

An Oral History Tape Transcription
Of
Baytown Oral Histories
With
Interviewer: Linda Roberts
Interviewee: Mrs. Edward. L. Scott
Feb 26th 1976
Transcribed by: Lynnette Sargis

(Tape 1 of 2)

Baytown Oral Histories

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Interviewee: Mrs. Edward L. Scott

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LR: ...oral history interview with Mrs. Edward L. Scott. The interview was held on February 26th 1976.

Mrs. Edward Scott, [feedback] how long has your family been living in the Baytown area?

ES: Well, my mother was born and raised here, born in 1860, and my father came to this country in 18 and...70.

LR: How did your father come here? I understand that he wasn't originally a citizen of the United States.

ES: He came from Hudiksvall, Sweden, on ship and landed in Galveston [feedback] on his birthday, the 25th of March 19 [sic] and 71.

LR: Why did he leave Sweden?

ES: Well they uh had very religious, uh, dealings, the king did. They had uh what they termed, uh, religious war, and some of 'em were expelled from school for not believing in the Lutheran religion that they were very strict with there, and they uh wanted uh religions of different denominations, and they uh some of 'em wished to migrate to different countries where they could have their own religious beliefs.

LR: Well did your father come to this country with uh his mother and father, or was he older at the time that he came?

ES: He came, him, and his brother, and a friend, Mr. [indecipherable], came here uh with the intentions of making this their home, and they put in for their naturalization papers, and bought their land and built their homes.

LR: Well, how did they get here? Did they come by boat?

ES: Yes, they came by boat, um; they got on at, um, in England. My father, he, uh, went to school in England four years at the Trinity College before he came here and, uh, he learned the English language real good, and he, uh, after they built [feedback] their homes here, his brother, Eric Olaf Sjolander, went back to Sweden and brought their mother over here. Their father was drowned when they were just little children in the Baltic Sea, in a storm from his ship. His father carried on uh trade between different countries. He had a fleet of ships, and he was drowned, and they found his body in about a week's time.

LR: Well, they came to uh Galveston on this ship, I understand. Then how did they get to the Cedar Bayou area?

ES: Well, they waited until the ship was about to leave to go back to wherever they were taking their cargo, and, uh, they hid out and got on a ship and came up Cedar Bayou.

LR: What type of business did they go into?

ES: Well, uh, the main business here at this time was brickyarding; everybody lived close to the, a stream, because they didn't have uh transportation much in other ways except by boat, and they worked on brickyards, built boats and,

LR: Was brick building a major industry in the area at this time?

ES: Yes it was. There was a number of brickyards all up and down Cedar Bayou.

LR: Are there any of them still in existence today that you know of?

ES: No, uh, they're all gone now. The larger brick, uh, refinery buildings is all done by machinery. In those early days it was all handmade bricks, and they'd get up early in the morning, start out and get their day's work almost by noon, before it got too hot.

LR: Can you remember any of the names of the brickyards, uh, the families that owned them?

ES: Well there were uh, there was the brickyards starting from the mouth of Cedar Bayou, a Mr. Wright, a man that came from England came over here and settled with his family. They had a large shipyard and, well, there were a number of shipyards all up and down the Bayou.

LR: So this was a major industry?

ES: Yes.

LR: What other types of industries were involved at this time? Did you have, this is before the oil boom?

ES: Yeah, this...

LR: What did most people do for a living?

ES: Well, they had, uh, cattle and they all farmed their little plots of land. They didn't go into it in, on big acreages like they do now a-days; they raised cotton, corn and, um, vegetables, and they always had their chickens and cattle and ate their meal practically right at home.

LR: Did your father do any actual farming himself?

ES: Yes, he raised cotton and corn, and they had ribbon cane, made ribbon cane syrup, and they raised a lot of watermelons and different things and when they had enough to make a boatload, they'd load their little boats up. Most everybody owned their own sailboats and, u, h would take their produce to Galveston, and that was a good market then.

LR: Was most of the trade with Galveston instead of with Houston?

ES: Yes, it was. It was very good trade there. Some of the brickyard, uh, companies that had their yards, uh, produced their own brick just for building in Galveston and their brick homes there, the contractors.

LR: Your father then met your mother here, in this area and married her?

ES: Yes they met here, and were married and at the ha-, home wedding which they all had at that time.

LR: What was Baytown like in the beginning?

ES: Well at that time it was just uh a little rough country spot with yaupon bushes you could hardly get through [laughs]. When I was a child, why, at the end of school, why, we all got in a wagon and went down to the bay shore to have uh dinner and play in the water, and you could hardly get through the little wagon trail that went down through the bushes.

LR: You had a school then in the area?

ES: Yes, we had a little one-room school around through the area, as it was not very thickly populated at that time, and they had their own school.

LR: Did you meet nine months a year or ten months of year-, a year like they do today?

ES: No, we just had three or four months. Usually it would be in, in the winter. And then in the summer, we always helped on the farm.

LR: Did you have a, an actual school building, or was the school held in a building used for something else also?

ES: Well, uh, they never did really own the land for school. They, people would uh, in the little one-room school, uh, was the Ellesley and Morgan and the Schilling school, and they just had the small room, and then later on when the Masonic building was built in 1875, in Cedar Bayou they, uh, the lower part of the building the Masons gave for a school, and they had school there from uh about 18 and 76 or '77, until 19 and 11. Then the Cedar Bayou School built uh, uh, bought land, and built their first really own school in the land.

LR: Can you tell me what happened when they decided that the Masonic lodge needed to be painted?

ES: Yes, um, after the building was there a number of years, they, uh, needed building and little repairs, so they decided to go around and ask the parents of the children going to school if they would come and help and donate the work or a little money. So the Masons collected one dollar from one of the patrons of the school [laughs],

LR: What did they decide to d-, to do about painting the building?

ES: Well, they went and they gave this one dollar back to the family that donated the one dollar, so they went to work and built, painted the school themselves [laughs].

LR: When was there actually a school building built just for school, do you remember?

ES: Well it was about...do you mean, uh, uh, in the early days here?

LR: Yes, when was, when was the first school building built that wasn't used for something else besides school?

ES: Well I tell ya in the early days, the uh, Lynchburg was a very thriving little town at that time, and they had schools there. But it was a real long distance over there and then uh the storms every few years destroyed the buildings, and so they, with enough people living in other little areas that they built these little places around their homes and had their little schools.

LR: Speaking of storms, do you remember anything about the great storm of Galveston 1900, uh--?

ES: Yes that was, uh, the worst storm that I, in my time, that I remember, just being a little child. That it destroyed uh people from Cedar Bayou that were there visiting, drowned and their bodies were never found.

LR: Your father wa-, worked for a Galveston newspaper at one time. Was he working there at this time, and did he cover any of the news of the Galveston storm?

ES: Uh, yes, he was a *Galveston News* correspondent and reporter he, uh, sent news from around this part of the country by letter, the mail, and, uh, he received a daily paper all his lifetime from that news there and, uh...

LR: Your father is very special to this area. What was his name, and what was the title that was given to him?

ES: Well, he was considered a poet laureate on [indecipherable] of Cedar Bayou, and his poems were published in practically all of the early, uh, publications of magazines and papers.

LR: Mhm, and what was his name?

ES: Well, when he first came over here, he went by the name of John Herbert. That was the people that he lived with...

LR: Oh.

ES: ...in Galveston, but he, he took his own name back, Sjolander, after he was here a while.

LR: I notice that you live on the Sjolander Road. I assume that this was named after your family.

ES: It sure was.

LR: What type of man was your father?

ES: He was a home-loving person. He just loved to read, and he loved to see, uh, beautiful things of nature.

LR: What did he want for the children of this area as far as reading material?

ES: He always wanted good material. Something that would stay with them, and betterment for the children.

LR: Oil wells came to Baytown; Exxon came around 1918. What did that oil boom do to the small community?

ES: Well that, at that time uh they depended more on boats and thangs for getting their produce here. But after the rail-, uh, the refinery came in we had the railroad built in, and uh all the freight and things came in to the stores in Baytown, so that was usu-, about the end of the small boats in Baytown and Cedar Bayou.

LR: Well, how did you get to Houston, say, before the railroad came to be?

ES: Well, they'd either have to ride a horse and go to Crosby, someone take 'em, and they'd take the train even, or they would go to uh Morgan's Point and cross over. Mr. Wright had lots of little boats crossing over to La Porte, and they could take a train there, or they could catch a boat and, uh, go to Houston or Galveston and stay till the boat came back.

LR: How long would this be?

ES: That could be practically a week.

LR: Would-, were you ride-, when you were riding on the boat, were you just riding with people or did you have to share it with chickens?

ES: Yeah, they shared it with chickens and wild stuff that they, uh, there's rabbits and possums and coons and all such as that that they could send down there, that they, people bought and butchered and ate. That was what the younger folks did to make their money when they were kids. They made traps 'n caught these animals.

LR: With so many people moving into the Baytown area because of the oil boom, how did they live? What type of housing did they have?

ES: Well, they had comfortable houses, they were frame-built houses- mostly in those days. But they always had plenty to eat.

LR: Did they, did you have many tent cities as a result of so many people coming in?

ES: Well, when Baytown first, uh, the first oil well gushers came in, that's how they lived there, until they could, uh, get homes built for 'em. Just anything they could pick up to make a little shelter, and a little church had began to come in.

LR: Tell me about the churches, which was the-, what was the first church that came into the area?

ES: Well, I think it was the, uh, Baptist and then they had the Methodist.

LR: Did they have services each Sunday or did they trade about?

ES: Uh, yeah, they had services pre-, pretty regular.

LR: They have full-time ministers uh?

ES: Yeah, they finally got full-time minsters after they got it all straightened up and got the buildings all fixed where they could accommodate the people.

LR: What are some of the biggest changes that you saw on this little community after Exxon came?

ES: Well I guess it's the, the growth and the building up from the community, and...

LR: How much has the population grown? Did you see a lot of people moving in as a result of the oil fields?

ES: Oh yes. They, they came in in covered wagons and any way they could get here and then, kind of a wild-looking life [chuckles] through the little thicket down there. But in all, um, in later years, they made a nice little town here and growing every day.

LR: I understand there was an-, an old town and a new town. What did that mean, and what areas are we talking about?

ES: Well uh Old Town, that was Pelly. That's where the oil fields first came in, and that's where the people started making their homes. And then there's, uh, Baytown, where the refinery is, that was Old Baytown, and then they came up, and that was Goose Creek; that was New Town. So then in later years, they all consolidated, and it's called Baytown.

LR: How did the people feel about the consolidation of the three towns?

ES: Well, at first they all wanted their little towns, but in the end they all voted to be consolidated and think it made it a better place.

LR: How did your father feel about it?

ES: Well, he was, thought it was okay. He was just the kind of little ol' home-lovin' person; he never did mix and mingle too much there. If anything, he's go down there to the stores and, go to the library, when they had the first library; Mr. Sterling built and gave that, it was on, uh, Texas Avenue and when it was opened he gave the, part of his books that he had accumulated to the little library.

LR: You said a while ago that he was uh kind of a private man, what type of poetry did he write?

ES: Well, it was, it was, um, that a child can understand.

LR: Did he write primarily for children?

ES: No, not exactly, but he always had his things versed and, and his thoughts that a child could understand. That was always his, uh, way of wanting to live, better, make it a better world for the younger generation.

LR: When did your father pass away?

ES: June 15th 1939.

LR: And how many children were there in your family?

ES: Six children, 5 boys and 1 girl.

LR: Did they all settle in this area?

ES: They did mhm.

LR: The house where you're living now is on the old home place?

ES: That's right.

LR: Where is the original home?

ES: It's about a quarter of a mile in the edge of the woods behind my home.

LR: What can you remember about living there?

ES: They were happy days [laughs].

[END OF TAPE ONE.]

[Tape 2 of 2]

LR: ...the only girl, how did you keep yourself busy during the day?

ES: Well, I had to help Mother with her household chores...washing, ironing...

LR: Did you make your own soap?

ES: Yea we made our own lye soap, it's what we washed our clothes with.

LR: What were your brothers doing?

ES: They, uh, helped with the farming, and the older ones, they uh worked out and made money at different things. Working on the shipyards and such, my brothers did. Neighbors helped them with their farms or the brickyards or just anything come along to make 'em money.

LR: Tell me about your mother.

ES: Well she was a good housekeeper and she was a home person, 'course she liked to help out anyone needed help, she was there to give a hand.

LR: I understand your father was pretty good with some household duties also.

ES: Yes, he was a good cook and handy at mending clothes; he could really mend a little torn place on a good pair of pants or [laughs] something that you wanted it mended real good, she'd say, "Well, let Papa do that."

LR: If you were looking out the front door of your old home place, looking straight across, what would you see?

ES: Well, I guess it would be sweet memories of a long time ago and sad memories too.

LR: Did you have a ferry in the front part of your home that you could travel across Cedar Bayou to get to the other side?

ES: Yes, it was a little flat boat that had ropes on each side to pull it to the other side of the Bayou,

LR: You have to do your own pulling?

ES: Oh yes. This was just a small one, that's just, you couldn't uh put your horse on. They'd swim the horses across, [inaudible].

LR: What was courting like in those days? With that many children, there must have been a little of it going on.

ES: [Laughs] Yes, well they, we called it parlors in those days, they call it living rooms now, and we had singing and the younger children all gather we usually had uh the organs they usually could play songs or,

LR: Did you have hay rides?

ES: We had hay rides, we'd go to church, and sometimes we'd go on a little boat, and my uncle had built one down here on the Cedar Bayou, and we'd go down to the old Methodist church. That was our main church at that time.

LR: Most of the social events then dealt with church life?

ES: That's right.

LR: Was Saturday nights or Saturday afternoon on Texas Avenue in Baytown an important part of your life in growing up?

ES: Yes, that was the gathering place in the early days. All of them went to town on a Saturday afternoon [laughs].

LR: Describe what Texas Avenue looked like.

ES: Well, it was busy, a little burg at that time uh,

LR: Name some of the stores that were there.

ES: Well there was um Roper, that was the main store everybody went there that had enough to nickels to buy thangs there, and, oh, there were, uh, dress shops all along and,

LR: Was Culpeper's there yet?

ES: Yeah, Culpeper's was there and then a furniture store and it's still there today...and uh meat market, grocery stores, and just a mixed-up little affair all along Texas Avenue that,

LR: Did you go to town by car or by wagon?

ES: Well, we, uh, at that time, when Baytown would come in, why, we had cars then, old Model T's.

LR: Tell me about your first experience with a car.

ES: Well, [laughs] uh, it was on the 24th of June. The Masonic Lodge always had a big picnic. There was two or three cars came from Houston or somewhere and brought people there, and, all of us girls, we got out there and sit in the car. That was something; we thought we was neat. So the man that owned the car, he came and says. "Well, would ya'll, did ya'll want to ride in the car?" And we said, "No!" We was ready to get out of the car again. We was scared what he was

gonna get us. He says, "Well, I'll give you a ride." 'Course, we was right in for that, so he did. But when Mother and Daddy and them found out we was out riding, boy, HOOHOO, it didn't work too good.

LR: What did they tell you?

ES: Told us we shouldn't ride with someone we didn't know [laughs].

LR: You said after Baytown came into being, that you rode in the car. Where did you get your groceries and supplies before Baytown developed?

ES: Well they had uh several stores at um Cedar Bayou. It was Cedar Bayou then you know and there was the Ilfery store and the Fishers had a store, and Tom McClain had a store.

LR: Did the brickyards have commissaries?

ES: Yea that's where the uh people that worked there, the men, they can uh get their food.

LR: What type of food did they keep stored there?

ES: Well it was uh flour and sugar and bacon and rice or thangs that they could get in big quantities and then they have a scale and they'd weigh so much out, what they wanted, and then they worked on the brickyard and that's the way they paid for it and that's the way they made their living.

LR: What was Houston like at this time?

ES: Well Houston was just a little place at that time. More of a little country town.

LR: Did you get to go very often?

ES: Not too often, uh no I went one time on the old sail boat. Went up to Houston, Mama had a sister that lived there, and we stayed out at her house while my father done the trading and got what he wanted to bring back, and we came back on the boat.

LR: What do you remember about Houston?

ES: Well, we thought it was grand at that time, it was so much bigger then what it was here. They had street cars at that time, horses and buggies. So it was a great adventure to get to go to something like that.

LR: Are you surprised that Houston grew as much as it did?

ES: Oh yes, it has really spread out now.

LR: Do you think Baytown will ever become part of Houston?

ES: Well it may later on. If you didn't know where the dividing line was now, you wouldn't know which was which [laughs].

LR: What do you see in the future for Baytown?

ES: Well I think it's gonna spread, and it'll be uh a larger city, large as Houston someday 'cause it, it has plenty of open spaces around it that, you know, can be built up and settled.

LR: In the last few years since you-, your husband died, you've been keeping yourself busy doing a lot of things. Tell me about some of 'em.

ES: Well, my main thangs now is writing little family histories 'n,

LR: Has there been very much interest in your father?

ES: Yes, uh, school children they like to, uh, write up the history. Some of 'em write theses on his life for a thesis when they graduate from colleges, 'n so I've helped quite a few of 'em on that.

LR: I noticed that there is a historical marker out by the highway telling about your father. When did this come about?

ES: That was put there in 1958.

LR: What do you think your father would think about Baytown today?

ES: Well, I think he would be surprised [laughs]. But he always thought, though, that it would you know build and spread. But the later years that he lived he, he was practically an invalid, he didn't get out to go. It was lots had built up while he was still living but he never did see, you know, but I'd tell him about it.

LR: Well, you married in this area. Was, uh, Mr. Scott from the Baytown area?

ES: He had been here since he was 5 years old,

LR: And you had,

ES: And born in Huffman.

LR: And you had one child.

ES: One child.

LR: And I understand he works for Exxon now.

ES: That's right. He works out at Exxon.

LR: Are you glad that you've been a part of Baytown?

ES: Yes I'm, I'm proud of Baytown.

LR: Do you look forward to gathering more information about Baytown history and, and working with the historical society and groups like this to put down the history of Baytown?

ES: Yes, I do.

LR: Well, Mrs. Scott I'm so delighted that you allowed me to come and, and talk to you about your recollections of Baytown history. You understand that this tape is being made so that we can put it in an oral history collection, so that in future years people who wonder about the

history of Baytown can come and listen to these tapes and hear what people have to say about it that were actually living at that time. And I hope that you will allow us to use this tape in our oral history collection.

ES: Well I'm glad that I'm able to tell a little of the early times here and all the younger generation don't realize the hard times that we lived in in the early days here. They are used to just getting out and getting in a car and going [laughs].

LR: Is there anything else that you can think to tell me about Baytown that maybe we've missed?

ES: No... I don't really know of anything, I don't think. It's just the building and being a better little town.

LR: Well I,

ES: And I'm proud of it.

LR: Well I do appreciate it so much.

ES: Thank you.

LR: Thank you, Mrs. Scott.

[END]

Transcribed By: Lynnette Sargis