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Date: Interview recorded in 2010 about events ca. 1890

Description: Interview with Swans Islander Eva Wheaton about her mother and grandfather

Interview with Eva Wheaton about the quarries and her mother's times working at the island's quarry boarding house, ca. 1890

My name is Eva Wheaton and I live on Swan's Island. My grandfather was William Martin and he came from Scotland and he was here as a stone cutter. Came over first and went to Stonington and worked there and then he came down here to the island and worked in this quarry here, near the Minturn Loop. I believe my grandfather was some of the ones that did the drilling the holes in the stone for where they would put the dynamite to split the stone where they had to. And they used to have boats come into the quarry wharf down there and big barges used to come in and they had a track that they used to load up with the stone, take it down and then load the barges. And they'd go out quite often, they went to New York.

My mother was just a teenager herself and she used to work at the boarding house where the stone cutters from away stayed and she fed them each day. My mother's name was Rose Martin. She was probably twelve or thirteen when she was working there. She was from a family of thirteen and her mother died when she was six. She had a gall bladder attack and they took her to Rockland on this boat and she had the surgery done and she was up ready to come home. And ah, she died.

'Course they had the funerals right in the homes back then, she remembered that. And her brother was the youngest one, he was four. When they brought that casket in the house, and he wanted to get in and lay down with momma, 'cause he was too little to realize what was going on. But it was, it was very difficult for her, afterwards. But she rose above it, of course, she had to work, so that it gave her a place to live and be taken care of. She helped the woman that owned it, Betsy McDuffy, and she had to wash the dishes and helped take care of the bedrooms that the men used and helped with the laundry and everything that had to be done. And 'course dishes had to be kept washed all the time, wasn't paper dishes back then. She did a lot of baking and cooking the day before to be ready for the breakfast the next day for the men before they went to work. She always remembered—somebody got injured with the dynamite up there, while they were cutting stone. I think his name was Stinson Hooper. He came down to the boarding house but a he did get quite severely... 'Course, you took care of yourself and knew what to do and survived. But it's just a different way, now you all run for the mainland and take a trip off and get to a doctor as quick as you can, but it wasn't that way then. (laugh) So, it was just different.