

Peggy Childs
Interviewed by Loren Webb and Jesse Stocking
for the Washington County Historical Society

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Participants: Loren Webb
Jesse Stocking
Peggy Childs

Webb: Welcome. This is--my name is Loren Webb. I am the coordinator of the oral history program for the Washington County Historical Society. To my right is Jesse Stocking. He is a co-coordinator with me with the oral history interview program. And to my left is Peggy Childs. We're excited to have you here with us. You are, of course, the founder of the Washington County Historical Society, and so this is our fortieth anniversary of that.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Of the founding of that.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: So we're going to spend quite a bit of the majority of the time just talking about your involvement with the Historical Society.

Childs: That's good.

Webb: So, Peggy, if you can just tell us a little bit, how did you first get interested in history?

Childs: I grew up in Utah, you know. In Utah we have pioneers, we celebrate, you know, the Twenty-fourth of July, and you talk about your great-grandparents, and they did the stone work for this building or that building, and you're just always entrenched in history, especially up on the Wasatch Front. But when I came to St. George, guess what, I moved on Jacob Hamblin Drive, which was right off of Wesley Powell Drive. So then you have a couple more people you've got to study, and anyway, it just seems like it's always been in the air in Utah.

Webb: Good.

Childs: So I've enjoyed it.

Webb: Okay. So how did you get involved with the Washington County Historical Society? How did that start?

Childs: I lived in Salt Lake at the time and was working for the Utah Heritage Foundation. The director of the Heritage Foundation was Stephanie Churchill, and when she found out I was moving to St. George, she said, "Get something organized down there." And she just said, "We've got to get something going, a historical group of some kind."

Webb: So there wasn't anything going at that time?

Childs: No. No, there wasn't. And she felt the need to get something started and sent me on my way. And of course I'm the new person in town, I had to get my bearings a little bit and kind of do my assessment of what was around, and there was so much around, but I saw it as kind of this "could be threatened," you know. It was, there was nothing protecting what I saw, and so I finally, you know, I decided this is worth a shot. We've got to do something. And so I walked over to the Chamber [of Commerce] office. It was the old Court House building.

Webb: Uh-huh.

Childs: And walked up the stairs, and I was going to ask for just a meeting room so that we could advertise and maybe get some interested people. And the fellow who was at the Chamber office that day, I told him why I was there, and he said, "We're not interested." And I said, "Oh, okay." And I left. And I started walking down the front stairs, and I got about half way down, and I thought, he can't tell me that. And so I walked back upstairs, and I said, "Wait a minute. Is this not kind of a public area here? And you haven't got a conference room we could use?" I said, "Let me explain some more," you know, so we talked a little bit. And he chuckled, he laughed. He said, "Okay." So he said—

Webb: Do you remember who that was?

Childs: I don't, I don't. Better not tell his name, I later heard that maybe he was having a bad day. But he chuckled, he relented. He said, "Listen, let's do something for you." And that's how we kind of got started. He agreed to form what was for a couple of years the Washington County Historical Committee of the Chamber of Commerce.

Webb: Okay. So it kind of started off as—

Childs: Yes, just a—

Webb: As part of the Chamber of Commerce.

Childs: Uh-huh. Yes. Just a little committee.

Webb: So who, who was involved with all this, or who, besides yourself?

Childs: Well, we sat at the table and I was introduced to some amazing people. He kind of helped gather some people that he thought would be interested.

Webb: Was this the Chamber director?

Childs: Yes, yes.

Webb: Okay.

Stocking: I imagine one of them would have been, is it Doctor Greene from Green Gate Village?

Childs: Not yet.

Stocking: Okay.

Childs: He had, I think he was not in St. George yet.

Stocking: Oh.

Childs: Close. He came in later. But Montrue Larkin, I mean, my goodness, there's a name for you.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: She knows all about St. George.

Webb: Right.

Childs: We had Scott Prsbrey and Heber Jones. They kind of represented, I think, the Sons of Pioneers.

Webb: M-hmm.

Childs: But oh, their knowledge is so vast and wonderful.

Webb: What about the Daughters of Utah Pioneers?

Childs: We had Dorothy See and Ione Moss, and I don't know if they were affiliated with the DUP. They may have.

Webb: So Dorothy See was a correspondent, I believe, for the—

Childs: Yes, she was.

Webb: *Deseret News*. Right?

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: She wrote some articles, and Ione, I think her background was in education. She helped with the writing of the getting us organized and the documents. And Royce Jones. You know, there was the new kid on the—

Webb: And Royce Jones, okay.

Childs: Block that was part of the Chamber and had all the enthusiasm, and—

Webb: He wasn't the Chamber Director at the time?

Childs: Not at the time. No.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: It was prior.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: So, but he had all the enthusiasm, the right context.

Webb: Yeah, he did.

Childs: And so that was a dynamic group, you know. I was just the new kid on the block.

Webb: So what happened, how did this nucleus get started? What were some of the first things that you looked at, as thinking that this is what we need to do? What, what started all this?

Childs: What are we going to do now that we've got a group, huh? I guess I drew on some of the experiences I'd had with the Utah, the Heritage Foundation, there we go. I, because I was a Speakers' Bureau worker there, and we did volunteer programs around the city. So I could see us having a home tour. So we organized the home tours that were some of the early ones. And we had a lecture series.

Webb: Was that a monthly lecture series?

Childs: It was a monthly lecture series, and there were—

Webb: In the Pioneer Courthouse? Upstairs?

Childs: Well, Dixie College actually even helped with it. You wouldn't believe the names of some of these people that were on that first lecture series that came. Can I use glasses?

Webb: Sure.

Childs: Okay. Who's who of history here. We had, the first year, Melvin Smith, who was the Director of the State Historical Society.

Webb: Utah State Historical Society, right.

Childs: Melvin Heaton, who was the owner of the Honeymoon Trail Company that came across. Loved that.

Webb: Yes.

Childs: Thomas Alexander, Director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at BYU. We had Jay Hammond, who was the Coordinator of Collections with the State History Department; Paul Anderson, who was LDS church Curator of History sites. We had Carol Edison who came from the Folklife Coordinator, Utah Arts Council; Karl Brooks, our wonderful mayor of the City at that time; and Mary Kleinman, a teacher and an author. That was our first year.

Webb: Wow!

Childs: Isn't that amazing.

Webb: Yes, that's a—

Stocking: And was that 1978?

Childs: 1983.

Webb: 1983.

Childs: M-hmm.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: 1983.

Webb: That's definitely a Who's Who of—

Childs: I know.

Webb: During that time period.

Childs: And the little things that we did, my goodness, we got, we got good coverage. There was this new kid that came that started, covered stories, good ones. Loren Webb was his name. Look, Loren, there's the first home tour.

Webb: Oh, I remember this.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: This was awesome. A lot of the homes around Green Gate Village and scattered throughout the community, yeah.

Stocking: Are you in that picture?

Webb: No, I took the pictures.

Stocking: You took the pictures.

Webb: I took the pictures.

Childs: He took the pictures.

Webb: This is—

Childs: He did some, you know.

Webb: This is awesome.

Childs: Don't you miss the newspapers because—

Webb: Yes.

Childs: They, when you would do a story or someone else would do a story, it got out there to the public. It created a lot of enthusiasm, so we had good turnout at our---

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: At some of the things we did.

Stocking: So this is your story?

Webb: It is, and I—

Childs: Yes, it is.

Webb: I had just started at the *Spectrum* in September of 1982, so just a year prior to that.

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: And I was, of course, already interested in history, and—

Childs: Uh-huh.

Webb: So I was, it was wonderful to be able to see all these things happening.

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: You know. The home tour was, would you say it was quite successful?

Childs: It was. We had a number of them.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: And it was just so much fun to do those. The community really loved it. You know, and even our lecture series, because of the names of, you know, our speakers, some of them that were coming down, wow, that was truly amazing, to partner with the Historical Society in Salt Lake and the Church, BYU, my gosh. And they were coming to us.

Webb: And you had really good public involvement, right?

Childs: Really good.

Webb: Public attendance?

Childs: M-hmm. Yes. And probably, I've got to say, our biggest honor, my most favorite thing, was one night at the lecture series we honored Juanita Brooks with a lifetime membership. And Karl brought her.

Webb: Was that at the, the Tabernacle? Because I covered, I covered something about Juanita, and that was a big deal there at the Tabernacle.

Childs: I think—

Webb: But I can't remember.

Childs: This was held at the college.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: When I say college, UT, Dixie College.

Webb: This was at the college. Oh, wow.

Childs: I'm going to be speaking historically.

Webb: Look at that. Yeah, that's awesome. Okay.

Stocking: So that's you in the picture, isn't it?

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: You showed me this when we first met.

Childs: And Royce Jones.

Stocking: So Juanita Brooks, Royce Jones.

Childs: Karl.

Stocking: Karl Brooks and Peggy Childs.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Probably show that to the camera.

Childs: February 1983.

Webb: I don't know if the camera can pick that up.

Stocking: Sure. So yeah, that's a great piece to share for us today.

Childs: That was an honor, you know, and when I think of how the Historical Society has continued to honor her, the statue, wow, kudos.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: Kudos to anyone who worked, to anyone who worked on that project.

Webb: And Jesse, Jesse worked on that project.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: For a long time.

Childs: Yes, thank you. You know those names are just never to be forgotten.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: We need to do our part to make sure it just will always be there.

Webb: What were some of those homes that you went to that stand out?

Childs: Oh, the homes, yes.

Webb: Talk a little bit about those homes.

Childs: We had some great homes. I know we—

Webb: It's right there, you had it right there.

Childs: You're looking at—

Webb: That one right there.

Childs: This is Thomas Judd's.

Webb: Oh, oh my gosh. That's the Thomas Judd store.

Childs: This the Thomas Judd store.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: I know I had a brochure with it.

Webb: So that's one of the, the Thomas Judd Store was one on the tour.

Childs: M-hmm. We had the Orson Pratt, we had the Woolley Foster home there. Gosh, I've forgotten all of them. We kind of took—

Webb: There was the Miles home.

Childs: The Miles home.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: You know, some of these homes we, there were actually during this time historic homes moved from where they were to a new location.

Webb: Right.

Childs: I think we had two or three that were moved that I know about.

Webb: Yeah, during that time period, too.

Childs: One crumbled.

Webb: To Green—yeah, one of them crumbled.

Childs: Uh-huh, one—

Webb: And that was to the Green Gate Village.

Childs: Yeah, yeah.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: But just amazing homes. We kind of started spreading out, I think we had some in Middleton at one time, there are some amazing homes there in Middleton. It kind of got some of the other little towns excited about this and actually they started their groups, you know, which—

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: Was amazing. People started talking history. It was sweet; it was really neat to be involved with it.

Webb: Did you get any other programs going besides the lecture and the home tours?

Childs: Those were our main projects, you know.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: We were always doing things kind of on the side, trying to preserve the history that we could while we were doing this, and we started growing, we started thinking maybe this is more than the Chamber thought we were going to do, you know. Maybe it's time that we become really our own entity and organize formally, and that took some time. They were patient with us until that happened. But that was on April 25th of 1983. So—

Webb: Wow.

Childs: And you know, for the most part we had 12 active members for a few years, 12, and how it has grown!

Webb: Wow.

Childs: Isn't that fun.

Webb: Yeah. So what are some other highlights that stand out during, how long were you involved?

Childs: I was involved until, I believe it was 1988. I, we got information about the State offering grants to governments, the Certified Local Government grant, and that would give funding to communities for historic purposes, and we jumped on that. We sent Scott Prisbrey up to Salt Lake to get the information, and he came back, and we started writing a grant for that program. And it was accepted right away, and we were thrilled. You know, it, St. George was getting excited. And part of that was to create historic preservation commission within the city. So at that time I was starting to get my life busy with school work, I was going back to school. And I made the jump over to the City to sit on that commission, and we brought in people. Brooks Pace was part of it, Kim Campbell, um, Doug Alder.

Webb: Was the architect?

Childs: Uh-huh, the architect.

Webb: And so this is the St. George Historic Preservation Committee?

Childs: Yes.

Webb: So you were on that plus the Washington County Historical Society?

Childs: Well, I kind of faded out of the Historical Society just because of life. I could see it was in good hands. That was exciting, because that was when Donna and Jay Curtis, that's when Doctor Greene and his wife were coming to town.

Stocking: What about Doug Alder? I know he moved to St. George---

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: In '86.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: So was he getting involved in—

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: Either one of these committees?

Childs: Doug Alder was on the Historic Preservation Commission. Karl Brooks was, for a while. We had some amazing names on that.

Webb: And I—

Stocking: So—

Webb: Oh, go ahead.

Stocking: I wondered if you could share a little bit, and maybe this was after your time when Doug and Elaine Alder did so much work with the Opera House, the Social Hall, the St. George Museum—

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: Was that in the '90s, later on?

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: Do you think? And you might know the answer, too, Loren.

Childs: Probably the late '80s and '90s. I can remember feeling like that was a threatened building at the time. Like I say, my life was getting busy. I was assigned to write a paper in one of my classes. And I did it on theater for the Mormons, which included a section about the Opera House, the theater now, and actually presented that at one of the People's Conference, hoping that it would emphasize this is an important building, we need to save it.

Stocking: Yeah.

Childs: We've got something important there. So that was a thrill to see—

Stocking: Yeah.

Childs: The efforts to preserve that building.

Webb: So you—

Childs: Sometimes they come at a fight.

Stocking: Yeah.

Childs: But it's worth it.

Webb: You mentioned Jay and Donna Curtis.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Could you explain and tell a little bit about them and their involvement?

Childs: They came and purchased what was the Seven Wives Inn, the wonderful bed and breakfast there that's just kitty corner from the Brigham Young Home. And their involvement was incredible. They, they felt the, the preservation spirit. What they did to that building was pure and true, and they were so involved with, you know, getting things started like the working with the City and getting that group deciding how we were going to split, you know, people who could stay, who could go, and whatnot. So they just remained involved with the community all the time they were here.

Webb: Right. You mentioned, let's, let's go back a little bit with your involvement with the Historical Society.

Childs: M-hmm.

Webb: When you became a separate organization, did you meet somewhere else, or did you continue to meet in the Courthouse, which was the Chamber, owned, or at least operated, by the Chamber of Commerce at that time?

Childs: M-hmm. We continued meeting there in the Chamber building in the Courthouse building for quite a while because it was a small group. Sometimes we'd meet at Seven Wives Inn, it would be kind of anywhere. But the Chamber building, the old Courthouse, was kind of our home for a while. And to see that preserved, my gosh, yay.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: It just brings tears to my eyes when I go in that building.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: It's beautiful now.

Webb: It really is.

Childs: So—

Webb: So, uh, what about your involvement then with the St. George Historic Preservation Commission? And where did they meet, and did they meet at the City Hall?

Childs: They'd meet at the City Hall. It's kind of an as-needed meeting, when someone submits something. As part of that grant, we created the Historic District of St. George, and we wrote the first historic preservation ordinance for the City. And because of that, that kind of protects the buildings that are within the district. When people moved into the district, bought one of the properties, and they proposed changes for the home, they had to come to the Commission, and we would guide them through maybe color selection that would work with it, you know, any design recommendations we could give. We didn't really have teeth to any of this, so people

came along, and they were willing to keep that historic district looking. And so that was our main focus was protecting that historic district.

Webb: Okay.

Stocking: And that's actually where she and I met three years ago.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: I just went to the Preservation Commission meeting at the City.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: Because of my involvement here, wanted to check that out.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: And experience that for the first time, was introducing myself around the table, and she said, "Oh, you're with the Wash--, I, I've been looking for you." And I said, "What? What do you mean?" "I'm Peggy Childs, and I helped start that society, and I've got a box of archive material that I would love you guys to take, and I know you'd probably love to have. I was just looking for somebody like you." And that was about three years ago.

Childs: Yep. I gave that box to you, and I really enjoyed my work with City. And I was there until just a few years ago, so around three decades. That's quite a while.

Webb: Wow. That is quite a while.

Childs: M-hmm.

Webb: So looking, looking at the, the District now, it seems, the City seems to have, is to be emphasizing now that it's called an Art District.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: And not emphasizing the historic district.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: How does that make you feel?

Childs: Well, sad. They, they now have what they call an art overlay which means they are taking what they'd like to do within a certain area that they've already designated. We had this historic district, and the overlay is now we're going to put an art district within that boundary. And they've got some work to do. Cities that have done it

successfully, they create their own art ordinance, and they talk about things that are within the ordinance, and I don't know where they are in this process right now. They're still, if you look it up, it was still the historic ordinance that was running this Arts District. They don't mesh. So there needs to be some work.

Webb: Okay. Going back to the Historic District.

Childs: M-hmm.

Webb: Tell me what were some of the real successes that the St. George Historic Preservation Commission was able to do in connection with this downtown Historic District.

Childs: I'll take that back to the Historic Society because they created the Walking Tour. They, we've got the plaques for the historic homes that were placed outside so people could pick up a little brochure, they could walk around the city. There were some little books that were written for the district. And if I go into the Preservation Commission, they've actually done a couple of nice, very nice booklets—

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: About the Historic District and the homes that are involved there, too. So there have come some good publications, you know. It was interesting when we first started that most everyone was just so enthusiastic, but once I got told, "You have no right to be here because you have, this is my history and not yours." And I said, "You're right; I give." You know, and I said, "I'm just here to help." My, I'm the cheerleader. I'm the one with the pom-poms. I said, "What can you do, you know? How can we use you?" She was very helpful with some of the publications, early publications. So, you know, we drew them in.

Webb: Okay. What were some of the positions that you served in with the Historical Society?

Childs: The first president.

Webb: First president. And how long did you serve as president?

Childs: I think it was about two, thr—five years, until I probably went into the Commission.

Webb: To the Commission?

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: Okay. So what are some, when you look back, what are some of the accomplishments or, that you, that occurred during those five years, then?

Childs: Well, the greatest one, I think was getting the Historic District, getting some, the ordinance written. I know it's, it may be, you know, sketch, right now we don't know

exactly where it stands. We were trying to push for something that had a little bit more teeth in it. If somebody challenged the recommendations that were made, they could really do what they want, you know. So we were always looking for the next thing, and it, that was a little bit more preparation, more protection, things that we could do to solve it. Things just kind of kept coming to us, and that was very rewarding, you know, very rewarding.

Webb: Were there any things left undone that you would have liked to have seen finished or accomplished or?

Childs: Yes, for the Historic Preservation Commission?

Webb: Either one.

Childs: Either one.

Webb: Either one, the Historical Society or the Historic Preservation Commissions.

Childs: You know, with the Historic Society, I just left knowing it was in good hands. I—

Webb: Who took over your position?

Childs: I know Royce served for a while as a president. I think Jay Curtis was president for a while. I'm not certain, Jesse's got to look in the box. It's got all the records there. I kept them all. But I can't really say. But I knew that was in good hands, and that's proven true. I, when I go into that building or to a meeting now, I'm just proud. I just look back and smile.

Webb: Wow.

Childs: You know, when I left the Preservation Commission, I'd go with fingers crossed, and I knew it will be in good hands, you know. I don't know the ones that are involved there, but they'll learn; they'll learn what's important. We have a whole new way of getting new information out now. You know, it's not the newspapers, which was the central way to disseminate information to the community. And I'm not up on all the social media at all. So they know it, they're going to have to handle it and get the word out.

Webb: Okay. What are, what are some other civic organizations that you were involved with?

Childs: Well, during my time with the Preservation Commission, yes, it was during that time, I started working with the Utah Folk, the Southern Utah Folklife Festival.

Webb: Oh, okay.

Childs: Held in Zion National Park. And that was a thrill. That was held three days in September in Zion National Park. It brought in people from the College, the Park, community members, and we would go around all year trying to find old people or new people that did old things, and the old way, and we brought in people from the Paiute Tribe. Hal Cannon started that, back in 1979, Hal Cannon from the Folklife up in Salt Lake.

Webb: Uh-huh.

Childs: Very much [unclear]. In fact, he lives down in southern Utah now. But that was kind of his baby. It grew and grew, and the park rangers that were on the board of directors there, they'd say, "We can do this until we outgrow it." And when you, when we get too many people coming, you're gone. You know. And we drew big crowds, amazing crowds, kids from St. George and all over would come in on the bus loads to visit. The parking lots would be just absolutely full. And that was really a fun, fun, fun project. Then the earthquake happened.

Webb: 1992, September.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: I'll never forget that.

Childs: Kind of shuffled life in Zion, you know, a bit. And it, everything kind of stopped at that time. I was an itinerant special ed teacher for Springdale Elementary, and got to know the community over there. And there was a time when they wanted to try it again and get it started, but then the Park said, "Um-mm, no, we're not, you're getting too big." So then we were trying to find places. It just didn't ever take hold again. But we've got some wonderful memories of that.

Webb: Okay. So did you say you were into doing some, going back for some education when you moved to St. George?

Childs: Yes.

Webb: What was that?

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: What was that involved with?

Childs: Well, I started, you know, long ago right out of high school going to Utah State, and then life called, and took care of life things, kids and marriage and all of that. And, but when we moved down to St. George I was working for the School District at the time just as a para-educator and aide. And I got thinking, I love teaching. I really do.

And so I enrolled in Dixie College and Southern Utah University, at the time, what did they call it? SUSC.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: Southern Utah College.

Webb: Uh-huh.

Childs: I enrolled for classes at the same time I was going.

Stocking: St. George and Cedar City.

Childs: Uh-huh. My daughter was enrolled, too, and we would, you know, sometimes she'd drive while I'm reading the books, and like that. It was crazy. But I went through and I got my bachelor's degree, graduated from both schools in one week, made the front page of the *Spectrum* newspaper, you know, they were, that was great. "Grandmother Graduates from Two Schools in One Week." Headline.

Webb: Wow.

Childs: But then I went back to get my master's degree, finally, out of Utah State where I had started, and that's where I ended with elementary ed and administration. So.

Webb: And where did you teach, or become an administrator?

Childs: Well, I started teaching at Pine View Middle School. I was in special education. I was a resource teacher teaching mild to moderate kids, started Snow Canyon Middle School when they started, when they opened.

Stocking: Oh, I—

Childs: You were there.

Stocking: Started as a student when they opened.

Childs: I knew you looked familiar.

Stocking: You recognize me?

Childs: My room was down by the science rooms, across from the shop room.

Stocking: What did you teach?

Childs: I was resource teacher for special education.

Stocking: Oh.

Childs: So the kids that needed help with reading and math.

Stocking: Yeah. I took, I took the shop class, and—

Childs: I must have been there.

Stocking: I lived that direction.

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: So when I walked home and to school, it was in and out that hallway across the dike.

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: To Santa Clara Heights and that every day.

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: For two years.

Childs: I knew you.

Stocking: In ninth grade, and then started the high school first year, as well.

Webb: How many years did you teach there?

Childs: Only for a few years because at that time the Director of Special Education, he said, “The state is interested in this project. Would you be interested? It would involve going up for training, and it would be a couple of years.” And we said, I said, “Okay, I’ll do it. So I did this training. And when I came back, what they wanted us to do was almost a full-time job. It was trying to get more of the special education students involved in regular ed. And so it meant working with different schools and teachers and so I wrote some grants, we got some grants to work with some schools and create a position within the District to start working with special ed, regular ed, meshing them together. And I did that with the District for a number of years.

Webb: And you’re raising a family, too, right?

Childs: Yes.

Webb: So how many children?

Childs: My husband and I, this was our second marriage, I had two, he had five, and we had a Navajo that lived with us, a Navajo boy. So, yeah.

Webb: So you're raising a family, you're teaching.

Childs: Teaching.

Webb: And you're president of the Historical Society.

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: And later a member of the St. George Historical—

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: Preservation Commission. So you had a very busy life.

Childs: It's been busy, yes, yeah, but it, it's been fun, you know. Out of home tours, I could grab my daughters and say, "We need a guide," you know. And I'd place them at a home, and they'd get excited, you know. And one of my stepdaughters was Connie Childs. It's Connie Childs, who was president of the Historic Society.

Webb: That's right.

Childs: Around the 25th anniversary. You know, and it—

Stocking: It was about two thousand—

Childs: Eight.

Stocking: Eight.

Childs: Nine. Yeah.

Stocking: Okay. That would have been right before Dick's time, yeah.

Childs: Yeah.

Stocking: He was 2010, his first year.

Childs: Yeah. So some of what I did just involved the family.

Webb: Wow.

Childs: We got them all involved with it.

Webb: That's amazing. Yeah. Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us in connection with the Historical Society, the Historic Preservation Commission, your

family, your life? Anything that stands out that you feel important and would like to share with us?

Childs: Let me tell you a fun story when, the early years, going right back to the early years. Royce Jones got a call from a fellow down in Mesquite, and he said, "I have this great big," and I don't know if he identified it for what it really was. It was a grape sorter. This great big long thing that was longer than this platform here, maybe about half as wide. And he said, "It's in my barn, and I want to get rid of it. Would you, I'd like to donate it to the Historical Society." And so he said, "Would you take it?" And we said, "Well, we'll come down, and we'll look at it." So my husband, I got him, and we got Royce, and off the three of us went to Mesquite one night. And back in the barn we found this horrible old machine, and, "Sure, we'll take it," you know. Our first artifact. Wouldn't we want that? And then we thought, "How are we going to get it home?" you know. And Royce with his connections, he, I think the City sent down a flat loader, a flatbed truck or something, got the thing, brought it up, and now "Where are we going to put it?" you know. Somehow it ended up over in the new, it was the new Washington City Building, which is the old Washington City Building now. But as big as this machine was, we had a contest, "What do you think this is?" contest with Washington City. There's the mayor.

Webb: There's Mayor Robert Slack.

Childs: Robert Slack, yes.

Webb: Awesome. Yeah, he's—

Childs: And—

Webb: He was a great mentor to me.

Childs: He was a great one. He loved history.

Webb: He did.

Childs: Yes. And I do not know where this machine is now. I have no idea where the thing sits. But it was part of Dixie's history, you know, the planting of the grapes here and the sorting of them.

Webb: We need to check with George Staheli over in Washington City and see if he might have been—

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: He might know where this is at.

Webb: He might know where it is.

Childs: He may, yes.

Webb: Yeah. Any other great stories like that? I love to hear stories like that.

Childs: Isn't that a great one.

Webb: Yeah. That was just precious. That was a lot of fun.

Stocking: I have a question that might be a fun story that you were a part of.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: In the past couple of years at the Pioneer Courthouse, the old County Courthouse.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: We had somebody who I believe was living in Oregon or Washington call us up and say, "We have an old upright piano that we got decades ago out of the old County Courthouse."

Childs: Really.

Stocking: "Can we give it back to you guys?"

Childs: Oh.

Stocking: So it took months of coordination.

Childs: Wow.

Stocking: And it finally ended up coming back, and it's in there now. And I wondered if that was there then, and maybe if you also recall the Pioneer Courthouse Players. I think it was a performing theater.

Childs: It was.

Stocking: Or a comedy troupe.

Childs: M-hmm

Stocking: Were they active in the '80s and maybe the '90s?

Childs: That was the hot date my husband and I would have is going to the Pioneer Courthouse Players. That was quite a civic event. That was fun.

Stocking: What kind of performance did they do? Plays and comedies?

Childs: Plays, mostly comedies, silly little laugh, you know, things. They were so fun to watch. They, you'd just chuckle and laugh, and it would be hot up there, oh my gosh, it would be hot. No A/C at the time.

Stocking: They might have been using that piano for their performances.

Childs: I can't remember that. But it was just fun. You would just be so glad when it was over and you could go outside. And the actors would line up there, and you would get to talk to them. That was fun. That was a part of that building.

Webb: Did you ever get a chance to work with Bart Anderson?

Childs: I didn't, but Bart was so involved with the wonderful stories and his columns that he did for the newspaper.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: We talked on the phone, do you know, when I had questions about this and that, I could call him and talk to him. But I think I attended a couple of his walks that he had around. But never got to know him well enough, I felt like he just had so much, he's like who's the new kid now that's writing all the histories?

Webb: Reuben, Reuben Wadsworth.

Childs: Reuben Wadsworth, oh, I'd love to meet him. He's just, so many tales.

Webb: He really, yeah, he's got great stories.

Childs: Yes. Wonderful stories, and that's wonderful. I feel like he's filled a void there, that, you know, when Bart passed away, no one was telling the tales and getting them out to the public. But Reuben's been so good to do it. It's been good.

Webb: Yeah, and Scott, Scott Prsbrey did quite a few things.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: With regards to the, the Temple Trail, right?

Childs: Yes, he did. Yes.

Webb: Okay. And that was part of the time that you were involved with the Historical Society?

Childs: And I think that was probably his work with the Sons of Pioneers. But that was marvelous to get that trail going, and identified, marked, you know, made it available for people. So, you know, he was always active.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: In history. Always.

Webb: Any other stories or, that you can remember, that stand out?

Childs: I don't know. I've got to tell you, though, about the first book, I think one of the things that captured my love for St. George before I got here, and I was in Sam Weller Book Store up there in Salt Lake, the old Sam Weller Book Store. In the back there was a table of old clearance books. And I found this little book. It's called *Twelve Mormon Homes*.

Webb: Oh, yeah.

Childs: And it's an account of, it's just a journey from Salt Lake to St. George, and it was with Brigham Young and company. It was a leisurely trip. They stopped at twelve different communities on the way down, and Colonel Thomas Kane, Kane.

Webb: Kane.

Childs: Kane.

Webb: Thomas Kane.

Childs: Kane with a K was a guest with his wife, and these are letters and diary entries that his wife made, impressions of coming all the way down and working with the communities and her observations of Indians and hunger and, you know, just poverty. But they're loving it. What the heck, I don't get it, you know, she was so cute with her observations. And her father actually put these together at her request to kind of tell the tale of this journey. But her entry in to St. George, as they are coming down, this is in December, and it's cold. But she said, she wondered how an artist could ever capture this, it's so ugly. You know, a scenic artist, what are you going to paint? You know. Well my husband painted, made quite an income out of painting the beautiful landscape of southern Utah. But she just was afraid of it. She was frightened of it, and as they started coming down that black ridge, and it started getting redder and redder, she talks about coming in, she says, "At last I know what it feels like to come to Mars."

Webb: Wow.

Stocking: And this was probably the 1870s or something.

Childs: Eighteen seventy-four, almost a hundred and fifty years ago.

Webb: My gosh. Was this Elizabeth Kane?

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: And she talks about coming down and starting to shed the coats, and, you know, it's getting warmer, and all of a sudden there's some greenery, you know, and they, of course they end up at the Brigham Young home. And there's a wonderful welcome for them, and it's Christmas time. And she just loves it when she's here. But that really, I, it made my love for St. George happen before I got here. I don't ever go down the black ridge without looking at Mars., the view of Mars down there.

Stocking: We all do.

Childs: And thinking of what it must have been like for them, you know. That was—

Webb: Were there any other books that influenced you, like Andrew Karl Larsen's *I Was Called to Dixie*, or—

Childs: I loved all those books, Juanita Brooks' books, I loved her stories of Washington County. For an area like Washington County, we've been blessed with a number of authors, people who have captured these stories and put them into print, you know. God bless them. That's amazing. And yes, they benefit all of our lives. The stories about Jacob Hamblin. I had to pore into those, you know. I still love that man.

Webb: Yeah.

Childs: Wesley Powell, what he did, you know. But yes, this is a very rich, richly blessed community with the literature efforts that have been made to keep it alive, the stories.

Webb: Okay. Any other questions?

Stocking: That's great.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: When it's the parting shot, could I have it?

Webb: Yes, absolutely.

Childs: I'd love to.

Webb: Parting shot.

Childs: Parting shot. Well, I'd like to take this interview back to where it started, okay? Stephanie Churchill. Many years later, maybe 20, 25, 20 years later, she left Salt Lake to go back east to work with some other historical groups. And we're both back in Boston for a conference for the National Historic Trust. And I'm in an elevator, and she comes in the elevator, and I got to tell her we got something organized, and you should see it. And that was twenty-some-odd years ago. So my goodness, what it would be like to have it.

Webb: So you were, you were able to say, "Hey, I took—"

Childs: We got it.

Webb: I, we, [unclear] got it started.

Childs: M-hmm.

Webb: Based on what you sent us—

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: Said hey—

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: Can you get this thing going.

Childs: Yeah. She had sent me something, once I got here, that was compelling, too. I don't know if you've ever seen this, Loren, but it was a booklet, a paper, I think, that was written, is it by Pulsipher and.

Webb: You know, I have, this is one I haven't seen.

Childs: You haven't seen that.

Webb: I have not seen this one.

Childs: It's a paper, and it was on tourism, the good, the bad, and the ugly. And St. George had its very own chapter in it. Like, oh-oh. And there's a quote in there that I think we really need to kind of remember it. It captures I guess what I felt long ago, and I still kind of feel it today. It says, "St. George's unique tourism potential lay in two important elements—its natural setting and its heritage. Yet both seem to have been

overlooked in the pell-mell rush for economic growth. With no one keeping an eye on natural and historical values, it's not surprising that they are the very things which have succumbed to the town's history." Now remember that was early 1980s.

Webb: That was just about the time when things started to break loose.

Childs: Yes. Things—

Stocking: And this is St. George Boulevard, isn't it?

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: I can make out the contour.

Childs: Yes.

Stocking: It's very grainy, but I can make out the contour—.

Childs: You can make out the contour, yeah.

Stocking: Of Saddleback Ridge.

Childs: M-hmm.

Stocking: Along Bluff Street.

Childs: Yeah.

Webb: And I remember another article that came out a little bit later and complained about St. George being tacky-tacky commercialism.

Childs: M-hmm.

Webb: Do you remember that article?

Childs: Yes, yes.

Webb: Do you want to address that?

Childs: Well, I'm glad they happened, because I feel like those were two of the factors that started the turn-around. You know, I, if Stephanie had said, "Go get something organized" without this, when you read the article, you think, "Good heavens, you're right." Then you start looking at it through a different lens, your community, through a different lens. So there was a real purpose to preservation at that point. And luckily, it caught hold. But that was then. I feel like we're at the very same point.

Childs: Well, you know, it's been quite a journey all this way, but I feel like we're in a circle. So keep those efforts going, Jesse Stocking and Loren Webb.

Webb: So there's a balance, right?

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Okay.

Childs: Yes.

Webb: A balance of preserving and a balance of moving forward.

Childs: There is a balance, and there's a place for both of them, really. With everyone that comes to St. George that doesn't know this history, I hope there's something that captures their interest. I hope they see one of the programs. I hope they pick up one of the books. It's a beautiful place to dig in to and get to know, rich history. Good stories.

Webb: Okay. Thank you so much for your time.

Childs: You bet.

Webb: We really, really appreciate you and your efforts to preserve the history of this community, this county, and for everything that you've done. We applaud you. So—

Childs: I applaud you.

Webb: Thank you.

Childs: Thank you.

Webb: Did you have any other comments, Jesse?

Stocking: No. Just thank you so much for doing this and taking the time.

Childs: You bet.

Stocking: And we just thought it was so neat that your interview landed in the fortieth year, the anniversary.

Childs: Yeah.

Stocking: The fortieth anniversary of the—

Childs: Isn't that something!

Stocking: The formalizing of the Washington County Historical Society.

Childs: Forty years, wow.

Webb: Yeah.

Stocking: So thank you.

Webb: Okay. Thank you all for joining us

Childs: Yes.

Webb: Hopefully we'll be back here soon and with another oral interview. Thank you again for coming to us and hearing this, hearing this presentation. Thank you.