was one of the, Graham was one of the producers that really made a lot of money on a place we call Point Hill, which is right outside of Franklin, and that hillside was covered with oil derricks for many, many years. They still do a little pumping up there, don't see the derricks like you did at that time. But he was one of the people that made a good bit of money, and he was one of the backers of this Foco. And they started, and they were using Franklin heavy crude. And, it was, there again it was for a lubricant, and they thought they had a better Patent, so they started that right after World War I. And, uhm, it kind of floundered it, it went for a while and floundered. The name was changed to Franklin Creek Refining, eventually it was sold to Amally, I mean, then it was a branch of Witco. And it existed for many years. When it was started they thought it was an ideal location, because the little road went beside it and the railroad was beside it. Well, as it grew it became wedged in between where the railroad, the creek, and the hillside. And, but it grew and it prospered until 1970 when they had a disastrous fire. Five people were, four refinery workers and a fireman lost their life in that fire, and of course that was the end of that refinery. But then General Miller, after he got out of Galina, also started a little refinery. And, um, it, believe it or not it still exists today, but it's not a refinery. And he started it as the Home Oil Company. Well, it, he invested most of his money in it, eventually it, finally you know it became a part of, Standard Oil bought it after his death. And then they ended up by selling it, and it was Mooney Chemical for, it was sold to Mooney Chemical. But it was Ciccone Vacuum Refinery, and then eventually it closed and was sold to Mooney Chemical, and now it is still O.M.G. I think, O.M.G. So it's a chemical plant now. But it's out

along Two Mile Run. It's still here, you know. So that's another thing, really that General Miller started.

McElwee- Was involved in.

Michener- Yeah, was involved in.

McElwee- His presence is immense. We can't , we can't say anything less than that.

Michener- Well, yeah. No. No. He was very much a presence, and still is really in the community I mean. People don't realize it today as much I don't think, but you know, it's still, it's still here.

McElwee- Today, really people don't remember most of what we've been talking about. When they go back, they think they're going really far back when they talk about Chicago Pneumatic, and Joy. Those companies, you were probably working for the paper when they were in their heyday. I would have to imagine that. Chicago Pneumatic had a role, they made some oil country goods. Small portable.

Michener- They made compressors.

McElwee- Compressors, of course.

Michener- They made compressors, and they made, but basically compressors for the oil industry. Or for other things, but a lot of compressors. And also they made a rotary drill.

McElwee- Yes. Yes.

Michener- Rich Drill, Rich Drill came here as part of Chicago Pneumatic, and they made a rotary drill. There's still a few Rich Drill's running around the county today, you know.

McElwee- They're considered prizes for collectors (laughs).

Michener- Yeah.

McElwee- How about National Supply. The old National Supply plant over there across the creek. Does that mean much to you. I keep running into, we all talk about Oil Well Supply up there, actually that's, that's Oil City, yes. But it's also Pittsburgh and Bradford, they had three plants. But they had a competitor called National Supply.

Michener- Producers Supply.

McElwee- Producers Supply. Is that what it was. Huh.

Michener- Yeah, Producers Supply. Yeah, uh-huh. And it was started by a family named Cheesly, who were also involved as producers of oil, and they made a variety of things for the oil industry. Eventually, it was sold to a company named Arms Franklin, and then it became a part of Joy

Manufacturing Company, and it later on the plant burned. But, and Joy for a time, moved part of its operation out of here, but then eventually moved it all back. Because they had another plant, and they needed to fill it for the void after the fire. But then, now its all back here so.

McElwee- Now I know you, you're now a widow. (Inaudible)

Michener- Um-hm. Yeah.

McElwee- On your property, you're famous for, over the years you've been famous for the things you grow (laughs). I don't know how else to put it.

Michener- That was my, that was my husbands projects (laughs, inaudible speaking). That was my husbands project. So, anyway (laughs).

McElwee- Well, your dear begotten husband, we gotta honor him somehow or other (laughs). People still talk about some of those projects, how bout that part of your life. Alright, lets just kind of, kinda, wrap this up. Is there anything you want to tell future generations about things you've learned in your life, things you've seen here in the Franklin area, and in the Venango County area, that you think are worth there remembering, and you have a unique perspective on it that they may not pick up otherwise.

Michener- Well, of course I think people need to know a little bit about their history, you know, regardless of what it is, you know. A lot of people do genealogy, I don't really do genealogy. But family history is very interesting. And, you know, some people want to start there, some want to start just by learning more about the community and so forth. But I think it's important that we do know, and we learn from that. We learn that, you know, life wasn't always as we think of it now, and maybe our problems aren't as great as some of the others were, you know. Our county history is very interesting, you know. And, the, just you know the whole county whether it was involved in oil or not. We had a lot of iron furnaces in the region. They were actually our first industries. And, people built these massive furnaces around the county. Some still existed. A lot of them are pretty much in ruins, but some still existed.

McElwee- That's right; we tend to forget that there was an earlier industry. The old iron furnace industry.

Michener- Yeah. We did a little publication here, based on a diary that a man kept, little journal. He ran a store out in a little community called Utica. We called it "The Year the freshet didn't Come", you know. I think we have a tendency today to think that freshets were, something that the oil industry invented, but freshets were an important thing. This is based back in the 1850's, you know. And they were trying to get there, or 1840's I guess, and they were trying to get their iron ore to market, and they couldn't get it because the river didn't rise,

you know. And they had to depend on rafts to take their goods down to Pittsburgh to market you know.

McElwee- And its interesting that you mention ???, the iron industry, because if you go up to Tionesta they'll tell you that freshet, of course is associated with the early timber industry. It's all these people who needed the creeks, French Creek, Oil Creek, and the river.

Michener- Yeah, right. Yeah. Yeah.

McElwee- They came up with a way to raise the level of water long before the oil industry.

Michener- Oh sure, yeah. The oil industry I think was noted for damming it up, particularly Oil Creek, damming Oil Creek, and releasing it so they could get their oil barges, down to the river. But, it was really something that existed long before that. And it wasn't unique to this area. It existed everywhere that anybody depended on water to get their goods to market, you know. And of course, Franklin history goes back really to the French and Indian war, with the building of the French fort here, and then later on we had a British fort, and later on we had a.

McElwee- We had three forts right.

Michener- Well, actually we had four.

McElwee- Four.

Michener- Fort Michelle for the French in 1750's, and in, shortly after that in 1760, we had the British fort, Fort Venango, and then after the Revolutionary War they built Fort Franklin, which is how Franklin got its name. The fort was named for Benjamin Franklin, who never came this far west, but anyway, it was named for him. And then, it, and after that they had the old garrison, which was a small fort, and actually, the historical society owns the site of that fort.

McElwee- That's the one just off of Elk?

Michener- Yeah, just off of Elk. Elk and 10<sup>th</sup> street.

McElwee- And the one up at the 13<sup>th</sup> street bridge crossing is?

Michener- Fort Franklin.

McElwee- Fort Franklin.

Michener- Fort Franklin, um-hm, yeah. It was built along French Creek. And actually it was used for people even as far away as Meadville. Coming down when they expected an Indian attack, after the Revolutionary War.

McElwee- We, we all assume that the transportation routes in those days were something that we can look at today and pickup, but they actually traveled in different ways than we think.

Michener- Oh, yeah. um-hm. Yeah.

McElwee- That was the main route up there at 13<sup>th</sup> street.

Michener- Yeah that was the main route to go, you know, West, or North too. Um-hm.

McElwee- Venango County Historic Society. You have been very active in this many years. Some people you and Randy ??? kinda associate with . You two are the personification of this. Like every historical society it seems you have your accomplishments and yet we're always behind the eight-ball with these local common historical sites. You never have enough money to keep them alive.

Michener- Oh. that's true.

McElwee- This house, was a miracle in a way.

Michener- Yeah, we bought it in eighty-one. 1981. It was for sale. It was right near the square, and it was a good place to locate, you know. And did a lot of renovation on it, mostly just cosmetic, you know. We had to change wallpaper to get historic, and things like that.

McElwee- And then of course we've, you, have been very much involved with others in the historical society, and these more recent editions of the Venango County histories um, fantastic amount of work (laughs).

Michener- There um, I mean, you know, it's the labor of love, or you wouldn't do it. I mean you don't count your hours (inaudible). No, I love to do research, and its, you know, and as I said, the newspapers are a great source. If we just had time to spend all our time in microfilm, you know, we would have a great, you know, great resource, you know.

McElwee- Yes. Now this group, this historical society, does have a climate control building.

Michener- We have a climate control archives. Actually it's the old garage that was on the property. There's a little office in front, and then we have climate control storage in back of it. And we do all our papers and photos in there.

McElwee- Well, you've undertaken quite a bit. And I do think people should realize that if they don't support these local historical societies, there's just not gonna be.

Michener- No, that's true, you know, but a lot of people come to us for things. I mean like when they were building a couple restaurants around here. They came to us for photos that they wanted to use on their walls, and so forth, you know. So things are used. Plus people come in to do a lot of research. A lot of genealogy research and different things like that so.

McElwee- Lets talk, because right across the way from us is the monument, the Civil War Veterans. Lets talk for a time. Franklin, and I think in some respects a unique history during the Civil War. The Plummer family, they were very close to President Buchanan.

Michener- Right, um-hm, yeah.

McElwee- And Buchanan himself was on the line. He didn't really commit to the North and didn't really commit to the South. And that seems to be the case about these families around here. Would you agree?

Michener- Well, a lot of times that true. I mean the paper was Democratic of course during the Civil War, and so forth you know. But we got the monument over here because, uhm, I'm gonna lose my voice, they gave away a granite shaft in Pittsburgh in a sanitary fare to the county outside of Venango, that raised the most money to support in the sanitary. Figured it was to support the wounded veterans

McElwee- Yes.

Michener- So we got the shaft in Venango county, so they put it in the park. They had to provide money for the base of it. And Thomas Hoge who was one of the, who built this main house that we are sitting in today. He was the fundraiser that raised the most money, so that's how we got it in the park right here. There's a picture over here on the wall, shows the dedication of it in 1866. Which I think was the second Civil War monument put up in Pennsylvania.

McElwee- Did you ever hear about James Tar's involvement in this monument? Does that ring any bells with you? As far as financing is concerned?

Michener- No. No. You mean, Tar farm.

McElwee- Tar Farm, right.

Michener- But he probably donated.

McElwee- I understand he did, and I point that out because, he was just a backwoods fellow who did well.

Michener- Oh, sure.

McElwee- Financially well. But things didn't go too well for him after. He moved to Meadville, and he ran for Judge, and nobody voted for him. But he was involved in it. It's kinda forgotten.

Michener- Your right, I know. Yeah, I know. Um-hm.

McElwee- A lot of these old, early producers were very much involved in Franklin in ways we forget. The banks, a lot of them (inaudible) involved in that bank. Those fellas from ???-ville, they

came down here. The exchange, all those exchange bank, the exchange building, all those things we call the exchange hotel. That was

Michener- Mitchell.

McElwee- Yeah, Mitchell, right, right.

Michener- Yeah, we had a lot of involvement of, you know, with oil money. I mean people would spend it and so forth, you know.

McElwee- We tend to forget that today. Now I must tell you, I have to remind people from Franklin from time to time, yes this is an oil town. (laughs).

Michener- Oh, yeah.

McElwee- It wasn't just Oil City, or Titusville. This is an oil community.

Michener- Yeah, and of course the fact I think that we were established and had the court house here was important, you know. And of course we got a new court house because of the oil boom, you know.

McElwee- Right, exactly. It wasn't big enough to handle all of those problems.

Michener- When they built the second court house in the 1840's, they thought it would last forever, and it turned out you know. It didn't last twenty years because they needed more room right away, you know. And you had to have a fire proof building, so.

McElwee- Well, It's been a pleasure Carolee. I realize this is an hour event that does get to be a little challenging sometimes.

Michener- I'm losing my voice, that's all (laughs).

McElwee- Yes, I know you are (laughs). But, you've put up with us, and it's certainly been

Michener- No, I've enjoyed it. I mean I love to talk about history, so it you know.

McElwee- Well, lets have more of these conversations. Then we will bring you back for another version of Carolee Michener, whatever. We've been talking with Mrs. Carolee Michener. Again, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008. It's in the city of Franklin, and it's certainly always a pleasure to speak with you. And it's really been an honor and I certainly hope in generations to come they appreciate the role you've played in life around here. As you are highly regarded and highly respected. I thank you very much.

Michener- Thank you, Neil.

McElwee- Your welcome.