

This is an interview with Ernest Ball at Ladoga. We are taking this interview on March 21, 1977. Ernie Ball was for many years an officer at the Ladoga State Bank.

RFW: Now Ernie, will you tell us when and where you were born?

EB: I was born on a farm back four miles southeast of Waynetown.

RFW: That is right here in Montgomery County then.

EB: Yes, I've lived in Montgomery County all my life.

RFW: What was the date of your birth?

EB: April 12, 1902.

RFW: Where did you go to school?

EB: I went to a little one-room schoolhouse right out at the end of our lane from our house named Ball School. It has been torn down now but I graduated out of the eighth grade. At that time, you had to go to Crawfordsville and take an examination before the County Superintendent, before you could enter high school.

RFW: Where did you go to high school?

EB: I went to high school at Waynetown.

RFW: You said the Ball School, was that some relation of yours?

EB: No, it was built whenever it was built, I don't know when it was built. It was built right in the center of the Ball neighborhood. There were several Balls living around there at that time.

RFW: Well, you must have known that Ball family. Where did they come from?

EB: Well, they originally come from Butler County, Ohio, and settled right in that neighborhood. Dennis Ball was one of the first settlers. I think he entered a section of land there but he was ... several Balls lived around there. Most of the Balls lived in Iowa, I remember Uncle Ralph Ball and

RFW: You were a descendant of that family?

EB: Yes, I was a descendant of that family.

RFW: In other words, the family the school was named after.

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: Now, you went to high school at Waynetown and what class did you graduate in?

EB: 1921.

RFW: What did you do after you got out of high school?

EB: I started in, one year, at Indiana University.

RFW: Down in Bloomington?

EB: Yes, Bloomington and I took dramatics.

RFW: Oh my!!!

EB: I thought that someday I might be on television.

RFW: Now, Ernie, who was principal at Waynetown High School where you were there?

EB: Well, I can't remember who ... Oh, I do too, and you probably know him quite well. The principal was Frieda Shelke. SHELKE

RFW: That's Frieda Jones today?

EB: That's Frieda Jones, she lives out on South ~~Scott~~^{Grant} Avenue here in Crawfordsville.

RFW: She was pretty young then to be a school principal.

EB: Yes in fact I brag about having a few dates with her^{er} when I was a senior.

RFW: What did you do after you got out of Indiana?

EB: I went to work at Morris and Jacks Greenhouse. I don't know if you remember them out on County Club Road before they were torn down or not.

RFW: Out there by Morris^o and Jacks^o Bridge, out that way.

EB: I worked there four years.

RFW: And what did you do then?

EB: Got married.

RFW: Who did you marry?

EB: I married Edna Hitch.

RFW: What happened after you got married? What did you do?

EB: I still worked there for awhile.

RFW: What year was that when you got married?

EB: 1925.

RFW: You worked there for four years, what job did you go to then?

EB: I had a cousin that was in the Old State Bank, well the present Elston Bank in Crawfordsville and he ^{CAME} ~~COME~~ to see me. I was making more out at Morris and Jacks than they started me in at. I decided there wasn't any future in Morris and Jacks; it was just a job.

RFW: You went to work for the Old State Bank and what job did you get with them?

EB: I started in filing checks. Then I hadn't worked filing checks too long till I went into the bookkeeping department.

RFW: Do you remember what the salary was when you started there?

EB: Do I remember? I distinctly remember. I got \$10.00 a week. That's approximately \$40.00 per month.

RFW: Where was that bank located?

EB: That's where the present Elston Bank is. In the same building.

RFW: Let's start from there and start talking about banks. Can you tell us now what banks there were in Crawfordsville at that time and where they were?

EB: Well, there was the old Elston Bank and it was over on the corner of, I guess it was Main and Green. Where the Crawfordsville Wall and Paint Company ^{was} used ~~to be~~.

RFW: Yes. Well, Main and Green werewhere the Bank Cigar Store ^{was} you mean?

EB: Yes.

RFW: Was.

EB: Was, yes.

RFW: Now the paint and wallpaper store?

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: That was the Elston Bank?

EB: That was the Elston Bank.

RFW: Now, who was the President of your bank, the Old State Bank?

EB: Charles Goodbar. The Cashier was Edna ~~Harris~~ ^{HERRON}. She's an aunt of Jeanette Dickerson.

RFW: Yes.

EB: I might tell you something concerning her which to my notion was foolish.

She would keep you there after evening came and you balanced out, she would keep you there until 10:00 or 11:00 if you ^{was} off a nickel, looking for it.

Of course, if you made an error of a nickel in change you couldn't find it in ten months.

RFW: Who ^{was} the officers over at the Elston Bank at that time?

EB: Well Bob, I can't tell you.

RFW: Was Herb Morrison there at that time?

EB: Herb Morrison was in the Old State Bank.

RFW: He was in the bank that you were in.

EB: Yes.

RFW: What was his job with them?

EB: Why, he was in the loan department and far as I remember I think that was his duties there until he became President of the bank. Will Stump was President of the Elston Bank.

RFW: Were there any Elstons connected with the Elston at that time?

EB: Yes, Ike Elston

RFW: ~~was broken into~~ ...

EB: Yes.

RFW: ^{ALL RIGHT.} Alright, what other banks were there in Crawfordsville?

EB: There was First National and Crawfordsville ...

RFW: Now where was the First National at that time?

EB: It was right across the street, west of Reasoner's Jewelry Store. It was on the corner there.

RFW: It was where Reasoner's Jewelry Store was?

EB: No, it was across the street on ^{the} corner of Washington and Main, southwest corner.

RFW: You mean where the Water Company is now?

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: What was in where Reasoner's Jewelry is now?

EB: Crawfordsville Trust Company.

RFW: Who were some of the officers of the First National at that time? Was old Cap Herron still there?

EB: Yes, Cap Herron.

RFW: What was his job?

EB: Well, if I remember, he was President.

RFW: Was he the Civil War veteran?

EB: No, I don't think so. I think you're probably thinking about old Cap Talbot.

RFW: No, Cap Herron was at ^{CHICKAMAUGA} Cheektowaga.

EB: Oh yes, that's right. And then after he ... the next President after Captain Herron was ... he moved to Florida, in fact he died in Florida and, but I can't think of his name now.

RFW: Do you remember any of the other officers in there at the time when you first started back then?

EB: No, Lee Sinclair, he was one of the tellers and I think he was an assistant officer of some sort and Dave Groves was there.

RFW: At the First National?

EB: Yes.

RFW: Then he is some relation to Aquilla Groves? ^{then?}

EB: Oh yes. I think, well it could be a son of Dave's.

RFW: What about over at the Trust Company. Who ran that company?

EB: Old gentlemen by the name of Walter ^{HULET} Hewitt.

RFW: Walter ^{HULET} Hewitt ran that?

EB: Yes, he had a nice home just south of the entrance to the County Club there. Do you know where that is?

RFW: Yes.

EB: That's where he lived.

RFW: Just south of the County Club.

EB: Yes, that's right, just south of the County ^{Club} Club.

RFW: Did the Trust Company do banking business or did they just handle trust business?

EB: I think they did some banking business but it was mostly trust business.

RFW: What sort of trusts? Did they handle estates?

EB: Oh yes. Handled estates and sold insurance and real estate that sort of thing.

RFW: What about the Citizens? Where was that? The Citizen's Bank.

EB: That was where Clements-Roscher is.

RFW: It was in existence at that time?

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: We had four at that time, there was four?

EB: I had forgotten about the Citizen's and W.K. Martin was President of the Citizen's Bank. He also owned Crawfordsville Ice and Cold Storage Company. I remember many of time when we came to town, I was just a kid, we always went out to the Ice Plant to get a chunk of ice to take home with us to make ice cream that night.

RFW: What other officers were in ... was Vern Livengood in the bank at that time?

EB: Oh, yes.

RFW: He was there under Billy Martin?

EB: Yes, the name of Mr. McDaniel was the assistant Vice President I think. I might give you a little humorous incident and I might say that was the first my first introduction to banking. Vern Livengood was cashier over at the Waynetown State Bank and I was just a little kid and I remember going into that bank and Dad always thought a lot of Vern Livengood and Vern always waved to him, and I don't expect I was over ten years old maybe but I remember that I had a pocket full of little baby mice ..

RFW: Baby mice?

EB: Baby mice. Back in those days we plowed and I followed Dad around with a walking plow and turn up a mouse nest once in awhile and little baby mice were about an inch long, inch and a quarter and I would fill my pocket full of baby mice and take them to Waynetown with me.

RFW: What did Vern Livengood have to do with that? Did you take them in to show them to him?

EB: Yes, I just remember the incident see and I think Dad found out I had those baby mice, while I was in there I would probably pull some out of my pocket.

RFW: Which of those Crawfordsville banks was biggest at the time when you first started?

EB: Well, I would say The First National was.

RFW: What would you say the assets of the bank were at the biggest bank?

EB: Oh, there would be quite a bit under a million dollars I think. Probably from five to seven-eight hundred dollar footings, assets and liabilities.

RFW: Now what about .. We've covered Crawfordsville banks, let's go around the county and tell us what banks there were around it in various towns in the county. Let's start now at Waveland.

EB: Well, that was, I think if I remember right, all of the outlying banks were state banks and Ted Johnson was head of the Waveland State Bank.

RFW: What size bank would that have been?

EB: I'd say three or four hundred thousand probably.

RFW: What year would this have been, Ernie?

EB: It would have probably been between 1925 and 1930.

RFW: They had a big bank robbery down there, an attempted bank robbery there at Waveland at one time didn't they?

EB: Oh yes.

RFW: Didn't they have a shoot-out?

EB: Yes, they had a shoot-out down there. An organization at that time that they called vigilantes and there were several of them belonged to it at Waveland. I don't know whether you remember them or not, Mr. Banta, big watchmaker, he was in on that.

RFW: Do you remember the incident and what happened?

EB: No I don't think they ever got in. I think they just had the shoot-out there and I think they finally got the best of whoever started it...

RFW: The bandits?

EB: The bandits trying to rob the bank.

RFW: Going across the county, there were never any banks going east there, Ladoga would have been the next town where they would have had a bank. Is that right?

EB: In the county, that's right.

RFW: What bank was that?

EB: That was the old Ladoga's Farmers and Merchants Bank of Ladoga.

RFW: That was before the Ladoga State Bank?

EB: Oh yes, yes. It was up on Main Street up east of where the drug store is now.

RFW: Oh, east of Bernie Bouse's drug store?

EB: East of Bernie Bouse's drug store.

RFW: Right next door to it?

EB: If I remember right I think it was.

RFW: There was only one bank in Ladoga though?

EB: Oh yes.

RFW: Now, where was the Waveland Bank? I didn't get that. Where was that located?

EB: Well, I think it was located where the present bank is.

RFW: Who ran the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Ladoga at that time?

EB: I never knew him, it was before my time, but I've got a book in there with some of the records in it and then there was a fellow by the name of Gott. He was evidently the cashier or the President.

RFW: Now, wasn't the Ladoga Federal still in Ladoga at that time, Ladoga Federal Building and Loan? They were, of course, there.

EB: Yes, I think they were.

RFW: Where were they located?

EB: I think they were located at the location that they were when they moved to Crawfordsville, of course, they all redid that building and put a new front on it and everything. As far as I know, they were over in that same location.

RFW: Who ran that?

EB: Well, Robert Marks was the ... he started in there and there was a gentleman by the name of Ashby, Robert Ashby, who was one of the many officials there too.

RFW: Which were the .. There were no building and loans down there at Waveland I take it.

EB: No, I don't recall any.

RFW: Let's skip on up to the next town north which was New Ross. There was a bank at New Ross, of course.

EB: New Ross.

RFW: What was the name of that bank?

EB: The New Ross State Bank. I believe it's Farmers and Merchants Bank of New Ross.

RFW: The Farmers Bank of New Ross. The same name as it is now?

EB: Yes.

RFW: Farmers State Bank of New Ross.

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: Do you remember who the officers were?

EB: No, I don't. The gentleman that ^{ran} it lived right south of the bank but I can't recall his name. I never had much connection with that area. I really don't know.

RFW: Ernie, there was a bank at Linnsburg too wasn't there, at one time?

EB: Yes.

RFW: What was the name of that bank?

EB: Linnsburg State Bank.

RFW: Do you remember what kind of bank was that? Was it a very large bank?

EB: No, no it was a very small bank. Do you know where the Steele's antique refinishing place is? Well, that little brick building just to the east of where they live is where the bank was. It's just a little, very, very

EB: small bank building.

RFW: And do you remember who any of the officers were at that bank?

EB: No, I don't. I remember it was robbed once.

RFW: Was there some excitement?

EB: Yes and I think .. I don't know if there were one or two, somebody robbed it and he resided in Montgomery County by the name of Rice.

RFW: Oh? Rice?

EB: Rice.

RFW: Which Rice was that?

EB: I don't remember his first name I just remember his name was Rice.

RFW: They caught him?

EB: Yes.

RFW: Was he convicted, do you remember?

EB: Yes I think he served a term.

RFW: Let's go further north now and what would have been the next one, Darlington?

EB: Darlington.

RFW: What was that bank?

EB: That was ...

RFW: Farmers Merchants?

EB: Farmers and Merchants State Bank of Darlington.

RFW: Do you remember who the officers were in there?

EB: Yes, back as far as I can remember Jim Peterson was the President of that bank. In fact he, I don't know how many years ago but he's deceased now, he got his fifty year pin from the State Bankers Association for being a fifty year banker. Being in the bank for fifty years.

RFW: Where was that bank located?

EB: It was located right where the present bank is now.

RFW: I didn't hit that on the New Ross Bank. Was that in its present place?

EB: Yes.

RFW: Now, let's cut across west, there were no other banks in that area were there?

EB: The next one in that area would be Linden.

RFW: Where was that located?

EB: Its located just exactly where it is now, as far back as I can remember.

RFW: Was that the Linden State Bank the name?

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: Who were some of the officers in there?

EB: The longest I can remember was Leon Little. Leon Little, Jr., he ran it for quite a long while and but this Leon Little, Jr. he went to South Bend and got

EB: him a job in some pretty big bank up at South Bend.

RFW: Now Ernie, that's located where it is now. I think they have recently put a new bank there.

EB: Yes, they recently put a new bank in.

RFW: Let's move west, was there a bank at New Richmond?

EB: Not that I ever remembered.

RFW: Wingate?

EB: Yes.

RFW: What bank was at Wingate?

EB: That was the Wingate State Bank.

RFW: And who were some of the officers there?

EB: Well, for years, Joe McConkle was head of that bank and I don't know, I don't remember who the other officers was. I remember Joe because he was a good friend of mine. He was bald-headed. His head was just like a billiard ball. He didn't have a hair on it, but Joe was a good guy and I always considered him a good country banker.

RFW: Where was that bank located?

EB: It was located the same place it is now, on the corners of ... I don't know the name of the streets now, right on the main street as you go north through Wingate, on the corner.

RFW: Then we go south and we are back at Waynetown.

EB: Back at Waynetown.

RFW: That's where you ... was now the Waynetown bank, where was that located?

EB: That was located on the corner of the 136 Street and Main Steet that goes south. They are getting ready, I guess you've seen that in the paper, to build a new bank east of that.

RFW: Would it be on its present location?

EB: It has always been as far back as I can remember in its present location.

RFW: Now Ernie, we've covered these banks, now let's talk about some of the colorful events that happened. I think one thing that people are interested in were ... Do you remember back in those days were there any big embezzlements or any bank trouble back before the depression?

EB: No, not that I remember or that I can recall. There was a time that they in that you had a pretty difficult time getting a loan from any place.

RFW: Yes, that was before the '30's?

EB: Yes. Well, the bank moratorium that was during the '29's and '30's wasn't it?

RFW: Yes, although the bank moratorium was after Roosevelt was elected and that was '33.

EB: Yes.

RFW: Had there been in bank failures in Montgomery County prior to the moratorium?

EB: No, they never, as far as I know, been a bank failure in Montgomery County.

RFW: You mean ever?

EB: I can't recall any or reading about any. I think maybe there was one here in Ladoga. At that time there were two banks in Ladoga.

RFW: When was that? I never knew ..

EB: Oh, I don't know, it was way back there. I've just read about it in Ladoga history and but I recall one incident that I don't want to go through with again. During the bank moratorium, now that was when they closed the bank see, we had to take ledger and we had to set-up whatever anybody had in their banks, say you had \$100.00 in the bank, we had to set 5% over in another ledger card which if you had \$100.00 in the bank, it would mean you had to set up another card that had \$5.00 on it and that was all the money you could draw out on during that bank moratorium.

RFW: In other words, if you had \$100.00 in the bank, you could only draw out \$5.00.

EB: That's right. They made a set-up when the Department of Banking or Controller or clerk, they made us set up a new ledger card on that and you knew all of them. At that time, Arthur ^{Cordis} ~~Cordis~~ and Carl ^{Karl} ~~Dickerson~~ and I were the bookkeepers in the bank. That was the Old State Bank and we worked all day and all night and part of the next day getting all of those accounts transferred over to the 5% list. That was an ordeal.

RFW: Say, I want to go back a little here, I mentioned Ladoga Federal but there some other Building and Loans in the county ^{were not} ~~wasn't~~ there?

EB: I don't recall any.

RFW: Union Federal.

EB: Oh yes, oh sure. I was thinking about the outlying towns.

RFW: Crawfordsville, was there another one Crawfordsville Building & Loan?

EB: Well,

RFW: Who ran Union Savings?

EB: As far back as I remember Louis Hershberger did.

RFW: Wasn't it the Crawfordsville Savings and Loan or something like that? Did ^G Male McClure run a savings and loan?

EB: No. McClure, is that what you say?

RFW: Yes.

EB: He and ...

RFW: Walter Coppage?

EB: Walter Coppage and someone else I think that was in there, they run an abstract company. ^{RAM}

RFW: I have some recollection that there was a savings and loan there at one time but ..

EB: There might have been but I don't recall it.

RFW: Now, Montgomery Savings was in town at that time?

EB: Yes.

RFW: That was Earl Berry?

EB: That was Earl Berry, yes.

RFW: Were there any other savings and loans around the county?

Linden had one didn't it?

EB: I don't think so. Now it was a small one, I can remember it. It was an old, old one. New Richmond had a building and loan. Run by a man by the name of Mr. ~~Berge~~. ^{Boris BINNS}

RFW: Yes, ~~Berge~~. ^{Boris BINNS.}

EB: Of course when they, whatever they did, liquidated in the Linden State Bank bought that and of course they've got a branch bank there now in New Richmond.

RFW: Darlington had a building and loan too, didn't they?

EB: Yes, Darlington had a building and loan. And incidentally, that reminded me of it, Darlington had two banks.

RFW: Oh they did?

EB: Yes and I don't remember the name of it but the Elston Bank bought it.

RFW: Oh.

EB: I distinctly remember a gentleman by the name of Mr. Burgin who was in that bank up there. I think he had gotten in some financial difficulties and came down to the Elston Bank and helped us in the bookkeeping department on a lot of those accounts down there.

RFW: Where was the other bank in Darlington?

EB: I think it was, I don't know the exact location, across the street ...

RFW: To the north?

EB: ~~To~~ to the north of the present bank is up there.

RFW: So that meant quite few banks there. I think what makes interesting history is about old things like embezzlement and that sort of thing. Do you remember any of that kind about this man, I have a recollection of his name being Goodbar one time that ...

EB: Yes, I think he was connected with one of the banks in Ladoga but I've heard quite a bit about it but other than that I can't recall any embezzlements in Montgomery County as far back as I can remember.

RFW: What about (not understandable) in your time?

EB: Yes. It was while I was at the Elston Bank.

RFW: Do you remember what happened?

EB: No, I don't.

RFW: Was he prosecuted for it?

EB: I don't think he ever was. He probably made restitution on arrearage. Charlie did I think.

RFW: Now this was a different Goodbar than the one you worked for.

EB: Yes, he was a brother to Charles.

RFW: What was his name?

EB: William.

RFW: William Goodbar.

EB: Yes.

RFW: I think the people are interest in knowing how did .. you say that there hadn't been any bank failures in Montgomery County that you ever knew, were there any runs on banks in the county?

EB: No, not that I recall. I don't think there ever was a run on a bank in this county.

RFW: When the bank moratorium came, what happened? Was there pretty much panic in the county over the banks?

EB: Yes, there was quite a bit of concern but of course that was the reason that they set up this 5% from their regular accounts, so people could have some of that access to a small amount of money. I guess another reason was to give them a little time for things to get stablized.

RFW: How long did the moratorium last?

EB: If I remember right, it lasted three days.

RFW: We got this old bank book out here.

EB: Yes, a neighbor of mine brought that in there today and we're going to put it, when I get through looking at it which I guess I've done pretty carefully, we will put it down in the Ladoga Library. That's records of the minutes of the meetings and I think you can see there that on that last page that assets are about \$270,000.00.

RFW: Yes, \$279,000.00.

EB: Yes.

RFW: In this small bank down here.

RFW: Now, let's talk about the bank moratorium. How did that go over in Montgomery County?

EB: Well, of course there was some concern but as far as I could remember, it didn't cause any panic or anything like that.

RFW: Did the loans tighten up considerably then?

EB: Oh yes, they tightened up quite a bit and I think one thing that brought on the Depression in the 29's and 30's was the fact that the bankers got scared and I guess the insurance companies and if they had a loan with a farmer for a considerable amount, they would pay this borrower that had a farm loan on his farm, that they would call the loan right now. They wanted it and under the present banking system, we wouldn't do that, or the banks wouldn't do that. If a farmer got into some difficulty, now we'd give him some time to work the situation out. That is what caused the Depression and broke so many people. It broke so many farmers. If you owed the bank a loan, and they all got scared and they called the loan right now. It caused alot of farmers to just completely lose their farm.

RFW: Now, did that happen here in the county?

EB: Oh yes, I don't know how many, I don't know what percentage.

RFW: During the moratorium, where were you working, at the Crawfordsville State Bank?

EB: I was working at the .. No, I was working at the Elston Bank.

RFW: At the Elston Bank?

EB: Yes.

RFW: You started out in the State Bank.

EB: Oh yes.

RFW: You went from the State Bank to the Elston Bank, when was that?

EB: Well, I don't recall the date exactly. Well it was sometime probably between '25 and '30.

RFW: What was your job over at the Elston?

EB: I never was in the Elston.

RFW: I thought you said you moved over there and you were at the Elston.

EB: No, they bought the Old State Bank and moved over in the Elston and of course I was with the Elston.

RFW: And when did that happen? When did they buy out the State Bank?

EB: It was approximately 1930.

RFW: And you were in the bookkeeping department?

EB: Yes.

RFW: How long did you stay with the Elston then, after it took over the State Bank?

EB: I stayed with the Elston until July the 21st, 1941.

RFW: And then where did you go?

EB: I came to Ladoga State Bank.

RFW: Was that a new bank at the time?

EB: Oh no. No it was ...

RFW: Whom did you succeed? Who had been down there?

EB: Penson Larrick.

RFW: Oh, Pense Larrick was down there?

EB: Yes, Penson Larrick was down there and he, after I came down there, I was the cashier and he went to the Central National Bank at Greencastle. He worked down there a year or such matter and then he went from there to Darlington. He was there in Darlington until the time of his death.

RFW: What job ... You went down there as cashier in Ladoga then.

EB: Yes.

RFW: How long did you stay there as cashier?

EB: I stayed there as cashier until 19 .. Well, I don't recall how long I was cashier. I was cashier quite awhile and then Frank E. Davis was President during the time I was cashier and his health went bad on him and he resigned and that put me in as President. But that was, I don't know just what year it was, but I retired from the bank in 1969. Now I notice .. I know what the I think this is very interesting, now the controlling interest in our bank when I came to Ladoga was owned by the Central National Bank of Greencastle. Fred O'HARE was his name. You have heard of Fred O'Hare?

RFW: Oh yes.

EB: Well, his only interest .. he didn't cooperate with the community and consequently the community didn't cooperate with him and I think what he used this bank for was to dump some of the bonds, some of the railroad bonds that he was scared of and didn't want to hold on any longer up to this bank. I remember the ... when I came to Ladoga and the first statement I put out December 31, 1941, our footings was \$270,000.00. That's just about what they were in 1908. Our loans, they had \$70,000.00 in loans and I went to the Department of Financial Institutions, Joe McCord was head of it at that time, and I thought you probably know Joe. You've heard of him. I said, Joe I can't make any money on \$70,000.00 worth of loans. I know the business is there and I am gonna loan some money to these farmers around there and businessmen. I may lose a little in awhile but I can lose a little once in awhile

EB: but I can lose some once in awhile and make a durn sight more money than I can go along with \$70,000.00 worth of loans. He said, I think you're right. Go to it! He said, Our department won't bother you at least for awhile. They won't even examine me.

RFW: So that's what you did did you?

EB: I sure did.

RFW: And who did you loan money to?

EB: Everybody that needed it that I felt was qualified for a loan.

RFW: Did you find that people were eager to borrow money from the local bank?

EB: Sure!

RFW: How did you get rid of those bonds that Fred O'Hara dumped on you?

EB: At that time we had ~~reconstruction~~ had some what they called "debentures" held by the Reconstruction Finance Corporations. We couldn't pay a dividend until we got rid of those and I wrote the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and told them I wanted to get rid of ... that was about a year after I became cashier and I said I wanted to pay those debentures off. They would write back "Want more information." The same old information I had given them several times before only in just a different form. So I finally called Joe McCord up and I says, Joe? the Reconstruction Finance Corporation is playing horse with me on those debentures. They don't want them paid off. They don't want me to pay them off. He said I'll tell you what you do, the next set of forms you get from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, you fill them all out and don't send them to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. He said, after completed you send them direct to the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. A draft for the amount you owe the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and tell them write a letter with them and also on your draft "payment of debentures held by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, in full." That's what I did and I never heard any more from it.

RFW: Now, I don't quite understand that. You mean you owed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation money or they owed you money?

EB: We owed them money.

RFW: You owed them money.

EB: Yes, that's the reason they didn't want it paid off. We owed them money and it was during those tough times during the Depression when .. There were quite a few banks at that time that held or had debentures held by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

RFW: Now I've got you at the Ladoga Bank now and tell us about the history of the bank after you got with the Ladoga State Bank. You worked there as a cashier? What about the growth of the bank?

EB: Well I can tell you as I told you before when I came to Ladoga, the first statement I put out, our assets were \$270,000.00 and when we merged with The First National Bank of Crawfordsville and our assets were over 3 million. That shows you that the business was here and that if the bank would cooperate with the community they would cooperate and boost the bank.

RFW: How did you get O'Hara out of here. What happened to him? Did he sell out to the local people or what?

EB: No, they just reorganized. In fact, the local directors they was a gentlemen by the name of Grayville and Fred O'Hara and a gentlemen by the name of Albin, I think. They, Bob Warner and Frank Davis and Herman Davis, they just got rid of Fred O'Hara and in fact what happened they just reorganized the new bank.

RFW: Oh then ...

EB: They went out and sold stock to all the citizens around in Ladoga and after they got enough stock sold, they .. Charlie Travis, I don't suppose you ever knew Charlie Travis, he was a good friend of mine, ran a hardware down here and he called me up on the phone one day and says we need a cashier for the bank down here and he told me the situation and so I would like for you to come down and talk to the Board of Directors and I came down and talked to Frank Davis and Bob Warner and Herman Davis and I think Roy Stover was one of them and so we finally got together and I decided I didn't, I am not criticizing them, but in alot of companies and certain situations I knew that I didn't have any future in the Elston Bank. I didn't have anything to lose by coming down here which I am tickled to death that I made that decision.

RFW: Now I don't quite see whatever happened to old O'Hara. How could they do that? How could they take the bank away from them?

EB: Well, I don't really know. All I know is that they just .. I suppose the Board just disbanded him or fired him because ...

RFW: Well, he owned the stock though you said.

EB: Well, ..

RFW: They bought the stock?

EB: They bought the stock, yes.

RFW: They bought him out?

EB: They bought him out.

RFW: Okay. Now, you've told us that the bank grew probably ten-fold in the time that you were there, more than ten-fold.

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: What type of business were you doing? What was your main line of business, banking business? Farm?

EB: All types. That's one advantage of being head of a small bank. You get the whole picture. You handle farm loans, you handle personal loans, automobile loans, appliance loans, we handled the whole thing. In fact, we bought .. later on we bought ~~alot of~~ alot of automobile papers, which is one of the best businesses you could have.

RFW: Speaking of farm loans, Ernie, in the time that you were in the banking business have you seen what big farmers were wiped out that you can recall or remember by the banks? Can you remember any big farmers that were wiped out?

EB: No, not in this area.

RFW: Well, there were a considerable number of foreclosures weren't there in this area? During the Depression?

EB: Well, there might have been during the Depression. In fact, I can't recall their names but then that was during the '29 and '30's along in there. Around here I don't really recall anybody losing their farms. There might have been some insurance company foreclosed on but they relented quite a bit on giving the farmers more time. I might state this that I'm proud of the record and am proud of the community for it. I was here in 1941 to 1969 and I made alot of farm loans. In fact, I made some through the Prudential Insurance Company and I made alot of residential loans on just property. I threatened and went through the legal procedure and you probably handled that. I never had one foreclosure from 1949 to 1969 when .. all the time I was in the bank.

RFW: Not one single foreclosure?

EB: Not one single foreclosure. I threatened one and posted notices on telephone poles around and it and was gonna sell him out at a certain time and when that time came, he came up with the money. From that time on we had a loan with him and we never had anymore trouble with him.

RFW: Now, do you .. have you ever had any robberies or any bank robberies at your bank? Why don't you tell us a little about it.

EB: Well, the first one we had, I didn't know anything about it until it was all over. I was ..

RFW: When did it happen?

EB: I don't know, I can't recall the date, but I was holding a Board meeting

EB: and we, one of the customers and I might before I get to that I might...
I told you I had never had any foreclosures, well, it wasn't a foreclosure but I was going to. I went out and picked up eighty head of Holstein cattle and all of this farmers farm machinery and sold it. He didn't lose any money on it.

RFW: That was the one that .. was that Chiddick?

EB: That's right. It was Chiddick, but I don't remember where ...

RFW: You were going to tell about the bank robbery.

EB: Well, this first one I had been having a Board meeting and it was concerning this Chiddick and he had applied for some additional credit and of course we turned it down. We just got through and I had the door closed to the Directors' room because .. so customers couldn't hear what we were talking about. We all got up from the Directors' table and I opened the door and Eva was at the window ..

RFW: Eva Williamson?

EB: Eva Williamson and she said we had just been robbed.

RFW: Oh boy.

EB: So they got him the next day but his name was Persinger from Jamestown and he had been the marshall of Jamestown previous to that.

RFW: I'll be darned.

EB: Then the second one ...

RFW: Now how did that happen? What happened? Did he come in and pull a gun on her?

EB: Yes, she walked up to the front window and he pulled an automatic gun of some kind and I think the FBI said it was a German make and of course he pointed the gun at her and said for her to give him the money in the drawer. She opened her cash drawer and she took out all the money, put a rubberband around it and handed it to him. She told him he was crazy, you'll get caught doing this and of course they did get him the next day but ...

RFW: How did they catch him and so quickly at that?

EB: Well, I don't know.

RFW: Did someone recognize him at the bank?

EB: No and I think somebody tipped the FBI off. He went from here to Roachdale and he roamed around Roachdale and he had some relation down there, I think a brother-in-law or something. He stayed down there all day and it got real foggy that night and then drove him through the fog but the FBI picked him up the next morning.

RFW: Did someone pick up his license plate from his car or something like that?

EB: I don't know. You see the FBI and the Sheriff's Department, they don't tell you much or how they got ahold of things.

RFW: ^{All} ~~At~~right now, you say you were robbed again.

EB: Yes.

RFW: When was that? Tell us about that.

EB: Edna, do you remember the date?

RFW: Well, you don't have to give it exactly. Just tell me about the circumstances.

EB: Lawrence was going ..

RFW: Lawrence Brown?

EB: Lawrence Brown was going on vacation the next week, on Monday, and this was on Saturday, no, this was when I was going down to the bank. I had some things I wanted to talk to Lawrence about before he went on vacation so I went back, I ordinarily go to lunch at 12:00, but I came home and ate lunch early and I went back about an hour early. I went back just about 11:00 to confer with Lawrence and I was sitting in the back office, Lawrence was on the other side of the desk like you sitting there and I noticed Lawrence looked up and he had a funny expression on his face. I just turned my chair around and looked and this fella by the name of Scott from Roachdale, came through that door with a gun on me. He told Lawrence to get on the floor to lay on the floor and he went in and he said for me to get out of that chair and go around it in there and he put both the girls on the floor, that Eva Williamson and Jesse Matson. They were laying on the floor and he told me to go into the vault and he had a gun right in my back and so we ... we call it the watermelon, its one of these round Mosler safes, you know, you've seen them, with a door on them about this thick. That's where we kept the money. I had some hid in a lockbox and they didn't get that but they cleaned us out on everything else. So he told me to reach in there and get him the money, so I reached down to the side of this watermelon and picked up a big money sack and we had gotten currency shipped in from the Federal Reserve Bank. I spect it was 18 inches by 2 feet large and I reached in and got all the money and stuffed it in that bag and handed it to him. Well, he had his gun in his right hand in my back and he said get it all! I told him I had it all and he switched his gun from his right hand to his left hand and then he got down and he looked to see if I hadn't left any money in there. Then he ^{heard} heard me out where the others were, where Jesse ^a and Eva was, and he told me to lay on the floor too. The fella by the name of ^{Doolittle} Duly from Indianapolis he was with him and he stood up in my office and one of the girls said something to the other and he ^{told you} ~~told~~ him to shut up. I've always trained my employees

EB: and I've trained myself if we ever got held up to try to see what the hold-up person had on so you could give a good description of it. I laid there and watched Scott go down behind the counter and I .. when the FBI called us in Indianapolis to .. they had his clothes over there, this Scott, why I identified all his clothes. He had on patent leather shoes, I know, the shiny kind and so but he came up before Judge Steckler and I think he gave him two years. He actually held up the bank, escaped out of the Marion County Jail and he went to Chicago and held up a tavern up there and killed two men during the hold-up. The FBI at that time Clarence Demoret was Sheriff and the FBI and the Sheriff said if we had made one false move that he wouldn't have hesitated to shoot you. He was a bad actor.

RFW: Is he still in the pen?

EB: Oh yes, the Judge at Chicago, I think Clarence told me, he killed a policeman sometime after in St. Louis. This Judge in Chicago gave him two consecutive 99 year sentences. He still in someplace.

RFW: Any other bank robberies that you were involved in?

EB: That's the only one and I don't want to be involved in anymore.

RFW: All right. I never have asked you about banking hours in those days when you first started banking. What kind of banking hours did they observe?

EB: It depended on whether or not you balanced of an evening or not. No the ordinary banking hours were from 9:00 to 3:00.

RFW: Were they open on Saturday?

EB: Oh yes.

RFW: Were they open all day or just Saturday mornings?

EB: Back when I was in the Elston, we were open all day Saturday. That was one of our big days.

RFW: This is an interesting subject, you were going to tell us a little bit about banking practices and machinery and how things have evolved since you have worked in the bank. Let's talk first about banking machinery that you used.

EB: Well, when I first started in at the Elston, of course that was when Arthur Cordes and ~~Kordis~~ *Karl Dickerson* and ~~Carl Dixon~~ and I were taking care of all the books. We had an old *Burroughs* posting machine that we had to put the ledger card and we had to crank it by hand. It had a handle on it and push the carriage back by hand. Then it got so they improved them and the next one we had was electric they were alot, we thought, alot better and faster, which they were, and then the next ones we got were a posting machine which carried a carbon tape on it. Well, at that time we had a ledger and a statement. The alphabet was made up in three parts. I posted the ledger down to a certain letter in the

EB: alphabet. Arthur ^{Cordes} ~~Kordigs~~ would were made up of other letters and of course ^{Karl Dickerson} ~~Carl Dixon~~'s was say maybe the tail end of the alphabet. Well, we had a ledger and a statement and they is what they would call double posting. I post my ledger, I did that all the time. Arthur ^{Cordes} ~~Kordigs~~ might have posted a statement which corresponded with my letters, see? Well, we switched around and ^{Dickerson} ~~Dixon~~ would post a statement in ^{Cordes} ~~Kordigs~~' letters. Well, they had a little carbon tape on the back of them that recorded the checks, deposits and the new balances on them. By the time you got done posting your ledger you would probably have a tape 10 to 12 feet long maybe 15 feet. It depended on how many checks and deposits you had in your run. Well, if you were accurate and we tried our best to be accurate, say when I posted my ledger and ~~K~~ Carl Dickerson posted my statement, that was just exactly the same checks and deposits and everything. When we got through, we would tear those tapes off and compare the ^{totals} ~~figures~~ on that tape and if my checks and his checks were exactly the same deposits were the same and our new balances were the same, we knew we didn't have any mistakes in the posting. We could just throw those tapes in the wastebasket and be done, but if the tapes didn't correspond you had to start in the front of them and compare tapes, check all the new balances and deposits you understand. And then they got into and that was about the time I left the Elston Bank, they got in different type of posting. I don't know just and of course I guess now everything, all the posting and I think both the Elston and The First National all keep computers in Indianapolis.

RFW: I think we'll talk alittle bit about colorful characters in the banking business in Montgomery County. You mentioned the fella ^{McCORKLE} ~~McClerca~~ up at Wingate. Were there anymore colorful characters in the banking business in the County that you remember?

EB: No, I don't really remember any. I just happened to think of that gentleman's name that was President of The First National, William Collings.

RFW: Oh, Bill Collings?

EB: Bill Collings.

RFW: He was here when I came to town. He was the fella that had the blue complexion.

EB: Blue complexion, that's right. ^{DARNELL} Donald Mahorney was in there too then and I don't really recall any colorful people in the banks. Incidentally, you asked me sometime back during this interview if I recalled any embezzlements. Well, I just happened to think of one. That was a gentlemen by the name of ... he worked in Elston Bank and his name was Charles King. He was a politician at one time. He was Montgomery County Treasurer. He got away with quite a bit of money

EB: from the Elston Bank. Martha Lowe caught him. She worked right with him in the loan department but he was holding out deposits.

RFW: Oh, the money wouldn't be put on a ledger, is that it?

EB: Yes and he was manipulating the note transactions someways that he wasn't making some entries in it, but one evening she caught him and that was the last of him.

RFW: How far back was that? How many years ago?

EB: Oh, I expect that was in the '30's, middle 30's sometime, I'd say.

RFW: Was he prosecuted?

EB: I don't .. yes, I think they did send him ... he lived just about the second house this side of ... west of Virginia Robb's on East Main Street, where she lived.

RFW: You mean in that big old house with the A-windows?

EB: Small house, a nice little house. Mrs. Miller lives in it now. Do you know where she lives?

RFW: Yes. You say you don't recall any other colorful characters, of course Will Collings had a purple color, but what about some of the small town banks? Were any of them colorful characters.

EB: No, I don't recall any. Of course you don't remember Lee Sinclair, I think I mentioned him previously ..

RFW: At the Elston you mentioned.

EB: No, he was with The First National, but at one time and of course you know Red Howell, well Lee Sinclair and Red Howell and there were several others had a big dance band. They traveled all over this area and Illinois. Lee would be out half the night ^{playing an} ~~planning~~ that orchestra and come to the bank and be half asleep the next day.

RFW: What about Frank Evans. You said he was President of the Old State Bank, that was the one you worked for.

EB: Yes, that's right.

RFW: That was the one where the Elston is now.

EB: Yes.

RFW: Did he own most of the stock in it?

EB: Yes, I think he did, he owned a considerable block of it and Lawrence Devore and ..

RFW: Lawrence was in which bank?

EB: He was in the farm loan business, Evans-Devore, he and Frank Evans were ... and he for a short time was put in as President of The First National Bank, but he was no banker. All he knew was farm loans and you can't run a bank on that basis.

RFW: Yes.

EB: And of course I mentioned W.K. Martin before, but ...

RFW: Who was the most successful banker in the County or in your opinion? Who did the best job over the years of banking in the time that you were there in the banking business?

EB: Well, it would be hard to just single out one person. Herb Morrison was a good banker. His .. I always thought his secretary, Martha Lowe, knew more about the bank than he did and of course ^{DAGNELL} Donald Mahorney was a good banker and ..'

RFW: What about Billy Martin? Pretty tight wasn't he?

EB: Yes, he was, I'd say, for the good of the bank, overly conservative. You've got to take it ... Anybody that loans money has got to take a few risks but you can't run a bank and not loan any money and make a success out of it. In the first place, if you running a bank, you're not ... one of the functions of the bank is to perform a service to the community. If you don't loan any money, if you turn everybody down or half of them that comes in, you're not performing your service to the community like you should be.

RFW: Now, when you were with the Ladoga Bank, what part did the directors play in running the bank. Did they have a very big role in it or was it done mostly by the operating officers?

EB: Well, it was done mostly by the operating officers, of course, every bank had a board meeting monthly and we always made a list of all of the loans we made the month previously. We had a sheet for each director and we always went over all of the loans we made. The month previous to the meeting we were having, well, they would go over that list and sometimes they would criticize the loans and now I had it on authority that I could make any loan I wanted to to anybody up to \$1,000.00. Use my own judgment on it, see? Of course, that any new loan on established customers who had a A-1 credit rating, why I didn't pay much attention to that and the board didn't either. I had a good Board of Directors and they give me a lot of good ideas and sometimes they was the Board that offered constructive criticism, see? I always awful proud of my Board of Directors rather. Did I tell you who was on my Board?

RFW: No.

EB: My Board of Directors was: Frank Davis, he was Chairman of the Board, Lewis Goshorn, and Chaundy ^{& BLAYDES} Blake. Wade Baker was on awhile and Bob Warner and Roy Stover.

RFW: What were the business these people had?

EB: Well, of course Frank Davis, he didn't have any business. He was retired.

EB: He used to be in the poultry business. He shipped trainloads of chickens from Ladoga to New York City. He married Havens, Havens Company, you see? They were big poultry dealers and they took trainloads of chickens from Ladoga to New York!! But Roy Stover, he run the grocery store and of course as long as he was on my Board was always ^{Bob Warner} in the automobile business and and Chauncy ^{BLAYDE} Blake was a farmer. I had a pretty well diversified Board.

RFW: Was Ashby ever on your Board? *Bob Warner was in automobile for years.*

EB: No.

RFW: Do you remember any other bank robberies in the County?

EB: Yes, there was one in Waynetown.

RFW: What happened, do you remember that?

EB: Well, there was a fella by the name of Pierce or Pierceson, from Roachdale and he held up the Waynetown Bank when Ernie Pyle was down there and he went in to apply for a loan and he pulled a gun and told Ernie that this was a holdup. I don't know how much money he got but this fella had been in my bank shortly before and Ernie Pyle gave me a description of him, ^{GILLENAND} pretty definite description and so I called Jim Gillenough who was on the State Police Force at that time and told Jim I would like to see you. He came down and I said that I may be wrong but I think I can tell you who that bank robber was who held up the Waynetown Bank. Sure enough it was!

RFW: He had been in your bank and you suspected that he ..

EB: Yeah and he had never been in any trouble before and he served a short sentence, I think. As far as I knew, he has never been in any trouble since.

RFW: Pierce?

EB: It was either Pierce or Pierceson. [?] I can't recall which. That was the only other bank robbery that I ever recall outside of ours.

RFW: Well, you did tell about the one at Waveland.

EB: Oh yes, the shootout. I can remember that.

RFW: Had there ever been any Crawfordsville robberies?

EB: Not that I ever knew of.

RFW: Did they ever .. Dillinger never came in Montgomery County.

EB: No, he did hold up the Central National Bank at Greencastle.

RFW: I think I've heard that.

EB: That's when Fred O'Hare was in there.