



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with John Mann

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Interviewer: Norman Metzger
Transcriber: James B. McMahon
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Material contained in brackets [] has been added by editors subsequent to the interview.

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

METZGER: Jack Mann on September 28th in the evening, 29th...

MANN: Twenty-Fifth.

METZGER: Twenty-fifth, sorry, September 25th and in my home on Capitol Hill. So it's a pleasure to have you here.

MANN: Thank you. It's nice to be here.

METZGER: And you have brought a fantastic collection of photographs. But I thought we would start first, sort of, by setting a context for this collection that you have. And, perhaps, the way to start is to talk about your own experience, directly on Capitol Hill. You lived on Capitol Hill, for a while?

MANN: Yes, I did. My mother moved back in with her parents, who lived at 1427 East Capitol Street, while my father was overseas during World War II. So I lived there from like 1943 to 1945. My grandmother was named Elsie [C.] Mohler, her married name. She was a Beckert and her family had lived on Capitol Hill since the 1840s. And her son, my uncle Charles [Mohler], upon his retirement in the mid 1960s, fortunately, took it upon himself to do some family history on all four of his grandparents. All of which eventually ended up having some connection to Capitol Hill. So what I have is the result of his labors. It's in four volumes.

METZGER: Are we getting an echo here?

MANN: Yeah, a little bit.

METZGER: Your family came from where, originally?

MANN: Originally the Beckert family: George Beckert came from Prussia. [Germany according to the 1860 census, Baden according to the 1880 census]

METZGER: That's B-E-C-K-E-R-T?

MANN: B-E-C-K-E-R-T, and he was born in 1810 and arrived in Washington in 1844. And he died when he was 59 years old. When he was 49 years old, I'm sorry, in 1859. And he had Beckert's Garden which was a brewery and playground, a play area between 13th and 14th Street and between D and E. [Block 1042]

METZGER: Southeast?

MANN: Southeast, right. And that was where he settled. And very interesting to me, the house he built and lived in until he died was the house that I visited until I was about ten years old. It survived a hundred years. And my uncle patiently calculated, figured out, how many people in the family had lived in that house. [Block 1042.]

METZGER: You mean Uncle Charles?

MANN: Uncle Charles, right. And there is a listing of all those people. I knew that last person who lived there, who was my grandmother's sister. Lulu we called her. Aunt Lulu. And she lived there with her husband, Sam Collins [1352 E Street SE]. And I was in the house when they lived there and helped move stuff when they both died. The house, unfortunately, was torn down in the mid [19]50s but other houses that my great-great grandfather built are still there. It is now a supermarket and that half of the block where Beckert's Garden and Beckert's Brewery used to be. [family history states that the house was constructed in 1850. The 1857 Boschke map shows only one large building in the middle of the block, perhaps the brewery. The frame house at 1352 E SE may have been constructed as late as 1859.]

METZGER: Safeway now?

MANN: Yes, I believe so.

METZGER: OK, we spend some time up there. [Safeway]

MANN: Really.

METZGER: Ok.

MANN: So he had purchased that in about 1850. About half a block. And then right before he died, according to my Uncle, he bought an acre of land up on Seventh Street near where Howard University is now.

METZGER: So he did live there and had a brewery at the same location?

MANN: Yes, he lived at 1352 E Street. And the brewery was right behind their house. And the Beckert's Garden went north along 14th Street. [The brewery, the house at 1352 and other buildings on the property were frame.]

METZGER: So it was a brew house, it was a brewery, and it was also a beer garden?

MANN: Right.

METZGER: OK.

MANN: And it had an amusement park and play area, and a saloon

METZGER: Do have any idea how large it was?

MANN: Well, it apparently took up that whole half a block. Except for houses along E Street and my uncle who was quite detailed in what he did, laid out the plat of the block. And so you can see where it probably was. Although, he didn't know exactly where the brewery was. But he describes it as being on the upper portion of that area. [set back from D just east of the alley, according to the 1887 Fire Insurance map.]

METZGER: Did Charles, did he follow in the...

MANN: I'm sorry.

METZGER: Charles, did he follow or was he also running the brewery? The son?

MANN: Oh no. Well ...

METZGER: He was the son, right?

[Summary genealogy:

Beckert, George, born 1810, Germany, died 1859

Beckert, Theresa, wife, born 1813 (family history) or 1820 (census), Germany
lived at 1352 E as early as 1860

Beckert, Frank, son, born 1838; ran Lager Beer Saloon, other restaurants

Beckert, George, son, born 1855

lived at 617 Pennsylvania Avenue SE in 1880

lived at 703 1/2 I Street SE in 1889

lived at 405 Eighth SE in 1900

Beckert, Mary, wife of George, born 1855

Beckert, Ferdinand, son, born 1878

Beckert, Lulu, daughter, born 1881, married Sam Collins

lived at 1352 E SE in 1920

Beckert, Elsie C., daughter, born 1893, married Charles W. Mohler

lived at 1427 East Capitol in 1930 and 1940

Mohler, Charles G. born 1916

Mohler, Catharine, born 1917, married John Mann

Mann, John (Jack), son]

MANN: No, no, no. Charles. We are going back a number of generations. Charles was my mother's brother. So it was his great grandfather, who had the brewery. Then when he died his great grandmother [Theresa] actually ran it [the beer garden], managed it for a numbers of years. At first one of his oldest

sons took it over [Frank] and then a son-in-law took it over. And based on what I can recall, it was no longer operating as a brewery by late the late 1890s. My great grandfather [George], who owned the Beckert Cigar Store, on Eighth and D Streets, moved back into his mother's house in the early 1890s, according to this, in order to help his mother out. And run the brewery and the beer garden. So it was still in existence apparently in the 1890s.

[The brewery was operated by the National Capitol Brewing Company by 1897. Others had operated the brewery in previous years, including Francis J. Adt in 1877. Frank Beckert's widow, Mary Anna, on March 20, 1894, sold lots 3, 4, 5, and 6 square 1042 for \$15,000 to the National Capital Brewing Co. In 1919, with Prohibition, the brewery became the Carry Ice Cream Co., then later Meadow Gold Ice Cream Co.]

METZGER: So he ran a cigar store and also a ...

MANN: Well, he did that, and then he opened up the cigar store later in 1893 [405 Eighth SE], I believe, when my grandmother was born. And also, according to my uncle, who was his grandson, there were too many in the District ... the District determined that there were too many saloons on Eighth Street... so they wouldn't give him a liquor license, and so he opened a cigar store. He had previously had restaurants at 617 Pennsylvania Avenue and 625 Pennsylvania Avenue. And, unbelievably to me, at 625 Pennsylvania Avenue [SE], the site of his restaurant in the 1880s, is now the northwest portion of McDonald's at 625.

METZGER: McDonald's is closed, it's gone. Yeah.

MANN: Well, it was there a year ago. I went in there last fall.

METZGER: They've closed since then. I think there's actually a new restaurant there anyway.

MANN: I made sure I had my hamburger on the site of McDonalds, where he had his restaurant.

METZGER: What was it? A German style restaurant?

MANN: I imagine it was. It's not described that way but the family referred to his wife's mother "grossmutter Wolff". So I imagine it was German.

METZGER: I don't think we had fine French cooking there.

MANN: {Laughter} And he lived above the restaurant on Pennsylvania, as I understand it,. And he certainly lived above the cigar store at 805 A Street [sic], and that portion of the building is now rented

out as an office. And I was fortunate to go up and take a look at it and you can see that the dimensions of where they lived.

METZGER: Oh really?

MANN: Yeah.

METZGER: How long was he actually there in the building?

MANN: He was there from 1893 until 1918. He and his wife [George and Mary Beckert] both died as part of the flu epidemic in 1918.

METZGER: I lost my maternal grandmother to the flu epidemic, in Germany.

MANN: Well, the same thing happened to them, both of them were born within three months of each another and died within four months of each other. I had said 805, it was actually 405 Eighth Street, as the address of the cigar store. [The 1880 census lists George as living at 405 Eighth SE and running a restaurant.] [Family history says that George ran a restaurant at 617 Pennsylvania Ave. SE. in 1881.]

METZGER: And they had children?

MANN: Yes. They had my grandmother [Elsie Beckert], who was the last child they had. They had three other daughters [including Lulu Beckert] and a son. And the son, Ferdinand, was a violinist and member of the Marine Band, and he had gone to Germany to take violin lessons. He was a protégé of the Captain of the Marine Corps Band at the time. And he actually live in that house as well. Also at 1352 E Street, for a time, with his family. I did not know him. He died in the 1920s, but I did know ...

METZGER: He died reasonably young?

MANN: He was... my grandmother was the youngest and so I have the dates here, but he was roughly in his late 40s when he died, I believe. And the three aunts lived much longer and I knew each of them. They lived into the 1950s and my grandmother lived until 1974.

METZGER: And who did the photographs?

MANN: My uncle Charles, Elsie Beckert, my grandmother, her son, Charles [G.] Mohler, and he did the album in the 1960s. And he got original photos from living relatives. He did a tremendous amount of research in local history places, newspapers, archives, and recreated the plats of property that family was involved with. Where there were photos from the 1800s he has those in the album. Where the buildings still existed he went back and took pictures of them in the 1960s.

METZGER: It's amazing. What did he do before he got into this?

MANN: He as his father was a movie projectionist. His father was on the cutting edge of technology in the early 1900s and became movie projectionist in about 1915.

METZGER: In Washington?

MANN: In Washington. And worked in local theatres and his son, Charles, followed him and also was a movie projectionist.

METZGER: Did he work at any of the movie theaters on the Hill, there were quite a few on the Hill? Do you know off hand?

MANN: I don't know. He worked at the Atlas. I know that. And he worked at the Ontario, at the end of his life. It seemed like he was always driving far away. So I don't think he had a job on the Hill.

METZGER: OK. Now you mentioned he retired more or less in his 50s?

MANN: My Uncle Charles did, yes. And he worked part time for the State Department in their audio-visual area. But from the bulk of the work that he's done it's evident that he spent a lot of time doing this, He not only got pictures and identified the family member and traced them. But he also repeats family stories. He does outside historical research to put things in context. He did a tremendous job. He was an untrained genealogist, amateur historian. We were grateful to have him.

METZGER: Without the internet to help him.

MANN: Oh no. It was all manual typewriter and hand drawn and notes that he obviously took and then typed up in final form in the albums.

METZGER: We'll go back to that. A little about yourself, did you live on the Hill during the war?

MANN: Yes, I lived at 1427 East Capitol Street with my mother while she was living with her parents at that address. She had moved there in 1927, when she was 10 years old. And my parents, once my father got back from the war, they moved to the suburbs, and we lived in Prince Georges County.

METZGER: How old were you when you lived on the Hill?

MANN: I was one to four years old.

METZGER: I won't push you on your memory of the Hill.

MANN: Well, I do remember it because I not only lived there at that point ... my grandparents remained in that house until about 1956. And my mother worked and I would spend a number of summers at my grandparents' house. And often times it would be with, oh, about half the time it would be with, the Mohlers, who were my mother's half.

METZGER: This was after the war?

MANN: After the war. So I hardly ever spent the night there, but back in those days you visited your parents on Sunday afternoons. And I was there almost every Sunday afternoon, while they lived on East Capitol Street. And I spent a number of days during the summer living there, and I would also go there after school. I went to school at Fifth and G Northwest [St. Mary's]. And I would catch the street car, two street cars, to get off. They lived right across ... I got off at 13th and D Northeast, which was the terminus of that line and then would walk to where they live, which only a couple blocks away. And they happen to live right across the street from the car barn. Which is still there.

METZGER: Now it's a condominium?

MANN: Right, but at that time street cars were the way to get around town. And there were street car tracks right in the middle of East Capitol Street—very convenient.

METZGER: How did you get out to your home in the suburbs.?

MANN: Well, my father would come by and pick me up. He worked as a plumber. His jobs would be all over town. And my mother worked at that time at the Pentagon, and he would pick me up and then pick her up and we would go home. I either spent time there on Capitol Hill or my other grandparents' house, who lived on Ames Street, across the river. But they had lived only a half block away from 1427 East Capitol Street. This is a whole other side of the family. They lived at 11-15th Street, NE. And so, there are Capitol Hill connections on both sides of my family, my father and my mother.

METZGER: You had friends on Capitol Hill, when you visited.

MANN: Well, no I was the ... there were hardly any children in that neighborhood when I came to visit in the [19]50s. But, small world, when I lived there during the war, I was one to four years old. Somebody whom I met 40 some years later, lived three doors down and we used to play together in Lincoln Park. And then his children became friends with my children and we met later—the Nolans. His grandfather ran a typewriter repair shop and livery from his house further east on East Capitol Street. At my other grandparents' house I... there were other children in the neighborhood and I did meet them.

METZGER: What kind of games did you play, the usual?

MANN: Well, it was an urban setting so we would play in the front yard. We would play tag. I can remember running up ... this is the Mann side of the family now, it was on Ames Street. So we were off of Capitol Hill, but in terms of games we would ride bikes and run up and down the hill. And I can remember falling and scraping my knee and unfortunately putting a hole in my pants. I can also remember coming down the hill on my bike and the brakes didn't work correctly and I ran into a car, so we had some fun and games. It was an urban setting. That was ...

METZGER: Typical boyhood.

MANN: Sure, absolutely {laughter}. My parents, on the hand, grew up there and their childhood memories were related to things that could be done in an urban setting. And my grandfather—we're getting to the other side of the family here—but this was while he was on Capitol Hill he was a well known boxing figure in Washington DC and he built a gym.

METZGER: What was his name?

MANN: His name was Frankie Mann [Francis]. And I am proud to say ...

METZGER: Meadow ...?

MANN: Mann, M-A-N-N, Frankie Mann and he was an amateur boxer and became a boxing manager and promoter. And was very well known in the city and became ... and was inducted into the Washington DC Boxing Hall of Fame in the early 1970s [1980s]. Unfortunately, he had died some fifteen [twenty] years before that, but he was renowned in the whole of the Washington area and along the East Coast for his success in promoting and managing and training boxers. And out of his own pocket he built the gym, Frankie Mann's gym in his back yard. And it was a gathering place for ...

METZGER: Was this on East Capitol?

MANN: East Capitol, 15th Street, just north of East Capitol.

METZGER: OK.

MANN: Eleven 15th Street. I don't have those picture but I have some wonderful pictures of his gym, the inside of it. He managed people like Joe Gallagher, who fought at Griffith Stadium and Madison Square Garden. He was a well know boxing promoter and a number of articles were written about him when he died.

METZGER: So, you were how old, when he died?

MANN: I was seventeen when he died.

METZGER: So, did he teach you to box?

MANN: Yes, he ... well he did not want me to box, nor did he want his children to box.. He did not teach me to box. My father did , and my uncles did. By the time that I knew him he was mellow.

METZGER: Comparatively.

MANN: Comparatively, right. He had his day job, he was the head of supply for the Washington Railway. And his night job was boxing. And he brought—the family believes—brought a heart attack upon himself, when he was 50 in about 1940. He had to slow down after that. And by the time I knew him, he was not managing boxers anymore. He was more of the grand old man of Washington boxing. And local newspaper writers, like Lou Atcheson, and Bob Addie, would call him up and ask him his views on the boxers of the day.

METZGER: You may have said it but, what was his full name?

MANN: Frank Mann, M-A-N-N.

METZGER: Oh. He was remarkable.

MANN: Oh, a tremendous guy, yeah, and I'd be very happy to bring stuff over related to him, on that side of the family. What I have here is my mother's side of the family. Who have a longer history on Capitol Hill than Mann ... But just as an aside, they were railway people which was euphemism for street cars. And ...

METZGER: You were talking about your mother's side now?

MANN: No, I'm talking about my father's side, Frank Mann. I'd like to go back to them for just a moment.

METZGER: Sure.

MANN: And the way they got to where they were at 11 15th Street was that that was on the east side of the Car Barn. And his father had owned that building before him. His father also had a house in the Georgetown area which was the western terminus of the railway

METZGER: And his father worked on the ...

MANN: His father worked on the railway as well.

METZGER: He was a conductor or a driver or ... ?

MANN: He worked in the ... he was like a mechanic on the cars. There's a wonderful picture of my grandfather when he was about seven years old in front of the street car, in about 1900. But my father grew up there at 11 15th Street and his wife to be grew up probably 300 yards away at most—200 yards away. And they knew each other. Both went to Holy Comforter grade school, but didn't date until about 1940, when they met each other on a street car going to work at what is now the general ... or rather the ... I'm embarrassed now—it's at the corner of Seventh and D Street [SW] and it's a General Services Administration building. And at that point it was a Department of Treasury had it and, ironically, their son ended up working on the other side of the street for twenty some years at the Department of Transportation. They met each other in a street car and started dating and got married in 1941 at Holy Comforter.

METZGER: And there you are.

MANN: Yeah.

METZGER: Let see, I was going to ask you a question ... I lost track of your father was a street car ... ?

MANN: My father worked when he was in the 30s, right after he graduated from high school, he worked as a time keeper for the Washington Railway company, on M Street in Georgetown. And then that wasn't paying enough money so he became a laborer, digging ditches And after the war moved up to be a plumber, and was a plumber's apprentice and then he became the business manager which is the effective head of the local union for plumbers in the 1950s. And he did that for 10 years.

METZGER: What is so fascinating is—I mean that other people found the same thing—is how much of a working class neighborhood Capitol Hill was.

MANN: Absolutely.

METZGER: I mean that the people in your family—I'm not denigrating you—they were working class: plumbers, were managers of breweries, street cars, etc, etc.

MANN: Nobody graduated from college in my family, and many didn't graduate from high school until my parent's generation. And among—just taking my father's brothers and my mother's brothers and sisters—there were only two out of nine people who graduated from college and both of them, and I'm thinking about this in this context for the first time, got their college degrees as seminarians. They went into the Jesuits and then got their college degree that way. Other than that it was my generation that were the first college graduates. And we're going back five generations in Washington. They were typically on

my mother's side. One person in each generation was the business guy. They successfully ran businesses. My great-great grandfather of the brewery that we talked about before. His youngest son who's my great grandfather, George Beckert, did the cigar store and restaurants. And he literally took care of his brothers and sisters and his mother. In the next generation down it was my grandfather, who married Elsie Beckert, the granddaughter of the first Beckert to come over here the brewery. And he was a movie projectionist but I don't know how he did it. He was paid \$8,000 in 1927. And on a movie projectionist salary. ...

METZGER: That's not a ton of money

MANN: It's a very substantial house, still there, 1427 East Capitol Street. He drove a Packard (laughter) when I knew him, and I don't know how he did it. I still don't know how he did it. He didn't have a second job. He wasn't a shady character; he was a movie projectionist.

METZGER: Maybe he was a high-paid trader at that point?

MANN: It wasn't, no it wasn't, it wasn't, No. And he took care of the extended family. And then when it got to my parents' generation they were much more broadly successful but still in blue collar, non-professional trades, endeavors. Once again it wasn't until my generation, and there were a number, about half of the grandchildren had college degrees.

METZGER: They were pretty successful, as far as I can tell they never faced poverty. They lived in the middle class by Washington standards.

MANN: Well, they ... there were pockets of poverty but the line that I was talking about took care of those pockets of poverty.

METZGER: Within the family?

MANN: Within the family. They would have the person move in. They would unofficially adopt children who were not being well taken care of. It was a rough time in the late 1800s and early 1900s for somebody to be successful if they didn't have all the get up and go that you needed. Social underpinning was not there. So the family took care of their own.

METZGER: When we had our depression in late 1800s. It occurred several times, and a big one later on. That again was the working class tradition and the tradition of extended families staying together and taking care of each other.

MANN: Right, and when I think about it today, the block area—we are probably talking about where upward of 60 to 70 family members lived was only, maybe, ten by fifteen blocks. And they all moved

around , almost constantly, and they would tend to move next to one another. As I was mentioning earlier to you, I took a look at 711 and 713 A Street NE, the two building are still there. And, my great grandmother moved in next to her sister and brother-in-law in the 1890s and that's where my grandfather was born. And they moved next to each other. The next generation, her son Charles and my grandmother Elsie moved next to her sister. And I just happen to look up this stuff today. On I Street Southeast, 803 and 805 I Street, and they lived next to each other. And actually my grandmother and grandfather bought the house at 805. There's a nice story in here about how they were able to simply move the furniture and possessions from one window to the other. They did not have to go on the street to do it. And that's where my mother grew up and her brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, it's below the Southwest freeway now, opposite the Marine Barracks and the building is no longer there.

METZGER: A lot of people say "unfortunately" when it comes to that. One of the things that Nancy [Metzger] did is that she extended the [Capitol Hill] Historic District beyond the Southeast-Southwest freeway. There were a lot of houses that were being knocked down. Now some houses have been saved as a result. I sort of take it that this phenomenon, quote unquote, was not unusual and certainly not unique to your family. It probably happened with everybody?

MANN: I imagine it did. The houses were very small. They tended to move in with family members until they could afford something else. And they would buy as close as possible to where the existing family member were. You mentioned earlier that blue collar, the Navy Yard was a real draw for employment for a number of family members who were not running their own businesses. And another neat quote in here from my uncle's book is that when his great-grandfather and my great-great-grand father, George Beckert, built his house at 1352 E Street SE, he could look across the field of weeds to the Navy Yard. There were no buildings between him and the Navy Yard. Now this is in the 1850s we're talking about. But this was an open area.

METZGER: Washington had a population about fifty thousand then. The Marines were first, they came to the area first and then, as you say, houses were built here to provide housing for the workers in the Navy Yard.

MANN: So some of his children worked there and some of my grandmother's sisters, all of them, married people who worked at the Navy Yard, either as machinists or as common laborers. They worked there. One of the artifacts that I have is a plant stand that was done, probably I'm sure, at the lunch hour, by one of my uncles in the 1910s, and it's a proud possession of mine right now. He put it together. He welded it together.

METZGER: Charles died when?

MANN: My uncle Charles who put these books together, he died in the 1980s. He was the one who followed his father's footsteps as a movie projectionist, also was remarkable in terms of being able to conserve his money. He was the only, probably, non-lawyer who lived on Lake Braddock in Lake Barcroft in Northern Virginia in the 1950s. He semi-built his own house in Silver Spring in the late 1930s and was able to pull it off somehow. And he has this beautiful home, rambler, above Lake Barcroft. And that's where he lived until he died in about 1985.

METZGER: Did you ... you obviously had lots of opportunities to talk with him about the Hill and about this album that he created. And I was wondering if what ... did he talk to you about his motivations for doing the album.

MANN: No not directly but he ... I believe he, this is in hindsight, I did not realize it at the time, he had an unhappy marriage. And I think at the time that he retired, his wife had just left him and it's noted in the book . He was a very frank author in here and this is to give you a slice of his...

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

[TAPE 1/SIDE 2]

METZGER: But, anyway, you were telling me this little anecdote about this.

MANN: Yeah, you were asking if I knew Charles's motivation and I think I can surmise what his motivation was. This was ... he did these books in the 1965 to 69-70 time frame. And I believe he was searching for his family's roots because he had gone through a rough marriage with his wife. And he points this out in the book when talking about his own family. He graduated from Eastern High School along with his wife. And they were sweethearts and got married soon after that and had four children and when the fourth child was in grade school the wife said that she would like to leave—leave him. And he persuaded her to not do that until after the last child had graduated from high school. And he notes in the book, and I just read it today, so I remember the dates, how, on June 10th in 1961 Gary graduated from Jeb Stuart High School in Virginia and Evelyn had gone within the hour. And this was three or four years before he started this book and I think he was searching for family ties. And he was very ... he worked very hard at it. He must have spent hours on end doing it over four or five years. He would bring the books to family gatherings and my ... one of my cousins, Kristine, and I and Mike [Kit] and one of my sisters are the most interested in these books. We have fortunately gotten three out of the four, that we have here tonight and the fourth one is in California and we hope to corral that at some point.

METZGER: What period does the California book cover, do you know?

MANN: The same period, it's the Mohler family.

METZGER: OK, M-O-H-L-E-R {spelled out}

MANN: M-O-H-L-E-R {spelled out}

METZGER: OK.

MANN: And I have a copy of that. The Mohlers actually came earlier than the Beckerts. They came in the 1820s and lived primarily in Northwest Washington. Right around the White House and 21st and Pennsylvania Avenue. And the connection gets to be Capitol Hill in the 1890s when a Mohler married a Huntington and they moved to the house I mentioned earlier at 713 A Street NE. And that's where my grandfather, Charles [W.] Mohler, was born and raised. So he goes back as far as he can on the Beckerts, the Mohlers, and the Wolffs, which is my grandmother's mother's name: Wolff. And on the Huntington's side there was some surmise that we were direct descendents of Samuel Huntington, signer of the Declaration of Independence. But on a closer look by myself and my cousin, the name's the same but we can't find a direct connection between Samuel and the [our] Huntington who came to Virginia in about the 1830s.

METZGER: Right church, wrong pew? Right?

MANN: Well, it's probably some familial connection. But there is no linkage to Samuel Huntington the signer. That did not stop the obituary notice where my great grandmother to refer to her as a direct descendent to Samuel Huntington, signer of the Declaration of Independence. It was believed, I think, at least until my uncle got involved in doing the genealogy.

METZGER: So he shot that one down?

MANN: He did not mention that in this book {laughter}. I don't think he wanted to disappoint his mother or father.

METZGER: OK, talk a little bit more about the books. You obviously recently have gone through them again, haven't you?

MANN: Yeah, I looked through them today. In preparation for this evening.

METZGER: And maybe a little more ... a general description or some things in there that I see surprise you.

MANN: Well, it was fortunate that in the first page in the Beckert book is a picture of George Francis Adolph Beckert May 18, 1810 to August 29, 1859. And what is remarkable when I looked at it again is how much this immigrant from Prussia—Germany was not a country at that point, a nation at that point—accomplished in the short time that he was in the United States. Within six years of coming here he had bought a half of a square block and had his own brewery and beer garden. He had built at least seven houses on that block between 13th and 14th Street and D and E. And one of those houses, as I mentioned earlier, stayed in the family for a hundred years. And my uncle has laid out all the people who lived and died in that house. He was well off that just before he died to buy an acre of land on Seventh Street, near where Howard University is. Unfortunately, he died within three or four years. But it was remarkable what he did over about a ten year period. And that legacy was still there when I was a kid, in the early 1950s. I was in the house that he built in 1852. It was still in existence in 1952 and his granddaughter and her husband were living in it. The other thing that has struck me over the years is how connected the families were. How they stayed in the same area. They lived within a ten to fifteen block area, visiting each other all the time. My grandmother's best friends were her sisters. They were together all the time. And my mother's best friends were her cousins. It was a small town. And their part of the town had nothing to do with Washington politics, had very little to do with being an employee of the federal government, until my mother's generation. People didn't work for the government.

METZGER: None of them did, except for some of them might work for the Navy Yard.

MANN: Yeah, right. They were machinists there or small property owners. And they tended to marry neighbors. They went to the same schools. It was a very close knit community on Capitol Hill. The connections with the Beckert side continued for the next 40 years after he [the first George] died with the brewery that he had. His son [the second George] in the 1890s came back to help his mother [Theresa] manage it. And then he had the cigar store. The connection, once again, [was that] one of his daughters [Lulu] married an employee of the cigar store, Sam Collins. And we have a picture of them in the front of the cigar store. And this is the one that's going to be on the street for the historical initiative [Barracks Row Tour signs]. And they are all lined up with his workers and looking at one of his daughters walking across the street who was eight months pregnant. And Sam Collins is right there, the proud father. And they moved into their parent's house when they first got married. How they all lived together and stayed on speaking terms is incredible in this day and age.

METZGER: That's right.

MANN: The women did not tend to work unless they were single or widowed. The, as I mentioned before, the husbands all had blue collar or non-professional type jobs. But that did not keep them from

raising their families in a very comfortable way. And for those who were more successful than others, helping out other members of the family who were not so successful.

METZGER: And I imagine the single women that had problems got taken care of. Got taken in.

MANN: Taken in, or two sisters would live together. The other off-shoot, my grandmother, Elsie Beckert, married to Charles Mohler, was not an outdoors person but her three sisters were. And they all got together and bought, first a shack they built on the beach, Dares Beach on the Chesapeake Bay. And the three of them with my grandmother reluctantly going along on weekend visits went every weekend to Dears for some thirty years.

METZGER: How did they get out there?

MANN: Car. I mean ... this was, we're talking teens and twenties now. And it was the Chesapeake Bay was closest place to go to own your own place, nearby. And that's what they did. Excursions. And these wonderful pictures in here that my grandmother and her husband took down at Colonial Beach. That was a common thing for them to do. They would take a steamer from the Southwest Pier and go down to Colonial Beach for the day and come back. The Speedway, I don't know if that is a known term anymore, but it was the term in my family. The Speedway was Haines Point. And they would go there for picnics constantly, starting with their ... in their mid-teens, when my grandmother and her sister's children were starting to be born and that was common place to go just to get into some fresh air and openness. They lived in row houses...

METZGER: I never knew Haines Point was called the Speedway.

MANN: The Speedway. It was called that because there were speedboat races along the Potomac. And there are pictures in here of the trophies. And my grandmother's sister's husband won—a Mr. Wheeler. And he was a super mechanic at the Navy Yard. And had some special design that he did for a speed boats and he won a number of races at Haines Point., the Speedway. It was a very popular place for them to go.

METZGER: Well it still is but no longer called ...

MANN: Now it's called Haines Point. But no more motorboat races as far as I know.

METZGER: So the album covers a period from the early nineteenth century to ...?

MANN: From as early as he could find somebody, who came to Washington. And whatever he could find beyond that. But for the Beckerts and the Wolfs and the Mohlers, he couldn't go much beyond when they

first got here. For the Huntingtons, he did a lot of research on the Huntington family, going back to England and ... a Huntington in New Hampshire I believe. But most of it is local history once the family members got to the Washington area.

METZGER: Did he ever remarry?

MANN: Yes, he married Elaine and they were blissfully happy.

METZGER: Good for him.

MANN: Yes, he ...

METZGER: He continued to live in Lake Barcroft?

MANN: Yes, lived in Lake Barcroft. He and Elaine had a number of common interests. He had known her mother for some thirty years. And she worked with the telephone company and they were very happy for the remainder of their lives together. He was very active, very positive thinking. And he and she joined an excursion club where they had trucks that you could live in back of and go driving around the country. And they did that a lot and he was head of the Catholic War Veterans for the Lake Barcroft area and then became the head of the Catholic War Veterans for the entire state of Virginia.

METZGER: Wow.

MANN: He was a very active and involved citizen who did the best he could as long as he could.

METZGER: He did very well. What a person to know.

MANN: He was ... and he and my aunt Thora, who was an aunt, she married my grandfather, Charles Molher's brother Fred. And they were buddies in this endeavor. They would go around and do the research and I'm sure she helped him put together the books. But it is mainly his effort, clearly. He did a lot of digging and I haven't counted up the people, but I bet there are stories in here and pictures of 400 people. All four sides of the family.

METZGER: What a treasure trove. It's amazing. Now how did they come to you, did he will them to you? Or did he ...?

MANN: Well, unfortunately, none of his children wanted them.

METZGER: He had how many children ?

MANN: He had four children.

METZGER: All by his first wife?.

MANN: All by his first wife. And none of them has an interest until his last son married a woman out of California. And she showed an interest just for historical purposes. She likes old things. And she has one of the books. The Mohler book, and we are endeavoring to get that back at some point. Although we did make a copy of it. The other books relating to the other three families, we have the originals of here. And they got passed on to his sister, Gertrude. And then she passed them onto her daughter, Kristine. And so, technically they're Kristine's books. But she has let me have them until we get together again, which is November 11th. And I will give them back to her. But they are available for a number of purposes in terms of ...

METZGER: So we needed to get them back to you, obviously, before November 11th?

MANN: If ... That would be nice but it's not essential. She doesn't know about, you know, what might happen after tonight. So I am sure she would agreeable to them

METZGER: You actually have a copy of what's out in California?

MANN: Yes.

METZGER: OK.

MANN: And I have it here.

METZGER: OK.

MANN: It's not a good copy, it's a Xerox copy. But ... and it's not the whole book, but it's related to our particular family.

METZGER: Well, perhaps, a letter can be written. We can write a letter to her to see if she would be willing to ... or we could go visit her I suppose. I don't know. She may not be that willing.

MANN: I was able to scan some pictures in from actually ten years ago. Somebody else had copies made in a photo store. And they are good copies. And I scanned those in. I've got about 17 of those pages on my computer. And I made some paper copies of those, which I can show you later. And they are in good shape. And they give a sampling of it. I believe if we can say that this is going to be done for Washington history, that we can find a way to get the book from California. My son happens to live in Los Angeles, she's in southern California, and we can probably find a way to get it back here.

METZGER: OK. What I'm going to suggest since I can turn the tape off and then I would like to sort of go through the books with you for a bit to see what's actually in there. But I don't think we actually need that on tape. And then you said you're willing to leave them here?

MANN: Yes.

METZGER: And we much appreciate it. And then we will get back to you.

MANN: OK.

METZGER: I think we will probably also make copies of a lot of this material.

MANN: All right, that's fine.

METZGER: Enormous, what a stunning thing to have!

MANN: I feel very fortunate to have it. And glad to be here.

METZGER: So, I'm going to turn this off.

MANN: OK.

END OF INTERVIEW