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## Pauline Wright Memoir

**W934. Wright, Pauline** (1909-1986)

Interview and memoir

1 tape, 45 mins., 22 pp.

### SHAWNEETOWN BANK PROJECT

Pauline Wright recalls the bank as a resident of an apartment on its third floor. She discusses the building's furnishings and interior, stairways, back hallway, and sidewalks and exterior.

Interview by Horace Q. Waggoner, 1978

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PAULINE WRIGHT MEMOIR

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## PREFACE

This manuscript is a complete transcription of a tape recorded interview conducted September 13, 1978 by Horace Q. Waggoner for the Oral History Office. This is one of a series of interviews conducted in connection with the Old Shawneetown Bank Project. Memories of a Bank, an oral history and documentary inventory at Old Shawneetown was published in 1979 by the Oral History Office, Sangamon State University. Linda Jett transcribed the tape and Horace Waggoner edited the transcript.

Mrs. Wright was born in Shawneetown on September 4, 1909. Her primary memories of the bank are from living on the third level for a short time during the period when houses were being moved from Old to New Shawneetown.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Pauline Wright, September 13, 1978, Shawneetown, Illinois.

Horace Q. Waggoner, Interviewer.

Q. . . . some questions here and then we'll kind of let the conversation flow the way it wants to flow. When were you born?

A. September 4, 1909. In Shawneetown. Born and raised there and I guess I'll die here. (laughs)

Q. You went to school there in Shawneetown?

A. Yes. See, our grade school and high school were combined then. We had a very small enrollment. The downstairs of the old building was the grade school, in which they had to double up on classes, and the upstairs was part of the high school.

Q. Now, this is the building that's down there now.

A. Yes. It'd going to wrack and ruin. It's a shame. It's a beautiful old building. And that clock, it's a shame they've let it go like they have. It used to be just as regular as clockwork.

Q. Yes. Mr. Eswine, who I interviewed couple of weeks ago, used to work on the clock and keep it going.

A. We've gone up there many a time. There's a ladder that goes up there, just straight up, you know. It's rather scary to climb it. But we used to go up and, oh, you could see quite a distance from there.

Q. I bet you can. That would be about three stories up, then, wouldn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you live in relation to the bank, the big bank there?

A. Oh, let's see. Let's see, we were about three or four blocks where I, where I was born.

Q. From the bank?

A. From the bank. Yes.

Q. That was your family home there, was it?

A. Yes.

Q. What was your father's name?

A. Charles.

Q. Charles?

A. Charles E. Sheets.

Q. Is the S-H . . .

A. Just like the sheets. S-H-E-E-T-S.

Q. Were you married in Old Shawneetown?

A. Yes, we were married in the Presbyterian manse by Reverend Thomas Reed.

Q. And where did you live then, when you were married?

A. Well, when we first married, we lived with a couple, their name was Shook. Roy and Reva Shook. We lived upstairs. They had an apartment upstairs.

Q. Oh? Was this on Main Street or . . .

A. No, it was just off of Main Street. That house has been moved out here now. We were married in February and Joe went to Chicago to embalming school in September. And I stayed there until the flood came.

Q. Oh, I see. What year was this, then?

A. That was in 1937. And he was up there and we left--I went up there and stayed with him awhile during the flood. And I came back to Equality and stayed with his uncle until he was able to come home--We could get home and start cleaning out. And we stayed with his mother and step-father for a while. And then we moved into upstairs in the Goetzman, Mrs. Joe Goetzman's, home. And we stayed there until they decided to move the house out here. It's over here just a block. It's a beautiful old home. And that's when we moved to the bank.

Q. What was the first name of Goetzman?

A. Mrs. Joe Goetzman. I cannot think of her first name.

Q. Okay. Now, sometime after the flood, I understand you stayed in the bank?

A. Yes. We stayed up there until we moved out here. Now, I don't remember just how long, I don't remember when they started moving that house. But we were there until July of 1941.

Q. And the bank was still in operation downstairs at that time?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. You were living on the third level, I understand.

A. Yes.

Q. How did you get up to that third level?

A. Well, there's an outside stairway on the Route 13 as you go in.

Q. I see. On the highway.

A. There's a stairway goes up there and then we had another flight to go up.

Q. Now, that flight going up was in a back hallway across the back of the bank, as I understand it.

A. Yes. Yes. See, the stairway comes this way on the bank going up to that second story. And . . .

Q. On the outside.

A. . . . then the stairway was directly, as you turned left, it was directly on the left, on the left-hand side.

Q. On the left against the back wall.

A. Yes.

Q. Was it straight from bottom to top or did it have a landing and a turn in it?

A. No, when we went in, we just went straight. The stairway was right against the back wall. And then we turned right to go into our . . .

Q. When you got to the upstairs.

A. And that was a huge place for two people but (laughs) we just used three rooms. We had one, a living room, and then we had our bedroom, and then our kitchen. And the bedroom and the kitchen were rather small but the living room was rather large.

Q. I see. Now, was this across the front of the bank, then, or . . .

A. Yes, we were in front.

Q. When you got to the head of the stairs, then, you had to walk through some rooms?

A. There was a hallway. There was a hallway and then we went into the big room.

Q. When you came to the head of the stairs, in order to enter that hallway to go to your rooms, how did you go? Did you turn right?

A. Turned right. Yes.

Q. Were there two doors in that wall there?

A. Well, I declare, I don't remember.

Q. Was there someone else living there also? Was there another apartment up there?

A. No. No.

Q. Just the one. So, you went along this hallway. Were there rooms short of the ones in which you lived? That would have been in the central part of the bank.

A. I don't know just what you mean by that.

Q. Well, let's see now. You went up the stairway and you were in the back hall on that level . . .

A. Yes.

Q. . . . when you came to the top of the stairway. Then you went down a hall toward the front of the bank. Is that correct?

A. Well, there's a very small hall. It was . . .

Q. Narrow hall?

A. Narrow hall. Yes.

Q. And it went more or less down the middle of the building, did it?

A. Yes.

Q. And when you reached the end of that hall and stepped into your rooms, where were you? Were you in the dining room area, that you used for dining room, or what?

A. No, we had our kitchen and dining room together.

Q. Together.

A. No, there was just a huge room with a beautiful old fireplace. And then we went to the end of that and that was where our living room was. And then our--we were right in the very front part. We had our living room here. (holds out right hand) And then there was a small room which we made into our bedroom and then the kitchen over here. (indicates to left of her right hand) We were directly over the bank, the bank part.

Q. The large living room, then, would have been on the southwest corner?

A. The south, yes.

Q. And can you describe how you arranged the furniture in that room? How did you have it set up?

A. Oh. (laughs) Oh, that I just don't remember at all. (laughs) About the only thing I can remember about that is, for our first year there, Joe bought me a piano, which was quite a surprise. See, I was teaching school at the time. And those poor fellows had to carry that piano up the two flights of stairs. And when I came home at noon, why, there it was. Quite a surprise. (laughs)

Q. What part of the room had he positioned it in?

A. On the south side.

Q. On the south side. Between the windows on the south side?

A. Yes.

Q. Opposite that, on the north side, was there a fireplace there?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you use that fireplace?

A. No. Never did.

Q. As you faced that fireplace, was there a doorway to the left that lead back into the central part of the bank?

A. Now that, I, I don't remember that either. It's been so long, I'll tell you. (laughter) If I can go up there, I could tell you everything and see it once more.

Q. Well, I have permission to take people in but I'm afraid to do it because there's so many holes in the floor now, you know. They're starting the restoration . . .

A. Yes, I know.

Q. . . . and someone's liable to step through a hole and fall all the way down.

A. You never know.

Q. Was there any marble or anything in that living room, that you recall?

A. Not that I can recall.

Q. What was the texture of the walls, do you recall? Were they papered or painted?

A. Painted, I think.

Q. Painted.

A. I think so.

Q. Now, there are very tall windows in that room. Did you have to make drapes for those windows?

A. Yes. (laughs) Yes, they're very tall.

Q. Did they still have the shutters on those windows so that you could close those?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there wainscoting around the room? Such as this . . . (indicates wainscoting in the interview room)

A. No. No, not that I recall.

Q. Just a low baseboard and then . . .

A. Yes. Very high ceiling.

Q. What kind of lighting did you have in that living room?

A. Electric.

Q. Light fixtures. Did it hang from the ceiling or . . .

A. No, we had just the floor lamps and table lamps.

Q. I see. So, it had been wired . . .

A. Yes.

Q. . . . for that? Do you remember what the design of the fireplace was like? What did the fireplace look like?

A. Oh, it was very large, but I couldn't tell how it was designed.

Q. Did it have a wooden mantle on it?

A. Yes.

Q. Wooden paneling around it, I suppose?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that plain or painted or . . .

A. No, it had been painted. It seems . . . now, what color was it? It wasn't white. I know it seems--It was dark.

Q. Now, let's see. The kitchen area. Was that a large opening from the living room into the kitchen area or . . .

A. No, it was a regular door.

Q. Small door there. Regular door.

A. Into the bedroom. Both the bedroom and the kitchen were small. And there was just a regular door in between them and, as I recall-- But now, at that time, we had--our stove was, we used kerosene.

Q. Oh? Did you vent that stove, do you remember? Was there a stove-pipe or anything that went into a flue?

A. No. No, it was just like an electric stove only we just had to use kerosene. And they were messy. Whenever they sprung a leak. (laughs)

Q. I bet. Yes, ma'am. (laughter) Where did that set in the room? How did you have the kitchen arranged?

A. Well, (laughs) I'll tell you, I haven't thought of those things in a long time. I really don't remember. But, of course, there were no cabinets. We had to have--oh, what do you call them?

Q. Sideboards.

A. Sideboards. That's what we--they used to call them sideboards. Well, it was just a cabinet. It had a place for the flour and, up above, for your dishes. And it was quite small but, at that time, we didn't have very much to use anyhow. Newly married and Joe gone to Chicago and we hadn't bought too much.

I remember we had a maroon colored couch and chairs to match, a base rocker . . . and a smoke/magazine stand combined. It was very pretty. We lost that when we moved out here. We put it in the basement. We had no place to put it.

See, when we moved out here this was our funeral--we put our funeral home in here. This was our embalming room here. (Indicates room in which the interview was being conducted) And we tore this partition out here to make a little chapel. (Indicates large opening leading to living room at the front of the house) And this room back here was our display. (Indicates room behind the living room) So, we lived and we had our bedroom and kitchen and two rooms over there which is now--I mean our living room and kitchen--which, now, is our bedroom and bath. (Indicates west side of house--the house faces north)

When we moved out here in 1941 and finally got it all fixed up so we could use it--people never left their bodies here. They wanted to take them home. That was the thing of the day. It was just an unheard of thing to leave them here, but once in a great while we would have one. And then, just, seems like overnight, everybody started leaving them here and you know that little--it's a big room but it didn't hold very many people when they came to a funeral, so we finally had to build out there\* and made this our living quarters. It's a big old house for two people, now that our children are gone, but we just love it. (laughs)

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\*The current funeral home is a separate building next door to the Wright Residence. [ED]

Q. On the second level of the bank, the one below the one on which you lived, do you recall anything about that level at all?

A. I never was in that part at all.

Q. So you hadn't been in where the bank itself, the lobby, was. Do you recall that at all?

A. Yes, we've been in the bank, but as far as what's underneath there, I never did . . .

Q. I see. Behind the lobby then, you weren't in there, then?

A. No.

Q. Do you recall the lobby itself? Could you describe it in any way?

A. I surely couldn't.

Q. Do you recall the counter across there where you went up to speak to the tellers?

A. I couldn't describe it. I'm not a very good one, am I? (laughs)

Q. Do you recall any chairs or anything that were--When you went in to do business, if you had to wait, were there chairs there to sit on?

A. Well, that I couldn't say.

Q. And how about the walls? Do you remember any marble on the walls?

A. No, I don't recall.

Q. How about the vault area behind the teller's counter? Anything you were struck by?

A. Only huge, huge doors.

Q. Do you remember the color of those doors?

A. No.

Q. Do you remember any photographs or pictures that might have been hanging on the wall?

A. No, I surely don't.

Q. When you came in the front door, there was a counter in front of you

and a doorway off to the right. Do you recall whether that small room there--would have been under your kitchen, immediately below that.

A. Yes, at the right. It would have been.

Q. Was there an office in that room or was it kind of a hallway, do you recall?

A. No.

Q. You don't recall anyone sitting in there at a desk or anything like that?

A. No.

Q. Do you recall any of the people that were working there at that time?

A. Yes. Max Galt. His son is at this bank out here.

Q. Jimmy Joe Galt.

A. Jimmy Joe Galt, yes. And Carroll Goetzman, he's the brother-in-law of Max. And Frances Coffee. Now, she's one who could tell you because she worked in the bank.

Q. Yes, I interviewed her yesterday.

A. You did? She could give you all the details that I can't remember.

Q. And anyone else you can recall?

A. No. Those are the only three that I can . . .

Q. Do you remember Mr. Roedel?

A. Mr. Charles Roedel, yes.

Q. Having a law office there?

A. Yes.

Q. Were you ever in that office?

A. No. I never was. Oh, he was a fine fellow. All of those were. They were just wonderful people.

Q. In the part of the bank that you lived, upstairs there on the third level, do you ever recall having heard anyone say what those rooms might have been used for in the early times?

A. Never did.

Q. There was a stairway leading up to where your kitchen was at one time and we've been trying to find someone . . .

A. Is that right?

Q. . . . that remembers that or has heard of it but it was closed off from the . . .

A. I never . . .

Q. When the Allens lived there, the boys slept in that room. That was their bedroom. But we can't find anyone that has heard anything about that at all.

A. Is that right?

Q. Let's see, now. On the northeast corner of the building, that would be away from the streets, on the back there, at one time, there had been a wooden room built on there which was the kitchen when the Allens lived there. Do you recall that being there, at any time?

A. No.

Q. Before you lived there, do you recall it?

A. No, I had never been up there till we moved. It seems like there was a stairway that went up into the attic. I never did go up there. Probably the door was locked and I never . . .

Q. It was a stairway very similar to the one that you used to get to the third level?

A. Yes.

Q. And right above it, I guess.

A. Yes.

Q. When you came up to the third level on that stairway, was the stairway enclosed so that you came through a door into the hallway at the top or was it open with a railing?

A. It was open with a railing.

Q. Do you remember any details of that railing? Did you ever get any splinters from it?

A. No, I never did. (laughs)

Q. I see. Let's see now. How did you heat your part of the . . .

A. Well, as far as I can remember it was heated through, however the bank was heated.

Q. So it must have been the furnace, then, in the basement that heated the whole building.

A. Yes.

Q. You had no stoves in the living area?

A. No. Just our little coal oil cooking stove.

Q. I see. Yes, ma'am. And you had a refrigerator or ice box there at that time, I guess?

A. Yes.

Q. Which was it, an ice box or refrigerator?

A. Oh, it was a refrigerator. It had a freezing compartment.

Q. On the outside, at that time, a good deal of the iron fence had been taken down or gone someplace. Do you remember any iron fence that was running around the building at any place when you were there?

A. No. No. Other than what was left there.

Q. Back to the northeast corner where the wooden kitchen had been built on there, evidently it was destroyed in 1937 flood, there was a carriage house at one time. It was against the east side of the property. Do you recall that building at all?

A. No, I surely don't. I don't remember that.

Q. Okay. Let's see. On the, I guess you'd call them balustrades, on each side of the main steps as you go up to the pillars there in the front of the bank, do you recall two lights, tall lamps?

A. I've seen pictures of that but I don't really remember.

Q. You don't recall them there when you were there?

A. No. When I was there, no, they weren't there then.

Q. Do you remember iron railing around each side?

A. Yes.

Q. So there was iron railing?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And the sidewalks outside along the west side by the highway and out in front, do you remember what they were made of at that time? Were they concrete or brick?

A. They were concrete when we were there.

Q. Both of them were concrete.

A. Yes.

Q. And let's see. The highway had come in then, so that was surfaced, I guess, with concrete on that street down there.

A. Yes.

Q. What was the front, out in front of the bank? Was it surfaced . . .

A. It was sidewalk, just regular sidewalk.

Q. Beyond the sidewalk, then. The street itself, was it paved?

A. The street. No, it wasn't paved at that time. I don't think it was.

Q. It wasn't then.

A. It could have been, but I don't remember it, if it was.

Q. So you were never in the attic. How about the basement? Did you ever go down in the basement?

A. No, never was in the basement either.

Q. I understood Mr. Wright's father, I guess it was, at one time had a mortuary down there in the . . .

A. No.

Q. Oh, he didn't?

A. No. Now he--yes, I know, have you heard of the Old Riverside?

Q. Hotel? Yes.

A. Hotel. Now, he had one on the bottom floor of that, at one time. And then where Bobby Logsdon has his tavern, it was in there. And then, there was--who was it? I believe it was what at one time was the Kroger Store. He had a business in there for a while.

Q. I was down to the Logsdon Tavern yesterday and talked to them. She's quite a character.

A. Yes, she is. Now, when the flood came--of course, the building has been moved out here now, but it was just a--Logsdon's tavern is here and then there's that parking lot--what we call a parking lot, now. But then, there was what they called the Old Rubenacker Building. He used to have, Mr. Rubenacker used to have, meat. What do you call them? (laughs) Meat markets. And they were there when the flood came. Funeral home, Joe and his mother. Of course, his dad died in 1934. And he and his mother . . .

Q. So, this is kind of catty-corner to the left across the street from the bank itself?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Let's see. Do you recall anyone who had lived there before you lived in that area?

A. In the building?

Q. In the building itself.

A. The bank? No.

Q. You don't know who might have lived there?

A. No.

Q. And you don't recall any use of the basement?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Let's see. Must be skipping some areas here. Let's see. We've covered the lights, and the heat. Do you know, now you've named some people who worked in the bank there. Do you have any idea as to who might have any documentation that might have come from the bank? Any letter files or . . .

A. Unless the historical society would have them in the Old Marshall Bank or in the . . .

Q. Docker Museum?

A. Docker, yes. They would have some.

Q. You don't know of any private individuals that might have some?

A. No.

Q. Or artifacts? Things that might have been in the bank through the years that . . .

A. No. Jimmy Joe may know of some.

Q. Yes. He has the safe, for example, that was used down there. It's in the vault. They can't get it out of that vault . . .

A. Is that right?

Q. . . . down in the Harmon store. Without tearing the vault out, of course. But that type of thing we're looking for, you know. Like the iron fence. We've found that Dr. Caveness up at Eldorado has a section of that.

A. Oh, he does. I didn't know that. I know Dr. Caveness.

Q. Well, that's the type thing. We're trying to locate where these things might be. How about photographs of the bank? Did you ever take any pictures of the inside while you were living there?

A. No, never did.

Q. There seem to be none in existence of the inside of the bank.  
(laughter)

A. Other than the banking part, I don't know that I have ever seen any photos of that even.

Q. I'm a little confused on--When you went up the stairs in the back hall, you say there was a long narrow hallway which led to the forward area where you were living. Were there rooms on either side of that long hallway?

A. No, they were all on the same side.

Q. Okay. Was the hallway that you went through to get forward, to the forward part of the bank, on the eastern side or western side of the bank?

A. Well, the stairway was right on the . . .

Q. Would be the northwest, I guess.

A. Was on the northwest. Yes.

Q. Okay. When you got to the head of the stairway, then, and you were going forward to the rooms that you were using at the front of the bank, you went down a hallway. Was this, where was it located in the bank? Was it on one side or the other?

A. Well, now the doorway wasn't very far from the stairs, as I remember it. But we didn't, we didn't go very far from the head of the stairway to get to the doors.

Q. When you entered your rooms, you came directly into the living room, did you, or into your bedroom?

A. No, it was in the large room that we didn't use.

Q. I see.

A. It was a huge room.

Q. When you entered your quarters there, did you go through an entryway which had shelving on each side of it?

A. (indicates negative)

Q. It was just a straight-forward door.

A. Not that I remember. It was a straight door.

Q. When you stepped into your living quarters, was the fireplace to your left?

A. To the left, yes.

Q. Oh, okay. So the hallway that you used, or the access that you had, would have been more toward the highway side of the bank than the opposite side?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Okay. It's beginning to come clear. Now, when you came to the head of the stairs on the third level and then you turned right to go to the doorway to go to your quarters, there was a small room at the end of the hallway. Do you recall that room?

A. I surely don't.

Q. It was used as a bath at one time and had a heating, a small heating closet or place for heating water in it. You don't recall that, at that time? So, it might have been gone by that time.

A. No. Might have been.

Q. Okay. When you reached the door that went into your quarters, before you opened that door, was there a fireplace on the left there?

A. Before we opened the door?

Q. Before you opened the door to go into your quarters?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Well, I think I have it fairly in mind. And those rooms leading to your quarters as far as you know were just empty rooms? Nothing was stored there?

A. Yes. Nothing stored, not a thing.

Q. You can't confirm that your living room at one time was used as the executive offices? (chuckles)

A. No. I wish I could. (laughter)

Q. Okay. Yes, it seems that the bank didn't have living quarters, as such, until 1865. And those rooms must have been used for something before that and we're trying to figure out exactly what they were used for, you see. So. Well, okay, can you think of anything that I haven't touched on that hasn't come to mind at this point?

A. No, I wish I could remember more than I've told you about it, but it's been several years ago. (laughs)

Q. I guess. Okay. Well. Real fine.

A. But I know we enjoyed living up there. I really enjoyed it.

Q. You had a view of the river from up there, didn't you?

A. Oh yes, yes.

Q. So, and I guess there was quite a considerable amount of river traffic at that time?

A. Oh, yes. And they have sort of slowed down, but now there's really lots of traffic on that river.

Q. Yes. I flew to Memphis Sunday afternoon and back and we went in and out along the river, you know. There was a lot of traffic on it. Tremendous barge traffic. Okay. Well, that'll do it, I guess. I need to . . .

END OF TAPE.