McElwee: Good morning. It's November 14th, 2008. It's a beautiful fall morning in Franklin, Pennsylvania. We're in the historic 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's recognized as the Dean of Oil Historians, general historians I might add, and a long-time professional in journalism and I would say she shares the honor with Bud Pelaghi of being the Dean of Journalists who are with us. It's a real pleasure to have you here this morning, Carolee, and welcome.

Michener: Thank you Neil.

McElwee: Alright, we are of course in Franklin. A 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 one hundred and fifty/ two hundred years it's been prosperous for a number of reasons. Much of that prosperity goes back to the oil industry in the nineteenth century and that extends up into at least the first half of the twentieth century. I'd like to kind of explore that a little bit with you, Carolee. Let's just talk somewhat about the Miller family, for example Charles Miller and the impact he had on the Franklin community and in the oil industry in the country.

Michener: Well, Charles Miller came here really because of the oil. Franklin was a little village with about nine hundred 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 a buffalo dry goods store. And—but he was very shrewd and very smart so he was a young man of twenty-two or twenty-three when he came here. And he ran the store for awhile but he soon learned that the money to be made was in oil so that's where he, you know, put his niche, it was in oil.

McElwee: Now, to set the stage here let's explain to folks the crude oil that his concern ended up refining and processing, that might be the better way for it, was something known as Franklin heavy crude. Much different actually than the balance of crude around here. Could you tell us a little more about that?

Michener: Yes, it was much different. It hid you know thirty to thirty-two degrees gravity compared to twenty-eight 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 Drake's well in Titusville and a man by the name of James Evans who lived just down the street from where we're sitting now, actually, down along French Creek and 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 and he kicked down his water well deeper to about seventy-two feet and he got Franklin heavy crude was 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 gonna get that type of oil.

McElwee: Yeah, I've read Patchel Run up on French Creek is the—

Michener: Right, yeah. Yeah.

McElwee: I suppose that'd be the Western limit of ?? and then over to Two-Mile Run.

Michener: Two-Mile Run, yeah. It's fairly limited where you're going to find it but it is—and it was, that was what some of the early refineries were based on, not-- most of the early refineries of course made aluminates for lamps. And the first refinery that was started here was actually by George Bissell 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 where the French Creek goes into the Allegheny River and they made a lubricant called Hendrick's. And a man by the-- Mr. Hendrick's owned it. And they lasted only 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 Galena 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 twenty-six by then and 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 while Colonel Street had been paying Mr. Hendrick's a dollar a barrel for the rights to use his patent in the manufacturing, Charles Miller was shrewd enough to buy the patent, so he bought the patent from Mr. Hendricks and paid him like three hundred dollars a month until he got it paid off--the six thousand dollars paid off and that was a shrewd move and it—

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.

Michener: (Speaking at same time). Yeah, right, mmhmm.

McElwee: They had a fire down there, right?

Michener: Yeah, they had a fire and there wasn't too much said about it. They 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 for the fire department was pulled by manpower across the bridge 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 fired the boiler too hot 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'd 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 third ward of Franklin but also along French Creek, nice level land. And they had, you know, 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: (Begins speaking at same time, unintelligible). Now he had some serious investors.

Michener: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: The toll park and that Samuel Dale property construction. Who were some of those fellows?

Michener: Well John Coon was one of them, a man by the name of Austin was another one, and there was a Plummer who was related to the Mr. Austin and they invested in it to help him get the money to move. But he was a shrewd businessman 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 Sibley and soon Joseph Sibley was also out of the store. They—he was into the oil business, too.

McElwee: Right, let's just talk—we'll come back to Charles, the story's so huge you just can't stop it right there but this is a natural point to bring in Joseph Sibley a bit more.

Michener: Yeah, Joseph Sibley 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 were of course up and coming all across the nation. And that's where Mr. Miller, you know and that's where Mr. Sibley, they 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: Okay, for a moment could we recall where Charles Miller's first house was and where Joseph Sibley's big house-- the big houses, the first big houses. I know Joseph Sibley was right down here where the post office in Franklin is today.

Michener: Yeah, uhmhmm.

McElwee: That's not the one most people remember as the Joseph Sibley house—

Michener: No.

McElwee: --but that was there.

Michener: Yeah, he had a large house there and interestingly enough when he sold the land to the postal department in the 1920's to build a post office there they took his house and moved it a block, oh 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: Yeah, now gone, yes. But we do remember Mr. Sibley for building a property called River Ridge. He built a huge stone house at river ridge, built stone houses for his employees and so forth and had an experimental farm there for a number of years. And—but it was all based on the money he made in the oil business.

McElwee: Mmhmm and it comes out I suppose more with Sibley than Miller—the man was really a farmer at heart.

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

McElwee: Right, good stock.

Michener: Yeah, good stock.

McElwee: Good genetic stock.

Michener: Yeah and Mr. Sibley particularly brought in many people to talk to the farmers in the area about farming; about how to prune trees, how to plant things, and how to diversify their crops and you know he hosted many large gatherings for farmers.

McElwee: I like to think of these fellows as the early Penn State agricultural school, it just wasn't called Penn State at the time.

Michener: Right, yeah, uh-huh.

McElwee: They played that role.

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

McElwee: Let's go back to Charles again. He's such a huge person.

Michener: Yeah.

McElwee: Huge presence when he was alive and he still is today actually in Franklin. I think it's the El Paca house or the 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 that. 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 Lelina?? 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, you know.

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

Michener: A lot of them are related to him, yeah.

McElwee: (Laughs) Right.

Michener: You know, if you go back far enough they're related to his family or friends and people that were in business with him and so on and so forth.

McElwee: Typically just move up there.

Michener: Mmhmm, yeah. Interestingly enough they also developed, you know, where the Prospect Hill stock farm was. That was developed into a housing area for less elaborate houses but they were sold quite reasonably and one of the big selling points of them was of course they're up on a hill and that you could buy these lots quite cheaply and .they were above the fog line. (Both laugh). 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 wanna be above that fog line. (Laughter). Particularly if you have arthritis.

Michener: Yeah, but that—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, you know. And he did—actually, he didn't 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, he 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 their

railroads. They had a fire test and if you could go—or which one could go the most miles without catching on fire, that was the criteria. And of course Galina oil won hands down except, and 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 won over until Galina oil was used in about ninety-five percent of the railroads in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

McElwee: Yes.

Michener: And he had a 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 or 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 then in the early '20's it closed. But when Joseph Joy wanted a place to move from Indiana, and 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: Oh, yes?

Michener: Yeah, mmhmm.

McElwee: That's really fascinating.

Michener: So, you know, there's 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 this things so for granted today—that you remember how they used to make carbon copies on notepads? Okay, when that process was developed he persuaded those people to come here and open General Manifold Printing Company, which stayed here for, well 'til about fifteen years after World War II, you know. So there's 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.

Michener: Yeah, the big railroad bridge that goes across the Belmar, which is now part of the bike trail.

McElwee: Right, right. Well you can't forget the Belmar Bridge if you're out in the middle of it. (Laughs).

Michener: No, that's for sure.

McElwee: I can't make it all the way across I can tell you that right now. I'll tell you (unintelligible). I think of him every time.

Michener: Yeah, mmhmm.

McElwee: Well, Charles' brother-in-law Joseph Sibley had his own story, own start and story if you will. Although of course they were very close nonetheless. Was Joseph Sibley's wife Charles Miller's sister, how'd that work? I mean there was a—obviously there was a—

Michener: Joseph Sibley was a brother of General Miller's wife.

McElwee: Okay, alright, alright. Sibley's kind of an independent character within the Galina operation.

Michener: Yeah.

McElwee: The signal oil is actually manufactured in the Galina factory, the old Samuel Gale?? 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. And they, Standard Oil, wanted to buy both of those concerns.

Michener: You're right, yeah.

McElwee: I believe Sibley agreed first. Actually Miller never really did agree, am I right on that?

Michener: I'm not positive. Anyway they bought out three of the stockholders and became the controlling interest but you know Miller and Sibley kept their own stock and Miller was hired on to run the company. The original reports which came out in one of—not the main weekly paper but one of the smaller weekly papers said that they agreed to pay Miller ten thousand dollars a year to run it which was pretty—a lot of change in those days, but also he was a major stockholder. And they kind of gave him free reign although Archibald and some of the Standard Oil people run the board. Most of the stuff does not show up in deed transfers or anything it only shows up in the charter books at the courthouse so you have to go explore the charter books and them but you don't find it in deed transfers, you know. I was naïve enough at one time to think I could go to the courthouse and find a—a Standard Oil loan and found out you couldn't do that, it wasn't possible, you know. So you have to go to the charter books and go back from there, yeah.

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.

Michener: Okay.

McElwee: Now I'm gonna start by Dr. 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 1860's he probably moved here.

McElwee: He moved into the house—

Michener: (Beginning at same time) House next door to us. Yeah.

McElwee: --next door to this one. His success was up on Oil Creek at the—I call it the Egbert and Hyde farm.

Michener: Right.

McElwee: Very successful 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 wanna kind of take off on—

Michener: Well the producers in 1872 decided that they need to have their own refinery. They needed to place to sell their oil. And of course this was Franklin heavy crude. It's—the first Franklin heavy crude sold for twenty-five to thirty dollars a barrel. But by this time it was down to about five dollars a barrel. And then it went even lower than that. So they decided they'd bring in a man by the name of Dr. Tweddle—T-W-E-D-D-L-E—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 eight-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 Dr. 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 in Franklin including Dr. Egbert, the McCalmons, Grants, Fee who lived out at the very edge of the Franklin heavy crude field in a little place called Gallaway, they decided they would you know 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 Dr. Twiddle 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 years before they were into bankruptcy. They—first they—after Dr. Tweddle left and went to Russia and he was going to start a refinery there. Well they hired a banker by the name of I.M. Patterson. And he came on board and he got a little bit more financially sound but he also didn't know much about refining. So they hired P.R. Grey who was a former

sheriff 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 nine months after bankruptcy it was sold to Standard Oil. And Standard Oil kept P.R. Grey on as their manager. And if Standard Oil hadn't bought it I think it would have just 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 having about a hundred and twenty-five acres there. So it—and it was constant expansion.

McElwee: For younger people-- even I didn't come here until twelve years ago so you really have to look at the old photos of the eclipsed site.

Michener: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: It went all the way up to Two-Mile Run or the OMG area, people might be familiar with that, or just beyond what is that, just beyond Burger King. This was a huge, huge facility. I recall it's certainly the largest one of the Oil Region and 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 and actually it was—carried the Atlantic name through practically all of its history because Standard Oil also owned Atlantic and it—then after the breakup 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 and it—but they made some hundred and twenty-five products during the course of their life—eighty 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 brands.

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

McElwee: Do you recall the name S. C. Louis?

Michener: Oh, sure.

McElwee: Could you tell us more about him?

Michener: Well, S. C. Louis 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 one of the things is that 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: Yeah.

McElwee: And to honor her he put in one of those beautiful windows they have over in St. John's Church.

Michener: Right, yeah.

McElwee: I, of course our audience won't be able to see this today, but I've had the pleasure of looking at this it's just wonderful, just beautiful.

Michener: Oh yeah, 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 in and where the spin-offs are but you know many of them were people that were involved in the oil business in one way or another.

McElwee: And you were telling me in a conversation earlier that the Eclipse plant itself, much is gone a few big, big concrete forms but the office still exists on Route 8.

Michener: Yeah, right, yeah.

McElwee: Why don't you describe that to me, to our audience?

Michener: Okay, well the first offices for the, 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. Then they built this large office building along Route 8 and it was large at the time you know, doesn't look so large today. (McElwee laughs). But it's ?? you know, and since then it's been a furniture store now it's offices, it's a number of offices and 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—

Michener: Yeah, right.

McElwee: Duncan Macintosh, another big name associated with ??

Michener: (Beginning at same time). Duncan Macintosh was also a man that came here with the Eclipse and he built a large home called—was called Lenmoy for many years and the home still exists. It's out on Route 322 just east of Franklin.

McElwee: Big stone house.

Michener: Yeah, uhm-hmm.

McElwee: I don't know who's in there now, I think the Easter Seals was there for awhile, they could still be, I don't know.

Michener: Well it's—there's been a variety of offices and things there, it was really just a community of nuns there for awhile and, but it's now a place called Turning Point which is a facility for youth.

McElwee: Beautiful, beautiful place.

Michener: It is a beautiful place.

McElwee: What still exists, so much is gone of the old refining industry, but what still exists are some of these houses we're talking about the Galina Signal building itself.

Michener: Yeah, mmhmm.

McElwee: I think that was built around 1911.

Michener: Yeah, and that's—it's not near the refinery, it's over in the main part of town, you know.

McElwee: We still have, we still have a lot to look at.

Michener: Yeah on of the things—legacies, that General Miller—in 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 great-grandfather, who was a Civil War veteran, and would—probably never would have got off his farm out in Mineral Township if it hadn't been for General Miller. But he would pay their way to go to all these GAR conventions if they would guar—guarantee they would wear their uniforms and participate in the parades, so. But one of the other legacies that he left Franklin was he had a night school. And it was started up town, in one of the buildings that still exists up town and later on after they built this new office 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, then they could go get a better job. And later on it was open for women, too. And it was—and I knew 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, but that's how they learned, 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 early 1940's and then eventually--I mean they didn't do much, I mean it was still 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: And in fairness it's because of the decline in the fields, right?

Michener: Oh sure, it was, yeah, decline 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 '70's, 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. Penzoil ended up owning, but they also owned Wolf's Head at that time and they owned most of the heavy crude fields or a lot of the heavy crude fields, but then they quit segregating it and--.

McElwee: Let's switch to River Ridge. It overlooks, across the river, it's up on a hill, it overlooks the old Eclipse site. Various groups around here give tours, tourists—

Michener: (At same time). Tours, oh yeah.

McElwee: --your organization, the Venango County Historical Society does. For those who have never had a chance to visit it or see it, why don't you 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 'cause 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 décor has certainly been changed because it was sold first to the group called the White Fathers, which is a Roman Catholic organization and they had their seminary there. And then later—now it belongs to a religious group called Life Ministries 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. Sibley's dream to have this experimental farm and he brought in people from—he brought in a person to run his greenhouse from Holland and he brought in stonemasons 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.

Michener: Artichokes, yeah.

McElwee: They were known for their artichokes. (Laughs).

Michener: Yeah, uh huh.

McElwee: That didn't go too well. I remember that.

Michener: No, no it didn't go too well, no. Artichokes were being developed as a thing, I think they thought they'd help diabetics or something but I don't think it ever really materialized but it—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 (both laugh), she just said it was wonderful, you know. So it, and he didn't spare any expense in doing those things. He was the politician. Charles Miller was not really a politician as such. I mean he didn't run for elective office, I mean I think he was mayor at one time but that really was more of a you know, one term thing. But Sibley was the politician, you know. Both, you know, he was in Washington D.C. you know about ten 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 it's most elaborate sign of horse flesh because he took all these great horses with him to run his carriage.

McElwee: Right, I know he had a railcar. You see the side of it even today, rail car right there along the Allegheny River below his estate area, his farm really is what it was, and he invited famous people—

Michener: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: --to go with him and he went to Buffalo.

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

McElwee: Right, right.

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

McElwee: They knew it well.

Michener: Yeah—

McElwee: Very well.

Michener: --and Charles Miller one time, I think if I remember correctly it was three thousand acres along Kissabe River in Florida.

McElwee: Oh, is that right?

Michener: Yeah.

McElwee: I never heard that one.

Michener: So, you know.

McElwee: Good for him.

Michener: I'm sure it wasn't worth what it is today. (Both laugh). But you know, he got around. He was on the board of several different railroads, too, across the country.

McElwee: Railroad's a major part of life around here.

Michener: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: This is who they sold to and they did very well. Joseph Sibley 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.

McElwee: Exactly, that's the point I'd like you to make.

Michener: Yeah, I mean you know, it was. It—

McElwee: This was St—people around here work for Standard Oil.

Michener: Sure they did, yeah, whether they knew it or not that's who they work for. 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, they seemed to be able to do that, you know.

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 you read the old newspapers you find out a lot of little things, you know. Like when we would be having a downturn, 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, to do something, you know. A lot of these people were gentleman farmers and they needed people to build roads and they needed this and that, you know. But every time there was a downturn you'd see a note in the paper that so-and-so hired ten or fifteen or twenty people to work, you know. And all 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 very wealthy men, they built their own roads, their own infrastructure. This wasn't municipally sponsored.

Michener: No, uh-uh, no.

McElwee: They paid for it.

Michener: They did, yeah, they did.

McElwee: It was a good place to live, no question, no question. Well, let's move now into the twentieth century. I'm not gonna 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 so many books that you've authored or worked on; as a project, as an editor. You're known for this. Your background i—I'm not really sure what your background is. You worked for the Herald for many, many years. You were the editor of the Herald.

Michener: Yeah, I started with the newspaper right outta high school.

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

Michener: So it's a simple background, very simple. (Laughs).

McElwee: Well you like to write, there's no question about that. Did you come by that naturally?

Michener: I started writing when I was in eighth grade so I guess it was—probably naturally.

McElwee: Boy, your eighth grade teacher'd be proud of you. Do you remember her?

Michener: Yeah. Well we had refineries start in the twentieth century, too, you know. Defoco?? Was started.

McElwee: That's one, 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 it.

Michener: The Foco was started as a fairly small refinery and it was out on Route 322 going west outta Franklin, just outside the city limits. It was a small refinery and it was started to use Franklin Heavy Crude again. Grant was one of the—Grant 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. The 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 WWI and it kind of floundered. It went for awhile and floundered. The name was changed to Franklin Creek Refinery. Eventually it was sold to Amily and then it was a

branch of Whitco. 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 the railroad, the creek, and the hiilside. 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 believe it or not it still exists today but it's not a refinery. And he started it as the Home Oil Company. Well, he invested most of his money in it. Eventually it finally you know, became a part of—Standard Oil bought it after his death and then they ended up by selling it and it was Mooney Chemical. It was sold to Mooney Chemical but it was Socony Vaccuum refinery and then it closed and was sold to Mooney Chemical and now is still OMG, I think, it's OMG. So it's a chemical plant now, but it's OMG. Sorry to interrupt you. It's still here, you know. So that's another thing really that General Miller started it.

McElwee: Was involved in it.

Michener: Yeah, was involved in it.

McElwee: His presence is immense.

Michener: Well, yeah.

McElwee: You can't say anything less than that.

Michener: No, no, he was very much a presence. It still is, really in the community. I mean people don't realize it today as much, I don't think, but 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--

Michener: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: --and Joy. Those companies—you were probably working for the paper when they were in their heyday, I have to imagine that. Chicago Pneumatic had a role—they made some country goods, um—

Michener: Yeah,--

McElwee: --small, portable--.

Michener: --they made compressors.

McElwee: Compressors.

Michener: They made compressors. And they made—basically compressors for the oil industry or for other things but a lot of the compressors—and also they made a rotary drill. Rich Drill came here as part of Chicago Pneumatic and they made a rotary drill. There's still a few Rich Drills running around the county today, you know.

McElwee: They're considered prizes for collectors, you know. (Laughs). What 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 supply over there—actually that's Oil City, yes, but it's also Pittsburgh, Bradford, they had three plants. But they had a competitor called National Supply.

Michener: Producer's Supply.

McElwee: Producer's Supply, is that what it was?

Michener: Yeah, Producer's Supply, yeah. And it was started by a family named Cheesely 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 Joy for a time moved part of its operation out of here but then it 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 it's all back here, so.

McElwee: Now I know you, you're now a widow.

Michener: Yeah.

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

Michener: That was my husband's projects. That was my husband's projects, so, anyway.

McElwee: unintelligible. We've got to honor him somehow or other. People still talk about some of those projects, part of your life. Alright, let's just kind of 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 their 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. A lot of people do genealogy, I don't do genealogy, but family history is very interesting. And, you know, some people will start there, some will start just by learning about their community and so forth. But I think it's important that we do know and we learn from that. We learn that 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 they just in the county whether it was involved in oil or not. We had a lot of iron furnaces in the region and they were actually our first industries, you know, and people built these massive furnaces around the county. Some still exist. A lot of them are pretty much in ruins but some still exist.

McElwee: That's right, we tend to forget that there was an earlier industry here.

Michener: (Beginning at same time). Right, yeah. We did a little publication here based on a diary that a man kept, a little journal. He ran a store out in a little community called Utica. We called it the year the Freshet didn't come. 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 was based back in 1850's, you know. And they were trying to get their—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 it's 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 always people who'd use the creeks—French Creek, Oil Creek, and the river—they came up with a way to raise the level of the 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 anywhere that anybody depended on water to get their goods to market, so. 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 then later on we had a—

McElwee: We had three forts.

Michener: Well, actually we had four.

McElwee: Four?

Michener: Fort Michelle for the French in 1750's and then shortly after that in 1760 we had the British fort for Venango and then after the Revolutionary War they built Fort Franklin which is how Franklin got it's name. The fort was named for Benjamin Franklin who never came this far west, but anyway it was named for him. And then—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.

McElwee: And the one off of the 13th Street bridge crossing is--?

Michener: Fort Franklin.

McElwee: Fort Franklin.

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

McElwee: We all assume that the transportation routes in those days were something that we could look at today and pick out but they actually traveled in different ways than we think.

Michener: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: Yeah, that was the main route up there on 13th Street.

Michener: Yeah, that was the main route to go, you know, west or whatever, too.

McElwee: Okay, Venango County Historical Society, you've been very active in this many years. Some people, you and Rainy Linnic??, 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 county historical societies. Never have enough money to keep them alive.

Michener: Yeah, that's true.

McElwee: This house was a miracle ??

Michener: Yeah, we bought it in '81, 1981. It was for sale, it was right near the square, it was a good place to locate, you know. And we did a lot of renovation on it, mostly just cosmetic, you know. We had to change wallpaper, get historic and things like that, you know.

McElwee: And then of course you have been very much involved with others in the historical society in these more recent additions of the Venango County histories. Fantastic amount of work.

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

McElwee: Now this group in this historical society, you have a climate-controlled building.

Michener: We have a climate-controlled archives. Actually, it's the old garage that was on the property. There's a little office in front and then we have climate-controlled 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 that people should realize if they don't support these local historical societies there's not gonna be—

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

McElwee: Let's talk—cause right across the way from us is the monument of the Civil War veterans. Franklin had, I think in some respects, a unique history during the Civil War. The Plummer family, they were very close to President Buchannan.

Michener: Right, yeah.

McElwee: And Buchannan himself was on the line, you know, he didn't really commit to the north, didn't really commit to the south. And that seems to be the case of these families around here, don't you agree?

Michener: Well, a lot of times that's true. I mean, the paper was Democratic during the Civil War and so forth, you know. But we got the monument over here because-- (clears throat). I'm gonna lose my voice.

McElwee: Oh, sure.

Michener: They gave away a granite shaft in Pittsburgh in a sanitary fair to the county outside of Venango that raised the most money to support. And a sanitary fair was to support the wounded veterans. 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 Hogue who was one of the—built this main house that we're 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 show's 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 Tarr's involvement in this monument? Does that ring any bells with you as far as financing?

Michener: No. You mean Tarr farm?

McElwee: Tarr farm, right.

Michener: No, but he probably donated.

McElwee: I understand he did and I point that out because he was just a backwoods fellow—

Michener: Oh, sure, yeah.

McElwee: --who did well, financially well. But things didn't go too good for him after he moved to ??, ran for judge and nobody voted for him. But he was involved. A lot of these very early producers were very much involved in Franklin in ways we forget. The banks, a lot of them, those fellows came over here from Ralston to exchange. All of those—Exchange Bank, Exchange Building—all of those things we call the Exchange Hotel.

Michener: Right, Mitchell.

McElwee: Yeah, Mitchell, right.

Michener: Yeah we did a lot of involvement with little money, I mean people would spend it and so forth, you know.

McElwee: We tend to forget that today. I must tell you I have to remind people from Franklin from time to time, yes this is an oil town. 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, had the court house here was important, you know. And of course we got a new courthouse because of the oil building.

McElwee: Right, exactly, it wasn't big enough to handle all that property.

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

McElwee: Well, it's been a pleasure Carolee. I realize this has been an hour event it does get to be challenging sometimes.

Michener: I'm losing my voice, that's all.

McElwee: Yes, I know you are. (Laughs).

Michener: Ok.

McElwee: But, you've put up with us and it's certainly—

Michener: No, I've enjoyed it, I mean I love to talk about history, so—

McElwee: Well let's have more of these conversations.

Michener: There you go.

McElwee: Then we'll bring you back for another version of Carolee Michener, whatever. We've been talking with Mrs. Carolee Michener. Again, November 14th, 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. Thank you very much.

Michener: Thank you, Neil.

McElwee: You're welcome.