



National Park Service
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Cuyahoga Valley
National Park

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Farming in the Valley: 2011 Oral History Project

The following are transcripts from six audio clips in the **Just For Fun** section. Visit <http://www.nps.gov/cuva/historyculture/just-for-fun.htm> to view the entire page.

Hidden Gold?

David Darst, who worked on the Bender Farm from the 1950s through the 1970s, shares the legend of Dan Brown's gold, possibly hidden in his grave.

"When Sheriff Lane wrote his book, history book, he mentioned the counterfeiters and he mentioned the fact that Dan, D-A-N, Brown had gone to the gold rush in California and had returned with ninety-thousand dollars of gold. *Well*, people who would read that book would get up in their wagons and drive up to Bender's farm and look at where this fella Dan Brown was buried. Well Earva told me that his father got tired of all these people comin' up on his property looking for Dan Brown's tombstone. So Earva told me that his dad hooked it up to a horse, and hauled it, and threw it in the gully just to the left of the barn.

"Happy-go-lucky me: 'A tombstone? Earva, what the tombstone for?'

"'Oh,' he says, 'that's just old Dan Brown's marker.'

"'Well where's it go?'

"'Well, my father put it there because it was causing trouble.'

" And I said, Well let's look at it.'

"So we hauled it out of there, and Earva said, 'Welp, as I remember it should be right about there.'

"So that's where we put it."

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Mr. Hale's Stagecoach

Ott Wilson, whose father worked on the Hale Farm in the 1930s, tells why Clara Belle Ritchie decided to burn her uncle's stagecoach.

“He would pick up people down at the train station with . . . He had a stagecoach, *beautiful* thing, that he got from Senator Dick from, that was in Akron. He was a Democrat, and Hale was a Democrat, and he give him this beautiful stagecoach. And I think it had glass. *~laughs~* We always thought it was really nice! But he'd take . . . Go to the train, he'd hitch up his . . . had a horse in that barn where he kept that, and he'd hitch up the horse and take off, just pick up people down at the station, and bring 'em back. The thing about that thing . . . When, after he died, and Clara Belle Ritchie . . . I worked for her too, she was a Republican, man, she was nothin' else *but* a Republican! . . . and she had me go over and get that stagecoach out of the barn, bring it out in front, get her a chair, set it down and watched me set it on fire and burn it up. *~laughs~* I said, 'Why don't you give it to me or somethin'.' No way. She didn't like that Senator Dick, and she didn't.' *~laughs~*

Turkeys Love Cars

Terry Smith of the Goatfeathers Point Farm describes his turkeys' unusual affection for certain vehicles.

“When we first had the turkeys, we'd raise them on pasture, and the first year we raised 'em right at the barn. And there's a little park at the end of the field. And the car doors and stuff? They'd hear that and they'd just *run* right down there and see what it is. And of course the fence doesn't mean anything to 'em, you know, 'cause they can fly and everything. And the same thing with motorcycles. The motorcycles would be there and they'd all run down to the see motorcycles. I went down once and they were . . . we only had like fifteen, twenty of the turkeys . . . and there was a Miata with its top down and the people were sittin' in the car and the turkeys were all over the car. And you know turkeys don't exactly have good bathroom habits, but the people in the car thought it was great. You know.”

Mom Versus the Turkey

Dorothy Vani tells a story about her mother and the turkey on their farm on Akron Peninsula Road, near Boston Mills Road.

“Oh gosh! Yeah, she, she had a gobbler. And he chased us! He chased her, he chased us. And the one day . . . She usually carried a stick. She always carried a stick when she was goin' to the back yard or whatever. And the one day, maybe she had a bigger stick or something, and that gobbler started chasing her, and she took the stick and went like that, and she hit him right across the neck and killed him. And she's sitting . . . standing . . . at the sink when we came home from school. She's standing at the sink and she's pluckin' the feathers out of that turkey and saying, 'I didn't mean to do it!'”

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Attack Geese

Daniel Greenfield of Greenfield Berry Farm tells a story about ferocious geese he once owned.

“Geese are ferocious. These geese liked me. I would feed them in the evening and they were real nice to me, but they were always getting out. And when you have a pick-your-own operation it's not always a great scenario. So frequently I would hear a combination of honking and people screaming. And people were being chased all over the farm, and they were getting goosed, they were getting bitten by these geese, and it was happenin' all the time. And it was hysterical to me, not always to the customers, you know. Most people were good natured about it. A lot of fun. My little nephew . . . For some reason, these geese attacked mostly small children and women. So I went back with my nephew before he knew any better, and he's, I think at the time, was around seven. And the geese are out, and I turn around, and I didn't realize it but one of the geese . . . a goose got under his shirt. So I'm seeing . . . you can't see it but . . . you can just see the head is under his shirt, pecking at him, and he's screamin' and oh, it was quite a sight. And he ends up fallin' down in a mud puddle and . . . If only I had that video tape. It was quite hysterical. It was fun. But I ended up giving those geese away to some other farmers that they got to enjoy them for a while, too.”

Cigars in the Orchard

Willis Meyers, who grew up on Steels Corners Road, shares a story about the dangers of smoking.

“My neighbor was my same age in my grade, and we chummed together all the time. We'd go fishin' and . . . The grocery store was never locked, either door, front or back. And people'd stop in, get what they wanted, and leave us a note, you know, to what they got. So they went away on a Sunday and the store was open, and it was in the summertime. And the orchard . . . we had a pretty good-size orchard . . . and we went in there and got two cigars. We was just little. We went out there in the orchard under a shade tree and lit up them cigars, and swallowed all the smoke. We got sick ~laughs~ We was sick enough to die when my mother and dad got home. Dad looked at me and he could smell the cigar smoke. He said, 'I oughta give ya a good whippin' but' he said 'I think you're hurt enough' he said 'without the whippin's.'" ~laughs~