



Worcester Women's 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. You (or the organization you are affiliated with) may want to add or subtract questions to fit your particular goals. We encourage you to do so. Every oral history should have a chosen focus—one element that you plan to cover in the greatest depth. Choose this focus before beginning your interview. (Such a focus could be: how the respondent obtained her education, the evolution of her political goals, early memories of Worcester and women's place in the city, or the respondent's work life.) Choose a focus that best suits your particular interviewee. Add questions to pursue this focus if you wish.

Bold type indicates very important questions that should be included in every oral history. If questions are not applicable to the interviewee, leave them out.

Provide this Explanation about Why We Want the Interview: We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics/community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with ____ (insert chosen focus here)_____. 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/WORCESTER

- 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 Worcester? In what neighborhood?

- 8) What was the neighborhood like generally?
- 9) If you were not born in Worcester, when did you arrive? (year or age). How did you come to live in Worcester?
- 10) Where do you live in the city now? Have you lived in multiple areas?
- 11) Do other family members live in the same area?
- 12) If you don't currently live in Worcester, what is your Worcester connection?
- 13) What challenges do you think this city still faces? What would you change about the city?
- 14) What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?
- 15) What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?
- 16) What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

EDUCATION

- 17) 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.
- 18) Did you attend/graduate from college?
 - a. Name programs and years if possible
- 19) What were your challenges in education?
- 20) Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?
- 21) What support networks and mentoring have been important to you?

WORK

- 22) What was your first job?
- 23) What other jobs have you had and what do you do now?
- 24) How did you come to do this work?
- 25) What has this work meant to you?
- 26) What were/are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework and child care?

- a. Do you share this with anyone?
- b. If you do share, to what extent do you share it?
- c. How has this changed for you over time?

27) How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

28) What do you think are the pros and cons of the path you have chosen?

29) How do you feel about the choices you've made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

POLITICS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

30) Do you consider yourself active politically?

31) 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 with 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?

32) What role has religion played in your life?

HEALTH

33) How have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

34) Did the Covid pandemic affect you, your family, or business in any way?

35) What are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable healthcare?

36) Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

INTERVIEW CONCLUSION:

37) How do you get through tough times? What kinds of thoughts keep you going?

38) How do you define success in your life? Has this definition changed over time?

39) Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

40) We are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women than has been recorded in the past. What should we be sure to include?

41) 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 Worcester have occurred during your time here? Did they impact you personally? If so, expand on this memory.

2) How old were you when you were allowed to date? Where did you go on dates?

3) What was considered fashionable when you were a young woman?

4) What was your favorite musical group or song? Dance? Club? If a club, did the establishment cater to a particular group or groups?

5) How were girls treated when you were in school?

6) What were your most significant extra-curricular involvements?

7) What did your parents' education consist of?

8) What difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood?

9) What memories do you have of significant historical events that took place when you were growing up?

10) When you were not at home, where did you usually spend your time?

11) Were there particular areas of the city where you spent a lot of time?

12) Do you have hobbies or do any regular leisure activities that take you outside of the home?