

Ralph Lamoreaux Interview
Interviewed by Loren Webb

Date of Interview: May 6, 2025

Participants: Loren Webb (Interviewer)
Ralph Lamoreaux (Interviewee, 94 years old at time of interview)

Location of Interview: St. George, Utah

Transcribed by: Susan Mower

Webb: Welcome. Hi, everyone. My name is Loren Webb. I am the oral history coordinator with the Washington County Historical Society. Today we are interviewing Ralph Lamoreaux, a long-time private abstractor, formerly with Southern Utah Title Company, who has extensive knowledge of Washington County property records. Today's date is Tuesday, May 6, 2025, and we are in the Community Education Channel studios on the campus of Utah Tech University. So let's begin the interview. What is your full name?

Lamoreaux: Ralph Carter Lamoreaux.

Webb: And when and where were you born?

Lamoreaux: They tell me I was born April 14, 1931, but I didn't remember that. Incidentally, on my birth certificate as it was originally recorded, my name was Ralph Archie Lamoreaux. In other words, my grandfather's father was named Archie, and my mother's father was Ralph. And so in 2012 I had to get that Archie name out and the Carter put in, and it was quite an extensive program to do that. But anyway, I've always been known as Ralph Carter Lamoreaux. And I was named after Ralph Thomas Carter, who was my grandfather.

Webb: So where and when were you born?

Lamoreaux: Born April 14, 1931.

Webb: Where?

Lamoreaux: In St. George, Utah.

Webb: And who else was in your family? Were there siblings, brothers and sisters?

Lamoreaux: Yes. I had two brothers and three sisters. I was the oldest. The next in the family was Margene. She was born two years after I was. And then the next one was Orvil Bruce Lamoreaux, and he was born in August, 1934, but he died in May of

1935 of septic sore throat. And he is buried in the St. George Cemetery, the City Cemetery on 600 East.

Webb: And what were your parents' names?

Lamoreaux: My father's name was Orvil Archie Lamoreaux, originally from Paragonah, Utah, Iron County.

Webb: And your mother?

Lamoreaux: Mother is Beatrice Carter Lamoreaux. She was a twin sister to Bernice, Ralph Thomas and Adrell Hunt Carter.

Webb: Did other family members live nearby? Did you have any relatives living nearby?

Lamoreaux: Yes. I had other siblings, too, that I should reiterate on those. After Bruce died, my only living brother then was Paul Lamar Lamoreaux, and he was born September 14, 1935. And then later on in August 1940 we had Beatrice Joy Lamoreaux. She was named after my mother. And then Carol Bernice Lamoreaux, who was named, the Bernice name was my mother, Beatrice's twin sister Bernice who married Ray Larson in Washington. And so that was the total. There were six of us in the family with one deceased.

Webb: So what did your parents do for a living?

Lamoreaux: The birth certificate said that my dad was a truck driver and my mother was a homemaker. That was on the birth certificate. My dad was a chef but also a truck driver part of the time, and, of course, in Depression days, jobs were hard to come by, and times were tough for everybody, I'm sure. And my mother worked waitress part time at the cafes, too, when she was younger.

Webb: What did your community look like outside of your family? What was your neighborhood like?

Lamoreaux: The neighborhood was considerably quieter, obviously. There were no hard surfaces streets, there were water ditches, laterals coming off on the West City Spring came off of Diagonal Street and down the various tiers of blocks, and so people would get up in the middle of the night sometimes and take the water, and so forth. I know we had water on this place we have now, the West City Spring. It was every five days and seven hours. And if you missed the water, you were SOL [so out of luck] so to speak. So you had to get up in the middle of the night sometimes to take the water.

Webb: Right. Where did your ancestors come from?

Lamoreaux: Well, obviously with the x on the end of Lamoreaux it was a French name.

Webb: I didn't know that because I grew up with Kevin Lamoreaux.

Lamoreaux: With Kevin?

Webb: With Kevin Lamoreaux, yeah.

Lamoreaux: That's my oldest son.

Webb: So when did your ancestors come to the United States?

Lamoreaux: I think the French line were Huguenots, and they came to England and then came to the United States. And I can't tell you when now. I wasn't that interested in those old ones.

Webb: That's okay. Do you know where they settled when they first came to the United States?

Lamoreaux: Andre Lamoreaux, that was one of my ancestors, owned part of Manhattan Island years and years ago. And William Carter, of course, came from England.

Webb: Can you describe your grammar school and your high school years? What were those like? Where did you attend?

Lamoreaux: Okay. I was living at the time, probably, in a rental. My folks were renting from John T. Woodbury, Sr., where he lived on the corner of 300 West Tabernacle. There's an office building now on that property. Anyway, they were renting there, and I went to Miss Conklin's Presbyterian Church School, which was like a preschool, and that was on 200 North.

Webb: 200 North and about, was it about 200 West?

Lamoreaux: It was in the middle of the block, and she had the bell on it, and it's gone now, and the bell was in the belfry up there, and she'd always ring the bell before school, when it was time to go to school. And you had sometimes, if you were late, then she'd say, "Well, try to be on time next time." And later on we lived across from Miss Conklin, when I was 14 years old, we lived across the street at 240 West 200 North [St. George, Utah] in a home that was originally built by Miner Laub, and it was right across the street from Louisa Conklin lived in the house east of the Presbyterian Church.

Webb: So did you go to Woodward Junior High School?

Lamoreaux: Yes.

Webb: Did you go to West Elementary?

Lamoreaux: No. It was originally Elementary.

Webb: Okay, just Elementary.

Lamoreaux: It's where the School District Office is now.

Webb: So you went to, they just called it Elementary School there?

Lamoreaux: That was the elementary school. And incidentally, my father-in-law, Howard Empey, helped, I imagine the Christian [surname] brothers and so forth lay the brick for that, and he would have to use the masonry they called it hod then, so he had the nickname Hod Empey because he went through this elementary school building completely and had a good job there at the time.

Webb: Okay. So then you went to Woodward Junior High?

Lamoreaux: First grade I was with, the teacher was Miss Graff, and I think later on she married Bud Sorensen, but she was the first grade teacher. And then I moved to Paragonah which was my father's home town, and he worked at the iron mines. I lived there and went to school the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades. Then we returned to St. George, and we lived in Grandma Carter's, Grandma and Grandpa Carter's old house while they were, they just barely built their new one on the corner at 298 West 300 North. And anyway, we lived there, and I went to school there. Fifth grade teacher was Misha Seegmiller. Sixth grade was Israel Nielsen. And then I went across the street into the 7th grade at Woodward High.

Webb: And you had various teachers there, a lot of teachers.

Lamoreaux: Various teachers.

Webb: Yes. Okay. So after that you attended Dixie High School, right?

Lamoreaux: Well, it was all one high school.

Webb: Right. It was Dixie High School and the College were together at that time, right?

Lamoreaux: Well, in other words, we went to some classes over to the old Dixie College, Dixie Academy.

Webb: Right. Dixie Academy, right. So it was kind of combined there. How far did you go in grades there? Did you graduate from high school?

Lamoreaux: I went to school until I was 17. And I dropped out of school. And of course we were having a tough time, and so I didn't ever go to any college per se. My next

school was the school of hard knocks, so to speak, and on in to, I was drafted in the Army.

Webb: Let me back up a little bit. Did you have any hobbies or interests as a child?

Lamoreaux: Oh.

Webb: Any fun things that you did while you were growing up?

Lamoreaux: Yes, I covered all of the Red Hill.

Webb: You liked to hike and explore?

Lamoreaux: Liked to hike, and from the Sugar Loaf, you know where the Dixie Rock is, the Sugar Loaf, west clear to Watercress Springs, and we called it Watercress at that time. It was the West City Springs. And they called it Watercress.

Webb: And it was a beautiful place, right?

Lamoreaux: It was a beautiful place.

Webb: Kind of the predecessor or where Dixie Red Hills Golf Course is located.

Lamoreaux: It is incorporated, and you can go there to the Club House and still see the caves that they dug back in there to access some of the water.

Webb: So let me just get it straight here. Before you went into the military, did you work at the Big Hand Café and the Liberty Café?

Lamoreaux: My first job—

Webb: Was this before the military?

Lamoreaux: Yes. Let me go back, my first real job was when I was 11 years old, and that would have been in 1942, and I was a dishwasher at the Liberty Café.

Webb: Which was located?

Lamoreaux: Which was located in the center of the block.

Webb: On 100 North?

Lamoreaux: On 100 North between Main and 100 East, on the south side. It was part of the Liberty Hotel complex. And anyway, at 11 years old, that was my first job. And Clark Blake owned that, and my dad was a chef there, and so I got a job there.

Webb: Doing what?

Lamoreaux: Washing dishes. And I was so short then that they had to use wood pop crates for me to walk on to access and get the dishes where they could go in the dishwasher.

Webb: So what stood out to you about why people came to the Liberty Café? Was it the food? Was it the service? Was it both?

Lamoreaux: That was because the Burlington Trailways Bus stopped there. And if they were going north, they would come on the old Highway 91, and they'd take the lower street, we called it the lower street, and that went down on the curve through now Smith parking lot block and came out Tabernacle Street, and when they got to the center of the block, they turned up an alleyway that went clear through the middle of the block. And then they'd pull up to the Liberty Café, which was on the right side in the alleyway, and open the door, and the people would go into the Liberty Café. And it was sometimes a rest stop, and sometimes they'd have meals there, too. At any rate, Burlington Trailways stopped. That was what it was for.

Webb: How long did you work there?

Lamoreaux: Well, my Dad worked there, I think some time. And then later on when we went to Paragonah he worked in the iron mine. Then when he came back he worked at Dick's Café, and I worked at Dick's Café for just a short time when Wally DeMille was the chef over there then. I remember one of the waitresses was Jewel Frei, which would be Shelby Frei's wife, Kent Frei's a child, I think now, their mother, Jewel, she was a Gubler. She worked there. And then for the next job that I had was at the Big Hand Café, and that was under the manager of George Pace then. And I worked with various people there. The first one was Adrian Anderson. They called him Ad Anderson. And he married Faun Giles. She grew up where the Dixie Market is now on 200 South.

Webb: What did you do at the Big Hand?

Lamoreaux: I was a dishwasher there to start with.

Webb: What was George Pace like? What do you remember about him?

Lamoreaux: He was a nice guy, and his dad and, of course, the family, owned the Rugged West Motel which was on the north side.

Webb: Just a little bit west of the café, too, wasn't it?

Lamoreaux: Well, that was Gus Hardy's, the Hardy House. And of course the little jail is back in there now. And now part of Ancestor Square complex.

Webb: So didn't they have a Trailways bus that came, or was it the Greyhound Bus that came?

Lamoreaux: Well, the Greyhound came to the Big Hand Café. The Trailways was a red bus, and the Greyhound was more a blue color.

Webb: So Greyhound stopped at Big Hand. Did the Trailways stop at any café in St. George?

Lamoreaux: I think at first it was Dicks, then I think they stopped at Liberty Café. And when they'd come in, same with, when Trailways would come south they would take the lower road from out there about Wendys, and they had another road going down there to tie into Tabernacle, and that's the way they would come. When Greyhound bus would come, of course the Greyhound was on the corner of Boulevard (we called it 100 North) and Main Street. But if they were going south, they'd turn at the Pioneer Courthouse corner and go up the street. Sometimes they'd do the left in the center of the block at the McQuarrie Museum there, go past the jail and the fire station, and come out on Main Street and do a left, and park right down next to the door, back from the stop sign, and everybody would get out and go in the restaurant. If they were coming from the west, they would come down the Boulevard and turn on 100 West and go to 200 North and do the right, and that was past the Brigham Young home, and around the corner at Diagonal and then down the street. And if there were a number of buses, a lot of times they'd park in front of the Grundy house which back then Sherm Hardy lived there, and it was all down to that point, down to Mattie Empey's, it was all rock ditches then. And then when you got down to Big Hand it was all curb and gutter. Then put that in and had the wider sidewalk.

Webb: So at age 17 you left to go into the military. Is that correct?

Lamoreaux: No. When I went in the military, I was 19.

Webb: You were 19. Which branch of service did you go in?

Lamoreaux: No, I was 20 when I went in. This is the program there. I lived at 240 West 200 North. That was across from the Conklin Presbyterian Church, moved there when I was 14. And anyway, I'd been ordained in the LDS Church—should I bring that in?

Webb: Sure:

Lamoreaux: I'd been ordained in the LDS Church as an Elder under Maiben B. Ashby who was the bishop then, and I was ready to go on a mission, an LDS mission. And the draft board, they had a draft board, and the inductees and those that were drafted were Class 1A and 1B and so forth. Anyway, I was 1A, and I was ready to go, and I had

actually met with the stake presidency, and I think the Stake President then was James Andrus.

Webb: This is the St. George Stake?

Lamoreaux: St. George Stake, the original St. George Stake. And I was ready to go and was getting the papers signed, and then the draft board decided that I needed to join the Army. And so LeRoy H. Cox, he was in the Second World War, no, he was in the First World War, and he was over the draft board, and, incidentally, a relative of my grandmother's, and anyway, I was drafted. And so on October 23, 1951, I and Delmont Truman boarded the Greyhound bus headed for Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City to be drafted into the Army. And we stopped, it was on old Highway 91, and I think we stopped, sometimes they'd go through Hurricane, and sometimes just over to Leeds, up through that way. Anyway, in that case they went to Hurricane, and we picked up somebody named Hinton and then went up the Black Ridge. And of course we didn't go over to New Harmony, it was off the beaten path. But we went through Kanarrville and on up into Hamilton Fort on the old highway and right in to Cedar City. And all of the way up Highway 91, we'd stop about every town and pick up other inductees being drafted.

Webb: So it probably took you 8 to 10 hours to get there, right?

Lamoreaux: Yes. Not only that, but the speed limit was, I think, 55 back then.

Webb: Yes, I believe that. So was this during World War II?

Lamoreaux: No, this was just, it would have been after World War II.

Webb: So what year did you join?

Lamoreaux: 1951, October the 23rd is the day I left.

Webb: So this was during the Korean War, then?

Lamoreaux: Yes, during the Korean War.

Webb: And how long did you serve and what experiences did you have serving in the military? Where did you go from, did you say Camp Douglas or Fort Douglas?

Lamoreaux: Fort Douglas. We went from there, and we got on the train and went to Fort Lewis.

Webb: Fort Lewis, Washington?

Lamoreaux: Uh-huh. And that was unusual for me because every day it would rain up there, at the time we were drafted, compared to St. George where it rained twice a year down here, you know.

Webb: Right. What did you do in the military there at Fort Lewis?

Lamoreaux: Then from there I got on the train and we went down to Camp Roberts down near Paso Robles, California. And I had the six-week basic training where we learned to march and fire weapons and so forth. And then we moved across the river to Cook School, or some of us did. And because I had cooked at Big Hand Café when I was 17, 18, 19 years old, I'd cooked there and worked there, that was what they, I went to cook school, anyway, and learned how to cook Army way in the Field Ranges back then, M-1937 Field Range, which was a gas-powered free-standing stove to cook on.

Webb: Did you go to Korea?

Lamoreaux: Yes. And we left, and I remember we went under the Golden Gate Bridge at 1 o'clock in the morning, and we got on the troop ship, and I think there were 3,300 of us on there, on the troop ship. And we stopped at Hawaii, and I got with a GI that he was a military, his father was in the military, and he knew his way around Hawaii, and they turned us loose for eight hours while they refueled and took on freight and dropped freight. His name was Landau, and so we went along Waikiki Beach and seen some of the program that was going on there, and we stopped later on at Guam and took on supplies there, and we came into Tokyo Bay on the tide, and it was early in the morning. It was a beautiful sight seeing Mount Fuji in the background, and come in there. And we spent a couple of weeks there and got some more shots, and then we got on a ship and made a short journey around Japan, out of Japan and into Pusan, South Korea. And that's where we landed. And that was a culture shock to me because everybody, some of the ladies would have their baskets on their head, and they'd be carrying their produce, and there was nothing above, their breasts would be showing. It was quite a, that was a culture shock.

Webb: I bet. So when you got there, were you there when Pusan, I think Pusan was attacked by North Korea. Is that right?

Lamoreaux: Well, Pusan was kind of at the extreme south end.

Webb: Yeah. So what did you do there? Were you cooking for the soldiers?

Lamoreaux: I was cooking there, yes. I was in a replacement company, 40th Infantry Division, 40th replacement company, and the closest I was to the front lines was about 12 miles away.

Webb: Did you hear the—

Lamoreaux: We could hear the artillery going, sometimes at night, too. And this replacement company, we had 200 permanent party at the base we were at, and 200 soldiers there. And they would come in on the train, and they might bring 2,000 in, and if

they came in the middle of the night, we had to get up and fix them coffee and coffee cake or something for them to eat as they came in. And we had the various tents, and they'd get off and sleep for a day or two, and then they'd go to the front lines. And then they'd bring back some from the front lines, and we might have two or three hundred more as they brought them back. And so it was always a variable number.

Webb: A variable number of people that you were serving?

Lamoreaux: Uh-huh. And there were five, we had five cooks, and we had one ration man. He was originally from Brooklyn, New York, named Tirganoli. That sounds like an Italian name, doesn't it.

Webb: And how long were you there? How long were you serving there?

Lamoreaux: I was there 16 months.

Webb: Sixteen months, wow.

Lamoreaux: Then when I came home, we left Inchon Harbor which was up farther north from Chuncheon, I was there at the time the 38th parallel, the truce was called in August of 1953. And so they quit fighting, and I'd got on a truck and went to Inchon and got on a ship and came all the way up back to U.S. We went up by the Aleutian Islands. It was cold up there, and down the Gulf of Alaska, and on down the West Coast, and I came in to San Francisco Bay under the Golden Gate, and there was this beautiful lady out there singing "God Bless America."

Webb: Wow.

Lamoreaux: Even today it makes me—

Webb: Yeah. So touching. So when you got back to St. George, what occupation or career did you pursue, and why did you choose that career?

Lamoreaux: Well, when I got back to St. George I could have gone back to work, the law required that if you had worked in some business, you had the option to go right back to the business, and the business had to rehire you. That was the rule of thumb at that time. I could have gone back to work at Big Hand Café, and I was [unclear] for a short time, and Howard Carter was my uncle, my mother's only brother. And he had started Carter Abstract Company. And before that he had worked for Hafen and Nelson as an abstractor, an attorney firm. And that's where he got his initial start. And so Carter Abstract—

Webb: So, they offered you a job?

Lamoreaux: Howard Carter offered me a job, and I didn't know beans about typing anything, but I had to learn to type. But it was a GI bill, they called it a GI bill, that was provided for Veterans on-the-job training. And at the time that I went to work with Howard, I had \$155 a month was on-the-job monthly wage.

Webb: Was this Carter Abstract Service, or was this Southern Utah Title?

Lamoreaux: No, it was Carter Abstract.

Webb: Carter Abstract Company or Service?

Lamoreaux: Yes, Carter Abstract Company.

Webb: And where was it located?

Lamoreaux: 53 East 100 North, next to Pickett Lumber.

Webb: Oh, and what were your duties there?

Lamoreaux: Well, we had, we were close to the Pioneer Courthouse, and if you made an abstract—an abstract is a history in total, so to speak, of all the documents in Washington County, some of it in a summarized form, and it gave a history, a chain of title, if you will, on this given piece of property from the sovereign, in other words, St. George was incorporated August 17, 1862. That was the corporate charter at that time. But the patent wasn't issued for the City entry until 1872.

Webb: Oh, my gosh. That's a long time afterwards.

Lamoreaux: Uh-huh. So the patent for the City entry was issued to Joseph W. Young, who was the mayor at that time, as the trustee for the inhabitants of St. George City, Washington County, Utah Territory, for their benefit. And by law the mayor and the probate court determined who had what, and various people had already camped out here, so to speak. The earliest documents were called land certificates, and they were issued, the first of them in the record, was 1859. And if went to the record, we could find those if we needed to. But they were issued, and the mayor's deed was issued, and the city lot, usually one city lot was designated to so and so, and that lot was .8 of an acre. It was 132 by 264 ft in size, and of course the streets, the blocks were laid out in the grid pattern. We lived in the one block, the lots ran north and south, lots 1 through 8, and then the next block on either side would have been horizontal. We had pattern. And the idea was you lived in the front part of the block, and you had corrals and so forth in the back, and your garden area, and so forth. Anyway, the mayor's deeds were issued, and most of the lots sold for \$5.

Webb: Let me stop you there for just a second. You describe, you know, the lots and the blocks and everything. Isn't that kind of based on Joseph Smith's plat of Zion, going clear back to Nauvoo and—

Lamoreaux: Yeah, it was. It was a common thing. Everything was mostly laid out in a grid pattern, and they were a systematic type thing. And of course we had various plats and so forth, and then my personal opinion is that when the pioneers first came here and started to establish the town I think, this is just a personal opinion, I can't verify it in any respect, but I think Erastus Snow was the prophet, or the LDS go-to guy.

Webb: Here in St. George?

Lamoreaux: Uh-huh.

Webb: Right.

Lamoreaux: I think he and Brigham Young told everybody, okay, go out and get your homestead taken care of because we don't want all these gentiles to come in and take over part of it.

Webb: Right. So as I understand it, you were working for Carter Abstract Service, but you were also working at the Washington County Recorder's office, right?

Lamoreaux: Well, okay.

Webb: And that's where the property records were kept, correct?

Lamoreaux: The property records were over there.

Webb: Was that in the Pioneer Courthouse?

Lamoreaux: In the Pioneer Courthouse.

Webb: 97 East St. George Boulevard?

Lamoreaux: Uh-huh. 97 East 100 North. At any rate, every morning at 8 o'clock I'd go to work at a quarter after. Later on, incidentally, we, Howard and I, formed Southern Utah Title Inc.

Webb: What year?

Lamoreaux: About 1960.

Webb: Okay. Can I have you look that up for me, or your daughter, Lisa. Let me know when Southern Utah Title was organized.

Lamoreaux: I'd have to really think that out.

Webb: It's okay. We can come back to that later.

Lamoreaux: Okay. Now I would leave there, and I would walk over to the courthouse with a little briefcase like I have here, maybe, and there was no room at the courthouse for anybody to sit, you know, to work. The County Clerk's office was in the northeast corner, and then we had the County Commissioner room adjoining in that with another door, and another door going out into the hall. And then on down toward the south side it was the Assessor's office in the southeast corner. And in the southwest corner there were steps and a restroom under the steps, and it went up to the courtroom upstairs, as you know. And the next one north, going up the west side, was the Recorder's office, and then the County Treasurer's office was in the northwest corner. But then later on they had a little vault that went out to the north, built on into the treasurer's office. At any rate, I'd go over to the courthouse and had a Smith Corona typewriter, and we had a long table which was about three feet wide and was in the hall on the east side.

Webb: I was going to ask you. I bet it was out in the hallway. Because there's just not a lot of room there.

Lamoreaux: There wasn't a lot of room there.

Webb: Oh, my gosh. So you worked in a hallway with that table, right?

Lamoreaux: There was that table and then—

Webb: That Smith Corona?

Lamoreaux: Yeah. And then Hafen and Nelson abstractor, Harvey Schmutz, worked on the other end, and you had to go and get the various books, you had to go through the Treasurer's office to go back to the vault to get some of the books, and some of them were in the Recorder's office proper. And then you had to take those out in the hall and open them up and do your typing to make the abstract.

Webb: Right. So you got to see a lot of signatures, right, hand signatures? And you became really good at being able to identify signatures, right?

Lamoreaux: Well, you see, when you, there's a difference. Nowadays we use Title Insurance, and we don't worry much about that. But when you do, make an abstract, you have to take each document individually, type it, and get it as accurate as possible. It has to be proofread in your head, at least, and so you saw various signatures on documents as you went through. And this is a common thing for the title people that Ron Nelson had Nelson Supply which was, anyway, originally it was his dad's Western Auto. They had their business there in the Liberty Hotel complex on the south side of Boulevard. Anyway, Ron Nelson had this little contest that he published, and he says, "If you can figure out who these signatures are, you get two nights free at so and so place in Las Vegas." And I looked at it, and I said, "Well, I've seen those signatures." So I looked them up, and there were five signatures

there, and if you look at those signatures, you couldn't possibly make anybody's name out of it because it was all a bunch of scribbling. And those five names were John William Hickman, who was one of the founders of Dixie State Bank. He was a banker originally from Beaver. John W. Palmer, he was an attorney. Lang Foremaster was an attorney. Jack Holt, he had the Twin Oaks Motel out there, among other things. And let's see, the last one was Irvin Wesley Milne, who was Milne Jewelry. So that's the five names, and I went to school with Wes Milne, incidentally, so I meandered up to Ron Nelson's business, and I said I want to solve this puzzle you got here. And I said, I told them who they were, and he, "You son of a gun, I knew you'd do something like this." And I went to school with Ron. It was a joke, so to speak.

Webb: So you won? Did you get to—

Lamoreaux: No, I didn't ever take advantage.

Webb: Oh, I was hoping that you would take advantage and that you would be able to win and go down to Las Vegas.

Lamoreaux: Well, I had the chance, and I told various people. Larry Blake was one of them, who was Southern Utah Title, and Ed Bowler, too. I told them that was their signatures.

Webb: So how did you become familiar with who owned the property in Washington County, and how were you, as an abstractor, able to assist such agencies as the Washington County Attorney's office?

Lamoreaux: Well, it wasn't so much the Attorney's office, it was mainly the Recorder. I was adjoining the Recorder's office. Incidentally, a couple of times while I was working in the old Pioneer Courthouse, Helen Barker was the County Recorder, and Wilma Andrus was the Deputy. And they decided a couple of times to go to Salt Lake to the various county conventions. And so I was the temporary recorder for a day or two, a couple of times.

Webb: Well, that's really neat.

Lamoreaux: Another that's interesting here is we'd go through and do these documents and make these abstracts, initially they were written in longhand, and you've seen some of them probably in your historical business there, written in longhand, and there were, I can't tell you just when they quit them. But then they had long-carriage typewriters, and so Wilma Andrus would type most of the documents, and all of those documents had to be proofread that were typed, and finally in the '60s we went to a roll of film, a microfiche program where they would photograph them and send that North, and this outfit up there would print the pages and bring them back, and we'd put them in the various books.

Webb: So during the time that you worked as an abstractor, land transfers and lending changes went from occasionally, you know, just doing it once or twice a day, up to 200 to 300 documents a day. So what do you believe brought about such a rapid change, and how did that impact your job and the job of other abstractors?

Lamoreaux: Well, it was actually the job of others. I was out of the business. I quit that in 1979, and it got too busy to suit me.

Webb: So this was actually, in 1979, this was probably prior to, oh gosh, on the early '80s it seems like is when we really saw the main push in population increase in Washington County?

Lamoreaux: Well, you see, the freeway was built over here. Incidentally, I have some, a couple of pictures of when they made the cut through the east Black Ridge which I could produce.

Webb: What was that like, when you saw that [unclear]?

Lamoreaux: Well, I was informed at that time that they were going to open that up, and so I went over about where Red Hills Parkway comes off the hill there at the old movie theater off on Industrial Road there, and they had already done the preliminary work on the top of the cut, and the cats has been up there and had pushed off all of the ledges of black rock on top, and then they had their dynamite charges in to start the project of exploding and pulverizing the red sandstone which was under the—

Webb: Under the lava rock.

Lamoreaux: Under the lava rock. So I got a couple of pictures of that explosion and—

Webb: How long did that take, for that construction to clear that cut?

Lamoreaux: I don't remember, but the first, before the freeway was built through the gorge, they used that cut before that. It was an extension of St. George Boulevard on a big turn over part of the freeway now and through the cut. And the Utah Highway Patrol Checking Station was over on the Middleton side, on the south side.

Webb: I remember that.

Lamoreaux: And the first one moves over where Dean Terry's home is next to the Snow Canyon Summit thing where Dean Terry's house is. The first checking station was there.

Webb: Over on Sunset Boulevard.

Lamoreaux: Uh-huh. On Sunset. Anyway, the Checking Station was there. And in 1970 they completed the Gorge work, and the freeway was built.

Webb: In 1973 before it was done, uh-huh. It started before that some time.

Webb: Wow. So how did legal descriptions which originally referenced landmarks, how did that change over time?

Lamoreaux: Well, when I think of that, I've told, I have two grandsons who work at Southern Utah Title, and my son helped me a little bit in the early, when I had left Carter Abstract and went on my own, my son helped me. So we actually had three generations that was associated in the abstract business. But Dallas Lamoreaux and Bryce Lamoreaux now work at Southern Utah Title. But at any rate, things had changed completely by the time that freeway was built. It was extremely busier at that time in the 1973 era. When I was first with Carter Abstract, sometimes we had, referencing back to that time, Carter Abstract, when they first started, it was tough. We had one abstract in two weeks to make.

Webb: Right. But apparently the, I don't know, the description, let's see, I'm trying to remember, let's see, there was a tie to an old peach tree. You tell me about that.

Lamoreaux: Okay. I kidded Bryce, my grandson, I said there's a deed over there, and I think it's in Lot 2, Block 36, Washington Town Resurvey, and it says it's in Book H, and I can't tell you the page now, but it said, "Beginning at a lone peach tree, four to six inches through," and this would have been in the 1880s, I think, "and running thence north 132 feet to a cedar stake, thence east" so many feet "to a cedar stake, thence south to the south line, and then west to the point of beginning." Okay, there's no way you could follow that now because that peach tree'd been dead a long time.

Webb: Right. Okay. So what difficulties did St. George residents go through obtaining home loans when you began working?

Lamoreaux: About the only one that did much loaning was the Bank of St. George.

Webb: So there was, apparently Andy McArthur and Merv and John Reber were also making loans, as well?

Lamoreaux: Well, yeah. And there were other people that made loans, too.

Webb: So what was that like? I understand that Andy McArthur had kind of an interesting way of making loans, along with Merv Reber as opposed to how the Bank of St. George made loans. Do you recall the differences?

Lamoreaux: Well, the difference was when Andrew McArthur would make a loan, he would expect it to be paid. And there were various people—

Webb: Paid when?

Lamoreaux: As soon as possible. But it didn't always work out that way.

Webb: Okay.

Lamoreaux: But the Bank of St. George was originally on the corner of Tabernacle and Main. That was the building, the Dixie Stock Growers Bank next to the Arrowhead Hotel. And when I first started, Clair Terry worked there. He was one of the big shots, so to speak, and W. W. McArthur was one of them.

Webb: Who was W. W. McArthur?

Lamoreaux: Wilford Woodruff McArthur, Rudger McArthur's father. And he lived on Diagonal Street west of Main Street.

Webb: So where was Andy McArthur's office?

Lamoreaux: Andrew McArthur, he didn't have an office.

Webb: Did he work out of his home?

Lamoreaux: No, he worked out of the bakery. He worked out of the Quality Bakery.

Webb: Out of Quality Bakery? He was making loans out of the Bakery?

Lamoreaux: Quality Bakery. And I remember I bought, before I married Janice, I got a loan and bought a 1950 Ford, and I borrowed the money from Andrew McArthur. And I remember as I made the payments I would go into the front of the Quality Bakery and say, to whoever was running the front, I said that I need to speak to Andy. And Andy would come out, and he'd be wiping the dough off his hands, and he had the hair all shaved off on down here, and it was all shaved off and clean, and he'd, so he'd shut down and pull out a receipt book, and he'd say, "Now, let's see, it's \$108" and so much. And okay, and he'd write me a receipt, and I'd give him the cash and go on my way. And that was Andrew's way of doing business. But Bank of St. George, Clair Terry would bring me the loan document, the abstract company, and he'd bring it up, and he'd say, "Ralph, my boy, you get this recorded, and then when we're in first place and then finish up the abstract." And so that was done, and St. George Savings and Loan was also making a few loans. And that was under, later on, Dick Mathis. And anyway, it was next to Tri-State [Office Supply on the south side of Tabernacle between Main Street and 100 East] there and Arrowhead Department Store.

Webb: And Merv and John Reber were making loans from near the Dixie Bowl, right?

Lamoreaux: They were making, they had an office next to the Dixie Theater.

Webb: Oh, the Dixie Theater.

Lamoreaux: Originally that was the Wadsworth Theater when I was young. And when I went to the movie when I was a kid, they would go to the matinee, it was only 11 cents to buy a ticket to the matinee.

Webb: Oh, my gosh, I know. It must have been really cheap. So what title companies operated during the time you worked as an abstractor, and how did they get along?

Lamoreaux: Hafen and Nelson had Harvey Schmutz, and she and I got along okay. Prior to that, there was various other abstractors. One of them was Ellen Carter, and she made abstracts under the authority of the County Recorder. In other words, the County Recorder could make an abstract, and they'd say, okay, this is the property, and here's the patent, and here's all the documents, and so forth. Later on, John T. Woodbury, Sr., who was an abstractor, too.

Webb: So were there two main companies, the Dixie Title Company and the Southern Utah Title Company?

Lamoreaux: Well, that was later on. Originally— [The following information regarding Dixie Title Company was added by Lamoreaux after the interview: *Ralph Lamoreaux left Carter Abstract Co. which was incorporated into Southern Utah Title Co. about 1962. I left employment with Southern Utah Title Co. in 1967. I did work individually making abstracts and writing title insurance with Lawyers Title Agency; then in 1979 Lawyers Title sold to Dixie Title Co. Lowry Snow, Doug Westbrook, and others. I retired in 1979 and never did work for Dixie Title Co.*]

Webb: That was later on. Okay. So these were just individuals?

Lamoreaux: Huh?

Webb: Were these just individuals that were operating as abstractors?

Lamoreaux: Yeah, they were individuals. And LeRoy H. Cox was an abstractor, too. And Hafen and Nelson, that was Pershing Nelson who was an attorney, and Orval Hafen was an attorney. And Howard Carter got his experience through Hafen and Nelson.

Webb: And they all got along pretty well?

Lamoreaux: They got along pretty well, yeah. Anyway, getting back to Carter Abstract, when I first went to work, it was some days it wasn't anything happening. And finally I got a job and worked some, a couple of days a week, across the street at the Liberty Café in the afternoon because there wasn't enough business to keep things going. And Carter Abstract also in 1956 contracted with the State Tax Commission to sell license plates. And so that happened in 1956, and if you were going to license your car you had to go to the Assessor's Office in the old courthouse and get a clearance. And back then you could actually have your car taxes attached to your real estate,

and you didn't have to pay the tax on your car until they were due on the 30th of November in that year. And they'd bring the slip back over to Carter Abstract, and we'd fill out the registration and stamp it and so forth. And then Howard also had Western Union contract, and we'd send money here, there, and everywhere. And Rocky Mountain was a big Western Union user. They'd do some business with California Produce Company through Western Union.

Webb: Are you talking about Rocky Mountain Produce Company?

Lamoreaux: Yes.

Webb: What Washington County Recorders did you work with during your work tenure?

Lamoreaux: The majority of them was Helen P. Barker, Helen Pearce Barker, and she had three boys. I went to school with Duane, her oldest, and she had two boys, Bruce and Nelson. And her husband had died, I don't know for what reason. I think his name was Moroni Bleak, but I'm not positive on that. And she was Nelson Pearce's daughter, and she, when I first went there, she'd walk to work from clear up on 400 North and come down Diagonal, and sometimes she'd get a ride. And Wilma Andrus lived across from the library there on 100 South, and she'd always walk to work. And as I said before, she had this long-carriage typewriter. It wasn't electric. And she'd type the document as it came in, then Helen and Wilma would proofread it and make sure it was right. And then it was officially recorded.

Webb: So there was just one County Recorder that you worked with?

Lamoreaux: No, there were others.

Webb: Who?

Lamoreaux: Then Helen retired. She married Billy Barker and finally she retired.

Webb: Who replaced her? Who did you work with after that?

Lamoreaux: Well, we had Lane Tait, and he was there a short time, and Herbert Snow Bentley was there a short time, and finally Gail Thomas Andrus was there.

Webb: Were there any differences in their management styles, anything that stood out between Helen and these others?

Lamoreaux: Well, there were various deputies, too. You had Beth Tolton, and that was under Helen. She would, and then finally under Gail Andrus, Beryl Heaton came there, and they'd do the initial indexing and make sure the document was in the proper place. And they were kind of inexperienced, so to speak, and if somebody'd come in, and I had had some experience, as you know, with abstracting and so forth, and somebody'd come in and say, "I want to look at a map of my property," a lot of

times they'd come back and they'd say, "Ralph, do you know where so and so lot is, and so forth?" And I'd tell them, "Yeah, I think if you look in Range 13 you can find it." And I had it [unclear] here because I had experienced, I'd had extensive experience in various properties. And when I made an abstract, I got to where I, as the names came up, I knew the names even though I might not know the person. And later on I might know the person and remember the names.

Webb: From abstracting, title companies began issuing title insurance. What advantages did that give potential home buyers or those wanting to purchase commercial property?

Lamoreaux: Okay. If I made an abstract, this is the way it would work. We'll say that Ed Snow wants to give Jack Holt a deed to this property, and so Ed Snow comes in and orders an abstract, and so we make the abstract, and then Ed Snow'd say, "I want you to make a deed to Jack Holt. Will you?" And so he'd take the abstract and the deed, and I'd always, when I'd do it, I'd always hand the deed, after I'd made it, and the Snows had signed it, and I'd hand it to Snow, and they had to give it to Jack Holt. That was called deliverance. And that was an early-day thing. And we had attorneys, we could make a deed, being an abstractor, and having a description and so forth, we could make a deed for \$2. The attorneys were charging \$10 minimum. We had a couple of attorneys that wanted to sue the title people and make sure that the attorneys could prepare the deeds.

Webb: Now how does it work?

Lamoreaux: Now it works that the title company does all of the deeds, all of the documentation, and it's all handled through the title company in trust for the seller and the buyer.

Webb: So what other events in St. George that you witnessed personally as an abstractor, stand out for you?

Lamoreaux: Say that again?

Webb: Were there any other particular events in St. George that you witnessed personally as an abstractor that stand out for you? In other words, were there, what residential or commercial changes occurred, like maybe in the St. George Historic District during the years that—

Lamoreaux: Let's consider that a little bit. We know where Zion Bank is now. On that corner, Main Street and Boulevard, there was a Standard Service Station run by George Anderson, and then we're going to go east. The next one was Clarence Force had a rock shop there. And when I was young there was supposed to have been a show house there, but I don't ever recall that. And then next place going east was the OK Market, and that was run by Harold and Elma Snow Miles, Richard Miles's father, OK Market. And the next one over was Francis and Joe Simmons', and it was a beer parlor.

Webb: What was it called? Do you remember what it was called?

Lamoreaux: It was called the California Inn. And then they had one son Crane, and they lived in the back of the California Inn. And incidentally, Crane became a NASA engineer of rockets, and so forth, in Florida. I'm not even sure he's still alive. And then the next business was Renouf and Thompson, and that was a garage run by Roy Renouf who later became the Sheriff of Washington County. And then a lot of people don't remember this, but there was a little business in the northeast corner of the Renouf and Thompson building called St. George Finance, and it was a little one-room place next to the alleyway that was called St. George Finance, and that was run by Jay Arnoldus. And the alleyway was approximately 16 feet wide, and you couldn't get two cars up and down it. In other words, once the bus came in there, there was no way to drive a car through. And then it was the Liberty Hotel complex. The first one was the Liberty Café, and then the Liberty Hotel, and then in my day it was Ez McArthur, the barber. And then it was Wes Nelson, Western Auto, and then it became Nelson Supply, and then it was Dixie Auto Parts, and then I vaguely recall May Pace lived where that Texaco Station was, and Walter Pace was her son, and he was the recorder at the St. George Temple for a number of years. And Dan Schmutz bought the Pace place and built the Texaco station on the corner.

Webb: And in between there, wasn't there, down in the basement, the Liberty Lounge?

Lamoreaux: Yeah, there was the Liberty Pool Hall. Then you went on the east side of Dixie Auto Parts, who was run by Tony Reynolds, and Kay Heaton worked there [and was co-owner, and was Tony's brother-in-law]. Kay just died a year or two ago [died on December 23, 2021]. He worked there for a long time, too, as well as Skylar Maggard who lived out by the College, by Dixie Tech now, worked with Tony in Dixie Auto Parts. But anyway, you went down an alleyway on the east side of the building there was a stairway there, and it went down to a pool hall down in there under the Nelson Supply and Dixie Auto Parts.

Webb: All right. And you retired in 1979?

Lamoreaux: From the title business, uh-huh.

Webb: The title business, okay. So describe how you met your wife.

Lamoreaux: She and her cousin were, we'd seen them before. I went with Loren Prisbrey who lived in the northwest part of Sand Town, where Sand Town park is now. We'd seen these two girls walking the street a little bit, and they weren't ill-repute-type girls, they were just school girls, when I say walking the street. Anyway, they were on the corner of Josephine Prisbrey's mother and father's place where the Conoco Station was, and his name was Lee Empey, and she was Dora Burgess Empey, but anyway, Josephine got together, and we picked them up in Loren's car, and I got in the rumble seat with Janice in the back, and that's how it all started.

Webb: So Janice's maiden name is?

Lamoreaux: Empey.

Webb: Janice Empey.

Lamoreaux: And also Josephine Empey was her cousin.

Webb: So can you describe or list your children, your grandchildren and great grandchildren if you have any. [See list of posterity added to last page of this transcript.]

Lamoreaux: Well, we haven't got four hours to list 52 great-grandchildren, so—

Webb: How many children?

Lamoreaux: We have six children.

Webb: Six children. And how many grandchildren, did you say?

Lamoreaux: Twenty-seven.

Webb: Twenty-seven, and great grandchildren?

Lamoreaux: Counting, now, I think 52 or 53.

Webb: Fifty-two or 53. So what other civic or community or religious organizations have you participated in, if any?

Lamoreaux: I didn't like to function, so to speak, in much, as far as organizations. I didn't care that much for it. I was a member of the Kiwanis Club for a couple of years. I got in a couple of Easter egg hunts with Kiwanis Club. And I helped them on the Fourth of July explode from the Sun Bowl, the northwest corner of the Sun Bowl with all of their fireworks. And I remember I had a nice T-shirt, and the first time I done it, the sparks would fly. There were cannons going off, and there were shots going in the air, and all the sparks would come down and ruined, burned a lot of holes in that brand new shirt.

Webb: Oh gosh. So were there any other hobbies, then? If you weren't involved in organizations, were there hobbies or things you did when you weren't working, that you enjoyed?

Lamoreaux: I loved to hunt and fish.

Webb: Okay. What kind of hunting?

Lamoreaux: Any kind, mostly deer hunting, usually a family-type thing with my boys and then the Lamoreaux boys and some of us and friends and so forth.

Webb: Okay. So as you look back over your life, what would you like to be remembered for?

Lamoreaux: I can't think of anything.

Webb: Nothing? Nothing?

Lamoreaux: Well, I'd like to hope that people understand that time work years ago isn't the same as it is now. And it was a slower pace back when I was doing abstract work. Nowadays it's a hurry, hurry type thing. And like we said before, documents go to the Recorder's Office up to 200, 300 a day now. And when I first started you might have two, maybe three recorded documents a week.

Webb: And it sounds like you had some really good memories of going back to that time when you were working and when the town was smaller and people were closer. Is that—

Lamoreaux: People were closer. You didn't know everybody, but you knew who they were when you saw them, usually. And I knew a lot of the old-timers that, of course, have gone, and when I think of older people I think of Charles Foster, Jr., who lived on the corner of Boulevard and 100 West. He married Jennie Nixon Foster. And we had Elizabeth McArthur Gardner lived up the street from him on 100 West. And I think of some of those older people. The oldest house at one time was the Burgess house on 200 West, just off of Boulevard. And I didn't know anybody that lived there other than Bill Snow lived there in a newer house that he [unclear] down the old one with. Some of the things that really stood out to me was how much things had changed since I was young. When you consider Main Street now and then, we'll say Main Street on the east side from Boulevard, the first one was the Standard Station. Then [south] there was a pawn shop there, and later on Clyde Christensen built a little place there, and he was a shoe repair man. And then you had Roy Cox who had the Cox Building with Ray Squires in the southwest side. That was his son-in-law. But prior to that there was a Conoco Station pump and a sign next to Snow Dress Shop. And I understood that was the starting of Milne Truck Line was right there.

Webb: So you got to know these people as well as see the abstract documents of people that owned these businesses?

Lamoreaux: I got to see a lot of them, yes.

Webb: And that's what made it special, right?

Lamoreaux: Right.

Webb: So is there anything else that you feel is important that I haven't asked you that you'd like to tell us about before we close?

Lamoreaux: I'm sure I would think of something, but I think that's the end.

Webb: Well, we want to thank Ralph Lamoreaux for taking the time to be with us today. We also want to thank Lauren Golden and the staff of the Community Education Channel Studios for allowing us to use their studios and for their technical expertise. This is the Washington County Historical Society's 20th [actually 21st] interview since I began conducting oral history interviews here in 2021. Thank you again for joining us.

List of posterity added by Ralph Lamoreaux provided after the interview

Kevin Lamoreaux. Children Misty, Rachelle, Trenton, Timothy, Tia, Kalen
Brent Lamoreaux (Sue). Children Dallas, Trisha, Ryan, Bryce
Julie Lamoreaux Garner (Dan). Children Amy, Nate, Sara
Lisa Lamoreaux Osborn (Blair). Children Tiffany, Shayla, Whitley
Darren Lamoreaux (Belinda). Children Jessica, Mandy, Austin, DJ
Melanie Lamoreaux Hamblin (Darren). Children Stacia, Alicia, Brady, Katelyn, Madison,
McKayla, Tanner

Addendum by Lisa Lamoreaux Osborn, Daughter of Ralph Lamoreaux, June 6, 2025

My father is a humble man and rarely talks about himself. He has many important traits and values. The one that stands out to me is his integrity. The impact of my parents' words was one thing, but learning through their example is life changing. My dad taught that your word is your bond. If you say you'll do something, then do it. He believes that a good name is everything. I am privileged to be raised by a father who has left a legacy of love, trust, honesty, and integrity.