



Ayer Oral History Project

Interview Guide

Every oral history project begins with a series of questions, referred to as a questionnaire or question guide. Below is a suggested guide. Every oral history should have a chosen focus—one element that you plan to cover in the greatest depth.

The Ayer Historical Commission's Oral History Project's focus is to interview citizens of Ayer about their personal history and association with the town of Ayer and their perspective of the town throughout their lives.

Provide this Explanation about Why We Want The Interview:

We are completing a townwide oral history of the lives of Ayer citizens, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences: ***"We want to focus today on your experiences as a citizen of Ayer and your association with the town. Thank you for your help with this important project!"***

Ready to Record: Please ask interviewee's permission to record their oral history using their name and the date. Record the question and response.

GENERAL/FAMILY/AYER

- 1) What is your full name including both maiden name and married name if applicable?
- 2) When were you born?
- 3) Have you ever married?
 - a. (If yes) What is the name of your spouse?

- 4) Do you have children?
 - a. Do you have grandchildren?
- 5) What cultures/ethnicities do you identify with (family background)?
- 6) Tell me about your parents.
- 7) Where have you lived during your life?
 - a. Did you grow up in Ayer? In what neighborhood?
- 8) What was the neighborhood like generally?
- 9) If you were not born in Ayer, when did you arrive? (year or age). How did you come to live in Ayer?
- 10) Where do you live in the town now? Have you lived in multiple areas?
- 11) Do other family members live in town?
- 12) If you don't currently live in Ayer, what is your connection to Ayer?
- 13) What challenges do you think this town still faces? What would you change about Ayer?
- 14) What changes have you seen in Ayer over time?
- 15) What distinct characteristics make Ayer the place that it is?

EDUCATION

- 16) Where did you attend school?
 - a. What were the names of the schools?
 - b. (Appropriate for someone who did not attend college) Did you pursue any educational programs or vocational training?
 - c. Name programs, if applicable.
- 17) Did you attend/graduate from college?
 - a. Name programs and years if possible
- 18) What were your challenges in education?
- 19) Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?
- 20) What support networks and mentoring have been important to you?

POLITICS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 21) Do you consider yourself active politically?
- 22) Have you been involved in volunteer or community work?
 - a. If so, what groups did you work with/for?
 - b. What led you to join this organization?

- c. What were the organization's main goals?
- d. What were some of the main programs/initiatives that you worked on?
- e. What did the work consist of?
- f. What would you consider the group's major accomplishments?
- g. Were you involved with other organizations?

23) What role has religion played in your life?

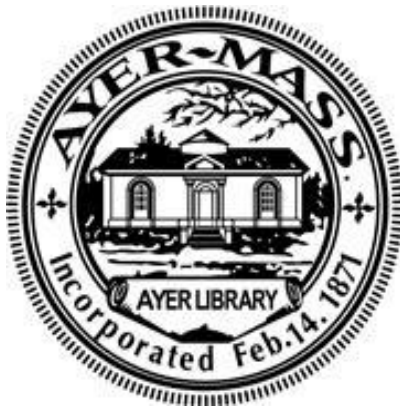
INTERVIEW CONCLUSION:

24) Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to people today and future generations?

25) Is there anyone else you would suggest we talk to?

Menu of Additional Questions You May Want to Add to Your Interview:

- 1) What major historical events in Ayer have occurred during your time here? Did they impact you personally? If so, expand on this memory.
- 2) What was considered fashionable when you were young in Ayer?
- 3) Were there any clubs or social places in Ayer you liked to visit that aren't around anymore?
- 4) What were your most significant extra-curricular involvements?
- 5) What did your parents' education consist of?
- 6) What difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood?
- 7) What memories do you have of significant national or world historical events that took place when you were growing up?
- 8) When you were not at home, where did you usually spend your time?
- 9) Were there particular areas of the town where you spent a lot of time?
- 10) Do you have hobbies or do any regular leisure activities that take you outside of the home?



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