

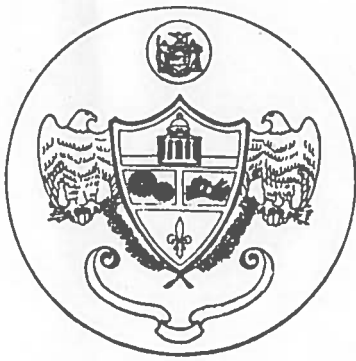


Orleans County Historical Association

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Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Miss Doris Mary Hickman
406 Park Avenue
Medina, New York

Miss Doris Hickman was born May 11, 1907 at Coseley,
Staffordshire, England.

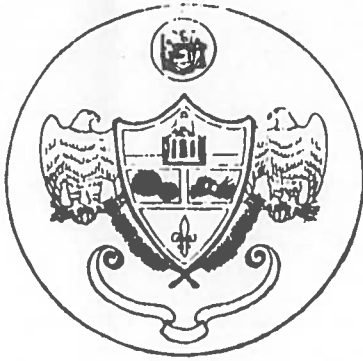
The interview was conducted by Miss Ethel Willis, Medina.

H Hickman

W Willis



Miss Doris Hickman



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Jorie Mary Hickman
Signed

Oct 31, 1980
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Ethel N. Willis
INTERVIEWER

Oct 31, 1980
Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association Oral History Project, Miss Ethel Willis Of Medina is interviewing Miss Doris Hickman of Medina. The date is October 31, 1980.

- H I am Doris Mary Hickman and was born May 11, 1907 at Coseley, Staffordshire, England. My parents were William Henry Hickman and Sarah Whittleton Hickman. I had one brother, William Ernest Hickman who was two years older than I.
- W How old were you, Doris, when you came to America the first time?
- H I think I must have been around two or three. ...
- W Who came with you to America?
- H My grandparents: Mr. and Mrs. William Whittleton; my aunt and uncle: Mr. and Mrs. James Whittleton; my Aunt Jennie Whittleton and Annie Whittleton, Uncle Walter Whittleton, and Leonard Whittleton.
- W Did they all come to Medina to live?
- H Yes. My two uncles were here and Grandpa and Grandma Whittleton came to see them. They had a house on James Street that they had already bought and were paying for through the Loan Association. ...
- W Where did you and your parents live?
- H We lived on James Street for a while with Grandma, but then my mother and father went to work for Dr. and Mrs. Edward Munson, on West Avenue in Medina.
- W You didn't live there?
- H No, we lived with Grandma and Grandpa for a while, and then we went to live with my Aunt and Uncle James Whittleton on Orient Street.
- W That was a temporary arrangement, wasn't it?
- H Yes because we were not here very long.
- W You went back to England, Doris?
- H Yes. Then the First World War came. My father went to the (U.S.) Draft Board, or whatever it might be in those days, and tried to enlist in the Army; but they would not take him. His health was not passable, into the Army anyway. So, he said he would

Hickman

1 1/2



Mr. and Mrs. William Whittleton

go back to England. But Dr. Munson said to him, "No way! They won't take you in England either, in the Army". Anyway he went back; my father and mother, my brother and I. Mr. and Mrs. James Whittleton also went back with us. My father went to enlist and they would not take him over there, but neither would they let him come back to America because he was of military age. If in the future they did need someone, why he would have to go into some type of service.

When we left Medina in 1914 to go back to England, the War was on quite heavy and we had to go through the war zone. We had battleships and cruisers guiding us through the war zone.

W Do you remember the name of the ship you went on?

H The Mauritania. It was the Cunard Line.

W What was it like in England during the war (WW I)?

H Well, we were rationed very heavily. My father worked and my mother went to work also, in a munitions factory. Government stores would be set up in a nearby town. It might be a mile away, or it might be two miles and a half away.

W Did you have to buy your things in the government stores?

H No, this was extra that you could get. We didn't have ration cards or anything like that, but they would advertise in the paper that this store would be open on a certain day. The things they had would be advertised. If you had the money and could get there, you would have to stand in line. So, my mother would take my brother and I and instruct us very definitely not to speak to each other while we were in line. She would put me in line first with the money, and what was on the paper that I could get. Then several people back, she would put my brother in with his money. Then she would get in line several places back. This way we could get three lots of food that they would have on sale. But there were times that we didn't even make the door. It would be all gone before we got there!. So we would come home without anything. Then at another time we would get all the supplies that Mother had asked us to get - which we would have to walk where ever it was and walk back again. But, in this way - well, we had the money to do it. We could divide

Hickman

2 1/2



Mr. and Mrs. William H. Hickman
(Mrs. Sarah Whittleton Hickman)

it with other people, older people, who couldn't walk that distance.

W Well, two miles was a long way to walk and carry that.

H And young children we were too, but I can remember that my brother and I never looked at each other while we were in line. We called them queues.

W Well, what sort of things was it? Sugar? And butter?

H Yes, particularly sugar.

W The stores in England are different from the stores here, aren't they?

H Yes. Of course these government stores would bring all the staple things but we had the green grocer store which only had vegetables and fruits in stock. Then we had a pork butcher shop and a beef butcher shop. And you could only get pork in there, and sausages and anything to do with pork.

W Was poultry in a different place?

H That was in a different place, yes.

W Does this still hold true now in England?

H I don't think so. I think they are getting to super markets.

W Of course food was scarce (during the war).

H Yes. Then too, the Zeppelins came over our particular area. It was in the midlands of England and one Zeppelin apparently got off the course and went over our house. My brother wanted us to come out and see it because it was supposed to be a new English aeroplane flying. When my mother and I finally went to the door to look out, they dropped the bombs. My father was visiting Grandma Hickman, and he came home. The next morning when we were awakened, they had been over back again, to go back to Germany again in the night. And we had not known it at all; but our neighbors were all up. ... We were all asleep; never heard them! That next morning, my father took us to the area where it was bombed.

W What were they aiming at?

H A munition works, which was very close to Birmingham in Coventry

W Did they destroy houses?

H Oh yes! Yes. When we went down there, they were roping it off of course. It was too soon to have it all done. My father did

take us around and show us. We could see the beds hanging out of the upstairs rooms.

W Well, that certainly is something to remember! ... Do you want to tell me anything more about the war?

H No, I don't think of any more.

W When the war was over you came back to the United States?

H Yes. We could not get a passport at all until 1920 and we had to stay.

W What ship did you come back on, Doris?

H We came back on the Kaiser Agusta Victoria. That was a German ship that had been captured during the war. It was troop ship which had been reconstructed some.

W Did you have to go through Ellis Island when you re-entered?

H Yes; both times.

W Of course you wouldn't remember the first time, but do you remember the second time? What was it like at Ellis Island?

H The building was like a big warehouse; part of it was open. You could see the water very readily. It was just a small island. They would put us into different groups and put numbers on our backs and that was the group we had to stay with. Once when we were there, the numbers were not all alike. My Aunt and Uncle James Whittleton came back with us this time too. We were all coming to Medina to Grandma Whittleton, yet we all had different numbers on our backs.

W Did you have to go through a medical examination?

H Yes, some. But you see we already had our shots and everything and there wasn't too much for us. But we did have to go through again.

W How long were you at Ellis Island?

H A good share of the day

W Did they feed you? Did you have anything to eat while you were there?

H I think we had a cup of tea or something. Not much, no.

W So then you came back to Medina?

H Yes, we came by train to Medina.

W Where did you live then?

- H My father and mother went back to Dr. Munsons, and then we lived at 510 West Avenue, which was then the Gates Apartments next to the Baptist Church. It was there that Dr. Vanostrand came from the Baptist Church to talk to my mother and father.
- W Were your people Baptists in England, Doris?
- H Yes, my father was a First Baptist. The Hickmans were all Baptists. My mother and father were married in the Episcopal Church but my mother was a Methodist. She was not a Methodist Episcopal, she was a Wesleyan Methodist. She did not particularly like the Methodist Church. However when she was married, she asked my father if he would go to the Methodist Church with her and he said, "No". "Well", she said, "If I go to the Baptist Church with you, will you go with me?" And he said, "Yes". She said, "That is all right. That is where I belong". My mother never joined the Baptist Church but she always went to church.
- W She didn't join the Baptist Church here in Medina, but you did?
- H Yes I did. When I wrote and told Grandfather that I was going to join the church he didn't like it! He said, "No Hickman had joined any other church but the Providence Baptist Church in Coseley". He thought that I should come back and join the church. My father was going back in 1926 and it was decided that I go with him and join the church. But when it came time to go, I could not leave my mother! So, I didn't go. My father went alone and stayed all summer. At least over a month he stayed, and then came back again. My Grandfather finally wrote to me and said it was all right for me to join the church here.
- W You lived in the Gates Apartment (Medina) for a short period of time didn't you?
- H Yes, it was just a temporary arrangement. Then we bought the house at 608 Gwinn Street. ...
- W You lived there (47 years) until after your mother died and then you sold the house?
- H After I had the (car) accident I sold the house; I think in early '63.

W Doris, when you lived at the Gates Apartment, you knew Mr. and Mrs. George Kennan? Mr. Kennan had been the Ambassador to Russia, and Mrs. Kennan's people, who had previously come from England, lived in the house on the southeast corner of the intersection of West Avenue and West Center Street; diagonally across the street from the Gates Apartment. And that's how you happened to know them? Tell me about them.

H Mr. and Mrs. Kennan were lovely, lovely people. Mr. Kennan - I can't tell you just the year that he died - (1924) - but Mr. Kennan was not well and my father went to sleep nights there.

W Mrs. Kennan was timid on account of his being sick?

H Yes. If he needed help, then she would have someone to get help for him. Every night my father would go over and we would see the light burning. Mrs. Kennan always had a drink or something for him, or a book to read. We'd see the lights go out. (Mr. Kennan died in 1924). Then my father passed away in 1930. ... Then it was my turn to go and stay nights at the Kennan home. And always Mrs. Kennan would have a little refreshment for me, on the night stand, and a good book, which I was always glad to read. She was up many times in the night, making coffee. At the head of the stairs she had a little kitchen there. She made coffee and I could smell it. She'd tiptoe around.

W Mrs. Kennan was quite a person, different from other people.

H Yes.

W She was Mrs. D. A. Acker's sister, wasn't she?

H Yes.

W Yes, and I remember, I suppose it was because she had lived in a foreign countries where people didn't do as she did, that she didn't care whether other people dressed the way she dressed or anything. She just went her own way.

H That's right!

W You admire that in a person.

H Yeah! She did her own thing. ... Alexander Graham Bell came to visit there when Mr. Kennan was sick. And David Fairchild came to visit.

VA T

1924

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 1924

GEORGE KENNAN

George Kennan, well-known traveler, investigator and writer, died at his home at 6:35 o'clock, Saturday afternoon, after a three-day illness of paralysis. Mr. Kennan was 79 years old.

Mr. and Mrs. Kennan had but returned home from spending the winter in Florida, where they went to escape the rigors of our northern winter. There they found climatic conditions even worse than in the north, and it is thought that this had considerable to do in undermining Mr. Kennan's physical condition.

The private funeral and burial services for George Kennan, were of the most simple character. Lying over the oak casket were the gold and black, and purple and black hoods of the Rochester and Williams Universities. At the head of the casket, there was a wreath from some of "His Associates of the National Institute of Arts and Letters" tied with purple and gold ribbons, and at the foot, the basket of roses from the Albion Historical Society.

The Rev. William L. Findlay read inspiring selections in a full rich voice at both the house and the grave.

The bearers were as follows:

Dr. Edward Munson, Mr. Milford W. Childs, Dr. Grant H. Simonds, Mr. Algernon B. Shattuck, Mr. Clark Allis, and Gen. John S. Thompson who kindly replaced George A. Newell who was ill. There were flowers from Washington, New York and Cleveland friends. The relatives who came were J. Ruggles Weld of Buffalo, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. McWade of Philadelphia, Miss Elizabeth Castle of Washington, D. C., Lewis Thompson and Stanley Brown of New York.

Dr. David Fairchild came from Washington earlier and helped to select the little lot in Boxwood overlooking the Lake where the illustrious traveler will forever rest in our midst.

One of his close friends writes, "I remember in listening to Mr. Kennan, when he visited at my house, as to a rare and brilliant spirit. There was no one just like him, he knew almost everything and he talked better than most men write. He was extraordinary in the fullest sense, fair minded, conscientious, in every way and (I keep coming back to the word) brilliant."

I have many recollections of him in my house and at Outlook lunches, in company with others, but always to me, he was the most striking and interesting in personality. There are few Americans alive who can compare with him."



Brainerd



ROME, N.Y.

George Kennan

W Doris, did you ever meet Alexander Graham Bell?

H Yes, yes. At the Kennan home.

W Wonderful, wonderful! Not many people in Medina can say that!!

Than, back of the Kennan house there was quite a garden, wasn't there?

H Yes. There was a crabapple tree and every fall we made crab-apple jelly. It was very good.

W ... Of course you went to school here in Medina and graduated from High School here. After school where did you go to work?

H I went to work at a shoe store on East Center Street: Child's Shoe Store. I worked there for five years. Then Mr. and Mrs. Childs decided to close the store. They bought five apartment houses in Buffalo, double apartment houses, up and down, and had income from those homes. Mr. Childs had a sister who was a school teacher in Buffalo. She went on a tour of the Holy Land this one summer, and Mr. and Mrs. Childs asked me if I'd like to ride down to New York with them when she (Ethel) was coming back. So, I did, and we went to Hoboken, New Jersey where she was docking. As the ship was coming in, the people on the ship were waving furiously. Dr. Butzer from the Presbyterian Church in Buffalo was on the ship and he said, "Ethel, I think those people are waving at you!" Ethel said, "No, there's no one going to meet me. I think they must be waving at you because they seem to be looking this way". She was so surprised when she got off the ship. It was her brother that was meeting her. So we had the chance to talk with Dr. Butzer.

W Of course, Dr. Butzer was a very famous Presbyterian minister from the Delaware Avenue Presbyterian Church in Buffalo.

H Yes. We went (to the church) many times after that. It was a beautiful church.

W After you left the shoe store, where did you work, Doris?

H Then I went to the Newell Shirt Factory and worked there for over 40 years.

W Forty years! My goodness!!

H When the shirts were all sewed, they came to me. Of course they were all customed made for the individual persons.

- W Do you remember who some of the customers were?
- H Yes. Franklin Roosevelt (President) had pajamas made.
- W Were there actors, like Bing Crosby, and people like that who had shirts made at Newells?
- H Yes. I can't think of their names.
- W The shirts and pajamas were very expensive?
- H Very expensive!!
- W Back in the days when you could buy a shirt, an Arrow or Van Huesen shirt, for \$4.00 or \$5.00, Newells were charging \$25.00 or \$30.00 !! But the materials used were just beautiful! And you were the final inspector, Doris?
- H Yes. When the shirt was all done, it came to me. Maybe the man had ordered six or twelve or whatever, and I would have to measure the collars to see that they were the right size; measure the sleeves, see that the buttons were all on. Then I made out a slip and sent them down the chute to the laundry. The next morning the orders that I had taken off were checked off from upstairs, and checked in the file downstairs in the shipping room. They had to be shipped that day.
- W I suppose you had the original specifications for the shirts? You would compare the final shirt, or whatever, to make sure it was allright?
- H That's right.
- W Well, they were very, very beautiful shirts. Newells are still making shirts?
- H Yes they are. I did go down (return to Newells) after I had the (car) accident. I wanted to see whether I could work again; if I could do the work. And I could! I stayed just a little while, not very long.
- W Well now Doris, you spoke of the accident. Will you tell me about that: where you were going, who was with you, and what happened?
- H We had been to the cemetery. Jenny Bensley was with me. She was 87 years old, and her sister had passed away in 1962. I had taken Jenny back to visit the grave and that of my own mother's and father's. We were going north on route #63 on this beautiful summer day, July 21, 1962.

H A young man was driving in back of us and coming very rapidly. In fact he had said (later) that he didn't know if he was going 80 or 90. He didn't know how fast he was going, but he clipped the rear wheel (of the Hickman car). There was another car coming towards me and he could not stop quick enough, and he clipped.

W Was he trying to pass you?

H He was trying to pass me, yes, and he clipped the rear left wheel. I had a small car at that time and it flipped in the air six times and landed on the top. I was conscious all through.

W Mrs. Bensley died, didn't she Doris?

H Yes, she died enroute to the hospital.

W What were your injuries?

H It was mostly my left arm. It was badly mangled. Just above the elbow was all crushed so that when they got me to the hospital they were going to take it off. There didn't seem to be any other way. ... My arm was all cut off except one tiny piece of skin; as big around as my little finger.

W Wasn't it fortunate that the main artery was still intact?

H Yes. Dr. Williams said that he had to take me to surgery right away. I had no one (no relative) with me. Then I said, "I have worked here in the hospital. Everyone's my friend". So, we went to surgery, and Dr. Williams sewed my arm on.

The next morning they did extensive x-rays because they thought my chest was hurt.... but it wasn't. It was just the arm. Everyone who came in felt of my fingers, my hand. They would look down and feel of my hand and it was still warm. I didn't understand it at the time, but they wanted to see if the circulation was there.

W Just for the record, that was Dr. Kent Williams from Middleport?

H Yes it was.

W He sewed your arm back together and connected all the tendons so that later you had the use of your arm. Where the bone was crushed, did he have to put a plate in there?

H Yes, there is a plate and six screws in there. ... That is all still there. I think that some day I will have to have it out.

W Your arm was absolutely stiff! Did it take a long while to heal, Doris?

H Yes. In fact (around the upper arm) it's broken open now.... It had broken open around one of the screws... It heals and then it will break open again. I don't know why. ... For six weeks it showed no signs of healing at all. After I had an x-ray this one morning, Dr. Williams came in and said to the nurses, "Do you have a certain kind of medicine?" The nurse said, "I don't know". They went to look and they didn't have it and Dr. Williams said, "I wish you would get some". So they 'phoned to Buffalo and they said they would send the medicine down on the next bus. The Head Nurse went and met the bus when it came, and she brought the medicine back (to the hospital). They started using it right away. I said, "If that is anything very expensive, don't leave it in my room!" But Dr. Williams said, "We will leave it right here". From then on the arm started to heal.

W Before it healed, the flesh sluffed off?

H Yes. They put a cast on but it would just all fall off. They never cut one stitch off. They fell right off! That was very, very messy. They took the cast off. They cut the top off so that it was just like a cradle, and they put a piece of plastic in there. But that was too warm and they had to take it off. I think some days I had as many as four slings on (my arm) and they were fifty cents apiece. They charged for the slings.

(End of side one of taped interview)

H I was conscious all through, except when I was in the operating room, and I knew what they were doing. I told the girls (Nurses) that I wanted Mrs. Bensley taken care of. Of course I didn't know then that she had passed away. Her doctor was Dr. James Sterling and I wanted him to be with her. They assured me that he was there.

W You didn't know that Mrs. Bensley had died?

H No, because when I looked at her (after the accident) her face didn't show anything.

W Well, you had enough of your own to worry about!

- H She was older than I and I wanted to be sure that she was taken care of .
- W Don't I recall that Mrs. Bensley was about to go into the Odd Fellows (Retirement-Nursing) Home... but that she had not yet made the move.
- H That's right, yes.
- W Well, tell me about regaining the use of your arm, but before that, tell me about Mrs. Brady.
- H Mrs. Gladys Brady, a cleaning lady (at the Medina Hospital), came in my room one day. My own doctor had been in and he had said, "There is no alternative. Your arm has to come off. It doesn't heal, and we don't just know what to do with it". I said, "Not today, not today!" Gladys Brady was in my bathroom and when the doctor went out, I cried. "Oh Miss Doris", she said, "I want you to sing". I said, "I don't want to sing. What do you want me to sing? What are we going to sing?" She said, "We are going to sing God Will Take Care of You." And we did! I don't think it sounded very good but we sang it. And she said, "You must look higher up". She said, "These men are just of this earth down below, but there is somebody, my dear, up above". And I never once ~~ever~~ felt that I was going to have my arm off!
- But, Ethel, you came over every day and worked cocoa-butter into my fingers and my hands... Remember, they didn't have any of that in the hospital! They had to get some.
- W Then I remember how proud you were when you could touch your thumb to your little finger! That was a real achievement! Yes, it really was because your fingers had been absolutely motionless.
- H Yes and even getting it to the first finger! I knew if I could get it there and pull it down, I could keep pulling it and it would work both of them. But it was hard work. We made a joke of it you know? We were going to have a roll in my mouth by Christmas!
- W Yes. You came to our house to stay after you left the hospital.
- H Yes, I was at your house for six months.
- W And you got your roll in your mouth that Christmas, Doris!!

- H Mrs. Wise brought the coffee cake and I took a piece of that cake in my hand and I said, "Look Ethel!" And I got my head down in some way and just got a bite!
- W You sure did! You got the 'roll' into your mouth by Christmas. But oh boy, how you worked on that! (Said with great admiration and respect). The only way to get motion back (into the arm) was to force it.
- H That's right! I just had to do it...
- W And massage it with cocoa butter. I know that sometimes we would work on it for about an hour every night. Sometimes you would stand there with the tears running down your face, it hurt so! And I would say, "Do you want me to quit, Doris?" And you'd say, "Nope. We have to do it".
- H And Ethel, I remember that I carried your little flat-iron, five pounds, around the house; back and forth, back and forth. Then pretty soon I could carry ten pounds back and forth.
- W By the time you went home in March, Doris - let's see, you came to our house in September and you went home in March. And when you went home in March - you had pretty good use of that arm. You could do everything but put your hand on your head.
- H Yes, and I can do that now! I can scratch my head. I am still working at it. It will take the rest of my life, I guess. When I said that I wanted to knit, you know, and you brought me over the knitting needles. Oh dear, that was a sad day. - But I finally did get into knitting and I said, "Well, if God will help me, I can work to get my hand to work..." (Said with great emotion as memories temporarily overwhelm her).
- W Well Doris, you did it! You know, when I was in high school, I was in a play and I remember one of the lines of that play. One of the characters said, "It is astonishing what patience and persistence will do!" And that is so true!
- H That's right! ... I said that if I could have the use of it (the hand and arm), I would do something that would be worthwhile.
- W You certainly have. ... You have been a hospital volunteer for years!!

Hickman

12 1/2

SUMMARY OF SERVICES TO MERCHANT SEAMEN

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- Seamen of all nations entertained in the International Seamen's Club.
- Chapel services.
- Tracing missing seamen.
- Air conditioned single and double hotel rooms for active seafarers.
- Group adult education projects and programs.
- Merchant Marine School for the teaching of marine courses leading to upgrading in the profession.
- Fully equipped library.
- Books and magazines distributed aboard ships.
- Restaurant and cafeteria in the building.
- Social service interviews.
- Auditorium programs.
- Christmas gift boxes distributed to ships.

PORT NEWARK

- Soccer games.
- Dances.
- Chapel services.
- Snack bar.
- Letters mailed for seamen.
- Television, movies.
- Ship visitations.
- Billiards, ping pong.
- Bus transportation to Manhattan S.C.I. dances.

Seamen's Church Institute of New York

15 State Street

New York, N.Y. 10004

Rev. John M. Mulligan D.D.
Director

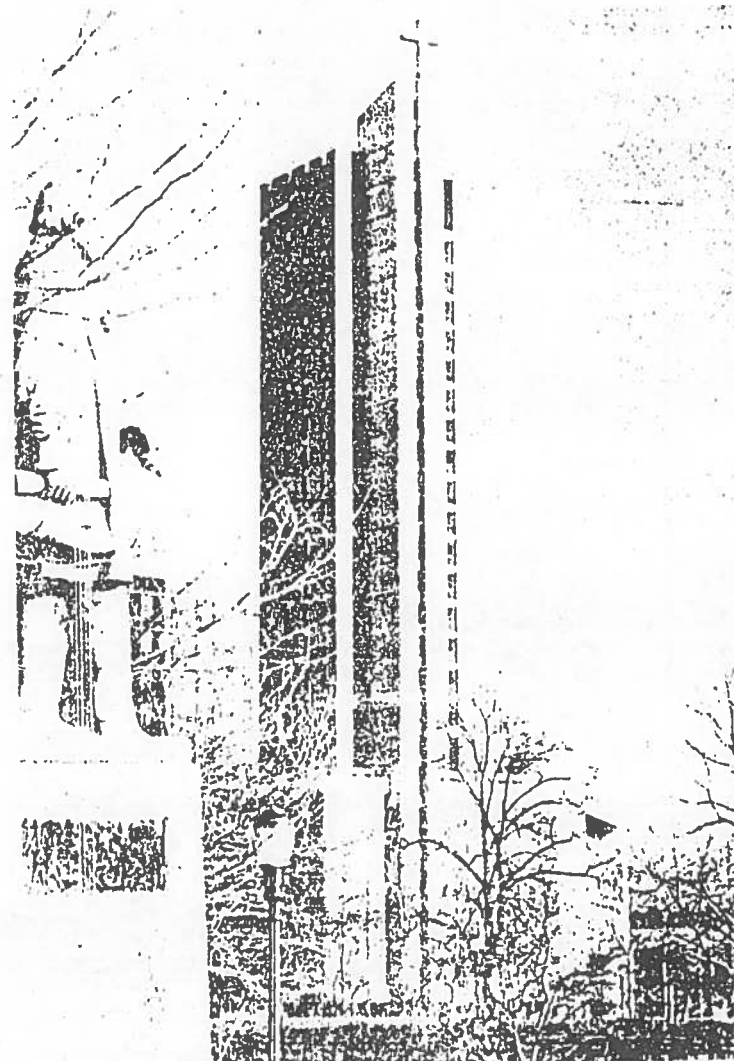
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Twenty-three stories of air-
conditioned comfort, designed
and built for seafaring men
and women and their families.
Overlooks the Harbor.



W In what capacities have you worked at the hospital as a volunteer, Doris?

H At the Reception desk, and mostly in Central Supply, and in the Twig's Gift Shoppe.

What do you mean 'Central Supply' ?

H That's where all the things are given out for the patients.

W Like for surgery?

H Yes. ... Then I knit for the Seaman's Church Institute .

W Oh yes! Tell me about the Seaman's Church Institute. What it is and where it is.

H It's down at the Bowery in New York City. They have a beautiful building there. I have never been but I would like to go and see it. They (Seaman's Church Institute) take care of all the seamen who are on the high seas at Christmas time. They are not anything to do with our Navy. They are any ship of any country. They (S.C.I.) pack around ten thousand boxes every year, and the ships that will be out on the seas, they give them a box for every sailor. Every Christmas. It's fantastic, the letter^s that come in.

W Who told you about this, Doris? How did you happen to get into it?

H Addis Hartt's sister, Mrs. Helmkamp, lived in Elmira and a group of ladies did it there. So I wrote (to S.C.I.) and they sent the yarn to me, and then I would have to pay to mail it back after I had got it done.

W You worked for them for about ten years? Do you remember how many sweaters and other things you made?

H I made 204 sweaters, men's sizes; and 357 pairs of socks; and I made gloves and scarves and caps besides.

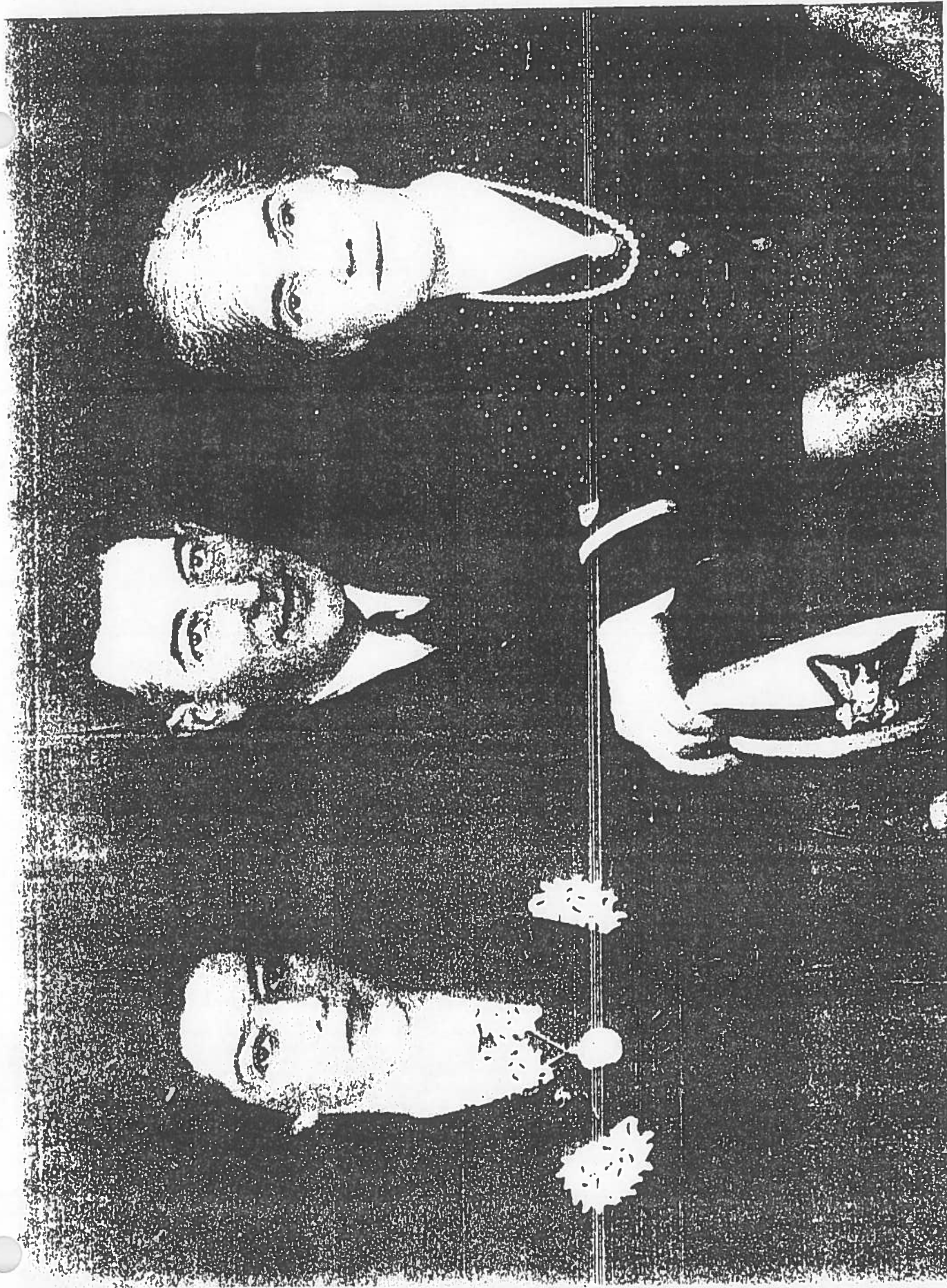
W Well, that is quite a piece of knitting!!

H Yes, it was rewarding work but to mail it back to the Institute, well, the cost of the mailing was getting pretty much!

W Besides mailing it back, didn't you have to pay \$10.00 a year to belong?

H Yes, I always paid ten dollars a year to the Knitter's Guild. I still pay that because they said "Anytime you want to knit again, just let us know".

- W Well, that was quite a piece of knitting!
- H Well, there are so many things around here (that ask for knitters): The MAAC (Medina Area Association of Churches), they need mittens and things; and they have a 'Mitten Tree' in the library at Christmas time; and the Senior Citizens (Fall Fair).
- W You have belonged to the Senior Citizens (organization) for a number of years, haven't you Doris?
- H Yes, ever since it started. I was not old enough to get into it at first. I volunteered there on Mondays.
- W And every Thursday you work on the Nutrifare Program.
- H Yes, it is very rewarding.
- W You've found things to do alright. ... Besides that, you belong to the Twig Association, for the (Medina) hospital.
- H Yes. We make all the scuffs for the patients in the hospital. Particularly the people that come in from accidents and have no slippers. They can have them and take them home. ...
- W One year didn't you make some little hand puppets for the children?
- H Yes, the Twig Association did that. And I was able to do that after I went home from here (after the car accident and period of recuperation at the Willis' home). I made quite a lot of those little "pinky puppets".
- W They were cute little things. Do they still make them?
- H No, they don't do that anymore. They have little buckets that they put coloring books in, and crayons. McDonalds (restaurant) furnished all the supplies in there. I don't know whether they do that now or not. They did for a long time.
- W To take you back a ways: When you lived in England, what kind of a house did you live in?
- H The houses were like double houses: there were two houses and then there would be an entry way, and then two more. They were all attached together.
- W Like a row house?
- H Yes.



Doris Hickman

(brother) William Ernest Hickman

(mother) Sarah W. Hickman

W What were the houses made of?

H They were all made of brick and the roof was slate.

W They were quite fireproof then?

H Yes, they were.

W They don't have many clapboard, frame houses over there. I know I remember hearing somebody say that when they came to Canada to live they were so surprised to see frame houses. Of course in Canada there are not nearly as many frame houses as there are here. There are a lot more brick and stone.

H Yes, yes.

W Well, you went back to England later, didn't you Doris?

H Yes. In fact I flew over in 1959, after my mother passed away (in 1957).

W Do you have relatives living in England still?

H Yes, cousins. My father was the only one who came here on his side of the family. But my mother's brothers and sisters all came here. All but one brother: Uncle Will Whittleton remained in England and he told my mother that if she came to this country, he would never write to her. And he didn't!

W He was what they call a "stubborn Johnnie Bull", wasn't he?!

H Right! And after my mother passed away, I got in touch with him through the Salvation Army. I wrote to him, and then I went to visit him when I was there.

W During the Second World War, how did they fare in England?

H Well, they had rationing and it was pretty desperate. My people did not live very far from Coventry which was absolutely bombed out entirely - where the munitions factories were. Twice a month Mother and I would pack a box and put in all the staple things. Twenty-one pounds was as much as we were allowed, and we made it as near that as we could.

W What would you send, canned meat?

H Yes, and one time I sent a two pound bag of rice. And tea, of course, and some coffee. Very often I would put a pair of nylons. I would wrap it around a can. ...

W I suppose they could not get any nylons?

H No, no! I don't know just how long we did that; it must have been a couple of years or more.

- H When I went (to England) in '59, I had a couple of aunts living then: my father's sisters. My aunts said that if I would come visit them, they would keep me as long as I wanted to stay, for what we did for them during the war. And this is how I went. My aunt kept house for my grandfather, and she had a bag of sugar... and it was awfully hard in the bottom; you know? And I said, "Gee, that looks awfully familiar to me". It was Jack Frost sugar (brand name). She said, "This is one of the five pound bags that you put in one of the boxes".
- W Oh for goodness sake! She didn't want to use it!?
- H Yes, she just hated to use it all. Then the time we sent rice, my aunt cried. They hadn't had rice for two years. They had never seen any! They were very grateful for what we did send. Of course we sent it all to one aunt, and then she distributed it to the others.
- W Well, that cost you quite a bit for postage, to send to England, didn't it? To say nothing about all the food that you bought to go with it.
- H Oh yes. We even bought butter in a tin.
- W You must have had to use your own sugar coupons?
- H Oh yes.
- W You went without sugar and butter and things yourself, to send them over to England! Well, they really needed them worse.
- H Oh yes. You know, we packed that box so carefully, and then we'd wrap it up in paper, and get it all tied up. Then I'd wrap it in a cloth, a heavy cloth, sew it all up; and then we'd wrap it in another wrapper. And I would have to carry it to the Post Office. Twice a month we did that!
- W You have always been a Baptist, haven't you Doris? And you have been active in the Baptist Church?
- H In the past, yes. I sang in the choir and taught^a Sunday School class.

- W Doris, when did you become a United States citizen?
- H In 1936. I have all of our papers. I had my father's first papers, but then he didn't live long enough.
- W So he never got his second papers?
- H No, we had to wait five years in those days. So, Mother and I did. When I went to get our papers in Albion (1936), I was getting a license to learn to drive. So I stopped in to get the (citizenship) papers. The clerk there said, "Now don't tell me who you are! Let me see if I can tell you from your picture." He came to my mother's picture and I said, "That is my mother's. I want to take that." He said, "You can't take it! She has to come herself!" "But", I said, "It is impossible for her to come. She works and she can't get here the hours that you are open." "She has to come herself!" (Said in a very gruff manner). So he finally found mine and he gave it to me, but nothing I could say would let him give me my mothers.
- W That was the County Clerk?
- H That was the County Clerk. I came home and Mother said, "Did you bring my papers?" I said, "Mother, I brought mine but they wouldn't give me yours." And I cried, and she said, "Never mind." And so it came time to vote and so we went down to the Village Hall to register. A gentleman in there said, "What's your name? Are you going to register?" I said, "We are Republicans." And he said, "You will have to have a literacy test." I said, "I went to school here." (He replied) "It doesn't make any difference!" So I said, "All right." So I took my mother out to the high school to take a literacy test.
- W That's ridiculous!! (Said with much feeling).
- H Well, so we did, and Mr. Steve Sommers was there and he said, "I am not going to give you a test! You went to school here." I said, "Oh yes, we have to." He said, "I know where you came from, and you are not the first person that has been here today." But we both took the literacy test, and back down we went again. Oh boy! This poor man!! He really gave us a tenth degree and questioned us. Finally I said, "If you want to know any more about my mother and I, will you please call General (John S.) Thompson? I am sure he will be glad to answer any

questions that you would ask." He right away registered us, and that's all there was to it.

- W That was General John S. Thompson who lived on Park Avenue?
 How did you and your mother happen to know General Thompson?
- H Well you see, we lived on Gwinn Street and so we went back and forth to work every day, right by his house. Then, in my school-days, Thanksgiving Day we had the big (football) ball game between Albion (and Medina). And General Thompson would go by our house to the ball game and he'd stop and say, "Are you ready to go, Doris?" So we would go to the ball game together. But after I came back from the City Hall (concerning the episode on getting registered), I stopped and told him what I had said. General Thompson said, "That's fine. Any time you get into any difficulty, you just let me know!" So when it came time to vote in November, I said, "Oh Mother, I don't dare to go to vote. You haven't got your citizenship papers." And I said, "I will go down and see General Thompson." So I explained to him and he said, "What time do you want to go, Doris?" "Well," I said, "It doesn't make any difference. Any time of the day. But I don't dare go without the papers." "Well," he said, "That's okay." So he had to call up LeRoy Posson. LeRoy Posson went to Albion, brought the papers to General Thompson; General Thompson came to Newells with them for me, and I carried the papers home to Mother. Red tape!!!

W Did you get to vote?

H We did get to vote.

W In spite of the politicians who tried to stop you! (laughter)

H We've voted ever since, every time. But if it were today and the man said to me, "You can't have it", I would say "Here, you can keep them all!!!" I'd let them rot.

Then I went over the Canadian border, and we were always so proud of our citizenship papers. The man at the border when we were coming over one time: "You are a citizen of — where?" "The United States." "Where were you born?" "England." "Let me see your papers." "Oh yes." He looked at my papers and he said, "Doris Mary Hickman." And I said, "Yes Sir." He looked at Mother's and he didn't say anything. And she said, "Sarah Hickman." And he said, "Huh." He held up my papers and he said,

"Do you know that this is no good?!" I said, "I paid \$5.00 for it, Sir. What is the problem?" And he said, "It has not been signed." And I said, "Oh dear!" So he showed me. My mother's (papers) had been signed by the County Clerk but mine had never been signed!! I said, "Oh dear! Well, I will have them signed tomorrow if you will let me go over." He said, "If you promise me you will?" I said, "I will". He said, "Do you know this gentleman?" And I said, "Yes I do. He doesn't live very far from our home." He said, "All right, I'll let you go." So the next day after church I went out to this man's house. I took both our papers and explained the situation. "Well", he said, "I am not going to sign that. That wasn't my fault!" I said that I didn't know whose fault it was but that is was no good this way and that I didn't know what to do other than that. "Well", he said, "I am not going to sign it because there are three of those (papers). One is in Albion, you have one, and the other has to go to Washington. And if those were not signed in Washington, those would definitely have to come back". I said, "All right. You don't want to sign it?" He said, "No!" No, he wasn't going to sign it! "Well then", I said, "I will go to General Thompson and see what I have to do next". "Well", he said, "I'll sign it!" And he signed it. I still have the papers and you can see that mine is not the same as my mothers

W It paid to know General Thompson, didn't it!?

H It sure did!

W He pulled you out of a hole more than once!!

H Yes, and many times when we would have Propositions to vote on, I would go down to General Thompson the night before and -

W And find out what it all said!

H Yes.

W My! He was a good looking man, wasn't he!!

H Oh wasn't he?! In his uniform.

W Tall and straight.

H Oh yes. Those are the kind of citizens we need today

W Yes, that's true.

W Previous to your last trip to England when you flew, you always went by boat, didn't you Doris?

H Yes, we did.

W Were you seasick?

H Oh yes, I was always seasick. My mother was always in her stateroom, at all times. She never came out.

W Were you afraid?

H Only one time were we really afraid. We ran into a beam-sea and this was a very severe storm! The boat would pitch and we didn't think it was going to right itself many times. It was early in the morning and the men who work on the ship - at night they peeled potatoes and things for the next day. On this day my brother and I were looking out the porthole, above the door. The water was all in the boat, and we saw the potatoes going by! My brother said, "There goes the grey boat. There goes the brown boat". My dolls were all washed overboard, and my Eskimo doll which I liked the best, they were all washed overboard.

My brother would bring us down food. He had the soft-boiled eggs in his pocket, and he tried to bring us a cup of tea but there probably would be only about a tablespoon in the cup. The boat rolled so!

W Your brother would have been in his middle teens, wouldn't he?

H Yes, but he was never sick.

W It was just fun for him.

H My Uncle Will, in England, was deep sea fisherman and in the summers we always went up there. My brother had been on several trips with Uncle Will on the North Sea, so he was used to the waters.

W Didn't your brother work on the boats on the Great Lakes?

H Yes, he did.

W He really liked being a seaman?

H Yes. He finally had to get a Captain's license, on the Great Lakes. In the war (WW II) he was, one day, put in the Coast Guard and he had a Coast Guard uniform. The next day, this was in Cleveland (Ohio), they took all the uniforms back and put them (the men) in the Navy, all the officers. But he didn't have to serve overseas at all.

W Because of his experience on the Great Lakes, your brother was put into the Navy?

H Yes.

W Well Doris, this has been a very interesting tape and I am particularly glad you told about your accident and how Doctor Williams took care of you, because that was a very wonderful piece of surgery. And he did it single handed! He was a marvelous doctor! In fact, we have been very fortunate in the doctors we have had in Medina.

H Yes we have, and in our hospital too!

W In a community this size!

H We have a marvelous hospital! And marvelous doctors here now.

W Yes we do, but none of them are more dedicated than the men we used to have: like Dr. Maynard, Dr. MacDonell -

H Dr. Munson, Dr. Edward Munson, Dr. Rogan, and Dr. Scott.

W Yes, we have been fortunate all along to have such good doctors. My goodness, it used to be that any time, day or night, a doctor would come to your house if you called or if you needed him. But not any more. Still, we are well taken care of. We are fortunate.

H Yes, and the nurses, and all. We have a very good hospital. (There is an intermingling of conversation thru here).

W Do you ever expect to go back to England, Doris?

H I'd like to, yes.

W I'd love to see England. My ancestors came from England!

H My cousins were here this summer, two of them, but I didn't see them.

W I suppose I have very distant relatives in England but I haven't any idea where.... Well, thank you very much for this interview Doris. I'm sure people will find this of real interest because you have had different experiences from most of the people we have interviewed. Thank you very much!

(end of taped interview)

Transcribed by Luther Burroughs of Albion.

Examined, with several additions and several deletions, by Miss Hickman. Photos, etc. loaned by Miss Hickman to be copied.

All editing, compilation and final typing by Helen McAllister, Medina.

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN S. THOMPSON 1875-1948

"No man is worth his salt who is not ready at all times to risk his body, to risk his well-being, to risk his life, in a great cause." -- Theodore Roosevelt

General Thompson was born in Exbridge, Ontario, Canada and educated at the Canada Business University at Chatham and the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph. As a young man he came to the United States and became a citizen in 1900. For the rest of his life he resided in Orleans County and lived at 216 Park Avenue in Medina with his wife, the former Edith Hill whom he married in 1914.

His military career began in 1898 when he enlisted in the 29th Separate Company New York National Guard. He was commissioned Second Lieutenant in that company during 1907. It merged during WWI with the 3rd Infantry becoming the 108th Infantry. During that time he served as Captain and Major, participating at Ypres - Lys and in the Somme offensive and in the Dickebusch Lake and Scherpenberg sector in Flanders. He commanded the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry A.E.F. in the breaking of the Hindenburg Line on Sept. 29, 1918. He then commanded the 108th Infantry as Colonel for eleven years and was promoted to Brigadier General in 1930 in command of the 54th Infantry Brigade. At an Auburn Prison riot during 1929 he commanded National Guard troops by order of the Governor. He served on the military staff of Governors Miller, Smith and Roosevelt.

He received two division citations for bravery in action and was awarded the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross, Purple Heart, Silver Star for gallantry in action and the Belgian Croix de Guerre with Palm. In 1937, he retired from active National Guard service with the rank of Major General after thirty-nine years of service to the State and Nation.

General Thompson was elected as our assemblyman November 4, 1930 and represented Orleans County until the time of his death. He succeeded Frank H. Lattin of Gaines and preceded Alonzo Waters of Medina. From 1934 to 1945 he served as chairman of the Public Service Committee, when he resigned to become the chairman of the committee on taxation. Also, he served on the Interstate Committee which investigated public utilities. Gen. Thompson was also the one New York member on the Interstate Commission on the Delaware River Basin. In 1941 he served as chairman of the Orleans County Civilian Defense Council and 1942 was appointed Director of Civilian Protection for Orleans County.

Gen. Thompson had many civic interests which included serving for one term 1921-24 on the Medina Village Board. He was a director of the Medina Savings and Loan Association for twenty-four years and organized the James P. Clark Post of American Legion and served as its first commander. He was also a charter member of the Lincoln Post of Veterans of Foreign Wars. In 1926 he served as president of the National Guard Association of New York State and was first vice-president of the National Guard Association of the United States in 1927. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church of Medina, Royal Arch Masons, Genesee Commandery and Knowlesville Grange.

In spite of all the prestige in military and legislative matters General Thompson always remained a man of the people, close to his constituents, willing to listen with sympathetic consideration for the best interests of our county.

J-R Feb. 25, 1982