

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Virginia Davis Scarborough**

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Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

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Mary Jones Prowell (left) and Virginia Davis Scarborough fishing at George Ranch, 1943



Courtesy the George Ranch Historical Park, Richmond, TX

Transcript

GOODSILL: Nice to see you today, Virginia.

SCARBOROUGH: Thank you. Nice to be here.

GOODSILL: I've been looking forward to taking your interview because I know you have a LONG history of your family having been in Fort Bend County.

SCARBOROUGH: That's right.

GOODSILL: I thought a place where we could begin would be for me to ask how your family got to Fort Bend County.

SCARBOROUGH: Two of the Old 300, William Little and Henry Jones, were my ancestors. Henry and Nancy Styles Jones' son, James, married William and Jane Little's daughter, Martha Jane. They had one son, Walter Little Jones. Walter's first wife, Jennie, died in 1872, she was seventeen. His second wife was Archietta Davis, the youngest child of William Kinchen Davis and Jane Pickens. I remember her well because we were at her home a lot; she died in 1930 when I was nine years old. Walter and Archie had seven children; the oldest was my grandmother Jennie, who married Tony Wessendorff. They were the parents of six daughters; my mother, Lizzie, was the oldest. Lizzie married Syd Davis; his Davis family was not related to Archietta's family. Lizzie and Syd Davis had six children, two daughters and four sons; I was the second child.

My father's family came to Texas from South Carolina. His grandparents, Gabriel and Jane Davis, and some children were in Green County Alabama in 1850, in Brazoria County, Texas in 1860 and in Wharton County, Texas in 1870. They were the parents of five children. The oldest, James Lewis, was the father of my father, Syd Davis. His mother was Emma Darst, whose ancestry can be traced to Daniel Boone and beyond. Both James Lewis and Emma died when Syd was four years old. His older brother, Claude, and younger sister, Lida, were raised by their father's younger brother, Frank B. Davis and his older sister, Margaret Britt. Lida later married Dyer Moore.

William Little was born in Pennsylvania, an only child, son of John Little and Hannah Hamilton. I just learned that yesterday! And he first went to Illinois and then went on to St. Louis and it was there that he found out about Texas being developed.

GOODSILL: What do you think he might have found out?

SCARBOROUGH: Well, he found out that Stephen F. Austin's father was given permission to settle 300 families in Texas. The father became ill and died but Stephen F. Austin took over that job and got families from Missouri, and I think Louisiana, to come in to Texas. Some stories say that William Little was the skipper of the Lively that brought the first settlers in.

GOODSILL: The Lively?

SCARBOROUGH: The little ship that left Louisiana and came to Texas with the first settlers. This article I read recently in Twentieth Century Quarterly, Volume One, said that he rode horseback to Texas, but all of the other information, e.g., Sowell's History of Fort Bend County and Wharton's History of Fort Bend County, say that he was the skipper of the Lively. So I think that's more accurate than the horseback story.

GOODSILL: What year did he come to Texas?

SCARBOROUGH: He came in 1821 and received a land grant from the Spanish government in 1824.

GOODSILL: Didn't take him long! Three years to get that land.

SCARBOROUGH: (laughs) That's right!

GOODSILL: Where was his land?

SCARBOROUGH: On the east side of the Brazos River, what is now Riverstone subdivision. And he was across the Brazos from Henry Jones. That's how the families got together and the offspring married.

GOODSILL: So he came down here and then met his wife.

SCARBOROUGH: I also learned in this Quarterly, and I don't know for sure if it is true, that William Little's wife was Jane Edwards, and she was the daughter of Jonathan and Nancy Edwards, who were from Georgia, I think. I'm not sure about that. And Jonathan Edwards died young and she married William Morton, for whom Morton Cemetery is named. But she had Jane when she was married to Jonathan Edwards, and Jane was married to William Little. I just learned THAT in that Quarterly too.

GOODSILL: Do you mind my asking how old you are, Virginia?

SCARBOROUGH: I'll be 90 in May.

GOODSILL: Goodness! And you're still actively doing your genealogical research.

SCARBOROUGH: Yes! I enjoy it. I'm not very good on the Internet but my daughter looks up things for me. Then Clint Drake, the young man that's a member of the Historical Commission, looks up things and knows that I'm kin to a lot of these people, and sends me information. He's the one who sent that Quarterly. I appreciate that very much.

GOODSILL: At what time in your life did you begin to be interested in genealogy?

SCARBOROUGH: I guess when I joined DAR and found out about some of the kinfolks. I did NOT do the research to get into DAR. Grace Briscoe had a friend in Washington, D. C. who did the research for Mary Dee Moore. My daddy and Mary Dee were first cousins so the friend looked up my information, too. And I just got curious about who came before. In that line, there is a man named Flanders Callaway, who was married to Jemima Boone who was Daniel Boone's daughter.

GOODSILL: Daniel Boone had a daughter named Jemima?

SCARBOROUGH: Daniel Boone's wife was Rebecca Bryan. One of their daughters, Jemima, married Flanders Callaway. Flanders and Jemima has several children; one of the daughters, Tabatha, married Abraham Darst. They had four children, and Tabitha died having the firth child. Abraham left the children with the Boones and went somewhere and married a woman named Jemima Brownfield. They and the children from both marriages came to Texas and settled around the Snake Creek Community. One of Abraham and Tabitha's sons, Emory Holman Darst, married Mary Ann Moore, the daughter of Elisha Moore and Jane Gillette. Emory Homan Darst and Mary Ann Moore had eight children. The fourth child was Emma who married James Simpson; they had a child, and both the child and James Simpson are buried in Snake Creek Cemetery. She later married James Lewis Davis (mentioned above).

Five of my ancestors received Mexican land grants. Another one was my great grandmother, Archietta's grandfather, Kinchen W. Davis who got his grant about 1831. His land was near where Brazos Bend Park is located. Davis Estate Road is in that area. Kinchen Davis and his wife, Fannie Pleasants, were married in Wake County, North Carolina, in 1815. On their way to Texas, their son William Kinchen Davis, was born in Morgan County, Alabama in 1822.

William Kinchen Davis and Jane Pickins were married and had four children; the oldest was John Harris Pickins David who married Lizzie Ryon, the daughter of Polly and Col. William Ryon. Eleanora married B.A. Hinson, Kinchen married Rachel Glasscock and Archietta married Walter Little Jones.

Elisaha Moore, the father of Mary Ann Moore who married Emory Holman Darst had a land grant partly in Wharton County. They were the parents of my father's mother, Emma Darst, and her siblings. Most of them lived in Richmond, and I knew them well. Elisha's father was Zachariah Moore who fought in the American Revolution

Abraham Darst, the father of Emory Holman Darst, had a land grant near Damon. He is buried in Damon public Cemetery.

William Kinchen Davis was a Mier prisoner--the Mier Expedition that went to Mexico in about 1842. He was one of the ones who drew the white bean. They were in Perote Prison and he drew a white bean.

GOODSILL: For people who don't know, please explain about the white beans.

SCARBOROUGH: There is a detailed article in Sowell's History of Fort Bend County about the Mier Expedition. We should let him tell the story. Anyway Kinchen Davis survived.

GOODSILL: I might add for our listeners that Virginia is doing all this from memory. She's not using ANY notes!

SCARBOROUGH: (laughing) I should be! J. H. P. (John Harris Pickins) Davis and Archietta were two of the children, my great-grandmother, Archietta. And Davis was Mamie George's father. Archietta and Walter Little Jones had five children and Jenny was the oldest one. I think they had two children who died very young but they had Jenny first, and Hattie, who also married a Wessendorff, Tom Wessendorff. And then William and Joe and Walter were the other three children. Walter died young and Joe fairly young.

GOODSILL: I would like to go back to Mr. Little, in 1821. When you do your research and you know the names and the dates and whom they married, do you also do research what life might have been like back then? I wonder what it might have been like when a person was starting out on a land grant in 1824.

SCARBOROUGH: I'm sure it was a VERY hard life. There was NOTHING here. The story is that the men on the Lively, the ship that brought them in, were supposed to meet Stephen F. Austin at the Colorado River and they mistakenly went up the Brazos. They found a bend in the river that looked worth settling, and they built a small fort. Morton and his wife and children came in about the same time. I think the first thing they all did was plant a corn crop. And they shot wild game, whatever they could find, for meat. They were brave people! And I really don't know HOW they survived. I think so many children died young because they didn't have the proper nourishment and all that. And I guess disease was something they all had to go through. They didn't have fresh water; they didn't have any of the things we enjoy today.

GOODSILL: The area where Riverstone is now is where Mr. Little had his league? And then your family had other land or was that the main one?

Mary Jones Prowell (left) and Virginia Davis Scarborough at George Ranch, 1943



Courtesy the George Ranch Historical Park, Richmond, TX

SCARBOROUGH: Of course Henry Jones had the one where the George Ranch is. They had eleven or twelve children. In my history I have a lot of things about who they married and that kind of thing.

GOODSILL: So your extended family was really all settled right here in Fort Bend County?

SCARBOROUGH: Right here. Now my Wessendorff grandfather, and I DO remember him, he died in 1930. His father was named Anton Wessendorff. He and two brothers came over here in 1854. Their father and mother had both died in Germany and sister and twin brothers had all died, too. So they got on a ship called the Galliot Concordia. It took 75 days to cross the ocean and they landed in Galveston. I was fortunate to find that information in either A New Land Beckoned or New Homes in a New Land by Chester William Geue. There is a Mormon Church where you can order microfilm and I could trace them back. German records are WONDERFUL on microfilm. His father, Anton, married Johanna Jenentsky (that's one of the ways it is spelled). She had come over with her family earlier, and settled around Bellville.

GOODSILL: Is that a German name?

SCARBOROUGH: It doesn't sound German but they lived up in the northern part of Germany, in Lubeck. She and two sisters and the parents came over from Germany. I don't remember what year they married.

GOODSILL: How did they meet? You said her family settled around Bellville?

SCARBOROUGH: I don't know how Antone and Johana met. The other two brothers stayed in Galveston. Anton came and settled in Fort Bend County. He brought his carpenter's chest--it had been his father's. I think it's still in the Museum here in town. So he took up a carpentry business and eventually opened a funeral parlor, did embalming, built a hearse that's still out at the George Ranch. They had twelve or thirteen children. I knew most of them during my lifetime. There were several that I didn't know.

Family was closer, I think, in those days. They didn't go off to California or anywhere. They mostly stayed and worked.

GOODSILL: There are so many creative ways to make a living and of course, there had to be a need for a funeral parlor and carpentry. It would be an interesting thing to go through your family tree and look at the professions of the people!

SCARBOROUGH: Yeah! I'm trying to remember what a lot of them did. The older son was Joe G. Wessendorff. He was in the insurance business later in life. He came back here after his wife died and the children were scattered.

GOODSILL: The insurance business is a fairly modern invention, isn't it?

SCARBOROUGH: Yes. There weren't many jobs. People were either farmers or ranchers or doctors or lawyers, maybe pharmacists. There weren't very many different ways people could make a living.

GOODSILL: How about the education in your family? Was education highly prized?

SCARBOROUGH: My mother went to college in Washington, D. C. for one year. Mr. John M. Moore, Sr. was a congressman and Etta Mae, his daughter and Momma were the same age and good friends, so she went to Washington, D. C., and lived with them. She and Etta Mae went to school together in Washington, D. C. They were invited to some event of President Taft's. I have the invitation still, and they show it at the Moore home, too.

My daddy went to college in Sherman, Texas. He and his brother, Claude, both went there. I can't remember the name.

GOODSILL: Tell us your maiden name.

SCARBOROUGH: My name was Davis, Virginia Davis.

GOODSILL: And while we're at it, tell us the date you were born.

SCARBOROUGH: May 6, 1921. My dad had a dairy. I can remember his getting up in the wee, small hours of the morning and going out to the cows. The cows would all know to come in. He tried the electric milking machines at one time but he always had other people helping him.

GOODSILL: Where exactly was his farm located? Or tell us now what it's near.

SCARBOROUGH: It's between Richmond and Rosenberg, between the railroad tracks and the Brazos River, about halfway between. There's really not anything built where we lived. There IS a little subdivision that you go into from the road that's across from the Richmond State School.

GOODSILL: Did the dairy have a name?

SCARBOROUGH: Rivercrest Farm. Roads were terrible. We had to cross both railroad tracks and then they built the rice canal during my lifetime, and had a long lane into the house. During wet weather it was just TERRIBLE! Muddy, ruts, you had to put chains on the tires. I can remember having a radio with earphones--you had to have earphones to listen to the radio. Eventually they improved those.

Mother always had help in the kitchen and help with the house. Still there was a lot to do, with six children. Mother was real active in all kinds of things--the PTA, the garden club, which they formed in 1935. I just got a book that that Richmond Garden Club published and it's a VERY good book about when they formed and who the people were that started it.

GOODSILL: What was the main focus of the garden club in 1935?

SCARBOROUGH: Just to learn gardening and to put on flower shows. I can't remember how many women--probably 25 or 30 that organized it. They met in homes sometimes; sometimes at City Hall, some of the churches. Mother was real active in the Methodist church, too. Daddy was some, but Momma was the most interested in that. And the Women's Missionary Society--it changed names several times. We always got to school on time. Maybe not on time, but we always came to school! School was a two story, red brick building for elementary school, with six rooms. It was where the building now that has some offices in it and the clothing section that they help schoolchildren have clothes to wear.

GOODSILL: Near what intersection or landmark?

SCARBOROUGH: Its on Tenth Street and Houston Street.

GOODSILL: How did you get to school?

SCARBOROUGH: Usually one of the men who worked with Daddy on the farm took us to school in a pick-up truck. Sometimes Mother would take us. As we got older, we drove ourselves. I got my driver's license when I was fourteen. Daddy just took my sister and me to the courthouse and said I want these girls to have a driver's license, and we got them. (chuckles)

GOODSILL: What kind of car did you have?

SCARBOROUGH: I can't remember. I remember the family had Chevrolets and DeSotos, a Buick. Daddy always had a pick-up truck but I can't remember what kind it was.

My sister. Antoinette, was born in 1919, I was born in 1921, Syd was born in 1923, Tony was 1926 and Frank in 1928, Tommy in 1931. Frank is the only one besides me who is still living. He lives in Houston. He's an attorney. He has a wife and two children.

GOODSILL: Is he interested in the family genealogy as well?

SCARBOROUGH: Not really. Antoinette was a little bit but not as much as I was.

GOODSILL: Are your children interested?

SCARBOROUGH: Slightly. (laughs) Not really.

GOODSILL: They will be when they get older.

SCARBOROUGH: Maybe so. Lynne, my older daughter, helps me find things on the computer. Marie, the younger daughter, will too. Well, they'll ALL help me with the computer.

GOODSILL: Things have changed a LOT in your lifetime. Tell us what it was like, growing up. And then we'll come to how things are now.

SCARBOROUGH: Well, of course, living in the country, when we got out of school we would often go to the grandparents home, where the Life Check Drug Store is now on 11th Street in Richmond. Across the street is where my great-grandmother, Archietta, lived. She died in 1930, so I remember her very well. My grandmother died in 1926. Her younger sister, Aunt Hattie, lived until 1956, I believe.

GOODSILL: So you had extended relatives and you would go to visit them.

SCARBOROUGH: Go stay with them until somebody could pick us up.

GOODSILL: What about their houses?

SCARBOROUGH: The Wessendorff home was a big, two-story house with about 5 bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, music room, and sun parlor on the left.

GOODSILL: Was it a fun place to visit or did you have to behave yourself there?

SCARBOROUGH: It was a fun place to visit. Some of the aunts were still there with my grandfather. I remember Aunt Netta would get us when we were there, and wash our hair and just play with us. After my grandfather died, the aunts moved to Houston and lived in the Lamar Hotel. One of my aunts taught at San Jacinto High School.

GOODSILL: Just out of curiosity, why do you think they moved into Houston?

SCARBOROUGH: I don't know. (laugh) I think the memory of having their parents there, but I'm not real sure. I think Doris was already teaching in Houston, so they moved in there. Marie married in '32. She was the youngest child. They moved to California. Bill wanted to be in medical school but he got out there and had some cousins and friends that were already there in the movie industry, so he became a film editor for 20th Century. Marie died in 2001. We had gone out there to visit her MANY times. She was happy to stay out there even after Bill died in 1970, I believe. Doris married Dick Goodwin and they lived in Houston.

GOODSILL: We're going to have to supply a family tree for anybody reading this interview! (laughs)

SCARBOROUGH: (laughs) There were so MANY of us! And then both sides of the family were around here.

GOODSILL: Go back a little bit, and tell me if you thought you got a good education in the local schools?

SCARBOROUGH: Yes, I think so. Of course, classes were small. There were so few people in Richmond at the time.

GOODSILL: How many in your class?

SCARBOROUGH: When I graduated from high school in '38, there were 38 in the graduating class.

GOODSILL: Girls and boys were both educated?

SCARBOROUGH: Yes. I just remember that we appreciated getting an education and there were VERY few incidents of anyone having disciplinary action or anything. And if you misbehaved in school, you were punished again when you got home! There were just six grades in that two-story, red brick building. Then the high school was over where the elementary school is now, in Richmond. It was a big tan brick building. Had a basement and two floors.

GOODSILL: A basement?! Kind of rare in Texas.

SCARBOROUGH: The library was in the basement. You had to walk up a flight of stairs to get in the building, either through the basement and up, or otherwise. I felt like we got a good education there. They had all the sports.

GOODSILL: Did you participate in any sports or clubs?

SCARBOROUGH: Not really. I was a pretty good spectator (chuckling) but that was about all.

GOODSILL: What did you do after you graduated?

SCARBOROUGH: Then I went to TSCW, which is now Texas Woman's University in Denton, for a half-year. And then we had friends at Sam Houston in Huntsville, and they told us we should come there, so we transferred. My sister had been at TSCW a year and a half when we moved to Sam Houston. I graduated from there.

GOODSILL: Was that a good experience, going to college?

SCARBOROUGH: Oh, I LOVED it! Huntsville is such a nice town and was close with the university and it was a LOT of fun. It was a small university at that time. In fact it was called Sam Houston State Teachers' College when I was there.

GOODSILL: Were you trying to become a teacher?

SCARBOROUGH: I took education courses. Of course there were so few things women could do in those days, and I thought, well, I may not do it, but I'll prepare myself to teach. And glad I did, because I taught twenty-one years in the Lamar schools.

GOODSILL: What did you teach?

SCARBOROUGH: Mostly English and reading. I started out teaching remedial reading. I started in the middle of the year one time, when one teacher's husband died and she was going to move into Houston, with her sister. So I got her job and started in the middle of the year. And I really enjoyed it. I felt like I was doing something worthwhile teaching kids.

GOODSILL: Was there quite a bit of difference from when you first started teaching to, twenty-one years later, when you stopped?

SCARBOROUGH: It was getting less easy, I'll say. Children were just not as well behaved and just didn't seem very interested in getting an education. Some of them were wonderful kids.

GOODSILL: Were you a good disciplinarian?

SCARBOROUGH: Not so much. I had pretty good discipline in my classes but I wasn't real strict. I tried to convince them that the thing they needed to do was to listen and learn and do their homework – that kind of thing. I wasn't one of the 'Sit down and be quiet!' kind. (laughs)

GOODSILL: Let's see--you've just gotten out of college. What happened next in your life?

SCARBOROUGH: Well, I graduated in the summer of '41. I just stayed and went through school, through summer school. I was having such a good time. Met my husband there.

GOODSILL: Tell us his name.

SCARBOROUGH: Alfred Young Scarborough, called Sonny. He was supposed to graduate that same summer but the draft was happening, [there was a peacetime draft beginning in 1940] so Sonny and two other boys in college went to Dallas and joined the Naval Air Corps. They told them that they would let them finish their college that summer and then they'd get them. Soon after they went up there, Sonny got his orders to report and he called them and told them they had told him that he could finish college and then they'd call him. They said, you report whatever the date was. So he never did finish college. He lacked two Chemistry classes.

GOODSILL: What was he majoring in?

SCARBOROUGH: I think P. E. I'm not sure. So many of the men in those days wanted to coach. He never did do that either. Then we married in May of '42 and went to San Diego. He had to report right after we married. We were there a while, I think about two months, and then went to Oakland. When we got to Oakland he was given orders to go to the Aleutian Islands and so I got my mother and daddy to come out and ride home with me.

GOODSILL: In a car? On the train?

SCARBOROUGH: Car. So he went to the Aleutian Islands. That was in, probably July. In about November, he came back in to Seattle for about two weeks. So I rode the train and went up there and it turned out we were there about five weeks. Some of the women had gone there and gotten a house, so we could stay in the house with the ones that were there. We'd go out to the Air Station every morning at 5:00 for them to leave and the weather would be too bad to fly. (laughs) And then we'd go back to the house, and go out there the next morning at 5:00.

GOODSILL: So you said goodbye to him every morning for three weeks! (laughs)

SCARBOROUGH: (laughing) Uh huh! They finally did go back until I think the next May or June. We lived in Millbrae, California, when he came back. They were stationed at the Lighter-Than-Air base in Palo Alto, I believe. We stayed there about a year and then he was sent to Hawaii. By that time I was expecting our first child so I came back to stay with Momma and Daddy. He didn't get back home until September, '45.

We stayed in Richmond and then he got a job in New Orleans. We went over there once or twice. Living was no fun. By that time we had three children and finally he came back here and we resettled. Then he started flying again, for McCormick Steel Company.

GOODSILL: I missed something. Was he a pilot in the Navy?

SCARBOROUGH: Yes.

GOODSILL: He was flying when he was in Hawaii?

SCARBOROUGH: Both places. The missions were pretty dangerous, I think, because of weather. In Hawaii and maybe in the Aleutians, too. I can't remember if they were just patrolling that area because it was so near to Russia. Then in Hawaii they were pulling targets for our other fighter planes to shoot at. That was not real easy!

GOODSILL: You mean, he'd fly a plane that would pull a target and other fighter pilots would be training to hit the target he was pulling?

SCARBOROUGH: Uh huh.

GOODSILL: GEE! (laughing)

SCARBOROUGH: (chuckles) Well, that worked out all right! Anyway, he worked for McCormick Steel until they got rid of the plane, and then he flew for Waukesha Pearce Industries in Houston.

GOODSILL: So he was a private pilot for industry. Totally different than coaching!

SCARBOROUGH: (chuckles) Yeah, really! Then he retired--well, THEY retired him when he was 65. He sold planes for a while and then it got so that people could buy through the Internet and not have that middle person. So that didn't work any longer. All five of our children have college educations and two girls were teachers.

GOODSILL: Why don't you tell us your children's names?

SCARBOROUGH: Okay. The oldest is Alfred Young, Junior. Davis is the second one, Lynne is the daughter, James is next and then Marie. Young was born in '45, Davis in '47, Lynne in '50, James in '57 and Marie in '58. Almost two years apart – January to the next November.

GOODSILL: You were BUSY! Except for a seven-year period, but you had three children at that point. And they all got college educations!

SCARBOROUGH: The three older ones all graduated from Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches, and the last two from A&M.

GOODSILL: So, during that time when the children were growing up, you were working as a schoolteacher, and your husband was flying?

SCARBOROUGH: I didn't start teaching until I was 45. Marie was in second grade.

GOODSILL: Really! So you raised the children until you were 45.

SCARBOROUGH: When Marie got in second grade, she was what they called a latch-key kid, but we lived in Winston Terrace, across the highway. It was really the first subdivision in Richmond, after the war. Richmond before that was just a little town with nothing. Then they built Winston Terrace, which is out on the Thompson Highway, near where the Episcopal Church is now. I guess they could catch a bus some of the time to go to school. Some of the time they just walked to school. They all went right here in Richmond, in what was a new school in those days, Smith School.

GOODSILL: Let's switch a little bit to your interest in historic preservation. I know you're on the Fort Bend County Historic Commission.

SCARBOROUGH: For the last fifty years or more, I've been interested in history. In about 198-something, I started wondering about the cemeteries in the county. I knew nobody had any records of people buried in Morton Cemetery in Richmond, where nearly all my relatives are buried. I was teaching, so I just started going over there on weekends and after school, and just listing all the burials in the cemetery.

GOODSILL: Reading off the gravestones?

SCARBOROUGH: Uh huh. And writing the birth and death dates, if they were there.

GOODSILL: There was no list of this anywhere? Nobody kept a record?

SCARBOROUGH: Not really. The George office had Walter Minkwitz who was the secretary; he was the one who sold lots. But he would sell a lot and put the price, and put a note like "north of the Moore lot" for example. Not the size of the lot or anything. There were many graves we knew that didn't have any markers on them and so I felt like this just HAS to be done! And so I did it. I was the one who named the sections and all that. I just did my own thing so I'd know where I was in doing it.

GOODSILL: What kind of names did you come up with for the sections?

SCARBOROUGH: Well, the cemetery was first called Masonic Cemetery. The Masons owned it. So I put Masonic Cemetery East, Masonic Cemetery North and West and whatever. And I don't even remember all the names I gave to them. But they were all so I could recognize where that area was. And then new additions were added. I looked up in the deed records and found out when the Georges had bought several different pieces of property to add on to the cemetery.

So I would put Addition One and where it was, and that kind of thing. But I just went through and put every name and every date and then Violet Poncik was secretary of the George Foundation and some way found out I was over there. So she was there one day when I was working and she said, "If you'll bring me your list, I'll put it on the computer." Because the George Foundation at that time was not in the building they have now, but in an addition behind the Drugstore. So I did take each list each time I got them, and Violet put it on the computer. The Wessendorff Insurance office takes care of the cemetery records now. Anyway, that's how we did that.

There was a genealogy society in Richmond at that time, and one of the other ladies found out what I was doing--I can't remember her name - isn't that terrible! Anyway, she said, 'When you finish Morton, let's go do the one in Rosenberg.' So we went over to W.O.W. which is now called Rosenberg City Cemetery.

GOODSILL: What did W.O.W. stand for?

SCARBOROUGH: Woodmen of the World. They owned the cemetery, or started the cemetery. She and I met over there after school and on weekends and did all the W.O.W. cemeteries. And Rosenberg didn't have a list of who was buried in there. So we took the city office in Rosenberg all our writings. And then we published it all in a little magazine the genealogy society was doing at that time. We called it 'Around The Bend'.

We were looking up marriage records at the courthouse and all kinds of tax records and things to put in that little magazine. Then, the UDC, the United Daughters of the Confederacy--I belong to that too--and some of those women knew what we were doing so we would all meet together and gradually got all the cemeteries in the county that we knew about, listed. I remember one day, about eight of us met over at Needville Public Cemetery and adjoining it is the Needville Methodist cemetery. You can't tell when you go from one to the other. We listed all those. Each person would take a section. We went out in fields and had bulls roaming around (laughs) and all kinds of things! Of course, then Bob Crosser joined the group and started REALLY looking into a lot of the out of the way cemeteries. We would go with him. Willie Ann McColloch and Bob and I, and Wincie Campbell joined us, going to some of them. I'm sure they'll find other cemeteries out where William Little lived. Henry Jones' cemetery is taken care of and we know nearly everybody buried in there. I'm sure on all these properties where the Old Three Hundred had homesteads, that they buried the people there. We don't know where else they would be buried. So there are a lot of them we'll never know about. Anyway, I enjoyed doing it. I thought it was something that HAD to be done.

GOODSILL: And NOW you're doing something else.

SCARBOROUGH: Well, we're doing the death records at the County Clerk's office, going through those, and finding a few new names of cemeteries. But a lot of names of people who are buried. These records we did NOT have.

GOODSILL: Tell me what's involved with doing this? How do you do this? What do you look for?

SCARBOROUGH: We get microfilm records that the County Clerk's office has made and Willie Ann writes faster than I can read! So I read the microfilm and she writes down and then she takes them home and puts them on the computer.

GOODSILL: Writes down correct spelling and dates, and when people have died?

SCARBOROUGH: Right. It tells who the parents are and what caused their death, the name of the cemetery and the town. Some have been taken other places in Fort Bend County and we don't put those in the books but we do have them in the records. The George Memorial Library has a file cabinet with all the obituaries that are in the local papers and some from the Houston papers if they are Fort Bend County people. So we have pretty good records.

GOODSILL: You go through them all, starting at a certain date or starting with a letter of the alphabet, or?

SCARBOROUGH: We started in 1903. That's when they were first required to have death records. At present we are in 1980.

GOODSILL: WOW! Almost eighty years! Amazing!!

SCARBOROUGH: The number increases as we go along, because there are more people. I think we are in December of 1980 now. We'll continue as long as they'll let us. Or as long as we're around!

GOODSILL: Very interesting work that you're doing. How often do you do that?

SCARBOROUGH: We go once a week.

GOODSILL: That's quite a contribution that you are making, to the accuracy of historical data.

SCARBOROUGH: And it's real good for people interested in genealogy.

GOODSILL: And they have full access to your findings? It's public record?

SCARBOROUGH: There have been six books published that are in the genealogy department of the library. I think they have about enough information for another one, which is good. And I THINK maybe the people in the library are planning to put it on microfilm, but I'm not sure about that. Or on the Internet.

GOODSILL: I know Dianne Wilson has done quite a good job of making things available to the public on the Internet.

SCARBOROUGH: Oh, yes, she has. They've digitized all of the records in the County Clerk's office.

GOODSILL: Truly a HUGE benefit to anybody doing genealogical research or historic research.

SCARBOROUGH: And looking up land records and all kinds of things. She has made it much easier for people to find what they need.

GOODSILL: Well, gosh! We've talked about your ancestors, and we've talked about your parents' lives and we've talked about your life, and we've talked about your career and your volunteer activities. What have I forgotten to ask you? Is there anything I should be asking you about how things have changed, or favorite memories?

SCARBOROUGH: I started talking about how things have changed, and of course they HAVE! Richmond, the downtown part, really hasn't changed much at all, but all the subdivisions being built around it have certainly added a lot of nice people to the area. Many schools have been built. Of course, I've just come through a lot of things from earphones on radios, to television, to computers. The way automobiles and roads have improved. It's been an interesting time. I just wonder what the future holds that we can't even imagine? When I was a child, the thought of somebody holding a telephone with no wires in their hand, and these things that take pictures that you can hold in your hand, and you can look up any information, and you can talk on it. Just unimaginable years ago, really.

GOODSILL: And the ease of transportation is something I think people take for granted. When you talk about how difficult it was even to get in and out of your homestead.

SCARBOROUGH: Oh, yes! And, of course, Richmond was all just dirt roads. Going to Thompson, it was a bog. Just going to Thompson and Booth was a muddy road. I can't remember when they started the hard surface roads around.

GOODSILL: But that made a BIG difference.

SCARBOROUGH: Oh, it certainly made a difference. Yes, indeed.

GOODSILL: Changes in vehicles.

SCARBOROUGH: Mm hm. Of course, going to Houston--I can remember a two lane highway what is 90A and coming back home when the sun was setting RIGH in front of you, and blinding you. The way Sugar Land has grown from a little company owned town to what it is now. It's been AMAZING.

GOODSILL: It's been something to watch. Let me take a look at my notes, but I'm feeling like we have a good interview here. Oh, what kinds of recreational activities did you do when you were a young girl?

SCARBOROUGH: I can remember going home from high school--well, we'd nearly always go to the Moore home, which was where the Wessendorff home was. The Moores moved from the country into the Wessendorff home after the Wessendorffs moved to Houston. And we'd go over there and play Monopoly, nearly every afternoon, after school. Of course we had dances. Everybody danced in those days. Some played bridge.

GOODSILL: Social, interactive things, together.

SCARBOROUGH: Everybody had birthday parties and all the usual things like that when we were younger.

GOODSILL: Let me ask you this. What kind of records do you have that maybe we should have a copy of, that would help to make your interview complete, or help us keep an accurate historical documentation. You have a family tree--I know that would be essential. What else do you think you have that might be important for us to keep with your--

SCARBOROUGH: I'm a packrat! I save everything. I have information on families that really are NO connection to me, but things I've cut out of the paper and that kind of thing. I have all my genealogy on computer but it's a program that you'd have to have to play it.

GOODSILL: What are you going to do with all this material that you've been collecting all these years?

SCARBOROUGH: I have file cabinets, and folders--

GOODSILL: Have you decided where it's going to go, when you aren't here any more?

SCARBOROUGH: (laughs)

GOODSILL: (chuckles) Is that too personal a question?

SCARBOROUGH: One of my sons says he's going to put a match to it! The other says he's going to get there first and save it. We'll see! (chuckling)

I told one of them the other day, just take one of the file cabinets home and put it in a safe place somewhere so that whoever gets interested later on down the line will HAVE it. Because I've looked up SO much. I have letters from Missouri, from places where they had a lot of information. And from Germany, and all that, that it would take people forever to replace.

GOODSILL: Treasures to people that really are--

SCARBOROUGH: And I'd LOVE to put it up here, but I have about four file cabinets.

GOODSILL: The library? Historic Texas?

SCARBOROUGH: I don't know who would take it. I'm sure a lot of it is repetitious because I've rediscovered things. I'd be certainly willing to share anything, and I've been toying with the idea of looking in my computer--in my genealogy program's book--I know there's information about how to print a book. But I haven't gotten around to reading it. I'll always do it 'later'. I'd really like to get it on paper. I still like paper. I've had two computers just break down and I lost ALL my genealogy one time and had to replace every bit of it. And right now, it's just sitting there, but I HAVE backed it up. There's still some stuff I added yesterday. I don't know what's going to happen to it. I'd like to find a place for it.

GOODSILL: We'll have to think about that! Can you think of anything I should have asked you but I didn't?

SCARBOROUGH: I really can't think of anything, but I've enjoyed it. It's been fun, reminiscing. I can't think of anything else.

GOODSILL: Good. Okay. Thank you so much.

Interview ends