



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Donald Barton,
1989 March 31

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Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Donald B. Barton on March 31, 1989. The interview took place in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT F. BROWN: —interview with Donald Barton in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, March 31, 1989, Robert Brown, the interviewer.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were, uh, born here in Fitchburg in 1903, and can you say a little bit about your family? Who were they, and what did they do? And think about—was there anything in your family that might have led to your eventually going to art school? But first, let's talk a bit about your family. Were they from Fitchburg?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes, they're from Fitchburg and Waltham.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Waltham. Yeah.

DONALD B. BARTON: My grandmother came over to this country shortly after the Civil War and settled in Waltham. Her husband was an engraver, uh—engraved watch dials, but lost his job due to machine engraving, which came in, and he found it difficult to work the machine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where had he been trained as an engraver? Had been—your grandfather—

DONALD B. BARTON: I don't know that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But somewhere in—where in England or—?

DONALD B. BARTON: In England, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: England, yeah, yeah.

DONALD B. BARTON: Now, he also had another vocation that of a cook—uh, a baker. So after he lost his job, they baked bread, and they delivered it around. And they lived somewhere near Moody Street—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Waltham?

DONALD B. BARTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember your grandparents?

DONALD B. BARTON: My, uh, father's—or my mother's father, I don't know which, died from—my grandmother's—her husband died from a heart attack about the age of 50. Then he left her with seven—with four girls and three boys to bring up, so they carried on the baking business. [00:02:49] But, really, my grandmother was not a baker. At the age of 14, she was foreman over four men in a shoe shop.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At the age of 14? Huh.

DONALD B. BARTON: Uh-huh [affirmative]. But they left England. They always put a barrel of beer down in the cellar, and when they left England, they didn't use the beer anymore. They got rid of it. And my father supported himself through physical culture—education in going through Harvard.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. How did he support himself? I mean—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, well as you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —by teaching it or—

DONALD B. BARTON: Teaching, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —by teaching that?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, physical education.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh [affirmative]. He went through Harvard. What did he study there?

DONALD B. BARTON: Medicine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Medicine? [00:04:00]

DONALD B. BARTON: He specialized in eye, ear, nose, and throat.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your father's name was?

DONALD B. BARTON: Dr. John Alfred Barton.

ROBERT F. BROWN: John Alfred Barton.

DONALD B. BARTON: My mother's name was Mable Augustus Barton or Augustus Samuels.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where was she from?

DONALD B. BARTON: She was from Waltham but also from New Orleans. Her mother divorced her father. Her father was a music publisher, and he also was a scientist. He worked for the—what's your?

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, your grandfather worked from the Smithsonian?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, at one time related to the fishing industry up in Canada or somewhere around there where they stripped the salmon of the eggs and propagate them out officially. That's when it first came out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his, uh—

DONALD B. BARTON: And I have pictures showing him stripping the can of salmon.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his first name your grandfather—

DONALD B. BARTON: His name—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —Samuels?

DONALD B. BARTON: —was—golly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was—his first name was?

DONALD B. BARTON: Edward—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Edward Samuels.

DONALD B. BARTON: —Samuels.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But they were divorced, and your mother went with her mother down to New Orleans?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes. [00:06:00] She was brought up by a captain—I forget the name. It was something with three letters like T-O-D, Tod—a tugboat captain. She had a pony and a parrot and a monkey.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Does she—did she always speak fondly of living down there?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. That's while her parents were divorced.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, you told me that your mother studied art too.

DONALD B. BARTON: My mother went to the Boston, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, the Normal Art School?

DONALD B. BARTON: Normal Art School, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, the Massachusetts College of Art, yes?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was she planning to make a career as an artist or as a teacher?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I think she was. She graduated, she had a—she could have been a teacher if she wanted to be. And I have some of her paintings here, some upstairs in the barn, and my daughter has some of the paintings, some of the better paintings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So she did continue to paint for a while?

DONALD B. BARTON: She did some still life and some landscapes up on—back of Leominster in the hillside. It was then a nice cow pasture, and now it's all built up. [00:08:00] Well, I went with her on these painting trips, and I painted one picture, but I—I destroyed it because [laughs] it looked like an Italian landscape.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, it didn't look like what you were—?

DONALD B. BARTON: Everything was green, green, green. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, your parents married and—

DONALD B. BARTON: You know, trees are green, eyes, and the sky was blue, and—[Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, your parents met in Waltham and then moved out here?

DONALD B. BARTON: I guess so. You see, they had a—I think it was a three-story apartment house on the hillside—on a hill. They pointed it out to me once. And it had a tennis court, and they played tennis a lot. And that's about all I know there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: About when did they move out here? About when did you—

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, probably about 1900. My father moved to Pepperell first.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Pepperell, Massachusetts, yes.

DONALD B. BARTON: He had inherited a—for a short time, he was going to take over the practice of an elderly physician who was going to take a vacation for a few months. And he found himself right in the middle [laughs] of a medical mess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really?

DONALD B. BARTON: And he had a hard time pulling two or three people out of a bad condition. [00:10:09] And so, he decided that he would go in for eye, ear, nose, and throat because that's a [laughs]—thyroid. [They laugh.] So he went to medical school for about 10 years after that, or you know, going to Boston to the clinic and back here, and back to Boston, and back here, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: He'd got deathly sick on the railroad train.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh? But he had—so he commuted to finish up his special education?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, he's specializing now all the time. And he died in '71. He was sick for about two years with Parkinsonian syndrome.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, they were here—you were born then—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —shortly after, they came here, yes?

DONALD B. BARTON: I was born in 1903 and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you particularly remember about growing up here in Fitchburg?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I don't know. There's nothing special about remembering Fitchburg. I do remember Gloucester when I was two years old. My folks took a place down there, and I got acquainted with the whole of

the land.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, this artist in Gloucester was—

DONALD B. BARTON: [Theodore] Thomas Victor Valenkamph.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay. V-A-L-E-N-K-A-M-P-F, I think it is. [00:12:04]

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very good.

DONALD B. BARTON: Now—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember him?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. He originally started out of the brown sauce school—

ROBERT F. BROWN: With the what school? The what school, please?

DONALD B. BARTON: What?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which school?

DONALD B. BARTON: The brown sauce. You know brown, pan deck [ph] brown, and so forth given in the painting, yeah?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Brown sauce, right?

[Audio Break.]

DONALD B. BARTON: Instead of brown sauce, he used these nice grays. And the reason for it was that an old countryman of his, Sigurd Skou who studied under Anders Zorn—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, he's Swede then this man?

DONALD B. BARTON: What?

ROBERT F. BROWN: They were Swedish?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. So Skou told him to paint light—and that he changed his whole way of painting to more beautiful, light colors. And uh, I always used to like to go up to visit his studio and see the paintings he was doing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you—you remember him from when you were very young?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you—would you go to Gloucester several times?

DONALD B. BARTON: I would go to Gloucester, Rocky Neck, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You would go—oh, you went several times to Gloucester?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As a child?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, at that time, I remember. I was so young, I could hardly remember anything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure, yeah.

DONALD B. BARTON: But I remember the old man. And so, 20 years later when I was studying art, I went out to his studio again. [00:14:05] A year or two later, I heard that he had—was diabetic, and he went to bed with a bottle of whiskey and never woke up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember some of the things he talked about?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, no. I don't know that he talked about much, but he did paint a lot of mostly seafaring pictures, boats on waves—boats on waves, and fishermen pulling in their nets on—in small boats on the waves, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Uh-huh [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: They were very dramatic. There was—a large canvas was on his easel at the time he died or something similar to that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Did you start painting then when you were a young—very young—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —or drawing at least?

DONALD B. BARTON: —the first time I started painting was, oh, when I went painting with my mother. I'd drive the car. I must have been about 14.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You'd drive her in the car, yeah?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. I drove her up to this farm where there's a large, large pasture on the hillside, and fruit trees, and so forth, rather pretty. [00:16:00] And she painted the pictures there, and while she painted away, I would kill the time, two or three hours, by running over the top of the mountain and then coming around the bottom. I had just about an hour. And you know, on top of the mountain, there's a stony, bald spot with a tree growing up. The tree is about, oh, five or six inches in diameter, and on either side of the tree there's a mark of a cartwheel, which—a steel-rim cartwheel that left their marks on the stone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. So it once had—a track that went right over the mountain?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this the big mountain of Leominster?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mount Wachusett, is it?

DONALD B. BARTON: I don't know the name of it. I used to call it wildcat mountain because I saw a wildcat on it once.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, did you then begin occasionally to sketch yourself or to make some paintings?

DONALD B. BARTON: So, I—so, instead of running over the hill once, why, I thought I'd try painting a picture. Like I said, I described the picture as sort of like an Italian landscape with [laughs] green trees, blue sky, and white clouds. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But did you—

DONALD B. BARTON: Very primitive.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your mother encouraged you in this? In—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, I guess so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. [00:18:00] Well did you have any—uh, what instruction did you have here in school in Fitchburg? What kind—?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, we had art classes there. I think in school in Fitchburg, my teacher gave me an acanthus leaf to draw, which I did rather well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would you draw it from—a plaster cast, from a plaster—?

DONALD B. BARTON: No, no, I don't think so. I might have drawn something like an ear or something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. By the time, you finished high school, had you had very many art lessons in school or elsewhere?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, no, not much. I did build a movie camera and take some movie pictures of a football

game. Probably gotten stuck away somewhere. And I've been looking for the negatives, and I handed out all these, but I couldn't find the ones I was looking for.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were interested in photography as well?

DONALD B. BARTON: What?

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were interested in photography?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. So, yes, I built a small, steel camera that takes 35 mm film about this size. And at that time, I would get the positive film because it's cheaper, and I'd use that in the camera, so the pictures are not quite as clear as they should be.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you made your own camera?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you buy the lenses or did you grind the lenses?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I got the lens from an old camera that was obsolete, I guess. It was a Brownie or a Kodak or something. [00:20:00] And my father's brother, Bill, went down to Guatemala, Panama, somewhere, and he took some pictures, and he took one picture of a woman with a vase or a bowl getting water beside a stream. I can remember that, and it was a very good—it was an artistic picture and—well he took it with this old camera. So I built the lens in my camera. I still got the lens, but the camera I got rid of because it had rubber rollers on it, which indicated the frame—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The—

DONALD B. BARTON: —about that big, you know, so that when it goes over, makes one complete turn, it would—the soft rubber would press against the film, and it would move the film around one turn, see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: So, I still have some of the negatives, some prints in this little album over here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So this is when you were a young man—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and you're a teenager or something like that? Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Here, I'll—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —so, you came out of Fitchburg High School in—what—about in the late 19-teens, around 1920 or so?

DONALD B. BARTON: Nineteen twenty-two.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you went to—apparently, you went to the Fitchburg Normal School for one year?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you—? What did you study there? [00:22:00]

DONALD B. BARTON: Not the Fitchburg Normal School. Let's see. Normal Art School in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then you went to Boston.

DONALD B. BARTON: —Boston.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I'm not sure.

DONALD B. BARTON: I went there night classes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: To the Normal Art School in Boston?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes. Yeah. Big classes at Boston Museum

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. But you—before you went to the museum school, you went to the Normal Art School, is that correct?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, before that, I went to Michael Jacobs School of Color.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Michael Jacobs School?

DONALD B. BARTON: Michael Jacobs.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And where was that school?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, it was right next to b—? I can't remember the name.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What, Boston University? No?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, it was in Rock—in Gloucester?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, it was in Gloucester? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. Breckenridge. It's next to the Breckenridge school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Breckenridge school in—

DONALD B. BARTON: My mother was going to the Breckenridge school, and I went to Michael Jacobs School.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it—was it pretty good instruction for the—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes. Yeah. I think I learned more about color because we had to mix these colors charts. And his way of mixing color charts was taking complementaries and mixing them together to get a neutral gray. But then take a—you might say, red and blue to make a neutral gray, and green and crimson to make a neutral gray, and yellow-green and violet to make a neutral gray, and all of that, you see? [00:24:08]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: So that if I wanted to mix a color, I knew how to do it and get just about what I wanted the first time. And so, he had these little um, poster color paintings about this size.

ROBERT F. BROWN: About—what—four by four inches or so?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. And we'd make about a certain—six or seven of those using different color schemes. And well, that had used up the first summer of '22.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The summer of '22. Was he a—quite a good teacher, do you think?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, I think he was, and he was a major in the army in World War I. And he still had a little mustard gas on his trench coat, you know? [Laughs.] He would—you know, tell people to feel it or rub it, and they would get an itchy hand. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was—by the way, was World War I a fairly memorable time here for you?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I was 14 at the time and around there. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So that—

DONALD B. BARTON: So I'd go down to Camp Devens and watch the—look at the trenches they had dug, you know, to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To practice—

DONALD B. BARTON: —to practice the—for practice. [00:26:00] And sometimes, you go on the rifle range to pick up a few casings. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your first—then your first long art instruction that lasted awhile was the summer of '22 with the Michael Jacobs School of Color in Rockport?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or in Gloucester rather—

DONALD B. BARTON: Gloucester.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Then you began—that fall, you went to the Boston Museum School?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did that require an entrance examination? Did you have to—

DONALD B. BARTON: No, no, no. My father suggested that I go there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. And so you—all you had to do was go there?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, he wanted me to be a medical student, but I wasn't smart enough for that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So he suggested you go to—that you could be an illustrator or something else?

DONALD B. BARTON: I guess so. My father wasn't a very practical man.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, he wasn't?

DONALD B. BARTON: He didn't know too much about money or how to invest it. Uh, he did buy stocks and when the stock market crashed, why he lost all his money. I told him to sell the stocks—he could have saved some of it—but he wouldn't, "Hang on, it's going to come up, it's going to come up," you know? Well it didn't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah. So, you—when you started at the Boston Museum School, can you describe the curriculum? What did you do in the first year?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, the first year, you draw from cast, from plaster statues, and so forth.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you enjoy that?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, yes. Kind of dull but—[00:28:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Who was your teacher of drawing?

DONALD B. BARTON: Anson Cross

ROBERT F. BROWN: Anson Cross, yes.

DONALD B. BARTON: And, well, I guess Philip Hale. I don't know. He specialized in charcoal drawing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they each pretty good teachers?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes, good teachers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, would—did—would you work at home too? Did you have—would you work both in school and at home? Did they give you assignments that you had to—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So your time was your own, once you were out of class?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. So I went to night school—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you did?

DONALD B. BARTON: —at the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What, the Normal Art School?

DONALD B. BARTON: —Normal Art School.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why did you do that?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Certain things—

DONALD B. BARTON: —to get a little more figure drawing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Figure drawing? Hmm.

DONALD B. BARTON: And also, I took up a little modeling and sculpture at the—hmm—can't—I never remember the name of the thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall who—

DONALD B. BARTON: Let's see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Maybe you recall who your teacher was?

DONALD B. BARTON: No. I can't recall that, but I went there for a couple of years, night school and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were getting a real range of different training?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Drawing, life study, sculpture?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And when would you, uh—in the second year at the Museum School, would you go into something more complex, more complicated? [00:30:03]

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, they have anatomy and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The study of anatomy, was that done from models or from what?

DONALD B. BARTON: No, from sketches that the teacher put on the blackboard. Philip Hale was real good at it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to know him at all or—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes, I knew him quite well. I have a picture of him somewhere, but I don't know where it is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was quite approachable, was he? I mean the students could talk with him and—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he was and he wasn't. Some people say he was very cruel.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really? You mean—

DONALD B. BARTON: He was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did they mean, do you think?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he'll build you up, you know, and tell you what a great guy you are but then [laughs] he'd give you the shaft. So, I guess, that's the reason why people don't speak of him very much. He was a music critique by profession.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, he was, huh?

DONALD B. BARTON: But he was a greater artist. He painted pointillism after—what—it's Seurat?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Seurat, yeah. Right.

DONALD B. BARTON: And he did better than Seurat. At the time I was with him, he was working on a man or a man-horse flying in the air, you know, bringing a nude woman on—[they laugh]. [00:32:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was very appealing—

DONALD B. BARTON: I've never seen it reproduced, but it's a very good painting. He also had another one of the football game. So, I can't understand why it isn't among some famous paintings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go to his studio and see what he was doing?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You visited?

DONALD B. BARTON: I took private lessons from him—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you did?

DONALD B. BARTON: —for two years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh. And you found he was a very pleasant, I mean you got along very well with him?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes. He was agreeable.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Did he do—

DONALD B. BARTON: He always smoked a little Stogies cigar, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yeah?

DONALD B. BARTON: And the whole corridor and the bathroom smelled of it. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to know his family at all?

DONALD B. BARTON: I never knew his family.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because his wife was a very well-known painter too.

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right? But you never met her?

DONALD B. BARTON: No. I know her style of painting, a little, up-and-down strokes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So, by the second year, were you beginning to paint as well at the second year of the Museum School? Or were you—

DONALD B. BARTON: The third year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Third year?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then who were the teachers then of painting at that time? Who taught you painting?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, it was Anson Cross. He tried to blur everything, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, sort of misty.

DONALD B. BARTON: And I have forgotten who taught the painting. [00:34:00] I get the names of artists and surgeons mixed up. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Well, but we can come back.

DONALD B. BARTON: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you were at the Museum School three years then, was that—is that right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But during the summers, you were studying further in Gloucester and Rockport?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you mentioned studying at the Jacobs School of Color then you mentioned you also studied down in Rockport, I suppose, with Aldro Hibbard?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And was that of value to you? Was that quite good?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, yes, it was a good start.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. He was noted as an outdoor painter. I mean he—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. What I enjoyed more than anything was the little dances on Saturday night. They'd pass around a cup, and everybody put a couple of dollars in, pay for the musicians.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These—were these something that Hibbard set up or—these—

DONALD B. BARTON: Hibbard set it up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So did—he had a group of students, did he?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, he had a large studio. There's room for dancing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I see.

DONALD B. BARTON: The last time I saw him was down at Rockport and looked around. He had a large exhibition room. His studio was around the cove.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So with him, did you go outdoors and paint?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, we'd go out, and we would paint our pictures, and he would criticize them. I'd put my picture down, somebody else put theirs down here, and he'd say, "Well, this picture is here, and that picture is there," and so forth. He would sort of analyze it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he a fairly kindly critic? Was he kind? Or—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, yes, I guess he was kind. [00:36:00] I never cared much for destructive criticism. And if anybody wanted me to criticize their work, I would do it constructively.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Why—the destructive—

DONALD B. BARTON: I think destructive criticism well you can you say, "Well this is wrong or that's wrong," and I show how it could be better.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. I suppose you saw students who were crushed by destructive criticism? You must have seen that happening?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, yeah, I think it is very bad.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned Hale for example could stick a knife in 'em, so to speak. I mean you—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he wouldn't do it very—you know? But, uh—well, he'd start to build you up, you know, and tear you down. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Even worse.

DONALD B. BARTON: There's a—oh, when we were drawing charcoal sketches, he would come around and just take a little section there, and he says, "You do it this way." And he would do it very nicely [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were supposed to—

DONALD B. BARTON: Copy—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —copy that?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah. So was he around much of the time? He would come around—

DONALD B. BARTON: Once a week.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Once a week? But when you had your private lessons with him, then he was there all the time, right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. he would be working on his canvas, and I'd work on mine. He'd come around and say, "Do it this way." [00:38:00] As a whole—I think that he could have taught me a little bit better than he did. But after all, you know, he's [inaudible] you have a little here, a little there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. You mentioned also that you studied with Ernest Major, Ernest L. Major

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you describe him a bit? What was he like?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he seemed to be a rather outgoing personality, a rather forceful man. He had whiskers I think, and he looked like a major. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he pretty good as a teacher? Was he—?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I think so. I think he mentioned Correggio a lot. I never knew much about Correggio because I didn't even—look up any of his paintings. But I think Correggio is a lot of curves and things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then you—you've said also you studied with William Lester Stevens.

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And how do you—could you describe him? What was he like as a teacher?

DONALD B. BARTON: Uh, as a teacher, he was not much of a teacher. You just go and do it. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, but would he come around and criticize now—occasionally?

DONALD B. BARTON: He'll put lots of paint on your palette, and you go out and use it all. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, he—did he advocate building up with paint and impasto and all that? [00:40:03] I mean —

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —thick, thick—

DONALD B. BARTON: —impasto, uh—oh, I think when I was in the Museum School, "Lights fat, shadows flat."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Light fat, shadows flat?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was his general rule?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. I have—I don't know. The rest of it just sort of drudgery. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: The rest of school?

DONALD B. BARTON: Mm. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then—

DONALD B. BARTON: —after Museum School, I went to the Grand Central School of Art, and there I had Sigurd Skou, as I said, is tied in with the Valencamph—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So this is—

DONALD B. BARTON: —and Skou?

ROBERT F. BROWN: And Skou? How do you spell his name Skou?

DONALD B. BARTON: S-K-O-W [Skou], I guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay. So, had Valencamph suggested you go to the Grand Central?

DONALD B. BARTON: No, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went?

DONALD B. BARTON: I just went there. I can't remember all the teachers, Arshile Gorky.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he teaching there then?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. How—what kind of painting was he doing at that time?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, he was just charcoal drawing nudes. And he made quick charcoal sketches very fast.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you get to know him at all or—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, you know, he's kind of crazy-like. [00:42:03] He was crazy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was your first—how would you compare Boston with New York in terms of your interest as a young artist?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I think I like the New York school in a way as you splash around more paint. They had a good illustrating course there. I wish I had taken that. But that's a little more advanced than I was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm. So that was 1925, 1926?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were down there for a year? Did you go—would you go around and look at exhibitions or go to museums quite a bit or—when you were—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —when you were in New York?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, yes, I went to a lot of exhibitions. But they did have—the best exhibitions I think were the paintings in the Grand Central Art Gallery. There were some dandy ones by—was it Walter Ufer—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: —that impressed me a lot. And some other painters from the West.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Made you interested in what they've done, right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. You also, at that same time, had some classes at least in 1925 in Ogunquit, Maine. You were up there at least briefly. Is that right?

DONALD B. BARTON: And I did—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went with Henry Rice evidently.

DONALD B. BARTON: —yeah, Henry Rice.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ogunquit?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Was that useful too?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes. Yes, I think Henry Rice started me some very—how to do some good watercolors there. [00:44:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. He was primarily a watercolorist?

DONALD B. BARTON: Watercolor painter.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you enjoy doing watercolors?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I enjoyed his watercolors. I think he had some beauties, some around Cape Cod and Ogunquit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you like Ogunquit? What—were there quite a few artists that you—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I liked then, I don't like it now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But then, were there a lot of artists that you liked?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, a few.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Are there any you remember?

DONALD B. BARTON: I think it was a fellow name Woodward.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, or Woodbury was there.

DONALD B. BARTON: Woodbury. Woodbury.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had a class. He taught, yeah.

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, I didn't go into any of his classes, but Stanley Woodward did, and Stanley Woodward says he is very demanding. You know that he wanted nine or 10 eight-by-10s every week. At least.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You really would have—really had to produce for Woodbury?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, you had to. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You knew Stanley Woodward at that time?

DONALD B. BARTON: Stanley Woodward, Charles Curtis Allen, Lester Stevens.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. You were all a bunch that knew each other quite well?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Did you ever think of living down in Rockport or in Ogunquit, you think?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, yes. I wanted to get a place down at Wells Beach—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. In Maine—in Wells, Maine, yeah. Right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. It was \$40,000. [00:46:01] I couldn't dig up the money. And it was a good location. Now, I've always kicked myself in my pants [laughs] because I didn't buy it. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: I've got to turn this off.

[END OF TRACK barton89_1of1_cass_SideA_r.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you also studied one summer about 1925 with Gifford Beal?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That would be down at Rockport or in—

DONALD B. BARTON: In Rockport.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Do you recall him at all? Can you describe him a bit?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he is a good teacher. He—I think I went to an exhibition of his on opening day. At the end of the day, every one of his paintings was sold. Uh, he had a small studio in an upstairs loft in Rockport. And he lived somewhere else. He's uh—gave me a little bit more of an idea of how to construct a painting. And I think he helped me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. So, you were—were you beginning to feel pretty confident in your painting by that time? Or did you feel—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, I guess so. I did kind of both horizontally going this way, this way. Two, three, four paintings, watercolors. And some oils that year. [00:02:15]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then the next year, 1926–[192]7, you went to Europe, right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go with friends or on a—

DONALD B. BARTON: I went by myself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You just—you just went on—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you—

DONALD B. BARTON: I went to Paris, and I was going to study there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—where were you thinking of studying?

DONALD B. BARTON: The Lhote school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, the André Lhote School, right? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. But I didn't like the work they were doing. I think I could do better myself. And John Lavallo who went to one of those schools in Paris there, and they tossed the teacher out and elected him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, did they—[They laugh.]

DONALD B. BARTON: He was a whole lot better. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Those—their schools were noted for being rather, uh, very democratic, weren't they? I mean, the students had a lot of say, I think. Huh.

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. Well, let's see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you didn't study—

DONALD B. BARTON: Somebody told me that Hans Hofmann in Munich was [inaudible]. Well, I had forgotten just how it—oh, I met a friend of mine named Porter, a girl.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Named Porter.

DONALD B. BARTON: I forgot her first name. She was in the Hibbard School when I was in Florence, Italy. [00:04:08] She told me about Hans Hofmann, and she said that he was having a class in Capri.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did she recommend him as a very good teacher?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. So, I said, "Well, I'm right near Capri. I'll just hop over to Capri from Florence." And, uh—so that's how I got in touch with Hofmann. He spoke German mostly, and it was hard for me to understand him because my knowledge of German amongst a [inaudible]. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But was he still able to be an effective teacher?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, we talked a little French, you know, so I could get most of his ideas through. I did, however, kind of confuse him or exasperate him when I asked him what zoom meant. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But was he, generally speaking, a pretty good teacher, did you feel?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well yes, I think he was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. What did you do? Painting with him?

DONALD B. BARTON: Painting in the summer school and then in the winter school in Munich at fur zig Georgenstrasse. He had mostly life drawing. [00:06:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did he stick around the students, or would he appear only once in a while, or was he there all the time?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he was there all the time, I think—and he'd it criticize it occasionally. And weekends, we'd go up in the mountains. It made a very pleasant diversion.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's nice, yeah. What, with your sketchpads and—

DONALD B. BARTON: No, no, just to ski or Zugspitze, a private land. Or Gramado.

ROBERT F. BROWN: All those places, huh? Did you get to know Hans Hofmann a little bit or—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, yes. With the—when we were in Capri, we'd take hikes as a diversion, you know—a

hike up over the mountain or the top of the hill. See, the island is like this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's like two—

DONALD B. BARTON: A saddle, like a saddle.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Like a saddle?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. Probably, once in time, it was a volcano sometime or other—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. The top blew off. [Laughs.]

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. And you know, it was pleasant hiking on a hot day. And in the saddle, there's an ice cream parlor, so you could get a little refreshment once in a while.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he talk about many different things? [00:08:00] I realize there was the language barrier, but did he talk about the whole—did he have many interests?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, he was a civil engineer or something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh. By training?

DONALD B. BARTON: By training. That was his real vocation, but he [laughs] never made a living at it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was his class very large? Were there—

DONALD B. BARTON: What?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there very many students?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, I should say—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How—

DONALD B. BARTON: —about 20.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then in Munich, were there more students back in Munich or about the same?

DONALD B. BARTON: I don't know, about 20.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or so. That's a pretty good number, isn't it? That's not too big, right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Not too big.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned, also, you traveled further on this year—in this year. You went to Spain?

DONALD B. BARTON: I went to Spain.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Just went on your own?

DONALD B. BARTON: I've got films of it here. I was just looking that on the other day. Spain, Bologna, Atienza. Tunis.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you'd even gone to North Africa?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you sketching there, or you were taking photographs?

DONALD B. BARTON: I took some pictures from the top of Vesuvius—no, Etna—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Etna on Sicily.

DONALD B. BARTON: —on the top of Mount Etna in Sicily. I had a sick spell then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's—no.

DONALD B. BARTON: I ate some tortillas, made me sick. And I was very sick. [00:10:05] I threw up. I don't know what it was in those tortillas. [They laugh.] They're bad.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that year in Europe was, generally speaking, very—of value to you, was it?

DONALD B. BARTON: I think so. I have hundreds of pictures of churches. I had a—pre to [ph] Rome, a list of churches and places, to study the architecture of the churches. Of course, I wasn't studying architecture, but I thought I'd get as many photographs as I could of the church architecture. Fortunately, I shot a little bit too high, but unfortunately I—there's something about the finder in my camera was—I was shooting high all the time, and I didn't realize it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In those days, you didn't know until you got home that you wouldn't—couldn't develop your film very quickly, I guess?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I did, I developed my film in the soup dish.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, when you were—while you were still in Europe?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. I got these pills, pill developers. You put a pill—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Pill—

DONALD B. BARTON: —in eight ounces of water, stir it up, and you're all ready to develop your film.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You are. So you were still thinking, perhaps, of going on and doing something with film at that time, as well as painting?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I just get a record of it, you know? [00:12:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Just a record of your trip, yeah. When you came back in '27—then you returned in 1927?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you, uh—evidently, you went to Rockport again? You shared a studio with the late Samuel Hershey?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did—had you known him earlier?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yes, we grew up together.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you did?

DONALD B. BARTON: In school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, here in Fitchburg?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, in high school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In high school, yeah. But then he went on—

DONALD B. BARTON: We were interested in photography more or less in that particular time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And he went on to—into painting as well, didn't he?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. Well, he wanted to attend Mercersburg Academy, which he did for one year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Down in Pennsylvania?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. At that time, he father died and he couldn't afford to continue his work there. So, he thought he'd come back and study art with me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. So you mean, you—you taught him?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, no, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he would be with you and—

DONALD B. BARTON: He was with me, even though I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, that year in Ogunquit—

DONALD B. BARTON: I don't know—I don't know what art schools he attended.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that year at Rockport, you were just painting on your own? I mean, you were—

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, I think I was. I had a little henhouse studio.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So you worked pretty hard at it?

DONALD B. BARTON: It looked kind of pretty from the outside. It had a few cabbages and flowers. I planted geraniums around the outside to make it—a touch of color. [00:14:04] It was just a henhouse [laughs] and a garage underneath it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] So did you work indoors, or did you go outside and paint quite a bit?

DONALD B. BARTON: I went outside and painted. I never did much painting indoors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In fact, was painting from a photograph or painting in the studio, was that looked down on at that time? Were you supposed to go out and directly paint?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, it was more or less. I don't have much luck painting from photographs. There's something stilted about it—I don't know why—but I think it's because a lot of photographs don't see into the shadows. It's—they photograph it as brown. Reflected lights are brown. And of course, I've always been partial to photography.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well then the, uh—you were—very much liked traveling because then in 1928, you then took a long trip to the western United States?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you describe? What was your purpose in doing that, and can you describe what you did —

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, my father's idea I think. He financed it anyway. My father was, uh—made a hobby of me, I guess. [Laughs.] [00:16:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you the youngest child or—?

DONALD B. BARTON: I'm the only child.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Only child, so you were, uh—

DONALD B. BARTON: You see, when I was in Gloucester at the age of two, my mother had placenta previa or something.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, like a miscarriage or something. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: A miscarriage. And she almost died, but I didn't know anything about that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, your father then was encouraging you in all of this and helping to finance this trip out West?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, did you go out there to paint and to take photographs also?

DONALD B. BARTON: To do what I could. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Can you—what was the—

DONALD B. BARTON: I had a box built on the back of the car, and I carried a lot of canvases in it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where—where all did you go? Can you describe that?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I headed for Cody, Wyoming, and worked way down the Rocky Mountains all the way down through Durango and to the Grand Canyon. And that's as far as I went. I stopped at Gallup to watch the West Indian tribal dances, and I headed back home through Santa Fe.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were some of the highlights of the trip for you?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I don't know, but I think it was getting stuck out in the desert.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean the car got stuck?

DONALD B. BARTON: About 60 miles from nowhere. [They laugh.] I consulted my map, and I found that there's about—two miles away, there was an Indian village. [00:18:02] So, I left the car and I hiked all the two miles, and over the hill, and through the sand, and I got to this Indian village. And there wasn't anyone in the village except a trading post. There was one trader. And I asked him if there's any way, you know, I could get pulled out of the sand because I got stuck in the sand. He said, "Well, there's a couple of Indians in here. They got a load of wood, and perhaps they will do it." So, he spoke to the Indians and then he nodded to the Indians. *Ooh!* [They laugh.] And so, the Indian said they would do it for eight dollars. So they took their two horses and went out in the sand and hooked up under the car, and the horses strained and strained, and strained, and they couldn't move the car. All of a sudden, the Indians leapt in the air and let out a war whoop, and startled eyes and so, they ran away with the car. [Laughs.] They finally got—uh, finally got it out of the sand, paid out the Indians, and I was able to go. But you see, what had happened was that the transmission got stuck in high gear. [00:20:00] There wasn't anything I could do to get it out. Trying to make the rest of the trip through the red—the bed of a brook or an arroyo, what do you call it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, an arroyo, right.

DONALD B. BARTON: Arroyo?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

DONALD B. BARTON: Anyway, I had to rush the car and bounce it in the air about six feet—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To give it enough momentum?

DONALD B. BARTON: To get up over the edge of the bank. And then I got stuck in a—in a bed—at the bottom of a creek, and there's a shelf going up like this about three feet or four feet on the edge of the riverbed. And I had to go up over that, and I was like [inaudible] and the car was stuck in high gear. So I had to take everything off of the car, strip the car off, everything I could strip off the car. My side kitchenette and all the junk that was in the car, I had to get out, even the seats. And after I lightened the car a bit, I could rush it and get up over the bank.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] But you—

DONALD B. BARTON: And then it took the rest of the day to reload the car. So I had to spend the night near a Hogan, an Indian Hogan. They didn't bother me, and I didn't bother them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But this—there weren't any roads, is that—[00:22:00] So you drove along these riverbeds?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, there's a couple of rods there for a road about that deep. You could get the car in the rod, and it would steer itself. But I had a little automatic pistol and when the jack rabbits would come across the front of the car, I'd [inaudible] them. [They laugh.] But I stopped doing that because sometimes I'd hit them in the leg and it wouldn't kill them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Yes. You had quite an adventure then on this western trip?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, I didn't see any rattlesnakes. [Laughs.] I'm sorry.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There wasn't—

DONALD B. BARTON: I might have—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you—

DONALD B. BARTON: —stepped on one, but I didn't see any [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But when you came back, well this was—then the next year was 1929 and did—were you determined to be a painter then or—? You also, though, attended photography classes or school?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you weren't certain? You were going to be a painter, but also you might be a

photographer?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, I went to PA of A Photography School in Winona, Indiana.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Winona, Indiana. Hmm. And did that convince you to—

DONALD B. BARTON: That—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —switch to photography?

DONALD B. BARTON: —conducted by Eastman Kodak and they had their technicians there. And we used Eastman film—and papers and cameras. And we used 8x10 film. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were thinking of becoming a photographer?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. [00:24:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—so—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, I was a photographer—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were, yeah, that's right. You've built, right?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. Because I had worked—I had worked as a retoucher at Bachrach's. And I gave that up because I'd get so tired at the end of the day driving home from—I had to get—

ROBERT F. BROWN: From Boston to—

DONALD B. BARTON: I'd have to hold my eyes open [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah. So then after you came back and were married, you spent most—many years here in Fitchburg. You had a studio of photography.

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah—a photo studio on Fox Street.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Fox Street here in—

DONALD B. BARTON: Down in Fox and Adamson. I didn't mind it then. I liked it, but I had four people working for me, and I had to pay them every week [laughs]. And business after Christmas was pretty dull. You have to let them go.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you sometimes show your paintings and photographs in exhibitions, from time to time?

DONALD B. BARTON: No. I've often wanted to do it, but uh, I don't know. I just can't seem to get around to it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. But now in Boston, you've had this recent exhibition at a gallery, the Walker Gallery?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. But I have been thinking maybe I should get a bunch of my best negatives and—have them printed. The only trouble that is I had to blow them up from, you know, these small films.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. But as a painter, you had some shows into the—[00:26:02]

DONALD B. BARTON: But I got some nice pictures in these small films. Every once in a while, you know, you get a good one. They're not all good. They're bad, good, and indifferent.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. A photographer has to take many shots, doesn't he, to get a good one?

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, yes and no. A good photographer can go out and take one shot, and he knows he's going to get a good one. But uh, you have to be familiar with the camera and with the speed of the film, and, uh—getting the exposure right is sometimes difficult. Because I find that these here they're all by guesswork.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And these are, uh—

DONALD B. BARTON: They're snapshots.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These are snapshots?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. And I didn't know what an exposure meter was in those days, yeah. Well, I think I

did have one, but I guess it wore out or something [laughs]. It's a very— detailed work. You've got to get a developer that's good and fresh, and lots of snap to it, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD B. BARTON: You can't use the old developer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But—

DONALD B. BARTON: I just took a picture the other day of Charles Curtis Allen because somebody wrote to me about him, and I'm going to send them a picture of him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You have a photograph of Allen?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was Allen like? [00:28:01] Did you get to know him pretty well?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah. He's a nice guy. I didn't know much about his family.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was a good companion when you knew him?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we—I think we went to Ogunquit once—Charles Curtis Allen, Bill Stevens, myself, and Lester Hornby.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Lester Hornby, yeah. Well, you showed, uh, your paintings in various places in the '20s into the '30s, and I suppose the highlight was 1931 when you won the J. Francis Murphy Prize at the National Academy of Design.

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go down to see that exhibition and—

DONALD B. BARTON: No, no, I didn't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You just sent something down?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. You must have been very pleased?

DONALD B. BARTON: Oh, yeah. I sent it down in a crate.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But thereafter though, you didn't show very much, did you?

DONALD B. BARTON: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it—there was—it was the Depression, I suppose, for one thing—

DONALD B. BARTON: Well, the Depression, yes. And during the Depression, as I said, I had had this photography studio, and I kept four people busy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. It was necessary to do that because you had a family by then, sure?

DONALD B. BARTON: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Well, let me—

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