

A = Alan Chalk

B = Bernard Riley

Series of Interviews with artist Bernard Riley, who will be discussing the background and the development of his mural, The History of Bridgeport from 1836 to 1936. It is in the Bridgeport Public Library, the wall of the Reference Room, a mural 40 by 13 feet.

ALAN CHALK How did you get interested in murals, Bud?

BERNARD RILEY Well, really it started in high school when we actually got into it. I started out, I wanted very much to be a stage designer. That was the career that I had had in mind. This meant large pieces.

ALAN CHALK This was in Bridgeport?

BERNARD RILEY This was the Central Library, in Central High School in Bridgeport. Working on the stage crew there involved large works and that's where it really began to take part, when I took part in it. But all along, even before that, I went going out to New Haven with Jim Borona one time to search out this man. I don't recall how we managed to do it, but we did. We found this little old man on the loft in New Haven doing a backdrop for the theater. This thing must have been about 20 by 40 probably, a real tremendous piece, and here this little guy that was hardly 5 foot 6 standing on the loft doing it. Now he had this rig that dropped down through the floor so he didn't have to move around on the scaffold or the rig. He just stayed right on the big loft floor. The room on the loft was a tremendous open space, and here he had this rig that dropped through the floor. He had the whole thing planned out the scaffold or dropping the rigging as he went along wherever he wanted to work. But the idea of the size of the thing against his size - this was a tremendous, big, landscape and it was intriguing. Then Jim and I got into it later at the Roxy Hall. We did two of our own, much larger than anything I've done since, really.

ALAN CHALK What was it? What was the project?

BERNARD RILEY This was quite a project, really. It was for the stage at Roxy Hall. Roxy Hall is gone now.

ALAN CHALK That was in Bridgeport also?

BERNARD RILEY But these things are still in existence. This was in 1930, 1932, 1931, 1932 — in between there sometime, and these things are still in existence.

ALAN CHALK Where?

BERNARD RILEY Well, Jim has the two backdrops. As a matter of fact, I was just talking to him a couple weeks ago, and I think I'm going to check it out. He has the two backdrops. The rest of the material he gave to Andrew Warde High School. As far as I know, the frames and that sort of thing are still left.

ALAN CHALK Now, you did these for a production at the Roxy? Was that a...

BERNARD RILEY No, this was a permanent thing. Their productions sort of fitted it into whatever the backdrop, you know, whatever they had.

ALAN CHALK Now, was that professional or school?

BERNARD RILEY The Roxy Hall itself?

ALAN CHALK Yes.

BERNARD RILEY Well, it was a society, and they used to put on plays there and shows. They'd use these two backdrops with woodwings, four woodwings. I don't know whether you know what woodwings are or not, but they're pieces that slide out on either side of the stage, from either wing of the stage. They're usually trees and forests and then you look through them to the actual backdrop, which is a landscape.

ALAN CHALK Do you remember the subject of this one?

BERNARD RILEY Well, these were two landscapes. One was a Hungarian village and the other was purely an imaginative sort of landscape with trees and meadows and fields.

ALAN CHALK Do you remember the size of them?

BERNARD RILEY Well, the size had to be, Jim Bovona would know more about the size. The size had to be close to 14, 16 feet high by about 30 feet in length.

ALAN CHALK So you're returning to fulfill a childhood dream here.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, actually, we did this now.

ALAN CHALK Did you do this on a ladder?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, the funny part is, yes; we did these on ladders. We didn't have a scaffold. But we both worked on it, so we could think we laid it out on a scale first; we scaled it off and laid it out. We had these canvasses stretched. We worked there on location.

ALAN CHALK At the Roxy?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, at the Roxy, right on the stage.

ALAN CHALK Did he ever go on to art?

BERNARD RILEY He went on to be a commercial artist and a sign painter, one of the best sign painters in the state. And he's still working as a sign painter. I've kept in touch with him over all these years. But he, as I say, I was just talking to him just a couple weeks ago, and he said, as far as he knew, these things were... See, we did the two backdrops, landscapes with the woodwings, and then we did two what we call interiors. That meant one was a very elaborate palace-like interior, and the other one was an ordinary room interior. This meant windows and doors and doorframes, and all of the bit and all of this painted.

ALAN CHALK You never went on with this kind of work, though?

BERNARD RILEY No, that was it. One reason was that we got this job right out of school, the first thing. Jim had connections with Roxy Hall. His father and family belonged; they were members of the Roxy Hall, and so was Jim. S'~ we had that "in." They were looking for this work to be done. And it just happened that way.

ALAN CHALK So this is really the beginning of your artistic career then?

BERNARD RILEY Well, actually, yes; we actually did something. This was no small job for a couple of kids.

ALAN CHALK Were you painting and drawing also at this time?

BERNARD RILEY Well, pretty much. Only related to, I was trying to get started as a commercial artist. And I was doing a lot of things. I was doing window displays, for instance, and all kind of things. I did a catalog for a guy who was selling little cuts and cartoons to be sold and cuts that could be used in newspapers or magazines. Anything that came along, I was willing to do. Then this popped up.

One of the stories I guess I told you before, related to this, was when Roxy Hall was torn down and they had to dispose of the scenery. This was maybe 10, 15 years ago, so that it was already old by that time. It had survived. Here's a couple of kids; we made this fireproof and did everything else. These things had to withstand a blowtorch. Fire inspectors came around to make sure that these things were fireproof, and here you had canvas stretched over wood. They would take a blowtorch and zoom - like that. And if it caught, that was the end of your scenery. So we had to fireproof it and everything else. We built it out of the, the carpentry involved, those frames are still in existence. As far as I know, the frames are still in existence. The backdrops, I know are.

ALAN CHALK Your art, your career as an artist, began when you got out of the Navy? You were not interested in murals at that time?

BERNARD RILEY Well no, then I began to change my feelings about murals, although if I'd been aware of it... I missed the boat, really.

The truth of it is, I missed the boat, because during the early 30's when the WPA was involved, all of the guys were coming along: Pollack and Larry Rivers, of course. These were people in the New York area, and they were in groups, and they had the power and they worked together. But I didn't get involved with that at all. Dohanas, for instance, Steve Dohanas did a couple of murals at that time.

ALAN CHALK So the government was funding at this time?

BERNARD RILEY The government was funding it, but not only that, but you got associated with other artists, and I just didn't; I stayed on my own.

ALAN CHALK Do you know if those murals are still in existence?

BERNARD RILEY The ones here in the Bridgeport Post Office are.

ALAN CHALK The ones Dohanas did?

BERNARD RILEY Oh, Dohanas are still in existence.

ALAN CHALK Where?

BERNARD RILEY One of them is in, somewhere in the Caribbean. Yeah, in the United States Post Office in the Caribbean somewhere. I don't know, I've forgotten where it is. And he did another one somewhere else in the Mid—West. But they're in the Bridgeport Post Office downtown. They had a couple of murals downthere.

ALAN CHALK So these were done by young men?

BERNARD RILEY They were done by young men at that time. They were young men.

ALAN CHALK What were you doing at. this time?

BERNARD RILEY At this time, I was just moving around on my own, doing these piddling little jobs. Then I was working in Handy and Harmon see, I went in and out of the weather there. I got involved in everyday work. Between that and taking care of a home, and then we built this house. Everything came along, as we would roll along. And I was sort of left out on the fringes, mainly because I wasn't paying that much attention, I guess.

ALAN CHALK So it wasn't, until the 50's then, that you got a chance to do the mural at Fairfield University?

BERNARD RILEY I started a whole different direction, you see.

ALAN CHALK How did that happen?

BERNARD RILEY Well, again, I went over there one day and went into Loyola Hall and saw the two walls with wallpaper murals on them. I thought, "Why, this is really ridiculous for a growing university, an organization of this size, to have wallpaper murals!" So I went to see Father McCabe and spoke to him about it and told him how I felt. I offered to do these two walls for, just to have a chance to do walls.

ALAN CHALK And this was just a sudden inspiration?

BERNARD RILEY Just that. It happened just that way. I don't recall now why I went into Loyola, I guess it was just an inspection tour of the University. Of course, there were newer buildings at that time. Loyola wasn't that old. I went in there and found these things and I thought, "Something should be done about it." We should start right now to correct it. But Father McCabe found the wall at Gonzaga for me and felt that this was the wall. It was; this was a good wall. It was over the little theater. Of course it was used more then and for better purposes.

ALAN CHALK Did he propose the subject matter, the theme?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I don't know whether it was he or I that came up with it. It was a natural thought, because it was Gonzaga Hall and this is Aloysius Gonzaga. The building is dedicated to him. So I did his, what I did was just do his life.

ALAN CHALK Who did the research?

BERNARD RILEY I did the research on it because, well, mainly because it was my baby from that time, that moment on.

ALAN CHALK Total freedom?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, total freedom, no strings attached. Except for the fact that we decided that it would be dedicated to Aloysius Gonzaga, based on his life.

ALAN CHALK How long did it take you from the research to the

BERNARD RILEY I don't really recall. It was over a year.

ALAN CHALK And you were working and bringing up a family?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, I was working. This was part time.

ALAN CHALK So when did you work on it?

BERNARD RILEY I worked in the evenings quite often, but mostly over weekends. I was working there. I started during the summer when there weren't kids around. This was a dormitory even then. There weren't any kids around at all, but by September the kids started to come back, and here I was, up on the wall, working. was getting all kinds of flack and remarks. That was the experience, it sort of taught me what to expect at the library.

ALAN CHALK The public was critical at that time? The kids?

BERNARD RILEY These were kids, and well, they weren't all, they certainly weren't all in favor of it. The Jesuits themselves weren't all, so you know, on my side. They weren't so favorable. There were exceptions, definite, some definite. On the other hand, they were both one way and the other. There were some people, especially among the Jesuits, who were very favorable, and very kind about it and interested. They would stop and talk and ask questions. This has carried on over the years, and the attitude towards that mural. Is this alright, to take up this much time?

ALAN CHALK Yes, go right ahead.

BERNARD RILEY The attitude toward the mural, the attitude towards religion, is different now than what it was in those, in the past. Aloysius was a very severe type of person. He was very, very dedicated. He was a wealthy man, came from very powerful people. The Gonzagas were, this is back in the Fourteenth Century, they were strong, powerful people. They had the power of life and death over hundreds of serfs and the people that lived on the land and worked the land for them. Aloysius just threw it over, just like Saint Francis, just threw the whole thing over, and went to join the Jesuits.

ALAN CHALK Did you have any controlling theme or design as you worked it out?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I just followed what I read about him.

ALAN CHALK You mean, as representing different episodes of his life?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, right. And for some reason or another, even among the Jesuits, they feel that the image of the religious person should be one flitting around happily, smiling, and a real, real, happy person, not this glum, strict, stern attitude towards religion. I was only doing what I read about Aloysius as a person. I couldn't very well make him out to be that type of person when he really wasn't.

ALAN CHALK Didn't the criticism bother you?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I never really heard too much of it. At the time, some of the Jesuits sort of hinted at the fact that it was a very stern thing for a dormitory. On the other hand, and it sort of stressed religion, I guess, they felt that, maybe if I had done the life of Errol Flynn, they would have been more in favor of it. Well, I'd always had read a good deal about mural-type painting.

ALAN CHALK So you always were interested in mural?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, I was always interested in the methods. It wasn't so far from the little exposure I had to the theater and stage sets.

ALAN CHALK Is this what you would call the classical mural technique?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, this was a classical medium I followed. It's a mixture, believe it or not, of oil and egg yolk and turpentine. So it came out as a soft satin—like finish. Yes. And I think that it works there on that wall pretty well. And it should last, it should never; it's almost 20 years old.

ALAN CHALK Is it colorfast? Is it a lighter color, almost in terms of like a pastel?

BERNARD RILEY I noticed that the sun comes in the window there, beautiful lighting, the way it hits.

ALAN CHALK So that should last.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, there isn't any strong light there. There isn't any reason, but the only thing that really happened was that the wall leaked. The water came down from the upper floors. It stained it.

ALAN CHALK What's the size of it?

BERNARD RILEY That's a little better than 7 feet wide by 27 feet in length. I had a rig between two stepladders, and a ladder stretched between two stepladders. I used that. I'd rather work on something like that. A stepladder is too confining; it doesn't give you enough space to work in.

ALAN CHALK The next mural-like work that I recall would be painting "The Procession" and then the 60—foot series of canvas as you did for the Silvermine Show.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, "The Procession" did come first.

ALAN CHALK Were you thinking of them as mural-like, or were you influenced by the mural in doing this?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, I was because this was a chance to have a show at the New York Hilton, and the way that worked out was that I was anxious to have something of that size, a mural—like size. This Hilton wasn't really a gallery. It was a passageway in the New York Hilton. It must have been a hundred yards of wall space there, not complete wall space, because there were doorways. There were a number of large spaces, wall spaces, and so I thought I'd like to have some large piece up and hopefully someone would find it and find it interesting.

ALAN CHALK So when you couldn't work on a wall. You then had to design a larger frame for canvas.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, I did it here.

BERNARD RILEY In that, there were 12, 4 by 4.

ALAN CHALK Do you mean 4 by 4?

BERNARD RILEY No, wait a minute. Yes, they were 4 by 4. Those are panels, blown up and put together because I took them down separately.

ALAN CHALK Oh, I see.

BERNARD RILEY They had to be broken up in order to take them to New York.

ALAN CHALK Now are we talking about, "The Procession?" Then the larger panels that grew from that, you were actually designing larger and larger frames to hold your canvas.

BERNARD RILEY Well then, the next step was the building they were in. I was thinking of the Vassos Gallery then. The walls were larger. I didn't consider until I got to that point how I was going to get them down.

ALAN CHALK So, if I recall, there were 17, no there were 16.

BERNARD RILEY Yes.

ALAN CHALK So actually you were designing frames for a mural—like painting.

BERNARD RILEY Then, at that time, too, I had “The Medici,” the one that’s up in Saint Vincent’s, for the Hilton. That’s almost a mural size. That’s 5 by 9 feet. I don’t know whether it was considered, actually considered, mural-sized.

ALAN CHALK Do you recall at this time thinking of or wanting to do mural, or looking for a wall? The question is, do painters like the walls when they see them?

BERNARD RILEY Well, painters like walls, but they also have the bad habit of changing the idea of flatness, for instance. Although this is one, supposedly one cardinal rule of mural painting, not to do that, artists do it, I’m afraid. They’ll project, and go in and they’ll change the form of the wall. Even Michaelangelo did that.

ALAN CHALK You mean visually.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, like the Sistene Chapel.

ALAN CHALK What was the genesis of the project? When did you... how did it start, the one in Burroughs Library?

BERNARD RILEY Well again chance followed this thing all the way along. Charles Ray and myself were out in the studio one day, and we got talking about murals, and Charles wasn’t working at the time.

ALAN CHALK Had he done any murals?

BERNARD RILEY No, he had never done one. But he had always had the same, every artist almost has the same desire to do a wall, you know, to do something that’s well, monumental, and also a monument to them. You feel if you can do a wall, it’s going to be there; it will be there as long as the building, which of course doesn’t mean much today. A building might only last 50 or 100 years and be gone. It might not even last that long. nothing much was happening. Although if you look closely at it, it was happening across the country, especially outdoor murals were being funded by the government through commissions, art commissions, and councils. They were funding outdoor murals. There was some kind of movement, and there still is that direction. Interior, murals in buildings, you just didn’t see that happening. Architects were cutting away from it and doing these simple buildings. They’re getting more towards that now, cutting out as much cost as possible, reducing things, and just being purely efficient, that’s all. The building is there to do the job that it’s supposed to do and that’s it. There’s little sympathy for the artist as far as architects and art. Buildings, even with the efforts that have been made with the government; the government said federal buildings are going to have to give a certain percentage to the arts. If a building is funded by federal money, then a percentage of the cost of that building has to go toward the arts.

ALAN CHALK It doesn’t specify murals, does it?

BERNARD RILEY No, it doesn’t specify murals. It could be sculpture or anything. But I don’t see it happening too much. Anyway, we got talking about it, and I brought up the fact that I’d been looking at this wall at the library for years, and thinking what a terrific place for a mural, because first of all, it’s a unique wall in the fact that it has these juts and these turns. And then I said there were two of them, not only one, but two walls. I said it would be like Leonardo and So it started there. We went to talk to Judy Muniec. Judy picked it up because this was in ‘76, and, no it was in ‘75 actually. They were thinking about ‘76 with the Bicentennial coming up, and she thought, “Well, hey, here’s a project for the Bicentennial.”

ALAN CHALK What was her position at this time?

BERNARD RILEY She was public relations, in charge of public relations at the library. And I had known Judy for a long time. It was Judy’s idea then that it be a Bicentennial project. It would be great if it would be the history of Bridgeport involved in it. Both walls would start off with the corporation of the city. Or I don’t know if we came to that conclusion in the first

conversation or not. Anyway, then I built the model, based on the fact that it was the history of Bridgeport. I guess I came to, I began with the incorporation of the city.

ALAN CHALK When you went to Judy, did you have a subject for the mural in mind or were you just inclined to the possibility of a mural?

BERNARD RILEY No, no. This was Judy's idea. It was simply the idea of, would you or would you not be interested? So she suggested then the history. She tied it in to the Bicentennial, and she tied it in to the fact, well here we are. It seemed the natural direction to take. The theme should be the history of Bridgeport.

ALAN CHALK In my reading I've noted that she was also chairman for the Bridgeport Commission for the Arts? And then she became, I guess, chairman for the Bicentennial Commission in Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, Judy and Victor were always active in the city. Mayor Curran had created the Commission on the Arts for Bridgeport. I was on that committee with Judy.

ALAN CHALK So how did you take to the idea of doing the history of Bridgeport?

BERNARD RILEY I thought this was terrific because I realized what a lot of material it was to work with. It was all right there in the library.

ALAN CHALK Had you been interested in the history of Bridgeport?

BERNARD RILEY Not particularly. Since I was born here on the other hand, my family came here. My mother's people came here in the late '80s. My father was born in New York City and lived in Kent and then came to Bridgeport at just about the turn of the century. So we were Bridgeport—oriented and related and I knew the city. I knew a lot about it. So I thought this was a great idea, certainly something to, a direction to go in.

ALAN CHALK So how did you start researching it?

BERNARD RILEY Right there in the library I began reading material on it. Strangely enough, I first began to think I wanted the first mayor, at his first day, as the mayor of the city of Bridgeport. His name was Isaac Sherman, Jr. But I didn't pay much attention to that "Jr." bit, There was a picture in the picture room in the Bridgeport." He was a very dignified, older looking man. Since it was marked "first mayor of Bridgeport," I accepted that. Then I discovered what researchers have to learn, that you have to double—check things. It turned out that that wasn't the Isaac Sherman. Isaac Sherman, Jr., his nephew, became the first mayor of Bridgeport. So from that time on, I was aware of the fact that in research, you have to really get into it and know what you're saying and what you're doing. So an authoritative history of Bridgeport meant you had to work: There's some material, but it's bits and pieces that you have to pick up, and check. That's one of the things about this project, in taping this, and of the remarks made in writing, any kind of a material on this mural. I should go back, you see, I didn't pay too much attention to sources, where the sources came from, or make any record of the sources. I really should have a record. For instance, the first engine that was used on the Housatoric was the Sandusky type; it was a Sandusky-type engine made in Paterson, New Jersey. Now where I picked that information up, I'm not too sure, but I should know the source. I should 'be able to put my finger on the sources.

ALAN CHALK Do you have xerox copies of pages and penciled notes for all the statistics?

BERNARD RILEY No, you see, I should have that. I should have these marked down.

ALAN CHALK As the tapes go through, we'll try to at least record them verbally, and at least that will give us some benefit.

BERNARD RILEY At the time I should have made a record of these sources. They were all there in the library. But it means going back and going through these materials again. It wasn't hard to find out; for instance, the first mayor. I soon found out that the first mayor was Isaac Sherman, Jr., who was a saddle maker. The other man was in politics. His uncle was in politics. He was, I forget what positions he held in the city and in the borough before the city of Bridgeport, before it



became the city of Bridgeport. It's interesting because Isaac Sherman, Jr., at the time the term was a one-year term. After his term was up, he didn't run for re—election. It seemed like nobody did. It was just a one—year term, and that was it.

ALAN CHALK How did you happen to start with him? You just mentioned that you did research some history prior.

BERNARD RILEY Well, this was the incorporation of the city. The city was incorporated in 1836 mainly so it could raise money enough for the Housatonic Railroad; they were hot on getting the Housatonic Railroad as terminal here.

ALAN CHALK Did you ever consider doing any of the history prior to that?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I had thought about it, because that's a natural thing, to show the beginning. But actually, it wasn't; it was first Stratfield. It was a combination of Stratford and Fairfield. And Park Avenue was the division line. Then it was, it went under several different names until finally it became the borough of Bridgeport, a separate little town along the harbor. Then small industries grew up along the harbor there, and there was But then the idea of bringing the railroad here; the railroads were being built then in the 1840s. The idea of bringing it could have gone to Southport or it could have gone to Norwalk. Norwalk was hot for it. But Bridgeport finally convinced them.

ALAN CHALK How did you happen to decide on those particular hundred years — 1836 to 1936?

BERNARD RILEY Well, mainly the 1936 came out of the fact that I realized I couldn't go on forever. There wasn't that much space. And '36 seemed to be good - 100 years.

ALAN CHALK That was in Bridgeport?

BERNARD RILEY Yes. That was really another suggestion. That would be the Centennial of Bridgeport. And then you're celebrating the Bicentennial of the country. As a matter of fact, I did a float for the 1936 Centennial celebration. I did a set for a play they put on in Seaside Park. So I was part of that. This was actually Judy's idea, of the century.

ALAN CHALK So you then researched it and then drew a small model.

BERNARD RILEY I made the model actually, it wasn't just drawn factually. drew the three—dimensional' model. Judy has that now polished. This is what I carried around in a box to try to demonstrate it and show it.

ALAN CHALK Then there was a larger model in your studio.

BERNARD RILEY Then from there, which was really a strange way to approach it, I did this one.

ALAN CHALK Why did you do that?

BERNARD RILEY I did it mainly because of the butts in the wall. I see, to work out the problems then. Yes. If I wanted to work out the problems, you couldn't do it on paper very well.

ALAN CHALK It seems to me you were doing two things at once. One, constructing the actual problem of the wall in your studio'. And then creating the design to fit it. So you actually were researching and starting to create new designs.

BERNARD RILEY That's right. The plan at that point, again, chance is involved in every step of the way. Changes were made all along, which is unheard of. A mural is generally planned, definitely planned, and the whole thing is worked out, and there's no changes made, and once that design is planned and the approach is planned and what they're going to do and how they're going to do it, that's it. Then a crew comes in generally and carries it out.

ALAN CHALK How did the funding for the project develop?

BERNARD RILEY Well, that wasn't so easy. Because that's what changed the whole thinking about the mural. We had to go to Hartford where we were steered to a case worker.

ALAN CHALK Did you bring your model with you?

BERNARD RILEY I brought the model with me, and we went up to talk to him. I hate to put it that way, but it was like going to the welfare department. They send you into the office, and the social worker sits down to explain the rules, and what you do in order to qualify and all that bit. So we got all these forms to fill out and explain how much we figured it would cost, and all that sort of thing. But on top of that we were told whatever money that we might get in commission would have to be matching funds. So that presented a whole other problem. That meant we would have to go out and raise funds. We were talking in the neighborhood of, it was a modest sum when you consider it. At the time we were thinking of two murals and we were thinking of maybe the outside of a year at most. We weren't thinking about making any great amount of money. I think what we were asking for was over \$5,000. Then we were told we would have to have matching funds, which would bring it up around \$10,000 or better.

We both had to work, and didn't have the money, and the way we felt. I didn't do any of the figuring on this. This was Charles Ray's department; he did the figuring and he came up with the sums that he figured we would need. Anyway, the way it worked out was, they couldn't give us anywhere near that.

ALAN CHALK Had Charles worked out a model?

BERNARD RILEY No he hadn't, because we never got that far.

ALAN CHALK So he didn't know what subject matter would be here or anything like that?

BERNARD RILEY Well, only that it was basically the history of Bridgeport. He was going to take it then from 1936. He was going to go up to the present. That was the only basis he had. He didn't do any drawings or any heading or any real layouts or schemes for it. He had been thinking about it, but he hadn't carried it out at all.

ALAN CHALK So what happened when this fell through?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I was determined then, by that point to do that wall regardless of how it would work out.

ALAN CHALK On your own.

BERNARD RILEY On my own. So we didn't. We were offered \$2,000; that is what they came up with from the Commission, which wasn't bad.

ALAN CHALK That was contingent upon matching funds?

BERNARD RILEY That was contingent on matching funds. That also included anything like the scaffold. For instance, if you had the scaffold, that would be a contribution. They would amount the same each way.

ALAN CHALK What about your labor? That doesn't count?

BERNARD RILEY The labor didn't, I don't think the labor was... I guess my labor, yes, it could have been included in that. Four years later. This whole thing got to be ridiculous then. They've had fits up there over their \$2,000 because they felt it should have been spent long ago. They felt that a mural should have been completed, and the \$2,000 should have been spent.

ALAN CHALK Has it not been spent yet? how much of it's left?

BERNARD RILEY I haven't got any real accounting for how much is left, but we didn't spend that much of it. See, when we got the \$2,000, we got the offer of \$2,000, then I went and checked with McKenzie about mounting the canvas. And we got a price on the canvas. To mount the canvas is \$300 over here. That's what I was basing it on, or so. When it gets up there, McKenzie comes up there to look at this wall, and says, "Well, it'll be about \$3,000." Oh my God! So there it goes.

That blows it right there. That's the end of that. So then I checked out the cost of the linen and that came to over \$500 with the linen. I figured, "Well, that's the end of that."

But we did get to talk. Now who suggested that I go and talk to him? To Rick Porto, who is a commercial painter. He's never done anything quite like this before. I thought, "Well, I'll go and talk to him anyway." Well, Rick said, "You know, under the circumstances, you haven't got any money to pay. Let's face it. There isn't any money. If you have \$2,000, it's going to cost you more than that for other mater'~ls. What 'ii do if I can, if I can swing it, the painters' union every year does some work for the community, as a community project. Every year they'll do a project for the community, so let me see if I can convince them that this was a worthy project." And he did! So actually, what they came up with was a combination of two Porto men and two men from McKenzie. And they did it for cost, for labor cost for the day. It only took them a day to do it.

ALAN CHALK Had they any experience in such a large...?

BERNARD RILEY The two fellows from McKenzie's didn't have too much experience. They sort of flubbed the first, this isn't going to be published now, they sort of flubbed the first. Not the first one, because they did get aroun&,that corner very neatly and very nicely. They handled that beautifully. But the first large 12—foot length, that's 12 feet wide, that's tough. So getting that into the corner was fine; they did that with no problem. Butting the next piece, the next 12—foot piece against it, there was little, was a little space. Maybe there's a little space of about, well, it doesn't amount to more than an eighth of an inch. So that's pretty damn good.

ALAN CHALK So you were able to get the linen, then, from Atlanta, then, as I recall.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, a company down there.

ALAN CHALK I remember there was a long delay.

BERNARD RILEY Well, I thought they were weaving it for a while there.

ALAN CHALK They had to prepare it specially for your work. And then you got the linen applied to the wall. So then the time between when you "first went to Judy Muniec and you actually began on the mural was about a year, a year and a half, then.

BERNARD RILEY Probably closer to a year, yes. Of course, there was a delay in getting the linen. Arid then getting the scaffold together and

ALAN CHALK And you were retired at this time, too. You'd retired in '75. So you were actually devoting now almost full time, almost a full week to this right from the very beginning.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, from that time on, I was.

ALAN CHALK So even though you began the canvas somewhere in October of '76, you'd already devoted about a year to it.

BERNARD RILEY It'd been, well, it was probably close, yes, close to that. I built this half—size model and worked out the beginning quarter of it on the half size model.

ALAN CHALK Not to mention the research you'd already done.

BERNARD RILEY The research was involved, and it involved research. Yes, it was probably about a year.

ALAN CHALK I'm curious now as to what your thoughts were in terms of setting up your little vision of the history of Bridgeport and that design.

BERNARD RILEY Well, see, that's one of the neat things about this. The real separation between this work and then the works of others. This wasn't, didn't have a total concept. It didn't have a total plan. It never did have. I worked, did this model, this half—size model. I'd worked out the first corner on it. But that's as far as it went. And from there on, the rest of that mural was created

ALAN CHALK Well, did you set up certain principles or designs that you were looking for?

BERNARD RILEY By that time, I'd come to the conclusion, for instance, when I was working here on the half—size model, I thought of color. I was still thinking color. And I was thinking of it in a more conventional way, probably. Of course, it was still the multiple image sort of thing. The superimposing was being worked out there. But even so, I was still considering color. When I got as far as a quarter of it on the wall up there, working from the half—size model to the wall, I'd been doing it just by measurements. I'd take a tracing from this half—size and bring it in to the library and then, just by measuring it in a general way, draw it on the wall in pastel chalk. The original thinking was that I was going to work the entire thing out here, half-size. So I'd have, really wind up with two murals under it. I'd wind up with a half—size mural and the one in the library. But then I realized that this was really too, just too much. And I began to work out directly on the wall there.

One of the problems in the beginning was that I couldn't find a way to get it from the tracing paper on to the wall without just actually drawing on the wall with chalk and measuring it out. It was scaled off, and then measuring in the scales, those 12—foot scales, 12—foot squares, measuring it off and drawing it, drawing it from the half-size model to the wall. Then when I got finished with that first quarter, I began to realize I could trace it on the wall, through the tracing paper by chalking the back of the tracing paper, which was a big help. Then I wasn't getting involved with small detail that I couldn't work out with the chalk.

ALAN CHALK So you would make, then, from your half-scale model, full-size tracing paper patterns and then tracing to the larger wall?

BERNARD RILEY No, no. Not in the beginning; I was taking that actually, the half—size model, tracing the half—size, and taking that half—size tracing to the library and working from that to the full—scale. But only by measuring it off, not tracing it. But then I began to realize I could trace it. So I worked out then, I just simply laid the tracing paper over the wall, worked it out from a two—inch scale to the twelve-inch scale on the tracing paper where I could correct or make adjustments. And I broke that, instead of twelve—inch squares, then, I was breaking them up in quarters of that. So I was going from the two—inch square to a three-inch square really, which was a much easier method of handling it, more accurate.

ALAN CHALK So you were working with the chalk on the back of the tracing paper.

BERNARD RILEY I was chalking the back of the tracing paper.

ALAN CHALK And then you would paint over that on linen?

BERNARD RILEY I would press through the tracing paper, yes. I'd get the And then starting to work and change a line if necessary. We were doing this over three times.

ALAN CHALK Did you do any free work on the wall at all?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, there's been some work, free work.' Of course, you're bound to do that. When you step back and begin to see what you want to do in terms of your dimensions, you refine it or make some adjustments to it. Of course, in doing this with the tracing paper, tracing it on the wall, although you can see through the tracing paper, you can't see clearly through it. So you don't always know exactly what you're laying over. These are now, we're talking about drawing which is, if anyone is listening to this other than ourselves, we're drawing over drawings, one drawing on top of another. It gets pretty confusing. Sometimes, although I've learned to overcome it, people do wonder how in the world can you see the damn thing. The onionskin technique. That would be fine, you know, if you had some more transparent paper.

ALAN CHALK Let's get back to the subject matter in terms of your original conception of it. As you started researching, what did you start looking for? You've mentioned also that you're interested also in the peoples' history of Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY Well, I was interested more in the character of the city than the people, rather than any heroic kind of mural; one that would show tremendous heavy industry. There was some heavy industry in Bridgeport, but actually the character of the city was more technical. It wasn't Pittsburgh, although there were smelters here and there were iron factories here. The general character of the city was more one of machinists and toolmakers and dyemakers and designers. This was the truth, the strength of the city. And I wanted to show the people.

Now, this brings up a point that we mentioned before, the problem of ethnic groups bothered me a bit. I was concerned about the fact that what people were going to say, like, "Well, where are the ethnic groups? Where are the Hungarian people? Where are the Slovak people? Where are the Polish or the German people who came here?" But you know, although that was true; Bridgeport was a city of large groups of various European people who came here and were needed because they brought different skills to the city. But, on the other hand, when you'd meet them on the street, you couldn't tell a Polish person from a German person or a Slovak person. They were all workers, and they all began to move into industry. And they didn't wear flags on their hats or anything. They just became the people of Bridgeport. So, although they held on to their groups; the Hungarian people had the Roxy Hall, and the Slovak people had their own societies, and the German people had their societies. And in these groups, and they were even living in certain sections of the city; they'd gather together. But on the other hand, as a total look at the city, you couldn't tell the difference between these people.

ALAN CHALK You see it more as the traditional American melting pot?

BERNARD RILEY This was typical of the American melting pot because people Europe because living conditions there weren't...

ALAN CHALK So you're not conscious of any kind of ethnic initial identity?

BERNARD RILEY I was conscious of it, and there was a little bit of it in the mural. This lady that I told you about, that came and wrote in the book about the fact that there weren't any black people in the mural, and why shouldn't there be, because there were black people here in Connecticut. I don't know whether that was true or not. She claimed that Connecticut was the last state to give up slavery. Now, there weren't ever too many slaves in Connecticut to start with. I don't know whether that was true or not, but on the other hand, there are no white people in the mural, either. The mural is strictly and purely a drawing. There's no color at all in the mural. So I don't know how you could tell whether it was a black person or a white person. You just, between you and I, I never could understand anyway, this business of black and white. I never saw a white person in my life, and I never saw a black person, because they're neither white nor black.

ALAN CHALK Tell me, that presents an interesting question. Are the characters in the mural, are they individuals? Are they portraits of people you've researched? Or are they in your own creation? What's the balance?

BERNARD RILEY In some cases. Well, it's a small percentage of people, of people that I know, or characters.

ALAN CHALK Now, for example, were you able to find pictures of, let's

BERNARD RILEY Some of them, yes. Yes, the first mayor, there are. There's only one picture of the first mayor, and that's been used over and over again. There's only one portrait picture of the first mayor. And that's not a particularly good one. There's, of course, there's hundreds of pictures of Barnum, for instance. There are pictures of Noble. That's another person. Tom Thumb, Lincoln; in other words, people that become public personages. Tom Thumb, yes, Lincoln. Of course, Lincoln was a whole story in itself in that mural because there was another bit of a flub in research.

ALAN CHALK Well, we'll deal with the actual mural as we go along.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, later, yes.

ALAN CHALK But, I'm curious right now as to, say, the working people. Are they of your imagination or did you work from pictures?

BERNARD RILEY No, well, of course, I referred to costumes, for instance, pictures of working people in costumes. There is, if you'll notice, there is a variation of costumes as I moved along.

ALAN CHALK Yes. The characterization is primarily, with the exception of public personages, your own.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, my own, just purely on my own.

ALAN CHALK The workers, the children?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, people in general, or people that I just...

ALAN CHALK Now', going back to this question of not seeing any black people.

BERNARD RILEY That's strange because there is, there are two exceptions to the ethnic bit. That is, there's one black man, and there's one Irishman in the mural. Now, the reason I can say that, is that the Irishman is characteristically Irish in his appearance, and the Negro is characteristically Negro in his appearance. Now, he's the driver of the Victorian carriage. These are the only two people. Now, this person who said there weren't any blacks in it just wasn't looking, or looking in depth.

ALAN CHALK You also have the first black church there.

BERNARD RILEY The first black church is there.

ALAN CHALK I remember reading that was a center for escaping slaves?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I don't know that it, it might have been part of the underground railroad or something that sort of... And then, I don't think that the black people that were associated, this was, it went back as far as 1824, believe it or not. It was the first black church in the Northern United States. And that was at Gregory Street and Broad, the corner of Gregory and Broad. And before then, they... they met, strangely enough as a congregation outdoors for a while before they were able to buy the property and build this little church. They met where the Burroughs Library is, on the corner of Broad and State streets.

ALAN CHALK Now, how many of the earlier figures were actual representations of historical people?

BERNARD RILEY Well, not too many. The first mayor, and then the group around him are just people that I dreamed up.

ALAN CHALK So then you started to create your own design of the people and the forces that came to play

BERNARD RILEY The only one on the second wall panel is Tom Thumb in his father's arms. Tom Thumb went in the, I'm not going to give dates now, because I'm going to have to look these dates up. Well, I can try to work a kind of historical coverage, then. This is just an overview. This has been four years ago that I.. .Well, Tom Thumb went to meet Barnum in New York. Now Tom Thumb was, at the time, only five years old. He had just turned five. Of course, Barnum presented him, Barnum gave out that he was twelve, but actually, he dressed him and called him Captain Tom Thumb.

ALAN CHALK Well, what I'm looking for here, Bud, is just a sense of what might have been the formative ideas and designs. Now, you've already mentioned the stars, the skilled laborer, the working force of the community, and that you were reaching for the essence of Bridgeport in terms of the worker and the people. Also, I noticed that you're very sensitive to some events, historical events are portrayed through there.

BERNARD RILEY I remember the burning of Bridgeport, also certain architecture.

ALAN CHALK But are there any other designs or motives that you had in mind then or that you've discovered since?

BERNARD RILEY Well, the railroad comes in there on that first back part wall.

ALAN CHALK Technology, then?

BERNARD RILEY Well, yes. Well, the importance of the railroad, the fact that this is really what made Bridgeport. Because they were bringing trains down from the, through the Valley, all the way down from New Milford, and picking up and all the way along, and farm products and that sort of thing, even cattle. And bringing them down to Bridgeport and shipping them out to the West Indies.

ALAN CHALK Now, what made the port of Bridgeport—that it was then was the railroad system. So one of the patterns then, is its center as an emerging industrial center, but also as a port.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, also as a port. It was a big thing. And this railroad is depicted there, and this is the true engine that was used in the first railroad. The character of the people surrounding it. And then the black church behind it, which was true, because this was, the railroad ran down, the terminal of the railroad actually, was down near Gregory Street, Whiting Street, just off Main Street.

ALAN CHALK Well, what about the actual start on the wall? Now, you said the scaffolding was from the library.

BERNARD RILEY Well, I had to rebuild it.

ALAN CHALK You had to rebuild that and create various levels?

BERNARD RILEY It would be hard to get up high enough because the scaffold didn't get me up high. The ceiling is 14, well, it's 14 feet from the top, from the top of the bookcases, and that's seven feet, so that's 21 feet.

ALAN CHALK That's 21 feet you had to work up.

BERNARD RILEY That's 21 feet from the floor. and then your various stagings.

ALAN CHALK Did you have to do anything to prepare the linen before you began it or did you just have to start?

BERNARD RILEY No, that's one thing. The linen was already prepared. Jesso there were two coats of Jesso on that thing. Of course, I didn't tint it. It's one thing I thought of in a sense I might have done. I might have given it another coat of Jesso and another priming coat or another finish coat of Jesso, and maybe tinted it. Now, that might have made a difference, rather than a, well; it isn't really white. It's an off-white. I think, as it turns out, with the density of the drawing, in raw Sienna, the contrast is enough to carry the thing.

ALAN CHALK Did you have to go back over to prepare it or spray it?

BERNARD RILEY Well, I have to clean it up a little bit. There are some marks on it, some marks and things.

ALAN CHALK Does it have to be sprayed with anything?

BERNARD RILEY It probably should be. Now, that thing has been hanging for a long time now. I should try to get McKenzie over here. I didn't want to try to do it myself, because it should be done in a day. Of course, now things have changed considerably. And I don't think I'd attempt to do it now myself anyway.

ALAN CHALK Well, what would they have to spray it with?

BERNARD RILEY It would be an acrylic varnish with a flat varnish.

ALAN CHALK And that would seal it in?

BERNARD RILEY It would seal it.

ALAN CHALK And protect it from dust?

BERNARD RILEY That's simply all it would do, is seal it and make it easier to wipe off, wipe the dust off. And that's all that would have to be done with it.

ALAN CHALK Let's talk about the concept of the mural now. You're changing, you've changed from the mural you did in Fairfield University, which was more of the classical and traditional mural. Here you're working with something that's fairly new, fairly experimental in your wall drawings. It's multiple image. It's unique, as far as I know. Did you consider it a traditional or classical mural?

BERNARD RILEY Well, in the beginning, in thinking of the mural, you would think of traditional murals, you would think of colorform and design and how it would affect the room or how it would go into the room. Part of that has come through, anyway. Part of the idea of how it will sit in that room, how it will affect it has always been a big concern. But on the other hand, the movement away from traditional murals and traditional methods, traditional decorative effect of a mural in a room. These ideas came about purely by working with it and realizing that the drawing was the more important part of it. Pure drawing, without the interference of color, and the use of color that is only slightly related to the final mural. But making the drawing, I don't know that drawing has ever, to my knowledge been featured at this dimension, on this scale before.

ALAN CHALK I recall that your project in your show at Silvermine was called "Wall Drawing," almost anticipating this.

BERNARD RILEY Well, again, this follows that thought.

ALAN CHALK How has the public responded to the idea of line as art?

BERNARD RILEY Some people are continually asking, "Well, when are you going to start to paint it? When are you going to start to color it?" And some people say, "Well, I miss color." But, on the other hand, one of the things that came to mind was that drawing is more related to the city of Bridgeport, since Bridgeport is a craftsmen's town. Bridgeport understands line, understands drawing, better almost than they might understand color. And colorforms.

ALAN CHALK That's interesting. There may be a relationship between the line and time.

BERNARD RILEY Well, there's a relationship to the history of Bridgeport in that sense. This is a kind of a town that would accept drawing over color. Certainly the multiplicity of your image allows you to work with different images in the same space, and therefore to create relationships you might not be able to. You wouldn't be able to do quite the same thing with color, although I've done some of it. But on the other hand, the drawing itself becomes to me at least, like a woven tapestry on that wall. It doesn't change that room at all. As a matter of fact, you don't have to see that mural. When you walk into that room, that mural doesn't come forward and grab a hold of you. It just is there, as part of the original wall. It doesn't change anything. It integrates with the room, then. It becomes part of that room. It's a woven texture-like piece of work.

ALAN CHALK I noticed also that the room is appropriately a research room, a resource center.

BERNARD RILEY Yes, it's basically a reference and research room. There was, and I hoped it'll go back to being a study area right beneath that mural so that people can sit there and this won't interfere with their studying, but on the other hand, if they look up and become involved in it and have a little rest from whatever they're involved with.

ALAN CHALK I think one of the most interesting dimensions has been the on—location concept and I'm wondering, what has your experience been, in actually working in front of the people? Are you self-conscious about it all, at all?

BERNARD RILEY don't think I was in the beginning too involved with people watching or worrying about people watching or being fretful or having an... The only thing is that bothered, of course, and it's partly due to that it was taking so long, is that you do get involved in conversations and nine times out of ten, you come down off the scaffold and really get



involved and sometimes, maybe twenty, thirty minutes go by. The original idea of working on location appealed to me finally because there was that feeling of that, hopefully, it might inspire some young artist to follow along or to see something happening with art that they never thought could happen with art.

ALAN CHALK In contrast with art being in the studio?

BERNARD RILEY Yes, they might have thought of it in galleries, they might have thought of it of illustrations in magazines and books and commercial areas, but they probably never thought of it quite in the same context.

ALAN CHALK Have you had any young artists stop by?

BERNARD RILEY Oh, several, yes. Well, of course, now things have changed. I haven't been there in so long. But while I was working there steady, there were regulars, regular people that came in regularly.

ALAN CHALK I know for a fact, there are a couple of students have been profoundly influenced by your work and I'm not sure how often they've been back to visit on their own, but I know, in their own work, I can see the impact.

BERNARD RILEY Oh, really? That's interesting. Well, hopefully, that was part of the thinking, was the chance. And then again, the general public was unaware that an artist works, for instance. This was one thing I began to realize, that people felt that artists were a separate, somehow separated from the human race, and that they worked only on a temperamental basis, that they worked when they felt like working or they had to have some sort of inspiration or some, or else they just dilly—dally along. Four years is hardly that.

ALAN CHALK You know another interesting dimension here, Bud, is you've always worked as a kind of intuitionist, I think you called yourself, so that the painting will evolve in your studio. The other dimension here is your interaction with the public. How much have they played a part in terms of the development of the painting?

BERNARD RILEY Well, this was the thinking in the beginning, was that they should, and they have. There's a number of things, parts of that mural, that were contributions. The black church, we mentioned, for instance. That was a lady that came in and told me the story about the black church. And so the black church was in it. It was difficult to see, perhaps. I'm sorry in a way that I didn't make more of it. But, it's there. I understand there's a lady's cat there, too. There's a cat there that everybody's intrigued with. Fortunately, the cat was the Rosy color. And the poor cat up and died a short time afterwards. So, he's immortalized there.

ALAN CHALK Do people come in and recognize their relatives or submit pieces of history?

BERNARD RILEY No, there are a group of ladies there, the, it wasn't the first class of Bridgeport Hospital, but the third class, that is, the third group of girls going through Bridgeport Hospital, and now, again without references, I wouldn't want to mention the year, because I'm not too sure about it. There was, in the 1870s, in '78, '78 I think it was, the Class of '78. Now, this, this I did take, actually, from a photograph, or rather, a rather poor photograph. It was a newspaper, and I never did get an original photograph. It was taken, it was a xerox of a newspaper clipping. So it was rather poor. But I did the best I could with it, in trying to make these young ladies look as they would. Those people, there was a book published and that's where this picture came from, the book, and reproduced in this book. And that was a newspaper, a newspaper clipping that was reproduced in a book.

ALAN CHALK Have people contributed any pictures or clippings or bits of history?

BERNARD RILEY They have at times and I haven't always used them, but there were; one fellow used to come in here. He had some pictures of the theaters, which is something I still haven't gotten in that respect. That's another part I hadn't even thought about.

ALAN CHALK So you do have a file in the library of all the materials and pictures.

BERNARD RILEY All the materials, yes.

## Tape 2

ALAN CHALK We're going down to the research room now, and we're looking at the first panel. You said something about this being not an original part of the wall.

BERNARD RILEY : This isn't the original wall; this was added to the original upper structure of that room for air conditioning. And this is a dry wall situation. There behind that wall is the air conditioning equipment.

ALAN CHALK What's the dimension of the wall?

BERNARD RILEY : It's about 36 inches wide and about 8 feet high. It has a curve because of the arch, and the arch cuts into it.

ALAN CHALK : When you say 8 feet, of course, we're already 7 feet off the ground.

BERNARD RILEY : Better than 7 feet now off the ground for that jog. That jog is higher than the back wall.

ALAN CHALK : Historically, what does this panel represent? This is the beginning of the 100 years, is it not?

BERNARD RILEY : This is a portrait, and the figure of the first mayor on the first day of the city's incorporation. It became the city of Bridgeport in 1836. And Isaac Sherman, Jr. - you have to make sure it's "junior" because there were two Isaac Shermans, and the older man was involved in politics extensively. But Isaac Sherman, Jr., came along and was elected to be the first mayor. He was a saddlemaker by trade, and a good one, and he had a good business in the city. Behind him, greeting him on the first day stands a ship carpenter. This is at the corner of Main and State streets, and we're looking, as you do through the rest of the mural, you're looking right through the figure of the mayor down State Street to the waterfront. And behind the mayor stands a young man, but we'll get into that later, because we have a close-up of him. This is the portrait of the first mayor, Isaac Sherman, Jr.

ALAN CHALK : Did you say something that they had the wrong painting?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, maybe we shouldn't answer that. There was a picture of Isaac Sherman, the older man. That was this man's uncle. And it was marked "the first mayor."

ALAN CHALK : How did you find out that this man was really the first Mayor?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, I went searching through other books and I came across in a book this young man's portrait. At first it threw me, because I couldn't figure out if this was a picture of him as a young man. It turned out that this was the nephew of Isaac Sherman that was involved extensively.

ALAN CHALK : Is this fairly close to the original portrait?

BERNARD RILEY : This is quite close to the original, the oil portrait in the city hall. ~ large one in the city hall that was done from the photograph and then there are several in the library, and books. But they're all the same photograph, all the same.

ALAN CHALK : Are they of the right one?

BERNARD RILEY : They're of the right one.

ALAN CHALK : Where is the wrong one located, just out of curiosity?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, there are several of those, too. And there's one in the picture room, in the picture file. I don't know whether it's still there or not, but it was marked "first mayor of Bridgeport." It's an easy mistake to make because he was involved in politics.

ALAN CHALK : Do you know anything about the beginnings of Bridgeport and how it is that he became the first mayor?

BERNARD RILEY : No, not how he became elected, but he was a businessman. He was involved in the city. He was an important businessman and his interests were in the city. He was only elected for one year. Mayors were elected for one year then. He served for one year, and then he left Bridgeport and went to St. Louis. I would imagine that the reason he went there probably was because the saddle business was probably better there than it was here.

ALAN CHALK : Who was this other gentleman, and what does he represent?

BERNARD RILEY : This is a ship's carpenter, who might well be in the area. And he's just a block away from the harbor. He's greeting the mayor on the first day, and giving him his good wishes and good luck. This now, we're looking right through those two figures in the lower part of the panel. And we're looking at a young man who had come into Bridgeport looking for work aboard ship. And he's talking to an old sea captain. This is the costume a man of the sea might wear. Of course, these ships did go to sea. They were shipping out of Bridgeport to the West Indies. They were quite large schooners, sailing vessels, and they carried a lot of cargo. So this sea captain was a real ocean-goer, a seaman. And that's a leather hat; that's typical of the type of hats that they might wear at that time. It was like a derby in a sense, but it had a squared-off top, made of leather.

ALAN CHALK : I noticed over in the left part of this panel, it looks like the mayor's hand is holding something?

BERNARD RILEY : He's holding a cane. You can just sort of zero in on that.

ALAN CHALK : And what about the background here? That's early Bridgeport. Is this authentic or is this your interpretation?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, this is rather an interpretation. They probably were buildings at the foot of State Street even in those days, even on that date. There were probably buildings, warehouses on the foot of State Street, but I wanted to open it up, so I could look right out into the harbor. It's very likely at the foot of State Street there could have been a dock, a small dock area, so that you could look right out into the harbor. You can see a warehouse across the harbor there; it's on the river actually.

ALAN CHALK : Now, did you have any problems in planning out this in terms of the chronology and the proportion of the panel? Now, for example, this three feet. Did you decide that it would represent so much time or do you work in terms of a design?

BERNARD RILEY : More in terms of a design. Of course, three feet by seven or eight is an awkward size to work with. The design was the thing that governed me.

ALAN CHALK : What determines whether you go into this inner and deeper dimension?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, part of what's there involves sequences of time. These two things could have happened almost at the same moment. The mayor could have been met by a ship's carpenter and these two people might have been involved about a discussion about work. So in your mind, there isn't just a relationship of minds; it also is of event. It's time sequence that might have happened on that very same corner within a matter of five minutes or a half hour or whatever.

But on that very spot, those two situations could have occurred. The mayor meeting the carpenter, and the young man from a farm land around Bridgeport coming into the city and going to sea, which was a normal thing.

ALAN CHALK : Airight, so the motifs you picked up so far are the working man, certainly, and the proximity to the sea, and the influence of the Sound and sea-going ships on Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : It was important to the city, although it wasn't the greatest harbor along this area; it was still one that was used a great deal. It was a servicing harbor. And a lot of activity taking place there all the time.

ALAN CHALK : Now is there anything else in this panel, or should I go to the next one?

BERNARD RILEY : Just the little figures and the motion of the sea, and the man with the hat, the high hat. It wasn't necessarily, it was a beaver hat, probably, not a silk hat.

ALAN CHALK : Out of curiosity, how high would you say, just looking at it, actual size, how high would you say he is?

BERNARD RILEY : That figure, that small figure? About 8 inches tall, 8 to 10 inches tall.

ALAN CHALK : So the smallest figure in there looks like he's in a dory, or a boat, and he's about 3 or 4 inches tall.

BERNARD RILEY : So you're looking up at this panel from a distance of maybe between 10 to 15 feet away, and yet, you can see these things. It takes a little bit of concentration. You probably wouldn't arrive at that until you had given it a little time.

ALAN CHALK : Well, let me move then, and here's a shot of the total second panel, I guess we'd call it.

BERNARD RILEY : Now, this is the side of that construction, that jog in the wall that was placed there for the air conditioner. You could see the arch that goes right on through to the main wall. Now this wall on your right here, that you can see just the edge of, that's a solid brick wall, a supporting wall. And you can imagine that jog was just built in there for space to allow for air conditioning equipment.

ALAN CHALK : How big is this panel, its dimensions?

BERNARD RILEY : This is 6 feet wide, and then it goes to, well it must be short of, it would be about 10 feet. It's greater behind that arch than it appears there. This is one of the problems, of course, you have with the mural paintings, is there that foreshortening, as you're looking up at it, at upper distances.

ALAN CHALK : Now, it may just be an eccentric question, but where do you begin in working the panel, downward or upward?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, this panel was worked out here in the studio, and the whole panel was worked on in a general way of design. Things fitting into it.

ALAN CHALK : I'm curious now, do you work across with the full intensity of the image, or do you begin to work across in terms of let's say, the forefront, and then working into more and more depth?

BERNARD RILEY : In the beginning, you work over the whole thing. You design the whole concept of that wall. Because you have to work it into that wall. And the reason, this was one of the stranger parts of the whole mural project, was the fact that I built this wall at home half—size. And the reason I did that was because of this particular situation here. Because of this corner.

Now, this corner had to be worked out so that it could be reasonably understood, and to reduce the corner as much as possible; that's the reason for the carriage. The carriage

through that corner, and the portions that you can't see in this side are part of that whole thing, try to reduce that corner so it doesn't become a hazard to the viewer.

ALAN CHALK : Let's take a look at the upper part of the panel. Focus in on that, and then what is the ship there?

BERNARD RILEY : The ship is the Nimrod, the first steamship, and then back from Nimrod you see a fourmaster, a schooner; that, there were quite a few that would come into this harbor. But the steamship is the Nimrod, and it ran between Bridgeport and New York. It would go down to New York one day and come back the following day. And of course cargo was the important thing. Passengers, they took passengers at a dollar-fifty for a one-way trip.

ALAN CHALK : That's not a paddlewheel, is it?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, that was a double paddlewheel.

ALAN CHALK : You usually think of the Mississippi; it's strange to hear about them on the Sound.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, and that's a four master to the left of it there, just off the bow, and behind it is a four master. And this is the steamship that Tom Thumb and his mother took to New York to meet Barnum. He had met Barnum in Bridgeport, but Barnum made arrangements to come to New York and of course, finally, not finally, because it was in the same week or so he hired Tom Thumb to go to work for him. We're going to have to go back and check out dates. Approximately 1840, 1850, 1860. Tom Thumb was five years old. But rather than make any real statements now, because it's been, well, it's been 4 years since I went over this.

ALAN CHALK : Do you work with a tight chronology, or do you work more impressionistically, just in the sense, putting in these figures without any rigid or logical time relationship?

BERNARD RILEY : Time relationship, yes. Yes, because in this lower left the heads of the two immigrants, now this was definitely during the 1840's because they were mostly Scotch, Irish and English people who were coming here. And this sort of the man almost is characteristic of the Irish, you know, he looks like an Irishman.

ALAN CHALK : Here, let me focus in on some of the faces. We're in the upper right—hand corner.

BERNARD RILEY : And these men are, these men, I term bridgebuilders, because there was a great deal of construction going on along the wharfs, and waterfront, and there were several bridges built between the east side and the west side of Bridgeport. Of course, just a matter of getting back and forth between these two areas. At that time, at least, there wasn't any East Bridgeport. There was all farmland, but bridges were built, and they fell down, and were built again, and this was a continual thing until they finally built reasonable bridges. And they were privately owned. That was another thing that was strange.

ALAN CHALK : Did people have to pay to go across?

BERNARD RILEY : It was a toll, they were toll bridges.

ALAN CHALK : Tell me, are these actual men? Did you have models or pictures for them, or did you work from the imagination?

BERNARD RILEY : Most, about 90% of the figures are imaginative; they're not taken. In some cases, the costumes, were sort of, followed the period. But even with costumes, it's hard to pin them down to make them work for you.

ALAN CHALK : Trying to read through their expressions, they're very muscular. It's not purely realistic. It's almost some impression in terms of the work in their character.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, they were pretty rough seamen. They were happy people, and they drifted. Work was the thing. They would go where work was. And they weren't particularly skilled people. They might not have been hearty carpenters, or considered carpenters. They were laborers mainly, and they did heavy work. And one of the things that I was trying to point out here was that the primitive equipment that they would be working with. They would be working with pulleys and heavy rope and hawsers and chains and there wasn't any of the power equipment that modern-day people have.

ALAN CHALK : Now this brings us a little forward and down the panel.

BERNARD RILEY : This brings a little later when the harbor was becoming more and more busy, and more excitement.

ALAN CHALK : Who are these people? The man, it's difficult, even in looking at that panel, to work this out.

BERNARD RILEY : The man with the barrel, there, can you make out the barrel there?

ALAN CHALK : Yes, it says something about molasses there.

BERNARD RILEY : Molasses came up from, molasses and rum, came up from the West Indies there, from the South. And aboard ship, and it was traded and bartered for tobacco. It was a business between selling tobacco from the Connecticut and buying rum and molasses. And that's what he's doing. He's a dock worker. That's what this figure represents. He's a dock worker. And the man behind that you see, stripped to the waist there, with his back toward you, belongs with the other two laborers working on the bridge. This is sort of a group of laborers. There's three, no four, of them involved actually, and this one of the larger figures of those. And behind is the little flower girl that was part of the ladies along shore and water-front that was typical, and made a name for Bridgeport in that way. And the seagulls. The gulls representing, of course, the gulls that are always near the water and the water—front.

ALAN CHALK : I see something in the background there, I can't make it out, near the fourmaster's home. I don't know whether it's just piers and people.

BERNARD RILEY : This is a boat, a rowboat, and there's a lot of activity in the harbor. Small boats and large boats, and people coming and going. And I think what you see there is part of this tree. The branches of this tree that was used. This was a, I can't think of a word for it, a device, used to compose this whole panel. You were asking about designing the panel. Well, the tree was part of that design to work this motion, this feeling of revolving and activity of moving around. The sailboat is in there, too, you see. There's movement in that sailboat as it goes alongside the Nimrod. Now, it's very difficult because you've got the initial creation in the studio, and then you actually apply it to the wall.

ALAN CHALK : But again, I'm wondering do you work from the closest or nearest plain to the deepest, or do you work from the smallest figure out? Or do you vary it?

BERNARD RILEY : It's a variation, it's a happening.

ALAN CHALK : So in other words, you don't sketch your total design and then work into your detail.

BERNARD RILEY : Not necessarily, no. It might be just the reverse of that. In this particular case, these three figures now, the workers, the large figures came first. This man with his back turned, he has an axe in his hand. And there's one thing about him, his left hand is minus one finger.

ALAN CHALK : I saw that.

BERNARD RILEY : Did you see it? Because almost when that figure was completed, someone picked that up. I didn't think they ever would. This was typical of what could happen to these people.

ALAN CHALK : It might not, because his finger might be bent and obscure there, but, it's just the angle.

BERNARD RILEY : The angle suggests that he's minus it. And he has this axe that comes down and brings your attention down into that wagon, and involves these immigrant people over here, too. The whole thing works in a movement coming through. On the right, just to the right of this slide, and only partly, well, part no, it's only on that slide at the moment. And I don't know if there's some other close-up picture, but that's Tom Thumb's father.

ALAN CHALK : That's not the man in the rairihat there?

BERNARD RILEY : No, no. It's the one beside him. The little figure on the far. No, there he is now, you see, with Tom Thumb, his mother, and his sister. Tom, well, the rest of Tom Thumb's family were all normal-sized people. And all of Tom Thumb's relatives and family were normal people. This is his father and Tom Thumb is in his arms. Tom Thumb was 22 inches tall at the time he was 5 years old, and 22 inches tall, which is small.

ALAN CHALK : We pick up the picture of Tom Thumb when he was with Barnum later in the panel, don't we?

BERNARD RILEY : Right. But at this time, he's on his way to New York.

ALAN CHALK : What is on the house here? I see B-R-I-S-T—E...

BERNARD RILEY : It's the Burroughs, no it's the Bridgeport Steamboat Company. This is where I suppose they sold tickets to New York.

ALAN CHALK : What is this man with the very gentle face and eyes?

BERNARD RILEY : This is part of that team. There's four of them. There's four, this is the fourth working man. The fourth laborer.

ALAN CHALK : Now we're looking at the lower righthand part of the panel. And this is the carriage. What's the story behind this?

**BERNARD RILEY** : Well, in the center, I guess. Well, we have actually, there is a story involving the little Irishman immigrant. They, the agents, that sold passage to this country, would often say that the streets were paved with gold. There were grand opportunities here. And so I depicted this Irishman on his first day of arrival in Bridgeport, picking up a coin on the street, thinking that this was all true, that everything was going to be grand from here on end. And he stands there with the coin in his hand, feeling elated, and feeling that this is great, that this country is going to offer him everything. And this is his son, the little boy, and he's waving to the grand lady and the carriage. And she's very cautiously waving back. And the colored man. This is a pretty good picture of that. The colored Victorian cabdriver is looking back toward her, sort of saying, "You don't know, you don't do that." the carriage man with his dog, there's a building in the background, a warehouse. This is the Burroughs, the Burroughs that is related to the Burroughs Library. In early times, they had a warehouse on the shore, on the waterfront. And of course the man and the wagon and the dog is part of the waterfront. See the barrel in the wagon. This was part of the activity that went on daily.

ALAN CHALK : Let's go back to your story. Why the little hidden wave? There's almost something there in terms of your depiction.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, I think there was a great distance between these people. With the classes. These poor, in class, there was this poor immigrant family that had nothing when they came here, and there was this very wealthy woman riding in the great handsome Victorian carriage. And yet there was a feeling between these people that was a little warmer, a little more understanding than there is today, I think, although money and values have changed a great deal, but still I think and there's probably less distances between classes, and hardly any noticeable class in this country now. Still, there's a distance, there's a greater distance, in some respects, in their attitudes toward one another.

ALAN CHALK : Out of curiosity, when did your family come over, at

BERNARD RILEY : Well, my mother's people came from Ireland in the, probably in the '80's. They came to Bridgeport, early on. It might have even been. Well, it must have been in the early '80s. They just came to Bridgeport for a short time.

ALAN CHALK : So that was the port of entrance?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, they had family, and they had people here. And they came and they stayed with them, for perhaps, well, I don't believe they stayed a year or so here in the city. And then they went on to where there was work in Pennsylvania. And my mother was born in White Haven. And then they came back to Bridgeport when my mother was about five years old. My father's people, though, I really don't know too much about their background. It's possible that they were in Kent as early as the Revolutionary.

ALAN CHALK : So they were very early settlers.

BERNARD RILEY : They were early settlers in Kent. And they owned a farm there and they worked in the iron mines.

ALAN CHALK : You seem very sensitive, though to the theme of immigration in the Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : Well of course, my mother's people came here at difficult times for immigrants. They were forced to leave Ireland because of the conditions there. And coming here, they came here penniless. Where my father's people must have somewhere managed to have money enough to buy farms. And they were better off.

ALAN CHALK the driver and another closeup of the runaway. What's the story behind this?

BERNARD RILEY : This is a little apprentice boy, and this was common at the time. A boy anywhere from 8 years old or so would be apprenticed out to a tradesman, and this tradesperson, carpenter or mason or whatever he was, he would have almost absolute control over that kid. He fed him and took care of him and taught him the trade. Quite often, a kid would find that life just got tough, and he didn't like the situation, and he'd run away from the master.

ALAN CHALK : This is interesting to me to think of all the various situations almost as a storyteller. All the various stories you could tell, why choose one and not the other?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, one of the things here, of course, I picked this up in an 1853 paper, a little ad offering a six-cent reward for this boy's return, and I thought this was rather interesting. A life returned at modern prices. But yet we have a little boy who's an Irish immigrant just arriving, timidly waving at the woman. We have this one, quite in contrast, and yet his family might have been here for years.

ALAN CHALK : We have the black carriage driver. Would he be a worker or a slave at this time?

BERNARD RILEY : No, he'd be a free man, very likely at this time, in the '40's. He most likely would have come from the South, and he might have been involved in slavery. Or he might have been a free man who was here in the New England area from early on. It would be hard to say. But there were slaves in Connecticut, of course. And there were some.

ALAN CHALK : How late?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, they were here until the Civil War. As I understand it Connecticut was one of the last states to eliminate slavery.

ALAN CHALK : I noticed this next shot: the first black church.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, this was the first, as a matter of fact, it was the first black church in the Northern United States. Actually, the congregation, there you have a number of black people. This was in 1824, before they put up this building. Strangely enough, they used to meet on Sundays at the corner of Broad and State streets, just where the Burroughs Library is, under a big, spreading elm tree, apparently. They would hold their meetings there on Sunday mornings. Finally,



they bought this property on Gregory Street and Broad, and they built this little church. The second church was built in the 1860's.

ALAN CHALK : Tell me, you mentioned that a woman came in and suggested this.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, she did. She brought a little item. Of course, it was a recent item, maybe a few years back. It told sometime of the story of the church. That building, the old church, stood there behind the new church for some number of years.

ALAN CHALK : Is this again your imagination, or did you have any historical description of this?

BERNARD RILEY : There wasn't much in the way of any information on the building itself except that it must have been a very simple building.

ALAN CHALK : Did you have to research the types of buildings at this time? Was there any material there?

BERNARD RILEY : There wasn't much in the way of material to research. There was a photograph on the other hand, of this building, but not in its original condition, of course. It was a photograph in the newspaper that showed this building a number of years later. Of course, there wasn't any bell tower or anything on it. I just sort of added that because I thought it probably was there.

ALAN CHALK : How much research did you have to do for clothing, buildings, apparatus of the characters, and the like?

BERNARD RILEY : I had to do considerable research in the costumes and the carriage and the things related to happenings — the immigrants, the period that the Irish, Scotch and the English people came here. Different groups came in different periods all throughout the history of Bridgeport. The picture of the Nirnrod is taken from a painting done of the Nimrod at the time. He was a Bridgeport artist.

ALAN CHALK : You did have a design or something to work from, so that's really authentic.

BERNARD RILEY : So that's completely authentic.

ALAN CHALK : And the carriage also? It seems to be very detailed.

BERNARD RILEY : The carriage is, too. The carriage is the type they used. Of course, they were building them here in Bridgeport. Bridgeport was quite a center for it.

ALAN CHALK : So this one was built here?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, this carriage was built in the city of Bridgeport. There were craftspeople here all along, very early on. It became a center and attracted craftspeople. So the craftsmen and workers and shipbuilders are seamen, all these people were attracted to Bridgeport. Then, of course, their families were here and new people coming from Europe would come here to stay with their families and find work. So the city always attracted a special group of skilled people.

ALAN CHALK : Going back over this panel, did you have any problems with the corners, one of them turning into this, and another one on this inside corner?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, in a matter of perspective, crossing over a corner creates a whole change in perspective. I recall the horses continue on this. The horses didn't give me any problem. It's only when you're trying to draw a straight line across. When you're trying to draw a straight line across the corner, you're in trouble. I discovered how to do it and managed to work it out in a couple of places on this side, in this corner. We have another corner on the right side, but there I really made an effort to do it.

ALAN CHALK : Now, I am trying to remember, did you go into the main panel and then go back, or was this panel done before you made your turn?

BERNARD RILEY : This panel was finished, yes.

ALAN CHALK : So you didn't go back to the tails or touching up anything?

BERNARD RILEY : No. I had this all worked out at home, and I was taking directly from that.

ALAN CHALK : But it isn't exactly like the model, is it? You did make changes.

BERNARD RILEY : There are some changes. Of course the black church wasn't in the original.

ALAN CHALK : So this is indicative of your sensitivity or your dialogue with the people.

BERNARD RILEY : That was one of the parts of this whole project, was that sometime in the future it might be interesting to people. A number of Bridgeport people made suggestions. "I suggested that," they might say. There's even a sequence on the Bridgeport Hospital that the Nursing Class of '8—, even now

ALAN CHALK : Interesting thing with the choreography of figures and events and activities, you get a sense of a kind of unified and integrated society, a community.

BERNARD RILEY : It was all of that. The words "melting pot" have been used so often in reference to Bridgeport. It was truly that. There were people from all of Europe that came here at various times. That's one of the things that I worried about in the beginning, and I still do a little. Certain ethnic groups might come to me and say, "Well, where are the Italians? There were hundreds of Italians that came to Bridgeport, and I don't see that you showed these ethnic groups or their influence." They didn't wear badges on the streets. When they came to Bridgeport, they became workers along with the rest of the people. Although they held on to their language, which was good, and they had their societies, which was good, and had their clubhouses and benefit societies and that sort of thing. Still, at daily work on the streets, you wouldn't know an Italian from a German or anyone else.

ALAN CHALK : So they were workers.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, they were workers. They might have been crafts specialists, in an early part of their coming here, they might have been a little bit different in costume and clothing. Eventually, within a few years, they were all difficult to tell, one from another. There were no badges, no flags waving. They kept their nationalities and they were proud of it. But they all became one. They were all working for the same purpose.

ALAN CHALK : This is again, just the lower half of the panel here. I guess that concludes this. Is there anything we haven't picked up? I noticed there's a ship in the lower left—hand corner.

BERNARD RILEY : That's part of the first panel, really. Now here's the reverse corner. I had to work that ship around that corner. I think it worked fairly well. I think when you look at that ship, if you look at the ship from the way the slide is taken, you see only the bow of the ship. But if you were looking directly at that corner, the corner of it would almost disappear, and you'd see the ship as one plane almost. It was quite a bit of doing to draw into that corner, to design so that it looks like it's a flat plane.

ALAN CHALK : You mean, in terms of the ship moving around here.

BERNARD RILEY : It's an optical illusion in a sense.

ALAN CHALK : Moving down below now, you drew this from the studio. Was there any great difference between the studio plan and this when you finally looked at it from the ground?

BERNARD RILEY : No, I had that in mind.

ALAN CHALK : The perspective changes, doesn't it?

BERNARD RILEY : Oh, yes, considerably. Of course, I had that in mind when I was doing it here.

ALAN CHALK : You have to distort reality up there to make it look...

BERNARD RILEY : To some degree. It isn't as exaggerated as it might be if it were Michelangelo working on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or working up a distance of 20 or 30 feet. If you had other problems with a wall or ceiling, you might have some more distortion. But that's what it amounts to, a question of overcoming distortion. At this distance there isn't a great deal of it because you're standing back, generally. If you walk up close underneath it, then it happens. But if you stand back 10 or 15 feet, it's not that obvious.

ALAN CHALK : Very good, we've just about covered the first two panels. Can you think of any final remarks? On these two in terms of technique or problems in addressing this part? These were pretty well planned. You weren't really free and running at this point.

BERNARD RILEY : No, these were all exactly planned.

ALAN CHALK : Was your technique different here from later?

BERNARD RILEY : Oh, yes, as far as applying it.

ALAN CHALK : Now we're turning to the main panel. This is the larger panel. What are the dimensions of this one?

BERNARD RILEY : This is 12 feet by 28 across.

ALAN CHALK : And how high is the ceiling here?

BERNARD RILEY : The ceiling from the floor up would be almost 20 feet.

ALAN CHALK : So that you were up pretty high, and working all this detail.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, the scaffold was secure. There weren't any great problems.

ALAN CHALK : But how did you move your scaffold? You were dealing with part of the mural that originally planned in your studio in the scale model. Did you start at the top and work down?

BERNARD RILEY : In this case, I did. Pretty much across the back wall I worked from the ceiling down. So if we start up in this corner now, we'll start with the burning of Bridgeport, which was in 1845. We're going to pick up some of the drawings from the original panel. Let's just continue across.

ALAN CHALK : Actually, what we're looking at here is the upper left—hand corner. You can see still, that's where that block and tackle come from. From the sequence before, across the corner. One of the problems will be the continuous overlapping of images and events and the lack of any kind of clear chronology. It's almost as if history is interrelated here.

BERNARD RILEY : It's inter—related and sort of dissolves, one part into another.

ALAN CHALK : We have in a sense foreground and background and yet a continuous interrelationship and overlapping of the particular historical events.

BERNARD RILEY : I suppose it's like memory work. At first you could remember all these things, or a person lived in Bridgeport all this time, and this is the way his memory would act probably or react.

ALAN CHALK : That's interesting.

BERNARD RILEY : It may not always be clear and the dates might not always follow some sequence, or you might speak about one thing later than another that actually took place before.

ALAN CHALK : What's the working principle? Are we going to deal with historical personages and events, but yet, what's the working principle in terms of relating one to the other? don't understand what you're asking. We're starting up here, taking a look at this one image alone, the burning of Bridgeport. How does one begin to look at this?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, it's a historical fact to begin with. When you look at it, the first thing is your own sense of vision. You see fire and you relate that to the city because they were so almost uncontrollable when they got started, and I look up and see, as the controlling image, the burning of Bridgeport. I think that we can recognize the fire as an historical event.

ALAN CHALK : One question: How historical is your image? What is authentic and what is created in your imagination?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, the action and the arrangement are all a matter of creation. The figures are all a matter of creation. The characters within the work there are all out of my own imagination. The costumes and the equipment aren't. That's a point, too. Looking at it, you have to look at it pretty carefully, I admit, to see the fire engine in there. It's the old type of pumper that they drew alongside through the streets by hand, a manual pull. And it was a manually pumped thing.

This was a picture of an old pumper of the times. And it was quite ornate, if you can see it. The main well where the water was brought in, it's quite ornate. There's an eagle on it. I often wondered if anyone would pick it up. There's an eagle, a figure of an eagle, on top of it. They were quite decorative. These volunteer firemen were quite concerned about their equipment and they kept it polished. They thought a great deal of it. They were very competitive between one company to another.

ALAN CHALK : What decided whether one company got the fire or the other? Getting there first?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, getting there first, and very often trying to get the best location.

ALAN CHALK : Now, if one got there ahead of the other, the other would hold back or would he assist?

BERNARD RILEY : No, they didn't immediately jump in and assist, but the first one there usually got some sort of reward for being there as early as possible.

ALAN CHALK : I see signs, like "The Oyster Station," no, "The Oyster Saloon," "George Wells," and is it the "Lockwood Cabinet Maker?" And there's something else there in furniture. Are these specific places?

BERNARD RILEY : These were places that were involved in the fire. This fire took place along Water Street, and burned down several blocks from State Street to Bank Street. This started on Bank Street, at George Well's Oyster Saloon at about midnight in December, 1845. One of the things we should say here is that a great many civilians took part, not civilians meaning that they weren't volunteer firemen, but people passing by or people in the neighborhood joining in, trying to combat this blaze. That's why there is this figure of this young man in the very upper corner. It was a bucket brigade of course. Especially this fire. This isn't drifting in this fire.

ALAN CHALK : So anyone would join in?

BERNARD RILEY : Anyone could join in and anyone was invited to join in.

ALAN CHALK : Was there a great deal of panic in such a fire?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, in this one there must have been, because they threw their hoses down into the harbor, and it was low tide. They got in the water, so they had to haul water from anywhere they could, and that's why they built this or, were again, using this bucket brigade, which wasn't very effective. Finally, it burned down some 70 buildings. It was a wipe-out kind of situation. Not like the Chicago fire, but comparable in Bridgeport history. It didn't burn the city, by any

means, but it burned the section down that was at that time the heart of the business part of the city. I see. That's one reason why I used it. After that fire, the center of the city really moved to Main and Fairfield Avenue. The businesses became to come along Main Street, and they gave up their Water Street residences. Of course, they finally rebuilt parts of it. Most of the buildings at the time, most of the people said it was just as well that they burned. They weren't worth having anyway. Nevertheless, it did do a lot of harm and damage, especially related to some of the people who might have been, who were living there. There was some number of people who were made homeless by it.

ALAN CHALK : The part of your mural that interests me a great deal is the cartooning quality of characters. It seems to me that these people very often take on a kind of personality. For example, let's focus in on the man coming down the ladder. What is it that you have created here? Why did you create a sort of focus on this sort of man? What did you have in mind?

BERNARD RILEY : He has a kind of humorous attitude towards it all. He's really an older man. He's saving all his worldly possessions. He has the clay pipe, the old type clay pipe is jammed in his mouth. And whatever clothes he has, he's wearing on his back. And he has over his shoulder an old pair of underwear. And his rocking chair. And he's coming down this ladder backwards, so he can comfortably carry the rocking chair.

ALAN CHALK : I noticed in the background there's another kind of rescue. A man is climbing on the roof. older man, and looking at this scene of a rescue. Again, it's a person who isn't a fireman who's taking part in rescuing this lady in a second-story, a two-story building. He's climbing along the roof in order to get to her. There were a lot of bad situations in this place.

Moving over to the left here, we have the boy you mentioned as a part of the bucket brigade. Behind him, the firemen are working the fire.

BERNARD RILEY : He's calling out of one of these horns, directing the other firemen in the operations.

ALAN CHALK : It's interesting to see the, almost the anguish on this man handing up the bucket.

BERNARD RILEY : You see the carrying, but really pushing the bucket along. If you've done this about 40 or 50 times, I'd imagine that bucket got pretty heavy.

ALAN CHALK : I see something on the bucket, what is it?

BERNARD RILEY : That's the date. The date is 1836, which relates to the age of the city. This bucket could have been around that long. Of course, this was 1845 that the fire took place. The "GW" were the initials of the company, the fire company.

ALAN CHALK : One of my favorites is the lady with the lantern. What's the story there?

BERNARD RILEY : She would be one of the people that was left without a home, and a rather pathetic person. She looks young, relatively young. If you notice their hands, they're rather rough hands. Someone who's a worker, manual work probably

ALAN CHALK : Is that the face?

BERNARD RILEY : That's the face now, in the right corner there. It's almost as if she's lost her possessions and whatever she had. She would have probably. All that she probably owned in the world went up in that fire. And of course, the real problem was there was no help to be had for people like that.

ALAN CHALK : Who's this worker with the cap on just to the left of it?

BERNARD RILEY : He could be a seaman from along the wharves that just took part in that, in my mind. There's a wild look in his eyes. Well, he's working the pump, you see. And he's using a great deal of effort. He's probably calling for help, to get more people involved in it. There was a great deal of excitement, I would imagine. It was a kind of keystone cop performance.

ALAN CHALK : We mentioned the keystone cops. I find that the firemen have marvelous faces, almost as if they're in a kind of play. You sense the kind of tragedy. This could be an early movie.

BERNARD RILEY : I've always felt that figures and faces relate to the period that they lived in. You could tell without costumes, without having anything to point out their period, you could tell by their physical appearance almost, in what period they might have lived.

ALAN CHALK : Let's move the eye down. Now, I think my camera has selected a vignette. I see factories; I see a dock, a cat. What is this vignette?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, this is looking east, across the old Stratford Avenue Bridge. I think what we're doing here is what a normal viewer would do. They go over it this way.

ALAN CHALK : I see, the eye will move around it and pick different scenes.

BERNARD RILEY : This isn't numbered, and since the wall isn't numbered, this is the way it might just normally follow it through, the flow of the work. It doesn't always flow in sequence. So the relationship of images will be different each time you view it. So there is no clear cause—and-effect pattern. It's more or less the choice of the individual.

ALAN CHALK : That's fascinating.

BERNARD RILEY : We're ignoring the foreground because the camera's moved in to pick out a detail, and we're looking at this detail of the city, almost like a kind of early picture of the city at the time. What you're doing here, and again I'd say this would be the natural way of doing this. We're doing exactly what we would do by nature, the camera's doing it for us now. This is looking at the Fast Side. The factory, which you can see, is the "Elias House Sewing Machine Factory." This would be about 1874.

You're looking through a window here from a print shop and these figures, they're sort of vague in there in this side, where these large figures detract. The cat itself is

ALAN CHALK : I see factories; I see a dock, a cat. What is this vignette?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, this is looking east, across the old Stratford Avenue Bridge. I think what we're doing here is what a normal viewer would do. They go over it this way.

ALAN CHALK : I see, the eye will move around it and pick different scenes.

BERNARD RILEY : This isn't numbered, and since the wall isn't numbered, this is the way it might just normally follow it through, the flow of the work. It doesn't always flow in sequence. So the relationship of images will be different each time you view it.

ALAN CHALK : That's right, it would be.

BERNARD RILEY : So there is no clear cause-and-effect pattern. It's more or less the choice of the individual.

ALAN CHALK : That's fascinating.

BERNARD RILEY : We're ignoring the foreground because the camera's moved in to pick out a detail, and we're looking at this detail of the city, almost like a kind of early picture of the city at the time. What you're doing here, and again I'd say this would be the natural way of doing this. We're doing exactly what we would do by nature, the camera's doing it for us

now. This is looking at the Fast Side. The factory, which you can see, is the "Elias House Sewing Machine Factory." This would be about 1874.

BERNARD RILEY : You're looking through a window here from a print shop and these figures, they're sort of vague in there in this side, where these large figures detract. The cat itself is laying underneath a press, a printing press.

ALAN CHALK : Why did you focus in on this printing event, or printing place?

BERNARD RILEY : Actually, because it was the first daily paper, it was The Republican Farmer.

ALAN CHALK : Now this picture; where is this in the perspective of the panel?

BERNARD RILEY : This is the first train going back. It came from Bridgeport to go to New Milford. Of course the band is playing, since this is its first day out. It was quite a celebration, of course. This, by the way, is the authentic engine that was first used on the railroad. It's a Sandusky engine that we built in Paterson, New Jersey. We did do a little bit of research on that and that finally came up with it in the Bishop Room. Dave Palmquist helped a great deal on researching this.

ALAN CHALK : Did you find a diagram or a picture of it or what?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, we found some pictures of it. Some of the pictures that were in the newspapers of the time were misleading. They were ads for this railroad. It did show a train, but that train turned out to be quite a different train and engine than what was actually used here.

ALAN CHALK : Now one of the controlling motifs of the entire mural will be transportation, and we've had ships. We're very much aware of Bridgeport as a port. You mentioned something, perhaps in the earlier tapes, about the attempt to bring

BERNARD RILEY : This is it, yes. This is the day that that had been completed.

ALAN CHALK : So they persuaded the railroad to come from what?

BERNARD RILEY : It was all a matter of money and backing and support.

ALAN CHALK : Where was it coming from?

BERNARD RILEY : The money?

ALAN CHALK : No, the railroad.

BERNARD RILEY : The railroad came down from New Milford. It was actually built from New Milford to Bridgeport. It could have had a terminus somewhere else. As a matter of fact, there were other towns who were looking and hoping for it. Because Bridgeport incorporated and did get the money to help to build it and invest in the railroad, it came here, and that was a very important thing.

ALAN CHALK : This was going north, so was there also a rail line to New York at this time?

BERNARD RILEY : Not at this point, there wasn't. They used the Nimrod then. I don't know whether there was another boat or not, but there was the Nimrod. So water transportation was used in the Sound. Water transportation was from here to New York. That's the way it went. Or the other way, from New York to Bridgeport, and from Bridgeport to New Milford, and from New Milford they went on up to Albany, I believe. They went by stagecoach and channels, you know, channel barges.

ALAN CHALK : We pick up in this image, we're beginning to see the overlap of the panels. I'm picking up the front end of the see another to the right. It looks like the wheel of a ship and some men.

BERNARD RILEY : That's the wheel of the Charles Cooper that we're looking at there.

ALAN CHALK : What is the Charles Cooper?

BERNARD RILEY : The Charles Cooper was built in Black Rock Harbor in about the 1850s. The ship, by the way, the hull of the ship, still exists. It was considered at the time one of the better wood ships ever built. Captain Hall was responsible for building it. It was his ship.

ALAN CHALK : Do you know where it happens to be?

BERNARD RILEY : The ship itself is in the Faulkner Islands, what's left of it. The hull of the ship is still in existence there. And there was a considerable amount of thought given to bringing it back to New York.

ALAN CHALK : So it's in a sense a wreck.

BERNARD RILEY : Well all that's left of it actually is the hull. They did consider bringing it back.

ALAN CHALK : Now, what is your justification, in terms of overlaying these images? Would this not appear confusing to the layman, to the person looking from below?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, yes. It is. I think it requires special effort on the part of the viewer to become involved in it. I hope that it's sort of an invitation to become involved. It does require an effort. To me, it's worth it because I don't think anyone can ever say, "Well, I've seen that mural." Each time a person comes in, he'll find something new. The way to look at it is that you just sort of begin in any part of it at all and find some little part that runs into something else. Before you realize it, you're involved in it. You discover exactly, in the case here, these horses, you begin to follow the horses, their backs and their forms, into the Victorian carriage. This all begins to come together.

ALAN CHALK : I noticed that we've moved from the Victorian carriage and we've picked up the engine and we've moved into the ship. This is what happens. So you get a juxtaposition. Is this relationship in your mind as you're working, the thematic relationship?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, there is. You have to think of it that way. You think of one form leading you into another one, one sequence leading you into another.

ALAN CHALK : So certain motifs then will in a sense begin to develop almost subconsciously, and then consciously.

BERNARD RILEY : Right.

ALAN CHALK : What about the audience below, the critics? Have any of the of the people ever criticized the complexity of the drawing?

BERNARD RILEY : There has been some, but not a great deal of criticism. One of the problems is a valid one in the sense that some people just can't see it. It's a question of eyesight. I've told my eye doctor that if he had any problems with visual tests to send them up to me. We could set up some sort of an examination prop here. I think, again, that becomes a part of the dimension of the creativity of the person. Anyone who's going to sit there and study it, let's say studying it in the research room, is certainly not going to see it the same way. You could spend a hf etime there and never get the entirety of it. I don't think any two people would ever see it the same way.

ALAN CHALK : Let me move a slide on. Let's see. I picked up another vignette of the harbor. This is Black Rock Harbor? What is the ship and the building?



BERNARD RILEY : We're looking under the stern of the Charles Cooper now. This figure on the left that you can see all but his head. You see only his back. He's one of the dock workers, one of the ship builders, probably a ship builder working on the ship. You're looking past him across the harbor a short distance to the shore and the house up on the hill is Captain Hall's house. He's the man who owned the shipyard, and who built the Charles Cooper. And the house is still in existence. That's him himself standing in front of the house. The house is still in existence. Now I'm picking up the over... Oh, the house has been moved. It's been moved from its original place.

ALAN CHALK : Now we're picking up a few of the close-ups of the printing vignette and this is a printer's devil, quite a character.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, they were. This was typical of the printers of the day. They made these little hats. It was kind of an oily, dirty job, printing was. They wore these hats, made out of squares for a hat. It was characteristic of the printing trade.

ALAN CHALK : Now you're intending a comic image here.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, well what's happening here, this is part of a thing that's going on among these printers; this older man that's in the scene that you see here is raising hell with the printers because they misspelled his name or some such other thing. He's in a real tizzy. And this fellow who is one of the printers is laughing to himself about the big to-do this old man in putting up. The editor, who isn't in this slide but standing to the left over here, is reading the newspaper, paying no attention to what's going on at all. But the paper does come right across that corner, so that this whole scene works into that back wall. These were hand operated presses, by the way. This particular case, this is a hand—operated press. Steam presses were coming in at the time.

ALAN CHALK : We've picked up now. We've moved up the wall a little bit and we've picked up the little girl who is with the woman in the fire. We're starting to pick up a cluster of images.

BERNARD RILEY : Actually we're moving now in different dimensions of time. Do you notice that the little girl is holding a doll? Yes. See these are the little things that you pick up. And there's almost like another hand that goes to the right. That's General Noble that you see, if you sort of look through her and you find this other figure of General Noble who is standing along the ~side of Barnum who is not in this scene.

ALAN CHALK : It's interesting how these peoples' lives seem to overlap and inter-relate.

BERNARD RILEY : They do, because they were all part of the history of the city.

ALAN CHALK : We have here another one of the motifs, the architecture of Bridgeport, and this is the Octagon House?

BERNARD RILEY : This is the Octagon House.

ALAN CHALK : What was the date on this one?

BERNARD RILEY : This was 1853.

ALAN CHALK : And this still exists as well?

BERNARD RILEY : This is still standing. Charles Brilvitch owns this house at this point. And he's rebuilding it.

ALAN CHALK : Who's the gentleman in front of it looking upward?

BERNARD RILEY : This is part of the Cooper, part of the Charles Cooper, and he's one of the ship builders. Of course, over here on the left, you see the wheel of the Charles Cooper. Barnum lived in the house. My mind was picturing Mrs. Barnum and one of the daughters leaving the house to go into town, which would be across the river.

ALAN CHALK : Who is this small figure over to the right?

BERNARD RILEY : A surveyor. They were still surveying the East Side. These two men on the left, just above the wheel there. They're surveyors, and he's part of the team of surveyors. They were subdividing the land on the East Side of Bridgeport. That's the reason for the Octagon House, actually,

ALAN CHALK : Now who is this man in the foreground? We cannot see his head, but we see his hand stretched out to the right and left of the house.

BERNARD RILEY : That's the figure of Barnum. That's Barnum. Yes, we sort of chopped off his head. This is Ehas Howe and his wife and son. That is a drawing of the first sewing machine. And I'm just seeing the bottom of Barnum's head. Now you see that, yes. You see Barnum again.

ALAN CHALK : So we're at the top of the panel and this is Barnum and Tom Thumb.

BERNARD RILEY : They had just returned to Bridgeport. P.T. Barnum and Tom Thumb returned from Europe in about 1847.

ALAN CHALK : Now we're starting to pick up P.T. Barnum, and he apparently becomes one of the motifs himself. I see this is the lady and the lion. What's the story here?

BERNARD RILEY : This was a fire that burned down the winter quarters, the Barnum winter quarters. There were several fires. This was one of them that took place in 1874.

ALAN CHALK : They didn't winter in Florida? They wintered up here?

BERNARD RILEY : They wintered here, yes.

ALAN CHALK : Did a lion get loose?

BERNARD RILEY : Several animals got loose. Among them was this lion. The next morning, a little old lady came out (this is just a story that's told and retold in the history of Bridgeport), she came out on here porch down in the South End of Bridgeport, and she found what she thought was a large dog laying on the porch. So she grabbed a broom and chased be a lion. The poor lion was more confused than she was! All he wanted to do was find a peaceful place to get away from it all.

ALAN CHALK : Now what is this Wheeler and Wilson Sewing Machines I see in the drawing?

BERNARD RILEY : That's part of the Lincoln sequence. Lincoln came to Bridgeport in 1860, and there is a little bit of confusion here, because not being a historical researcher, I picked up this information that was actually in one of the few books written on the history of Bridgeport, for the Centennial, that was written in 1936. The sign says "Wakes, Honest Abe." Re—elect The Wide-Awakes. The Wide—Awakes were a group of Lincoln supporters. According to Danenberg in this history of Bridgeport book of 1936, Lincoln had come here twice. He came in 1860, which is registered and there's a plaque on MacLevy Hall that states he was here in 1860. But Danenberg said he was here in 1864 also. Now in 1864 he was already President and he wore a beard. But in 1860, of course, he didn't have a beard. In order to make him look like Lincoln, I chose 1864, and put him in there with his beard and said, "Re—elect Honest Abe," in that banner. Now I find that he was only here once, in 1860.

ALAN CHALK : You've probably just rewritten history which will probably come to stand now.

BERNARD RILEY : I think that confusion carried on because there was a newspaper article in 1931, telling the story. That also made the statement that he was here in 1864. He gave quite a big story about it.

ALAN CHALK : Now we're looking at a very, very detailed map of Bridgeport. What's the date on this? ~

BERNARD RILEY : This is 1875, and every house in the center part of Bridgeport is in there. Every house and every factory and every building. The is in there. The old Atlantic Hotel is in there. The old railroad station that stood at ground level. That's the old Stratford Avenue Bridge. And the railroad bridge.

ALAN CHALK : This is accurate, is it?

BERNARD RILEY : This is accurate. This is taken from a map that's in the Bishop Room. The map in the Bishop Room covers a good deal more of the area, but this is the center. It runs from Saint Augustine's Church up on Washington Avenue in the upper left—hand corner to Washington Park in the upper right-hand corner, just that section of Bridgeport.

ALAN CHALK : Why did you put this in?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, one of the reasons I didn't go any further with it was the space involved.

ALAN CHALK : No, but why did you put this in, in all this infinite detail?

BERNARD RILEY : I was so intrigued with the map that I felt that it should be, I just had to do it. It was as simple as that. It was a great deal of work and it took a great deal of time, and a fellow, a friend of mine came in one day, Ray Fletcher, and he asked me, he said, "Well, now why in the world are Nobody will ever know the difference." I said, "Well, Ray, you were born in the city of Bridgeport, weren't you?" And he said, "Yes, I was." And I said, "Where were you born? Where in the city?" And he said, "I was born in the house across from Prospect School." And I said, "Ray, there's the house!" And it was there. It was in there, right across from Prospect School.

ALAN CHALK : Is your home here, your first home?

BERNARD RILEY : No, my house isn't in there. It doesn't go as far as Colorado Avenue. I see. I don't believe that Colorado Avenue, I know Colorado Avenue isn't even in the original map in 1875. So this is exactly how Bridgeport looked in 1875. The old roundhouse was there, the old railroad roundhouse.

ALAN CHALK : Yes, I see it down in the left-hand corner there.

BERNARD RILEY : The railroads, both the Housatonic and the, by this time the railroad from Hartford. At that time it ran along the ground level all the way. That was before the tracks were elevated.

ALAN CHALK : You begin to see the relationship that you'd been discussing as the controlling motifs of the panel: transportation, factories, the people.

BERNARD RILEY : And the harbor was in there, with the type of shipping, all the shipping, the sailboats and steamboats were in the harbor. It was really a busy harbor. It was kind of a turning point from the past to the present. One of the interesting things here is the number of fac—out of the stacks. In the upper left side of this map is the old Wheeler Mansion. One of the points about the map was this, and one of the reasons I got involved in doing it, I began to realize it was worthwhile. On the original map, it's quite small, and the houses are difficult to make out. You can't really tell what they were. For instance, I had a real problem trying to figure out what was on the top of Prospect School. It turned out to be a bell tower. It took me quite a bit of time to find a picture that would show me what that was that was sitting on top of that building. In the map you couldn't really make it out, you couldn't make out what in the world it was. Another problem was a bell tower that stood on the first firehouse in Bridgeport on John Street. It was a bell tower again, but I couldn't figure out from the map what in the world it was. I mentioned Wheeler Mansion. The Wheeler Mansion was there, but you couldn't really understand what the building looked like. So I took photographs upon photographs of these buildings. The map is large enough to give me the chance to really make these buildings so that you could really understand what they are.

ALAN CHALK : How did this work into the choreography of the mural? Is this almost central to the large panel?

BERNARD RILEY : It's rather central. It probably, it's a density, it works as a density, not a movement, but a center to hold that wall together. Things sort of work around this density. Even if you aren't able to make out what it is, the weight

ALAN CHALK : Now who are these two figures just to the right?

BERNARD RILEY : These two men are the Palliser Brothers that came from England as carpenters, and they went to work for Barnum. They built several houses in Bridgeport, both for Barnum and on their own. They began the first mail-order architectural advisory sort of book. The first book they printed was 25 cents. But then they got really deeply involved in it. They became an architectural source of information. They not only sold their books and catalogues and advice on how to build, but also who to hire, and how to go about hiring carpenters, and what to demand of them. All the designs for the house were in the book, the whole layout for a house was in that catalogue.

ALAN CHALK : Were they of their own creation?

BERNARD RILEY : They were their own. They were of their own creation. So in other words, they had a very strong influence on the architecture throughout the country. Yes, across the country. They built several homes, some of the larger houses in Bridgeport in the South End, and around Bridgeport University were built by these two brothers.

ALAN CHALK : What is the building in the background?

BERNARD RILEY : The building in the background is part of a number of buildings which stood along the side of the Atlantic Hotel. This is lower Fairfield Avenue, at the corner of Water Street. The building on the far right there is part of the Atlantic Hotel.

ALAN CHALK : Again I noticed it was recreated in great detail. Did you research it?

BERNARD RILEY : This building especially, yes, because I remember myself, there were several pictures of it.

ALAN CHALK : Is it any longer in existence?

BERNARD RILEY : No. It's been torn down.

ALAN CHALK : So in these buildings, you had to then go back for drawings and photographs and study with a magnifying glass.

BERNARD RILEY : Right. Speaking of a magnifying glass, I think I came up with the facts, I'm not too sure, I sort of had to add a little bit, but those, I don't know quite what they call them. They're the above the windows, those supports for the lions' heads, I believe. From what I could make out from the photograph, you couldn't really tell from the photograph, or from the photographs I've looked at. I put the lions' heads in there, feeling that it was appropriate. The building is gone. I went as far as calling the people who had torn it down. But the man who was really involved in it, he died. He was dead and gone.

ALAN CHALK : Now I see in this image another close-up, we're in a Burroughs Plaza, looking at horses, dragging a sleigh. What have we got here?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, this is the corner. This is the corner of Fairfield Avenue. Again, let me just declare it, the Burroughs Library wasn't on the corner of Fairfield Avenue, but this building is the D.M. Read's building on the corner of Fairfield Avenue and Main Street.

And this is the blizzard, the famous Blizzard of 1888. There's a story involved here. There are so many stories in this whole thing. This story deals with a lady that worked in D.M. Read's and she lived on Gregory Street, somewhere close to Lafayette Street on Gregory Street. She walked, on the morning of the blizzard, which was a real bad morning already, she walked to work from Gregory Street to the corner of Main and Fairfield at D.M. Read's. They worked until around noontime. By that time, everything started to close down. Nothing was moving. So Mr. Read himself hired a sleigh and took all the people home, including this lady who worked there in D.M. Read's until she was in her eighties.

ALAN CHALK : Where did you hear the anecdote?

BERNARD RILEY : It's among stories that are in the Bishop Room.

ALAN CHALK : You mean you just had to sit there and collect them?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, they were newspaper clippings about Read's and about the history of Read's.

ALAN CHALK : Now there's something also behind that. That's the dirigible. You can see it there in the center of the slide.

BERNARD RILEY : It's the first, it was a hand-driven dirigible. The man that operated it operated it like a bicycle, with like a peddling motion.

ALAN CHALK : And that was in Bridgeport, too.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, that was Bridgeport.

ALAN CHALK : How did he get it lighter than air? What did he use?

BERNARD RILEY : He must have used some type of gas rather than . . . And I see a kind of a gas container from which there is kind of a gondola suspended. I see a little propeller in the front. That's the fellow who moved it from the foot pedal.

ALAN CHALK : Do you know the approximate time of this?

BERNARD RILEY : I'll have to check that out.

ALAN CHALK : It sounds like he's way ahead of his time.

BERNARD RILEY : Oh, he was, just as Whitehead was.

ALAN CHALK : And if I'm not mistaken now, I'll have to jump ahead, and I won't push you for details now, but also, a plane which pre-dated the Wright Brothers was developed in Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, that was Gustave Whitehead.

ALAN CHALK : So this was this aeronautic industry or tradition in Bridgeport then.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes.

### Tape 3

ALAN CHALK : Picking up again with the main panel and we're looking at one of the first dirigibles, an example of the technology developed in Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : Of course, Bridgeport was a town of industry. Of course there were hundreds of them, smaller and less spectacular inventions. This was one of the first labor uprisings (Laughter) in the state, as a matter of fact. It was the trolley strike of 1903. They raised quite a bit of fuss. It started in Waterbury and came down here. It was a question of the Connecticut — was it Connecticut even then that they called it — Light and Power Company taking over the trolleys.

ALAN CHALK : Again, I see that we not only have considerable development of industry and technology, but also, labor to go along with it and also labor unrest.

BERNARD RILEY : I think those little figures there are kind of interesting, because there is one man that has a stone in his hand, about to throw it. And, a young man startled by the whole thing.

ALAN CHALK : Dropping to the lower portion of the panel, we're picking up what looks to be Civil War activities. But, this, I think you've already suggested, is not the Civil War, which would be about 1865, but rather in relationship to the Civil War monument that was developed.

BERNARD RILEY : The monument was built some ten years later. It was finally completed.

ALAN CHALK : What is the story in the scene here?

BERNARD RILEY : These are part of the Civil War veterans that took part in the ceremony and dedication of the monument. This was planned for some ten years actually, and the money being raised for it, and all the effort that went into it, and all the planning for this day of dedication. And they were to march from the center of Bridgeport down to Seaside Park down to the monument; and it poured rain all day long and really washed the ceremony out. What I was trying to think of before was 'the Grand Army of the Republic, that banner there in the back ground. These were veterans and members of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Elias Howe Chapter or Company.

ALAN CHALK : Now, there was also a story, too, about the monument. I don't remember. You discovered something in working with the pictures of the monument.

BERNARD RILEY : I had photographs of the monument to work with; but, photographs are misleading sometimes, terribly misleading. In the photographs I had it showed a marble figure in the center of the interior, the center part of the monument. When I went down to the park, there was no such thing as a figure. It was a figure of victory. It was a beautifully done thing. It was torn out there.

ALAN CHALK : And they don't know what happened to it?

BERNARD RILEY : That's a moot question. I guess there's some knowledge. I think it was pulled out of there and crashed down. They picked up the pieces and stored them away. But, nobody has much to say about it.

ALAN CHALK : We're looking at a picture here, a close-up, the ladies under the umbrellas. It looks like not only is it raining, but, they're crying.

BERNARD RILEY : They should after all the effort that went into it, and it's pouring rain, and the rain is dropping off the umbrella and the tears are going along with the raindrops.

ALAN CHALK : What does the banner say? Ladies --

BERNARD RILEY : Ladies 'Soldiers' Aid Society. Let me see now. Welcomes you to the Soldier and Sailors monument, August 17, '76.

ALAN CHALK : August 17, 1876. Where did you get the idea for this banner? Did you have any photographs, any news items?

BERNARD RILEY : No. This banner was my own invention. I just wanted something that would move across there. Again, devices.

ALAN CHALK : And, again, the ladies. So, in other words, you keep researching and coming up with these little news items, and you depict it in terms of your drawing.

BERNARD RILEY : My own drawing.

ALAN CHALK : Almost like a kind of historical cartoon in this respect.

BERNARD RILEY : Right. And, of course, the drawing works itself in there. In the background there is a man holding his horses. There's a little story involved. Again, we can't see it in this slide. But, there's a young lady in the carriage making

eyes at one of the soldiers that are marching alongside the carriage. There are little things like that. Whether or not they'll ever be' picked up, is a good question!

ALAN CHALK : I see something further in the background. It looks like a park bench.

BERNARD RILEY : There's a park bench; there's a boy sitting on it holding a newspaper over his head.

ALAN CHALK : And people behind that with their umbrellas.

BERNARD RILEY : And people behind with umbrellas. They all came down, of course, to take part in the dedication. It was all but ruined. Here's the scene here. Here's the young lady sitting in the carriage with her father. The father is also aware that she is flirting with one of the soldiers. I wonder often if these things will ever be picked up.

ALAN CHALK : Now, this is a close-up of the Atlantic Hotel.

BERNARD RILEY : At the corner of Fairfield Avenue and Water Street, and that's the old Atlantic Hotel. This ~s part of the --

ALAN CHALK : A lot of details of the corner. Buena Vista, the van behind, horse-drawn.

BERNARD RILEY : This is the artist that became so well known in later years. He did a great many buildings around Bridgeport and did some beautiful paintings of the Nimrod.

ALAN CHALK : And that's the picture of him, supposedly?

BERNARD RILEY : He was a grocer in the way of grocery store, and this was a peep show. The peep show had Vista. For a penny you could

ALAN CHALK : Is that his name up there?

BERNARD RILEY : His name is at the top; but, you can't read it.

ALAN CHALK : F. Hughes.

BERNARD RILEY : Hughes, that's his name. Your eyesight is better than mine.

ALAN CHALK : H—u—g—e—s. Famous peep show. But, this is again another example of the complex overlays here. We have the Huges Peep Show; we have the Atlantic Hotel; we have People going along in the thoroughfare. We have a policeman. Now we have the steam engine.

BERNARD RILEY : And there's the watching it. This is a little

ALAN CHALK : And then the man to the right working a machine.

BERNARD RILEY : He's working the gate, because there was a drop gate across Fairfield Avenue.

ALAN CHALK : What is in your mind when you're working a complex pattern like this? I see also a man with his back to us who seems to be directing --

BERNARD RILEY : That's a street sweeper, and he's whistling a tune to the newly—married couple getting out of the horsecar.

ALAN CHALK : What determines the complexity of any one image or one part of the along with the policeman earning his keep. He ran a wagon that he converted into a to do with the Battle of Buena look into this thing that --

BERNARD RILEY : As you go along you sort of dream it up. You're putting these pieces together and you sort of elaborate. It's just like writing, I suppose. Like writing a story.

ALAN CHALK : I mean, are you concentrating on one pattern within it and you're not looking at the other or are you looking at the total all the time?

BERNARD RILEY : No. You're always concerned with the overall working of the thing.

ALAN CHALK : For example, are you looking at the people on the street and ignoring the other lines? Are you looking at the street sweeper?

BERNARD RILEY : No. You see, you're putting one on top of the other; but, in the same sense, you're watching those lines so that they will work with the others and work into them. Here you have actually three drawings on top of one another, and it does get a little bit complicated, very complicated as a matter of fact. But, I think it works in an overall way. You have to understand about all of these, the whole thing, that it's a whole new road. You're exploring here and you've experimenting. You can't come off one hundred per cent with the thing. It may have some failings. It probably does in a number of ways. But, you're trying. This is a whole matter of excitement to me. You're trying to push it

ALAN CHALK : But, when you've planned a number of overlays, we moved away from the model, so that you were actually working from a day to day development the mural or evolution of the mural. So, you're working it in preliminary sketches, which you have below, which you then transfer to tracing paper and put up above. So, you would have then one layer -- as you said, three pictures overlaying one another; there would be one picture and then there would be one overlaid that and then another one over that. Was there ever a time when you rejected an overlay?

BERNARD RILEY : Not after working on it.

ALAN CHALK : So, in other words, you would work it below in terms of your sketch.

BERNARD RILEY : I had to have some idea.

ALAN CHALK : And then bring it up. So, with the tracing paper effect --you put your sketch on the tracing paper, full size, and then you'd be able to see through the tracing paper to some extent --

BERNARD RILEY : You'd see what was happening underneath; your location you'd know where you were. You'd know how well you might be able to see this.

ALAN CHALK : Now, let's say, like that man on the window or that pigeon, were all of these pictures in details conceived of below and brought up?

Did you ever act spontaneously to add the monto the actual drawing?

BERNARD RILEY : Only in detail. Like the pigeons weren't there in the original planning.

ALAN CHALK : You just put them in.

BERNARD RILEY : They came to be there.

ALAN CHALK : Why?

BERNARD RILEY : It just seemed very natural. Pigeons were everywhere in the area. And the man in the window, I don't think was in the from the beginning. But, this was an express office on the second floor of the railroad station there.



ALAN CHALK : So, your work is being governed in terms of, let's say, the aesthetic effect or appearance of the line, but also, the themes, the stories. anecdotes.

BERNARD RILEY : Also, the themes. A lot of this is related to that one corner. It could all have taken place in the same moments, you know. The two men standing there, the old Irish man who is ---

ALAN CHALK : So, this is like the Atlantic Hotel corner. So, now suddenly time is fused.

BERNARD RILEY : Across the street from it stood the railroad station. And there's a story about that. The story is that of all people, Charles Dickens came to Bridgeport on this very railroad. Apparently he came down probably from Boston or Hartford; he had been lecturing, and he was going to stop in Bridgeport overnight. And he got off the train at the station, and Bridgeport (station) was at that time on street level, and he gathered his bags together and went out to the street and hailed this cabbie. Of course, it was a horse— drawn cab.~ He asked to be taken to the Atlantic Hotel. The cabbie takes his bags very carefully and puts them all aboard the carriage and drives off and drives around town for about three quarters of an hour, and drives Dickens back to the entrance of the hotel. The Atlantic Hotel stood right across the street from the railroad station.

ALAN CHALK : Did he recognize it?

BERNARD RILEY : Apparently, he didn't know it at first, because instead of coming in from the railroad side, he had let him off on the Fairfield Avenue side. And he might not have recognized it, although he must have recognized that the railroad that was right in front of his eyes there.

ALAN CHALK : I suspect he was the ancestor of some of the New York cabbies here.

BERNARD RILEY : Dickens never forgot that.

ALAN CHALK : That's not depicted in the mural, is it?

BERNARD RILEY : No.

ALAN CHALK : All right, we have here the graduation picture of nurses, is it? The class of what is it?

BERNARD RILEY : 1889.

ALAN CHALK : Of '89. These look like particular people.

BERNARD RILEY : They are. This is actually taken from a photograph. They were able to do that. Of course, photography goes much further back than that. But, it becomes a useful tool for this kind of thing.

ALAN CHALK : Why this class?

BERNARD RILEY : This actually was the third class. Why the class was (this one) was because I had the photograph. It was only six girls. It just seemed to be suitable. I found it in a pamphlet that was printed in I think, 1953, and some of these girls were still living then. You can see, they had corsages on. This was graduation day. And the thing I got a kickout of was Barnum was President of Bridgeport Hospital at the time. He gave this class a present of two books, and one of the books was Daily Strength for Daily Needs, and the other book was the story of the life of P. : T. Barnum.

ALAN CHALK : And that's what is in her lap, then.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes.

ALAN CHALK : What is this?

BERNARD RILEY : This is C. P. Bullard. You have to look a little bit closely here, again, because of the overlays. This is the first lathe that Bullard built. Bullard came to Bridgeport in 1888 and established a factory. At first he was really remodelling and rebuilding machinery; but, then he worked out this vertical lathe, which became a real workhorse, and finally it was used all over the world in various factories. At that time the company was called the Bridgeport Machine Tool Works. It was on Broad Street in Bridgeport.

The other man to me represents the technical worker of Bridgeport. This is what Bridgeport depends on mainly, people who could make tools, (people) who designed and made tools and could work on a machine like this and set it up. These were really the backbone of Bridgeport workers, and why industry came to Bridgeport, because of these people who were able to do these (jobs), skilled workers.

ALAN CHALK : This is a photograph of him, is it?

BERNARD RILEY : This is my brother, and I was going to put that into it. He worked for Bullard for close to forty years; he's just retired. I put him in there as an example (of a worker). He spent his life and time (there).

ALAN CHALK : Is the picture of Bullard accurate?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, the picture of Bullard is a portrait picture.

ALAN CHALK : And the lathe?

BERNARD RILEY : And the lathe is accurate, although it's difficult to see.

ALAN CHALK : Yes. We're looking at the wheels of the engine.

BERNARD RILEY : The wheels of the engine run through there. But, the smaller gear wheel and this box—like arrangement that looks like rollers is part of the lathe. And the lathe goes up right out of the slide view. And behind it is another Bullard machine, a larger lathe—type machine, that Bullard manufactured. And, again, it's interesting, because the meaning of the mural begins to emerge in terms of the relationship of the images in overlay, the juxtaposition of putting them side by side and then over one another.

Now, the railroad took such a part that the steam engine dominates this whole area, and the power of steam.

ALAN CHALK : There's an incredible line here in terms of --

BERNARD RILEY : You're aware of those small lines behind that represent the

ALAN CHALK : This is brilliant, because it seems to me in the modern age, we are very much concerned with the machine depersonalizing man. It almost seems like the machine and the line are one.

**BERNARD RILEY** : Yes. It becomes a part of the images of the men there.

ALAN CHALK : It is his creation, his building; so, the mural is almost a complex of lines as a result of the architecture, the buildings, the transportation, as a result of the people.

BERNARD RILEY : And, again, when you use the word "line," I think that a Line drawing is more related to the city of Bridgeport than color areas might be, color forms or color areas. I think that a pure drawing relates closer to a draftsman's understanding than a painting might.

ALAN CHALK : I find it very difficult to imagine this color. I don't think we'd have the depth.

BERNARD RILEY : You might have even greater depth with color forms and washes and that sort of thing, but --- it took me a while to adjust to it myself --- I came to the conclusion that, again, as I say, that a line drawing related more accurately to the city's character.

ALAN CHALK : I'm afraid it would opaque more and emphasize certain —

BERNARD RILEY : It would. Here is a trolley.

ALAN CHALK : low, we have a couple of pictures here which are anticipating the next moves. This is a sketch below the mural.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, this is kind of interesting in that respect.

ALAN CHALK : I see the hospital up in the right hand corner. I see the first airplane.

BERNARD RILEY : Gustav Whitehead's airplane above there. These are all drawn now into the sort of cartoon for the mural.

ALAN CHALK : And so, we're sort of aware of your technique here.

BERNARD RILEY : And the tracing paper below is planning for the next step.

ALAN CHALK : What's the scale of this in relationship to the mural?

BERNARD RILEY : This is two inches to one foot.

ALAN CHALK : How do you work from the drawing up to the mural?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, these are two inches squares; and the mural is laid out in twelve-inch squares. What I do is I divide the mural, the twelve—inch squares into four parts, and then divide the two—inch square into four parts.

ALAN CHALK : All right. Now, we have the parade turning the corner and the vehicle leading them. What will you do after this tissue?

BERNARD RILEY : As a matter of fact, I worked from this to the tracing paper

ALAN CHALK : To the larger tissue.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. In other words, I'm scaling it up on the tissue paper rather than on the wall. If you do that on the wall the linen absorbs all these extra marks, and it's hard to clean up.

ALAN CHALK : So, in other words, you will draw on the tissue and place it on the master drawing. And once you're satisfied with it, will you draw it into the drawing?

BERNARD RILEY : I chalk the back of the tracing paper, and--

ALAN CHALK : So, you apply it actually to this drawing? In other words, this drawing is not on the tissue.

BERNARD RILEY : I'll transfer this to the drawing.

ALAN CHALK : The same way you work on the mural.

BERNARD RILEY : The same way mainly, because I want to have a record of it, and that we may use this by reducing it in size. This might be the key to describing (the drawing). We might reduce this and then have an overlay with numbers and that sort of thing.

ALAN CHALK : You know, if anyone were ever to study the entire evolution of it, they'd have to put all the sequence of tissues on order. But, I don't imagine they exist any more, do they?

BERNARD RILEY : Not entirely. There are some around.

ALAN CHALK : Whatever happens to them?

BERNARD RILEY : We've given some of them away, and we've sold a couple, and we have some out in the studio. I don't think we've had very good control over them, though.

ALAN CHALK : There must be hundreds of them, though.

BERNARD RILEY : There would be, yes.

ALAN CHALK : In other words, then, you will plan this image and draw it on a tissue. Then you will apply it to the tissue, and then you will actually expand it to the mural.

BERNARD RILEY : Right.

ALAN CHALK : So, you're working both at the same time.

BERNARD RILEY : Actually, if you've kept control of them, you should have a two-inch scale drawing on tracing paper and the twelve-inch on --

ALAN CHALK : Well, we have the model in terms of the drawing itself. But, we don't have the sequence in terms of what comes first. That's fascinating. Maybe we should take one portion of the panel and say "O.K., what are the sequences to these images as they follow?" Then, take any one passage that seems to be particularly intense and we can see in terms of the layers of lines how it works. That's fascinating! (Brief pause)

ALAN CHALK : O.K. We've moved into the upper right hand corner of the main panel. What's up here?

BERNARD RILEY : The upper left first we're going to talk about?

ALAN CHALK : No. This is the right hand of the main panel.

BERNARD RILEY : Right. On this side the Burroughs Public Library that stood on Main and John Street. Again, going back, we have to try to figure out the time here. We had the anniversary; it's 1882.

ALAN CHALK : 1881. I just saw it on a tee shirt.

BERNARD RILEY : O.K. 1881. But, anyway --

ALAN CHALK : And they established it on the Burroughs family?

BERNARD RILEY : It was their building, and they finally gave over portions of that building to the library. The second and third floors, I guess, were given over to the library. The sign is on the top that you can read, a big sign that said, The Burroughs Public Library. It was all begun through the pleading of a young boy, believe it or not. He suggested that the city of Bridgeport should have a public library, and out of that finally came the library that we have today.

ALAN CHALK : So, they gave part of the building.

BERNARD RILEY : They turned over part of the building to the use of a public library.

ALAN CHALK : Did they also endow it?

BERNARD RILEY : They endowed it. Barnum helped. It was a publicly supported library at that time. Public funds helped put it together, which is something that we may have to go back to some day.

ALAN CHALK : I notice in terms of, again, the overlapping of images creating this kind of relationship in history — that we have the airplane, which I believe is 1901 —

BERNARD RILEY : 1905, before the Wright Brothers.

ALAN CHALK : In other words, you've got twenty years right in this little corner.

BERNARD RILEY : The other things that are happening there — the trolley strike, which was one of the first Labor uprisings in the city. It was quite a serious affair. The Connecticut Company took over the trolley and caused quite a great deal of upset. They went out on strike. It was finally settled, but after quite a bit of hassle. And that's what's pictured here — the man walking with the sign. And the policeman — that's another point — a policeman with a bicycle was one of the first of what they called a mounted policeman in Bridgeport, on a bicycle.

ALAN CHALK : What does the sign kit say?

BERNARD RILEY : It says, "Walk With Us." They raised a little bit of a fuss, all right. They finally got, I guess, what they sought. But, Gustav Whitehead's plane is in there. A strange—looking plane, but said to be the first airplane flown. It was 1901.

ALAN CHALK : Where did you get the details for this?

BERNARD RILEY : Actually from a blueprint of the machine itself. It really doesn't look like it could fly, but there are —

ALAN CHALK : It looks like a flying boat.

BERNARD RILEY : In the beginning those rib—like things that look like bat wings were made of bamboo. Each one of those ribs was a bamboo rib. Finally, they were aluminum tubing, which was the first use of aluminum in a thing like that.

ALAN CHALK : Now, are these blueprints in the library?

BERNARD RILEY : They're in the library, yes. They are in this book on Gustav, and there are drawings and blueprints of the machine itself, not of the engine, but of the machine. Those wings were made where they could fold back against the body.

ALAN CHALK : Were you able to find out any details as to where and supposedly how long he flew?

BERNARD RILEY : There's quite a bit of written material on some of it, supposedly. I don't know what the word for it is, but, anyway, it's signed by people who said they witnessed this machine flying. And he supposedly did fly it for a half an hour or something or for two miles; and he flew out over the sound and back. He flew out over the sound at one time and came down in the Sound.

ALAN CHALK : Could he land it in water?

BERNARD RILEY : He couldn't.

ALAN CHALK : I wondered about tee boat-like (characteristics).

BERNARD RILEY : He almost lost the ship. The body does look like a rowboat almost.

ALAN CHALK : Is there any evidence of his having traveled over Bridgeport such as this indicates?

BERNARD RILEY : Not over the city itself the way I have it pictured here, no. He lived in the west end of Bridgeport, and he did fly at what used to be called the "circus grounds" where the Barnum Apartments are today. In that area there was a vacant space, vacant lot, and he used that area as a place to try it. He was very shy and afraid of hurting anyone. So, he usually tried to fly the plane early in the morning when there weren't kids around, all that sort of thing. He was an

unusual man; he had lots of trouble with money. Finally, he lost everything and went bankrupt. Then in this same slide we have St. Vincent's. Out here at the crossing over that corner --

ALAN CHALK : I don't think I have a closer one than this.

BERNARD RILEY : In the next one the distortion is obvious. See how the lines turn up in the corner. In order to make those lines look straight across that corner, it had to be done that way. In this position — you were up a little bit, I think, on the scaffold taking this picture. But, if you were standing on the floor and shooting into it, those lines would have come down and looked straight across that corner.

ALAN CHALK : How did you discover this?

BERNARD RILEY : I discovered it actually by climbing up and down the scaffold. I'd climb up there and make a line and I'd climb down and see if it worked.

ALAN CHALK : 'Did you anticipate this or did you see the problem from below?

BERNARD RILEY : I didn't discover the reason for it until I was sitting out in the parking lot having lunch one day. And I looked at the building, the library building itself, and then realized how those lines worked that way in perspective. Looking into a corner from sitting at ground level, the lines as they went up dropped downward. So, I realized that in order to make them straight across, you had to peak them and then they would come down in the right direction. It's an interesting matter of observation.

ALAN CHALK : You had never come across that problem before?

BERNARD RILEY : No, and I tried to find some other things similar to that in any other mural, but, I've never seen it done before. I think it's unique. I maybe wrong, but, I think it is.

ALAN CHALK : I notice, also, as we start to go across the corner that St. Vincent's Hospital integrates the corner and the two nuns; I notice in this particular slide we pick up the wing of the airplane and the lines of the harbor scene that follows.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, that's a point, too, you see. St. Vincent's was completed in 1905. Of course, that was early for airplanes. But, later on airplanes used the dome of St. Vincent's as a way of knowing where they were at. It was a landmark, and aviators used that; they realized that this was Bridgeport

ALAN CHALK : What's the story of the two nuns?

BERNARD RILEY : Those were the old habits they wore, and those headpieces were the ones that Robert Vickery was so much in love with and did so many paintings about. They're very attractive, and it's a bit of a puzzle to try to figure out just how those headpieces were folded. But, they were beautiful, and you were very much attracted to the impression they gave.

ALAN CHALK : Almost like wings themselves.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes; they were like angel wings. They're very ancient French (designs).

ALAN CHALK : In your research did you find that they wore these right up to --

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. The common women wore headdresses like that in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. So, they did have a source; they weren't just suddenly created for the Order. These were an accepted sort of headdress at the time the Order was formed.

ALAN CHALK : You don't happened to know when they stopped wearing them?

BERNARD RILEY : It wasn't too long ago. Because I remember them very well myself. In the thirties probably.

ALAN CHALK : What about the child here? Anything

BERNARD RILEY : Well, the Order is one of charity, and they were concerned with children and charity is what the relationship between them is, the nun and the young child. And there is a little girl that isn't pictured here on the slide with the second nun.

This is the tower, by the way, the shot tower, that still exists, that tall tower there with the flag. They used to drop melted lead down through that to a pool of water at the bottom to make lead shot. They still do it.

ALAN CHALK : What's the printing there that's behind it? Something "Tool?" Do you see the sign there?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, there are several signs there. That's again going back to the corner. This is a whole complex of things. Oh, that's the sign the machines, the lathe.

ALAN CHALK : The Bullard lathe.

BERNARD RILEY : Bridgeport Machine and Tool Company.

ALAN CHALK : And the wheel there is actually a large locomotive, which is just in back of it.

BERNARD RILEY : That's right; a large locomotive wheel.

ALAN CHALK : And this figure here, the large figure, is the worker, a skilled worker?

BERNARD RILEY : He's one of the toolmakers that was working in the Bullard plant and working with the lathe. Bullard had invented the vertical lathe, and it became a workhorse; it became internationally sought after machine. It brought a great deal of attention to Bridgeport, because of its ability to do a number of jobs. It changed the whole complex of lathe used by making the vertical lathe. It's a very complex machine. This was known as the Bridgeport Tool Company at that time, Bridgeport Machine Tool Company.

ALAN CHALK : Actually, you've integrated the lathe and the large locomotive, the steam engine and the skilled worker actually which goes across the corner here — with something in mind then?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, the steam, at that time, that was where the power was before electricity became the source of power. Steam was used in all of these industries. The U. N. C. was -- of course, in 1917 that was on the border line of the beginning of the use of electricity. But, previous to that, steam was used for everything from printing presses — all factory work was done with the use of steam as power; and the steam engine sort of symbolizes that was the monster --

ALAN CHALK : What fuel? Coal?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, at that point coal was used. What you're seeing there is the steam engine wheel. That was an American Standard, the steam engine that was really used on the New Haven line, and the man standing between the steam engine and the coal tender is the fireman for the locomotive.

ALAN CHALK : Now, what's the street with all the signs here behind — That's integrated into part of the soldiers marching.

BERNARD RILEY : That's Main Street and it's the corner of Main and State; just as the beginning of the mural shows the corner of Main and State, now, here at the end this is the corner of Main and State again in 1917. And that same building on the corner is now the Travelers Shoe Company. It's plastered all over with signs; it makes it really interesting. You wouldn't believe the number of signs, and all of them marked Traveler's Shoes.

ALAN CHALK : Now, you took these from photographs?

BERNARD RILEY : This was done from a photograph of that corner.

ALAN CHALK : So that your buildings here are fairly accurate.

BERNARD RILEY : Oh, yes. The signs are accurate, and the whole complex. The streetlight -- you can hardly make out these things clearly. The globelike streetlight -- that was an electric lamp at that time, at that point in 1917. So, electricity was really being used quite extensively. Some of the signs were electrically operated; they had electric bulbs. That was before neon. This is further down and shows the first contingent leaving for the World War in 1917.

ALAN CHALK : Is this your interpretation or did they actually march the troops down Main Street?

BERNARD RILEY : This is taken from a Photograph of 1917. month, but taken from a photograph of Army turning the corner at Main and State Streets. It shows again that building on the corner.

ALAN CHALK : A small point in terms of the transition between the sketch and the work. I remember, I think, in another slide we have the original sketch, which has many soldiers, almost an entire parade. I notice here you've become more selective, more impressionistic.

BERNARD RILEY : The other sketch had a truck, which I'm sorry I didn't keep. The truck was important, because it was built here in Bridgeport. It was built at the Locomobile, the Riker truck; and it was a real service truck, a real workhorse truck. It was used in Europe along with the Army units there. There are some beautiful posters of that truck in action.

ALAN CHALK : You couldn't get it in there?

BERNARD RILEY : No. It was so complex at this point that I felt the addition of the truck, which would have taken up a large area, would have been just too much.

ALAN CHALK : When you're working in this type density, do you see all the lines or do you see the lines only of the related image?

BERNARD RILEY : No. It's important to be able to see all of them, because they all relate to one another.

ALAN CHALK : Are you able to separate them in your mind so as not to confuse them?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, I can. Of course, I was working laying tracing paper over the first impressions; and I could always see it very clearly in doing it. But, it was important to be able to see through the tracing paper and know what underneath there so that the things would work together and not be too much in conflict.

ALAN CHALK : I notice as we go across the corner here, we pick up families

BERNARD RILEY : That's the rail.

ALAN CHALK : Oh, yes.

BERNARD RILEY : See the rail going down in that corner.

ALAN CHALK : Yes.

BERNARD RILEY : The rail, really shows that corner. But, if you're standing on the floor and looking up at that wall, that rail looks like it runs right into the —

ALAN CHALK : It's strange. It's the same thing as St. Vincent's then.

BERNARD RILEY : Right. That has to do it.



ALAN CHALK : All right, now, this is the crowd.

BERNARD RILEY : These are the people standing on the corners, you know. Some of them waving goodbye — maybe forever.

ALAN CHALK : I notice a little human touch there in one of the soldiers and the woman -Clasping hands.

BERNARD RILEY : And, of course this happened, you know, to people who were separated by this. It came about quickly with almost --although it shouldn't have been unexpected. But, like so many things in life, it got you before you knew it. It always seems that it happens to someone else, when all of a sudden you wake up and find it's happening to you.

ALAN CHALK : What about the faces? There's almost like a — I don't know if this is intentional — different emotions portrayed on them. For example, the woman seems to be holding up very bravely, and the young boy next to her, possibly her son looking up with a kind of courage. The man in the background seems to be looking off in the distance; the woman on the right looking down; the man to the left — now, did you try to depict any emotion there?

BERNARD RILEY : I tried to depict emotion there.

ALAN CHALK : What about the man with the beard or mustache?

BERNARD RILEY : Well, he's sort of one maybe who the one he was related to had passed in the parade, was gone, and he looked like he had seen him for the last time.

ALAN CHALK : Was that tears?

BERNARD RILEY : It could be or a feeling of wonderment.

ALAN CHALK : Now, do I see the man in the — there are two men together there, one seems to be looking up the street, the other one seems to be looking out of the corner.

BERNARD RILEY : There, again, this fellow might be waiting for somebody to come along, somebody in the parade. The other fellow is a pretty rough-looking character, (who) feels that, well, I'm going to go along with them, you know. And there were in those days. It was a strange time compared to our own attitude. We've been disillusioned by all of this flag-waving.

ALAN CHALK : Who was holding the flag there, by the way? I see a hand there, but I can't attach it.

BERNARD RILEY : This young fellow. You see there's a --

ALAN CHALK : One eye?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes; that's a profile looking back and being very patriotic when the man behind him is looking at him with a questioning, "If you're so patriotic, why aren't you going?"

ALAN CHALK : "Why aren't you going with them" (look).

BERNARD RILEY : This was the attitude; there was a lot of fantasy and —it's unbelievable -- naiveness of people at that time. It was all heroics, you know. It was a grand affair! The soldiers were all heroes. They came back with the same attitude; they came back, the soldiers, with the same realization of what it was all about. And, I don't think that it ever happened again; it didn't happen in the Second World War. People's attitude had changed, and the idea of marching away to glory had gone to the long past.

ALAN CHALK : This corner brings us into the twentieth century and combines or fuses event from 1881, the library, up to

1917-1918. We'll take a look here at the whole panel. Is there any controlling idea into this last panel? Of course, now, we're completing 100 years; so, it brings us up to 1936. But, still you had a particular problem as to how to conclude the mural.

BERNARD RILEY : It was a problem, because there were so many things that I felt should be part of it, and now we were coming to a conclusion.

ALAN CHALK : What were you reaching for in this last panel?

BERNARD RILEY : I wanted to include people that I had thought about.

ALAN CHALK : Contemporaries.

BERNARD RILEY : Contemporary people; people who had been an influence on the city, and the people who had brought attention to the city of Bridgeport.

It was one of the more difficult parts of the mural, to try to work out.

ALAN CHALK : I see something else. You could not carry the intensity of the corner throughout it. You had to perhaps begin to diffuse it.

BERNARD RILEY : No. I tried to balance it a little with the beginning of the mural. You notice that the beginning of the mural was more opened up. There was more space; and I thought in the end I would have to bring more white space into it, more airiness into it, and (make it) lighter. One of the things that I wanted to get in, of course, was Simon Lake who became nationally known. At the very top the Simon Lake Company was brought into it. Now, below this man that you see in the lower left part of this is John -- I should be able to think of his last name; he works in the library, a maintenance man in the library. But, he was an oysterman in Bridgeport; and, I thought the oyster industry had a definite contribution to the industries in this city, quite different than other cities, similar industrial cities. -- the fact that we're on the waterfront here, and the oyster business was quite well known. Along the shores in Bridgeport was one of the best sea oyster areas along the coast.

ALAN CHALK : You returned to emphasize the idea of the harbor that you began with.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. The harbor comes back into it.

ALAN CHALK : I'm rather surprised to see a submarine. I had no idea that we built submarines.

BERNARD RILEY : Submarines were built here, the very first of the submarines, the very early submarines. There were a good many experiments being done, of course, everywhere. But, Simon Lake built one of the earliest; and this submarine was used in the First World War. This is in 1917. He sold the submarines to the Russian government. So, he was pretty well-known. He had quite an industry going, quite a shipyard there. But, he went bankrupt, mainly because of the demands that the U.S. government put on him to make sure that all the contracts were fulfilled. He sort of bent over backwards to make these contracts right; but, in doing so, he bankrupted himself.

ALAN CHALK : Notice, also, again, parallels, that these workers remind me of the bridge workers on the second panel on the facing wall.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. This was an attempt, in a sense to return to that use of figures here, now, to join them design wise, to bring the mural together so that it would work as a unit. These men do resemble the first working men.

ALAN CHALK : Maybe in breaking away from the density of the panel we've just left, we re-emphasize the laborer.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, right.

ALAN CHALK : The human dimension.

BERNARD RILEY : And, also, the equipment — the pullies and the rope, all this, goes back to the first panel and it was associated with that.

ALAN CHALK : As I think it is people that sort of dominates this last panel.

BERNARD RILEY : Here's another one of the shipmates on board the Parmelee; it was one of the oyster boats. And this that looks like a flower, the intertwining things, that's wisteria. It was the symbol of Bridgeport University.

ALAN CHALK : So, you've integrated this.

BERNARD RILEY : And that on the other hand --

ALAN CHALK : The net.

BERNARD RILEY : That's a net, an oyster dredge.

ALAN CHALK : Going to the center and the metropolitan carriage.

BERNARD RILEY : This is the Metropolitan Carriage, one of the early businesses that grew up around people that came to this country and worked hard, began a business of their own, being yenture some and risking, and with just their own energies to build businesses out of nothing. This is the Carison Brothers; and this is Bill Carlson. The whole thing right in this sequence, this slide, tells a little story about the Carisons. This is Fanie Carlson in the carriage, who came to visit Bill Carison when lunchtime (came), and he let her take a wagon or carriage — it wasn't a wagon, it was' a : carriage, : a handsome little carriage. She wasn't too used to driving horses; she took the carriage out on Main Street and got started down Main Street; she couldn't get the horse to turn around, so she had to drive all the way to Seaside Park (Laughs) and go around that fountain — you know that fountain that they're talking now — and come back up Main Street. So, Bill stood there watching for a long time, wondering what had happened. Here he is just greeting her on her return. That's his brother standing in the doorway of the office building.

ALAN CHALK : What's this up to the right, these lines of people in the background just over the woman's shoulder?

BERNARD RILEY : That's the junior college. the junior college became Bridgeport University. The junior college was begun by Courtwright. What was his first name?

ALAN CHALK : Is he depicted here?

BERNARD RILEY : This is Courtwright on the far right. And next to him stands Dr. Is it Eliot Courtwright? Dr. began the first training of nurses for dental nurses and dental hygiene programs at school all over the country. He had a school here, and he also had — of course, he practiced dentistry. He began this whole program; it had a worldwide effect. It became internationally known. Actually, he bought the property. This building that the Junior College started in was the Edgar Vassick home. I guess they had moved out some time or other and the building was vacant. In order to hold it -- a number of people were bidding on it, Dr. bought it and held it for the junior college to get together their money. They finally got enough money together to buy the property and begin the junior college Courtwright.

ALAN CHALK : That was the beginning of what developed into Bridgeport University.

BERNARD RILEY : What became Brideport University later, yes. (In the thirties.) This was around 1927.

ALAN CHALK : Here we go into the lower part of the panel. We have a newsboy with a newspaper with a headline.

BERNARD RILEY : Jasper McLevy's announcement, Jasper McLevy's winning the election. Jasper had been working for some twenty years to make this, and he finally did it, and spent twenty—four years after that, I believe (as the mayor).

ALAN CHALK : Who was Jasper McLevy?

BERNARD RILEY : He was supposedly a Socialist. Of course, when he was elected, the idea of a Socialist mayor spread across the country.

ALAN CHALK : This was in the twenties?

BERNARD RILEY : This was in the thirties. (In) '33 he became mayor. But, the very fact that he was a Socialist — but, he was no more Socialist than I am! He was a Liberal in that sense; but, he was a very cautious man.

ALAN CHALK : So, he moved in in the Depression.

BERNARD RILEY : He moved in in the Depression; he held the city together. He was pretty tight with money; he was an honest man, and he did a real beautiful job.

ALAN CHALK : Twenty-four years.

BERNARD RILEY : Twenty—four years he remained mayor.

ALAN CHALK : I notice that the newspaper is the Times Star. That was the paper at the time?

BERNARD RILEY : That was the original bannerline as they call it, I guess. I can still remember those letters.

ALAN CHALK : We move here, and this is the mayor.

BERNARD RILEY : This is Jasper himself.

ALAN CHALK : What is in the signs in the background here?

BERNARD RILEY : That's his truck; he was a roofer. (It says) Jasper McLevy and underneath the letters "slate," "tile."

ALAN CHALK : Did he continue to run his business?

BERNARD RILEY : No. He gave up the business a short time after he became mayor. He was a roofer, you know. He used slate and tiles, asbestos roofing. He was a hard-working man.

ALAN CHALK : It's interesting how the first mayor was a saddle maker. A working man.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. There is also that relationship that I felt, too, was important, the relationship between the first mayor and Jasper — they were very similar people. This was taken from a photograph that was done by Al Matheson. Al got a call from his editor; he asked him to dash down to (Atlantic) Street, I think it was, in the South end, on the day that Jasper became mayor and catch Jasper, because he had just finished a job down there. So, Al rushed down and caught him standing by his truck. I added a little bit of the newspaper and the newsboy who happens to be Sam Lisgoth as a twelve year old boy. It ends with Jasper and all those years from '33; Jasper covered that time --

ALAN CHALK : Almost to the end.

BERNARD RILEY : Right.

ALAN CHALK : The middle of the century. Now that the mural is completed almost six years, what are your feelings?

BERNARD RILEY : (Laughs) Of course, when you put it that way, you know, six years, it seems impossible! It follows, I guess, the attitude I have about painting and art in general is that means nothing. Of course, I did start out and I really was sincere about it, (that) I would complete it in a year. It just shows you the lack of really sitting down and thinking the thing out. But, I'm glad that I approached it the way I did rather than a severely, well—planned — I think it was

probably more in character. I wouldn't advise anyone else (Laughs) to approach anything of this sort with that same attitude.

ALAN CHALK : On the other hand, there's another wall on the other side of the building.

BERNARD RILEY : There's another wall. But, no, I think there's something about walls, and there's something about murals, and I know that people probably think that, after all, you were building a monument to yourself and naturally you are going to spend some time doing that. But, that never really crossed my mind. Naturally, I hope that the wall will remain and will be there for a long time. But, it was never anything that was foremost in my mind. It was the being intrigued with the space. It's kind of a sort of affliction, I guess, that once you get attached to walls and once you get the feeling of that space to work in, that you really never recover from it. I'm not alone in that; there are other painters that have had that same feeling. They just love the idea of that expanse of space, that power that a wall can give.

ALAN CHALK : The filling of a void.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, it's more the fact that the space has tremendous impact on the viewer. It can surround him with the work. That's what I had in mind when I did the Gallery. This was the thought I had. When you walked into the Gallery, I wanted you to be completely overcome by the drawings — you were in the center (of them). Every which way you turned, you were looking at these drawings. And this wall accomplishes that. In a way, I suppose, I was feeling the same thing, because here the wall just isn't a straight flat wall. It has that two way it surrounds you. I think it's effective to a person who does this sort of thing, to have a feeling of all this space to work within and what you could do with it, especially if you're involved in figure work, and involved in doing human figures that can come out of that wall and have a personality and have strength enough to come forward and impress people or influence people or make the viewer wonder or think, become involved in the excitement of what you've created.

ALAN CHALK : Do you feel that the mural has limited the development of your art or contributed to it?

BERNARD RILEY : Of course, time is involved; it did take up time, and it kept me from doing other work. But, on the other hand, I think, as far as I can make out, this is probably the most highly concentrated bit of drawing anywhere. I mean, there are thousands of murals ever since the beginning when cavemen did it. But, I don't think there are any that I know of that — most murals are designed, large designs and theatrical effects, you know, and large figures, and spread out in spaces, as adapted. The work is adapted to give space. Where this is a concentration of drawing. Not only that, but it puts drawing on a different level than usual. Usually, people accept drawings as sketches or preliminary things for paintings or thinking—working things. But, here, drawing is presented as a complete, independent thing of its own. It stands on its own here. It's not preliminary to anything else. The wall depends on the drawing. To me, although I've given up a lot of work that I might have been doing, here I concentrated the work all in one location.

ALAN CHALK : You didn't feel limited by historical event and authenticity, reality, in other words?

BERNARD RILEY : No. Of course, it had its effect. But, I think I used it as much as I could to do what I wanted to do. To do the drawing I was still free enough to do the drawing and adapt my kind of 'drawing to the facts of history. I don't think that really restricted me very much. I think it still comes across as a kind of demonstration as it were. It will be critiqued. People will look at it and will have anywhere from good to bad to indifferent opinions of it. And those who understand a great deal about art and painting and drawing and that sort of thing, will have criticisms of it, I'm sure. It's not academic, certainly. The drawing is purely my own. It's a type of drawing that hasn't been influenced by anything. So, of course, this is good in one way; and on the other hand, it opens the door to all kinds of opinions about — “This guy, this is grafitti!” “Where did he come from?”

ALAN CHALK : Would you say it's the culmination of your art?

BERNARD RILEY : I would hope not. I had hoped that it was just an exercise in a sense.

ALAN CHALK : Another phase.

BERNARD RILEY : Another chance to expand drawing to a point where it... I learned a great deal from this wall, a great deal about drawing although I've been drawing all my life. I learned a great deal about handling drawing on that scale. It's been a great benefit for me. It really has.

ALAN CHALK : It grows out of your other work in terms of line drawing in the procession and some of the earlier paintings. But, of course, here you had to represent the image and perhaps some of the forces in Bridgeport. So, there was some confinement there. But, yet in your rather dynamic use and interweaving of events, dynamic use of history, you create a very, very interesting design that I think will be interpreted from years to come.

BERNARD RILEY Well, hopefully : Of course, you have to expect all sorts of opinions. That doesn't concern me or worry me. I was thinking more or less of the interpretation of what is the soul or what is the nature of Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : You know, I had a lot of time to think. (Laughs) painting up there on the scaffold and drawing. The ideas changed from the beginning to the end, continually were in the process of change. I had considered color when I started. I had thought of painting. But, then I began to realize it was impossible, because of the facilities. I'd have to run down into the basement to get water and to mix colors. (telephone interruption)

ALAN CHALK you have had a lot of time to think about it. What is your view of city, now? You've translated your feeling into image. you translate it into words now? What is Bridgeport? s rather difficult. I was born here, you see, so I should be able to do that. To me, I guess the simplest explanation that Bridgeport is home. Bridgeport is my people. I

BERNARD RILEY I always said I grew up in the far West. I was born on Colorado Avenue in Bridgeport. I went to School. And these were my people. It ran across all fibers of life, tragedy and happiness. In those days, by comparison to today, things were pretty rough. People died more often it seems. Kids were hurt; kids were sick. It was what they called in those days spinalmenininitis, and that sort of thing. There were threats. You're too small -- children that you would hear about. The neighbors were : It was different somehow. The neighbors weren't just neighbors; they were more like family. You grew up with them; you were in their homes. You chased around with the whole family, their fathers and their mothers. So if they got up in the morning and had a headache, you knew about it. You closer in your relationship to the people. I wandered around the city a bit. It's pretty much stayed the same area. As a matter of fact, it was just funny yesterday when wondered if I knew where was I said, "Yes; I guess I did. My first girlfriend lived on the corner of Railroad Avenue and Avenue." Poor (kid). Again, through a tragic situation she was a little girl. They left Bridgeport. Her father was a workman in Of course, a plasterer is involved in trade. They moved to Norwalk and she got involved with some pretty wild kids, I guess. She was killed in an automobile accident.

This is what Bridgeport means to me. The circus ground was there on Avenue. The excitement of watching what was going on there, and in the summertime when they were away, kids used to break into the circus grounds and have all kinds of fun on the wagons. I (remember) one time I got locked in the lion's cage. No lion; but, in the cage. The damn door came down, clang, (after) I crawled into it. There was nobody around. So, I spent about an hour and a half sitting in the cage waiting for somebody to let me out. We climbed all over the wagons; we climbed all over the railroad cars that were standing on the siding near the railroad yard. And we'd be up and down them. You talk about kids today. We didn't do harmful things or damage; but, we were all over the place. And there were more kids than you could shake a stick at, of course. And all in the same age group.

ALAN CHALK : That's the neighborhood; that's the people. What about the buildings, the city, the factories

BERNARD RILEY : It was beautiful really. Of course, these things in color, when you're young, you see things differently. But, the city was different to me. I spoke about the Edgar Vasick house; it was a beautiful house. In my day when I was a kid, this was an estate; it was quite a large estate. After it had been vacant for : years But, it was a beautiful home. Strangely enough, Edgar Vassick this was Junior -- was in school with me. Here was a kid whose father was wealthy, and he was in an ordinary school, P.S. it was then. He was a nice boy, quiet. Of course, the rest of us were a little bit rowdy Not really rough. Active, maybe, is the word for it.

ALAN CHALK : Did you ever think of running away?

BERNARD RILEY : That's one of the things that I often think about. I wanted to be an acrobat. I wanted to be an aerialist with the circus. So, my father built this bar out back in the yard to do exercise on. I had a lot of fun The only one problem was that I told my mother that I wanted to run away and join the circus. She said, "Well, that was fine with her, just so long as I got home in time for supper! I could never quite put the two things together, you know. This sort of pointed out the fact that I wasn't about to forget supertime.

ALAN CHALK : Is this heritage still present in Bridgeport?

BERNARD RILEY : I don't see it.

ALAN CHALK : You think it's gone, it's changed?

BERNARD RILEY Well, everything has changed. : has changed. Society has changed; attitudes have changed.

ALAN CHALK : On the other hand, I can't believe that these roots can be gone completely. It seems to me that they must remain somewhere in Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : The roots aren't gone. I think people deep down haven't changed. But, I think people have learned to protect themselves from one another, from the abrasive, mechanical facade of a society. Of course, we didn't have any of those things. An automobile, believe it or not, was I lived in the area of State Street and : Avenue and There wasn't one automobile on that street. We never saw an automobile go up and down that street. Wagons came through — the iceman with his wagon riding in and They were all horses and wagons. When I was about six years old, I used to go up to the corner of State every night and wait for these trucks to come along. The horse barn was right next door to our house. Trucking Company. was not only a trucker; he had milk trucks and all that sort of thing. Of course, in those days they used man and shovel to drag the dirt out. But, every night at five o'clock they'd be coming down Colorado Avenue. So, I'd go up over there and wait. Invariably they were Black Laborers that were dragging this big They'd stop and pick me up and give me the reins of the horse. Of course, the horse wasn't about to go any place else but home! (Laugh) He'd go down and I'd drive down Colorado Avenue into the barn. This was life. It wasn't mechanically as cold.

ALAN CHALK : Yet, on the other hand, you've eliminate the automobile from your memory. You've emphasized the horse-drawn wagon. But, throughout your mural we're very much in the presence of machinery, industry.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, of course, this was It was more than truly past. By the 1920's then the mechanical started to move in, and society began to change. So, it was early on when the mural first all these things in '36. In the early part of the mural you don't see that. It's the horses with and it was steam power. But the people, again, you see in the mural. The machinery —comes In the latter part; although, maybe it's my own attitude that machinery is coming in like an animal, really replacing

ALAN CHALK : I see the complexity of the image in relationship to the area of the machine. But, I'm not sure I see a judgment or an interpretation of them. They just seem to be a part of people's lives as skilled workers as they go to the plant.

BERNARD RILEY : 'I think if you look, you'll find tha.t the threat is there. Maybe in some cases it will be in a curious way. (For instance), the man that is working — of course, I suppose People have noticed that. In a sense, that was the beginning of it. Man was being overcome by machines. Surrounded by machines and being replaced.

ALAN CHALK : Was that your intent in the bottom part of that panel?

BERNARD RILEY Yes. You see : I guess I could say my brother.

ALAN CHALK : Skilled laborers.

BERNARD RILEY : Skilled laborers were integrated with the machines. It stands there with all its mixed in with the - they're

The machine is within : I think this is the thing that I see in the city of Bridgeport, that the city of Bridgeport has become more and more involved with the machine and less involved with people. although, there's no reason

ALAN CHALK : It's another period of transition. Is industry dying in Bridgeport or to the extent it did?

BERNARD RILEY : I think industry in the nation isn't what it was Technically it

ALAN CHALK : People there were workers, builders of bridges, inventors.

BERNARD RILEY : That's another creative and searching and not looking for a way out; they were pressing forward; they were making efforts to invent something, create something and do something with it that would give them their income and give them a better life.

ALAN CHALK : You know, I was thinking, there is not tragedy, pain or violence in the mural.

BERNARD RILEY : No. I wouldn't expect violence or pain or tragedy.

ALAN CHALK : It is very positive, buoyant.

BERNARD RILEY : I would rather feel that the world is being happy.

ALAN CHALK : So, it's an optimistic portrayal of this hundred years. It doesn't end in dark clouds.

BERNARD RILEY : No. I would hope that the future would hold more opportunity for young people especially, for happiness. And there's no reason why it shouldn't be true. There's certainly more understanding of problems (and) more solutions to ordinary problems. When I was a kid and growing, of course, it was different then. But, it was a real (threat) Polio. Measles -- all of these things. Scarlet fever. My brother was confined for almost two months with scarlet fever. They didn't know that much about arthritis. Some of my family suffered from asthma. They didn't understand that. This was another threat to the it was a real problem. All of these things are understood better and are under much more control

ALAN CHALK : Despite those problems, it still is incredible. The mural is still incredibly a kind of celebration of life here.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, I think we should

ALAN CHALK : I still see a relationship between your memory -- maybe your memory of Bridgeport and your childhood is somehow screened through your perception in your art.

BERNARD RILEY : I would hope that it was.

ALAN CHALK : Maybe your ideas and judgments are somehow suspended and something truer comes out.

BERNARD RILEY : I've always felt that I was : Maybe this reflects it in the mural.



ALAN CHALK I think it was 1792 or 179 : sometin<<something like that. But, it idd<<djd have an extablis<<established date.

BERNARD RILEY : In every pictu4re I've seen of that corner that buiLding is there in one condition or another. I used it here in this corner. I'm talkin

the number of signs on it. At that time —— this is 1917 —— it was Travelers Shoes that occupied that store. There were so many signs there; [Laughs] it was a real holiday for sign par\$inters!

BERNARD RILEY : There was a competition held among other towns for that railroad. It was Westport t\$hat wanted it, and Norwalk wanted it, and maybe one or two others.

BERNARD RILEY : It was because we were able to get the money in Bridgeport that the railroad came here.  
: : : That's probably wthat started everything going.

BERNARD RILEY : It did. It made the contact 4,between the harbor and the valley.

like Westport

BERNARD RILEY : Because actually the harbor wasn't that great was it?

ALAN CHALK : I don't know. I didn't used to think so; but, since I've done a lot of

couldn't build anything [major] back to New York.

BERNARD RILEY

BERNARD RILEY

BERNARD RILEY

ALAN CHALK

BERNARD RILEY

ALAN CHALK

sailing, I've begun to notice things. For instance, I thought it was strange that Stratford didn't develop into a city, because it had that really wide river there; but, the currents were so treacherous in the Housatonic. And the currents are not bad in the Bridgeport harbor. It was a great big deep harbor. The only problem was that it was shallow at the mouth. All they had to do was dredge that

BERNARD RILEY : The harbor itself was in competition. There were several harbors including Southport.

ALAN CHALK : Well, Southport is so small you really there. It's fine for shipping onions

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. That's what they did mainly.

ALAN CHALK : But that's all it's big enough to do.

What was the name of that building that you mentioned, that's over

here?

David calls it the "red building." ~

I don't know. I never really studied that particular building.

It probably was painted red at one time.

And what's there now?

a newer version of the building, which was up until five years ago a parking lot.

But, that building stood in my day. It came down in the fifties? That's something I'm not too sure of.

I think it must have. They didn't really tear too much down downtown parking lots before World War II. It must have been in that area somewhere.

ALAN CHALK : I gather you're a historian informally.

ALAN CHALK : I don't know what your background is or why you are particularly interested in Bridgeport or the history of Bridgeport. I'm curious as to how you (see this. Do you see this as history?

Oh, yes. Very much so. I don't know. I get a lot out of this, just looking at this, the feel of the whole city. You know, there is a lot of important stuff up there that's meant a lot — landmarks in the history of Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : Charles's house is up there.

C : : Yes, I own the Octagon House. The centerpiece of the whole mural.

D : : And this was Charles's suggestion.

Now

ALAN CHALK : Now, Let's say for example, Shakespeare will interpret history as people, as particular people, and so, it becomes not only the historic persons, but almost a kind of metaphor for the times. You said this gives you the feel of Bridgeport.

C : : Yes; that's correct.

ALAN CHALK : And I'm wondering — I don't know what Bridgeport means to you or what you see\* up here and in what way this represents Bridgeport.

C : : Well, it's really the~ greatness of Bridgeport — all the really great thin4gs that happened in the city or a lot of them are up there. Great achievements 1-ike building the Charles Cooper are up there or just a normal every day thing 1-ike or a harbor scene of the oyster boats.

D : : Maybe we shou4~ld follow through<<through here

from the first panel around the corner and so on. Maybe we should say something now about superimposing, the fact of the whyjs and wherefores of the superimposing technique. Again, here you have, going back to that first panel of the first mayor, you are able to see through these two Large figures that really cover almost that entire panel; they're almost lifes-ize. But, behind those figures we can see the corner of Main and State Street; we can also see down State Street to the harbor. This gives you a whole different dimension. It adds to that piece so that you'll get more than one visual point of view of that corner. That's ppprLy<<poorly put, but, your ability to see that particular spot -in the city of Bridgeport is increased by the superimposing.

B : : You know what had dawned on me while we're st-it<<sitjting here. People are more important to you than events.

BERNARD RILEY : Oh, definitely!

B : : BecaUsej the people are bigger than the event that happened.

BERNARD RILEY : The people are the flesh and bones of this whodLe structure. They are the structure. The figures have been used to structure the entire composition; the whole thing depends on the forms of the figures to support the design; and the events are secondary to that. Again, looking through the two figures you see down ito<<into the harbor and it begins to operate as a4 composition, a weaving of events into these main figures. Again, the figure of the mayor, the structure of that figure, supports th4at entire wall, and that's the whole composi ton<<composi t ion.

B : : It wasn't little people bigger than big pe4opLe? in other words, your immigrants, even Isaac Sherman who was a ship's carpenter himself. They're all bigger than P.T. Barnum and Abraham Lincoln and

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, the immigrant people are —

B:

BERNARD RILEY : They were again, th.e reason for the city's character. The city became internationally known for the immigrant character of it all l-ike some of the other cities, a melting pot. It was certat~in1y ttrue here, probably a little bit truer (heret<<here than it was in

One of the searches. has always been for highly skilled people; and they came here because there were other skilled people. It began at an early stage. One family would follow another or [they had] relatives here. Going around the corner now, the view of the harbor turns that corner. That's another point of this whole mural; the shape of this wall is not what a muralist would select. It's a wall that doesn't particularly lend itself to a mural. The structure -is cr~omplex; these

corners present a number of problems. But, the reason I liked it was because of those problems; it presented things that hadn't been done before. I felt that with the interest of the students who were into drafting and who were into drawing, they would try to understand the problem and how to overcome the problem there was for trying to get around and try to flatten that corner out. Alan, do you want to ask questions?

ALAN CHALK : I can. The basic problem is that I don't want to just repeat what I've asked you before.

It developed

BERNARD RILEY : Yes.

B : Well, I want to know some things, because I've seen some things that I haven't seen before by just sitting here. And even though I saw the lady with the flowers in her hand, I don't know who she is now. You know, I know what's in this wall; but, she I hadn't really zeroed in on.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, now we're talking about the sign panel.

B : The sign panel, right.

BERNARD RILEY : That little lady represents what would be natural to a port city. Bridgeport was known all across the country for its flower girls; they were ladies of the evening.

B : Ah, ha! O.K. [Laughs]

BERNARD RILEY : They were naturally to be found in this type of a city, a port city.

B : A girl in every city.

BERNARD RILEY : There were quite a few places along Water Street. into quite a story. Do you happen to know the story of

: I've heard it someplace. I don't really recall [where]; but, all through the nineteenth century, even back to the 1850's, the newspapers, were talking about all the vice dens on Water Street and how there has to be something done about it. They kept doing that.

BERNARD RILEY : But, they were inclined to this area. The rest of the city was pretty stripped. But, again, Like a port city, what you would expect to be here. Now, continuing on that side panel and above this little lady is the Nimrod. That was the first ship that traveled between Bridgeport and New York daily, that is, it would go one way day down and back the next. When Tom Thumb went to meet

Barnum, he took that. It was really the only comfortable

transportation at that time between Bridgeport and New York. Tom

Thumb would be meeting Barnum about 1840? — 1842 or something?

BERNARD RILEY : "1842.

B : And you have him here as an infant, he and his mother and father?

BERNARD RILEY : This is where the visual part of it gets complex.

B : Yes, right.

BERNARD RILEY : Tom Thumb is shown in his father's arms; his mother is with him and his sister is with him. I think there were three children in the Stratton family.

I don't know.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, there were three children in the Stratton family. The other two children were normal.

B : : I know his great, great nephew.

BERNARD RILEY : Oh, really.

B : : Yes.

BERNARD RILEY : How tall is he?

B : : Johnny : he's about six feet. He plays

and I guess he's manager of the : or he was there for a while.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, Tom Thumb's father was quite a tall man. Tom, at that point was only five years old when he went to work for Barnum. Barnum actually admitted to the fact that he was twelve years old. But, of course, he actually presented him as an adult. But, he was five years old when he was twenty—two inches tall and weighed fifteen pounds. He was a

small child, but bright, very precocious, very bright and quick to learn. It was Barnum's doing really that taught Tom Thumb to become a performer, and that he did! He became a very charming kind of performer. When he went to Europe, he was very popular with all the royalty of Europe. It's too bad a little bit more hasn't been made of that. We went to see Barnum and his players

New York, and missed all of that. To me it was one of the most colorful performances of Barnum's life.

These other large figures on the other side of this panel we talked about them. The only other means of transportation between Bridgeport and New York was a stagecoach, which was pretty rough going. I think this cost a dollar and a half for the trip to New York and was much more comfortable; except in this case, if you looked at this steamship it seems to be plowing right on through the harbor. One might ask why a steamship would be traveling at that great a speed in the harbor. But, this particular day that Tom Thumb was picked up, there was a race between the steamship captains on the Sound. I think quite often they did that. And they would tie down the safety valves on the boilers in order to build up speed. Imagine what a risk it was to ride one of those! got out of the harbor in order to beat this other captain, in a hurry.

Tom Thumb's mother went with him; and Barnum boarded them in New York City while he was giving Tom Thumb a little education in the art of performing. I think Tom Thumb was getting three dollars a week at that time plus board. Do you have any information on the early relationship between Tom Thumb and Barnum?

: : I read Barnum's autobiography Struggles and Triumphs, and that goes into the whole European tour and all of that.

There really isn't that much to add at that time. Barnum was living in New York at that time. It was like four years later that he decided to move to Bridgeport. I guess partially because of his relationship with Tom Thumb.

BERNARD RILEY : He did go to live in Bridgeport apparently of New York. Yes.

BERNARD RILEY : Of course, he had the museum, and he had to be responsible for that. Tom Thumb did take part in the museum, didn't he? He was presented there?

ALAN CHALK : I'm trying to think. I don't think the museum was opened until 1847 or so.

BERNARD RILEY : That would be when he returned from Europe, because it was 1847 here when he appears here in this back panel on the return from Europe. On the side panel, again, here is the little boy running across through the corner there. He represents an apprentice boy. I found this ad in the very same Republican newspaper that you see below there, an ad that offered six cents for his return. I guess those kids had a rough time. Occasionally they would get along with the master, and on other occasions they didn't. The master had complete charge of them as far as food and clothing; and if they happened to be the wrong type of person, why, of course, the kid suffered for it. And they quite often ran away. But, this boy — six cents reward — it's kind of but I suppose six

counted for something in those days! And just to the left of the boy is the immigrant in the background. The man is holding a coin in his hand. I've told this story a number of times. In those days there were a great many Scotch, Irish and English coming. Again, this is around the period, about 1840—42. They were mostly Scotch—Irish. A great many of the booking agents would try to sell the idea of coming to this country by saying the streets were paved with gold. And here this fellow gets there on the first day and finds a coin on the street — he's got it made; he's on his way! The little boy is waving to the woman in the carriage. She's sort of the upper class. (Do you want to run over that?)

B:

BERNARD RILEY : The little boy is waving to the lady in the Victorian carriage, and she's waving back, you know, sort of secretly waving back to him. The driver of the carriage who appears to be a Negro is sort of reprimanding — [loudspeaker -interruption]

B : : Who's the man with the wagon? I hadn't really noticed him.

BERNARD RILEY : This is a scene of the dock area in the harbor at the foot of State Street; and this man is just picking up barrels of maybe tobacco or whatever might have come in. There was a great deal of shipping from the West Indies. Do you want to say something about that, Charles?

C : : They used to bring wood and farm products down from the West Indies\* and they'd come back mainly with sugar and rum and molasses. Those were the big things.

BR; Those were the main

BERNARD RILEY : Those were the main items.

C:

BERNARD RILEY : Because the man up above the dockworker, that man, is rolling a barrel of rum across the dock. And then this man in the wagon has a couple of barrels on the wagon and a dog seated along side him. The Burroughs name comes in there although it's difficult to see, on one of the warehouses; and that Burroughs must be the same family that the library is [named after].

B : Well, Kathryn : father was — she's the one who gave the building. Her married name is Burroughs.

BERNARD RILEY : And I think this is the same Burroughs family that owned this warehouse.

B : : Why did the dockworkers take -in such a big portion of that panel there?

BERNARD RILEY : This is practically aLL organized here. What I felt was that I was concerned with that corner and making the composition work across the corner. And these<<these large figures of dockworkers — I call them bridge builders — they could be dockworkers working around the dock or building bridges. They are working with heavy equipment. These figures sort of carry the motion of the composition through that corner and down. The man with the<<with the adz in his hand is one of them. Something I thought would never be picked up — but, almost the day I finished that figure, someone noticed that he was minus one gi<<finger, one finger on the left hand.

B : : Oh, yes.

BERNARD RILEY : This was quite characteristic of a man who worked this way. A great many people hardly see that figure at all. But he works in; there are

four figures there of workers throughout<<throughout the waterfront. And those four figures organize that composition. Again, the figures play a<<playing a larger part and carrying the design. The ropes and the chains — all of this is an attempt to show how labor worked in those days. They weren't working with machines; they were working with their own muscle power; and the ropes and chains and hoists were the things that carried the bulk of the work.

B : : You have four action characters; they're in motion up there.

BERNARD RILEY : Right.

B : : Then, just below the Nimrod and just below Tom Thumb's head there's a man. Now, who is he? Why is he there? Am I missing a sequence with him?

BERNARD RILEY : He's one of the figures.

B : : Oh. Because he doesn't have the same action as the two on the top.

BERNARD RILEY : No. He was turned facing

B : : Oh, O.K. He's facing me; he's got a hat on.

BERNARD RILEY Do you see his hands? He carries the rope that comes down across the — B : Just over little Tom Thumb's head?

BERNARD RILEY Yes. Just over it; that's his Left hand up, holding onto this rope.

B : Now, I'm moving in sequence.

BERNARD RILEY If you Look at the rope, the rope runs right up into the corner.

B : O.K. That's this man.

BERNARD RILEY : The rope is what does it; -it brings the composition down and around and into almost, the carriage. See how that works out? The rope brings that curve down and into the figures of the carriage, and the reins that the

driver is using carries those lines over into the horses. The whole thing sweeps across that corner right into the back panel.

B : : What I was trying to do, I was just trying to identify figures. I've got six figures up there. You mentioned four. There are the four down below the Nimrod and I was counting the two above the Nimrod.

BERNARD RILEY : You're counting the other figure of the dockworker with them. That would be another figure; it sort of works in with the larger [ones]. And then there's a figure associated with the lady, another dockworker with his hat.

B : : Yes. O.K.

BERNARD RILEY But, that ties together with the lady with the flowers, with the seagulls, sort of brings that whole thing back to the Nimrod again. In fact, up in the corner there's a movement — B : I was just losing that one person.

BERNARD RILEY : There's a movement of his lower body; he's bending. It's hard to see. Tom Thumb is involved in that figure. But, you're sort of looking through figures and seeing and seeing the smaller figures. It gets a little bit [complicated].

B : : When I just come down and look at it, I see different things and I see whole sections. Today I'm trying to identify things, and by separating them, you lose the continuity of the whole thing, you know.

B : : You do if you concentrate on a certain part. There's a building behind Tom Thumb and his family, too, that's a shipping office for the Nimrod. Then, coming around that corner is a large geared wheel; it's being used for hauling and hoisting — it's a hoisting piece of equipment. See, there's a large beam that hangs down across the bow

of the Nimrod, and a chain arriving from that region right off that. It brings your eyes right up almost out of the panel and down that rope into the composition on that side.

B : : How do you do that? I mean, when you're drawing it, do you separate one thing from another perspective?

BERNARD RILEY : In this superimposing?

B:

BERNARD RILEY : No. It's just by intuition and by feel, the desire to incorporate all these things and to make them move together. Sometimes there are counter-movements and sometimes the action encounters another actor. So, it becomes a little disturbing. But, that counteraction sort of builds up a little excitement.

ALAN CHALK : Well, I was just going to follow up on Betty's point there. I believe she's asking you as I've asked you a number of times, what leads into the procedure — whether or not you work all these images at once or whether you work your overlay one level at a time. Was that what [you had in mind, Betty]?

B:

BERNARD RILEY : Actually at home on an easel painting I work the whole thing together. What happens on an easel painting is I begin to create a figure, but then within that figure I see some line. It might be just a part of an arm, which gives me a lead into some other form. Here, I'm actually working figure over figure, because the organization almost requires it be identified more clearly.

ALAN CHALK : Like a kind of

BERNARD RILEY : It's a kind of struggle.

B : : First you put the : and you build up there.

BERNARD RILEY : That's the way it's actually done. I draw it on tracing paper first, and get that on the wall, get the one section. Then later the second one with tracing paper over it and draw it out. Being able to see through the tracing paper on the other hand and know what I have underneath it and then trying to organize it so that it becomes a composition despite the point that it is superimposed [is the way it works]. It may sound a little bit difficult



to understand; but, what you're ~searching for here isn't chaos. You're really searching for the thing to be organized, for the ability to read -it and yet be exciting, to understnad it and yet be exciting enough to move the figures. It's a complex method. It's never been used, to my knowledge, for anything of this dimension.

ALAN CHALK : I want to take a giant jstep. One of the fascinating questions is:

What is the relationship between one event and the other, and working in this type of a mural, we can only work in terms of the proximity or the relationship. So, if you're a historian, you took for a causal relationsh~ip; if you're an artist, you look for an aesthetic relationship. So, you begin to put things together Like a historian or a political scientist would not. You get a kind of iner<<interpretation by the juxtaposition of figures and events; and from that motifs begin to ernr<<emerge right through, what talked about as the choreography of movement. I find it fascinating. Actually, certain motifs begriiin to set up a kind of tapestry withn the group<<entire mural to 'interpret' Bridgeport. For example, you've mentioned —and I missed that — Betty, that the peo(ple are bigger than the events.

That's a great point! I'm not sure : we'll have to see. We've got to come to that area. But, certainly the people are much larger than the events and secondly, we are very much aware of architecture at various points. I think this was your interest. There are places that seem to be landmarks. Also, in additirbon to the pop<<people, there is tej<<<

people, there is the occupation and activity of the people. So, transportation is obviously one of the strong motifs running through. And I tell you, Bud, we were looking at slides and my camera is too dman confining. I realize now that the first train — what is the

that is not quite —

BERNARD RILEY : The Charles Cooper.

ALAN CHALK : The Charles Cooper. That is going to be a tough one to find. And we have that huge locomotive there. That dominates a Large portion of —

BERNARD RILEY : Of course, it dominated the city, too.

ALAN CHALK : A—I right. And, of course, the horses and the carriage there; the first airplane up there; the first dirigible.

BERNARD RILEY : That was a point. I have that piece at home. We were going to straighten that out. Do you remember who that man was?

: : : Professor Richtell.

BERNARD RILEY : Professor Richtell. And that was the first dirigivie to be mechanized. Probably.

BERNARD RILEY : Do you know what he might have used in that? I'm not sure. It might have been helium.

BERNARD RILEY : It might have been helium.

B : : And was he ~Bridgeport, too.

BERNARD RILEY : He was Bridgeport —<<<

BERNARD RILEY He was Bridgeport —B : See. I didn't kow<<know that about the firi<<dirigible. I thought

that was teh one that flew over the stadium~ every afternoon<<< that was the one that flew over the city and someone asked you to put it in. [Laughter]

BERNARD RILEY What was that? The big one, the —B : The Gra<sup>4</sup>Spee.

ALAN CHALK The Hindenburg.

ALAN CHALK : You see, the problem is what I just did there was analytical; but, that's not the way Bud works. He works more intuitively. So, the relationship between people and events and the emergence of these motifs is more a kind of innocent or unconscious process. So, it's really an interpretation of Bridgeport by feeling.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, it is.

B : : I felt that right along.

br; : This is the reason I like to have Alan talk. He can put these things together better than I can.

ALAN CHALK : You know what I'd like to do, while Charles is here, to go into the [Octagon] House which fascinates me. I don't think we really talked about the history or particularly the story around that, the story that's emerging from this family album. I wonder what we can find out about

C : : We said a little about him, not too much.

ALAN CHALK : What's the date on it, for example?

C ; 1856.

the name of Orson Fowler who someone who reads the bumps your head over here, you're was America's leading on your head — if there going to be a criminal c books and things like that. And just as a sidel. going to design the perfect house for 4[America He had all this rationale that birds build their a round hive. So, nature's perfect building for a number of other interesting ideas like — this American was going to run out of trees within time he decided he was

5] : to live in.

d nexts and bees built

ri-is are spherical; and was in the 1850's —

And what's the story? How — to come up with a different building material, and what could be more

perfect than concrete, because what you do is you dig the gravel out the foundation and you mix it with lime, and voila, you have this wonderful building material that has all these properties

twenty—five cents to go through it (<

twenty—five cents admission for people to go through it and had people backed up for blocks to see the house. It's very interesting on the inside; again, that is, according to legend — the earliest documentation I have for that is in the 1920's, the whole story. According to a title search I did, the whole house was built for a guy named Nathan

who owned a clothing store on State Street. And Barnum's name isn't on any deed or any place. bought the lot in January of 1856, and specified on the deed that a house had to be built

so many square feet within a year. So, I'm pretty sure that the date would be 1856, and it is on the 1858 map. The inside is probably one of the finest examples of octagon houses\* left in the country. There are a couple hundred left in the United States. Probably about half of them are in New York state. It's got four large rooms on each floor, which are hexagonal, and four smaller rooms which are

which are triangular. The triangle-shaped rooms are where the single

window is, the doorway is and the sidewalk. There are two windows to a side, and that's why on the hexagon rooms the large windows you can see just to the left of the door, from floor to ceiling, and the

bottom half slides up, and goes right up into the wall. There's a cupola that you can see on top of the roof, and there's a spiral staircase that goes up to that. It's pretty much a central ventilating system : function you open up the

windows in the cupola in the summer and you open up the windows in the

22

Lower rooms, and it just creates its own drafts. The heat rises and it just sucks in the breezes from every direction and it cools the house off. It's never hotter than seventy-five degrees during the summer when it's ninety-eight degrees outside.

What's it like in the winter?

C : : In the winter you can close off the entire staircase so your heat doesn't go out. And all the outside walls, as you can see right between the two windows, there's a chimney on every wall. So, the place is set up for wood stoves or coal stoves, whichever. It's very fuel efficient, and cost me like eight hundred dollars last winter.

Are there fireplaces in it?

C : : There are mantelpieces in it; but, at the time he built that house, only the poor people burned wood in fireplaces and the rich people burned coal in little elegant French stoves.

: : : That's the way the house used to be.

C : : So, I got the mantles which are more or less traditional and the stove will fit right into them.

And this house is built out of the gravel used for the foundation. So, this is the first of the octagon houses?

C : : No. There's a so-called octagon house in Washington, D.C. that's 1814, but, in Fowler's book that came out in 1856, the year that this house was built, there's the floor plan of this house, and he calls it the best plan yet, because what he had done originally was to say, let's build an octagon house and he had tried to partition it off with no idea. He put a lot of crazy closets in it and tried to get square rooms somehow.

23

tried to get square rooms somehow. But, to have this cross plan of the hexagonal rooms with the four triangles adjoining really seemed to work well. Another thing, the front doorway is in a little triangle shaped hallway, and when you open the door in the winter, all the heat doesn't go out, because it just opens into this little hall. Most houses at the time were built, you know, with a long formal hallway with the sweeping staircase and everything, and when you opened the door, a lot of heat went out. But, they did think about those things in the 1850's.

Incredible plan!

C : : It really works.

ALAN CHALK : It opens up every side to the sun a little bit.

C : : Yes, and whatever direction the wind is blowing, you can catch the breeze.

ALAN CHALK : All you have to do is make it revolve.

C:<< Was there more property attached to that house?

C : : No, there never was.

BERNARD RILEY : That was it. It was just a seventy—five foot square lot.

B : : Did you ever find out how much it cost to build?

C : : Probably not much less than it cost me to buy.

ALAN CHALK : Did we talk about the event, the story you've depicted there, the family?

BERNARD RILEY : You see, I was under the impression —— apparently it wasn't true —that Barnum lived in the house for a short period.

[End of Side A]

C : : family. I did some research on him. His first wife died just before the house was built, and he got married again

shortly after the house was finished. He spent tons of money on it. He was always taking out second mortgages and third mortgages and so

on. He ended up, I guess, in 1862 moving out to Minnesota, and it was sold to a guy who owned a department store at the corner of East Main and Barnum Avenue.

B : : Yeah! Now, I can figure out which side is what now. : And where was the money going? To keep the house?

C : : I don't know. It's hard to figure out from records in the town clerk's office. But, apparently, this guy from Bridgewater, Connecticut, David Wooster, owned one of the mortgages on the house, and when moved out to Minnesota, Wooster moved down from Bridgewater. He lived in the house for about ten years, and then he built a little house right next door and lived in it. And according to legend, the house was just a monstrosity and he couldn't stand to live there. So, he rented it for another ten years or so to a surgeon who had his office on the first floor and, I guess, lived on the second floor. Abner Abernathy. After that, it became a rooming house.

C : : Yes. On the inside I've got it back to the condition it was in in 1856 or even better than that, because they really didn't know what they were doing when they built it. There were a lot of structural flaws in it from the beginning which have been corrected. I've taken every bit of paint off the woodwork.

There was a great deal of wood in that building?

C : : Well, the woodwork was pine. It was always meant to be painted; but,

the paint was like an eighth of an inch thick and it covered all, the detail. It just had to be

It must have taken an awful lot of work.

C : : Yes. To strip one side off one door takes about six to seven hours. And there's an awful lot of wood in there, not to mention the doors and windows.

: : : Were they in decent shape, the windows

C : : Well, a lot of them had to be replaced after the fire. But, of the original ones that are left, there's no trace of rot or anything.

BERNARD RILEY : We can go back now to this beginning of the back wall, the upper left—  
: hand corner : The figure you see of one of

those workers, crosses over that corner and sort of brings that whole action into that back panel.

: There's a fire there in that back panel that I was going to ask you  
: about, because there was a fire in 1845 that : burned out sections of  
: Water Street.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, that was : they were wood frame  
: buildings kind of like some of the [onion] : warehouses that were still  
: standing in Southport or some of the : buildings you see in the center  
: of

C : : Well, like you've got there — sailmakers, oyster and so on and so forth. I just did some research on Bill Finch's house. He's got the last federal period sea captain's house — we always called it the sea captain's house in the city.

26

And that, it turns out, was moved about 1871 from where the Jenkins [Bell] Factory was. It was owned by a guy named David Carrey. I was going crazy trying to find out about David Carrey. The only mentions that I found were that he owned three buildings that were burned down in a fire. And finally, after tracking down a million different leads, I found an obituary of his wife. He, unfortunately, died before there was a daily newspaper; he died in the 1860's, and her husband was formerly one of the most prominent citizens in the city, and was very active in the whaling business, and used to finance all these whaling ships

Another thing I found was — I think it was a town meeting or something — he gave them permission to boil oil on his dock.

I suppose

C : : Whale blubber

BERNARD RILEY : The reason I used the fire—the fire there was that after the fire, really that business moved right up to Main.

C : : That's one historian's interpretation which I don't completely buy, because right after 1845 Water Street was rebuilt, it was really fine granite and brick commercial buildings, which were still around until a few years ago.

And these were still commercial buildings, and they were still leading to the harbor.

C : : Yes. Main Street was where they would put a sn~azzy hotel or a sn~zzy shop; whereas Water Street still where you would go downtown and you know, buy a side of beef or something.

So, it really remained almost as it was. C : Right.

C : : Right.

The same business area. How many buildings —

ALAN CHALK : Did you say until just a few ywar<<years ago?

C : : Yes. When they built l-ike a railroad station. This is about 1974. : And a newere building the fire buildings were there.

C : : Abut<<About the 1830's.

How many buildings were burned down?

C : : Probably about thirty—five or forty.

And I know the remark was made that some people were happy they were gone; they weren't worth But it did put people out. And the old man climbing down the lajdder there with his possessions —— rocking chair and his —— was among those people that were burned out. And the lady below him with the lantern —— the reason I used the lantern was to indicate that the fire took place at night. It was on a December night. They were in a really poor position, because they coulrlidn't get water from the harbor. It was Low tide and all they had was mud flats there. So, they had to use~ a bucket brigade and try as best as they could to reduce the fire. They did contain it by throwing water over the buildings that weren't already burni~ng and protected them and sort of halted the fire that way. Now, we come down to the railroad just below that. Now, there is a difference (here. That fire took place in 1845, and the railroad is 1842. So, the wall doesn't really read

from top to bottom. : The railroad was

completed -in 1842, and a train took off from Bridgeport and went up to And, of cour~se, they had a band which worked all

day. Quite a ceremony. This —— the best I could figure out —— was a engine. It's called a Sandusky engine; it came out of New Jersey. They did, I kow<<know, in 1842 buy two Sandusky engines. Did you ever find a reference to the type of engine?

ALAN CHALK : No.

BERNARD RILEY : Because the newspaper ads were current at the time, [and] it does show an~ engine and several cars. But that engine aLso was bin<<being used, this for the Albany railrao<<railroad. So, apprently, it was just a cut that was picked up by the newspaper to be used. It really din't<<didn't have anything to do with the

The fact that they did b~uy two Sandusky engines would indicate that it ~was quite possible that that was the first engine. Then, coming down in that corner, the large sequence thereis<<there is —— I don't know whether the word sequence there is proper to use —— is the Republica Farmer. That was the first daily paper in 1853. Would that be early for a daily paper?

ALAN CHALK : Oh, yes. The Standard didn't start up until —

BERNARD RILEY : That was the first daily paper, The Standard?

ALAN CHALK : Yes. I think the Farmer was like twice a week or something.

BERNARD RILEY : It was a hand—printed paper; it was hand—type4l set. I underst—od it was the first daily paper.

ALAN CHALK : What's this woman doing, Bud?

BERNARD RILEY : She was probably one of the family that was a typesetter.

ALAN CHALK : A woman?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes. That was a surprise, because I did come across an indication that ladies 4did take part in  
owkr<<working in an o<sup>4</sup>fice like that, you  
29

know, at quite an early point. And in that organization there is the press, which is a hand—operated press. That's what  
this large in back is doing, turning the handle on this press. And the young man standing a4bove him is one of the printer's  
dev\*its, and they're wearing the cap so typical of printers. They just simply took a piece of newspaper andf=+<<<

of newspaper and folded it 4~into a hat. It was a dirty, oily job, and they did the best they could to keep themselves from  
getting comp~Letely covered with ink. And the cat below, the cat would suggest someone came in. I mentioned the dog  
in the wagon here. And someone noticed the dog and said, "Well, shy don't you have a cat? Why not a cat?" And this was  
—B : Ceil Smith.

BERNARD RILEY : Ceil Smith.

B : : The cat has since died.

BERNARD RILEY : She brought in a picture of the cat.

ALAN CHALK : These other two figures, the young man with the glasses and the man

wit<<<with the tall hat<<<

with the tall hat, are they a part of the : seq4uence  
: or are they —

BERNARD RILEY : They're part of the part of the printing sequence. : Remember, we spoke  
: about that. And we haven't got the slide that catches him.

ALAN CHALK : You see, the problem is my slides begin to fragment : -it. But, this  
: man over here holding the paper is the owner?

BERNARD RILEY : He's the editor.

B : : And the next slide his dajughter or wife?

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, probably part of the family.

ALAN CHALK : So, there are three young men working there. Who is this other man with the What does he represent?

BERNARD RILEY : The other man is real upset by something that came out inthe<<in the paper. Either his name is  
misprinted — that's why the expression is on the printer's devil's face. The young fellow standing above, putting the  
paper down o the press is quite amused by alt this excitement going on. The editor is paying no attention at all. But, these  
little stories that we're getting into are the Little stories that move about in these groups. These gt~roups irjillustrate a  
point in history and yet they also carry sort of lit(tle humorous stories. This man complain4iing, whatever, one way or  
antoher<<another, his name misprinted or something of the sort; his ad wasn't correctly printed, and he's raising a real  
lot of fuss, much( to the amusement of the pirnter<<printer's devil.

B : : I was just going to say that all the figures above the railroad scene are all part of the fire scene.

BERNARD RILEY : All part of the fire scene.

B : : O.K.

BERNARD RILEY : And there is — it's difficult to see — an old pumper in there. These are volunteer firemen, and they were very particular about the companies and they were competitive. They made a big thing about trying to get to the fire first. They were often given a special reward for getting there early. And they were particular about their equipment. I was surprised to find that they were wearing helmets at that time, fire helmets very much like the ones we have today. There hasn't been

much change. In that tangle of lines there is the pumper, and this man with the cap is one of the pumpers. They were volunteer firemen, but, also in this fire, people on the street who were apt to be passersby would take part in trying to help put out the fire.

B : : My interrupting you, you were about to go into the scene behind the printer.

BERNARD RILEY : We were talking about the print shop there. You're looking through the print shop, through two windows that act as a kind of a grill there to sort of hold that whole thing together. You're looking through these windows across the old Stratford Avenue Bridge. Along the Stratford Avenue Bridge part of it was a causeway. There were docks, and those docks were there up until — I can remember some of those docks still being there. Mostly fishing boats would come in there, and oystermen, I suppose. Do you have much the same thing in

: : That's oysters. This was the sea oyster capital of the world in the Late 1800's.

BERNARD RILEY : Sea oysters?

ALAN CHALK And the oyster beds between : and Stratford Point pretty much the whole coast off Bridgeport, is supposed to be a natural growth bed

the largest natural growth bed north of Chesapeake Bay. Bridgeport oystermen are known as the natural growers.

oyster up over to Long Island or whatever.

BERNARD RILEY What's the difference between natural growth and — C: Well, it's either a natural growth bed where you just go out and take

whatever you want or a bed that you plant and cultivate. : What happened to it?

C: It's still there.

: : It is really. Is it productive?

: : It sure is. Every day there are oyster boats off Seaside

BERNARD RILEY : That was a big industry. As a matter of fact, that building that you see there on the wharf, there is a sign "oysters."

: : What happened was right around the turn of the century — I think it was 1904 — there was a big scare, because a few people died from eating bad oysters; and it just almost killed the whole oyster industry. And before that, supposedly, in this area more oysters were eaten per capital than beef on a pound for pound basis.

BERNARD RILEY : When Lincoln came to visit and had his first oyster dinner, he had it at the



B : : You had the refrigeration to transport them

grow there.

: : I was just noticing in the city directory from the 1800's there was firm on Pembroke Street, and they referred to them as "purveyors of oysters to California." They'd just pack them -in barrels and ship them by train.

What about refrigeration? Maybe in dry ice?

: : No. They'd just ship them dry. That's amazing.

I've got some oysters in my refrigerator that have been there for a month and they're still alive.

BERNARD RILEY : One of the things in doing this Stratford Avenue Bridge was that it was part a covered bridge. There was a covered walkway across it.

: I've seen that with the : Street Bridge. I think it was about 1869 in that illustration of Bridgeport.

BERNARD RILEY : This turning part of the bridge, the part of the bridge that is open, cuts over ——Is that the one that's over there now at Pleasure Beach?

ALAN CHALK : No. That was the Yellow Mill Bridge.

BERNARD RILEY : That was the Yellow Mill.

BERNARD RILEY : Well, we've talked about the Octagon House; we've talked about the Lady with the lantern These are the things that you

to, I think. Some of the other areas you're going to have [fights over].

B : : I think when you have a close-up. Alan, you have that one picture where you have a close-up of that lady with lantern, and the anguish in her face is very

ALAN CHALK : I was thinking about that a moment ago. I was wondering what the emotional dimension of the whole mural would be. We're certainly moving from great anguish from the fire down to the a kind of comic scene to anger in the print shop. I wonder if we could carry it across whether we do reveal the entire spectrum of emotional existence?

B : : I think you leave emotion here some place and from then on ——

ALAN CHALK : More static figures.

B : : Yes. As Bridgeport started to build, you were intent on the building and the machinery mostly.

BERNARD RILEY The machinery, [Yes]. Although there are some ——B : Well, you've got the lady with the lantern the

BERNARD RILEY The lady with the lantern : the story of the which is kind of a sentimental story. But, it all deals with people. We're talking about people; you talk about people, you're talking about emotions.

B : : Yes. And I suppose when you get to the Civil War, the boys marching off is an emotional scene. But the expressions on the faces —

ALAN CHALK : Architecture, line and machinery begin to dominate the people over here.

B : : The Industrial Revolution — going from one era to another. : I guess it's intuitive.

BERNARD RILEY : You might talk about the Charles It sort of follows here along the bottom of the print shop scene. The Charles was built in Harbor. This was, again, Charles suggestion that I might use that because it was considered one of the better wood ships.

C : : Well, not only that; but, it's still around. It's the only American— built clipper ship from the 1850's that is. It was trying to get around Cape Horn in the 1860's, and got damaged in a storm or something, and went back to Island which is just off shore here. They took the masts down and turned it into a warehouse. The water from the Islands gets as warm as like 38 degrees in the summer and as cold as 34 degrees in the

winter; so it's in a constant refrigerated state. So, it's preserved the wood. It was recently acquired by South Street Seaport Museum of New York, and it's been called the finest work of nineteenth century carpentry that remains. It is supposedly as important to the United States as the is to Sweden and the Cutty Sark is to England. And they want to bring it back to New York and restore

it. : They had heard that it was built in Blackrock, Connecticut, and just assumed that this was some little outpost that just folded up completely. I just happened to read the story in the New York Times that they found the boat down there and that it was built by Captain William Hall of Blackrock, Connecticut. That always stuck in the back of my mind. When I was at South Street Seaport, I just started asking questions. It turned out that they had magazine articles about it and everything. We were able to get a couple of eight by ten glossies of it, one of which is the — I wish I knew a little bit more about boats — I'm going to call it the back carving — Sternboard, I guess, would be a word for it.

C : : There's probably a proper name for it. It was really elaborately done.

BERNARD RILEY : It was all hand-carved. That's taken from one of the pictures that Charles got.

C : : The ship's historian from South Street Seaport came up to look at Black Rock, and he said it was the best collection of buildings associated with shipbuilding in wood that there is in the United States south of Maine.

B ; : Mary Louise : had that in her : yesterday.

Did you see that

C : : Yes. That's a quote from Norman Grower from South Street Seaport, which was quoted by her in a newspaper story about two years ago.

Where was this? In the Limelighter or something?

B:

ALAN CHALK : There's no relationship between the [Cooper] and this ship down (here?

BERNARD RILEY : No. It's ju(st another hou<<ship of almost the same type.

C : : The house you can see the+re is Captain Hall's house, which overlooked the shipyard and is still standing now on Street.

BERNARD RILEY : This is the house that made the front page.

B : : That's the one that made the front page! [Laughs]

BERNARD RILEY Old Captjain : must have turned over in his grave.

B : : Poor man! [Laughs]

BERNARD RILEY : But that's the building.

B : : A Lot of flower ladies were there. [Laughter]

BERNARD RILEY : Right. The ship itself is not related to the smaller one — it's only the stern. It was probably a similar ship, though.

ALAN CHALK : But, it is the Black Rock Hifab<<Harbor?

BERNARD RILEY : That's the Black Rock Harbor.

ALAN CHALK : Was this ship built there, too?

BERNARD RILEY : It could very 4'well have been, because they were building several ships there.

: : : There were four shipyards there.

ALAN CHALK : I bet it was.

ALAN CHALK : I bet it was.

br; And then there<<<

BERNARD RILEY : And then there's a wagon behind it, the type of wagon that might be used in this area. Then there are several smaller boats in the harbor, and also a warehouse. Of course, above that is the Octagon House and Barnum standing Barnum and Noble standing alongside just to the left of Barnum; and it was Barnum and Noble that began to develop the East side just at the time the Octagon House was built along with the Octagon House. Someone came in a week a-f-go and ~mentioned the fact that there was a great deal of difficulty between the East Side and the East End. And somehow or other I mis+sed that thjere was a distinction.

B : : There is indeed a distinct difference between the West Side and the West End, too. I was talking to a girl who is in housing, O.D.A.,

and she said that when she goes out into the community and has to deal, she deals with entirely different prob~lems with the Ea-(st Side than she deals with in the East End. That<<They're just separate.

BERNARD RILEY : Welt, there's Yellow Mill in between them.

B : : Right.

BERNARD RILEY : Then, right up against the ceiling there's Barnum and Tom Thumb. In between that is Elias Howe and his wife and son. Elias Howe is working on the sewing machine, and that sewing machine is a drawing of the first sewing machine that he built. He was working at the time trying to beat a deadline, because he was being followed by

a half a dozen other people that were after the sewing machine. He had quite a struggle in proving his patent and fighting for it. Do you know about that story?

: : I just know that there were a lot of people who claimed they were first, and that Howe really didn't have the idea first, that he sold the idea. This goes back and forth.

BERNARD RILEY : There were three or four others that were so close, and Howe evidently did take some of his ideas from a previous machine that hadn't been so very successful. He made improvements on it and developed this machine of his own. Then, of course, other people came along almost at the same time and taking some things developed from him and developed their own ideas. So, -it was a pretty confused issue. But, he finally wound up with the patent and was given credit for it. He did build a factory; he did build a business out of it. It was fairly successful for a while; he wasn't much of a businessman and had to work out money problems. That was his building. He built a sewing machine company, didn't he, Charles?

C : : Yes, he did.

BERNARD RILEY : That's where the textile company

B:

BERNARD RILEY : The picture is of him and his wife. He was working night and day as they say, at the time, trying to perfect his machine before someone else got hold of it. Above that is Barnum and Tom Thumb on their return from Europe [when] they gave this whole benefit performance

for the Ladies Aid Society. This Ladies' Aid Society is still in existence.

It was founded in 1810 or something.

BERNARD RILEY : 1830 something; the date isn't on here.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, in the

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, in the 1830's. I think] 1837. But, they raised three hundred dollars. Tom Thumb was called the "Prince of Bridgeport."

B : : Oh, really.

BERNARD RILEY : He was a very popular little guy, very clever. He pulled Barnum out of bankruptcy at the time or near bankruptcy. He was pretty shrewd with his own money. He finally went into touring on his own. Just to the right of that Abraham Lincoln appears. No, this is

Would you like me to carry on?

B : : Yes,

BERNARD RILEY : Abraham Lincoln appears here in 1844. We went through that, Charles, that according to the history there, the one written by

C:

BERNARD RILEY : That he appeared here twice. Do you remember that discussion we had?

C : : No. I think the only time he was here was in 1860.

BERNARD RILEY : 1860, rather.

: And according to : he came here in 1864; that was

after he was elected President, after he served one term. He came here on a tour to be re—elected and campaigned to be re—elected. Apparently, that wasn't true. But, the reason I selected it — I didn't know it at the time — but, I took 1864 because he wore

a beard at that time. And if I had presented him in 1860, everybody would have come in here and looked up and said, "Oh, that's Jasper McCleevy." So, in order to make him look like Lincoln he should have the beard. But, I went along with the whole story and I put the in there and a big banner, "Re—elect Honest Abe." I carried the whole thing to the limit. There's the Band that is involved in it.

B : : We can call this a mural or facts and fantasy! [Laughs]

BERNARD RILEY There's enough information that it's almost hearsay, I guess. But, I wasn't the only one [who thought he had been here twice]. There was a man named who brought Lincoln here — B : and say, "Boy, don't ever hire me for anything like this!"

BERNARD RILEY : The man that invited Lincoln here was confused at the date himself, and he gave the wrong date in a newspaper -interview. So, I'm not the only one.

The First Congregational Church.

BERNARD RILEY : That's the first Congregational Church, and that was a problem to solve, too, because there are still photographs of the First Congregational Church that showed it without a steeple. I don't know how I discovered it. Oh, I know how I discovered it. The map there, the map of 1875. In Looking at the map I found the First Congregational Church, and it showed the church with a steeple. That sort of puzzled me until I discovered that there was a steeple when the church was built. But, then the steeple was taken down, because it was hazardous; and the photograph that I had was one of the later ones the St. Augustine's Church and the map. It shows St. Augustine's Church without a steeple. When it was first built, they didn't have the money to complete it. They didn't put the steeple on until a later date.

C : : The same thing with St. John's, except they kind of put a hypothetical tower on it. The church was built in the 1870's and the tower went on in it in the 1890's, and by the time the tower went on, the styles had changed. So, the tower really doesn't match the church too well.

BERNARD RILEY : Also, on that map is the church on Myrtle Avenue that burned a year before the map was finished. I think the church was on the map.

: The Congregational Church : was designed by a really prominent architect by the name of Richard Upjohn, who did stuff all over the country, and supposedly the Bridgeport church was so beautiful, the congregation in Charleston, South

Carolina, wanted to come up and copy the blueprints and build the same thing in Charleston. And whether it's still there or not, I have no idea.

This was the first

BERNARD RILEY This was the First Congregational?

C : Yes. It was in Upjohn's obituary in the Bridgeport paper.

BERNARD RILEY : It was an interesting building, and it stood just about almost in the position as it's pictured there; it stood on Broad Street.

C : : Where the : Book Shop was.

BERNARD RILEY Just behind —B : You know what I didn't see? The Black church. Where is that?

BERNARD RILEY : That's over here. We sort of skipped over it. It's in the corner. It's right on the shoulder of the man driving the carriage.

B : : O.K. I see it.

BERNARD RILEY : And this was the first Black church in the northern United States. They met right here as a congregation. Before they bought the property to build a church, which was on Street and Broad, they used to meet right here.

This was a Baptist church, right?

BERNARD RILEY : No. There wasn't any church here at that time. This was early on. : There was a Baptist church on this corner.

BERNARD RILEY : Yes, there was in years later.

But in the beginning before there was any building, why, they used to meet in the open under the big oak tree.

There was a settlement in the South End right around where the church was built (called Liberia. I guess that was for free Blacks. The censuses would just give their place of residence as Liberia.

B : : Well, it's interesting with Dave doing this Black genealogy

BERNARD RILEY : I was going to ask a little bit about the Black history of Bridgeport. Were there slaves in Bridgeport?

Oh, yes.

BERNARD RILEY : In the early 18? what?

B : : The 1790 census had slaves. But, I haven't looked at any since. I was just Looking at this one genealogy.

BERNARD RILEY : 1790 : in Bridgeport.

B : : But, then later, beyond that, Blacks owned businesses, had various

Df... : V[1~ really. wnd-c was ~ne

B : : Gee, I don't remember.

BERNARD RILEY : About the 1840's, '50's?

B:

probably.

B : : Someone commented that there were more Blacks in Fairfield then than there a\*re now.

: There's enough in the South End of Bridgeport for two churches.

Yes, there had to be.

It's interesting how the city directories will give ~people's occupatic

So—and—so, carpenter; so—and—so, merchant; so—and—so, colored — for

his occupation. : Yes.

For his occupation.

BERNARD RILEY : Was there any outstanding Black : We don't know.

Any particular history on it.

It's something that has got to be researched.

B : : They are beginning the research of Black families th(at lived in Bridgeport, and they are doing that by the cr~ensus and city directory. They have got to use the census before there~ was a city directory. flt's strange in the map of 1875 that those two churches are there on the map~, but they're not mentioned in the listing. The map lists all the churches. The bil<<buiLdings are on the map.

BERNARD RILEY : There are a lot of things about that map that are difficult to read, for instance. The firehouse at John Strc~eet — I couldn't figure out „il~4 • \_ III ' ~ \_ II~ VI~I ' — : '. ~ — , a tall bell tower. And the Prospejct School, I couldn't figure out what in the world one of the structures was on top of that, and that was a bell tower.

B:

BERNARD RILEY : I found it in a photograph. It showed the entire building; it showed

: the bell tower. One of the things that does there is : th

other, sortj of pulls that wall together. It isn't in the center; : : it's

: offside. But, the organization of it works.

B : even from the floor down here you can see little

buildings that look like little buildings.

BERNARD RILEY : And you can see the harbor there. Actually every building is in there that's in that map, and that's every building in the city of Bridgeport on the entire map. This only goes from St. Augustine's that's at the

: upper left at : to the upper right.

: That's the extent of the map. : Of course, the map upstairs goes

: 4further than that.

BERNARD RILEY : It's about. But, every building is in there. I was going to get : back

: to the map being so small it was hard to understand

: It's the Wheeler House; you couldn't really understand what the house  
: looked like. So, I took a photograph of it, and reproduced it on the  
: wall here so that you can. Now, it has been: You  
: can't see it, of course, from the floor; but, being: photogra<<photograp  
: you pick it up. So, you could identify that house at this point.  
: The strange part of it is that there's a factory right across the

street from it with smoke pouring out of its stacks.

BERNARD RILEY : This was true of all — I don't know whether it was steam or was it coal.

It was a shirt factory.

B : : Steam from pressing?

: : Yes, but they needed heat on the other hand ~to do all<<do all that; so, they would have to

They probably would burn soft coal. And this was true of so many factories. Right along Fairfield Avenue there were a couple of print shops. Of course, again, they used steam; but, there would be heat for that. And you would probably burn soft coal.

B : : Do you realize there are very few real historic landmarks going back to the mid—1800's There are probably none. Your house.

: : Look around the city

B : : Black Rock.

Black Rock is left pretty much the way it as<<was. Washington Park is left the way it was. There was a Lot around Washington Park at that time.

B : : Of course, my area is much later.

Yes, but even so, there are here and there — St. George's B : St. George's, yes.

: : And in the South End we've got a Lot that's real old. We've got a house in the Soth<<South End in the early 1600's. We've got Bill Finch's house which I mentioned before, which is 1826. You've got a

lot of stuff

BERNARD RILEY : So, where are we?

: : : Before the 1875

BERNARD RILEY : In a sense you have Barnum and Noble develop(<developing the East Side; then Barnum standing close to this map of 1875. He was mayor of the city at that time. So, that sort of ties together there. Just sort of below the map and into it is a horse—drawn trolley car. This saved a little bit, because the horse—dr4iawn trolley car was the West Stratfield Company. When they said they didn't have the East End represented there, I could point to the trolley car. West Startfield i.s part of the East End, right.

Yes.



BERNARD RILEY And this trolley car ran from : Cemetery from the railroad station, and that's what we have where we tie it together here. There's a young couple stepping off the trolley car there, [whom] I consider just newly—married. Then, over further to your right, there's a street cleaner and a policeman. The street cleaner is — it's all pretty dense in there and it's difficult to read. If we pick that up closer, we could see that the street cleaner is whistling, supposedly to the couple getting off the trolley car, maybe whistled the wedding march or something<<something to remind them they are really married. This

It was while I was working on it that I dreamed it up. You'd have to explain -it

but, I had fun with it anyway. Then, of course, coming down from the trolley car are soldiers, sailors

to be<<<

planned to be completed in 1876. But, it would wound up — do you remember the date?

Yes. It was finished in 1876, but it was supposed to be finished in 1867 or something like that. But, they were running out of money.

BERNARD RILEY : I know there was a bond lapse or money struggle, and that's what this was all about. This is supposedly the dedication day for the

and these little ladies have worked so hard in planning a—l of this, and on the day of dedication it rained all day long. They tried; they marched down to Seaside Park, but, by the time they had gotten to Seaside Park, it had just washed out. So, they had to come back into town and they held the ceremony of a sort up at a theater on State Street. The people really are soaking wet, and the sign draped across, The Ladies' Soldiers Aid Society, which was the same society that was helping the Civil War soldiers during the war. This is the monument as it was. It was had a beautiful marble figure in the center of it. It's missing today. That shows you how things disappear, never to be seen again, probably.  
: : : Whatever happened to it?

BERNARD RILEY : I understood it that someone threw a rope around it, hauled out of there and smashed it. I understand that parts of it are still at the parks department stored away somewhere.

: : : I know there were four : on the P.1. Barnum statue

BERNARD RILEY : They're long gone.

And a car came up and smashed them. into one of them; so, instead of

B:

BERNARD RILEY

B:

replacing the one, they took the other three off.

Typical

Did you want to go on?

Well, it's four—thirty<<four—thirty. If you want to.

, : ~'

V

48

B : : We probably can take another afternoon, and when other. I'm always here.

: I think we're going to find this is a Little bit B : Well, that doen

At least we're getting i.t down on tape. Then we somehow.  
we're through do the disjointed.

can transcribe it

BERNARD RILEY

ALAN CHALK : I've never seen any documentation of that. And it's really strange. I've read through all the 1850's  
newspapers; never anything about it. Not reference.

: