

Nancy Bruns

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Nancy Bruns

Nancy Bruns is a chef, former restaurant owner, and the co-owner of [J.Q. Dickinson Salt-works](#). Her family, the Dickinsons, have operated salt mines in the Kanawha Valley for five generations, since 1817. This interview was conducted in conjunction with the Malden Salt Fest

NB= Nancy Bruns

EH= Emily Hilliard

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EH: Ok. Alright, so could you just introduce yourself for the tape and tell us where we are right now.

NB: Ok, Nancy Bruns and we're at J.Q. Dickinson Saltworks on the Dickinson family farm in Malden, West Virginia. Do you want me to hold that?

EH: Um, you can just... I think it will be fine right there. Yeah. And just to start could you tell me about your people? Tell me about your family.

NB: Um, my family.... That's not a simple question. Let's see, my family came

EH: That's purposeful. (laughs)

NB: (laughs) My family first came to the Kanawha Valley in 1813 and bought property. His name was William Dickinson, came with his brother-in-law Joel Shrewsbury in 1813 and bought land up the river from here on Carol's Creek which is now Quincy. And for the purpose of making salt because it was resource here. So that started our history in the salt business. They started making salt in 1817 and ended up moving down here to Malden in 1832 to this piece of property that started actually a different salt company, they had several different interests. So for 5 generations salt was made by the Dickinsons here in the Kanawha Valley.

EH: Wow.

NB: So starting with William and then his son William and William's son John Quincy and his brother Henry Clay Dickinson and their two sons, John Quincy's son Charles Cameron who owned this property and then it kind of, then it went to Mary Price Rattree, C.C. Dickinson's daughter and her husband Turner Rattree and then the salt business was stopped under Turner.

EH: Okay. So salt production was already a known entity here before your family moved?

NB: Yes, it was. The first commercial salt business started in about 1798 by.. I'm blanking on his name; I can't believe that. I'll come up with it in a second. So he started making salt in 1798 and was making about 150 pounds a day just in a kettle with a wood fire boiling the brine down. At that time, brine was bubbling up in springs so they could just, you know, put a bucket in this spring and pull out the salty water and then boil it down. That's not so much the case now. And so that's how it was known that there was salt here, but there was also a lot of wildlife, Native Americans were making salt. Then as the European settlers were moving west, they found this very important resource and it was such a valuable thing to have a source of salt away from the coast. It really allowed, you know, people to move west.

EH: Are there other examples of that in the United States that you know of?

NB: There is... there were salt works in Saltville, Virginia.

EH: Right.

NB: And that was more a kind of solution mining where they had these, they would drill down these holes and then when the river flooded it would flood into the holes and there was... already a hard solid salt resource and then the river water would go in and dissolve it and then they would pump it back out.

And then in upstate New York there is also salt that they were making. Onondaga salt. Near Syracuse.

EH: Okay. So when you were growing up how much knowledge did you have of this family business and did your parents or grandparents talk about it at all?

NB: No, hardly ever. It was not really part of our conversation. I knew vaguely that our family came here because of the salt resource but I didn't know much more than that. We had gotten into other natural resources which was the way things developed. You know, because of the salt resource, the coal reserves were found, natural gas, and the chemical companies came. So we were involved in other natural resources, so that was really kind of my knowledge growing up so there really was not a conversation around that salt history.

EH: Wow. So how did you come to it?

NB: I came to it through an interesting way, my husband and I spent 20 years in the food business, we owned a restaurant and did several other things. When we sold our restaurant in 2008, he wanted to go back to school and get his masters in American history which he did at Western Carolina University and he loves American history, he's also been very interested in salt worldwide as a commodity that has changed cultures and societies throughout history and has found that very fascinating. So he started looking into salt in American history and came across the Kanawha Valley and the importance of the resource here and of course he stumbled on the Dickinson family and got into all kinds of stuff. So then we were exploring the Dickinson family history and found actually, a huge box full of information in the family storage room that has all kinds of handwritten notes and letters about starting the business so that's pretty interesting. And so I just had one of these "aha" moments of... okay, if we have this land still and looking at what's going on in the food industry with chefs, you know, wanting to source their ingredients from, as locally as possible, as well as people are much more aware of the different salts in the world, they have a vision beyond Morton's, and so I just thought we could reach a market. And here we are.

EH: So it was... did he have an inkling? He had this interest in salt separate from your family?

NB: Yes, definitely.

EH: So wild.

NB: (laughs) Yes. And little did he know that he'd been married to this salt heiress... not an heiress but you know a 7th generation salt makers. So I had asked him one day, did they stop making salt because the brine dried up and he said oh no, there's lots and lots of brine, they stopped making it because it wasn't economically feasible anymore. And I said, we need to be making salt.

EH: Wow. And could you walk me through (phone rings) ...do you want to get that?

NB: Yeah if you don't mind.

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EH: Alright. So could you walk me through your background and your connection here? Did you grow up...

NB: Yes, I grew up here in Charleston. And then went away to high school and college and then went to culinary school, got married, lived all over the country and then was in the food industry for 20+ years before I decided to be in the salt industry again and now I'm back here, exploring my roots.

EH: And even though your family didn't talk about salt, was there an interest in, I don't know—not necessarily agriculture, but food production or food making?

NB: Oh, there definitely is interest in food in general in my family. My parents are both great cooks and we grew up exploring different foods and cooking a lot, so that was always an interest and I think that really spurred me to go to culinary school. But, I think through my culinary background and then just keeping my finger on the pulse of the industry, I just started to see you know, this movement toward the importance of sourcing locally and regionally as much as possible and having this sustainable agricultural system became important to me as well as when we were starting the business. It was importance the decisions we made and the way we're gonna make the salt. So using solar evaporation instead of boiling the brine down like our ancestors did was an important decision even though it slowed the process down by weeks and weeks. (laughs)

EH: How long does it take the evaporation to happen?

NB: At its fastest, it'll take about 5 weeks from the time we pump the brine out of the well and get it into the jar.

EH: Wow—that's a lot.

NB: That's a long time, where our ancestors were making thousands of pounds of salt a day. So it was very different approach. And you know, they were making it on an industrial scale.

EH: Mmhm. So could you walk me through what you know of their process in making the salt?

NB: Sure, so they had well, like we do, they had 8 wells on this property and they were pumping almost continuously. They had a big brine holding tank and then they would, you know it changed over time so, I guess let me back up. Originally their well, the way they put wells in was they took a hollowed out sycamore tree and drove it into the ground as far as they could get it and then put a man down inside that tree and dig around the base, they had a shovel and a bucket and he would send the muck up and he would keep driving that tree down in the ground and that would be their casing for their well.

EH: Oh my gosh.

NB: So then the Ruffner family decided that things needed to be a little easier than that, so they actually developed this drilling mechanism because you could only go so far down with the sycamore tree and then you hit bedrock—there wasn't anything to do. So they developed a drilling method.

EH: Why sycamore?

NB: Because they were I guess the tallest and straightest, and I guess the diameter of it was big enough to get a man down.

EH: They must have had to have been a small... not very broad shoulders!

NB: (laughs) Right! So, but you know at that time you had virgin forests here.

EH: Mmhm. Right.

NB: So I'm sure there were enormous trees. Of course, what we're looking at now has all been—this is all new forest. Because they had, you know for 20 miles in every direction, they deforested it because they first burnt timber and then they found the coal reserves. And burned coal. So they boiled, they had big furnaces and they would boil down the brine and it would go into a separate graining vat where it would turn to salt, where it would evaporate and crystalize, and then they would harvest it there. And they sent most of the salt to Cincinnati, which was a big meat packing center.

EH: Oh, yeah.

NB: Also called Porkopolis.

EH: (laughs) wow!

NB: (laughs) So that's where most of it was going—they would send it on flat boats down the Kanawha to the Ohio River to Cincinnati.

EH: Okay.

NB: Our family went to Nashville too, for a while, because there was a good market there and William Dickinson was searching out stable currencies, and Nashville had a currency that was usable outside of that area, so that was an important thing. And there weren't as many people sending their salt to Nashville as there were to Cincinnati.

EH: Are there any of the furnace buildings or furnace materials left?

NB: Yeah! So we can go look at it.

EH: Cool. And then can you walk me through today's process?

NB: So today's process is we pump the brine into a big tank and let it settle. There's a lot of iron in it. And our ancestor's salt was actually pink salt from this iron. And our, the... palates have developed to the

point where we really don't like metallic tasting food. So I think in the mid-19th century they didn't really care as much as long as their food was preserved.

EH: Right.

NB: And they weren't looking for subtle taste differences. So we have to let that iron settle out and we sell that iron oxide separately. So then once it settles, we gravitationally feed the brine into sun houses, into big long beds, they're like 40 feet long by 7 feet wide and the brine sits in there until it's about 10-12% salinity, then we move it to the Granary

EH: Okay.

NB: Which is what our ancestors called their crystallization area. And that's where it crystalizes, and that's where we harvest it.

EH: Okay. And how did you learn to do this? (laughs)

NB: (laughs) We... it was a process, it's all trial and error and my brother wants to rename the company Trial & Error, so...

EH: (laughs)

NB: It, you know I read a lot, a lot, a lot about it. And went to visit some other salt works that were doing it by solar evaporation and you know we had to figure out—you know in West Virginia you have to keep it covered because we get a lot of rain. You can't just have it out like they do in like—the Mediterranean salt works, they just kind of have these salt pans out in the open. And then being very sustainable was important to us. So we knew that if you have salty water and you let it evaporate, you're gonna get salt. But what we didn't understand was some things that we could do to change the flavor of it because we didn't like what we got at first. So we learned about different things that would precipitate out at different times and so... we learned, we hired an intern from the University of Charleston who worked for us for about 5 months and he set it up basically as a lab. We had all these different evaporation beds and different depths and different sizes so, he was figuring out how the crystals would form, what would make them taste differently... so that was really a fun process to go through. And then we got it right and were like—"Okay! There it is!"

EH: So was it initially pink?

NB: It was.

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EH: Because there was iron?

NB: Yeah, so we evaporated that starting it... while it looked pretty, it just didn't taste good. You've got to have a good tasting product.

EH: So what do you look for in taste of salt and could you describe what your final product tastes like?

NB: Sure, so I don't think you want an astringent taste or sharpness to it. You want it to be pleasing, you know, just like with any food. You want it to be a pleasing food. So our salt is very bold flavored, it's strong flavored but I think it has almost a sweetness to it and sweetness in the way that it's not sharp as in acidic or something that catches you in the back of the throat. Like some salts will—you'll taste 'em and like... (makes pucker sound) "Oh!" But our salt is really full-flavored, you definitely get some minerality to it. And it just, you know, when you put it on food it brings out the best!

EH: So there's a certain terroir.

NB: Exactly. So people say, why is your salt different and I say, well it has to do with the earth and where it comes from, as in wine or food that's grown in different soils, you know hydroponic tomato compared to a tomato that's grown in soil is a very different product, even though it could be coming from exactly the same seed.

EH: Right. So are there other salt works now in the U.S. that are doing something similar?

NB: There are, they're kind of popping up all over which I think is a good thing. I think that shows that there's a market for it and that people really want a higher quality salt. So you know people like Ben Jacobson who's in Oregon making salt and he's probably one of the very first small batch salt makers in the U.S. Modern. And he's boiling his bring down. He harvests from a bay in Oregon and then he has a process where he uses natural gas and boils it down. But there are other people doing it in greenhouses—sun houses like we do. Like Bulls Bay Salt works in South Carolina.

EH: Okay. I've heard of a Maine salt producer in Vinylhaven.

NB: Yeah, and a Maine sea salt. Yeah. So we actually went to visit them. So we decided to do it differently than they do. So everybody has a little different take on it. Amaganset Salt Company in Long Island does it—they just create little... they have little pans and they have little hoops that go over each pan.

EH: Oh! Okay.

NB: So (laughs) So it's pretty interesting.

EH: Wow. Personal greenhouse?

NB: (laughs) Yeah, so it just holds couple gallons of water. So anyway. So our tank holds 2500 gallons. And we actually just bought a second tank, so we're trying to become more efficient. We hope we can increase production by about 40% next year. But we're looking at expanding next year. Probably doubling our size.

EH: So in maybe it was the Gravy podcast you talk a little bit about being in West Virginia and West Virginia going through a transition after coal as coal's declining. Do you think there's a role to be played you know, with salt or maybe not necessarily just you but in a growing economy of makers and producers?

NB: I think there is a role, well I think we are playing a role in showing, okay we've taken this industry that really founded this area, and we've stepped outside the box and are looking at it in a totally different way.

13:33

EH: Mmhm

NB: And making a modern company even though we're doing it a very slow old-fashioned way, but... but we've looked for an opportunity based on our roots. And other people may decide to make salt here, I don't know. I would think maybe not, but... I hope not, but I think that West Virginia has a rich culture with makers and I consider us more of a well, more of an agricultural product. We consider this, kind of, salt farming more than mineral extraction on an industrial scale so I think that, you know, we fall into a different category than our ancestors did. And I think that this rich culture we have with crafts and agriculture in this state and, you know, food, and tourism, agro-tourism and other things like that can really be a way for us to be a great state again. I mean, we're always a great state, but a healthy... a healthy economy.

EH: Right.

NB: And I think one thing that's really important to us is that we partner with other West Virginian makers too. You know we have about 5 different craftspeople who are making salt cellars and pottery and um, things for us that... it's really important for us to keep as much money at home as possible. And promote their products and they promote our products and then that helps everybody.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, that's great. I really liked seeing the video at the dinner—just the spotlight on you guys, and you know the fly-over of the valley and I was kind of struck because I felt proud. I mean I've lived here since November, but I was like “that's where I live!” (laughs)

NB: (laughs)

EH: But it was just because you are here, you're bringing attention to this area. I think I heard the podcast before I got this job even and it was like, “Oh I need to visit there sometime.” So it is... it becomes a destination.

NB: Right.

EH: Really neat.

NB: And we really hope to grow that and make this a destination. You know our long-term plans are to become kind of an Appalachian food hub of sorts because salt touches so many food items. So we're expanding into, to selling things that are... we sell salt to people who are making sauerkraut and kimchi and preserving vegetables and preserved meats and making cheese and we'd really like to bring all those items here to sell them and then maybe we start producing some other things too. So, kind of value-added products to promote what, you know, what other West Virginia producers grow.

EH: That's great. So your products now are salt, popcorn salt...

NB: We have 3 different crystal sizes, the smallest crystal is our popcorn salt and it's actually a later harvest because there's less salt and brine when those crystals are forming. And then our main product is our finishing salt, our heirloom finishing salt, which is a medium-sized crystal and then we have a grinding salt which is very coarse and needs to be ground.

EH: Okay.

17:36

NB: So we're working on a West Virginia Applewood smoked salt, and a ramp salt! Which will be coming out this spring.

EH: That's awesome.

NB: Hopefully in April. Ramp season.

EH: Cool!

NB: So we don't want to get into you know, some salt companies have lemon salt and red-wine infused salt and all that. It's important to us to stay as Appalachian as we can, so... hence the ramps and the local wood. The smoked.

EH: Cool. Um, so... let me just make sure I've covered... um,

NB: Oh, and we also have a nigari which is kind of an interesting product, after we harvest all the salt crystals, there's a clear liquid that's left and it's called nigari and it's traditionally used to make tofu. And what it is is the minerals that don't adhere to the salt crystals, so it's very high in things like magnesium and calcium and potassium, and, um, so it's a coagulant, so it's traditionally used to make tofu, but you can also use it to make fresh cheeses like ricotta or fresh goat's cheese, or you know, farmer's type cheeses, or take it as a mineral supplement. So um, that comes with a little steeper learning curve for people, it's something very unusual, but you know, we have quite a few chefs using it to make cheeses and their own tofu and things, so it's um, it's interesting. And we're looking at developing it into an actual mineral supplement where it would be packaged that way. Now we're not an approved mineral supplement, so we can't claim that on the package, but um, it's a really, really healthy thing, but you know it's another whole process to get into the mineral supplement world, so...

EH: How cool. Yeah, I saw that at the um, Capital Market and was curious. So when did you re-open?

NB: 2013. We put our well in in May of 2013.

EH: And what... How long had you started the process before that?

NB: Um, probably a year or so before that I started thinking about it and talking to my husband about it and then maybe 6 months. I kind of put it away and was like, "do I really want to do this?" and... (laughs) And you know, it just wouldn't, it wouldn't leave my head. I couldn't put it away. It was like an itch I had to keep scratching. It was just like, okay I'll sit down and do a business plan and really get into this and

see if it's feasible. And of course the business is totally different than that original plan because you just don't know what you're going to get into. But, um, but it is. You know, we're actually in the black.

EH: That's great.

NB: So I called Louis in, my brother, in maybe September of 2012 and said, "okay, I've got this idea. What do you think?" And I sent him a business plan and I said, "I think this is feasible. Let me know what you think." So he was here already living and kind of, has always been interested in food businesses and was kind of exploring some things, so... he thought about it and said, "yeah, let's do it!" So then we worked with Gaddy Engineering um, who we wanted to make sure that the source was not contaminated with any kind of issues—that there were no chemical spills, you know, that could have gotten in there, or anything that could be a problem, so...they said that there was no issue, we looked at the geology, we decided we were gonna put a well, and we put it in in May and then we were on the market by the next November. And we immediately sold out of all of our inventory in 3 weeks.

EH: Wow (phone rings) that's great. Um, and... aside from the you know, the two salts you mentioned, and the hub, are there other things on the horizon?

NB: Um, we did share this, this space here inside and out, with Terra-salis (sp?), which was a family business-- it was a garden center and landscape design business.

22:25

And we kind of came into one of their hoop houses and have since built another one and moved into their main greenhouse and... but they closed in December. So we now have all of this property in the fenced area, so, we are looking to utilize the property more for events and we're gonna put in our own garden this spring and uh, we're already having some farm-to-table events. We have a series we call "Celebrating the Season" where we bring in a local chef and have... have a dinner for 60 people.

EH: Cool!

NB: And have them source locally so people can see what West Virginia can do.

EH: Nice.

NB: And then we support a local food initiative, you know like a farm-to-school program or Keys for Healthy Kids, part of CAMC's outreach and um, you know, the Future Farmers of American we've supported as well as like, Appalachian Food Summit.

EH: Cool.

NB: So that's important to us, that's a way we can give back, and people are really excited to come to events here so we think there's an opportunity for larger events, like I just got a phone call—somebody wants to have a wedding here so...

EH: Oh, that's great.

NB: So I think that there's a way... we need to be able to come up with revenue to pay for taking care of the property, as well as make sure that we're staying with our vision of what we want to become, but I

think it could become a really place gathering place in a way? You know, one name we're throwing around is calling it "The Grange at J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works" where it's a, our kitchen, we would put in a kitchen that wouldn't necessarily just be used for events, but it could be a demonstration kitchen for cooking classes, it could be used... you know we'd rent it by the hour for people that want to come in and use the community commercial kitchen to, you know, can their beans or make pickles or do these value added products—I think there's a real need for commercial kitchen space.

EH: Oh yeah.

NB: You know, as well as be able to have events here. So that's on the horizon as well as we're exploring having a cidery too.

EH: Wow. Very cool

NB: So we think apples are a big part of West Virginia's agricultural history and I think that the cider industry is growing in this county and I think there's a real opportunity in West Virginia. There's already one—Hawk Knob Cidery, but I think we have an opportunity to do that and there's a real need for cider apples. The demand for them is huge. So I think there's an opportunity for us to grow apples—not necessarily right here, but we have some other family property that, you know, is coal business, and it's not doing that well right now. So if we could maybe shift gears and go into agriculture in a way that might be a good thing.

EH: That'd be great.

NB: So, we want people to come here and maybe we have West Virginia craft beers, and have people come hang out in the afternoon and enjoy the farm and...

EH: I'm in! (laughs)

NB: (laughs) So you know, have some food. You know, we don't really want to have a restaurant, but maybe a little small carry-out where we have a charcuterie plate or something.

EH: Salted meats. (laughs)

NB: (laughs) Salted meats, pickled vegetables, yeah.

EH: There you go.

26:05

Um, one thing I realized I didn't ask—what is your family's heritage and how did they—why did they come to the valley, I guess.

NB: Um, let's see they were in Bedford County, Virginia near Lynchburg, and they had been there for three generations. So we're 7 generations here. Um, so they're mostly English, would be the heritage, but they've been, since the late 1600s here in America. So, but they settled there, they had a general store and a mill and um, William the eldest son of Joseph who had the, who settled there with his wife Elizabeth, was running this and so William was just looking for other opportunities so when his brother-in-law Joel Shrewsbury said hey, my brothers Samuel and David Shrewsbury I think? No... what's the other... can't

remember... um, they were here making salt and so Joel said the word, “Hey, I think we should look into this,” so they came over and bought some property. Um, course that was... it was all Virginia at that time. So then they ended up moving over here, but Joel and William had a big falling out, so it’s been an issue. Between Shrewsburys and the Dickinsons, which you still can kinda feel. Occasionally. My mother remembers my grandmother talking about the Shrewsburys and how she couldn’t stand them. But she never knew why she couldn’t stand them!

EH: Right, exactly. (laughs)

NB: (laughs) but, um, you know and I went to John Addams, the middle school here, with Scott Shrewsbury. I always liked him but nobody ever—I never knew at that point that there was an issue.

EH: I see.

NB: (laughs)

EH: Yeah, I just wanted to make sure I got that history. So I guess my last question is—and maybe you could get a little metaphorical too—so as a chef, what is the importance of salt, what does salt do, and then maybe, you know, what is it to you in a symbolic or metaphorical sense?

NB: Um, oh gosh, that’s a loaded question! (laughs) Um, I guess to answer it literally to start I think that as a chef, and I didn’t really realize this until pretty recently, is that you’re putting salt into almost everything you’re cooking, whether it’s just a pinch or you’re curing something or you’re making cheese or whatever, but that salt has a flavor and an impact and you just you know, we did it, we just kind of blindly took it for granted, we just ordered Morton’s Kosher salt in 2 pound boxes and um, just cause that’s what we used in culinary school and that was what we were used to and I think your hands get used to picking up a certain amount of salt but um, through traveling through, in Europe several times, I, we would come across these salts that they would have on tables or we’d see them in a food market, and “wow, there’s a whole world of salt out there! Who knew?!” And it was just not a part of the American palate or American cuisine, chefs weren’t looking at that and so we started collecting them and I saw my pantry filling up with salts and we would put you know, different salts on salads, or different salts on meats, and you’d get these beautiful crystals and it’s a nice crunch, and what a finishing salt is really does is give you that texture and then that pop of flavor that give you a, a little complexity to your food and it really adds a dimension that normally wouldn’t be there while you’re seasoning. And I think that high quality salts have minerals in them, you actually use less than you would a Morton’s or a Diamond Crystal or something like that. Because it actually has flavor so you can use less and you’re getting those minerals, and it’s really a win-win.

30:44

Um, you know, you can make all kinds of jokes and puns about, you know getting back to the salt of the earth, and here we are back at our roots, but every day when I pull into this farm to go to work, I... it never fails to... I feel this presence of my history and I am back at, you know, the salt of my earth here, you know carrying on and really being a steward for future generations. You know, our family have been very successful in the natural resource business for a long time but it’s a really, really difficult time right now and um, you know, that was another thing that kind of spurred me. I can’t count on what my, what previous generations did from these natural resources, so I better get busy and find some (laughs) thing

that's going to support me, you know, after we sold the restaurants. I was like, "you know, I think I better find something that works, that's gonna work for future generations too. How can we rethink what we've done in the past, use these current resources, and make it work for the future? So.

EH: Cool.

NB: Does that answer? (laughs)

EH: Yeah! That's great. Um, well do you have anything you'd like to add?

NB: Um, I think we covered it pretty well. Oh, I remember Elijah Brooks is actually the... salt maker, that original salt maker.

EH: Um, okay. Do you think that's the Brooks street in Charleston?

NB: Mmhm. I'm sure it is.

EH: Okay. Yeah. Dickinson. Ruffner.

NB: Yep, just go downtown you'll find all kinds of names and Hale St.

EH: Oh yeah. Mmhm. Great, well should we go...

NB: You want to go walk around a little bit?

EH: Yeah, that'd be great.

32:55

END OF TAPE

Part 2

00:00

EH: Oh okay, so could you tell me about the employees for the Salt-Works initially and who you have today for employees?

NB: Sure, so originally my ancestors as they grew, used, leased slave labor as well as indentured servants. The reason the industry was so successful here and was actually the largest producing salt region in the country—1830s and 40s was because one they could have slave labor, but you know, they had this rich resource, they had the river for transportation, and they had a lot of natural resources to burn to make the salt. So it... all of those things combined allowed it to become a huge industry here, as in so many industries in the country at the time were reliant on the backs of slaves. So um, anyway, but today we do it with, you know we're a very different scale of course, we're making about 10,000 pounds a year, they were making 1,000 pounds a day, so we have this time of year in March, we have 2 full-time employees, but in the height of the season we'll have 4-5 full-time employees and then myself, my brother, and his wife working too.

EH: Okay. So what are those employees doing? Do they have specific tasks or do you all kind of do the same thing.

NB: So our operations manager Megan oversees all the operation, the salt production, and anything having to do with the maintenance of our buildings for salt production, so this time of year they're working on you know, looking for more efficiencies, repairing beds, and we're installing some easier ways to move the brine, so and then she has employees under her that are doing the work of moving the brine, harvesting, cleaning the salt, packaging, sifting, grinding. And of course shipping out orders, we do... about 40% of our business is online so we have to ship those orders out plus we have 350 wholesale accounts that we're shipping nation-wide too, so we have to get that out and do all that communication as well. So she organizes a lot of that, I do a lot of the overseeing of you know, marketing and long-term planning and talking to media and a lot of financial work. Things like that, so.

EH: Nice. Thank you.

NB: Is that good?

2:59

END OF TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW