



## Interview with Jeannette Morton

Under the Auspices of the  
Monmouth County Library Headquarters  
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.  
Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

**Date of Interview:** September 15, 1999  
**Name of Interviewer:** June West  
**Premises of Interview:** Navesink House, Red Bank, NJ  
**Birthdate of Subject:** July 30, 1911

**Ms. Morton:** I am Jeannette Morton. I was born in Long Branch in 1911, the seventh child of Frank and Anna Brown Morton. My dad was a Pennsylvania railroad engineer. He worked as a passenger service man for about forty years as an engineer. My mother was a homemaker and never had outside work of any kind. I attended Long Branch public schools all my life. I was graduated from the Long Branch Senior High School in June of 1928 and attended the Newark Normal School in Newark, NJ for two years. I was employed by the Long Branch Board of Education for two and one half years. Because of the Depression era and not having tenure, I lost my job. But in 1936 I was employed by the West Long Branch Board of Education and gave them thirty-five years service. Since retiring, in fact before retiring, I did a great deal of traveling. I have visited every one of our fifty states and have a map in my apartment showing these fifty states. This map is made of counted cross-stitch by me. I have traveled in Europe, also China and Russia. Now I am very much enjoying a life of leisure in Navesink house.



**Jeannette Morton with her pig collectibles**

**Ms. West:** I guess you've traveled extensively through Monmouth County as well?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, I think I've seen Monmouth County pretty well also because I like to take just little trips now and then around the area. I know quite a bit about New Jersey as well, because I also enjoyed my home state.

**Ms. West:** Are there any historical points of interest in Monmouth County you'd like to tell us about?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, I always make sure that I told my children in school about the Monmouth County Museum in Freehold and have taken many classes there to see the great things that they have on display there.

**Ms. West:** Such as? If you can recall.

**Ms. Morton:** The artifacts that they had concerning the Revolution are excellent. The man who did the lecturing was a great fellow. Their display of toys and small artifacts that amuse the children at that time was very, very good.

**Ms. West:** Do you recall the kinds of toys the children played with?

**Ms. Morton:** Oh, the dolls especially.

**Ms. West:** And what about the boys; what kind of toys did they have?

**Ms. Morton:** Trucks. Well guns of course, were the things for the boys. Another place of interest for children as well as adults was, I guess it's called the State Park now down at Allaire. I've taken many classes there as well. The old buildings and the general store were of great interest.

**Ms. West:** What historical interest did that have?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, that was the place where iron was going to be made, but they found that they couldn't get enough coal to run their furnaces, and so it didn't last very long.

**Ms. West:** Is there any location in Monmouth County that has personal significance to you?

**Ms. Morton:** No, I think the whole county is a very lovely place to travel. Our roads are very adequate, and the farmlands, many of which are now disappearing, were always lovely to look at any season of the year.

**Ms. West:** Is there any particular person in the county or including your parents, of course, who played a very significant part in your life or was a great influence to you?

**Ms. Morton:** No, I don't think so. I always thought quite highly of two of the principals under whom I worked, Elmer Barnett and William Kate, both connected with the Long Branch public schools.

**Ms. West:** How did they impact your life?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, they were people that you looked up to because you felt they were good citizens and people who could give advice when needed and were there just as a good friend.

**Ms. West:** Well how would you describe Monmouth County in your childhood, then in your youth, and now?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, of course as a child I didn't get very far from my home because we had no car. My dad was a railroad engineer and everywhere that we went we went on the train. Consequently, traveling as a youngster was very limited, but since my own car came into existence, why, naturally I did a great deal more traveling.

**Ms. West:** How were the schools when you were going to school as compared to when you began teaching?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, I guess I'll have to say I don't think I saw very much of a difference. The only thing is we had a lot more supplies when I became a teacher than what we had as a youngster. I recall learning to read from charts that were posted in the room. I don't recall having a book to read from till maybe the third grade. Our reading was done by means of using a chart with stories and so forth. But in my teaching experience, I had ample material books and papers and so forth to work with.

**Ms. West:** Speaking of books, did you have a favorite book that you liked to read as a youngster?

**Ms. Morton:** I made it my business to read to the children in my class everyday, and I've had more than one child come to me since I have been retired and said one of the things that we enjoyed most was hearing you read to us everyday.

**Ms. West:** Were you a reader when you were a youngster?

**Ms. Morton:** Yes, I always enjoyed books.

**Ms. West:** Do you have a favorite author?

**Ms. Morton:** No.

**Ms. West:** Just liked to read.

**Ms. Morton:** I very much like to do handwork, also as evidenced by things around my house.

**Ms. West:** What games did you play as a youngster?

**Ms. Morton:** We played with the neighborhood children a game called "kick the wicket," and it was really sort of like a ball game I guess. We had a stick posted on the sidewalk and you kicked that and ran the bases. We did that at the four corners of the street. There was no traffic at night and we could go out and play kick the wicket. We played tag and hide and go seek. A girlfriend and I rolled our doll carriages up and down the street. When I was older than that I used to do a great deal of roller-skating. I enjoyed roller-skating with the neighborhood children.

**Ms. West:** How were the roller skates then as compared to the skates that the children are using today?

**Ms. Morton:** Oh, I wore out two pairs of roller skates. I was a very heavy child, very stout and heavy, and I wore out two pair of roller skates. But they were ordinary roller skates.

**Ms. West:** What were they made of?

**Ms. Morton:** Steel.

**Ms. West:** So now while you and the girls were out pushing the doll carriages, or what have you, what were the boys doing? Did the boys and girls play some of the games together?

**Ms. Morton:** Boys and girls roller-skated together. Kick the wicket was usually with the boys. We played tag and hide and go seek with the boys.

**Ms. West:** What is kick the wicket? Anything like cricket? Are you familiar with cricket?

**Ms. Morton:** I'll explain it to you. Then another thing when I could go by myself, I did a great deal of swimming, because I lived close to the ocean and went swimming practically everyday.

**Ms. West:** Do you know anything about your ancestors?

**Ms. Morton:** No.

**Ms. West:** Did you have any heroes or heroines when you were a little one?

**Ms. Morton:** Don't remember.

**Ms. West:** What type of music did you like?

**Ms. Morton:** Classical music.

**Ms. West:** Always?

**Ms. Morton:** Always. I've never enjoyed other music.

**Ms. West:** What were the clothing fads of the day when you were a young girl?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, because I was, and this is very personal, because I was such a big girl most of my clothing had to be made. To get something to fit me that wasn't too old looking, we had to have a dressmaker come once a year and make clothes. I make a number of my clothes even today.

**Ms. West:** Do you remember the first movie you ever saw? Did you like going to the movies?

**Ms. Morton:** Yes. I went often to Saturday matinees, but I don't remember the first one that I saw. One of the first stage productions that I saw was *Oklahoma* which to me was wonderful. I remember going to the Hippodrome in New York on occasion, and of course it was a big treat to be taken to New York. The Hippodrome was a place where there were many different reviews. They had a swimming pool there right on the stage. I've seen a locomotive on the stage there, too.

**Ms. West:** Oh, really. That's interesting. Do you have any hobbies?

**Ms. Morton:** I would say my desire to do handwork: knitting, crocheting, sewing.

**Ms. West:** You have done that all your life.

**Ms. Morton:** Yes. As a youngster, I would be getting ten or fifteen cents to go down to Woolworth's and buy something to embroider. I was never denied as long as I finished the one piece that I did. When I finished one, I could go get another one.

**Ms. West:** Now that you mention Woolworth's, could you tell me something about Woolworth's?

**Ms. Morton:** Oh, Woolworth's was a wonderful place to go. They had everything.

**Ms. West:** What was Woolworth's?

**Ms. Morton:** It was a five and dime. There were stores all over. There was a big one in Long Branch and there was a lovely one in Asbury Park and one here in Red Bank that I remember going to.

**Ms. West:** Did you go to Asbury Park much since you lived in Long Branch?

**Ms. Morton:** Asbury Park and Red Bank were our two shopping areas. If you couldn't get it in Long Branch, you went to either one of those other towns.

**Ms. West:** If you could choose any symbols, what symbol would you use to represent you in your life?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, I enjoy teaching very much. I think I made a little imprint. I've had students who became nurses, teachers, our Monmouth County judge was one of my pupils, Bill Haggen. Two or three of my pupils became lawyers, dentists, doctors, so I guess I shed a little light.

**Ms. West:** I would think so. What grade did you teach?

**Ms. Morton:** Mostly fifth grade, but I had experience in kindergarten through eighth.

**Ms. West:** Then you laid a good foundation for many a person here in the county. What would you say has been your greatest achievement in life?

**Ms. Morton:** I'm very proud of some of the handwork that I've done, if that means anything. Making my own clothes and the bedspreads I designed and made; I have also crocheted bedspreads.

**Ms. West:** Is this just for a hobby?

**Ms. Morton:** Just because I like to do it.



**Jeannette Morton with her pig collection**

**Ms. West:** What would you say is the most unusual thing about you? How many other people handle more than 200 pigs in their house? Tell me about the pigs.

**Ms. Morton:** Oh, our collection of pigs is close to 200. It was started by my sister Elva Davis and comes from all over. There are pigs from all over the country and every time I visit a country I bring a pig home.

**Ms. West:** How did the pig collection get started?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, it was something my sister liked. She loved to play with the pigs on my uncle's farm.

**Ms. West:** Where was this farm?

**Ms. Morton:** Belmar. One summer when she and my brother went to visit Uncle Wilson they came home and found a new baby sister. Me. Then when she married and her husband retired they had a farm in Marlboro and the suggestion

was made that they raise pigs. She said that was all right with her, and she'd bring one in and use it as a pet. But instead a collection of pigs got started. No pigs were raised. I inherited the collection of pigs from her and they're mine until I finish with them.

**Ms. West:** Do you have any nieces and nephews?

**Ms. Morton:** I had eight nephews and two nieces. I've lost two nephews and one niece so far.

**Ms. West:** Maybe one of them will inherit the collection or one of their children will inherit the collection. You certainly have a lot of pigs. I didn't know that pigs came in all positions, I would say.

**Ms. Morton:** All positions and all kinds. I have the native coal. I have several native coal, brass, disk, wood, just about everything. I also have a great, great, great niece.

**Ms. West:** Was that three greats? Boy, she's a lucky little girl. She doesn't know it, I'm sure.

**Ms. Morton:** Five generations.

**Ms. West:** Isn't that wonderful. Not many people can attest to that. They go to three, well maybe to fourth generations, but still it's quite a thing.

**Ms. Morton:** People are living longer these days. After all, I'm eighty-eight years old.

**Ms. West:** Well, except for the record, I wouldn't tell anyone. As the old saying goes "you carry it right well." What are your values in life?

**Ms. Morton:** I like to see things dealt with fairly. I don't like to see anyone given privileges over someone else. Rules are made to be obeyed. If you can't curve the thing that's going on, don't make any rule about it, just let it go. But when a rule is made, it should be obeyed. Don't feel that you're the only one around to be pleased. There are 200 other people here in this place. I'm not the only one.

**Ms. West:** Is there anything about your life that you would change?

**Ms. Morton:** I don't think so.

**Ms. West:** Anything that you would like to do that you haven't done or tried?

**Ms. Morton:** I'd love to go to Japan, but I don't expect to go there. I've been to China, but I don't expect to get to Japan.

**Ms. West:** You never know. What advice would you give to the young people today, if one of your grandnieces or nephews were looking for a little direction or a little more direction, because life is so complicated today?

**Ms. Morton:** Just be honest with yourself and other people. I think honesty is one thing that would help a great deal. Think of others. I believe in the Bible: "Do unto others as you have them do unto you." I think there's a lot of people in this world who don't think about that at all, and that's where some of our trouble comes from. Home life, I just can't understand why we have the type of crime that we have with young people if there's any home life. There must not be. When I was growing up, I knew that my mother was going to be home when I went home, and that my father would come home. He seldom was with us because he worked all day, but I knew that he was going to come home at night. We had a family. It was very rare for the whole family to sit down with my father for a meal because he didn't get home till eight or nine o'clock at night many times. But we were a family. You just knew that there were rules and laws that you had to pay attention to or else you were punished. That doesn't go today, I guess, from what we see in our newspapers and see on our televisions.

**Ms. West:** What legacy do you think you might have left your students, your nieces, nephews?

**Ms. Morton:** Well, we always had fun when they came to Grandma's. That's what they tell me now when I see them. I guess I must have been there to engineer the fun.

**Ms. West:** Sounds good to me. What would you think is the most unusual thing about yourself?

**Ms. Morton:** The fact that I was able to go to so many places and see so many wonderful things in this world. In studying geography as a youngster, I thought, "Oh! wouldn't it be nice to be able to see these things and to stand in front of those pyramids there in Egypt," and I did.

**Ms. West:** A lot of us don't see it beyond the geography books.

**Ms. Morton:** It was a wonderful thing to be able to drive my first car, which I didn't do until 1956.

**Ms. West:** What was your first car?

**Ms. Morton:** It was a lovely Chevrolet.

**Ms. West:** How were the roads and things in the county then compared to the way they are now?

**Ms. Morton:** Oh, I think we've had good roads in Monmouth County. All of them that I traveled on were fine.

**Ms. West:** Growing up in Long Branch, did you live in beach community? Did you grow up on a farm?

**Ms. Morton:** No. Oh, I visited the farm, but not to stay.

**Ms. West:** Are your siblings here in the county?

**Ms. Morton:** Some of them lived right here in Red Bank. My oldest sister moved to Red Bank and her children grew up here. They're still a couple of them are still right in Eatontown. I have two nephews out in California, whom I have visited many times.

**Ms. West:** How were the hospitals in the county? How do they differ from when you were a child as far back as you can remember? How was the service? What was offered in the hospitals?

**Ms. Morton:** The Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch was just a one building affair when I first remember. Then they built an addition to it. Tore down the front of it and built an addition there, which is still there. They are doctors' offices now. Then of course many years later that plant has come there. One of my sisters trained there as a nurse, and I was called upon many times to take uniforms, which another sister washed and ironed. Until I got a chance to go into the main lobby of the hospital she would meet me there to pick it up. I think the service that they offer has always been excellent.

**Ms. West:** Were doctors and other medical aids accessible here in the county?

**Ms. Morton:** Yes.

**Ms. West:** It was apparently adequate back then.

**Ms. Morton:** Well, in those days of course, way back as far as when I was a youngster, the doctor came to the house. You didn't have to go to his office. He came to the house. You could go to the office if you were able, but they made house calls.

**Ms. West:** Were your mother and father born here in the county?

**Ms. Morton:** Dad came from Manasquan and Mother from Belmar.

**Ms. West:** So they're both from Monmouth County. And their parents?

**Ms. Morton:** Their parents were all from the same area.

**Ms. West:** Oh, then you go back generations in Monmouth County.

**Ms. Morton:** I had a man visit me one day about some property that Morton family was supposed to inherit and I asked him where he thought we Mortons originated? He said as far as he could determine there were Mortons who came over from England with Roger Williams. A Scottish Parcer who I met on one of the ships that I took to Europe said the Mortons were also prominent in Scotland so apparently they came from British Islands. My grandparents were also born in the United States and my great grandparents. I never knew the great ones, and I knew only one grandparent. My two grandmothers and one grandfather were gone when I was born.

**Ms. West:** Did they live on farms?

**Ms. Morton:** No. The grandfather that was alive was a fisherman down at Belmar Fisheries. What's now the Belmar Marina was Shark River at that time. The grandfather Morton was a farmer.

**Ms. West:** What did he raise?

**Ms. Morton:** General farming.

**Ms. West:** For sale or just for family?

**Ms. Morton:** I'm sure more or less for family and probably neighborhood.

**Ms. West:** I guess you've enjoyed your life here in Monmouth County, or else you wouldn't have stayed here.

**Ms. Morton:** I would have gone elsewhere, I'm sure.

**Ms. West:** Just looking here out on the Navesink River, it seems so peaceful. It must be heavenly in the summertime.

**Ms. Morton:** It's beautiful all seasons of the year.

**Ms. West:** Oh, I could imagine looking out here at the trees when the fall comes. It must be very colorful, and before you know it, it's going to be all nice and green again. What are your personal strengths?

**Ms. Morton:** Oh I don't know how to answer that.

**Ms. West:** Tell me, did your mother and dad or your grandparents pass any stories on like you do generation after generation?

**Ms. Morton:** My mother and father must have lead very quiet lives because everything was always so easygoing, so quiet in our home. Never any fuss or bother; no arguments or anything like that. I think Mother and Father were a very devoted couple. He was only seventy-two years old, but that was back in 1939, seventy-two was a fairly good age for a person at that time. Mother lived nine years longer. It was always a very happy home when people came.

**Ms. West:** What major changes have you seen in your lifetime?

**Ms. Morton:** I think the way people behave toward one to another.

**Ms. West:** How does it differ?

**Ms. Morton:** There was no thought of doing harm to somebody else. You wanted to do good. If you saw somebody in trouble, you helped them. Today you pass them by on the street.

**Ms. West:** What other changes have you seen?

**Ms. Morton:** The way things are done, the way we shop in particular. You went to one grocery store; you had a clerk to wait on you. Took all the things from the shelf as you wanted them, out of the bins or whatever, and got them all together. You don't have that today. You have to fend for yourself when you go into the store. Big difference to me as far as shopping is concerned. News in the newspaper: our newspaper *Long Branch Daily Record* was just local news. Once in a while there would be something about New York or maybe Europe, but today there's no local news. It's all what's happened in the world when you pick up the paper.

**Ms. West:** Was your father in World War I?

**Ms. Morton:** No. I didn't have any brothers in the service, either. I had nephews in the service.

**Ms. West:** Being handy with your hands, did you do any work for the Red Cross?

**Ms. Morton:** Yes. I did volunteer for the Red Cross in World War II. In World War I, I knitted washclothes for the soldiers. That's how I learned to knit, making washclothes in World War I. In World War II, I went and made bandages.

**Ms. West:** You did all that for the Red Cross.

**Ms. Morton:** And also the USO furnished refreshments in the Second World War.

**Ms. West:** Were there any troops stationed near by?

**Ms. Morton:** Fort Monmouth. I don't know whether they were actual troops, but that was a Signal Core Installation and where troops were trained.

**Ms. West:** How did you heat your home when you were a youngster?

**Ms. Morton:** With a coal furnace. We had to shovel coal in it. There was a big coal bin down in the cellar and you lay in coal and hoped it would last all winter. If it didn't, why you had to find more. We carried out those ashes everyday. There was no means of controlling the temperature like we have on a heating apparatus today.

**Ms. West:** No thermostat.

**Ms. Morton:** No thermostat, no.

**Ms. West:** How did you get around?

**Ms. Morton:** Walked. I walked to school even while I was teaching.

**Ms. West:** How far was home from school?

**Ms. Morton:** About a mile. As a youngster, I walked to school in the morning, walked home at noontime. Because we had an hour and a quarter for lunch, we did not stay at school for lunch. Then I'd walk back again and home after school. I would say it was close to a mile that I walked. Up until the time that I got the car, I walked even when I was teaching. There was no bus transportation that was anywhere near that I could use. If you went anywhere on the train you walked from home to the station. In very bad weather, you might be able to afford a taxi, a jitney. Jitney fare was a nickel, but sometimes you didn't have a nickel.

**Ms. West:** What was a jitney?

**Ms. Morton:** It was like a small bus. There's nothing left on the road today that is comparable as far as I can see. One little story about the blizzard of 1914. My sister was having a baby and my mother came to Red Bank to be with her. When she went home to Long Branch, she went on the first train that went through after the blizzard. The train slowed close to the street on which we lived in Long Branch, and she asked the conductor if she could get off. He said, "Well, lady you're going to go to your waist in snow." But she said, "I just live up the street, and I'd have a much shorter walk home than I would if I went all the way to the station." That was March 1st in 1914.

**Ms. West:** You don't get snows like that anymore.

**Ms. Morton:** No transportation but, as I say, this jitney was like a small bus. They were at the station. You walked you didn't take that.

**Ms. West:** Now that we've come to the turn of the century, what hopes or aspirations do you have for this new millennium?

**Ms. Morton:** It looks to me as though we're depending too much on mechanical things; especially this new Internet and that type of thing. I feel that already harm has come from it and I feel that there's a place where a lot more harm can come from it, as well as good of course, but harm has harmed too much.

**Ms. West:** Harmed how?

**Ms. Morton:** Getting people involved in things that are harmful. These scams and things that people take up with.

**Ms. West:** Do you think there will be an about face later on somewhere down the road?

**Ms. Morton:** I wouldn't want to predict that, but I just feel that there's just too much mechanical business.

**Ms. West:** Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

**Ms. Morton:** I don't think so.

**Ms. West:** It's been my pleasure meeting you, and I'm glad you were willing to be one of our subjects. If you think of anything else that you might want to add to this, I'll be around. Thank you so much.

**Ms. Morton:** You're very welcome.