

Transcription of Interview
Interviewee: Delbert Lipps
Interviewer: Stephanie Baudot
April 8, 2005

SB: Hi. It's Stephanie Baudot and it's April 8th, Friday. I am at the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum with Mr. Del Lipps and we're going to discuss the lighthouse. Please say your name and the date please.

DL: My name is Del Lipps and the date is April 8, 2005.

SB: Great, thank you. Mr. Lipps, where are you from originally?

DL: My roots go back to Nebraska, so that's a, a quite a ways back in time

SB: O.K.

DL: So, it's been a while since I've been there but that's where it all started.

SB: O.K. So how long have you been in this area?

DL: In this area, a little over 20 years.

SB: Great, What brought you to Louisiana?

DL: My work brought me to Louisiana, and ah, I am retired from a natural resource company in New Orleans, Freeport-McMoran and Company and

SB: Ah Huh

DL: my residence is in Mandeville.

SB: Very Good, and have you been in Mandeville for those 20 years?

DL: Yes, ah huh.

SB: Very Good. Um, I read that you are a boater, is that true?

DL: Yes, I am a boater.

SB: And how long has that been going on?

DL: Well for as long as I can remember we've had a boat one size or another.

SB: Ok, Ok. Um, have you always been interested in lighthouses?

DL: No, I have not. It has not really been of any particular interest. I got my first interest when I became a volunteer here at the museum.

SB: Very good, very good, and when was the first time that you saw the lighthouse here in Madisonville?

DL: Well, I'm sure I passed it several times boating, that sort of thing.

SB: OK

DL: but then I really didn't get out to take a look at it

SB: OK

DL: until I became interested in it about 2 or 3 years ago.

SB: Two or three years ago. Great. OK, um, so when you did get out? And it is not navigable by road, is that correct?

DL: It's not accessible by road.

SB: OK.

DL: There was a road at one time.

SB: OK, good and um so you got there by your boat and what kind of condition was it in when you went up to it?

DL: Well the lighthouse it's, you know is a masonry construction,

SB: OK.

DL: and so it's a very solid structure.

SB: OK

DL: and ah, the ah, some of the specifics on the lighthouse is that it's, it's about 40 feet high. The masonry part is about 40 feet high, it's about 18 feet in diameter at the base,

SB: Ah Huh

DL: but the wall at the floor is 5 feet thick.

SB: Wow

DL: So it will be there for some time. It's very impressive.

SB: Can you give me some background on that particular lighthouse?

DL: Yes. Uh, this is a lighthouse that was, that was reconstructed from the first lighthouse built in 1838.

SB: OK.

DL: And then following the Civil War there was some damage done to the original lighthouse, and this present lighthouse is a reconstructed lighthouse in about 1865.

SB: Is it at its original spot though?

DL: Yes it is at its original spot.

SB: Very Good. Ok, can you tell me, there was a Mr. Thurston who was the first lighthouse keeper. Can you tell me a little bit about him? Are you familiar with him at all?

DL: Well uh only just a, vaguely familiar with him. I read portions of his diary. There is a very good record of his daily activities and I knew he was a family man with five girls and um and very interesting um experience being a lighthouse keeper and so the record of that is very interesting. But as to any more details about Thurston or the Thurston family, I'm not familiar with that.

SB: OK, when he arrived there, um, I believe it was just the lighthouse and the keeper's quarters. Do you know what he did to improve that area or anything of that sort?

DL: Um, I am not familiar with anything that was done for improvement. I know that he had, he had gardens and he raised animals and things like that for his livelihood and he did also work, carpentry type work that was in support of the mariner/marine industry I should say, so he was more than just a lighthouse keeper.

SB: Yes, yes, um, was it a very busy lighthouse in your knowledge?

DL: It would be hard to say it kind of depends on the, the a, what was going on around here at the time. So, the activity depended on the trade that took place along the Tchefuncte River

SB: Correct

DL: And around the Lake Pontchartrain area. And so some of his interesting comments in his diary was that he had to go and pull people off the sandbar when they got stuck

SB: Yeah

DL: and that sort of thing. But it was. When he wanted to get groceries he had to row into town and get his groceries and things like that.

SB: Uh Huh.

DL: But I don't think there was anything, really anything that was done to improve the site.

SB: OK.

DL: It's a rather small site.

SB: How big is it? Do you know?

DL: Well, according to the, um, the drawings I've seen on it, the site itself is about 2/3 of an acre.

SB: OK.OK.

DL: and today I think it is probably about a half an acre.

SB: OK, very good. Um, what do, what is going on right now with the lighthouse? Is it under the umbrella of this museum or is it its own entity?

DL: Well the, the lighthouse is owned by the town of Madisonville.

SB: OK

DL: It was an act of Congress that moved the ownership of the lighthouse from the Coastguard to the town of Madisonville. The town of Madisonville then has an agreement with the Maritime Museum for its upkeep.

SB: OK, Very good, how many people are involved in helping with the lighthouse right now?

DL: Ah, there is really no one involved.

SB: OK. [surprise in voice]

DL: So if anything needs to be done,

SB: Uh Huh.

DL: it would have to be done on some special project sort of a thing.

SB: OK.

DL: But the lighthouse is still a navigation marker, that's a back range marker so that the Coastguard maintains a light at the lighthouse and a range marker in front of it, so anything that has to be done for the navigation purposes, the Coastguard maintains it.

SB: OK.

DL: It also is different today because it has this big black stripe on it and that is the back range marker.

SB: OK, ok. So it didn't always have the black stripe.

DL: No, it did not always have the black stripe on it.

SB: OK, what did they have to go through- you said it was an act of Congress to get the-for Madisonville to buy the lighthouse, um—

DL: It was a gift.

SB: It was a gift. OK, I'm sorry.

DL: They just transferred it over.

SB: and they transferred it over. Is that a rarity or is that something...

DL: Ah, I don't think it is a rarity. Um, the lighthouse properties everywhere are becoming a burden to the Coastguard, the government and so forth. So they are trying to find ways of you know, transferring those properties over to some useful organization or somebody, you know, for their upkeep and restorations.

SB: Great. OK, what are some of the plans that Madisonville wants to see happen with the lighthouse?

DL: Oh, the restoration plan is, Mayor Gitz is very interested as much as anybody and the plan is to restore the site and the site restoration is really three projects.

SB: OK.

DL: One is the lighthouse site itself which requires the rebuilding of the stone bulkhead to preserve its' boundaries. The second is the restoration of the keeper's cottage which is located here [on museum property] and needs to be restored and moved back out to the site.

SB: That's what I was wondering.

DL: And the Third project is to build a pedestrian pier, which would run from the lighthouse site to deep water, so that vessels could come up to the pier and people could come off and come and visit the lighthouse. So those are the three major parts of the restoration project.

SB: That's great. How long, how long term do you think this will be?

DL: Well, it all depends on money of course. They are looking for ways to raise money you know, to do this, to do this work. But until money is in hand, well, there's just probably no way it's going to happen so,

SB: OK.

DL: but still, the Maritime Museum and Mayor Gitz are looking at various ways to raise money for this purpose.

SB: Absolutely. OK. What do you think we can do in the parish (St. Tammany) to get more people involved?

DL: Well, I think the ah, I think the main thing is to have the people in the parish recognize that they have a valuable, ah, historical site here. And, ah, if people in the parish were excited about the site as much as the ah, people in Madisonville, well I think it would go a long way, because the people in Madisonville really love the lighthouse. Historical, special lighthouse. It's been a lot of fun to work with people in Madisonville and, ah, hear what they had to say about the lighthouse and how they remembered it being a part of their past and that sort of thing.

SB: Are there a lot of people still left here who do have fond memories of it?

DL: Oh yes, there are numbers of, numbers of people in the, in the Madisonville and with the adjacent areas as well. But it was, it was a social place in the earlier years, 1925 and 30's. And so families would go to the lighthouse for Sunday afternoon and things you know, these people would recall how you know it was social affair to do that thing on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

SB: Yes.

DL: Just a lot of people. Then I took a tour with the garden club

SB: Uh Huh.

DL: on a boat tour out there so they could see the lighthouse. We had another thing going on at the same time, anyway I will mention that later. But anyway, there were about I guess 15 or 20 in the, in the Madisonville Garden Club going out to that. There were some senior ladies there and they had a lot of fun talking about the lighthouse. And one senior lady asked another one of her friends, she says "I bet you never went skinny-dipping here did you?" [laughter] she said "Oh yes I did."

SB: Lots of stories to tell [laughter].

DL: People remember the boats that used to come in here as well,

SB: Yes.

DL: various pleasure boats and that type of thing. But the lighthouse has a real, a really interesting attachment to the town.

SB: Yes. What was the major industry, if you know, at the time that Thurston was in charge, are you aware?

DL: Not, I'm not really. I'm not that good of a historian about what was going on at the time.

SB: That's fine.

DL: I think that over time, it was agricultural.

SB: OK.

DL: [It] was a part of the area they would have as well as a lumbering

SB: Yes

DL: as well as um, as pine muslin products. Of course later, round this time, it would have been I would think just some of the basic areas like lumbering would be the big thing.

SB: OK, very good. You mentioned taking the garden club. Do you give many tours?

DL: Oh no. I don't. This happened to be a one time affair because one of the features of the site is that there is a large oak tree there. And the oak tree was, ah, almost as meaningful feature, to me, as the lighthouse. And so it was um Carol Jahncke who wrote this book here (The Madisonville Lighthouse). She was on my [volunteer?] list to help with the documentation.

SB: OK.

DL: She's the one read the Thurston diary. This oak tree has been here a long time and so she said "I think we should name it the Benjamin Thurston Oak."

SB: Very Good.

DL: Because well who could argue that couldn't be a named the Thurston Oak?

SB: Absolutely.

DL: So a, then the garden club kicked on, you know, to have it registered as the Benjamin Thurston Oak.

SB: OK.

DL: It's been, I'm sure it's been registered as such.

SB: OK.

DL: But it's a um-

SB: through the Live Oak Society or,

DL: Yeah. The, ah, [oak] it has its place in history. But the reason it was called the Benjamin Thurston Oak was because in his diary he said he made a note that "he set a live oak."

SB: OK.

DL: Who can say that wasn't it? [laughter]

SB: Exactly, exactly. [laughter] When I was reading about it, I read where he would go into Manchac or he would go into East St. Tammany and he would buy cypress trees and he would plant the cypress trees or he would go up the river and get hogs and whatnot. So he really seemed like he made that little area self sufficient for himself.

DL: Uh Huh.

SB: Um, I remember reading that they had gotten a kitchen area and, um, it was away from the living quarters. Is that in the plans in refurbishing or-? Are we trying to get it back to its' original state?

DL: That's a good question. You know they have two arguments about how far you should go on something like that.

SB: Sure.

DL: Ah, but ah, the, I call it the keeper's cottage-

SB: Sure.

DL: -that's out here now. Ah, it has a kitchen but that was only because it was added to it

SB: Later.

DL: after it was moved here. It was moved from the lighthouse site to the area just south of the museum in 1950. That was a boatyard there

SB: Uh Huh.

DL: that was located there. And so it became a residence for rent and all that. And so it was lived in for all of these times. And so when this new development took place just south of here and, ah, came into being and this cottage was donated to the museum

SB: OK

DL: and moved to the east of us, ready for restoration.

SB: That's wonderful.

DL: but ah I think the ah, we ah, the only thing we have on the layout, you know the drawings, showing the location of the keeper's cottage, the bell tower, the kitchen, the remote kitchen

SB: Uh Huh.

DL: and the out houses, storage houses

SB: Yes.

DL: and that sort of thing, so there are no designs available for that

SB: OK.

DL: but there is a design for the keeper's cottage.

SB: So what you do have is drawings. There's not photographs or anything of that nature from that time? That you are aware of?

DL: The only photographs that I'm aware of is just the lighthouse, 1838 Coastguard photographs which we see around. But other than that there really, I don't think there are that many pictures that I've seen of the site in the 1865—that was when the light house was rebuilt—and so what was this um, um survey drawing that I have since seen is like an 1880 drawing. So it's um—

SB: it would be after the Civil War and after it had been re-?

DL: Yeah, after it had been restored. I think the, ah, for example the keeper's cottage was of the 1880 area.

SB: OK, OK.

DL: There was nothing that would resemble what we've seen pictures of, you know 1838, the first pictures would be 1838.

SB: OK. Yes. So the keeper's cottage is here on the grounds at the Maritime Museum with plans of it going back to the lighthouse.

DL: That's the grandiose plan is to have everything moved back out there,

SB: OK.

DL: and the interesting thing about that is, ah, reasons for not doing it, you know, is the vandalism and that sort of thing.

SB: Sure, sure.

DL: So you can always find reasons for not doing it but then the mayor said he had about three volunteers that said they would move out there. [laughter]

SB: [laughter] Absolutely. That's great because that's what I was going to say: With the town owning it and it being under the umbrella of the Maritime Museum, um, how do they see, once they do put the money into it, do they see having a keeper there?

DL: Yeah [inaudible]—

SB: If you all get this all done will it be a workable, is it workable now? I'm sorry. Is the lighthouse in working order now?

DL: Ah, the lighthouse as it stands only serves as a back range marker. It has a light that has a battery solar cell that runs it.

SB: OK.

DL: And it's not much, just the size of a breadbox sitting up on the lighthouse.

SB: OK, so it doesn't have the big lens in it?

DL: No, it does not have the lens.

SB: Can you tell me something about the lens?

DL: The lens that was in the ah, in the lighthouse was a Fresnel [pronounced Fray-nel]. And it's um it was a fourth-order Fresnel. And no one seems to know what happened to it. A similar lens to this one is located in the Biloxi lighthouse, if you ever go to Biloxi, Mississippi.

SB: Yes, I was just there.

DL: So if you go there, it has a fourth order lens; the same size that this one was.

SB: We have a lens here in the Museum, downstairs? Or is it a copy?

DL: Oh, in the museum?

SB: Yes, yes.

DL: We have, we have a Fresnel lens and it is called a clam shape and it came from the Chandelier light-

SB: OK, very good.

DL: -on loan to us from the Destroyer KIDD over in Baton Rouge.

SB: I had come a few weeks ago—well um, actually months ago—and I had never seen the museum and I was just staggered how wonderful this museum is. Um, what does something like that cost? Are you aware, if we get it in order and working, what would a lens like that cost?

DL: Oh I, gee. It would be hard for me—I don't think we can buy them, unless they are already in existence. It's, ah, you know lighthouses are just not used anymore. They have GPS systems. Global Position Systems that are just-

SB: Too advanced.

DL: Yeah. [laughter] For a major waterway navigation, they have them on some channel markers and things like that and then are some very you know specific places like on the east and west coast where you have lighthouses that have their lights standing up for maritime purposes but, by and large, all serious navigation is done with GPS systems.

SB: OK. So at this point it's just the love of the history.

DL: That's right, that's right.

SB: You mentioned that they'll build a pier. They want to build a pier. Um, will they want, will it always be only water navigable? Or do they plan to ever build anything to where we can drive to it?

DL: Well the, ah, the pier will be water navigable for deep water vessels so then the challenge for building a roadway there is that the property between the lighthouse and the boat launch area is owned by somebody else.

SB: OK, so the city does not own that.

DL: The city does not own that. So that's area of private development, as they so choose. And the roadway that was there has since been washed away because of the receding shoreline has occurred because of the storms and winds and so forth that occur along this Northshore.

SB: Do you happen to know how long it has been gone? The road?

DL: My guess is it was probably, um in the 1950's or 1960's. It probably got washed away. There was electrical power service out to the lighthouse and a CLECO had told me that, ah, that was there until Hurricane Betsey in 1965. So after that there was no more electrical power out there. And so, ah, that was a pretty severe storm and the shoreline is at the mercy of the wind and water and it's just amazing the lighthouse perimeter is intact. Well, the stone bulkhead preserved the site boundaries. That's why it's still there.

SB: Yeah, and that was what you were saying was five feet thick?

DL: Well no, the, that's the lighthouse itself. The wall of the lighthouse is five feet thick. But the boundaries of stone just build up around the lighthouse. And I can show you some pictures; you can see that—

SB: So you said that somebody is now recently writing a column in the paper about the lighthouse?

DL: Well there have been several; we had several bits of publicity on the lighthouse. Deborah Burst is probably one of the most recent; I have a copy of that. And we have a 5 minute program on the Louisiana Public station that runs out of Baton Rouge; I have a copy of that if you want to listen to that. Then there's something to do about the end of the week, just not on this lighthouse but on all the Louisiana lighthouses. This one will be featured because it will be on the front page, Deborah Burst says. So we're getting a lot of publicity on it.

SB: Downstairs in the museum, I noticed there is a diorama being built by an artist in the area, a Mr. Plaisance. Is that pretty accurate, his depiction, that you know of?

DL: Yes. He was really challenged to research the information on the lighthouses and their characteristics and so ah, I think he's just done a very good job on that. The Tchefuncte Lighthouse, for example, I think is a very good display and accurately dimensioned. It doesn't necessarily show all the buildings like the um, the survey that I have shows the, the kitchen and other things. I think his just shows the keeper's cottage and the bell tower. And it may not I'm not sure. He probably does not show a pier leading up to the lighthouse. Most all the earlier pictures you see will have piers. Pedestrian piers.

SB: The pedestrian pier. Was that separate from the boat pier or was it the same thing?

DL: The same thing, it's just the pier is only designed to handle people crossing and what they can carry. It had to extend out from the site about three hundred feet so the, at least three hundred feet so it was long.

SB: And that was because the water was so shallow there?

DL: Very shallow, the water is quite shallow there by the lighthouse.

SB: I did read about how Mr. Thurston was constantly having to help people who had gotten stuck [laughter]. It had to be quite challenging.

DL: Well, the interesting thing about it is that if you look at the lighthouse today it looks like it in the wrong place because it's to the right, a half a mile west of the Tchefuncte River heading south looking like it goes into the lake but it doesn't go into the lake. It curves to the lake and, and earlier there was a shoreline on the south side of the river between the river and the lake and the shoreline. And so the shoreline has been washed away. So it's exposed now. The Northshore is being subject to erosion and that sort of thing. But the channel to the Tchefuncte River is the same as it was. So in order to get to the Tchefuncte River today you'd have to come up the channel that's marked by the lighthouse as a marker, come into the river and turn east before you turn north up to the Tchefuncte River toward Madisonville. There's a big two turns you have to make. People who don't make those turns will go aground.

SB: Is that why they chose to put it on that side?

DL: The site is thought to be a pretty good sandbar, really it was a higher elevation. And, of course, this is all very low elevation around here and so it was one of the higher points of elevation. And it was a sandbar and even today the site is not very high, it's only about four feet above sea level. So a good wind and rain, a good storm, will bring water in over four feet and so you can think about what was happening for the lighthouse keepers when they had a good wind and storm coming through here. It's a relatively low elevation but the house was built up off the ground and the floor of the lighthouse itself we figured about five and a half feet or something like that so even water will come into the bottom of the lighthouse when good enough storm comes by.

SB: When I read a little bit on the internet and your name came up with the lighthouse, it said when you saw it and went ashore and looked at it that you decided to start painting and whatnot. Was that all out of your own pocket?

DL: Oh no, when I started this we had volunteers. That was the whole idea was I was going to help do things through volunteers and I have quite a list of volunteers.

SB: I would love you to give me some of the names so their names can be on record if that would be OK with you?

DL: I probably wouldn't do that just because their names would have to be...

SB: That's fine, that's true we'd have to get their permission.

DL: So at the time there was a lot of enthusiasm so we had a good response for volunteers. The idea was that we would mainly do restoration on the lighthouse so it was painting the exterior of the lighthouse and replacing the glass. And it looked like it was a, it would serve as a great observation point, because your up in the air about forty feet. And you can view the lake; you can view the wetlands; you can view the shoreline. And it was just a nice place to take a good sighting of what was around. It has a high elevation; you could do that. And then there was I was thinking about was having some way that people could come and enjoy the lighthouse site, and go up the stairs, and go up to the lantern, and look around.

SB: Are the stairs still in good shape?

DL: Oh yes. There is a spiral staircase that goes from the floor up to a deck. And from the deck you take a little ladder, and the ladder goes into the lantern, and the lantern is the glass enclosed area. And then there is room for about, oh, I guess you can put 6 or 8 people in there at one time; that would be about all you could put in there. This is very, very popular, it's a very popular place. And people have gone into the lighthouse that have [stories]—you know, you say I'm interested in the lighthouse and well I'll have to tell you a little story about...

SB: Please do

DL: About one fellow that I had seen. In fact, he was doctor that I went to see. Well, he says “Dell, you go up there in that lighthouse next time, and you go into that lantern. And you will find up there—the inside has wooden panels you know—and you’ll find a big heart carved in there. It’s got my initials, and my girlfriends initials. I just want you to know I put that on there 27 years ago.”

SB: Awww, and was it still there?

DL: It's still there. It's full of, you know, initials being carved up there; a lot of people do it.

SB: That's what I was going to say, I haven't personally been there because access wasn't available to me. Was it very vandalized when you arrived on the scene?

DL: No, not really. Vandalism only occurred to the lantern because it was glass there. People and hunters would shoot out the old glass and that type of thing. But the masonry building, they're not going to do anything to that. It's five feet thick. And you can't hurt cast iron stairs. And, in fact, the lantern, the framing of the lantern is all cast iron.

SB: I was going to ask you about that, in Thurston's, Mr. Thurston's diary he talks about um, just real daily events. And it just seemed like he was always sealing the lantern and I wasn't exactly sure what that piece was and so that is the top part?

DL: That's the top part, but this is a different top part than what it was in 1838 when he was there. And so this lantern came from another lighthouse, from the Cat Island Lighthouse, in Cat Island, Mississippi. That lighthouse was destroyed in a storm and so they recovered the lantern from that lighthouse and brought it over here and set on this lighthouse. So that's where this one came from.

SB: That's very interesting. OK, yes. I knew it was damaged but I didn't think in what way.

DL: At the time they were rebuilding it I guess.

SB: That's great. Well, did you get a chance to tell the doctor that you had seen his [initials]?

DL: Yes. [laughter]

SB: [laughter] That's wonderful.

DL: But there were a lot of other initials up there too. So that will be a interesting restoration.

SB: At the time, the first time you said you had quite a few volunteers helping you out. Did it just kind of dwindle down or-?

DL: Yes. What had happened was we had a great interest in doing restoration work at the lighthouse. And so it was restoring the site, that meant the stone, the stone around the site, had been displaced by the storm and so forth, so we're going to restore the stone to the higher elevation so it can be protected more and then we were going to do painting of the lighthouse—the exterior. The interior, we didn't think we were going to do anything to it except clean it up. All the exposed brick and stuff just looked neat. And then we ah, we got bids for having that done and so we just didn't have the money for doing it. So that's when it all kind of died on the vine.

SB: Any ideas how we can get it going again?

DL: Well it's ah, it's going to be a fund raising. Somebody has to do some fund raising to raise money to do that with special emphasis on the lighthouse restoration. And I think looking at it, you'd have to look at the big picture I think of the site, the keeper's cottage, and the pier. Those three things, you know, together have to be a part of it. I think that would, you know, a meet the expectations of the mayor, of the museum, and of the people and that sort of thing.

SB: Are there any more stories that you can tell me about it?

DL: There was ah, the first time I went up there to the lighthouse. Going up these spiral steps there's a little hole in the wall and this snake was sitting in it looking at you from this hole in the wall. We had this lighthouse snake. [laughter]

SB: Humans have invaded his spot. [laughter]

DL: Nobody's sure how he got there but, anyway, he was there. Somebody finally took care of the snake. But one of the interesting stories was that these people that would come to the museum and they were interested in lighthouses. And, ah, turned out that there was a couple that were lighthouse keepers from the Great Lakes area and so she was asking me about the lighthouse. And I said it had spiral staircase and she said, "how many steps?" [laughter] And I said "I have no idea how many steps there are in that spiral staircase." And she said, "I bet there are 42". I'm sure she must have climbed every one of those because it's the same size. And so when my grandkids came in we had to do a project of count the steps in the lighthouse.

SB: That's great. Um, is it legal for people to go into it now or is it considered private?

DL: Well, that's a really good question. It belongs to the town and that's a liability. And I suppose, you'd have to say it's not open to the public and people travel at their own risk; it being fairly remote. But if there was land access, I'm sure it would say no trespassing. People who have been here, live around here, they just go on and go.

SB: How often do you get to go out there?

DL: I haven't been in quite a while. It's difficult to get to the lighthouse, unless you have the proper boating equipment. And my boat is not one of the proper kind. You need to have a pontoon boat or something like that, so that you can go from the boat to the shore line without having to go through the stone area. The stone is really treacherous. It's slippery wet. But you can do it if you don't mind getting wet and dirty that sort of stuff, and that's what we did. And so it's been a while since I've actually been out there. I'm interested in going again, one of the things we did is to confirm the oak tree's value I guess. And we had Malcolm Guidry, who's an arborist from the Northshore area, [we] took him out there and he wrote us a little report on it and that sort of thing. The tree has been there for a long, long time. And there are some pictures from 1935 when the last lighthouse keeper was there; the Schreiber family lived there. There's some pictures of the cottage and the oak tree is in those pictures. In the mean time, the natural growth of vegetation and things that occurred from the area have moved in and there are some very large trees that grew up amongst the roots of the oak that was just zapping the strength out of it. So Dr. Guidry said we needed to cut those down so we could relieve the stress on the tree. So two or three guys and I went out there and cut those trees down and I think that was the last time I did any real work out there.

SB: I was going to say now that it is registered they will probably have to check on it here and there to make sure that it's in good shape.

DL: Yeah, it's stood the test of time, and ah, it's a beautiful tree. I say it's truly beautiful. It's really kind of, it really stands behind, it looks like it shelters the lighthouse. It's bigger than the lighthouse. The lighthouse is relatively small.

SB: About how far is it from the lighthouse?

DL: Oh, about 60 feet.

SB: You've got a picture, well it's beautiful, he's showing me a picture of it, it's quite beautiful. Are there any final things that you'd like to say?

DL: Well, I think the, ah, the lighthouse will be there even if we don't do anything. It is ah, not going to go away, and has stood the test of time, has survived many a hurricane, and the ground that is sitting on is very stable and secure. And I'm sure it will always be used as a navigation marker because it will always mark the channel into the Tchefuncte River. I think it just stands there as a symbol, you know, of a major historical significance. And while we can appreciate it in the sunsets and the pictures, you really have to understand the history of the area to know how important it was to the people around here. And I think it is a part of history that should be, someone should find a way to restore it and people will really enjoy it.

SB: Well, that was lovely closing words, I want to thank you so much for your time and I will be getting back in touch with you. Thank you.

DL: You're more than welcome.

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