



**Berkshire Historical Society at Herman Melville's Arrowhead**  
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**Invisible Community Project**  
in partnership with  
**Housatonic Heritage Oral History**

**Minnie Golden**  
**Recorded: January 22, 1998**  
**0:00:00 to 43:55**

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**Elaine Gunn:**

Today's date is January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1998. Mrs. Golden has kindly consented to give an interview for our oral history project. Thank you, Mrs. Golden.

To begin with, I'd like to ask you some questions about your family background. For instance, who your parents were, and where they were born, and why they came to Massachusetts from wherever they came from. Especially, why did they come to Berkshire County. So, if you want to, just talk a little bit about your parents, and who they were, and their names, and that kind of thing.

**Minnie Golden:**

My parents didn't live around here. They're from Sharon, Connecticut.

0:00:59

My grandmother was Mary Moran, and she was born in Sheffield, England. She was a nanny to a lawyer in Sheffield, England. He wanted to come to Lakeville. So he came down through Canada, Newfoundland, years ago. They came down. Whatever you wanted to call it.

Coming down through, my grandmother, how in the world she ever met this Indian on this reservation, I'll never know. But anyway, somehow or other, they met. And grandma came down here with lawyer Warner, who had a business between Lakeville and Salisbury. Well, I don't know which it was, Salisbury perhaps. And Grandpa Mill followed her down here.

0:02:03

He was an Indian. He belonged to the Schaghticoke tribe.

**Elaine Gunn:**

And your grandmother was a white lady from...?

**Minnie Golden:**

She was a white lady from England. Sheffield, England. Of course, then, they landed in different parts of, maybe, Lakeville, and Salisbury. Now, grandma had—let me see, she had Aunt Jess, Aunt Lynn, Uncle George, Uncle Albert, Aunt Minnie. She had one child that passed. They lived in the area. Lakeville, on Sharon Road, from Sharon coming to Lakeville. One of those little houses there.

0:03:02

Then, I guess, Grandpa Mill was loading hay, fell off in the hayfield. So I'm told. Broke his back, and back those days, they didn't know anything about mending any back, so he passed.

Grandma—I don't know how old the children were. She had one young, Uncle Jim, and he jumped on a wagon, and the [cogs? 0:03:35] went right around, broke his leg. But grandma kept those kids together, as long as she could. They all sort of grew up together. Then she passed. Somehow or other, my father met my mother, who's name was Elizabeth Anthony.

0:04:00

**Elaine Gunn:** Was he Indian or white?

**Minnie Golden:** No, she was a mulatto.

**Elaine Gunn:** Mulatto.

**Minnie Golden:** Yes. Her father was a black man, but her mother was French. So, there is that mixture of grandma and the Indians, and my mother as a mulatto. And that's on my birth certificate. My father's an Indian, and my mother's a mulatto.

**Elaine Gunn:** Now when did they come here, to this part? I noticed that they were in Connecticut. At one point...?

**Minnie Golden:** They didn't come here. They never lived here. It was only Corny's people that lived here. Mr. and Mrs. Golden. Yeah, Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Golden.

**Elaine Gunn:** Your husband's family.

**Minnie Golden:** My husband, through—my Uncle Albert met the two Golden girls, Betsie and Abbie, and through him, I met my husband, Corny. We called him Corny, but his name was Cornelius.

0:05:10

So, I have lived here for a period of 65 years.

**Elaine Gunn:** Why did you come here? Remember why you came? Did you come because you got married, or did you come because...?

**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, I was married. I left from Sharon, and I went to live with an aunt in South Norwalk. I left my boyfriend, he was at that time. I left him up here, I went on about my business. But he came to South Norwalk, because Uncle Al was his uncle. With us being together like that, we're married. In Port Chester, New York.

0:06:00 Mr. and Mrs. Golden lived here, and so after a while, Corny and I came back up here. Mr. Golden started this home. It was just a little box of a house, three rooms. But as time went on, Corny built on, built on, so we have this [0:06:19].

**Elaine Gunn:** Do you know when that was? How many years ago that was, when Mr. Golden came here to live?

**Minnie Golden:** Well, it must have been about 50 years ago. Because, see, my children were all, except Shirley May, they were all born from around—in the hospitals, Canaan, [0:06:39].

**Elaine Gunn:** So it was probably more than 50 years then, would you say?

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes. Of course it was. Because Shirley May is 67, and Caroline's 65. And Shirley May was a baby. So you can see that I've been here many moons.

0:07:00

**Elaine Gunn:** As they say, yes. So then, you came to this part of the country because your husband's family lived here.

**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, right.

**Elaine Gunn:** It was also to help you get started on a job, or just...?

**Minnie Golden:** Yes, because after we came here—let me see—my husband got a job with Pete Scroll[sp?]. They both were young people. Pete built his business up, and Corny worked along with him, and helped him build it up. He did many different things. He put stones in the cemetery, and he put in foundations.

Over a period of years, Corny got interested in carpentry work. We had a neighbor, who's name was Mr.—don't remember what was his name.

0:08:04 Anyway, he was a carpenter. So he taught Corny many things, how to [read the room? 0:08:09]. Mr. Sibenelow[sp?].

**Elaine Gunn:** That was here in Sheffield?

**Minnie Golden:** That was in Sheffield. Of course, Corny then got so he could build houses on his own.

**Elaine Gunn:** Corny is your husband. You called him Corny.

**Minnie Golden:** Yes, that was my husband. He built about four or five houses here in Sheffield. I went to a tag sale, to two of these houses. Which was close together. And I asked them how their houses

were standing up. And they said, “well, our house stands up very well.” And I said, “well, you know, my husband built this house. And the studs are just 12 inches apart.”

0:09:00

Corny didn't know how to cut corners, so he put a lot of material in these houses that he built.

**Elaine Gunn:** Make it sturdy. The foundation.

**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, very, very sturdy.

**Elaine Gunn:** Wonderful. Now do you have any sisters or brothers?

**Minnie Golden:** I have one sister. She's not well, so she lives with her daughter, Emiloo[sp?], in New Jersey. That's all.

**Elaine Gunn:** So, some of your family, they have left the area. You said your sister lives in New Jersey.

**Minnie Golden:** Mm-hmm. Well, that's all. That's all that I have. Well, I've got a lot of other relatives, but those kids came up in the white world. So they don't wish to be mingled in with us. That's their choice. Who cares.

**Elaine Gunn:** Did they live with you when you were growing up though, these...?

0:10:00

**Minnie Golden:** No, no. My sister married a Catholic, so she turned Catholic. And back in those days, the Catholic children played with the Catholic children. They sort of were by themselves. So, really, my children and they don't really know one another. That distance, apart. That was their choice, so they're welcome to it. As far as I'm concerned.

**Elaine Gunn:** That happens sometimes. You were married then in Norwalk, Connecticut you said?

**Minnie Golden:** No, I was married in Port Chester, New York.

**Elaine Gunn:** And how many children do you have?

**Minnie Golden:** I had eight. But then I lost three of them. I lost Bob, [0:10:55], and—

**Elaine Gunn:** I remember that. Very sad.

0:11:00

**Minnie Golden:** —yeah, John. John—that was a terrible—poor John. He got afflicted with alcohol and no matter what you said or tried to do, you couldn't change his mind around. He left out of here in a sad way, which really kind of broke my heart.

**Elaine Gunn:** They never really found out what happened. He was drowned.

**Minnie Golden:** Well, he [0:11:36] I think this is what he planned himself anyway. Because, when I talked to Dr. Blaisey[sp?], he said, “well, John didn't have any water in his lungs, so he couldn't have drowned.” He thinks that he had a seizure. He said that the medical exam showed that he had very little water in his lungs.

0:12:00 It was sad. But then the story went out around, that was awful. That, this one drowned him, and that one drowned him. Nobody drowned John. John drowned himself.

It was sad. It was really, really sad. And it was really, really sad for his friends.

**Elaine Gunn:** For his family. For his mother.

**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, uh-huh. Well. And everybody seemed to know John.

**Elaine Gunn:** You saw him always around town.

**Minnie Golden:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. So, it was too bad that he couldn't see another side of life. But he didn't, so. Then of course, my oldest son, Bob, was killed in an automobile accident. And then, [Teran? 0:12:55] passed [0:12:56].

**Elaine Gunn:** Tragic disease.

**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, uh-huh.

0:12:59

**Elaine Gunn:** I remember the older son too. [0:13:02] in Connecticut, on Avon, Mountain, or something, in Connecticut?

**Minnie Golden:** Who is that?

**Elaine Gunn:** Your older son, John...

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, no. Bob was the oldest son. He was killed in an automobile accident in Hartford.

**Elaine Gunn:** Yeah, I thought it was in Connecticut. I remember that. Some years ago.

- Minnie Golden:** Oh, I guess so.
- Elaine Gunn:** Well, tell me about your growing up. Your memories about—did you go to church gatherings or...?
- Minnie Golden:** When I was a kid?
- Elaine Gunn:** When you were a kid.
- Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes, yes. My mother—I was baptized in the Congregation Church. My mother and father both went to Congregation Church, and there I was baptized. It was—I was playing basketball.
- 0:13:53 *Sound cuts out*
- Elaine Gunn:** ...high school.
- Minnie Golden:** [0:13:55] Sharon.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, in Sharon.
- Minnie Golden:** Because I was from Sharon, see. I lived in Sharon.
- 0:14:00 And then, we got on as kids get on. I had one special friend, but poor—her maiden name was Gert Meyer. And her husband played in the Episcopal Church, [organ? 0:14:23]. But I haven't seen Gert for two or years, and I'm just wondering. Otherwise, all the rest of my schoolmates, I guess, are gone.
- Elaine Gunn:** That does happen. But all of your children went to school here, in Sheffield?
- Minnie Golden:** Yeah, they all went to school in Sheffield. [0:14:47] Shirley May graduated from the Center school, which is now the library. Caroline from Mt. Everett. And the rest of them. They all graduated. I got them that far.
- 0:15:10 My parents weren't interested in them going to school. They didn't think they needed an education. But I stuck to my guns, and they all got their—right down to the grandsons. Two of them, that I brought up.
- And they're happy. It was a ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, but I got them through anyway. So that they were able to throw their caps up, in the air. And now they have to say how thankful they are.
- Elaine Gunn:** To you. Are you a member of any religious organization now, or any other...?

0:15:59

**Minnie Golden:** No. I found that I go, once in a while, to the luncheons. Today was a luncheon. At—what [0:16:12] used to be? Red Pepper? Not Red Pepper, what is that?

**Elaine Gunn:** Caesar's, was it Caesar's?

**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, that was Caesar's. It's [0:16:23], it's Caesar's. Now, well, it's a restaurant I guess. There's where the senior citizens went today for luncheon. It was a roast beef sandwich or a chicken sandwich, and I didn't see seven dollars running uphill backwards, because I thought that was really expensive for a sandwich.

**Elaine Gunn:** But occasionally you do go to...?

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes. And we all enjoy ourselves.

0:17:00 I like to go because I like to look over the situation. And I, myself, are 88-years old.

**Elaine Gunn:** Are you really? I don't believe that. You are?

**Minnie Golden:** Yes, I'm born 1910.

**Elaine Gunn:** No one would ever know it.

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, my word. Oh, mercy. All these wrinkles. And I had to register—I had to get my license removed. Let me see, Margaret took me last Wednesday. Well, honest and truly, they take your picture, and that first picture, I looked just like an Indian squaw. I said to that woman, "oh, what a [0:17:51] picture." She said, "you want me to take it again?" Because I was looking—so now, I come up with a false, I guess, smile.

0:18:05 But somehow or other, they did a pretty good job of it. Not too bad a job of it. Because somehow or other, they rubbed out the wrinkles.

**Elaine Gunn:** Oh, well good for them.

**Minnie Golden:** Yes, yes. I got to show you this picture. They did. I was surprised to see it myself. Because the first picture was horrible. So now, I told you all I know about my livelihood.

**Elaine Gunn:** Well, no. You did say, you had a special friend at school. But what else do you remember about your schooling? Your going to school in Sharon.

**Minnie Golden:** It was just an ordinary going to school. Once in a while, they'd burn the school down. A couple of times, they burnt—they'd call it a fire[bug? or bomb? 0:18:51] or something.

**Elaine Gunn:** [referring to photo] That's good. That's very nice.

**Minnie Golden:** See, they rubbed the wrinkles out. And that false smile.

0:19:03

**Elaine Gunn:** Very nice.

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, get out of here.

**Elaine Gunn:** But no, I would not have known. I would not have guessed that you were 88, Mrs. Golden. Not at all.

**Minnie Golden:** Well, here I am, anyway. But I am so ashamed of myself.

**Elaine Gunn:** Well, you shouldn't be at all.

**Minnie Golden:** I am, because you did say you was coming. When you called on the phone, I wasn't dressed, but I said, I better set the house to a little better shape than it is.

**Elaine Gunn:** But I'm just coming to interview you, not to look at your house or anything else.

**Minnie Golden:** No, I know that. You do have some pride. And I lost that, by not worrying to put on some clothes.

**Elaine Gunn:** No, no. You're at home and being very comfortable.

I would be interested if you could remember any of your school experiences at all, anything at all, that might shed light on what your life was like, going to school in Sharon, Connecticut.

0:19:56

**Minnie Golden:** It wasn't any different than what you would go to school. You went from first grade, right on up to—and you just played around with the kids. And that was it. There was no special activities. Maybe basketball.

**Elaine Gunn:** As you got older.

**Minnie Golden:** As you got older. But that's it.

**Elaine Gunn:** Was it just one building, from first grade to twelfth grade?



**Minnie Golden:** Yeah, the first one, the first house. The schoolhouse—the one they burnt down, the boy burnt down. After a while, they rebuilt that school. I guess it's still there as a school, I'm not sure. I think it's got to be. I don't know of any other school in Sharon.

**Elaine Gunn:** What was the mix of children, white or mulatto or African-American? Do you remember?

0:21:00

**Minnie Golden:** There was only one girl. Two. When I went to school. There was just the two Caesars. There was Mary Caesar and Raymond. Then there was just Florence and I, and my sister Bee. She went—while we were in the lower grades, Bee was the oldest, so she was in high school. It was a small community.

**Elaine Gunn:** And you finished school there in Sharon?

**Minnie Golden:** Yes. Florence finished school. I was the flower girl for Florence. But it was just like—no great activities. We had the opening at school, which I think should all schools have—we had the teacher, “good morning, boys and girls,” and we had the school prayer.

0:22:00

We also had to get up and say—each one of us took a turn I think in the morning, every other morning or every morning, to say—I don't know what it was, but it was...

**Elaine Gunn:** A bible verse or something?

**Minnie Golden:** No. Well, it could have been, a bible verse. I remember one—his name was Eric Shultz[sp?], and I also remembered that, because he'd get up and he was a big, lumbering guy, and his voice was always, “I'm [0:22:41].” And he grew to be one of the biggest thieves that ever walked in a pair of shoes.

**Elaine Gunn:** Oh, dear. That was his façade. He was hiding behind that.

0:23:00

Could you tell something about the job that you've held throughout your lifetime?

**Minnie Golden:** I worked all—when I went to South Norwalk, I got a job. I was working when I got married. Then I came back here to Sheffield. And somehow or other, I worked—sometimes I took my kids with me, sometimes my mother-in-law would take care of them. But I always managed to work in one place over a period of 20 years.

Would be doing different things. Sometimes I'd cook, sometimes I was a waitress. Then, at the last part, these people that I did work for, which was, you probably know the Pell-Dickinson garage in Great Barrington. Well, I worked for those people, see. The garage.

0:24:05 Then, Mrs. Dickinson, well, she'd fall and break her arm, break her leg, bang herself up. So, I worked for them about 20 years. Then they moved away. They went to a seashore, where they as kids grew up. So then I went from there to—where else did I go? Well, over a period of 20 years. Then I worked for Mr. and Mrs. Ortag[sp?] on the weekend. I worked for Mr. and Mrs. [0:24:47] on the weekend. And now, I'm here to Dr. Moore.

0:24:58 When I went to interview Dr. Moore, I didn't know that his wife was pregnant. So I did accept the job. And I have said to her many times, "you know one thing, if I'd ever known you was pregnant, I would have never taken this job." But I was a nanny to Tyler. And he is one of the finest young men. He's 14 now. He's going 15-years old. And Tyler is such a great person.

When kids get 8, 9-years old, they become a little fresh. He never went through that. He never did. Not because I'm partial to him. But that is the truth.

**Elaine Gunn:** This is Dr. Moore's...

**Minnie Golden:** Dr. Moore's Tyler.

**Elaine Gunn:** I know the older son, Kevin.

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes, uh-huh. I can't tell you what I think about that situation.

0:26:00 But his other—Dr. Moore had two other children. They were really nice kids too. There was Kevin and Lisa. And they were really, really nice kids too. He has three children that he can be very proud of, Dr. Moore can.

**Elaine Gunn:** I know Kevin, I don't know the daughter so much.

Going back to your childhood and teenage memories, any special games that you played?

**Minnie Golden:** Jacks. Oh, every recess, every noon hour. With that ball trying to grab them jacks, without touching.

**Elaine Gunn:** I don't know why they don't do that so much anymore. It's wonderful for coordination. Hand-eye coordination. I don't know if children do that anymore, or not.

- Minnie Golden:** I don't know either. Then we had the glee club, that I used to sing in.
- 0:27:00
- Elaine Gunn:** And Mr. Cross had that. He was the school music teacher.
- Elaine Gunn:** You can remember his name, that's remarkable.
- Minnie Golden:** Mr. Cross. He was a very nice man. And let me see. Aside of that, we were just children that played around with one another. We played tag, and we played ball. Just like the ordinary things. The school grounds never had to be supervised, we just went on to play.
- Elaine Gunn:** And you played with the other children. There wasn't any separatism.
- Minnie Golden:** No. Because there was only three of us race kids. Mary Caesar and Mary—
- 0:28:00
- Elaine Gunn:** Of course, Mary was a lovely child. She wrote that, her graduation song. Then they gave it to another girl to sing. I often think of that, and I thought how dreadful that was. That that girl wrote a beautiful—I wished I could remember it. It was a lovely, lovely song. And the music. Whoever made the music. But to give it to somebody else to sing.
- Elaine Gunn:** Terrible. Those were the things that happened to us.
- Minnie Golden:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.
- Elaine Gunn:** What do you remember about your teachings from your parents about—parents always had certain values that they lived by and lessons...?
- Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes. I can remember my mother always said, "you girl, I'm going to tell you one thing, you keep these men at arm-length."
- Elaine Gunn:** That was number one always.
- 0:29:00
- Minnie Golden:** I can always remember that. She'd, "keep these men at arm-length."
- Elaine Gunn:** That was always the number one lesson, if I remember correctly. Did they discipline you, both parents, or neither parent, or one parent?

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes. We had our rules to live by, I'll tell you that. Absolutely. We all did. We had our chores to do. Feed the chickens. Collect the eggs. Feed the pigs. We all had our little chores to do, I'll tell you that.

**Elaine Gunn:** Now, it wasn't a farm, but you had, in those days people did have farm animals around, didn't they?

0:29:57

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes. Back in those days, people took care of themselves. My father would always put in a barrel of flour, a barrel of sugar. His cabbages, he put in the ground, in a barrel. And you could always, whenever you wanted a cabbage, you'd go dig that out of the barrel.

**Elaine Gunn:** All winter long.

**Minnie Golden:** All winter long. He always put in his potatoes. We really come up on apples, because he was a person that would pick barrel for barrel. A barrel for the people, and a barrel for his family. That's why I just can't understand how people have such a hard time trying to get on today.

**Elaine Gunn:** Well, they don't know how to take care of themselves in that respect. How to garden, how to prepare for the winter, how to plant and harvest. We've gotten away from that, apparently.

0:31:02

**Minnie Golden:** I can't understand how that didn't happen from generation to generation. There was no such thing as welfare. There was no such as you're on the town. You took care—the people took care of themselves. They took care of the older people. Today, I just can't understand it. I just don't agree with what is going on. I don't.

**Elaine Gunn:** We got lost somewhere.

**Minnie Golden:** I guess so. I guess so. Because it didn't seem to be such an awful, terrible, hard job. I know we had some neighbors, the Wagners. You always help them out, when you thought that they needed it. Either a chicken, or a few apples, or a few potatoes. Because Mr. Wagner worked on his farm, at that time, and at that time, you didn't get very much money. No, no.

0:32:00

But then he was a man that—he somehow or other, he got lost. And he didn't plan, as my father did. But, I think because of—

**Elaine Gunn:** So your father was—

- Minnie Golden:** —an Indian, see.
- Elaine Gunn:** —and his ancestors had certainly handed that down.
- Minnie Golden:** Yes. That was handed down to him. To take care of their families. We were poor people. We didn't have a lot of money. But our parents took care of us, anyway.
- Elaine Gunn:** Did you have to help with the finances, when you got old enough to go to work? Like some families' children have had to do.
- Minnie Golden:** No, no. Because my mother passed when I was 17-years old.
- 0:33:00
- So, I finished at school, and then I went on my own. I took care of myself. All the rest of us, took care of ourselves. My father, he went on his merry way.
- Elaine Gunn:** You kept in contact with him or...?
- Minnie Golden:** Yeah, uh-huh. At the last stages, he came here to live with me for a while. Then he was taken awful sick, and took him to Sharon Hospital. They sent him, Dr. Chafey[sp?], sent him to New York. He passed on in New York.
- Elaine Gunn:** You said your family raised a lot of food that you ate. Do you remember any special recipes that your mother used to prepare for you children? Any special kinds of things that you really liked to eat?
- Minnie Golden:** My mother was a very good cook. Very good cook. So whatever she made, we all ate it wholeheartedly.
- 0:34:03
- You never—well, of course, you better not put your nose up at anything. You better eat what's put on the table. But there was never anything wasted.
- There's one thing—it's cabbage, and I love cabbage today. But I never learned to know how to do that sweet and sour cabbage that she used to make. But I do know how to cream the cabbage. And the coleslaw. That went along with me. That's what I have today.
- Elaine Gunn:** Those are some of your favorite kinds of foods.
- Minnie Golden:** Uh-huh. But my father had the pigs, so back in those days, they dried the fat out, the lard. She used to take the pig ears and pig nose and make [0:35:01].

- 0:35:04 He smoked his own ham. That's the life that I knew, up until I was 17.
- Elaine Gunn:** So you don't feel as though you had a hard life at all, even after, when you were 17 and had to go out on your own?
- Minnie Golden:** No. No way. None of us did.
- Elaine Gunn:** Because you didn't have to work.
- Minnie Golden:** No. Well, we did our chores at home, and that's it. I had a sister, Florence, who was as lazy as she could be. She never could do anything. So the rest of us had to fill in, do her work.
- Elaine Gunn:** There's always one.
- Minnie Golden:** Mm-hmm.
- Elaine Gunn:** You have any hobbies that you especially like to do?
- Minnie Golden:** I crochet.
- Elaine Gunn:** Have you always crocheted?
- Minnie Golden:** No, no. When we was in school, we had sewing lessons.
- 0:36:00 But I never [attracted? 0:36:03] by that, or somehow or other. Instead of paying attention to what was going on in school, in that sewing class, I think I [0:36:11] a waste of time.
- Elaine Gunn:** So many of us did.
- Minnie Golden:** Uh-huh. As the years go on, I just learned to crochet.
- Elaine Gunn:** Are those some of the things that you crocheted? Oh, wow, they're lovely.
- Minnie Golden:** Then I got a Christmas, a green, a red.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, that's beautiful. Lovely. Oh, I see that. Those are lovely. So you've spent a lot time, then, crocheting. How did you learn to crochet, do you remember how you?
- Minnie Golden:** Let's see. Nancy Philips, I learned to crochet from Nancy Philips. Though, I didn't get very far with that. So, I went to Hadie Johnson. And there I—along with the book.
- 0:37:06 I have crocheted for—I made Shirley May one, I made Caroline one, I made Margaret one, I made Barbara one. I don't go anywhere, and so this takes up my time.

**Elaine Gunn:** Well, there are very few places to go. Especially in the evening.

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, yes. I never—[0:37:37] around here, they seem to find their pastime in the [0:37:41], but I never did. No, no. Corny used to go up to the Grill all the time, but I—well, I worked, so I was tired, and I was glad enough to climb the golden stairs.

**Elaine Gunn:** And you had your family to raise.

**Minnie Golden:** Yes, right.

0:38:00

**Elaine Gunn:** Do you have any special memories, or some of the people you remember most in this area? Any memories of people who used to live here?

**Minnie Golden:** Oh, dear. Do we have a—Ms. Caughin[sp?]. I loved Ms. Caughin, but she was the most [insultingest? 0:38:22] person. I just loved her to pieces. And Barbara too. And we often speak of her way. She had some way, let me tell you. One time my father and Corny was standing out there in the garage, and Bob had beautiful curly, curly hair. It was sort of honey-colored hair. So she came along, and of course she was a drinking woman too.

0:39:00

And Bob was out there in the road playing. She called to Corny and my father, and she said to Corny—and she was a person that would do like this [inhaling sound]—and she said, “you got a lovely looking son there, Corny, [if] he’s yours.”

**Elaine Gunn:** Oh, dear. So what did you say?

[0:39:35]

**Minnie Golden:** That was some Ms. Caughin. She was something else. Then she had her—Mr. [0:39:50] used to give out the checks. Old-age checks, I guess.

0:39:58

Barbara was just saying the other day, she’d always wore this hat, with the flowers on it, and she’d go to the [town hall? 0:40:04] look for her check. And Mr. [0:40:07] would say, “Well, Lucy, I’m sorry, the checks didn’t come.” Call him every known name that was in the book. Oh, that was some Ms. Caughin, but I loved her dearly.

**Elaine Gunn:** What about any people who—or any black folks in the area who were well-known or famous? Did anyone ever come her? Other than, well, we know people who were here maybe 200 years ago.

- Minnie Golden:** [0:40:40] They got a monument out there for—what was his name?
- Elaine Gunn:** Du Bois?
- Minnie Golden:** Yes. In Great Barrington. Well, this is in Egremont. Did you go to that?
- Elaine Gunn:** Yes, I did. Many years ago. In 1969, I think. Did you ever meet him?
- Minnie Golden:** No.
- Elaine Gunn:** Did you ever meet James Weldon Johnson who used to come to Great Barrington?
- Minnie Golden:** Who was that?
- Elaine Gunn:** James Weldon Johnson. The famous—
- Minnie Golden:** No, I guess I didn't.
- Elaine Gunn:** —African-American who wrote what is now called the black national anthem. He had a home on Seekonk Cross Road.
- Minnie Golden:** Oh, really? In Egremont?
- Elaine Gunn:** Towards Alford. For a number of years.
- Minnie Golden:** Oh, really?
- Elaine Gunn:** Then after he died, his wife maintained the summer home. She used to come to, with her sister-in-law. So you never...?
- Minnie Golden:** The only real people that I—I knew Inis, because Mr. Petty used to cut Corny's hair. I knew her, just be going to her house to have Corny cut his hair.
- 0:42:00
- I knew Mrs. Hale through her being a nurse. I've just met Mr. Hale through Mrs. Hale, as we were in school—in the stores. Then I met Edna and Alice. I also met those people in the stores. I dearly loved to meet Alice, because she would always have something to say about the groceries, about how high they was. Never can buy anything different, she says. Don't have money to buy the same thing right over and over again.
- Then as the years went by, I got more and more acquainted with Edna. She was a lovely, lovely person.



0:42:53

**Elaine Gunn:**

Well, Mrs. Golden, I wish to thank you for allowing me to come into your home to interview you, for our Invisible Community project. I will return in a week to take a picture, as we've discussed. And perhaps to follow up with any other questions that I might have. I thank you again, so very much.

Mrs. Golden is a gracious lady, who has been a widow for well over 20 years. She lives in a comfortably modest home on the outskirts of Sheffield, with one of the two grandchildren she raised. Her five remaining children live in various parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Mrs. Golden appears to be in excellent physical condition, with a very good memory. She was most receptive to being interviewed. I did return in a week as promised, and I was able to take a photograph of her.

0:43:55

*Recording ends*