

**HAMMONTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**Tape 24B Transcript – Fanny Gazzara, Meat Market**

**[Start Time 00:00:03]**

Today is April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1978 my name is Patty Wagner, and today I'm interviewing Mrs. Fanny Gazzara. She resides at 311 Locust St., Hammonton, New Jersey. Social Security number 148-05-8122.

**Question: Mrs. Gazzara, would you like to tell me how you and your husband got involved in the meat market?**

Well to be honest, he was told by the doctor to leave the factory on account of his ill health, and the best thing for him to do was to get out and seek work, like outside work, something different. Well the thing that ever since he was a child he was always interested in livestock cause we used to have a butcher down at the end of our street that used to slaughter now and then, a little calf or something you know. He would always be down there watching him; he was always so interested. So the only thing that came to his mind was he probably wanted to get into the meat business which he didn't know anything about.

So he started out by working for a fellow by the name of Jimmy Milliotti (sp?) in Egg Harbor. He used to have a butcher shop there. And he didn't know a pork chop from a sirloin steak or anything. So anyway, he got some of his experience there, so when he thought he was ready he thought he would start out in business for himself. Well, he bought the second-handed panel truck, built a little cutting board back there, a little scale and a small handmade icebox and bought his first piece of meat from Cudahy Packing Company in Atlantic City. Well, we would grind up the hamburger at home, by that time we had already set up our garage as a little retail store and we had a second-handed grinder, and we would grind up all the hamburger for him and set it up in his little truck and he would go from door-to-door peddling you know. Of course, you start out at a small scale. For the first couple of weeks to me seemed like a disaster. I was, I told him, I said we ought to give up. I was, you know, just, all upset about this. He said no, I'm not going to give up, I'm going to keep on going. He said, after all, I mean maybe you make it one week, next week you know, you lose. So that's the way business goes. [2:29]

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So, he did that for a couple of years. Peddled from door-to-door, and little by little he picked up like little bars and other little places of business. While we at home, we did all the preparing of the sausage, which was stuffed by hand.

**Question: You processed the meat yourself?**

Well, the sausage you know, it's not processed, it's all fresh, you grind it up, season it you know. Well, we had my brother-in-law doing most of the heavy work, and I would help him whenever I could, running in and out of the house all the time, and we sold quite a bit of sausage. And then, later on, we had a chance to buy this kettle from two old people, two old ladies, and I can't remember their names, but they were making scrapple and selling it to different ones. I don't know who they were selling it to, anyway they wanted to give it up and we knew about it so we bought this big kettle. And it was one of those, it was really old-fashioned. It had like a wood box right underneath the kettle, and you had to light the fire with wood to heat up the water in this kettle and we made our scrapple. Of course they gave us the recipe too, they sold us the recipe with the stove and everything. But everything was done by hand, all the meat had to be ground by hand, boned by hand and we used this paddle, and we used to pack it in little tins. And at that time my husband thought it was no more than right to name it decided to call it Fanny's Homemade Scrapple which we sold by the bit (bin? tin?).  
[4:06]

So, it was really a struggle but little by little we were getting more customers, the people would come in our little retail store at the garage. We were living on Jacob Street at the time, 210 Jacob Street. So, little by little he felt that he was ready to build his slaughterhouse. So it wasn't until about 1942 when he built his first slaughterhouse, and we had a retail store with that building. But we didn't start making the hotdogs until about, I'd say maybe the following year when we hired this fella by the name of Max Jeske, he was a German from Cologne, and he had loads of the recipes, like for hot dogs. And he started making more of the German cuts, I just can't remember them all now like some of kind of different sausages and kielbasa, I forgot the names of some of the things that he used to make. Well, little by little, you know, the business got better and better, then he started putting trucks on the road and we started wholesaling. You know, it all came gradually, so when he realized that he needed more room he expanded his

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slaughterhouse. But at first everything was manual, like the pulleys to pull up the calves and pull up the pigs.

**Question: How many animals did he slaughter? Do you know exactly how many were slaughtered? Were they all slaughtered by hand? [5:44]**

By hand, all by hand. You know, they stick the pigs, then they hang him and everything had to be done with hand pulleys you know, nothing automatic. Then they had like a big, like a [inaudible at 6:07], well it wasn't exactly like barrel, a big thing with hot water where they just dipped the pig in there. It has to be done that way. And then all the scrapping was done by hand, they scrapped all the hair off the pig all by hand, it was all done by hand. The pulleys that would lift up the cattle was all done by hand. There was nothing automatic in the beginning.

But when he expanded, well it was altogether different, we had a beautiful tile slaughterhouse. We were noted as having one of the cleanest slaughterhouses in South Jersey. In fact, it was the largest slaughterhouse in South Jersey too. But by that time, you know, everything was automatic, the hoists, and we had the scalding machines, and the things.

Well, naturally in the beginning we only had a few employees mostly family but then we got as high as maybe about 35 employees by the time we reached the peak. So as I say we started gradually and finally expanded. The kitchen expanded. After this here fellow Max Jesky left, we had another foreman, a kitchen foreman, and he introduced a few more recipes of his own and our last foreman was Joe Olivo, a boy from Hammonton, which I would think you already know. And he was there at the highest peak and he stayed with us until it was time to close down.

Well we're going back to the beginning of my story. This all started out in 1938 and just previous to that my husband was working at one of the factories in Philadelphia.

**Question: Mrs. Gazzara, what were some of the products you made in the store?**

Well one of our main products was the frankfurters. The first one was made right on my husband's birthday, April the 12<sup>th</sup>, I don't remember exactly the year but we made as high anywhere from 5000 to 7000 pounds a week, that's at the peak

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season and the Italian sausage I would say from 3000 to 5000 pounds a week, plus all other items and types of Italian products, such as, we even had Polish sausage, beef baloney which we sold an enormous amount, veal loafs, pimento loafs, vegetable loafs, lunch rolls, scotch ham, boiled ham, Italian ham, cooked salami, cupertini xxxx, liverwurst, capicola, pepperoni, genoa salami, and of course scrapple was another big item for us too.

There's so many others that I just can't mention right now, there's loads of them. We were also big in rendering lard, we rendered all our lard. We had these great big steam kettles for lard.

**Question: Mrs. Gazzara, can you mention some of the prices of the meat sold in the past when you had the store?**

Well are you referring to mostly the fresh meats right now? Well as of April the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1953, we were selling steaks at 78 cents a pound, choice veal cutlet - \$1.20 a pound, chops - 75 cents a pound, leg of lamb - 55 cents pound and loin chops at 98 cents a pound. Pork loin center \$0.70, plus a number of other items. But our cold cuts were really very reasonable. We had boiled ham that we were selling at \$0.30 a quarter pound and if people would buy it in a piece, you know sometimes large families, they would buy like a whole baloney. We would sell it as cheap as 30 cents a pound. And that was another big item that I forgot to mention; bacon is one of our biggest items. We made thousands of pounds of bacon, that was another good item. We would sell that, now people would buy a whole slab of bacon, a lot of people who would want to take it home and slice it themselves or they could buy that as cheap as maybe 25 cents a pound. And even sliced, it would only be a few pennies more. You couldn't get it anywhere for that price. In fact, we were making Frankfurters for other people under their own labels.

**Question: Who bought most of your meat products, was it mainly people in Hammonton? [11:16]**

Well we sold, we retailed and wholesaled for any..., from Trenton clear down to the Cape, wholesale. That included fresh meats and all the meat products that we processed, veal, lamb and pork.

**Question: Did your husband transport any meats with his truck?**

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Well he picked up most of his cattle with our big cattle truck, in the beginning it was really hard. He had to go out with this second-handed cattle truck and buy and bring the livestock all himself and they were the hard times. When there were times when he never even got a chance to go to bed, maybe he'd stop along the road for an hour or two. The cattle would go right into the slaughterhouse and kept right on working. Sometimes he never even came to bed.

**Question: What type of cattle did he buy?**

Well, it wasn't always the same. He used to buy commercial cattle for processing. You didn't have to use the top-quality beef in the kitchen for processing, we used commercial cattle. But we had top grade for our retail store and for the stores that we wholesaled to.

**Question: Did you mention where the cattle came from? [12:40]**

Well we bought a cow as far as Virginia, we used to go to Virginia, Dover Delaware, Selena Maryland, Lancaster and to some of these local markets that we had around here like Cow Town and up in Columbus. They had a big livestock market there years ago and at one time we even had a load of cattle shipped by rail from Lancaster. I believe it was the only time in Hammonton that they ever had cattle shipped by rail to Hammonton.

**Question: Can you tell me what the slaughterhouse was equipped with?**

Well, as far as I can remember we had two large smoke rooms, a large steam room, a big rendering kettle, and, well, then we had a chill room where cattle had to be chilled before it went to the refrigerator. See after it was slaughtered it had to be chilled first and gradually put into the refrigerator. Then besides that we had another big refrigerator where we stored all our other products, like hot dogs and things like that. Then of course the big deep freeze also, we had that also.

**Question: After the animals were slaughtered was the room cleaned out every time it was used?**

Oh, every time that they slaughtered, the room was all scrubbed down, the walls were all tile, they were all washed. Anybody was allowed to go in for inspection. In fact, they used to run inspection every so often we never knew when they were going to come. Incidentally, the meat was all government inspected which I forgot

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to mention. Oh, we always had inspectors coming in, and we never knew, so the place was clean at all times.

**Question: Mrs. Gazzara, during the war, I know there was a shortage of meat, what was it like for your husband's meat business?**

Well, it got pretty rough. We were lucky because the quota was based on the amount of cattle and you know that we were slaughtering so we were a little more fortunate than some of the others. But even at that, the quota was so low that we couldn't accommodate all the people, because they could only buy whatever stamps was issued to them and people were even begging, they were willing to pay even twice the amount provided that we would give it to them. We told them we couldn't do it because we had to have stamps to buy our meat so how could we sell it without the stamps. So they were really some pretty rough times. But we tried our best to accommodate our customers.

**Question: Mrs. Gazzara, why did your husband's business close?**

Well if I remember correctly it started sometime around 1952, that's when the people, the employees were approached by the union trying to organize the place and they wanted them to go out on strike which they did. Of course, that upset my husband very much and he couldn't see why they had to join the union when he had everything to offer them that they were already..., they were already getting all the benefits that the union had to offer them. And he couldn't understand it. He said he would rather close than have them join the union; he didn't want to have anything to do with it. And that's where it really started. It wasn't long after that when my husband had his first heart attack, then a year later he had another one. And naturally not being with the business like he should have been, it started going downhill a little bit. So, by 1955 he had his last fatal heart attack and that's when he died.

Well, my son at that time is only twenty-one, the oldest boy, and he tried to take over well he tried his best, he didn't have the knowledge his father had. And he didn't have enough time to really learn all the ropes of the business, so he tried to carry on about a year and a half or so, then we finally were forced to close down. And it was maybe year or two later that we finally sold it at loss, a great loss.

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**Question: What kind of things did your husband do for the community while he was alive? [17:20]**

Oh well, I just can't begin to mention some of the things he did. First of all, he was always approached by different organizations and different groups, a lot of them even out of town because we did do a lot of business out of town. And it was always a donation for this, or a donation for that, or whether it was money or meat, he never refused anyone, always willing and they were always very grateful.

I don't know whether I should mention this, at one time we had a horse that was known as Sandy the Wonder Horse, and he even took his horse to places where he displayed the horse for the benefit of the organization. At one time it was at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, another time it was the Cooper Hospital and they were always very grateful. And he did that all for nothing. He always liked to do these things. There's another thing I thought he did which I should mention that he was the first man to ever play Santa Claus in this town and he did it for two consecutive years. Then he finally had to give it up because he wasn't getting the right support from the merchants. He will always be remembered as the first Santa Claus of Hammonton, distributing candy to the children and driving through town in his red sleigh, drawn by Little King, brother of Trigger of Roy Rogers fame. He and his horse Sandy.

**Question: Mrs. Gazzara, can you tell me something about your husband's family?**

Well I do know that they both came from Italy where they were born.

**Question: These were your husbands' parents?**

Yes, Catherine and Pasquale Gazzara, and they came straight to Hammonton, where they lived most of their life. And he worked at the railroad, at that time I believe they were giving something like a dollar a day, very minimal wages. Later he was, he purchased a small farm and he farmed at a small scale. Half the time didn't bring in enough money to pay for the bills that were made during the winter months. Then he finally got a job with his son, my husband, and that's where he worked until the time of his death.

**Question: Did you husband have brothers and sisters?**

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Oh yes, they were seven children all together, my husband Frank being the oldest, next came a brother Leon, another brother Angelo, Joseph, a sister Catherine, then there was another boy Peter and Mary. Did I mention Joseph? Did I say seven? I should have wrote it all down so I could read it.

**Questions: OK, how about your side of the family?**

Well, my side of the family, my parents also came from Italy, but back then we lived in Philadelphia up until about 1920, and that's when we moved here to Hammonton. I was 11 years old at that time, in fact they moved right on my birthday. My father was a tailor and he had gotten a job here with Eskins - they had a big clothing factory here at the time. And we were 10 children in the family. My sister Grace the oldest, then I came next, my brother Carmen, then I had another sister Sally that was killed a good many years ago at the age of 20, and then Thomas, Charles, Lucy, Angie, and Irene.

**Questions: OK, how about your own family now?**

Well, I have four children. My oldest boy, his name is Charles, most everybody calls him Buddy, well he's better known as Bud. I have one daughter Angela, another son Carl, and my youngest boy Frank.

**Question: How about grandchildren?**

I have 12 grandchildren.

**Question: Can you say all their names?**

Well I'll start with the oldest one, his name is Frances after his grandfather and he's known as Butch, and he got that name from his grandfather somehow. And then there's a brother, he has a brother with the name of Robert, and a sister by the name of Nancy, now there all Buddy's children, my oldest boy.

Now my daughter, she has 6 children. Her oldest boy is Steven, and then there's Frank. Kathy, Christine, Stephanie, Beth Ann. And my third child his name is Carl, he lives in Medford, he has three children. His oldest one is Michelle, they have one boy, his name is Michael, and another girl Carla. My youngest boy lives in Medford but as of now they have no children.



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**[End of Interview]**

**Transcribed By: Eileen Unger, 4/22/19**

**Please send any edits or corrections to the Historical Society of Hammonton at  
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