Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

Bea: "I was born in Saginaw Michigan in 1935. We moved to Flint Michigan because my dad's job took him there and that's where most of my socialization began. Our next move was to Brockport."

Interviewer: "How old were you when you moved?"

"I was in fifth grade or thereabouts, probably about 10 years old."

"*That's a nice age.*"

"When I moved to Brockport I was a high school freshman and it was Christmas time. I was introduced to Brockport by a house setting in the middle of the street at Monroe and Holley streets. It happened to be **Dr. Bott's** house and they were moving. They moved it out from Holley Street, across from where the dump was, and then they moved it back to what was the Middle School and cut down all those trees to get the house in the proper location. The moving van had not arrived here and we had a dog, plants, my sister, my parents and I in the car. Thank goodness the neighbors were very nice. The **Bannister's** helped us out. We cleaned the house, they fed us and found a few blankets and stuff and we could sleep but there was no heat in the house."



Fig.1. Bea DeRuyscher at home, 2014

"*Where did you move to? Where was your house? Was that the one that was moved?*"

"The house that was sitting in the middle of the street and was moved became the **Bott's** house and had no power, everything was cut off at the poles and it was Christmas time. It was cut off because of the electrical and the house that would be moved from the college. Upon the marriage of **Liz Bott** and **Bill Fitzgerald** it became known as the Fitzgerald house.

"My mother said, "You've done everything that you can. Do you want to go up to school and be registered, two days before Christmas or do you want to wait until after vacation?" I said, 'Well, I can't do anything else here.'

"Coming from Flint, Michigan, where their telephone system had advanced to dial and in Brockport we still had to pick up the phone and an operator would say, "Number please" was strange. It was a four-party line. I wondered what rinky-dink town my parents had brought me to. Our telephone number was 273-J. There wasn't much privacy because you could hear other people on the line."

"*Isn't that great how you remember? You got to listen to everybody's conversations. They heard yours too.*"

"No privacy then! The neighbors, when I did date, they paid attention to how long the car stayed out on the street, how long did the boyfriend stay?"

"*That was the way to raise a child, with everyone watching you.*"

"**Lois Root** and I were the only two freshmen that ended up going to the prom. Everyone knew that I was the new kid in town."

"*Where was your house when you moved here, before you moved to this house?*"

"We rented a house on Monroe Avenue. It turned out eventually to be **Gladys Queen's** house. We rented it and it had college boys living there. My father didn't want to put them out in the middle of the year. The young men helped move us over here."

"*So, you rented for a while and came directly here?*"

"Yes.

"During the time we lived in Flint, my dad was commuting between Delco and Rochester Products for a period of two years. He became known as the week-end dad.

"A family named **Edsel** owned the house and while they were in Europe on vacation they purchased paint and wallpaper to be used in this house. This happened in 1912. The next time it was painted was by my parents in the early 1950s. Around 1984 the Brockport High School Wrestling team painted the exterior.

"My mother's name was **Helen Virginia Wagner** and because there were so many Helen's in her class she became known as Virginia.

"My mother worked in town, first at a dress shop, then a jewelry store and later with a photographer. She was both an artist and a designer and made many of my clothes without even a pattern.

"We got this house when my dad was working for General Motors and this house had been on the market for some time. The people that owned it were stinkpots. It's the only nice word I can think of. The lawyer for the other people congratulated my dad on how nice it was that somebody could get what they wanted, but they had to get the big shot lawyers from General Motors to get the house. This house used to be the old Cupola, the nursing home. The cupola at the top has 24 windows and was used for homing pigeons during World War I. It was also used to watch for the Indians that might be entering the town. As you go out

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

toward Bergen there are areas where heavy fog settles and the natives believed that those places held the spirits of the Indians. The markings from the homing pigeons still remain in the cupola and have never been painted over. There still remains big holes for the drain, used for hot or cold water. I'm still plugging up holes.

"Ambrose Corcoran, his wife and three daughters lived upstairs and he was a painter. They rented the house and tried to buy the house but the people that owned it were not very cordial."

"So that was why your father ended up having to get the lawyers in?"

"Yes."

"That's hard when a house is for sale and they won't sell it to you!"

"Several people had wanted it but the hospital was on Main Street and we had people knocking on the door, "Aunt Tilly died in such and such a room and I've come to see so and so." Of course, by then the nursing home was down in back of the Methodist Church in one of those buildings. There were two houses back there."

"Oh, really? It's a parking lot now."

"They had a cupola in one of them too. The reason I know for sure is because my husband's mother resided there."

"I never knew why it was called the Cupola."

"Oh, because of the cupola."

"I never connected the two."

"And one of the buildings off of Erie Street did have a cupola also."

"Where did your mother and father come from? Were they immigrants or were they born in the United States?"

"Both my parents were born in the United States. My mother's parents were born in the United States. My dad and mother were **Russell** and **Helen Parish**. They were from Whitewater, Wisconsin, which is a community very similar to Brockport. It was a State College town. My Dad's birth certificate is in German, probably German Lutheran, and he lived on a dairy farm."

"What did your dad do for a living?"

"My dad did several things. When I was in school (a kindergartener) my dad was the teacher in the school. The school was kindergarten through eighth grade and my dad taught metal shop. My mother was very active in church work, no matter where she was. She also did a lot of sewing and kept busy doing that. Then my dad became a tool and die maker and eventually General Motors tapped him because he sent so many good students to them.

"About this time he began teaching in the Engineering Department at General Motors Institute. From that position he was asked to transfer to the Personnel Department at Rochester and then again moved back to Flushing, Michigan. At this time there was a movement for downsizing and he felt it necessary to look for another position. He was hired by Cal Poly at Pomona in California to again teach in an Engineering Department in an effort to advance the department. This is the institution that produces the floats that you see in the Rose Bowl Parade. His students would draw up the plans that somebody else had submitted and they had to build it and make it work.

"When he began working at Pomona there were 50 students in the Engineering Department and by the time he left it was co-ed and it had three different kinds of engineering and he was the head of it all."

"Did he ever go to school to get a degree in engineering, or was it all what he learned on the job?"

"He went to Oshkosh, Wisconsin for college. The first year my parents were married it rained every day and they were always busy attempting to get their clothes dry for the next day. The summer school classes were held in tents."

"He must have been an extremely bright person in that he was able to translate so much stuff that he learned into actually teaching other people."

"My mother's dad was totally blind, by accident, and he never saw his wife or his three kids. He had a mind that anybody that came to see him tapped into it. He understood so much and people would sit down and talk with **August Wagner** at length. He was very intelligent. My dad said he always tried to be like his father-in-law."

"That's impressive isn't it?"

"I have a sister named **Dianne**. She married and was divorced and is married again to **Don Voorhees** of Spencerport."

"Not the Don Voorhees here at Brockport?"

"Not that I'm aware of. Let me put it this way, the **Don Voorhees** that she is married to had been married prior. In fact, my sister had four children.

"Remembering back, we had a dog named Mike and **Dianne** learned to walk by holding on to Mike's ears. He was a black spaniel and very friendly. He was very family oriented except during hunting season and then he was only interested in hunting."

"How many children do you have?"

"I have four children. **Mr. Savard** had **Tim** and **Jaci** in school that I know of. I asked **Sandy** and she didn't remember."

"She would remember him if she had him because all of his old students said he was one teacher that they

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

would remember."

"Well, **Tim** was into sports too."

"Right, right! Okay, good."

"You need the name of my kids?"

"Yes, please."

"I have four children and I had them bing, bing, bing, bing. I got the baby stuff out and I never put it away. There is **Sandra Helen DeRuyscher Mosher**. She was born first and **Timothy Arthur** was born next, and then **Jacquelyn Carol DeRuyscher Bradt** was born next, and then we have **Robin Parish DeRuyscher**."

"Are they all in this area?"

"**Sandra** lives next door and she has a daughter and a son. He is out of school and is going to be working on his PhD, I think. **Tim** has no children."

"That's too bad."

"**Jacquelyn** married **Joe Bradt** and has two boys, **Austin** and **Ricky**. **Austin** is a new father."

"Oh, how wonderful."

"**Austin** and **Kayla** are the parents and are not married so I don't get the see the children very often.

"Tim lives in Mendon, **Jaci** lives in Tonawanda, and **Rob** lives in Chapel Hill in the Carolinas.

"Tim is with the firematics. He's a firematic engineer. This is the kid that I had to walk over to the Capen Hose every day to make sure that the first truck was still there. He wasn't happy until we had checked on the fire truck each day and then went on our way to school. He ended up marrying into a fire family. My husband was a volunteer fireman, my brother-in-law was a former chief, his son is chief now. We're talking about **Larry Vaughn**."

"Oh, yes."

"**Larry's** mother, **Mildred Vaughn** and my husband, **Howard DeRuyscher**, were brother and sister. **Mildred** was the first secretary for the Brockport Central School under the direction of **A. D. Oliver**. She was employed at the time the pink turtle was put in front of what is now the Ginther School."

"I love all these connections. It's interesting when you do these interviews. You learn not to say anything about anybody because everyone seems to have a connection."

"Well, as my mother told me, if your cat jumped over somebody's fence and who you're talking to or about knows it's probably true."

"You have to be very careful. I learned about connections that I never knew. All right, so let's talk about when your husband and you were married. Did he buy the store right away? Tell us more about his store."

"**Howard**, or **Howie** as he was known, was at the Brockport clothing store but he just worked there. The store was sold down the line and he went with the store. All the owners lived in Rochester. He did not own the store. Since the owners all lived in Rochester, if there was a heavy snow storm he was often the only one at the store because the owners couldn't get to Brockport. With each new owner Howie remained with the store."

"Oh, he didn't own the store?"

"People thought he did. The people knew that his word was correct. He quite often stood in back of the person, who was trying to buy a certain kind of pants, and he knew that they were not right for that person so he would stand in the background shaking his head. The person would not buy that item.

"I'm going back to World War I because he was drafted off of Main Street for World War II."

"Was he married at that time?"

"No, no, no, I didn't know him then. The Brockport Clothing was a men's clothing store. They started on Market Street, as I understand it. Then they went to Main Street and that's where they stayed. They expanded and doubled their space in the early 60s."

"So we're talking where the Lift Bridge is now?"

"Oh no, we haven't gotten there yet. You're about where Jimmy Z's is now, thereabouts. That's where Brockport Clothing was. Then there was a restaurant towards the corner and that got incorporated into Brockport Clothing.

"Eventually they got to the Workingman's Store. The people who ran the Workingman's Store bought Ben Franklin and the clothing store. At that point there was no place for girls to buy jeans or anything like that. You had to go and get the guy's stuff. Tailors came out from the city every Saturday and they spoke Italian and none of the kids spoke Italian, but between them they measured and marked and got the pants to fit your tush. They called it scooping pants. That's what tailors do. **Howie** learned from doing. Eventually they went to being Brockport Clothing and ended up joining with the Workingman's Store. Eventually they moved up on the hill where Wegman's used to be before the new store was built. The owners then were a young couple that had champagne taste but a beer budget so the store went under and they came back down on Main Street and operated a little bit out of one of those little stores on the other side of Main Street. They were supposed to have sold **Howie** the commercial sewing machine. **Howie** had the money in his pocket but they sold it to someone else. **Howie** was left sitting high and dry."

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

"When he was working in the Brockport Men's Clothing Store, it was a higher end store than when they went to the Workingman's Store?"

"Oh yes. You could come in and order the stuff because **Sid** and **Herm**, they were the owners, and the good guys. They would order those from Hickey Freeman or there was another place in Rochester, and you could almost get it tailor made."

"You're not talking just ordinary stuff, this was clothing that you would wear to weddings and that sort of affairs. When we moved here in 1959, it seems there was another name, it was already that kind of store."

"We came to Brockport in 1949, Christmas of '49 to be exact, and my mother ended up working downtown in some of the stores. I kind of knew downtown, she worked in a dress store, a jewelry store, and she worked for a photographer. That's when my dad had a heart attack and I had to return to college and I didn't know if I would ever see him alive again."

"Where did you go to college?"

"In Whitewater, where my grandparents lived and eventually I had to go into the dorm because I couldn't keep up the house and do my school work too. They had chickens and a lot of stuff."

"And you were expected to really help them a lot and didn't have much time to study?"

"Yes."

"Did you graduate, stay until you graduated?"

"No, I only went there one year and then I transferred to Brockport and then I got pregnant and that took care of that. My husband told about when the college was small and you knew everybody and you called the professors by their first name and there wasn't a Sunday that a college student wasn't invited to someone's home for Sunday dinner. You would see a professor downtown and they knew who you were even if they didn't have you in class and they would talk to you. We would pass **Dr. Tower** on the street when we went for a walk and we'd chat with him. It was a very small town and a very small college."

"It's funny we were just talking about that, Jim and I. He doesn't like the fact that a lot of the doctors now don't live in the village. It's not the same now. You don't know the people. A lot of the college profs don't live in town either. The college was smaller. People aren't very friendly."

"Brockport smelled of ketchup. It was from A&P, they were making ketchup. The stake body trucks, bringing in the tomatoes, would line up along Fair Street and if we wanted a tomato for supper or anything, my mother sent me out to see what had dropped on the road and I would pick up ones that were pretty whole. The trucks would start lining up about five o'clock in the morning and they went until whatever. That was when the A&P was up the street."

"The A&P was where the fairgrounds were right? Or were the fairgrounds still here?"

"I don't know about the fairgrounds. All I know is the building up there and the big tall chimney had the A&P on it. Eventually, they switched over the doing soap. Then the street had soap bubbles on it when it rained."

"This is great."

"Can we go back to the firemen? This is what happened in town that I remember. My husband was a volunteer fireman and because it was the way it was, whoever was the head of it was elected to be the head of the convention. So, one time the convention was here in town and the trucks went up and down the street and were spraying everybody and even through front doors that were open. You could be standing there looking out the screen and you would end up wet because somebody in a small truck would come by the squirt you. Of course what they were spraying was beer! My husband was also a carnival treasurer."

"We're missing that carnival. It's like you said, a firemen's convention was a lot of fun with competitions between the various companies."

"Roxbury was a restaurant at that point."

"That was a wonderful restaurant."

"It had a very high rating."

"It's beautiful in there. Do you remember the name of the woman who named it?"

"No, I believe it was someone from Hamlin.

"There was a time when insurance men and doctors made house calls.

"There was unrest at the college. One year before LA had their riots we had the equivalent here in town and the college sororities, the college kids, I'm not sure which, anyhow, they set something on fire and when the fire trucks and firemen came to put out the fire, the students rocked the trucks from side to side."

"Oh, my Lord!"

"I've never seen my husband that upset or afraid!"

"You don't remember what year that would have been?"

"Well, it was the year before the LA riots, probably 1963."

"Were they protesting the Viet Nam war?"

"They were just being nasty. It might have been racial. I don't know because there were quite a few colored people on campus

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

where there had not been before.

"I don't know but downtown certainly has changed. There used to be two drugstores, three shoe stores, two department stores, Sobbs and Houston's, two dress shops, and a dairy on Graves Street. There was Martin's soft ice cream out on the Brockport Spencerport Road. We had A&P and we had Star Market, two men's stores and others that I have probably forgotten. We had a Ben Franklin and we had a Houston. My daughter remembers going to one of the stores and she said the floor squeaked because they had a wooden floor. She went there for penny candy. It was probably the Ben Franklin store. I have no reason to go downtown now, there's nothing down there for me.

"Card and Candle was there. One of my kids said, "I want to see something." What he meant was he wanted to touch it. I'd go in Card and Candle and say, "Put your hands in your pockets."

"The kids did walk to school.

"When the fire siren blew you could count the call and how many times it blew would let you know where the fire was."

"When the kids walked to school did they go to the Central School?"

"Yes."

"When did they start bussing them and stop that walking?

"I believe we were right on the edge. There was a family with fifth grade children and they were bussed but our address said you had to walk. All children from kindergarten through fourth grade were bussed already."

"So it started changing then when your kids were growing up. It's so nice for them to walk to school, I think."

"Sandy went to the Presbyterian Church because that was when the building was used for the school. They were short two classrooms, however, classrooms were being built at the central school and when they were completed, the students moved there. **Sophie DeGroat** and **Doris Schmidt** were the teachers.

"I've always been interested in music. My kids always played instruments, my husband played drums, I played piano and violin, and if we put it all together we could have had our own band. Some of the people who rented apartments here would say they would rather live somewhere else because they knew I had kids practicing and it was too much. It's only fair. Who wants to listen to a trumpet, a clarinet, and a flute all going at the same time and they were not always in tune?"

"Now I want to ask you more about the house. Do you know what age the house is?"

"No, I can't find a record of it. We have tried. The house has square nails in it and one of the supports downstairs has marks where the hatchet was and there is still some of the bark on it. I do know that it was an inn at one point of the game because I have a picture of it."

"You're probably about the fourth or fifth owner?"

"Yes. The original deed went all the way up to the High Street Cemetery. I don't know how true it is but I was told that you had to go up South Street and then back down to get to this property."

"Well, Fair Street was built to accommodate the fair so whenever that started. I'm curious about what age it is; it has to be one of the older houses in town."

"**Charlie Utzman** was a carpenter, extra ordinary. He said there were three kinds of plaster in this house and thought that some of the woodwork and the stuff was added on here in the 1800's. During that time fussy-stuff was used for moldings and that is what is in this house and is identical to what is at the Morgan Manning House. There are twenty-six different places that change when you go to wash it or paint it. The downstairs ceilings in this house are 10 feet high. The upstairs ceilings are not quite that high but almost."

"Was this wooded part added on at a later time?"

"It was here when we bought it. We found grapes growing between the garage and the house and they are still being used today. My parents made grape jelly from them and that's what I do with them now. There are also rose bushes out there that are over a hundred years old and still blooming and they still smell like the old fashioned roses.

"I was told this was the stagecoach stop and the connecting one was to Garland and this was 4 Mechanics Street. The numbers went the other way. I was told that the fancy people, like the governor, were given one of the four rooms upstairs. If the stagecoach stayed they put hay down and the women slept in one room and the men slept in the other."

"So you could have five or six men in a room?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes many men to a bed. Some of them didn't have beds; they just put the straw down. It is my understanding that it was self-sufficient, that they used their own crops and stuff because the maid's steps had not been built to that part of the upstairs. There was no way getting from the front to the back unless you went upstairs."

"My sister's house is like that. There was a separate stairway that went to the servant's area."

"And it's steeper than all get out. The cupola was used for

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher



Fig.2. This small section of the 1861 Stevens and Thayer map of Brockport indicates that the home currently owned by Bea DeRuyscher (shown here in red) was then a hotel. The Village pretty much ended south of here. The triangular block is located at the current intersection of Main Street and Park Avenue. Park Avenue was then known as Mechanic Street. Utica Street is named North Street here. The "Garden" in the upper left section of the map was part of the Brockport Collegiate grounds immediately south of the building. The oval at the far right shows part of the fairgrounds racetrack no longer in existence. Fair Street, now directly across from Adams Street, is not yet indicated.

homing pigeons during World War I as I understand it. There are some markings up there that we have never destroyed, such as pencil marks, it's for somebody else to discover. What is our bedroom had a plate rack built to display plates. It is still here in the house either in the attic or under the stairs on the Fair Street side. We are using the back bedroom and I can hear everything that's going in and out both from the back door and the front door. By having apartments this way I can know what's going on."

"Are there apartments over this main house or are your apartments over the garage area?"

"There is one apartment over the garage. There are two upstairs, one on this side and one on the other side."

"Did you put those in? They weren't here when you had your children?"

"Yes. There were here. My folks put those in. It started out being one big apartment and then the teachers, there were four teachers, and one of them was going to get married and one went to Hawaii and so they split it and made an extra bathroom and kitchen. The following year somebody else got married so they fixed another apartment over the garage."

"I knew there was one over the garage but I didn't realize there were the others."

"Yes. It's a bedroom, a living room and then in the back part here, each is different. The kitchen and bathroom are here.

"There's a well in the basement. It's capped over so no one can fall in it. The plate rails were there when my folks had it. In the basement they have a large man sized barrel that is room high."

"A cistern?"

"No, I'm talking about the oak barrel that they put the wine in. This is a big one and it's built into the wall."

"Who made all the wine? Your folks?"

"It was here when my folks came and my dad took an ax to it because it was filled with vinegar. It had probably been through 30 or more years of fermentation. He broke it up with an ax and it ran down the drain. For weeks it smelled like pickles."

"Your mother must have been a real special person thinking what she went through."

"One other thing, just for prosperity, the front door is a leaded glass door and is made of oak and about three inches thick. It is up in the attic because it was either the door or my kids and my kids are more important. The hinges and all the hardware are with it upstairs so it can be replaced just the way it was."

"It's great that you saved it."

"Well, it's too expensive to destroy. It is similar to lead glass windows in a church except that it is just plain glass."

"Yes, that would be dangerous with children."

"Yes, it wiggled in the wind and the wind blew through it. My kids ran round and round driving everybody nuts."

"It being oak and solid besides, you probably couldn't find it now."

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher



This 1877 view showing the DeRuyscher home then owned by Sanford Goff is plate (XXXI) found in William H. McIntosh's "History of Monroe County NY: Town of Sweden & Village of Brockport", Published by Everts, Ensign & Everts.

"Who could afford it?"

"So basically, you haven't made a lot of changes to the house recently?"

"No, my folks did. The bathroom was the pantry and what is now a laundry room downstairs was the bathroom. That room was as cold as all get out. There was no heat in it. The linoleum was black with circles of yellow or red and it came half way up the wall and on the floor."

"Freezing, I guess."

"It reminds me of my grandparents, they had to take a bath like that. How do you take a bath when the bathtub is real short and there is a cabinet over it? You couldn't stand up or you would bump your head."

"Years ago people didn't bathe every day like they do now. Saturday was bath night and the rest of the week you took a sponge bath."

"There was a chifferobe in the house that didn't require nails or anything else to hold it together. All the pieces just fit naturally. It can be taken apart. I donated that to the Morgan Manning House because it seemed to be more appropriate there. When it was here I told my dad I wanted to put some dishes in it so he fixed up some shelves for me. Prior to that my dad had used it as his closet and then when the college boys were here they put it across the front hall so that others couldn't get into our private area. When my children were young we used it to store their seasonal clothes. This chifferobe had originally been in our house on College Street and when it came time to move it here the boys "walked" it over. There were folding doors on the side and a drawer at the bottom. I had to sit on the floor and use my feet to close the drawer. I knew it had previously been used to store clothing because on the side I found hooks where you might hang a bathrobe or whatever."

"Did you give a history of that to the Morgan Manning house when you gave it to them? Maybe you ought to type up a little thing and give it to them. Do you remember when you donated it, about what year?"

"No, it's still being taken out of the income tax because they estimated what it was worth and found it to be quite valuable.

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

This was maybe three years ago. The guy that gave us the estimate was a member of the Morgan Manning House. He was an appraiser but I can't remember his name."

"Was it Price Appraiser?"

"No, it was not him.

"There is a history to the story about this fireplace. I don't know the entire story but apparently my great, I don't know how many greats, grandfather stopped here with his father on their way to Buffalo to stock merchandise for the emporium in Spencerport. The animals were too tired to get to Spencerport and it was demanding, it had been raining and was muddy. That was when they had to put logs in the road so the wagon would not get stuck.

"A seven year old boy was here and became very interested in the fireplace which has an image of a boy and a dog on it. There is more to the story but I don't know it."

"That explains about how old this fireplace is."

"Yes. That's the part that you lift up."

"Was it metal?"

"Yes. You can see it. As I understand it, Brockport was never supposed to get this big. This was out in the sticks. The cupola was to watch for Indians. There was a practical reason for having the cupola."

"As you say, people would buy not a lot, they would buy acres, and you might own from here to the canal or something like that, so there were several people who bought property and deeds showed how far that property went."

"It finally came to me that the people my folks bought this home from were named **Edsel** and the deed was in the name of **Dr.** and **Mrs. Edsel**."

"The other thing I uncovered at the museum was all the deeds going back to the 1820's when James Seymour owned just about everything in sight. In Brockport he owned many lots so this property might be included in that bunch of deeds."

"They thought the canal was going through Clarkson."

"Yes. It really didn't become anything until the canal was built. I never realized there were 300 to 400 boats a day travelling on the canal. The most important position was the collector of fees on the canal. Then you were really wealthy and comfortable."

"The **Guernsey's** are the connecting link to Spencerport for our family. My grandmother's maiden name was **Guernsey**. Her name was **Gertrude Estelle Guernsey Wagner**. That was my mother's mother."

"It was Guernsey, you think?"

"Who knows? Because everybody spelled things phonetically so if some of your tax people couldn't spell, they wrote it down however it sounded. My mother was a historian; so much so that we even went over to Batavia to the Dutch Holland Company to arrange to have this property surveyed. Apparently this triangle was a mistake and we couldn't find out why or when this was built.

"The downstairs kitchen is iron wood."

"You mean wainscoting?"

"Yes, that's ironwood. **Charlie Utzman** built all four sides. He was a German and a very good cabinetmaker. He's the one who built all of this stuff in the house."

"Has this always been painted also?"

"As far as I know. It keeps cracking and popping out and then it contracts again. The house will only let you do so much. The reason the windows are covered over upstairs with wood is because there are twenty-four windows up there and the birds kept hitting it and breaking the windows. If anyone wants to return it to the original all they have to do is work from the outside and remove the wood. The windows are still there and still work. We had a hard time figuring how to solve the problem but **Howie** found someone from Hamlin to resolve the problem by painting it to make it look like a shadow."

"I just assumed they did that because there weren't any windows."

"Oh, yes. There are twenty-four windows.

"I was working at the theatre in town before I was married."

"Was it the Strand at that time?"

"Yes. It was under **Burt Donovan**."

"What were you? Were you a clerk in the window that sells the tickets?"

"That was after you worked you way up. First you had to be an usher and then you ended up taking tickets at the door. If you got out to where you sold the tickets, it was cold out there but that was the highest paying job. Basically I was inside with flashlights helping patrons find their seats."

"And how did you meet our husband? Did he just come to the theatre?"

"No, he was the assistant manager. He was fifteen years older than I. **Howard** told me people in his generation set their sights on what they wanted and others tried to catch him but he wasn't interested. Now what did you do 'rob the cradle' and I told him he had his chance and now too bad. My husband passed away at the Brockport Hospital.

Beatrice "Bea" Estelle (Parish) DeRuyscher

"There was a two story inlet and the old theatre used to be upstairs but I'm not familiar with that.

"The snow that came in 1977 was the last time the fireplace was used. They lived without power and had big snow drifts for over a week. I had little kids and was warming up bottles. I had a long handled skillet and I would stand back and warm up because I didn't dare leave the kids downstairs alone and go upstairs. It was Christmas time and there was a teacher who was home for vacation. I knew that I could go up and use her gas stove just to cook the food but I had three toddlers, fifteen months and eighteen months apart so I couldn't leave them. Blankets were brought to me so that I could put them over the windows and doorframes and the food that we had we put on the dining room table and it stayed right there. It was cold and we didn't have to worry about it spoiling.

"Sandy was mad as all get out because we made her leave her shoes on in the crib. She was not too happy."

"My life story could have been written as being born in 1935, moving to Brockport, leaving for one year to go to college, coming back to Brockport and then leaving for another year when I was first married, again returning to Brockport and spending the rest of my days in Brockport, but you would have missed out on all the interesting happenings that occurred in between."

Acknowledgements:

Interviewers: Kathy Goetz and Sue Savard conducted the original interview; Following the transcription, the interviewee made significant editorial changes through Joyce Brawn.
Interview date: 2014
Location: Interviewee's home
Audio transcription: Joyce Brawn
Fig.1: by Sue Savard; Fig.2: per caption; Fig.3: per caption
Layout and photo adjustment: Norm Frisch