



## Rockland oral history interview transcripts 2264

---

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on September 14, 2021.

Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Manuscripts and Archives

PO Box 3630

Wilmington, Delaware 19807

[askhagley@hagley.org](mailto:askhagley@hagley.org)

URL: <http://www.hagley.org/library>

---

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information .....	3
Biographical Note .....	3
Scope and Contents .....	4
Administrative Information .....	4
Controlled Access Headings .....	5
Collection Inventory .....	5

---

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository:</b>	Manuscripts and Archives
<b>Creator - ivr:</b>	Silvia, Mary Laird, 1938-2013
<b>Title:</b>	Rockland oral history interview transcripts
<b>ID:</b>	2264
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1999-2011
<b>Physical Description:</b>	12 volume(s)
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	Rockland is an unincorporated old mill village in New Castle County, Delaware, and was later surrounded by du Pont family estates. The collection contains twelve edited oral history transcripts by Mary Laird Silvia (1938-2013) with people who lived in Rockland.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Biographical Note

---

Mary Laird Silvia (1938-2013) was a historian interested in the people and events that shaped the Brandywine Valley.

Silvia was born March 26, 1938, the eldest child of William Winder "Chick" Laird (1910-1989) and Winnifred Moreton Laird (1912-1996). She grew up on the banks of the Brandywine, opposite the Hagley Powder Yards. She graduated from Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Following graduation, Silvia and a Radcliffe classmate traveled the world, including visits to Hawaii, Afghanistan, Egypt, Malaysia, and Lebanon. She worked as a licensed interpreter/translator for the United Nations, an assignment working for Sergeant Shriver at the Peace Corps in Washington, DC, Director of American Studies at the French International Lycée in Washington, and bi-lingual guide in the nation's capitol.

In 1975, she married Peter A. Silvia, a nautical architect-engineer for the U.S. Navy.

After her father's death in 1989, Silvia discovered boxes of family papers that she used to tell the story of the area where she had grown up. This soon expanded into a series of oral histories based on interviews with former DuPont Powder Mill workers and their descendants and a monograph on the settlement of Rockland and its many families.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Scope and Contents

---

Twelve edited interview transcripts by Mary Laird Silvia (1938-2013) with people who lived in Rockland, an old mill village that was later surrounded by du Pont family estates. See individual interviews for a more detailed description.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Publication Statement

Manuscripts and Archives

PO Box 3630

Wilmington, Delaware 19807

[askhagley@hagley.org](mailto:askhagley@hagley.org)

URL: <http://www.hagley.org/library>

### Revision Description

Ashley Williams 2021

### Access Restrictions

No restrictions on access; this collection is open for research.

### Use Restrictions

May be used for research only. Not to be quoted or reproduced without permission of donor.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Controlled Access Headings

---

- Oral histories
- Rockland (Del.)
- Working class
- Henry Clay (Del. : Village)
- Depressions -- 1929
- Children
- Leisure
- Paper mills
- Domestic relations
- E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company
- Russell, Mary Biddle, 1922-
- Newman, Libby Goldberg, 1922-
- Clark, Sarah Phillips Brown, 1926-
- Hearne, Rodney Lee, 1923-2006
- Ewing, S. Tyson (Samuel Tyson), 1919-2010
- Braun, Thomas (1917-2003)
- Porter, Luther, 1909-2000
- Bispham, Edward K., III, 1923-2011
- Paschall, Barbara Bispham, 1931-2012
- Twier, Beatrice Goldberg, 1919-2003
- Finnie, Betty Comegys, 1922-2006
- Ayres, Eunice Bambarly, 1914-2002

---

## Collection Inventory

---

Title/Description	Instances
Reminiscences of the Rockland area by Eunice Bambarly Ayres with Grace Bambarly Walker, 1999-2002	box 1

### Biographical / Historical

Eunice Mae Bambarly was born in 1914, the daughter of John Bambarly, a carpenter, and Ada Workman, the daughter of of powder worker at the Hagley Yard of E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. A life-long resident of the Rockland area, she died on March 7, 2002, shortly after recounting her memoirs to Mary Laird Silvia.

### Scope and Contents

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Silvia from interviews conducted with Eunice and her sister Grace Bambarly Walker between 1999 and 2002. The tapes

of the interviews have not been made public. Ayres recalls her family history, neighbors, and the routines of everyday life in Rockland, an old mill village that was later surrounded by du Pont family estates. The volume includes maps of the Rockland area showing buildings and occupants and portraits of the Bambarly sisters.

---

Recollections of the Rockland paper mill, 1946-1949, by Tom Braun, undated box 1

### **Biographical / Historical**

Tom Braun was born in 1917, the son of a du Pont family chauffeur. During 1946-1949 he worked for Doeskin Products, then operators of the old Rockland Paper Mill. After that, he worked at Hearn Brothers grocery store in Talleyville. He died on July 10, 2003.

### **Scope and Contents**

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Silvia from telephone interviews and correspondence. No tape is available. Braun recalls his family history and work experiences. The bulk of the text describes operations and working life at the Rockland paper mill and social life in Rockland, Talleyville and environs. The volume included a portrait of Braun, photos of the Rockland mill, and a diagram of papermaking machinery.

---

Memories of the Nemours estate by Betty Comegys Finnie, 2000 box 1

### **Biographical / Historical**

Betty Comegys was born in 1922 and married James Bell Finnie, the son of James Finnie, an immigrant from Scotland who was a grounds manager on the Nemours estate of Alfred I. and Jessie Ball du Pont.

### **Scope and Contents**

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Silvia from several interviews. There are no tapes available to the public. Finnie recalls the lives of both her and her husband's families, particularly on the Nemours estate and its immediate environs. The volume is illustrated with family portraits and photos and plans of the "White House", which was the managers home at Nemours.

---

Writings about Rockland by Beatrice Goldberg Twer with Charles Twer, undated box 1

### **Biographical / Historical**

Beatrice Goldberg was born in 1919. Her father, Hyman Goldberg, emigrated from Poland in 1907 and operated a

country general store in Rockland, Del. from 1919 to 1951.  
Beatrice Goldberg married Charles Twer in 1941.

## Scope and Contents

The volume contains reminiscences by Twer including a biography of her father and descriptions of life in Rockland, supplemented sketched plans of buildings, family photos and news clippings.

---

Memories of Rockland Farm by Barbara Bispham Paschall and Edward K. Bispham III, 2002-2003

box 1

## Biographical / Historical

Barbara Bispham Paschall and Edward K. Bispham III were children of Edward K. Bispham, Jr., an insurance company executive, and Julia Townsend Bispham. Their maternal grandparents were L. Scott Townsend, a Wilmington banker and broker, and his wife, Nellie Balliett Dure Townsend. In 1899, the Townsends bought Rockland Farm north of Wilmington where they lived the lives of gentlemen farmers. After L. Scott Townsend's death in 1918, the farm passed to his brother Sylvester D. Townsend. Edward K. Bispham, Jr., lost his money in the stock market crash of 1929, and went to live on the farm during 1930-33.

## Scope and Contents

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Mary Laird Silvia from interviews and correspondence. No tape is available. In the interviews, the Bisphams recall their childhood days at Rockland Farm, the lives of their parents and grandparents, and country life in Rockland and vicinity before World War II. The memoir is illustrated with family portraits, scenes of rural life, and a plan of the manor house at Rockland Farm.

---

Rockland as I remeber it by H. Franklin Baker, undated

box 1

## Biographical / Historical

H. Franklin Baker was born in 1915. His father Harry F. Baker was manager of the Jessup & Moore Paper Company's Rockland mill. His mother Susan Wilson Green was a great granddaughter of Charles and Mary Gregg Lecarpentier, early owner of the mill property at Rockland. From 1941 to 1985, Baker lived at Rockcliff, the former home of Charles Lecarpentier.

## Scope and Contents

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Mary Laird Silvia from interviews, telephone calls and correspondence. No tape is available. H. Franklin Baker recalls the early history of Rockland and the properties owned by himself and his ancestors. A part of the text takes the form

of comments made on an automobile tour of the area. The text is supplemented with maps and historic photographs of Rockcliff, the Rockland mills and the mill village.

---

Growing up on Brecks Lane and at Windmar, 1909-1941, by Thomas Braun and Luther Porter, 2001-2003

box 1

### **Biographical / Historical**

Tom Braun (1917-2003) and Luther Porter (1909-2000) were both sons of chauffeurs who worked for the Laird family of Wilmington, Del., the first of Irish descent, the second African American.

### **Scope and Contents**

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Silvia from interviews and correspondence. No tape is available. Both Braun and Porter recall their parents, life in the Laird household, and growing up in the area once known as Henry Clay Village. Braun and Porter are joined by the surviving daughters of W. W. Laird, Jr. Braun narrates a driving tour of the area, describing local landmarks and remarking on the individual residents of Brecks Lane in the early 1900s. Porter describes how W. W. Laird paid for his education so that he could become a high school teacher.

---

Growing up in Rockland by S. Tyson Ewing, 2003

box 1

### **Biographical / Historical**

S. Tyson Ewing's grandfather Henry J. Ewing came from Cecil County, Md., and established a general store at Rockland, Del., which he passed on to his sons. S. Tyson "Ty" Ewing worked in the Rockland paper mill of the San-Nap-Pak Manufacturing Company but spent most of his career as a professional photographer. He died on Dec. 17, 2010 at age 91.

### **Scope and Contents**

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Silvia from telephone interviews and correspondence. No tape is available. Ewing recalls his childhood, the operation of the family general store, his work in the paper mill and local life and history of Rockland.

---

My Rockland by Rodney Lee Hearne, 2003-2004

box 1

### **Biographical / Historical**

Rodney Lee Hearne was the son of Isaac John Hearne, a tenant farmer and itinerant laborer. The family moved to Rockland, Del., in 1928, when Isaac got a job tending the boilers of the Rockland paper mill. The family was forced to vacate their house when the mill closed in 1933. Isaac got a job tending the boilers at the Du Pont Company's

Experimental Station. Rodney Hearne served in the Army in World War II and later became an employee of the Du Pont Company.

## Scope and Contents

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Mary Laird Silvia from interviews, telephone calls and correspondence. No tape is available. Hearne describes growing up in Rockland in the late 1920s and early 1930s, including the hardships of the Depression. His account focuses on a child's perspective, describing games, amusements and mischief. He describes the layout of the village, local landmarks, trolley car lines, and his neighbors, including the aviation pioneer Giuseppe Bellanca, whose son was a playmate.

---

My early years on Rockland Road by Sarah Phillips Brown Clark, 1999-2004

box 1

## Biographical / Historical

Sarah Phillips Clark was the granddaughter of Theodore and Annie Phillips and the daughter of Thomas and Gertrude Phillips who in succession occupied a truck farm on the east bank of the Brandywine Creek at Rockland, Brandywine Hundred, Delaware. The farm was rented from the Woodlawn Trustees until 1945, when the trustees sold the land to the Du Pont Country Club.

## Scope and Contents

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Mary Laird Silvia from interviews and correspondence. No tape is available. In the interviews, Clark recalls her childhood on the farm at Rockland, the rhythms and activities of farm life between about 1930 and 1945, and the neighbors and buildings along Rockland Road from Blue Ball to the village of Rockland. The memoir is illustrated with a series of schematic maps showing the buildings and the names of the occupants, plus an aerial photo of the area once occupied by the Phillips's farm.

---

Surviving Rockland by Libby Goldberg Newman, 2009

box 1

## Biographical / Historical

Libby Goldberg Newman was the daughter of Hyman and Dora Horowitz Goldberg, Russian Jewish immigrants who moved from Brooklyn, N.Y., to rural Rockland, Del., in 1918 to run a general store and the post office. She later attended the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia College of Art and became a painter. Her father's store went bankrupt 1951 under the competition from new suburban supermarkets, and he moved to Wilmington as a salesman at the Wilmington Dry Goods store.

## Scope and Contents

The memoir consists of questions and responses edited by Mary Laird Silvia from interviews, telephone calls and correspondence. No tape is available. Newman describes growing up in Rockland in the late 1920s through the 1940s, including the hardships of the Depression and the World War II years. Growing up in a rural mill village without amenities like indoor plumbing was particularly difficult for someone of an intellectual bent, and this was compounded by being the only Jewish family in town. Newman describes numerous acts of harassment and intimidation, which was compounded by class resentment of her family's modest success.

---

Born up the crick by Mary Biddle Russell, 2011

box 1

## Biographical / Historical

Mary Biddle Russell was born in 1922 on Pigeon Row in Henry Clay Village, Del., the daughter of Albert Francis Biddle, a millwright and cabinet-maker, and Mary Goldie Martin Biddle. The family later moved to Breck's Lane. Mary attended St. Joseph's-on-the-Brandywine Catholic Church and its elementary school and Alexis I. du Pont High School. The family moved from Brecks Lane in 1937.

## Scope and Contents

The memoir describes Russell's childhood in Henry Clay, including children's pastimes and school experiences. She also recounts the texture of life on Brecks Lane and the immediate vicinity as it was just after the closing of the adjacent Brandywine Works of E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. The work is illustrated with family photos, scenes of Henry Clay and vicinity, and plans of the house on Brecks Lane.