



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies—Fort Ward Project*

Title: *Interview with Michael Lazich*

Date of Interview: *June 1, 1992*

Location of Interview: *Fort Ward Park, Alexandria, Virginia*

Interviewers: *Patricia Knock and Dr. Henry Mitchell*

Transcriber: *City of Alexandria Word Center*

Abstract: *The Fort Ward area, which was home to a number of African American families, became a park in 1961 because of its significance in the Civil War. Michael Lazich was one of the first workers to clear the land of dead trees and to make the park accessible. He started work there in 1962. He and the interviewers walk through the park as he describes the buildings, trees, and plantings that were there in the early 1960s and the changes that have been made.*

Table of Contents/Index

Tape: *Tape 1*

Side: *Side 1*

Minute	Counter	Page	Topic
<i>Not indicated</i>	<i>Not indicated</i>	3	Introductions
		3	Buildings That Existed Before Fort Ward Became a Park
		6	Trees and Plants in the Park
		10	The Old Shed
		11	The Old Barns
		13	The Minnokin Place
		15	The Old Creek
		17	The Old Well
		19	Filling with Gravel and Building the Roads
		21	The Old Amphitheater and the Sword by the Oak Tree

Introductions	
Patrick Knock:	Hi, would you like to introduce...I'm Pat Knock from Alexandria Archaeology and we're doing a walking tour of Fort Ward today with Mr. Lazich, who had been recommended to me by Austin Elliott as being one of the first people that helped clear the land on Fort Ward. So, we were real interested in what things looked like in the beginning. Would you like to tell us, Mr. Lazich, when you first—
Mike Lazich:	In the year of 1962 is when we started. All of this was nothing but solid woods, there was a house here, a house up there in front of the museum.
P.K.:	Okay. Well, you're pointing like between...you're pointing right close to where that visitor's parking lot is...
Mike Lazich:	That's right. It was over a little further.
P.K.:	We'll walk over and get a picture of that.
Buildings That Existed Before Fort Ward Became a Park	
Mike Lazich:	Back in here was barns. Now, there was a building here that I was told was either a school or a church, but I'm not for sure what that one was. Now, there is a well that was down here, the biggest well was over here in the corner and I will take you over there after a while and show you.
P.K.:	That's up by the front of Braddock? Right close to Braddock?
Mike Lazich:	That's right. Close to Braddock Road.
P.K.:	Okay.
Mike Lazich:	Okay. Back on the other side of this fence, these trees, there was another row of barns and we'll walk back through there and I'll show you...there might be some of the foundation still showing up.
P.K.:	Okay.
Mike Lazich:	Right here there was foundation showing up. We had to fill this in and a lot of it was concrete foundation to the barns here. Right along here. You know, you had to take it...you had to fill the land in, so we just filled the land in and covered up.
P.K.:	Well, how much fill do you think you put on there?
Mike Lazich:	It was probably two foot...two foot probably.
P.K.:	Two foot on top of fill.
Mike Lazich:	There is nothing but concrete and bricks.

P.K.:	Okay. Let me show you this. Let me tell you about the project. This is the development of an African American neighborhood on Fort Ward Park post Civil War. This is a map from 1878 and it shows Cassius Lee's place, who had Minnokin and Fort Ward...where the Fort Ward area was. This is the 1894 map and it shows the homes of the people that bought land on Fort Ward and you can see Adams, which I think might be where you lived, and Shorts (that was the Mom and Dad of many of these children) Miller, Hall, Jackson, and there were McKnights. The names aren't on this map, but there were McKnights also a couple of years later. In the 1900 census, we have a listing of nine families that lived on this property after the Civil War. So, I got interested in it because a person that I work with lived here and had her children born to her here and raised them here and so, it was real interesting to me when they were digging, that in last summer for the fort, the history of it after it was done being a fort, sort of the turning the swords into plowshares kind of.
Mike Lazich:	Well, there was an old trench pile that set almost on this corner right here where we planted these trees.
P.K.:	I don't know how far back you're talking?
Mike Lazich:	I'd say probably 30 feet.
P.K.:	Like, where those trees come out?
Mike Lazich:	That's right. Right in there. I found and I still haven't been home, I was going to bring you one of them for a souvenir...I found some old ink bottles with the glass tops...
P.K.:	Did you?
Mike Lazich:	And I'll give you one, plus, I found an old electric pole with the glass instrument.
P.K.:	Yeah, insulated...
Mike Lazich:	And I was going to give you one of those. But, I was running a little late and I will see that you get those.
P.K.:	Okay. The other thing is, I have to tell you that there will be a legal paper and you'll need to sign for us to be able to use your words. It's called a Deed of Gift and you'll get to review the information we've taken and decide if you want us to use all of it or part of it or later one you don't want us to use some of it...
Mike Lazich:	You can use it. It makes no difference to me.
P.K.:	It's just a legal technicality that we have to...

Mike Lazich:	Now, before we get into this a whole lot, there is probably a lot of it that some people would know more than me because when I came up here we had to take and clear the land to make the park, plus trim the trees. We spent almost a year in here doing nothing but clearing and trimming trees.
P.K.:	Well, nobody has told me about any barns. You're the first person...
Mike Lazich:	I don't know why they wouldn't have.
P.K.:	I don't know.
Mike Lazich:	Well now...Wanda has a picture of the barn standing plus a building that looked more like a church to me than it did a school, but they're claiming that they house that I lived in was the first black school in the city. Now, whether it was or not... And then, Wanda said they built this building back here and she used to teach the kids back here. Now, whether this is so and don't take my word on it. Because, I don't know about that.
P.K.:	Well...oral history work is that a lot of people telling us and then telling us the same kind of thing. You know how Mr. Douglas...
Mike Lazich:	But the building looked more like a church to me than it did a school.
P.K.:	I think I can clear up that mystery. It was a house; it was a school; then it was an Episcopal church. It was both.
Mike Lazich:	Well, maybe that's...
P.K.:	It was a schoolhouse and then the deeds show that it was St. Cyprian's Church. What I want to do just to make this logical for people who see this 20 years from now and go, "Where are they walking?"—I want to make—these are the houses—I want to walk up along Braddock, so this way and we're going to have to stop, film, and talk where we're walking and if there are places that you want to start over at the well, be up close to the road...
Mike Lazich:	That's right...
P.K.:	We'll walk down here and whatever you know of importance to tell us about, then we'll come back and walk down this way.
Mike Lazich:	Then I'll take you in this yard.
P.K.:	Is that okay with you? Are there places in the rest of the park that you want to tell us...?
Mike Lazich:	The only other...there was little building down where the playground is, but it looked like...more like a tool shed to me...that someone might

	keep some tools in, there is a well down there.
P.K.:	Okay. Well, we want to see that too.
Mike Lazich:	Well, we'll see that too.
Trees and Plants in the Park	
P.K.:	All right. We're going to the well. Anything that you can tell us about the structure too, like if it's the kind of foundation it was and the material outside?
Mike Lazich:	Well...
P.K.:	Of anything...of anything. We want to walk back this way, right? Does it matter? So, we are going to walk back up along West Braddock, that would be easier for people in the future to go from West Braddock and walk back. Yeah.
Henry Mitchell:	You don't have that on, do you?
P.K.:	I do have it on. Yeah.
Mike Lazich:	There is the ink bottle.
P.K.:	Yeah, I would love to have that.
Mike Lazich:	I will give you one of those...
P.K.:	The insulator thing...well, I will give them to [Alexandria] Archaeology. I hope...we want to do like a little exhibit when we get everything together, when we get all the information together. That would be great in the exhibit. Slow up. Oh, the pear tree. He is trying to be ahead of us. What kind of pear are they? Bartlett?
Mike Lazich:	I don't know.
P.K.:	Are they hard or soft when they are ready to eat?
Mike Lazich:	They were, well, they were in between. They are starting on now, you can see them. See them right over there?
P.K.:	Yep.
Mike Lazich:	Now, there wasn't just this pear tree. There were three...
P.K.:	Uh huh. Oh, there was more.
Mike Lazich:	One was there, one set here and another one was sitting over here. But those two died and this is the only one left. But, when you come up here in the fall, they are the biggest pears you've ever seen.
P.K.:	I've had some. What else was there? There was the pear trees and down

	there by the wisteria bush there was cultivated strawberries...
Mike Lazich:	Strawberry patch.
P.K.:	Did you say cherry trees or apple trees?
Mike Lazich:	They're over on the other side.
P.K.:	Is there cherry trees on the other side?
Mike Lazich:	Yeah.
P.K.:	Wild cherries, they called wild cherries, anymore, trees of...
Mike Lazich:	Not anything of pure fruit...that was the only thing right here. Three pear trees, plus the old strawberry patch over there.
P.K.:	What about gardens? Was there any garden pots?
Mike Lazich:	I never noticed that.
P.K.:	Did you ever notice any parts that were like more fertile ground?
Mike Lazich:	No.
P.K.:	No. Is the ground pretty good here?
Mike Lazich:	Yeah, it's pretty good. A lot of clay—we have filled in a lot of it, but there is a lot of clay dirt—
P.K.:	Where all did you fill in—
Mike Lazich:	Oh, we started from over there—all the way through here, down through there and at one time we was thinking about putting a duck pond down there—
P.K.:	Uh huh, that would be nice. Where the creek was?
Mike Lazich:	But they thought it would be too dangerous and the children might fall through so they stopped it.
P.K.:	What was the reason for doing all the fill?
Mike Lazich:	It's so gravelly and you couldn't grow no grass so we had to put fill dirt over top of it. It was patchy. There might be a bunch of grass here and nothing over here for 30 feet. So we just filled it all in and seeded it.
P.K.:	How did you decide which trees you were going to leave and which trees you were going to cut down?
Mike Lazich:	The only trees that we took down were the ones that were dead. And back then we could burn them. Some of them we just set a fire and burned them. We had a lot of fires when we did this back in the [19]60s.
P.K.:	There was a big wind storm in the [19]60s that took a lot of...

Mike Lazich:	Took a lot of trees down...
P.K.:	When was that?
Mike Lazich:	It would have been...I was going to say [19]68, but I think it was [19]69. In 1970, I have to walk you down there, we had about 100 pine trees that caught...and I will show you where that is at when we get down there...
P.K.:	Okay. This was a road where the...did you do this road or this was here before? Did you put down the bricks for the road?
Mike Lazich:	That's why we had to take and fill...so much pieces of concrete laying around...
P.K.:	Could they get here in the road and dump? They could come in and use it to dump if they wanted? I was looking for the bricks...[unintelligible]. This doesn't have fill on it here right? It does have fill on it here?
Mike Lazich:	Yes.
P.K.:	All right. Two to three feet of fill.
H.M.:	Where did you get the fill from?
Mike Lazich:	People would give it to us. People would bring it in and dump it.
P.K.:	This looks like an old tree. Is that a Chinquapin?
Mike Lazich:	That's what they call a willow...
P.K.:	A willow.
Mike Lazich:	That was just a little one...
P.K.:	The holly?
Mike Lazich:	We would just plant that.
P.K.:	I found a Civil War button here. Do you want to be in front of this Brad...
Mike Lazich:	Did I tell you that I found three old pennies?
P.K.:	No.
Mike Lazich:	You can look at those if you want to. They are so old that you can't tell the dates or nothing on them. The big round one. You're welcome to take those too, if you want. Do you have an office in Alexandria?
P.K.:	Um, yes. Alexandria Archaeology is down in the Torpedo Factory.
Mike Lazich:	Is that where your office is?

P.K.:	My office? No. I work at the Detention Home over on South Whiting.
Mike Lazich:	Well, when I bring this, where can I bring this...
P.K.:	You can bring it there to my job. Sure.
Mike Lazich:	I just thought somebody was interested and wanted to look at it.
P.K.:	Yeah. In fact, if you want, you could ask the person in the lab what it is and how old they are? They probably would know. There is an expert down there. Barbara Magid, she knows all those things.
Mike Lazich:	When I went to school, and I'm 64, it used to have a screw top—these are the glass ones.
P.K.:	Yeah. They could probably tell what they are...was there a building here that you know of?
Mike Lazich:	Not here.
P.K.:	No. Not here. Was there ever a civil building in this area?
Mike Lazich:	No...[unintelligible]
P.K.:	You have some great camellias here. Very nice. They're beautiful. You got them in Norfolk?
Mike Lazich:	In Norfolk.
P.K.:	[Unintelligible]...you don't remember any kind of building in this area?
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]
P.K.:	Is there fill here?
Mike Lazich:	Yes.
P.K.:	Okay. These oak trees were here when you were here, right?
Mike Lazich:	We actually planted these...now you see...[unintelligible]. Back in here was a whole lot and I can't tell you the name of the people that lived here...
P.K.:	Minnokin.
Mike Lazich:	But anyway, he had a big home, sitting right over here, and the City was trying to buy his property...
P.K.:	Yeah. I think I know a little bit about that.
Mike Lazich:	The church still has that. We don't have nothing to do...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	He keeps trying to get a hold...ahead of you.

Mike Lazich:	All the stones are not here.
P.K.:	Right. Do you think that's likely, that there...
Mike Lazich:	All we do is we keep the grass cut...
P.K.:	There is no fill on this. But now...so, this is why you put the fill on, because you wanted the grass to grow...
Mike Lazich:	The church over...
P. K.	Oakland Baptist. You put...they put the fence up around it and you planted the trees outside?
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]...the only stones we see and we set it right there because we didn't know which way it went.
P.K.:	You're going to show us something in here? Okay. If you don't, there is only three of us going through there.
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]
P.K.:	Could you slow up just a little bit so I can make sure that I get your voice on here. I can see you're used to moving fast.
The Old Shed	
Mike Lazich:	Right in this area was a little old building that to me looked like a tool shed, and maybe a workshop and stuff like that. Now, we never found any old tools. I can't remember whether it was a piece of glass...we throwed that in the junk.
P.K.:	[Unintelligible]...so, pretend you're walking around...[the] building. How big was it?
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]
P.K.:	Was there any windows in it?
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]
P.K.:	What was it made out of? Like rough sawed wood? Like circle cuts on the wood?
Mike Lazich:	Yes.
P.K.:	What was the roof made out of?
Mike Lazich:	The roof was just rotted out. It had...that's it right here. It's about ten feet up here.
P.K.:	Were the inside walls finished at all?

Mike Lazich:	There was an old bench in there and that was it.
P.K.:	So really, you thought it was a work place?
Mike Lazich:	I'm sure of it...it was a shop for any man...
P.K.:	Did it have like stones at the corner to hold the building up?
Mike Lazich:	Kind of like...well, the way you see it here. Bricks...it was mixed for the foundation.
P.K.:	And no water in it...?
Mike Lazich:	No.
P.K.:	Was there any outhouses around here when you came?
Mike Lazich:	Never seen any. There's nothing over here.
P.K.:	Nothing. But one battery down...that's what he said, "first battery gone."
The Old Barns	
Mike Lazich:	Right over here...this was never touched until we started planting flowers in the City. But this is where all the barns sit. They were sitting here at this corner, where the fence is and I'll show you where...
P.K.:	Wait a minute. What kind of barns were they?
Mike Lazich:	They were old wooden barns. One just had four posts to it and it looked like he might have just set equipment in it to keep it from getting wet and I'll show you the foundation for that.
P.K.:	So there is one here, as you come in the gate...
Mike Lazich:	This is where the foundation was and I have come up here...bricks and concrete was the foundation and that's it right here.
P.K.:	Could you point out that line to him again? Or maybe you could walk it? Wait a minute...
Mike Lazich:	This was never touched. It was just left like it is.
P.K.:	Do you?
Mike Lazich:	Over here is another little barn. It wasn't as big as this one. That barn there was the biggest one when I got here...
P.K.:	But it wasn't closed in on the sides...it was open on the sides and you could put your...
Mike Lazich:	This one was closed in.

P.K.:	This one was closed in on the sides?
Mike Lazich:	Never no doors or nothing.
P.K.:	What was the ceiling like?
Mike Lazich:	It was just like a...
P.K.:	Was it pointed or flat?
Mike Lazich:	It came up like this. That was that.
H.M.:	So, more or less a shed?
Mike Lazich:	Yeah. The only real barn that I ever see was that one right there....set four pieces of concrete with metal...just a roof...here is one of them now. That was all open except for the roof and it looked like whoever just put stuff on there...it was all open...just a roof and four posts. Then, all the way back to the fence there was two more...
P.K.:	Yeah...
Mike Lazich:	See, we never fooled with this. We just left this to store equipment for the City and like playground equipment and stuff. People over here didn't like seeing it sit, so we moved it.
P.K.:	You know about Claris Craig? [Unintelligible]
Mike Lazich:	Not...
P.K.:	It's behind the shrub.
Mike Lazich:	That I never paid too much attention to and I always wondered why that grave was sitting there.
P.K.:	Well, I don't know, but that's Clara Adams and I think that's his house that she lived in. And, her husband, Robert, was supposed to be buried beside here, but there isn't a grave. You never saw another marker?
Mike Lazich:	Let's go on.
P.K.:	Maybe we'll take a walk through there so we can get it on the tape. Just...yeah, it would be good to have it on the tape.
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]
P.K.:	Yeah, it's behind the U.
Mike Lazich:	It might be better than...
P.K.:	Um, strawberries, yum yum yum.
Mike Lazich:	This here was never touched. They planted flowers, but I don't know why they... that was the only one in this yard. I could never understand

	why this one was sitting up here by itself...
P. K.	We don't know that answer. Yeah, 52...[unintelligible].
Mike Lazich:	Here, try one?
P.K.:	Yeah, I think I will.
Mike Lazich:	He can put on the tape while you're eating strawberries.
P.K.:	Yeah, and then I can get arrested for messing with City property...[unintelligible].
Mike Lazich:	They used to put in some tomato plants.
P.K.:	They are quite ripe.
Mike Lazich:	As far as I know, when I came here, the only buildings are those that I told you about over there and this bridge. That's all that was over here. It could have been something here before then, I don't know.
P.K.:	I don't think there was a house up there...[unintelligible].
Mike Lazich:	We used to have this as a storage yard. These people here even planted the trees along here so they couldn't see in here but they still wasn't satisfied. They kind of had a feeling that us storing lumber and stuff in here would cause rats so we took it all out.
P.K.:	Okay.
Mike Lazich:	On the Rougheners...I think that's the name you were talking about...
P.K.:	Yeah?
Mike Lazich:	Their house was over here.
The Minnokin Place	
P.K.:	There was a place called Minnokin, too. Does that ring a bell?
Mike Lazich:	Their house sits right over there. A big, old frame house. A beautiful house. When they got ready to sell, I understand that he was in the service...but anyway, he wanted to sell and give the City first chance. So, if they wanted it, they could buy it and make the first...
P.K.:	So that was after 1960 then.
Mike Lazich:	Actually, this all happened in the [19]70s.
P.K.:	Uh huh. I don't think there is one...[unintelligible].
Mike Lazich:	Right here is where I found the whole top of the electric insulator—the whole top of the insulator. I kept them. They were going to throw them away, so I just kept them. I'll bring you one.

P.K.:	They are...my dad has a couple.
Mike Lazich:	Is your dad from Alexandria? Are you from Alexandria?
P. K.	No. I'm from Ohio. I am a Buckeye.
H.M.:	I am originally from North Carolina.
P.K.:	Where are you from?
Mike Lazich:	Niagara Falls...I had a brother who was seven years old when he died. So...I talked to one of the nuns up there and she said, "Well, what do you want to do?" And I said, "I would like to go to the service"...[unintelligible]. Got discharged in Norfolk. I went to work with the electric company. I got transferred here to Alexandria, and I've been here ever since. I married a girl from here. Been stuck here ever since.
P.K.:	It's a good place to be stuck, isn't it?
Mike Lazich:	Oh, yeah.
P.K.:	It's a great place to be stuck.
Mike Lazich:	She was raised up in Orange, Virginia, on a hog farm.
P.K.:	There was a hog farm here...[unintelligible]. I like to be taller than somebody.
Mike Lazich:	To tell you how small she is, she only wears a size 2 shoe.
P.K.:	Goodness. She's way smaller.
H.M.:	I didn't know that they made them that small.
Mike Lazich:	Know a big clothing store down there for women—Hayman's?
P.K.:	Yeah...[unintelligible]. I've heard that name—yeah.
Mike Lazich:	I went to school with his daughter. They run that place. He would take and get the shoes at random and sell them. When I married her, she weighted 79 pounds.
P.K.:	Oh my goodness. You must feel like a giant then?
Mike Lazich:	You ought to see her now. She's a little heavier now, but she was a little one.
P.K.:	Are we going in here? No.
Mike Lazich:	We were told to leave it alone and not touch it. I understood this that the people at the church, this church up here on the corner, they wanted all the trees...[unintelligible].

P.K.:	There wasn't ever a little house in there, was there?
Mike Lazich:	The only thing that I know...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	I'm sure that would have been fine with them...[unintelligible]. That would have been nice.
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]...it wouldn't go through City Hall and they were afraid of a lawsuit—
P.K.:	Was this drain here when you were...
Mike Lazich:	[Unintelligible]
H.M.:	Didn't want to get carried away.
The Old Creek	
Mike Lazich:	Put in here and...you can see the other one that we put in there. There was a ditch all the way through here just like this.
P.K.:	Well, this is a creek really, isn't it?
Mike Lazich:	Well, I was told it was a creek. Anyway, it run from the street right down through here, came this way more, but we filled this all in and...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	Let me show you something...[unintelligible].
Mike Lazich:	I don't know if it shows it on the map or not...[unintelligible]. That was still here and it run through this road here and right back through. Put that drain...
P.K.:	Did it go across the road or under the road?
Mike Lazich:	I can't remember. It seems to me that it stops right there and it ran down through here. Try to preserve it.
P.K.:	Were there any houses down this way?
Mike Lazich:	No.
P.K.:	Nothing.
Mike Lazich:	When we walk down this way I will show you where the other well was. There was a little shed there and I'll show you that. This does all the way to Van Dorn Street all the way across...[unintelligible]. I think somebody at City Hall was figuring that you might have a lawsuit or something...
P.K.:	Looks like you had to fill this in a lot. Did it keep sinking?
Mike Lazich:	Oh yeah. And we're going to do it again. We put concrete in there.

	What they think is that there is a spring here...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	And there weren't any graves that you knew right in this area here?
Mike Lazich:	If there way, they never told me. I don't see no stones.
P.K.:	Well, they...that happens too that they get buried. You didn't do any backhoe work. You did mostly filling?
Mike Lazich:	Filling. We did some of the ground work. Like maybe...see that little hole come up there, well, we flattened a lot of it.
P.K.:	It was higher.
Mike Lazich:	Well, we planted new trees too. This is new here...
P.K.:	I don't like that skinny thing whatever that is. Is that your favorite one? [Unintelligible]...that's where the camellias are.
H.M.:	[Unintelligible]...just somehow never got back to it. Some lady had planted a little tree—inside a tree—
P.K.:	Inside a tree?
H.M.:	Yeah.
Mike Lazich:	That's the only pear tree here. Back over there.
P.K.:	Oh yeah. [Unintelligible]...is this quince? I'm sorry, Mike, I can't hear you. [Unintelligible]...along here? Oh. A pear and an apple right along here. Somebody planted those. [Unintelligible]...there is the mulberry. It is.
H.M.:	Nice property and well maintained too. See some rabbits out here. See them in the morning out here early.
P.K.:	There is the pear tree again.
Mike Lazich:	The fruit trees came right around here. That's where they start. If they had an orchard here years ago, I don't know, but it looks like it. Of course, a lot of the trees was dead when we came in here. They were small trees and we just took and set fire to them and burned them.
P.K.:	Was it just one row though?
Mike Lazich:	Just the one row. Just like a circle. Of course, there were a lot of other trees in here. They were bushes. It was awful; it was just a jungle and a lot of stuff we just set fire to. At that time, we could burn it.
P.K.:	From the looks of it, from the photographs, it looks like it was pure trees even though it was a winter shot.
Mike Lazich:	Over here was a little old building that set here and it wasn't no bigger

	than an outside bath. It just looked like somebody put a hole or shovel or something like that and set it right here. It was just a little old thing. Had one door, no windows or nothing. We just took the bulldozer and knocked it over. One of the boys found a half of a crock—and had one of those, half ones sitting here and he kept it.
H.M.:	They haven't cleaned up from the weekend.
P.K.:	I guess not. I'm surprised.
H.M.:	It usually is cleaned up.
P.K.:	I've never seen it dirty here.
The Old Well	
Mike Lazich:	Right here and I can't exactly tell you but it looks like, it's right here where that little dent is, there is a well here...
P.K.:	Where's the dent?
Mike Lazich:	Right here.
P.K.:	I see it.
Mike Lazich:	It wasn't much bigger than the other small ones that I was telling you about. The biggest well was the first one I was telling you about...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	And how was this well made.
Mike Lazich:	With the cobblestones on the side.
P.K.:	And how big around?
Mike Lazich:	About six feet I'd say and it wasn't very deep.
P.K.:	Was there water in it?
Mike Lazich:	Oh yeah.
P.K.:	And you filled that in? Did it take you a long time to fill it in?
Mike Lazich:	That one had to be at least 30 feet deep. And like you say...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	You know how you scrape the ground from the animals like there is a particular smell, did you notice that when you were working out here?
Mike Lazich:	I can't say I did.
P.K.:	No? I heard there was a pig farm up here somewhere, but I'm not exactly sure where. [Unintelligible]...were there any garbage areas out here?

Mike Lazich:	Only garbage pile was the one over there where I found the...[unintelligible].
P. K.	You mean you just didn't clear it off or...
Mike Lazich:	Why it is left like this, I don't know. Some people don't want to...why, I can't tell you.
P.K.:	You didn't decide to and someone told you not to clear it?
Mike Lazich:	They told us to just leave it alone.
P.K.:	Leave that alone. So in that woods back there...
Mike Lazich:	In the woods back there we never planted...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	This looks like the regular ground. I mean, the original ground, no grass.
Mike Lazich:	This is the way it was always. That's why we had to do so much to it. Look down there. See how it's washed out? Well, that's the way it was all over the park. Gravel—you couldn't grow no grass. So we had to put in fill...[unintelligible]. We lost about 100 pine trees. They were little pine trees like those back in there.
P.K.:	Was there a—that's just a path. It wasn't a road—
Mike Lazich:	I don't have nothing to do with this back here. I don't know nothing about it. Why we don't touch it and this and that, I don't know. We put picnic tables back here and park benches. That might not be our land, I don't know. I thought it was.
P.K.:	I think it is.
Mike Lazich:	Except on the other side if you want to walk around there, where the bathrooms are...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	Do you want to walk around there? Yeah.
Mike Lazich:	Where the cannons are—I didn't have nothing to do with that—they had some other company come in and re-soil all that. We didn't do that.
P.K.:	Well, I think you had enough to keep you busy. [Unintelligible]...for one year, I think that's quite enough.
Mike Lazich:	We had a lot here and we still wasn't done.
P.K.:	One thing about archaeologists, they love looking at the ground.
H.M.:	Yes. Yes they do.
P.K.:	Between that and collecting shells, I think I am a natural for

	this...[unintelligible].
Mike Lazich:	We didn't do nothing to that. Through here—everything that I did with my men—we did that—
P.K.:	Oh, they're nice. These are really pretty.
Mike Lazich:	We can walk this way; it will be shorter. We try to keep everybody out of here because this property—we try to keep the people off of it...
Filling with Gravel and Building the Roads	
P.K.:	When you built these roads here, did you have to fill a lot before—
Mike Lazich:	Oh yeah. I don't know how many tons of gravel we put in here.
P.K.:	For surface. It doesn't break down much. The road seems like it has a lot of surface underneath it. You never knew any houses back in here.
Mike Lazich:	No.
P.K.:	No trash? Like a trash pit or anything?
Mike Lazich:	No. The only thing I forgot to tell is that a big white owl—on one of those trees that we tore down, lived in it. I mean, it had...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	So this place was really back to nature when you started. It was foxes, owls—
Mike Lazich:	Hogs, chipmunks, squirrels, every animal that you could think of. It's amazing that we never seen so many snakes. I don't think people see any today.
P.K.:	You seen snakes in here?
H.M.:	No. There was some trees back here that had a hollow in it and we planted things back here...[unintelligible]. We used to walk by there in the mornings and look at everything. They stopped and walked right by us.
Mike Lazich:	If you notice where I got the—I got a little round dish there for the squirrels.
P.K.:	I'm a bird lover. I like to look at the birds...[unintelligible]. Little stones—lots of little stones.
Mike Lazich:	That's the part of the park that we have not been able to figure out. Why we can't get the grass to grow. You think there is a reason—
P.K.:	Yeah, those big oak trees are sucking up all the good stuff maybe.

Mike Lazich:	See this foundation? I couldn't tell you what was here or nothing.
P.K.:	But there was foundation? That's not fill?
Mike Lazich:	We have never had to soil since we've put the fill in here. This is the worst area of the whole park, right in this area. Well, you can see it—
P.K.:	Oh yeah.
Mike Lazich:	Now back in here it was nothing. It was like this when I got here. The building here—
P.K.:	Where was the other foundation?
Mike Lazich:	That might be part of it right here.
H.M.:	Yeah, I see.
Mike Lazich:	Now, what was here? When we got in here, there was nothing but woods. There had to be something here at one time but don't know what it was.
P.K.:	Yeah. It might be. Not if it's concrete, though, because that would make it new. That would be too new if it were concrete.
Mike Lazich:	See how bad the dirt was. We had a lady from the Tree Department come and look at the dirt and she said that we ought to leave it like that because it would kill the trees. We never touched it. Isn't it funny though how that land right here over, the rest of it the grass would grow—
P.K.:	And this wasn't a road? That wasn't a road this way?
Mike Lazich:	The whole area was like that before we filled it in. We just left it like that.
P.K.:	I'm rich.
H.M.:	Oh, you found it. That's where you found a dime.
P.K.:	Unfortunately, it's a—
H.M.:	A modern one—
P.K.:	Here, Mr. Lazich, we're going to pay you. How do you spell your last name?
Mike Lazich:	L-A-Z-I-C-H.
P.K.:	And when were you born?
Mike Lazich:	1927
P.K.:	Okay. And what day?

Mike Lazich:	September 27.
P.K.:	Niagara Falls, New York?
Mike Lazich:	Actually, in Buffalo.
P. K.	In Buffalo...[unintelligible]. Buffalo has a place called Kings Island?
Mike Lazich:	Oh yeah.
P. K.	My dad's best friend from the service lived there and we used to go there. He was a radio broadcaster.
Mike Lazich:	I was told that there was a building sitting over there. It wasn't here when I got here.
P.K.:	It would be a nice place if it was there.
Mike Lazich:	He was one of the first guards that worked up here when we started. I've never seen no foundation. Whether that is so or not, I don't know. All I know is what I've been told. I didn't want to mention it because I've never seen it.
P.K.:	Like you mention it and then we ask other people. If you hear it, then we can ask somebody.
H.M.:	Then we can build on your information. We can ask somebody else and they may recall the same thing...[unintelligible].
P.K.:	What is this tree? Is this white pine? White?
Mike Lazich:	I think this is white pine.
H.M.:	I think so.
P.K.:	My dad has a bum knee. So when he goes—
The Old Amphitheater and the Sword by the Oak Tree	
Mike Lazich:	The amphitheater was back in this corner. We used to have a big building back there where people could change their clothes and everything. Too many people came in and ransacked it and started fires, so we took it down. When we built it, it was redwood.
P.K.:	I saw the clipping from the newspaper when they opened it up.
Mike Lazich:	We had to take it down because there was too much going on...[unintelligible].
H.M.:	They walk along and they take about five steps and then run to the house. Amazing. The last time I saw the cannon, he said somebody had broken in the yard and stole it.

Mike Lazich:	Right in here there was a tree struck by lightning and that's where I found the sword—in that tree. It sat right beside the oak tree –sitting right there. See the big oak, there is another like it and it sat right down in there. That's where I found the sword.
P.K.:	Tell me again.
Mike Lazich:	Right where that big oak tree sits right there. Just from that towards the ditch over there. There was another over there that was struck by lightning.
P.K.:	You mean to the right of where those are?
Mike Lazich:	Lightning struck it and I hit something with the chain saw and I said, "Darn, there must be a nail in this thing." We split it open and there was an old sword in it.
P.K.:	Where is the sword?
Mike Lazich:	In the Museum.
P.K.:	And it was a Civil War sword?
Mike Lazich:	I don't know.
P.K.:	I bet it was.
Mike Lazich:	I don't know one from the other. But there's where I found the sword.
P.K.:	Did you find bullets in trees when you cut them down?
Mike Lazich:	No. But where we built the steps...that's where I found the rifle barrel. The museum has that also...[unintelligible]. Over here is one of the best cherry trees I've ever seen. It has big cherries on it.
P.K.:	Sweet cherries?
Mike Lazich:	Yes. Two plum trees. Purple plums—
P.K.:	Yeah...[unintelligible]. But they were planted in a row?
Mike Lazich:	No.
P.K.:	They look pretty old.
Mike Lazich:	Well, that's it.
P.K.:	On no. No.
Mike Lazich:	What was up here—any in the front, I couldn't tell you. Where I showed you, that's all I know.
P.K.:	When you were here, West Braddock was gravel or dirt or pavement?

Mike Lazich:	It was just a little old single road. You could barely pass. Quaker Lane was just two lanes; it had the prettiest old oak tree there ever was. That's before they rebuilt Mud Town down there. Mud Town was just nothing but a dirt road and went back over the T.C. [The rest of the tape is unintelligible.] [End]
--------------	--