Mrs. Louise Tankard, Bath Matriarch

By Mary Anne Haskell
(Some transcription by Mary Anna Silverthorne)

Mrs. Louise Tankard, June, 1994

Introduction

To the casual visitor, Bath may seem to be the town that time forgot. But ancient photographs and the memories of a
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life-long resident contradict this notion. Bath, the first capital of North Carolina, has undergone many changes since its incorporation on March 8, 1705. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Bath evolved from a frontier settlement to a thriving commercial center whose residents included doctors, lawyers, colonial governors, and even a notorious pirate, Blackbeard. The twentieth century brought a drastic decline in commerce in Bath, and most of the doctors and lawyers currently are only week-end residents. A few of the current residents of Bath have been there their entire lives and have witnessed the twentieth century evolution of Bath.

Mrs. Louise Tankard has resided on Main Street in Bath since her birth in 1906. Mrs. Tankard was a teacher in the Bath schools for many years and has been and continues to be an active participant in the social and religious activities of the community. In her eighty-eight years in the town, she has been witness to the changes—both good, bad, and tragic—that make Bath what it is today, such as three major fires, 1919, 1927, and 1928; the tragic sinking of a boat in 1916; and a steady influx of "new" people into the oldest incorporated town in the state. Through Mrs. Tankard, we have an eyewitness account of Bath—both then and now.

Life: Is this the house you were raised in?

Mrs. Tankard: No. I was raised across the street in what is now called the Glebe House. My father bought that when he was a young man and raised two families there.

Life: Have you lived right here on Main Street all your life?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, I lived in the Glebe House, this house, and I lived for two years in the house you're [Mary Anne] living in [in the next block on Main Street]. We rented the house down the street for two years while we were building this one. This house is 58 years old.

Life: Did your father build the Williams or the Glebe House?

Mrs. Tankard: No. He came to Bath from Edgecombe County. I never have been able to trace his history because he came here directly from the army. He was in the Civil War. Can you imagine? I'm a real daughter [of the Confederacy]. They say, "I can't believe you are a real daughter."

And I say, "Well, my father married my mother when he was an old man and she was a young woman." He raised a family over there [in the Williams/Glebe House], three girls and a boy. When his wife died, he and Mama married. He was sixty, and she was twenty-six. Quite a difference, isn't it?

Life: It probably made for a good marriage.

Mrs. Tankard: You know what my mother always said? "It's better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave."

Life: Will you tell us about the three fires in Bath?
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Mrs. Tankard: The first one was when I was about thirteen. Helen [Helen Brooks] was a baby at the time, and I'm eight years older than she is. I was born in 1906, so the first fire was about 1919. Then the next fire was in '27.

Life: Tell us about the first one. What burned in that fire?

Mrs. Tankard: That is the one that confuses me because there were three fires. I think that the Winfield store, the Carlton Archibald store, Dr. Nicholson's office, and a row building just attached to each other [burned]. In that building there were a blacksmith shop and another store and the post office, which sold groceries in the front part, and then a barbershop.

Life: Did they rebuild those buildings?

Mrs. Tankard: No. That burned up to Mason's store, which was left standing. We didn't lose any buildings on the opposite side of the street. But in 1927 the Winfields had rebuilt their little store; in fact, it was a big store. The Winfield store had a grill, and the second fire caught [started] from the grill.

Life: Where were those buildings? What is located there today?

Mrs. Tankard: The barbershop and the Steve Hoard house. That was where the Winfield store was, and right next to that was a big vacant store. The man that owned it, I guess now you would say, he had Alzheimer's. He was mentally unbalanced, and we were afraid of him. I can remember that.

Life: Where was the doctor's office?

Mrs. Tankard: Dr. Jack Nicholson's office was between the Carlton Archibald store and the row of attached shops. And that all burned.

Life: Sounds as if Bath had more commerce and activity then than it does now.

Mrs. Tankard: Oh, it did! Much more! Main Street was really our business section.

Life: Was the fire really spectacular?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, that fire was on Sunday morning, and my mother and I were staying down with my aunt, Helen's mother. I don't know what month it was but it was cold weather; I remember that. Somebody yelled, "Fire! Bath's on fire!" And when we went out, it looked like that end of town was all gone, just about.

Life: Did they have the horse-drawn engines?

Mrs. Tankard: No, they didn't have anything but the bucket brigade. Do you know what the bucket brigade was? Run down to the creek!

Life: Is that the way they put it out?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, and we had two teachers here from up in the western part of the state, and my mother often remarked on how hard they worked. They would run down to the creek just like the men did, and I reckon they were
St. Thomas Church, 1892. Construction began in 1734, completed in 1763.

the only women that were working. They would run down and get a bucket of water, hand it to a man, and then run back.

Life: So there wasn't any prevention?

Mrs. Tankard: No, no fire prevention and no fire trucks. We never had a horse-drawn fire truck that I know of.

Life: Was the blacksmith's shop active? Did a lot of the people have horses?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, really that little shop down there did a lot of mechanical work on farm equipment and things of that sort.

Palmer-Marsh House, about 1900; Marsh daughters posing
Life: I guess by that time there were a lot of cars around.

Mrs. Tankard: No, I don't think so. We used to think if we could own a car, we'd be rich. Dr. Nicholson and Mr. Tim Brooks were the only two in Bath who owned cars for a long, long time.

Life: Do you remember the first car you saw?

Mrs. Tankard: A Saxon. Do you remember the Saxon? They were real low to the ground, sort of a little sport roadster. That's the first one I remember. We used to hop on the running board and ride.
Life: The second fire was shortly after that?

Mrs. Tankard: No, the second fire was in 1927. I can almost stand on that date because that was the year I was married.

Life: Was this also a major fire?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, it was. The Winfields rebuilt their store. They built on the side of it what I call a shed, a narrow building. My husband rented that for a barbershop in 1927 when we were married. My husband had just gotten all the new equipment, mirrors and everything, on time, and they all burned. I remember that very clearly. We had an agriculture teacher who was coming to town across the bridge and saw the fire. He broke into the barbershop and pulled out one of the chairs by himself. After the fire was over, he could not move it.

Life: When was the last fire?

Mrs. Tankard: 'Twenty-eight, just about a year later. I think both of them were in the late fall.

Life: Was this fire in the same area?

Mrs. Tankard: I told you that the first fire got as far as Mason's store? Well, the Mason store was standing, and Jatha Marsh had built another store, a large store. He had a grocery store and some farm equipment, and next to this he had a drugstore. On the back, on the creek side, he had a long office that he rented to my husband for his barbershop. The drugstore was being operated by Mr. Marsh's wife, Vonnie. That was the town gathering place. Let me tell you about this third fire. The Marshes lived across the street. Next to Mrs. Marsh's house, there was a livery stable. At one time they kept horses there for traveling salesmen. Adjoining that was a room where they kept the food. Next to that was a two-story house with an upstairs porch. That house burned, the livery stable burned, and Mrs. Marsh, Jatha Marsh's mother, lived in a house set back from the street, about where the cleaners is now, and that burned.

Life: Do they know what started that fire?

Mrs. Tankard: I was trying to think who saw that. I think they had a dance that night upstairs in the Jatha Marsh store. After everybody left the dance, somebody saw sparks up there. The wind was blowing so that the fire just went across the street and burned all those buildings. They thought that maybe somebody left a cigarette or something at the dance. The Burbage store was where the Robersons live now. That was right on the street, and that was saved.
Life: When did they tear down the Buzzard Hotel?

Mrs. Tankard: I don't know. It hasn't been too many years, I don't think, but you know time flies so fast. At one time, Mrs. Ives, who was with the Historic Society, was interested in buying it and turning it into a tea room.

Life: You mentioned earlier that your gathering place was the drugstore. People don't do that kind of thing anymore. Tell us about how you got together and some of the activities you participated in.

Mrs. Tankard: In the afternoon after you did your home chores, then you would just drift down the street. That's where everybody was. You would want to be with the crowd, so we gathered there.

Life: Did they have ice cream sodas there?

Mrs. Tankard: They had a fountain--a nice fountain in the one that burned. And they did have, where the old ABC store and Post Office were, on the opposite side of the street, they had a drugstore in there with a nice fountain. When we would come from school or from work or from wherever we had been, we would congregate there. I would think if I couldn't be in the crowd that I would die!

Life: Wasn't there a movie theater here at one time?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. That was along there where all the buildings burned. Dink Tarkenton--I don't know if he was the first to operate that, but I think he was.

Life: Was the theater open during the days of the silent movies?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. But I didn't care much for the movies. We had a man in Bath who would talk out loud and tell you what was going to happen next. He would say, "Oh, he's going to catch him. He's going to catch him." He was more amusing to me than the movies. He was a great talker and expressed himself really well, and so it was interesting to listen to him. Of course, he irritated a lot of people because they didn't like to be told.

Life: What else did you do for entertainment?

Mrs. Tankard: We would gather in the homes. Somebody would play the piano, and we would sing. That was when we started courting. We also had a book club that met regularly. Now we have three book clubs in Bath: Olde Town, Heritage, and Colonial. A charter member of the Colonial is still in the club. The club meets twice a month, except in the summer when it disbands. We read and discuss books and take part in civic activities. In fact, in 1942, the club had a dance to raise money to buy a blanket to put on a boat named for Bath. And when the mayor of Bath, England, came to our Bath to celebrate the bicentennial of the nation, the book club, under the leadership of Dot Tankard, helped entertain him.

Life: Getting back to how you entertained yourselves, what about dancing? Or was that not acceptable?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, it was acceptable to some families. My mother didn't think a whole lot of it. In fact, she didn't want
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Woodmen of the World, about 1928

us to get too far away from home. When we were real young, we would go out on the street at night and play hide or something. And then when we got older and got interested in boys, we would sit on the front steps. The boys would dare each other to do things. In those days the old Town Hall was over here next to me, an A-shaped buildin.; and they would dare somebody to go over there and go upstairs. The jail was downstairs in the building. They would dare each other to go upstairs and get a book or go over and go in one of the two cells. We had one boy in the community who was scared of his shadow. He wouldn't go anywhere. It was just interesting to watch the boys. And the girls wouldn't go. We would just look. One time Lucille Townsend told me that they dared her to go to the Episcopal Church and bring back a hymn book. And everybody---the young people, you know---was afraid of the graveyard. So she went over there, and when she came back, she said, "There was a man standing at the back gate, and I guess it was Bud." That was my uncle, and he was called Bud by all the family and community around here. Lucille said, "I said, 'Good evening, Mr. Draper,' and he didn't say a word." Sister told her that it couldn't have been Bud because he was in Belhaven. He was a photographer and had a shop in Belhaven. Lucille said that she knew it was Bud, and he was dressed in his suit. This boy that was so scared almost had a fit because he thought there was a spook around. They did a lot of things like that.

Life: Was it your uncle?

Mrs. Tankard: No, he wasn't here. We told her that she didn't see anybody. And they would dare each other to go

Daisy Chain made by graduating class of Bath High School, about 1930
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over and kneel down on the grave and all kinds of things like that. That was all we had to do for entertainment.

Life: Did you go to school here in Bath?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. When I started school, our school was out in what we call the Town Commons, about half mile out there where the road turns to go to Possum Hill Road. The school was on the corner there. My mother was a very protective person, and she wouldn't let us walk out there. It was too far for children to walk. So we went to private school, and I didn't go to the public school until I was about nine years old. The first school I went to is what is now the Hookway house. At that time the house was on what is now Harding Street. Back then we called it Middle Street or Church Street. It was along there right across from the Fire Station. That was where I first went to public school. We had two teachers and that location didn't last too long before they moved to the Redman's Hall. The Redman's Hall was the two houses now on the corner of Main and Carteret, one on the corner and the other one next to it. Redman's Hall was a long building, which was later cut in two and made into two homes. Those two houses were all one and faced Carteret street on the lot next to the corner. On the corner was a drugstore. I went to school there until our school was built in 1921 with a high school.

Life: What do you think the big differences are between the way school was then and the way it is now?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, there are a whole lot of differences! Even when I started teaching in 1925, we had a water bucket with just one dipper. There were wood stoves, and the teachers were the janitors. I can't remember building a fire myself. I think maybe the committeemen [town council] built the fire. I taught in a two-room school on Slatestone Road the first year I taught. In fact, we had a wood stove the very first year we started out here at this high school.

Life: Did you have electricity in town then?

Mrs. Tankard: No. We had kerosene lamps for light and cooked on a wood stove.

Life: What did you do about refrigeration?

Mrs. Tankard: We had an icebox. Do you know what I mean? It was a wood box, and you put a block of ice in the top and put your food underneath. But I'm sure there were times when we didn't have that. We had a shelf in the breezeway when I was a girl, and I remember them putting milk and things up there to keep them cool. We also had a well, and Mother would put milk down there, sometimes, to keep it cool.

Life: Did you make your own butter?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, we made butter and also made clabber biscuits.

Life: Did you raise most of what you ate, or did you buy it?

Mrs. Tankard: There wasn't a lot bought from the store. We had chickens and pigs over there, and at one time we had a "No Fence" law, and the cattle and animals wandered around the street.
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Life: How did you know which animals were yours?

Mrs. Tankard: They would come when you called them. In that storm in 1913 the Brooks had a chicken house down next to the water, and that was a sight. All those chickens drowned.

Life: I've seen picture of the water on the streets of Washington after that storm.

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, and Belhaven was sunk. Now, it didn't come up too high here on Main Street, but it did come in yards and in the outhouses in the back.

Life: What were the subjects that you taught in school? Was the curriculum a lot different from what it is today?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, no, not a lot of difference. We taught most of the subjects you teach now. But we taught school! We didn't have time for reports and that sort of thing. All we had to fill out was our monthly report to the county superintendent. We didn't have any supervision or any aides or that sort of thing except, once in a while, the superintendent would come for a visit.

Life: Did you have good discipline?

Mrs. Tankard: Very good. The discipline has changed a lot in the schools.

Life: Why do you think this has changed?

Mrs. Tankard: I think there are a number of reasons. I think television has done a lot to hurt. It has also done good. But the parents are also more permissive than they have ever been. The children are hard to discipline. Their attitudes are so different. They are exposed to so many things that children were not exposed to [back then]. Their interest is not in school a lot of the time. It is in other things.

Life: Everybody that I have talked with, during the eleven years I have been doing this magazine, has mentioned this. It is a consistent idea of the older people that the discipline is just not in the schools today.

Mrs. Tankard: No, it isn't. You can talk to a teacher today, and they are all ready to quit.

Life: I think that is sad, but it seems to be the case everywhere. I'm old enough that I got whipped in school. I think they put teachers in jail now if they touch a student. I can remember people being whipped in assembly. The students would be brought up in front of the whole school and be disciplined.

Mrs. Tankard: Well, you know what some teachers did? I remember this, and I thought it was terrible. I still think it's terrible. The teacher would draw a ring on the board and would make the student go stand and put his or her nose in that ring. It was terrible on the eyes. Some of the teachers would make students stand in the corner on one foot. When I was in the seventh grade, I think, it was the only time I ever had to be disciplined at school. A girl passed me a note that said, "Do you have an envelope?" and I wrote "No" on the note and passed it back to her. The principal caught us
and made us both learn the first Psalm in the Bible. And I know it today! You just don't forget those things.

Life: Did they have the athletic teams—football and basketball?

Mrs. Tankard: No. When this school opened in 1921, they soon had an outdoor goal, but there was not a basketball team. It was just simply girls and boys going outside and throwing goals.

Life: Did they later have the six-man football teams?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, they had those before they had the eleven-man teams.

Life: Did you have an extensive bus system for the school?

Mrs. Tankard: I don't remember how many we had, but we did have buses, buses with curtains down the side. I did hear one of the boys who was in school at that time say that the bus drivers got paid six or seven dollars a month, something like that.

Life: Which church do you belong to?

Mrs. Tankard: The Methodist Church. I joined when I was nine years old. The original members of the church met in a building for a while and then built a Methodist church in the 1800's on the corner facing Harding Street, right in front of where the school is now. They built a church there, and it was used until they built the present one in 1892. The original church was sold or given to the Baptists. They operated there for quite a while, and then they moved on and the church was torn down.

Life: What were the services like at the Methodist Church. Were they different than they are now?

Mrs. Tankard: Not a great deal. The only thing that disturbed me and still disturbs me is when we have revival, some of the people would get real emotional. They would often go down in the congregation and beg somebody to go to the altar or join the church. That disturbed me, so I didn't like revivals for a long time.

Life: Who is the minister now?

Mrs. Tankard: Jerry Schronce. We have service every Sunday morning at 9:30. There was a time when we didn't have a service but once a month. Right now we're on a charge with Bethany. We have service here at 9:30, and then the minister leaves and goes to Bethany for the 11:00 service.

Life: Wasn't there a cemetery where the fellowship hall is now?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, it wasn't really a cemetery. There were just a few graves there, and they moved the bodies when they built the hall.

Life: Was this a burial place for members of the Methodist Church?
Mrs. Tankard: Yes, it was mostly people from the church that were buried there. There was actually one body left there. They moved the stone aside while they were building and then put it back and built a little fence around it. It just didn't ever grow as a cemetery. I don't know who the first one was who was buried there. But Captain Howard Brooks' wife was buried there, and they moved her to Washington before the hall was built. We have a private cemetery out here next to the Episcopal Church. When we sold the house to the Episcopal Diocese, we reserved some of the land.

Life: Was this used at the time by your family as a cemetery?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. My father was buried there and his first wife. My half sister is buried there too. She was sixteen when she burned. Her mother was ill, and she lighted a torch for the mosquitoes or flies [to repel them]. She was wearing one of those loose dresses, called Mother Hubbards, and she caught fire. I've been told that she ran out into the breezeway. Some men came running over and tried to pull her clothes off, but she wouldn't let them. She didn't die immediately. She died from inhaling the smoke. Her marker is out there in the cemetery.

Life: When was it that the cargo boat sank out here in the river?

Mrs. Tankard: Nineteen sixteen. Oh, my land, how I remember that! It was horrible! I will never forget how they tried to revive those people! It was a gas boat that took cargo and passengers from here to Washington. At this particular time, the boat was loaded with potatoes. At that time, potatoes were stored in barrels, you know. They were going from here to Washington [N.C.] with a load. Mr. Marsh, the man that owned the store, was on the boat. When they got over to Archibald's Point, they stopped to load on some more potatoes, and he got off. He just knew that boat was going to sink, so he got off there. There were five, I believe, that drowned.

Life: Did it just sink under the weight of the potatoes? Were they out in the creek?

Mrs. Tankard: They were just out from Archibald's Point, going out into the river. They brought those bodies in and put them on the wharf down here.

Life: Was it Bath men that drowned? Were some of them children?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. Maude Mason, Alice Mason's sister-in-law, was on the boat. She was going to Washington to take music. She went over every week on the boat for her lesson. There were two Brooks girls and a Woolard man that drowned. They brought them down on the wharf and did everything possible to revive them. They rolled them on barrels and held their tongues out and tried to give them artificial respiration.

Life: None of them were revived?

Mrs. Tankard: No, they had been in the water too long.

Life: I guess that was a terrible thing for the community.
The Marion sank in 1916 with tragic loss of life

Mrs. Tankard: Oh, my goodness, yes! It was shocking!

Life: Who was the captain or owner of the boat?

Mrs. Tankard: Captain Howard Brooks over here had operated several boats from here to Washington. I believe the boat that sank was the Marion. I'm sure it was. We've had some tragic things, and we've had some mighty good things to happen.

Life: One of my memories of Bath was the celebration they had in '54 or '55. It was a bicentennial or something with pirates, the floating play and little pirate hats for sale.

Mrs. Tankard: Oh, that was a spectacular thing. Edmond Harding directed that.

Life: That would have been the 200th anniversary?
Mrs. Tankard: No, 250th. It was right out here on this lawn, right next to me. I'm telling you that was really glamorous! Edmond didn't spare anything to put it on. The stage was right down there at the back, and, oh, he had celebrities here! It was outstanding. It was just a shame that it couldn't continue. It was a very good performance. It was "Queen Anne's Bell." That was the name of the little play they put on.

Life: Now, that's the bell that's actually older than the Liberty Bell that belongs to St. Thomas Church, right?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, I think that's right. I told you my memory wasn't very good.

Life: It sounds pretty sharp to me. Didn't they have a theater, a permanent theater, down past the marker?

Mrs. Tankard: It was where I told you the Redman's Hall was. When they discontinued school there, Braxton Burbage opened a theater there.

Life: For live plays?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, they had some traveling people come in for some plays, but it was mostly movies.

Life: Was that the Braxton that has retired here now?

Mrs. Tankard: No, his father.

Life: Tell us more about the theater.
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Mrs. Tankard: After the school was built, about 1921, they took Redman's Hall and operated a show there. And there was a drugstore right on the corner. The door was right across the corner, right at the corner of the building. We've had a number of drugstores. The two-story building that I told you that burned, with the porch upstairs, we had a druggist there at one time and had a drugstore there too, with a barbershop upstairs. So they moved around quite a bit. Mr. B. A. Brooks moved out up there, and where you [Mary Anne] live, next to your yard, there was what we called "Lover's Lane." That was the lane that went through from Main Street to Middle Street, what is now Harding Street. And we would walk to school through there. Mr. Brooks moved the drugstore there, put the second story on, and, of course, changed the building. It was more closely square when it was down at the marker. So he changed it and made a dwelling out of it. I think the first person to own it was John Brooks.

Life: I think so.

Life: What did the empty building next to the empty lot used to be?

Mrs. Tankard: The post office and drugstore.

Life: And when was that? When was it built?

Mrs. Tankard: I don't know when it was built, to tell you the truth. It was a post office until they built the one round on the highway. It moved, but I don't know the year.

Life: Do you remember the Bayview Hotel?
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porch across the front and down the side. Years and years before I can remember, they had a hotel there. The traveling salesmen would come in and spend the night there. And there was a livery stable right over here where Tiny Mason lives. There was a livery stable, and they'd put their horses over there in that stable for the night. I don't remember that. That's just hearsay.

Life: What about the Buzzard Hotel. Do you remember that being functional?

Mrs. Tankard: No. It's been a private residence ever since I remember it. The Skittleworthes lived there and owned it, and they had a daughter that never married. I remember her because she played the organ in the Methodist Church, and she was there for a long time. But I didn't know it when it was a hotel.

Life: The Bayview, wouldn't men go there to hunt and go fishing?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes, they did.

Life: I wish we had a drugstore and a doctor in Bath. Don't you?

Mrs. Tankard: We've had several doctors since 1950 talk about coming here, but it never materialized.

Life: We've got several doctors that live here, but none practice here.

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Mrs. Tankard: We will never get a country doctor like Dr. Nicholson. He traveled from house to house. He went in his horse and buggy for years. I don't remember the horse and buggy, but I remember him having a chauffeur and going in his car. He went on calls all out in the country. Anywhere anyone called him, he went.

Life: Did he live in what is now the Bed and Breakfast?

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. He lived there and had his office in a little house that the Godwins own now. He practiced there until he died.

Life: Was he the last doctor to practice in Bath?

Mrs. Tankard: No. Dr. Norman was the last, but we had two or three between them. Dr. Norman came and bought the Bonner House. He had an office located near Bath Creek. And he stayed here until he died. I don't know what year it was because his wife lived here for quite awhile after he died. She eventually went back to Enfield where they were from.

Life: What do you see as the biggest changes for life in Bath from when you were young to the present?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, I think one of the biggest things is nobody visits much anymore. When I was young, my mother was a visitor. She went to see all of her neighbors. And if she heard somebody was sick at the edge of town, she would go. My papa died when I was three years old. And I remember nights she would take us and go to see some neighbor. We visited around. I think that's one thing.
People have gotten so involved. There's not the close contact there was at one time.

_Life_: You mentioned earlier, television. Do you think that's had something to do with it?

_Mrs. Tankard_: I think that has a lot to do with it.

_Life_: A lot of people just stay home and watch TV. I heard one idea that's going along with what you're saying is air conditioning. People would sit out on the porch rather than stay inside.

_Mrs. Tankard_: Yes, we didn't have air conditioning, and we'd go down to Bonner's Point. There's always a breeze down there. You hardly ever go down there when there isn't a breeze. And we'd go down there as young people.

_Life_: You mentioned school. They don't have the discipline that they used to have. I guess that's been a remarkable change since earlier times.

_Mrs. Tankard_: Oh, you didn't have a great deal of trouble disciplining children way back. I think it's really become more and more of a problem as time goes on.

_Life_: Was Bayview the first area that had cottages and people just coming down for the summer?

_Mrs. Tankard_: Yes, it's the first settlement right around here that got started for summer people. Then they started building down on the river shore. I reckon it's built up from Washington to Bath almost.

_Life_: Yes it is. Well, it's just fairly recent that Bath has been getting a lot of new people coming in, isn't it?

_Mrs. Tankard_: Yes. Springdale Village is fairly new, and Catnip Point has been recently developed and, of course, Blackbeard's Cove just above it. And over here we have Blackbeard's View and Cool Point. Cool Point is a little older than those others, and Teach's Point on the other side of the creek. As people get in better situations economically, they have more money to spend for boats, and they like to get on the water. I think that's one thing that draws a lot of people here.

_Life_: A lot of these people, in these developments, are not local people. They come in from other places.

_Mrs. Tankard_: Oh, yes. There's a lot of residents in Bayview that aren't local people that have had places there for years. But down at Springdale Village, some of the people are early residents of Bath who just bought the property and moved down there. But Catnip Point is practically all people that have come in.

_Life_: Bath, apparently, early, had a lot more activity than it does now, with the stores and the doctor and the theater and all that.

_Mrs. Tankard_: People didn't have transportation like they do now. They had a lot to do. They didn't have means of getting out of Bath.

_Life_: Going from here to Washington would be a real trip back then, wouldn't it?
Mrs. Tankard: As I said, my father died when I was three years old, and then we went around to live in my grandfather's home. That's around there where the Gilberts lived. That's where my grandfather lived. And we went around there and stayed for several years. And I can remember him getting up before day and taking the pony and buggy and going to Washington. And, of course, we looked forward to that because he always bought materials to make us some clothes, and he'd bring candy. That's where we got our refreshments. And it would be dark when he got home.

Life: You were telling us about the boat sinking and the girl going for her music lesson, so I guess going by boat would be about the easiest way to go.

Mrs. Tankard: Yes. I have a clipping on that boat sinking. It really was told by William Mason, brother of the girl that drowned. I've read it and some things I didn't agree with and some things I think weren't right, but he told it as he saw it.

Life: Do you think that the town would be better if we could somehow encourage more young people with children to move in?

Mrs. Tankard: Well, I think we need young people. Somebody in Washington asked me, "What in the world do you all do down there for entertainment? There's nothing in the world to do!" And I said that if you're active in church and you're active in school and you have any clubs, you'd go somewhere every night if you want to.

Life: Yes, that's true.

Mrs. Tankard: But I don't go as much as I used to because I don't take part in a lot of things.

Life: Well, talking about the schools in Bath, I would think that the school situation here would be wonderful for somebody with small children.

Mrs. Tankard: Well, it is, and you know that's the reason a lot of people move here. A lady talked to me last week. She said that her daughter tried her best to rent a place here, mainly to put her children in this school. A lot of the people in the Bath school district are here just for the school.

Life: Well, it's wonderful, the elementary school. I know a lot of people are upset that the high school closed because that was really nice too. I didn't quite agree with that consolidation.

Mrs. Tankard: Well, we didn't either, but there wasn't anything we could do about it.

Life: There's never been much of any kind of crime here in Bath has there?

Mrs. Tankard: No. Over the years there have been some break-ins and little things like that.

Life: Do you remember your father?

Mrs. Tankard: People here often ask me if I remember my father, and I don't. But I remember his funeral. And you
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know one of the reasons I remember it? I remember Mama combing her hair. I remember she'd comb her hair and cry that she didn't know what in the world she was going to do. You see, he left her with two little girls. She was young, and she had no idea what to do with the farm or anything else. My grandfather was really a father to us. But I remember that, and I remember him going out. I don't remember going to the grave, but I remember when everybody started to go out to the grave. I don't know why it made an impression, but Mama just crying was probably it. But I don't remember him. Now Eloise Brooks, who lived over here, was just a year older than I was, and she said she remembered him. Said he sat on the back porch over there, and he'd pretend he was going to get us. I guess he was feeble. He didn't get up. But she said he would pretend that he was going to get us with his cane. He died at 68, and he was an old man. And my mother died at 68, an old woman.

Life: Did she remarry?

Mrs. Tankard: No. Our family is so divided on marriage it's right pathetic. I had a grandfather married three times. That was my mother's father. I had an aunt that married three times, and I had a sister married three times. Helen's mother and my mother wouldn't have married anybody under the sun, and I felt the same way. So we're sorta different in our thinking!

Conclusion

Thanks to Mrs. Tankard's recollections, we have a closer look at the changes that have taken place in Bath. The Bath of today is a small, friendly place with caring neighbors, a
neighborhood elementary school, and a low crime rate. The doctors, lawyers, and commercial establishments of more progressive towns might be missed but not the often-associated rise in crime and drug traffic. As a resident of Bath, I will be interested in what the future holds. And I feel privileged to have listened to this venerable lady tell of the early days in this century in old Bath town.

*Fanny Myrtle Sheppard and Carey Norman (Dr. Norman's son) on the old Bath drawbridge, about 1942*