

Mr. and Mrs. Norman Schroth were interviewed in 1974 to provide background for the application to create the Capitol Hill Historic District. Any use of this material should credit the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project website for making it available. The transcript was retyped by Paula Causey in 2012 with street names and addresses edited to conform to the style used by the Overbeck Project.

Capitol Hill Interviews

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Norman Schroth

By Ruth Ann Perez and Hazel Kreinheder

November 1, 1974

The interview with Mr. and Mrs. Norman Schroth was conducted at their home at 404 Seventh Street NE.

Reel One, Side One

INTERVIEWER: I think we might begin with Mr. Schroth telling about his family home at Seventh and Maryland Avenues NE and the business his family operated.

MR. SCHROTH: I was born and raised at 702 Maryland Avenue, which is on the northeast corner. I was born and raised there approximately 70 years ago when my parents bought that property and for the last 29 years I have lived at 404 Seventh Street NE. I still have one sister residing at 702 Maryland Avenue NE and she expects to remain there. I have a niece and a nephew by marriage who are living there now with her so it will be another generation in that old home.

INTERVIEWER: Was your family the first family in that home?

MR. SCHROTH: My family was the first family. My father bought that property when it was built. He moved there after residing for a number of years—I don't know the exact number—and he raised the best part of his family at Sixth and G Streets SE, a large home on the southeast corner. He liked this property over here, so he bought this property and eventually moved his business there, which was the smoked meat business. He built the building in the rear of 702 Maryland Avenue NE where he processed meats, smoked hams and bacon and things there at that particular property. Back in those days, of course, there was horse and wagon. Eventually the building also housed motor trucks. We went out of the smoked meat business in the early 1940s during the Second World War. That building was sold to Bill Richards, who at the time was buying and restoring properties in the Capitol Hill area. I sold the property to Bill which he restored. That particular year it was named the best restored home on Capitol Hill. Of course, it has changed hands several times. [The booklet for the 1963 Capitol Hill Restoration Society house and garden tour describes the smokehouse building at 411 Seventh Street NE; that description suggests an earlier date for the building than Mr. Schroth does.]

INTERVIEWER: Who is the present occupant?

MR. SCHROTH: The present occupant is Marion Barry, he's a well-known local politician. I had a brother who died about a year ago, but his widow still lives in the 700 block of Maryland Ave NE and we still have property, other property in that area.

INTERVIEWER: Was your family in the meat processing business when you were at Sixth and G Streets SE?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where was his meat smokehouse at that time?

MR. SCHROTH: Right there in the rear of that house.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the big house with the mansard roof?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes. In fact, my grandfather was in that business, I think at the same location, and I had two uncles that were in the same line of business in Southeast Washington back better than 75 years ago. I don't know how long they were.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know what period of time your family lived in that house at Sixth and G Streets SE?

MR. SCHROTH: No, I don't. I had several brothers and sisters that were born and raised there that I don't even remember. They died before we moved to Seventh and Maryland Avenue NE. I think one girl was around 18, I don't recall now. I had two brothers, younger brothers, they were 8 or 10, 12 years of age.

MRS. SCHROTH: The three youngest ones were the ones that grew up here. You're one of eight children, aren't you?

INTERVIEWER: Do you know who built the house at Seventh and Maryland NE? Did they build it for your father?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, no. The story I used to hear him tell was that he was driving up Maryland Avenue in a horse and buggy. He stopped and he saw that house being built and he just liked the location. I guess there was some vacant property around. Anyway, he thought maybe he could establish his business. Why he left Southeast, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: That's a house that we've been trying to find out something about because it's now listed on the Historic American Buildings Survey as a synagogue and I don't believe that it ever was one.

MR. SCHROTH: I'm sorry, I don't have a little more of the history of that.

MRS. SCHROTH: Did you grandmother and grandfather live there at one time?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: When did you family first come to Washington? Your grandfather's generation or an earlier generation?

MR. SCHROTH: I think it was my grandfather's generation.

INTERVIEWER: Was your mother a native Washingtonian?

MR. SCHROTH: She was born, I understand, where Mt. Olivet Cemetery is now. And my father was born here.

INTERVIEWER: What was your father's name and also your grandfather's name?

MR. SCHROTH: Anton T. was my father. My grandfather was Charles.

INTERVIEWER: What was your mother's maiden name?

MR. SCHROTH: Nellie Conlon, she was Irish.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us about the houses on Lexington Place? Was this all vacant property?

MR. SCHROTH: It was a hill, probably 25 feet high and embraced this whole area, Seventh Street to Sixth Street NE, Maryland Avenue to D Street and over to E Street. The whole area was covered by this hill, which was known back in those days as "Active Hill." I don't know why it was called "Active Hill." That hill even had a baseball diamond on the top of it. This whole area, all these houses from Seventh to Sixth, Lexington Street bisected, between D and E Streets and it was developed by a firm, one firm, named Kennedy Brothers. When this property was being built, my father had already settled there on the corner and he purchased three of these houses on the Seventh Street side. At the time they were ... Mr. Perry was ...

INTERVIEWER: Do you know approximately when they were built? Was it before World War I?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh yes, I was born in 1905. It's just about that time. I don't think I was over 10 years of age when this property was being developed. I have a good recollection of that hill. You can tell every one of these houses are the same plan.

INTERVIEWER: Was this kind of an unusual development to have a whole square developed at one time?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't think so, not at that time. Of course, there are quite a few areas around the city developed like that. I don't know any larger areas though. I think these Kennedys developed property in the Petworth area. These row houses, now today they call them town houses.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know anything about the big houses on the south side of the 600 block of Maryland Avenue? I've heard somebody say that it was called "Doctors' Row." Did you ever hear that expression?

MR. SCHROTH: That could be true. I remember that there were three doctors residing in the one block.

Reel One, Side Two

INTERVIEWER: When did you move here Mrs. Schroth?

MRS. SCHROTH: Twenty-nine years ago, when we got married.

INTERVIEWER: Let's go back to "Doctors' Row." Is it still called that?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, sometimes. I've heard that expression, but it wasn't called that [inaudible.] I remember, let me see, Dr. Bacon. I'll have to think about the other two, but they were all there.

INTERVIEWER: Were those houses already here when you moved up here?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were those doctors associated with what is now Rogers Hospital?

MRS. SCHROTH: I can find that information out for you. Any information you want to know.

INTERVIEWER: You're on the Board?

MRS. SCHROTH: Yes, Committee of Women. Women's League Chairman.

INTERVIEWER: Possibly, they were associated with Providence because that was quite a big hospital in the area.

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, in fact, that's where all my family that had illnesses and were hospitalized went, to Providence. Of course, back in the horse and buggy days, I remember the horse drawn ambulance. The kids didn't have such a good name for Rogers Memorial back in those days. It was known, of course, as

Casualty Hospital. The kids called it "The Slaughter House." It has become a real modern hospital now. It was just a small building there on the corner.

MRS. SCHROTH: It was at Seventh and Massachusetts Avenue. The first building and then they built on to it. They've just completed the emergency \$4 million.

INTERVIEWER: Is any of the original still standing?

MRS. SCHROTH: No, the original building was at Seventh and Massachusetts Avenue NE. That's not there anymore. That was an impossible building. Of course, you know that nurses home at Sixth and Massachusetts Avenue up here, at Stanton Park. That was a nurses home for years.

INTERVIEWER: Was it always a nurses home?

MRS. SCHROTH: No, actually, I'll tell you, we have a book on it. I'll get the book for you. Any information you want about the hospital I can find.

MR. SCHROTH: I think some of the members of the staff and maybe some of Rogers family lived in that house and then it was converted to a nurses home.

MRS. SCHROTH: I think the hospital was there at one time.

INTERVIEWER: What schools did you attend, Mr. Schroth?

MR. SCHROTH: Well, I attended St. Cecilia's Academy at Sixth and East Capitol Street. They took boys up to the sixth grade. It was primarily a girl's school, but they had a separate building in the rear. That's all torn down now and there's a new building. From there I went on to St. John's College, which back in those days was on Vermont Avenue. Now it's out on Military Road. I think Dr. Nicolson [Note: This is a reference to Dr. Margaret Mary Nicolson who referred us to Mr. Schroth] might have gone to St. Cecilia's Academy. I'm pretty sure her brother did. That was a private school, parochial.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the public school? Where did most of the children go from around here?

MR. SCHROTH: They'd start off at the Edmonds School at Ninth and G Streets NE, Peabody School at Fifth and C Streets NE on Stanton Park. The Carbery was on Fifth Street between D and E Streets NE. Then they had school here at Seventh and G Streets NE. I can't think of its name, I'm sorry.

MRS. SCHROTH: Then they jumped across the street. In later years they built ...

INTERVIEWER: Where would high school children have gone?

MR. SCHROTH: Eastern. Eastern was at Seventh and Pennsylvania SE.

INTERVIEWER: There wasn't any high school in Northeast?

MR. SCHROTH: No.

INTERVIEWER: Was this area fairly well developed by the time you came here? Most of the houses were built, weren't they?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: How far out did the building go?

MR. SCHROTH: 15th Street, I would think.

INTERVIEWER: Because all of Maryland Avenue, say out to Maryland and H Street NE, was pretty well built up.

MR. SCHROTH: 15th and H was the site for the circus grounds. Back in those days they had three circuses, I believe, that visited Washington every spring. Eventually they even had circus grounds at Fifth and Florida Avenue NE, the present site of that wholesale market. That was the old Camp Meigs during the World War I period.

INTERVIEWER: Where did your family go to do its shopping?

MR. SCHROTH: When you talk to oldtimers, you talk about shopping. I think everybody went to the markets. The most famous market was torn down, the whole area was taken over by the government. The government triangle at Sixth and Pennsylvania Avenue NW that was the starting of the market area, wholesale and retail. And where the triangle is now and at Seventh and Pennsylvania to Ninth Street NW was the site of the old Centre Market, which looked like Eastern Market, individual stands and things like that. And, of course, I can remember, no refrigerated stands. Iceboxes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you family ever go up to H Street to shop? If your mother went to buy ribbons or notions?

MR. SCHROTH: H Street, oh sure, H Street back in those days, when I say those days, 35, 40 years ago, H Street was as much active business on that street as downtown, only the stores were much smaller. But, you could get anything in the world that you wanted down there and, of course, back in those days it was safe to walk to H Street. They had neighborhood movie houses, the Apollo, the Princess, and that's where everybody did most of their shopping around this area.

INTERVIEWER: They would go there rather than going over to Pennsylvania Avenue?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: When do you think that neighborhood began to deteriorate?

MRS. SCHROTH: It started when the, you know, when they started open schools. Yes, it really went down after the riots, but it started to deteriorate before 1968. I don't think we paid too much attention to it before the riots.

INTERVIEWER: Was the area north of here, between here and H Street, all built up with houses?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh yes, all the same.

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering also if you know anything about three houses east of "Doctor's Row" in the 600 block of Maryland Avenue that sit back, kind of up on a hill. They appear to be older, they have flat fronts, and they're back from the building lines of the rest of the houses, on the south side. [Note, Mr. and Mrs. Schroth did not know.]

MR. SCHROTH: Just let me go back to "Doctor's Row." I recall the other doctors' names. I told you Dr. Bacon, the others were Dr. Ruedy and Dr. Fache. 655 Maryland Avenue NE was the home of the Brahler family who were very well known in this area around that time. They owned and operated the Alhambra Restaurant on E Street which is the site of Stuart Junior High School. It was a famous open air garden type restaurant.

INTERVIEWER: Did it go with the brewery that was up there?

MR. SCHROTH: They closed down at the same time. Prohibition came into effect. That brewery was on the north side of the restaurant.

INTERVIEWER: Did they own the brewery, too?

MR. SCHROTH: No, Gus Brahler was a very well-known man in Washington business circles.

MRS. SCHROTH: In fact, I knew him when I was a child. I lived in Southwest, (inaudible) and Brahler had some kind of a wholesale store, drug supplies, on Seventh Street between B and Maryland Avenue SW. I can remember so well because every morning I went by to go to school, he'd say "Hello Missy" and I'd say "Hello, Mr. Brahler." They were very well known.

Reel Two, Side One

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me anything about the commercial building on the south side in the middle of the 600 block of Maryland Avenue NE?

MR. SCHROTH: That was built by a man by the name of Myers, Charlie Myers. He lived in the house just east of that building and he built it for a public garage for automobiles. He had parking and maybe he did a little repair work there also at that time. He was active in Northeast, too; in fact, he built the row of houses on Maryland Avenue on the south side between 11th and 12th streets, which is up on the hill. They've deteriorated quite a bit in the last few years. That was on the site of another famous hill, we had back in those days. It comprised that whole block there, "Elephant Hill."

INTERVIEWER: Why was it called "Elephant Hill?"

MR. SCHROTH: I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Was that again just a vacant hill and kids went up there and played?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, yes, it was a hill probably 25-30 feet in height, covered the whole block there.

INTERVIEWER: Was most of the rest of Maryland Avenue developed except for that one square?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Would you have considered all of that area east of where you lived to be part of the same neighborhood or was there a breaking point?

MR. SCHROTH: No, it was considered all the same neighborhood.

INTERVIEWER: Did this area have a name? Was this considered part of the Stanton Park neighborhood?

MR. SCHROTH: No, there wasn't any particular name that I can recall right now for this particular area.

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Schroth, when do you remember your first automobile?

MR. SCHROTH: Ever since I can remember we had automobiles.

INTERVIEWER: Earlier on you were talking about horses and carriages, when did this neighborhood begin to have a lot of automobiles owned by individual families?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't know just what year.

MRS. SCHROTH: I think you all had one of the first cars that was ever built, your family.

MR. SCHROTH: Well, cars were being built long before.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of car did your family have?

MR. SCHROTH: The first one I can remember, it was called an EMF.

INTERVIEWER: Did your family ever have an electric car?

MR. SCHROTH: No, I can't recall any electric. We had a Lincoln, later we had a Pierce Arrow. We always had two or three cars in the family. I remember an Elmore, that was the first one. I know it's called an EMF.

INTERVIEWER: It was an open car, like a touring car?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, I don't think they had sedans back then at all. Of course, they had Fords, Model T Fords.

INTERVIEWER: If I can get back to Maryland Avenue. I don't know that much about the 700 block, that's a rather short block as I recall, but I think Mr. Bartle said the building he owned on the south side had been a post office.

MR. SCHROTH: On that corner there, Seventh and D and Maryland, it's that triangular shaped building, that was a drugstore. First I can remember and a family by the name of Flemer owned that building. That was their home and they had the business there, the drugstore on the corner. He was there for a good number of years. He had several sons that were raised with us. We played together as kids. Then he left ... [inaudible.] He sold his store to a Dr. Bradley, a pharmacist. Finally, Dr. Bradley purchased another store at 18th and Columbia Road NW. The Flemer family moved out of that house over there. I think most of the boys are dead and Dr. Bradley's family, I never hear anything of them. Then the drugstore was taken over by Grubbs. Grubbs is now at Fourth and East Capitol. They stayed there for quite a while. I think both of those brothers are dead now, the Grubbs. I think that the drugstore still operates under their name, though.

MRS. SCHROTH: The wife still runs it, I think.

MR. SCHROTH: We had quite a few boys that were raised in this neighborhood. I was raised with two or three of them I can think of that were very prominent doctors in this area. The first one comes to mind is Howard Dumond, he lived right around the corner at 634 D Street NE. He was quite an athlete, a graduate of Eastern High School, and he went on and got his doctor's degree. He's dead now. He practiced in Northeast and Southeast. Howard Dumond, Gabby Dumond. He was quite an athlete in high

school. Then there were the two Crisp brothers. They all used to play on "Active Hill." Ed Crisp, and I forget the other one's name. It will come to my mind. They both practiced in this area. When they were growing up, they lived at Seventh and E Street NE. They were from that area. They lived on the north side. On the south side are these Kennedy built houses. I don't know whether they were born there. But they were raised as kids on the north side there and they're dead now, also.

INTERVIEWER: Did any city politicians ever live in this area, or Congressmen, anybody interesting, influential, etc.?

MR. SCHROTH: The Hettingers were business people. They were a family that were close friends of ours that lived in that property with three or four apartments in the building at Eighth and Maryland Avenue NE, on the northeast corner.

MRS. SCHROTH: He had a barroom there years ago.

MR. SCHROTH: Before prohibition, up to prohibition, he had a restaurant, I mean a well-run, a regular family place. The last of that family just died a few years ago and that property has been sold. Where the business was, it was restored into an apartment. They resided there up until their deaths. They owned several pieces of property in the 800 block adjoining their home.

MRS. SCHROTH: I called it a barroom. It was called a barroom years ago with swinging doors.

[Insert in original transcript: The following is an excerpt from "Suburban Citizen", a local newspaper, May 6, 1893, vol 3, #15, p. 1. The Library of Congress has the 1892 and 1893 issues of this publication. They also have one volume containing later years, but there is virtually no Capitol Hill information in those editions after 1893.

'Mr. William Hettinger is going to improve the northeast corner of Maryland and Eighth Street by erecting a couple of modern buildings, one to have a store-room on the first floor. Ground has already been broken.'

A photo of 800 Maryland Avenue taken by H.F. Kreinheder in the spring of 1974 is on file at NCPC.]

INTERVIEWER: What was on the southeast corner of Eighth and Maryland? That looks like it was some kind of commercial property.

MR. SCHROTH: That's right. It was a grocery store, set up on a kind of a hill. I can't recall the name. Some years ago that property was converted into that apartment, then they had that laundromat on the Maryland Avenue side of it. A very interesting building is this building here at Eighth and Maryland

Avenue on the southwest corner where the tailor shop is. That was owned by a family by the name of Schmidt. It wasn't a brewery, but they used to bottle beer there in kegs, keg beer. One of those boys is still living. I happened to run into him at services recently for one of the old neighbors. That building was converted into apartments and that tailor shop, dry-cleaning store.

MRS. SCHROTH: How long was Hardesty at Eighth and Maryland Avenue? They now have a place at 15th and East Capitol.

MR. SCHROTH: They were here in later years.

MRS. SCHROTH: He was there when I moved over here. That's not too many years, only 29.

INTERVIEWER: May I go back and ask you about the post office over there.

MR. SCHROTH: The Northeast branch was there.

INTERVIEWER: When was that built?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't know whether that was built by the Flemers or the Bradleys, but it was in later years. It was there for quite a few years. Then they moved the branch down to H Street NE, between 11th and 12th Streets. Then Mr. Bartle bought the building. He bought just the post office. He didn't buy the whole corner.

MRS. SCHROTH: There was a house there they tore down to put that building there, the smallest house on the hill, don't you remember, it had one room downstairs and one room up.

MR. SCHROTH: I don't think there's anything in that space right now, where that little house was. It went back before my time, but I know when I was a boy we had an athletic club around the area and we used to use it as a club house.

INTERVIEWER: When was it torn down?

MRS. SCHROTH: It's been many years ago. I think it was still there when I moved into the neighborhood.

MR. SCHROTH: I think the District had it torn down for sanitation purposes, you know, I don't think they had any plumbing or anything. They had the outside water spigot, there might have been an outside john.

MRS. SCHROTH: These houses here now had an outside john, in the 600 block of Maryland and D that we're talking about now. They had, when we moved in our house on Seventh Street, 29 years ago, they

had that old toilet out in that area way. We had full plumbing in the house, also. The little houses on Maryland Avenue, the three little houses, they had outside toilets there, too.

INTERVIEWER: What three little houses are you talking about on Maryland Avenue?

MRS. SCHROTH: The houses we own.

MR. SCHROTH: Number 704, 706, and 708.

INTERVIEWER: What date period are those?

MR. SCHROTH: They go way back.

INTERVIEWER: They're earlier than the one you lived in as a child?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, yes, oh my lord, yes. We were discussing that because we're in the process of restoring one of those houses, it's vacant now, we're going to renovate it and we were discussing the date.

MRS. SCHROTH: It must be at least a hundred years old.

INTERVIEWER: Have you pulled your deed to get your permit or anything like that?

MRS. SCHROTH: Oh, no, we just have an architect that's doing plans for us.

INTERVIEWER: When you get your deed out to have him file for the permit and so on, have him find out what the earliest [inaudible] is on record for those houses. I presume they were all built at the same time.

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

MRS. SCHROTH: The house at 716, a woman by the name of Redman bought that house just recently and did a restoration job there. That was supposed to be the oldest house around here.

MR. SCHROTH: That was owned by a family that owned this property at the corner of Seventh and D Streets, that would be the southeast corner. Their name was Symanoskie. They were in the tinning and roofing business.

[Note: Joseph Symanoskie is listed in Boyd's 1895 Washington Directory at 333 Seventh Street NE. He was in the tinning business. HFK 8 November 1974.]

INTERVIEWER: Is that house you're talking about at Seventh and D the one that's called the "Tin House." Is it all tin inside, walls, ceilings, etc.? Somewhere in this neighborhood, there's supposed to be a house that has tin all over the interior.

MRS. SCHROTH: I don't know.

MR. SCHROTH: They owned that property that she just mentioned at 716 and that was supposed to be one of the oldest houses in this area. We had another family in that block, at 726 Maryland Avenue. Mary Pitts moved about five or six years ago. That family was in the house at 726 Maryland for a hundred, over a hundred years.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any members of that family still alive?

MR. SCHROTH: There's one, that is Mary Pitts.

MRS. SCHROTH: They don't live there, they sold the house. She lives in Falls Church. I talk with Mary once in awhile.

INTERVIEWER: We'd like to get her address and drop her a note. She might have some ideas of things she'd like to tell us when she was here or things that she heard her parents tell.

MRS. SCHROTH: I could see what she would remember because her mind is very good. Mary must be 85. We haven't talked with her for some time.

MR. SCHROTH: It was a very large family. Mary is the only one of her generation that's living.

INTERVIEWER: Speaking of little houses, there is a little frame house on the north side of Stanton Park, there's an income tax place on the corner of Sixth and C Street NE, then there is a little white frame house. Do you know, is that a real old one, too?

MR. SCHROTH: That's the house that the old lady lived in that had a fire.

MRS. SCHROTH: Oh, yes, Mrs. Davis. She had a fire.

Reel Two, Side Two

MRS. SCHROTH: I think it's a real old one.

MR. SCHROTH: She became very senile.

MRS. SCHROTH: I doubt she could even talk to you. [Note: Mrs. Schroth did later offer to call Mrs. Davis to see what she could find out.]

INTERVIEWER: Going along the north side of Stanton Park between Fifth and Fourth Streets, there's a row of 4 or 5 very tall red brick buildings that have never been painted. Somebody told me ESSO owned all those buildings. [Note: The Schroths didn't know anything about those buildings.]

MRS. SCHROTH: A funeral home was in one of those houses.

MR. SCHROTH: That was between Fifth and Sixth, just this side of the AMOCO station. That's the first house.

MRS. SCHROTH: The only tall houses I know would be the ones east of that AMOCO station.

INTERVIEWER: How about on the south side of the park, there's Peabody School. Across on the other side is a huge building that has presently been converted into a couple of real estate offices.

MRS. SCHROTH: That was the Stanton restaurant.

INTERVIEWER: What was it before it was the Stanton restaurant?

MRS. SCHROTH: I don't know.

MR. SCHROTH: Stanton Grill they called it. You know the Stanton Grill there, well, right up Fifth Street, midway in that block there used to be a large vacant lot that was at one time an open air movie theater.

INTERVIEWER: Was that before the Stanton Theatre?

MR. SCHROTH: No, both the Stanton Theatre and that open air theatre we had were owned by the same man. He was Philips. He was a well-known character from around this area. He had one arm and he lived next door to the next house at 658 D Street NE. He made that house into two residences. He was also an announcer out at the ballpark; that's before they had the loudspeaker system. He used to get out there with a megaphone and call out the names of the pitching, the batteries for the game that afternoon. Of course, those games were all afternoon games back in those days. That was the old Griffith Stadium.

INTERVIEWER: He was calling for the Senators?

MRS. SCHROTH: Oh, yes. He had a booming voice and he used to work the World Series back in those days because that is before they had the loudspeaker systems.

INTERVIEWER: Did he own any other theatres?

MR. SCHROTH: No. He died about ten years ago. We were good friends up until the time he died.

INTERVIEWER: How did he lose his arm?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't know.

MRS. SCHROTH: What carnival was he with?

MR. SCHROTH: I was just going to come to that. Up until the time he died, he was the owner of the Johnny Jones Circus and Carnival. I don't know whether you recall Johnny Jones. They used to visit Washington. Johnny J. Jones. Their home grounds were in Deland, Florida. As far as carnivals go, it was a large outfit. He and the widow of Johnny Jones operated this carnival and they used to tour, I know, the whole eastern part of the United States. He was well-known among folks here. When the circus came to Washington, it was always like old homecoming day. We used to have little parties out at the circus grounds in the wagons where he had the office. He was a well-known character around the city.

INTERVIEWER: What was Stanton Park like? Did the children play there or was it mostly ornamental?

MRS. SCHROTH: It was a beautiful park. We used to walk our dog up there every evening. We could walk around here any hour of the night. It didn't make any difference if it was one or two o'clock in the morning. We were never afraid to walk.

MR. SCHROTH: At our old home at the corner of Seventh and Maryland Avenue, when I was a kid, raised around here and my mother and father were living, we never had any keys to front doors or locks or anything. Now in recent years, they've got as many as three locks on a door over there and they're still pestered. They've been broken into several times.

INTERVIEWER: What was Eighth Street like? Did that have a lot of commercial all up and down it?

MR. SCHROTH: Eighth Street, no.

MRS. SCHROTH: I have heard this, that years ago there was a store, what was it? Wahls? Where Millers furniture store is now.

MR. SCHROTH: Near Seventh and Pennsylvania Avenue SE?

MRS. SCHROTH: Haines is what I'm trying to say, and you could buy anything there, anything at all.

INTERVIEWER: Did you come from Southwest to shop up there?

MRS. SCHROTH: No.

INTERVIEWER: When did they go out of business?

MRS. SCHROTH: I can't remember. Miller had that store there at least fifty years ago. I know this because I lived in Southeast for a while.

INTERVIEWER: What other store were you talking about?

MR. SCHROTH: You mentioned Wahls. That was at Seventh and H Street NE. They had a nice beautiful home here at the corner of Seventh and F Street NE. They built that home at Seventh and F Street which was much nicer than most of the other homes.

MRS. SCHROTH: That was Dr. Young's, the dentist's house, because he bought it from Wahls.

INTERVIEWER: Where would you say was the most important house, the house that was most looked up to in this whole neighborhood? You said that was a better house, a prettier house than most of the houses.

MRS. SCHROTH: I wouldn't say prettier.

INTERVIEWER: Grander, maybe? Where would you say was the house that had the most prestige?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Was this neighborhood composed of mostly middle income, comfortably situated families?

MR. SCHROTH: Right. I guess the most affluent people we had in this neighborhood were around the 300 block of Maryland Avenue. There were homes up there, old homes, and they had quite a few of the old families of Washington.

MRS. SCHROTH: The Schroths years ago were certainly affluent people.

INTERVIEWER: Can you think of anybody specific on Maryland Avenue that you'd like to mention who lived in the 300 block?

MR. SCHROTH: No, I can't recall any names.

INTERVIEWER: Ruth Ann, what about that man that you've been trying to find out about on D Street? What block was that?

RUTH ANN PEREZ: I think it was around the 400 block and I don't know whether it was on a number street or a letter street. There's a reference, I don't have a name, I don't have an address or anything else.

I think it was on the north side of the 400 block of D Street as best as I've been able to pin-point it. Supposedly, a Secretary of State lived there at one time. But now this may have been earlier than you.

INTERVIEWER: But you said that he came out in his white shoes and his white duck pants. That would be turn of the century, wouldn't it?

MRS. SCHROTH: Must have been.

MR. SCHROTH: The 400 block on the north side, I knew a family that lived in that house. I think they have more or less restored that property in there. Family by the name of Miller. That would be on the southeast corner of Fourth and D Streets NE.

INTERVIEWER: There's also another interesting building over toward that neighborhood and I think it must have been a commercial property. It would be on the northeast corner of Fifth and D and it's now painted a bright pink color. It's quite large, it's been recently restored. It has a kind of pointed tower on the front of it.

MRS. SCHROTH: I think there was a colored church there for a while.

MR. SCHROTH: I think there was a store there at one time.

INTERVIEWER: There's a church here that faces Stanton Park, gray stone. I don't know what it is now, but I understand years back it was some other denomination.

MRS. SCHROTH: Was it Presbyterian? They went over to southeast.

INTERVIEWER: Were you in St. Joseph's Parish?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: We need to find out some information from St. Joseph's Church. That was a very interesting church.

MR. SCHROTH: I tell you, I've a book.

INTERVIEWER: What were the geographic boundaries of the parish? Correct me if I'm wrong, St. Joseph's was originally built as a German church, wasn't it?

MR. SCHROTH: I'm going to show you a little memento I have.

MRS. SCHROTH: He's real proud of it.

MR. SCHROTH: My sister gave this to me several months ago when she was getting ready for this restoration work there in the old home. You mentioned something about St. Joseph's Church that brought this to my mind, this gold headed cane. This was presented to my grandfather Charles Schroth by his friends at St. Joseph's fair April 18, 1887. [Note: The preceding is from the inscription on the head of the cane, which MR. SCHROTH read to us.] I don't remember my grandfather. Like you mentioned, St. Joseph's was founded by old German families, in fact, back some years ago they celebrated their centennial year; 1868, that's when it was founded, to 1968. This was the program or brochure, whatever you want to call it. You can take that and look at it. I suppose they have records up there.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you that. I have talked to a couple of churches that go back. I would like to find out about the old church records because it could be very helpful for us to locate people and where they lived on the hill.

MR. SCHROTH: There were two Catholic churches on the hill that date back that far, that's St. Peter's and St. Joseph's.

INTERVIEWER: What are those papers you have in your lap?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, I just happened to pick these up. Like I told you, we were in the wholesale meat and retail smoked meat business and I ran across these old invoices. This invoice is made out to a grocery man who had a store at 16th and U Street SE by the name of Burch. The date was September 8, 1934. His order consisted of three smoked hams weighing 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds at 23 cents a pound, and 10 pounds of sliced bacon at 30 cents a pound. I'm just hanging on to these things. On July 17, the wholesale price of ham was just 21 cents a pound and the sliced bacon was 24 cents a pound.

INTERVIEWER: Getting back to St. Joseph's, I think that for most Catholic churches the members come from an area within what's called the parish of the church. Because St. Joseph's was a German church were there boundaries or was it just for Germans who lived anyplace?

MR. SCHROTH: I think, of course, every parish has its boundaries. I think the German Catholic church that predated St. Joseph's was St. Mary's that was on Fifth Street NW, between G and H. I believe some of those parishioners came over here and were active in this parish over here.

INTERVIEWER: I have heard, and it may be in this booklet, that when they built St. Joseph's, they built such a solid foundation on the place that they ran out of money before they could finish building the church. Is that true?

MR. SCHROTH: That possibly could be. They have a history of it, of course. St. Joseph's had its school there. I think the school probably started the same time the church was built.

INTERVIEWER: Was the school still open when you were little?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Then why did you go to St. Cecilia's?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't know. I guess maybe some of my family, the older family from Southeast went to St. Cecilia's and we moved over here and there were three in the family that I recall, this present sister of mine and the brother that died about a year ago, we all went to St. Cecilia's. I was born in St. Joseph's parish, but when I was getting some records for my social security back a few years ago, I had to get my birth records, baptismal records from St. Peter's, I was christened there. I was born just a few months after they moved in this home here.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know anything about some kind of bottling factory that was in the 600 block of C Street?

Reel Three, Side One

INTERVIEWER: Is it in the interior of the block?

MR. SCHROTH: No, on the north side closer to Seventh Street. Sue, you know where Johnny Thompson lived there? He was an old friend and neighbor of ours. He was in the parking business also and the vegetable business. The name of the bottling company was Herrmann, they had a very large business.

INTERVIEWER: Did the building where they actually did the bottling set back from C Street?

MR. SCHROTH: I think it did set back a little.

INTERVIEWER: The reason I ask is because somebody has a house that faces C Street. Apparently, she's renting that out and she has fixed up a building behind it in the alley or something. She was living in it and they said no, you have to have a zoning variance to turn the place into a residence. I think it must be the old bottling factory. I thought Herrmann bottling factory was down by Tyler School.

MR. SCHROTH: They moved from here to Southeast.

MRS. SCHROTH: They made ginger ale.

MR. SCHROTH: They made all kinds of soft drinks. Nickel a bottle.

[Note: In a conversation with H.F. Kreinheder, 12 November 1974, Mrs. Freda Murray, Mr. Herrmann's daughter, stated that the only bottling plant which her family owned was located on Tenth Street SE. She was aware of the existence of the plant in the 600 block of C Street NE, but said that it had never belonged to her family.]

INTERVIEWER: Has Christ Child House always been on the site where it now is or was something else there? [2014 note: 608 Massachusetts Avenue NE]

MR. SCHROTH: It's been there quite a few years. It opened up there a good while after I was young. I don't recall just exactly when. I don't recall whether they tore down some houses to put that building there or not, or whether it was a vacant lot. I can't seem to think of there ever being a vacant spot there. Could have been though.

MRS. SCHROTH: What about that property at Sixth and Stanton Park that was the nurses home? Do you know what they're going to do with that?

INTERVIEWER: First they wanted to build four town houses and asked for all kinds of variances. Then they agreed to ask for only three town houses, one facing the park, one facing Massachusetts, and I can't remember how the other one was going to go. I don't know how it worked out.

MR. SCHROTH: I understood that they were supposed to start that building there around the first of October.

MRS. SCHROTH: You know why they sold that building. It was the nurses home. It was a beautiful home, old home, two homes. It just deteriorated so that finally it would cost so much to restore it that it wouldn't be worthwhile doing it.

INTERVIEWER: What is the story on the building on the corner of Sixth and Maryland that is all boarded up?

MR. SCHROTH: That old apartment?

MRS. SCHROTH: Someone told me that that church had bought it.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the church on the corner of Sixth and C?

MRS. SCHROTH: No, the church that's facing Maryland. [inaudible]

MR. SCHROTH: What's that man's name? He owns quite a bit of property on the south side of Maryland Avenue and also on the north side of that block. He lives down in North Carolina now. He had an office there at Sixth and Maryland Avenue where that little tax office is. Who seemed to know something about him?

MRS. SCHROTH: Sealander, he is a real estate man, in this area. He's been around our houses I don't know how many times. I gave him a couple of pieces of property on the hill to sell, the Brahler house for one and a piece of property on D Street.

INTERVIEWER: Does anyone else come to your mind that you'd like to mention that lived anywhere in this neighborhood that we haven't asked about?

MRS. SCHROTH: Lexington Place was a beautiful street when we moved here. Who was the dentist up there, Norman? Dr. Biggs was on D Street.

MR. SCHROTH: Dr. Palmer, on Lexington Place.

INTERVIEWER: Did he have his office there?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where on D Street was Dr. Biggs?

MRS. SCHROTH: Between Sixth and Seventh. The 600 block of D Street. His widow is still there. I tell you maybe she could produce some information. She is 85 or 86. She still lives there alone. She's a very lovely person.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever remember horse drawn trolley cars or anything like that that serviced this area to downtown? Somebody told us that there was one that went down along Lincoln Park, where it went from there they didn't know.

MR. SCHROTH: I don't remember any horse drawn, but I remember the trolley cars that used to run on Eighth Street from the Navy Yard. The same as the bus line now. It went on out to Seventh and G Street. They used to run from Seventh and Pennsylvania Avenue. There were two trolley cars attached together.

INTERVIEWER: Were they electric?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, electric.

INTERVIEWER: How far back do you remember those?

MR. SCHROTH: I was quite small. Later on we had the open air street cars that ran on that line.

INTERVIEWER: How about the ones that would have come up Massachusetts and across D?

MR. SCHROTH: Right here, there's a bus line, the 42 line.

INTERVIEWER: Was that a trolley line before a bus line?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, 13th and D Street. They were always known as 13th and D.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't there some kind of building up there at around 12th, 13th and D that was the old railway building?

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, sure, the old car barn.

INTERVIEWER: I thought the old car barn was up by where Hechinger's is.

MR. SCHROTH: Oh, there was one at 15th and Maryland Avenue. It was just in the last few years they tore that down. This other one was at 13th and D Street. That was torn down years ago. I remember they had a terrible fire out there when I was a kid. That was the end of the line. Back in those days we had two companies, we had the Washington Railway and Electric and we had the Capitol Traction Company.

INTERVIEWER: Could you transfer from one to the other?

MR. SCHROTH: I don't think you could.

MRS. SCHROTH: I still think I have some of those old tickets.

MR. SCHROTH: Six for a quarter. Each line had their own tickets. Then they merged. I think that was one of the big features of merger, I mean, you could transfer from one line to the other.

INTERVIEWER: Did they both have lines in this area or was it all Washington Electric?

MR. SCHROTH: This D Street line here, that was Washington Railway and Electric, and the Eighth Street was Capitol Traction.

INTERVIEWER: There's one reference to a St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church in St. Joseph's booklet. Where was that located?

MR. SCHROTH: North Capitol and I Streets, right below the post office. It's still there.

INTERVIEWER: The booklet refers to Father Wiget.

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, he was one of the Jesuits.

INTERVIEWER: He was one of the first ones up at St. Joseph's. It referred to the fact that he was so close to this property at St. Joseph's. I was not aware that North Capitol and I Street would be so close to St. Joseph's.

MR. SCHROTH: That's the old Swampoodle, a lot of Irish lived in Swampoodle.

INTERVIEWER: Speaking of North Capitol brings to mind Union Station. Somebody has told me there was a playground someplace near Union Station. Where was it, where the plaza is now?

MR. SCHROTH: Just to the east of Union Station, the old Terminal playground.

INTERVIEWER: Did it have equipment on it or was it just open space?

MR. SCHROTH: Open space. I mean, they had a baseball diamond, that's how large it was. And just over here at Massachusetts Avenue and D Street, where the Southern Railway building is, there's a government office there now, the government is getting ready to tear that down. There was a big parking area space in there. That area was playground also.

INTERVIEWER: Just open space, also?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, and during World War I they had a large building there; it was originally called a tabernacle. It wasn't a permanent building there. That's where Billy Sunday used to preach.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the block where the Monocle Restaurant is now?

MR. SCHROTH: Yes, that's what I was driving at. I was trying to identify the area by the old Southern Railway building, which is now a government building.

INTERVIEWER: That brings to mind something else. Schott's Alley is on that square. Were there any other alleys that you recall, that were inhabited? I know most of them have been demolished.

MRS. SCHROTH: Well, there's Browns. I think they're new.

MR. SCHROTH: They are old buildings that have been restored.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other inhabited alleys in Northeast?

MR. SCHROTH: What we'd call street up here. We referred to them mostly as alleys. They're restoring all that property now. Morris Place and Acker Street would have been considered alleys.

INTERVIEWER: Did black or white people live there?

MR. SCHROTH: Black.

INTERVIEWER: Were the buildings on those streets pretty run down?

MR. SCHROTH: I would say so. There were quite a few streets like Acker Street.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know why it was called Acker Street? Was it named after the builder?

MR. SCHROTH: No, I don't know.

End Reel Three

We all walked down to Seventh and Maryland Avenue NE where Mr. Schroth showed us a number of the buildings about which he had spoken. In addition, he mentioned that the house at 710, in which his sister-in-law is still living, was built by his father about 1918. He also said that Symanoskie owned the corner lot at Seventh and Maryland and that it had a board fence around it. Symanoskie would never sell the property to his father, but after he died his daughter sold it to the Schroths.

END OF INTERVIEW

Washington Post, October 8, 1987, death notice attached to original transcript

SCHROTH, NORMAN C.

On Monday, October 5, 1987, at Greenbelt Nursing Center, Norman C. Schroth of Capitol Hill, the beloved husband of Sue E. Schroth; devoted father of June L. Logan; father-in-law of Joseph A. Logan; loving grandfather of Susan Redman and Joseph Logan, Jr.; also survived by a loving niece, Mary Dyer, and many nieces and nephews. Friends may call at the Lee Funeral Home, 4th St and Mass. Ave NE, Capitol Hill (parking on premises) on Thursday 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 pm. Mass of Christian Burial will be offered at St. Joseph's Church, 2nd and C Street NE, Capitol Hill, Friday, October 9, 1 pm. Interment Mt Olivet Cemetery.