



Orleans County Historical Association

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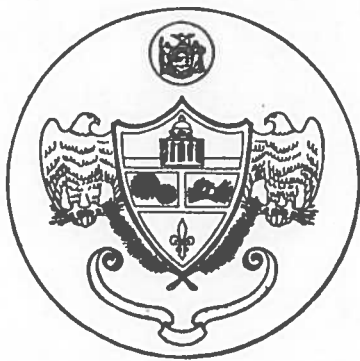
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Walter Colman, father
Clara Hubbard Colman, mother
Ethel Colman Eskelson, sister
Alvin Eskelson, bro-in-law
Alice Colman, sister
Hopeful Crook, gr-gr-grandma
Alpheus Goodridge
Lucina (Lyman Temple)
Clara (Samuel Colman)
Howard Colman, brother
Henry Hubbard, grandfather
Clara Temple Colman
Edward Ward
E.Betsy Platten Hubbard Colman
Mary Ann Ward
Thomas/James/John Colman

Harvey Bostwick
Elijah Bent / Donald Bent
Julia Gates Green
Marian Smith
Mrs. Clarence Pratt
Beulah / Harold Higley
Martin Green
Bernice Cielwich / Mott
James Moriarty
Frank/Herbert/Irving Weet
Glenn/Norman/Lowell Neal
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Milo Weld
Evelyn / Francis Rumble
Ethyl Hill
David Ryan
Homer / Virginia Bale
Burdett / Ruth Jean Colton
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Orleans County Historical Association

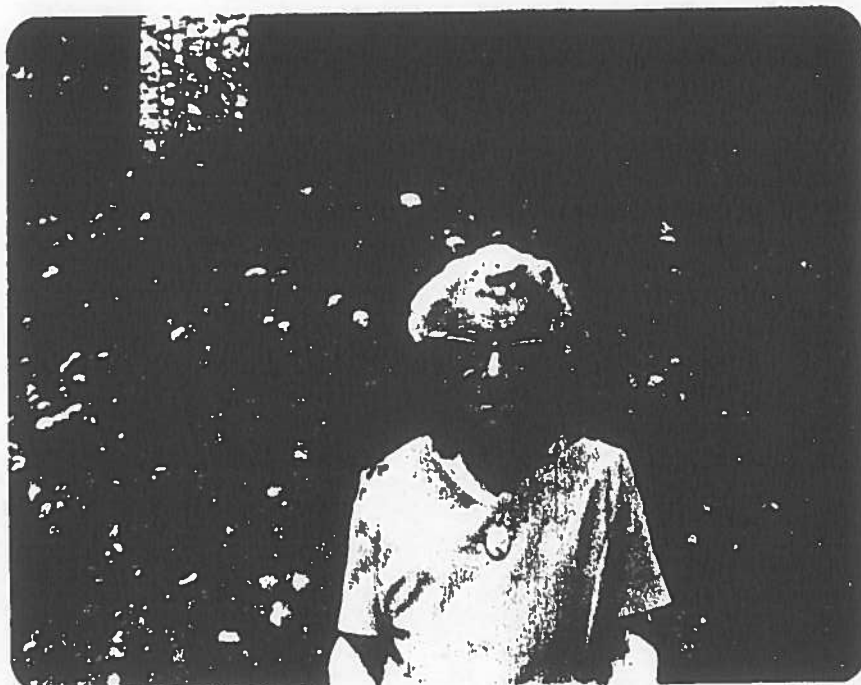
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Miss Edith B. Colman
Shelby Center
Medina, R.D., New York

This interview is conducted by Arden R. McAllister, Medina, N.Y.

C Colman

Mc McAllister





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.

Edith B. Colman

Signed

March 29, 1979

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Arden R. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

March 29, 1979

Date

- C I was born August 26, 1895, east of Lyndonville. I've lived here in this house since 1908 when my parents bought the farm. The land for this farm was bought by Harvey Bostwick in 1833 from the Holland Land Company. He sold it to Elijah Bent in 1835 for \$4,200.
- Mc Elijah Bent was quite a prominent person in this area, wasn't he?
- C I think so, because the building where the Liberty Bank is now was the Bent Block. The Bent's Opera House (they called it Bent's Opera House) was where we had our Commencement exercises when I finished in 1912. Elijah Bent willed the farm to his son, Don Bent, and then it was bought by my father, Walter Colman, in 1908 from Julia Gates Green who was a granddaughter of Don Bent. My father paid \$6,438. And how he happened to come here ... his father had worked as a hired man for Don Bent at the time of the Civil War; in fact, he enlisted from this place. When my father was interested in buying a farm, his father suggested that he come and look at this one, which my father did, and bought it.
- Mc Could I as you too - You're mentioning this place where you live now and where your father came in 1908; where is this place located?
- C In the town of Shelby on Route 63; just as you're entering Shelby Center from Medina; at the first street light. The house was built, we think it must have been, between 1835 and 1850. We were told that when we came here, by an old lady that lived in Shelby, that it was here in 1850. When the land was bought from the Holland Land Company, it was 69-and-10/100ths-acres, and father sold off enough for two lots and bought an additional field; so right now, I think the farm is approximately 75 acres. The present barns were built in 1928 and 1929, and they were paid for just before the bank closed, fortunately.
- Mc Now, that closing of the bank would have been due to the Depression?
- C I think so. I have forgotten just what caused it.
- I used to walk to school in Medina when we moved here; I was going to High School. So I walked to Medina to school in the fall and spring when the weather was good. And of course my father would have been busy on the farm, and winter-time, he took us. My sister went to Medina to 7th and 8th grade too. In the winter, my father would take the bob-sleigh with a team of horses. We went down West Avenue and gathered up all the pupils along the line. In those days, we had what we called "Pitch Holes", and the bob-sleigh would have a

seat - just a board across - and of course it would be cold, and, as we'd go down the Pitch Hole, the seat would slide forward, and you'd come up and went back. Of course, the ones riding on it had a lot of fun.

Mc Yes. Would that be about two miles?

C It's two miles from here to the Four Corners in Medina, I think. From here down to what we call the Forks, where West Avenue and South Main join, that's, I think, about a mile, and I used to walk it in 15 minutes. Then, in 1923, I bought a Model-T Ford. That was the first car we had in the family. My father never had one. I had the car; ever since then I've had a car. Before we had the car, we walked to church, twice on Sunday and once during the week. It's half-a-mile from here to the Shelby Baptist Church.

Something some people might be interested in: For years, we had a Carol Party on Christmas Eve. My two sisters started it. My sister, Ethel, taught the young people of the church in Sunday School. My sister, Alice, was advisor for the young people, the same group; so my sisters felt comfortable by having them come on Christmas Eve. They'd meet here and then go out caroling around the village, and then come back and have supper and a program of a ... well, after the supper, we'd have gifts. They'd bring a gift for exchange. Then, at midnight, we'd have the devotional service. That started out as the young people. Eventually they brought their parents. Some whole families came; the church families. One year we had over 50.

Mc Is that so! That would be right in the Shelby area, in the village?

C Our Shelby church people started Christmas carol parties in 1934, and the last one was in 1970 - the year that my sister, Ethel, died. I haven't been able to do it alone. It was quite a task, even for two people. When we started, of course, we had the whole family to help. Others would bring food and, some of the time, they brought their own dishes, which was rather confusing; but we enjoyed it. When there were so many here, some young people ate their supper sitting on the steps. See, there's a stairway here, and also going from the second to the third floor is another stairway. So they sat on the steps, and we had card tables for the other people.

Of course the service at midnight was a religious service, and then they went home shortly afterwards.

One of my great-great-grandmothers was Hopeful Crook who married Alpheus Goodridge. One of their daughters was Lucina who married Lyman Temple. They had a daughter, Clara, who married Samuel Colman, and their son, Walter, was my father. The descendants of Hopeful and Alpheus Goodridge have a family reunion each summer in August. Recently it has been held at Churchville Park, every year. I've been to it for a good many years. There's a genealogy book of the Goodridge family. I don't have one, I'm sorry to say, but you can't get them anymore. I have seen them, and it has my name in it, and my sister's.

The Smith's from Lyndonville, the ones that have the pond there and so forth, are descended of the same. That's Marian Smith and her sister, Mrs. Clarence Pratt. Several times, I've been the oldest one in attendance at the reunion. Last year, Beulah and Harold Higley were there. He's older than I. I haven't mentioned the fact, but I had a brother who died in 1913. Howard was only 16 at the time. That's a long time ago. In 1943, in March, my parents observed their Golden Wedding Anniversary. We had open house (it was on a Monday), and there were about 80 who attended. I have the names in a scrapbook. I looked at the list the other day, and at least 50 of those people are gone, out of the 80 that were here. But you see that's 36 years ago.

From 1915 to 1918, I taught what they called Laurel Hill School. I was the only teacher. I had first and second grade. There were two rooms, but only one was used. I had a janitor, Martin Green, who furnished me a little amusement; he'd leave notes for me. One time, he left a note asking if I'd get some curtain material to put in front of some shelves. There were some open shelves in the corner of the room. So he suggested I do that so it would look more respectful in the room. Another time, he left a note. He said: "If anyone comes, I'll be loading coal."

Mc Laurel Hill School was over on what they used to refer to as Paddy's Hills. That was on Erin Road.

- C And there was a store on Pleasant Street. Cielwich's lived at the corner of that and Erin Road. Bernice Cielwich, that I taught there, is Mrs. Mott, and she works for Mr. James Moriarty in the Accountant's office. I finished school in Brockport in 1914, and I started in Medina as a teacher that fall doing substitute work and anything they wanted me to do. I continued teaching in Medina until 1962 when I retired. In the meantime, I went summers to Columbia and Syracuse and Rochester so that I got my degree from the University of Rochester in 1936.
- Mc I'd like to ask you about your grandfather that was a Civil War veteran.
- C Yes, both my grandfathers were in the Civil War; Samuel Colman and Henry Hubbard. Henry Hubbard, my mother's father, died when he was 39. My father's mother, Clara Temple Colman, died when she was 41. The two grandparents that were left married each other. The two couples had been friends ... so the grandparents I knew were my mother's mother and my father's father. They had one daughter who was half-sister to my father and also to my mother because my mother and father were step-brother and sister. My grandfather Colman, the one that I knew, died in March of 1913, the same year that my brother died. My mother died in January of 1951, and my father in October of 1953. My sister, Alice, died in August of '44, and my sister, Ethel, in December of 1970. I'm the last one of the immediate family.
- Mc Samuel Colman was on that Sherman's March to the Sea?
- C Yes ... both my grandfathers were together, as I understand. They belonged to Battery M, 1st New York, Light Artillery, 1st Division, 12th Corps, I think it is. Battle of Antietam, Gettysburg, and Georgia March to the Sea with General Sherman. There was something in this book I just discovered today; maybe I've read it before. This is about The Mirror, the high school year book now was a quarterly when they started it.
- Mc The Mirror was a school magazine.
- C Yes, it was a school paper. They called it a paper when they started. It says here: "The Mirror staff wishes to thank all those who so loyally have given their hearty support during the beginning of this new enterprise. Let us hope the school will support the paper just as loyally in the future." In looking over old papers, the

following statement was found in the Shelby News: "Published by the pupils of the Shelby Center School in the winter of 1883 and 1884" - and this is the quotation: "A man who was stingy enough to borrow a newspaper when he is able to buy one should talk through his nose to save wearing his teeth out. I think this over, is it not true, especially of those who are at this time reading a borrowed paper, do not allow it to be said of you that you are too close-fisted to spend 10¢ to support your school". (Must be they charged 10¢ for these.) "Do not allow a school paper published in a Barnegat School" (Barnegat was the old name for Shelby Center) "nearly 30 years ago to be able successfully to criticize your attitude. Support the paper in the future". I was interested when it said 'Shelby Center and Barnegat'.

Mc You went to Medina High School then in ... ?

C I finished Medina High School in 1912; finished Brockport Normal School in 1914; and then, several years later, started going to summer school and working towards my Bachelor's degree. I had to make up at least two years because I'd only been to Brockport for two years.

Mc That's all that was necessary then to get a Teaching Certificate?

C That's all they had. Yes, for life.

Mc How did you get to Brockport?

C I guess probably my folks took me down to the train. I went on the train mostly because it would have been early in the morning.

Mc So you would commute by train?

C Yes, every day I went ... which takes a lot of time and a lot of energy, I think. That was pretty hard. Later, my two sisters went to Brockport. They went at the same time although they were six years apart in age. They stayed with Mother's cousin's family and came home weekends. They took food with them; they did "Basket Boarding" they called it. They took their food, and they had the privilege of using the stove. As I say, it was Mother's cousin, Edward Ward, one of her favorites.

Mc The high school, when you were there, was in the old Academy, wasn't it?

C It was in the one that they tore down; had a fire, I think, in it; stone.

- Mc That was located in the same place as the present high school?
- C Yes, and when they went to build the present high school, of course, they tore down the three-story Academy and moved the high school back over towards Ann Street. My sister, Ethel, was going to school at the time when this was going on. She finished in 1922. While they were building the new high school, we had to have more pupils over in the old Oak Orchard School. We had a room full of pupils and two teachers in each room.
- Mc Were you teaching then at the Oak Orchard School?
- C Yes, I was teaching at Oak Orchard. I started teaching at Oak Orchard in the fall of 1920. I taught fifth grade the first year, and then I had a chance to continue with fifth grade or take first. I said I'd take the first, where I stayed 'till we moved to the new school in the fall of '55. I was up there seven years.
- Mc Do you remember who the Principal was when you started there at Oak Orchard?
- C Yes, it was Miss Carrie E. Ricketts. She later was married. Then Grace Leader, who now lives in Skaneateles, was there. Mr. Hiller was Principal at one time. Mr. Rutenbur and Warren Towne came as Principal there, I think in 1930. He was teaching in Medina before that, but I think he became Principal of the old Oak Orchard in 1930. That's the year that he and Vada married. I taught for him for a long time.
- Mc I want to ask you a little bit about Shelby Center. What was it like as you remembered in those early years.
- C Well, there were different mills. There was the Shelby Grist Mill.
- Mc Is that the one that was across the street here?
- C Yes. And then there was the Dry House, where they dried apples. I think it was torn down. It was down around Mill Street down here; Chambers is located down farther.
- Mc Was there a blacksmith shop?
- C Yes, a blacksmith shop was on what is now Route 63, just after you cross Blair Road. A Mr. Johnson had that. At one time, Mr. Weet raised cherries, and different ones went there and picked cherries.
- Mc What would his name be?

- C Frank Weet; he was a brother of Herbert Weet (who was Superintendent of Rochester schools for years). Irving Weet, another brother, had the store that Zachers have now. That is the same location.
- Mc Was there any other store?
- C Yes, there was a store where Glenn Neal lives. That was Wormouth's Store. The name was Wormouth.
- Mc And that would have been located where?
- C Where Glenn Neal lives, diagonally from the Shelby Hotel. Glenn had the store at one time, but, of course, he doesn't have it anymore. However, they live in the house part.
- Mc Was the Shelby Hotel pretty active in those years?
- C Too active!
- Mc Was it! Too active?
- C Yes, my parents objected strenuously to that, and my uncle.
- Mc That had a saloon in it?
- C Yes, that was the main thing. It has been, through the years, the main thing. And just recently it was closed, and we hoped that it was closed for good! But I understand they're opening it up again.
- Mc Then you had one school?
- C Yes. I never went there to school, but my brother went, and both my sisters. My sister, Ethel, wasn't getting along too well, and my folks dispared for her making a success of it, so they paid tuition for her to go to Medina school through the seventh and eighth grades.
- Mc And there was just the one church?
- C Years ago, before we came here, there was another Baptist Church. It was what they call Free Will Baptist, and our's at that time was Closed Communion Baptist. It wasn't used as a church, as I remember it, when we came here, but the building was there. At one time, Dr. Eckerson's mother, Mary Eckerson, bought it and gave the church the use of it as a hall. We had called it the Ladies' Aid Hall. We had suppers there and programs, and so forth. But, of course, that's been gone for a long time now.
- Mc Dr. Eckerson...he lived and had an office right here in Shelby Center?

- C Yes, you know where George Grapes lives now? Well, that's where his home was ... across from church, and the school. It was a brick house, but it burned so that the one the Grapes live in is not the same one. That's where Dr. Eckerson's wife lived. His mother lived in the other part, in one part of the house. His wife died in the spring of 1928, and then, some years after that, he married Dorothy Webber. Then he died in 1935.
- Mc Do you have any recollections of the first time the road out here was paved?
- C I don't remember too much about that. I know that the neighbors, or the daughter of the neighbors, had their car on our lawn because they couldn't get into their own yard over there.
- Mc Did you have a new road?
- C That was the one kind, and then they put in the cement since then.
- Mc I believe you attended that Exposition in Buffalo?
- C Yes, I don't remember much of anything about that.
- Mc You were pretty small then?
- C I was six years old.
- Mc But you were there the day before ...
- C I imagine it was before McKinley was shot, but I don't know when it was. Of course the Exposition was in 1901, but I don't know when I went. My parents had been several times, as I understand it, before they took us. Then they took the grandparents, and took my brother and me. That was before my sisters were born.
- Mc Do you have any knowledge or recollections at all about this Neuter Fort out here just a little west of Shelby Center?
- C No, I've never known anything about that except there used to be a sign up that way. I don't know anything about it.
- Mc Never heard about it when you were young especially?
- C No, no.
- We had a Sunday School picnic up in the woods on Blair Road I think the first year we were here. It was the time of my birthday - when I was 13. After that, we used to have Sunday School picnics at what they called Elm Park, north of Medina.
- Mc I guess that was quite a place in those days.

C Yes, that was. You had to go down through some stairs to get down there. At the head of the stairs, they had a little shop where they had candy. I imagine it was Penny Candy.

Mc I guess you could ride in boats?

C Yes, and they had something that went out over the water - a sort of a "merry-go-round" affair. I think you could ride in that. We used to have watermelons for our picnic. They'd put them in a fountain that was there, with water around it, to keep them cool. I understand that Frances Folsom, who later married President Cleveland, used to visit here, probably when the Bents lived here. This house has only been in the two families...the Bent family and the Colman family. It was rented when we bought it. People by the name of Linke lived in the house, just renting, but I understand they had lived here for a long time. There's a flat section of the roof that you can go out on. There's a stairway that goes from the second to the third floor, and then some steps that you can go up - to that part. They say that people used to sit up there on the flat roof. There's no railing around it. I wouldn't want to be up there.

Mc Miss Colman, prior to your moving to this Colman Farm in 1908, you lived where?

C Lived up on the Allen Bridge Road. I lived very near the Telegraph Road. At present, there are no buildings there at all. There were at least two barns and a house, and they're all gone. Even the trees that were in front where we used to have our swings are gone. I went to a country school up on what is now Route 31, with the Telegraph Road. It's now a private residence. I went there from the fall of 1903 until 1907.

Mc And you were how old when you started?

C I was eight years old when I started. I went there for four years, and I passed my preliminary exams (at least I supposed I had) and went to Albion High School. Then I found the elementary admittance paper wasn't satisfactory, so I had to try that again in January in Albion. When I was in Albion, I boarded with our mailman, and Mother could check on how I was getting along with the mailman, and was home weekends, of course.

Mc So you'd go from Monday through Friday and stay right in Albion?
 C Yes, on West Park Street. The man's name was Fred Butler - the mailman. And of course they were very nice to me. I was just a little girl. I was 12 when I went there.

Mc You got a little homesick?

C I don't remember. There was another girl there, and an older girl as I remember who stayed there too. I was more homesick, I think, when I lived at summer school in Syracuse. I had never been away to stay very much.

Mc Prior to moving to Allen Bridge Road, you came originally from Lyndonville area?

C I was born east of Lyndonville on what is now the Platten Road. When I was just about a year old, we moved to the Murdock Road where my brother was born. That place was owned by Milo Weld. We were there three years. They used to have a home, years ago, on West Center Street, on the south side of West Center - near where the Whedon place is.

Mc That would be the corner of Ann (STREET).

C Yes, it was near there; it was in that vicinity as I remember. We were on that farm, renting, for three years, and then moved to this other farm that he had charge of but belonged to his son. We were there for nine years. Then we came here in 1908.

Mc You were related to a Platten family?

C Yes, my grandmother. Mother's mother was E. Betsy Platten Hubbard Colman. She had a sister, Mary Ann, who married a man by the name of Ward. Evelyn Rumble, Mrs. Francis Rumble, is a granddaughter of that Aunt Mary Ann Ward. Her grandmother and my grandmother were sisters. Ethyl Hill, who died a few years ago, was my mother's own cousin. Her father was my grandmother's brother, Thomas Platten.

Mc I'd like to ask you about the Forrestel property over there. Who was there when you first remember?

C Years ago, David Ryan lived there, and his aunt, Jane Kirkham. David Ryan was not married; he was a bachelor. Mrs. Forrestel's mother was a Ryan, and her father was a cousin of my father's, so that her grandfather and my grandfather were brothers. Mrs.

- Viva Grapes Senior is also a cousin. Her grandfather was another brother of my grandfather's. He was Thomas Colman of West Shelby.
- Mc None of your relatives are in this little cemetery over here in Shelby Center?
- C Mrs. Forrestel's grandfather, James Colman, is buried over there. Mrs. Grape's grandfather, Thomas Colman, is buried in West Shelby. My grandfather's buried at Tanners Cemetery. Another brother is buried at Boxwood near the Eskelson lot. But my great-grandfather, John Colman, and his wife were buried up on the hill at Boxwood. The Bents are also buried in Boxwood, right near the south entrance.
- Mc I wanted to ask you about various organizations that you have belonged to over the years, beginning with your membership in the Shelby Center Baptist Church.
- C I joined the Baptist Church here in Shelby in October of 1911. I was immersed in the Medina Baptist Church because we had no Baptistery at that time. My two sisters, who were younger, were immersed in the stream over what is now the Forrestel place. Our church has a Baptistery now. Of course I belong to the Women's Society of our church; I'm Secretary and Treasurer of it. I'm also Treasurer of the Medina Women's Study Club, and Treasurer of the Daughters of the American Colonists, Otetiami Chapter.
- Mc You went to Brockport to school?
- C To Brockport, yes.
- Mc On the trolley sometimes.
- C I think we decided that the train was better. I don't know what was the reason, but that's what we ended up - using the train.
- Mc They used to have quite a few trains go through, didn't they?
- C Oh yes. Used to go in the morning, quite early, east, and then come back around 6 o'clock. When my sisters went to Brockport, they stayed down during the week. We used to take them in the Model-T Ford. Had a Model-T, a small one, in 1923 to '25. Then I got a larger one, a Model-T, until 1930, and then I got a Pontiac.
- Mc And you learned to drive it yourself? You must have been one of the early women drivers?
- C 1922 to 1923 when I got it. My sister and I both learned, and Ethel liked it, but I never cared much about it. Ethel complained to my mother that she wanted to drive. Mother said, "Well, don't

worry about it; Edith will ... ". As long as Ethel was alive and able to drive, she always drove it; the two of us together. Toward the last, her eyesight wasn't too good, but she was able to drive, and I used my eyes to tell her what she needed to know. I've gotten to the stage now where my eyes are troubling me.

Mc You are related to a lot of people.

C Well, my Grandfather Colman's family was quite a large family. People didn't move around the way they do now. They stayed put.

Mc Yes, life has changed quite a bit in that respect.

C Young people now-a-days get different jobs, and they go off to different states. They go to school different than they used to. When I finished high school, there weren't too many people in Shelby that had finished high school. It was unusual. Now-a-days, most of them go through the performance at least. Of course my mother wasn't able to go to school. Her father died when she was eleven, and she and her older sister went to live with other people and did housework. Mother was a great reader. She educated herself by reading. Mother wanted her girls to have an education. My sister, Ethel, wasn't going to be a teacher; I was. I started teaching when I was 19, and Ethel was only about 12 at the time. I was seven years older than Ethel. She wasn't going to be a teacher at all. Alice came along and finished high school in 1927, and she was going to go to Brockport Normal School. That was too much for Ethel. She couldn't have the two of us, so she and Alice went at the same time (Ethel was older). They used to get about the same marks, so there was no hard feelings. Of course, I think Ethel had to dig in a little more maybe. But Ethel was the kind that was inclined to specialize in good times! She never liked school, but after she got into it and taught Kindergarten (she liked music), she liked it. She taught the Harding School just this side of Rochester before she was married. She had Kindergarten half-a-day, in the morning. In the afternoon, she taught eighth grade I think, or it was seventh grade. She got a wide range of experience. First, she taught in Sunday School. She taught teenagers, like Lowell Neal and his cousin, Norman Neal. (They were among the first ones that

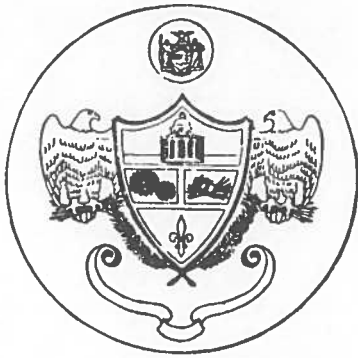
were in the Christmas Carol party.) Homer Bale, Virginia Bale, and Ruth Jean Colton lived next to us here. Her brother, Burdett Colton, and some kids (they seemed like kids to me) lived there years ago, and some are gone.

Mc Yes, that happens.

* * * * *

This interview was conducted by Arden McAllister, Medina, N.Y.
The transcription was done by Lysbeth Hoffman, Waterport, N.Y.
Editing was done by Helen McAllister, Medina, N.Y.
Final typing was completed by Lois McAllister, Rochester, N.Y.

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Orleans County Historical Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS : Myra C. Colton Interview

SUBJECTS

Medina's first Hospital
 Mary Louise Hospital
 Private-duty nurse

U. G. Coon & Son Dry House
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 transient workers
 dry-house operation
 apples shipped on canal & R.R.
 saloons/problems with drinking
 Saturday nights

Polish/Irish settlements

World War I
 Company F before WWI
 Company F after WW I
 "killed in battle"
 burial/body returned
 Gold Star Mother's Trip
 James Clark American Legion Post
 teaching/school
 School District #10
 Medina Free Academy
 classmates off to war

farming

mechanics

NAMES

Mary Louise Ramsdell (patient)
 Mrs. Azubah Barton (Fred Perry)
 Violet Rose (Wm. Blount)
 Clara Dewey / Minnie Kams
 Dr. Maynard / Dr. Scott
 Dr. Munson / Dr. Rooth
 Miss Lawrence, nurse

NAMES

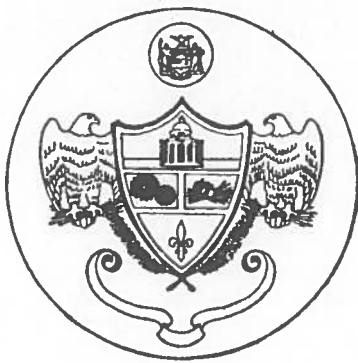
Frank Colton
 Marie Antoinette Quiram
 Alta C. (George Dunlap)
 Florence C. (George Hopensitz)
 Grant Erasmus C. (killed, WW I)
 Fred Debbage C.
 Earl Arthur C. (husband of sub
 Uriah G. Coon, grandfather
 Lucia Louise Sheldon C., gr-ma
 Cecelia C. Scofield
 Daniel Elmer C. (father of sub
 *Mortimer Sheldon C. (Dr.)
 Myra C. (Gordon): 1st hospital
 Frederick T. Gordon

* Mortimer wed Mary Kennedy
 Margaret Louise C.
wed Leo Engle
 Cecelia Mary C.
wed Roland Botting
 Peter Botting
 Paul Botting

Daniel Elmer Coon, father
 Edna Gotts Coon, mother
 Mortimer
 Myra ("Molly" or "My")
wed Earl Colton
 Grant, son (Ruth Pritchard
 Alice Louise ("Allie Lou")
wed Roy Collins

Carl
 Alice
 Sheldon
 Lloyd
 Bertha Wilson

Lyndonville, Medina, W. Shelby
 Shelby Basin, Alabama, Yates



Orleans County Historical Association

INTERVIEW

Mrs. Myra C. Colton
Shelby Basin
Medina, New York

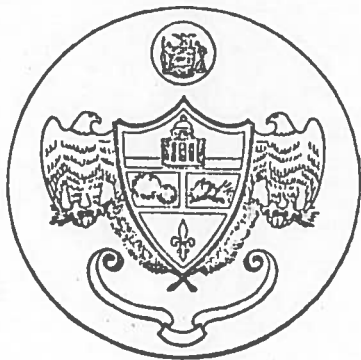
Mrs. Myra C. Colton, born April 24, 1899.

Interviewed by Arden and Helen McAllister, December 19, 1978.

C Colton

Mc McAllister/ Arden or Helen





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.

Mrs. Myra Colton
Signed

Dec. 19, 1978
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Arden R. McAllister
Helen M. McAllister
INTERVIEWER

Dec. 19, 1978
Date

Colton

The following printed material is available on microfilm and in the volume of original newspapers of 1907 at the Lee-Whedon Memorial Library at Medina, New York.

THE MEDINA TRIBUNE

MEDINA, N.Y.

Thursday, February 21, 1907

(front page)

The Mary Louise Hospital

The Mary Louise Hospital is now in readiness for cases requiring hospital care. Miss Coon, who is in charge, has had much experience in institutional work and is confident that with the cooperation of the townspeople, she can make the hospital of permanent benefit to the town.

It is difficult to make even a large hospital self-supporting, and it is hardly to be hoped that a small one in a town of this size could be sustained without assistance from the citizens.

The need of a hospital here, however, is generally recognized, the physicians especially realizing its worth in many cases and they would like to see people giving their support toward it.

These are plans suggested for organizations, churches and working-men and women which would be mutually helpful. Anyone interested can obtain information by calling at the hospital on South Academy Street or by telephoning Miss Coon.

THE MEDINA TRIBUNE

MEDINA, N.Y.

April 18, 1907

(front page)

Mary Louise Hospital

505 South Academy Street

Medical, Surgical and Chronic cases scientifically cared for, under supervision of Trained Nurse of long experience.

Special attention given to proper food, carefully prepared.

Treatments of Hydroed Thermo-Therapy, Oil, Salt and Alcohol rubs, for transient patients, when ordered by a physician.

Terms - \$1.50 to \$3.00 per day. Special treatments \$1.00.

July 25, 1907

- Harry T. Underhill, a well known resident of Medina, died Tuesday morning at Mary Louise Hospital after a brief illness....(etc)...

- Miss Lydia A. Masten died at Mary Louise Hospital Monday evening at seven o'clock.... (etc.)...

C I was born north and west of Lyndonville in the town of Yates, April 24, 1899. My father was Daniel Elmer Coon and my mother's maiden name was Edna Gotts. My father was a farmer on my grandfather's farm on Fruit Avenue. Father's father was Uriah Coon. He married Lucia Louise Sheldon. (She did not like to be called Lucia, hence she was known as Louise). After he (Father) left there, he worked on the farm west of Lyndonville. Then we moved to another farm west of Alabama that the family owned.

Mc What kind of farming was this, primarily?

C Mostly grain. The home farm was all fruit.

The first thing that I remember as a child was moving from the Town of Yates to a farm near Alabama. It was in the spring of the year and there wasn't a good road through the swamp. Everything was underwater, and the bushes grew right up and hung over the road. The teams with the furniture and the farm machinery had gone ahead.

Mc Your family was moving?

C Yes, in March I think probably or early April, when they could get through. My mother drove the horse and buggy with just me. I can't remember any others. We got to the edge of the swamp and the water came up almost to the horses' belly and she was frightened. Mother stood there a long time thinking about it, and all of a sudden she said that she guessed she'd turn around and go back to the farm. Then a team came up behind us: two men on a wagon. He saw that there was just a woman and a child in the buggy and one of the men got out and he said to my mother, "One of us will drive and the other will ride on the back of the wagon and lead your horse through." And he did! I don't know who they were and I don't think my mother knew who they were. But it was at least two miles through. You know how far it is through.

Mc Would that be what is now route #63 ?

C Yes, where you go into the swamp. It was a mud road; just a track through. I suppose at one time it had been an Indian trail. I don't know. The corduroy road, as I remember it, went up through West Shelby. But this was just a mud road.

- Mc Would you tell us a little bit about where you went to school?
- C Yes, I went to the country school west of Alabama on the Lewiston Road. That was my first schooling. I remember just a little bit about that. Of course, I was small. I remember the teacher was Miss Mook. She later married Charlie Woodstock.
- Mc You went to this one room schoolhouse for one year, then later you went to school district #10 on the Schoolhouse Road?
- C We were on that farm near Alabama four years, then my uncle died and my grandfather wanted my father to come back to the home farm and run the dry-house and the farms. (Home farm was on Fruit Avenue).
- Mc Do you have any special memories about going to a country school like that? What were the conditions like in the school, and the eating?
- C I remember a round oak stove which was all the heat we had, and unless you were right around it, you froze to death. It was cold, but I liked it. I liked the country school and I guess I always will. There were probably 20 students; about that.
- Mc Do you remember the name of the teacher at District #10?
- C Hazel Montgomery was one of my teachers. She later was Mrs. Charles Smith.
- Mc Then you went into the Medina school system?
- C Into the 6th grade. I went to the village school (Medina Free Academy); drove the horse back and forth part of the time. Part of the time I stayed with my grandmother and grandfather on Park Avenue. All three of us did: Mortimer, Carl and I.
- Mc You continued on through the Medina school system and graduated in 1917? (Yes). What was the Medina school like at that time?
- C I liked it. It was a good school. Dora Tanner was my first teacher, in the 6th grade. She married Mr. Harmer later. I was in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades in the old Academy and then I went to the high school.
- Mc What building was that?
- C The one that burned.
- Mc Was it that red sandstone?
- C Yes, the one they moved. It was not on the corner when I went there.
- Mc You said that you graduated in 1917, and of course we were getting ready for World War I. You were telling us about the

effect of that on your classes, Company F, and the empty chair. Would you tell us about that (again) ?

C War was declared, I believe, on the 6th of April; that we officially went to war. But about two weeks before that, we had an assembly in the high school. We had assembly about once a week. Mr. Merriman was the principal and the Easter vacation was coming up. At the assembly I remember he said, "Before we are gathered here again, America will be at war!" Those words made quite an impression on me because it seems as though all the boys I knew were eligible; which was true. And that was true: by the time we went back to school after Easter recess, America was at war! And Company F moved out.

Mc A lot of your classmates went with them?

C Oh yes. Not just my class, but all through the high school. Many of the boys had belonged to Company F and I think probably some of them probably had lied about their age. But they belonged to Company F, you know.

Mc Wouldn't they have to be a certain age to go (to war)?

C Yes, but I know one boy who ran away and went out to Cleveland (Ohio) and enlisted, and I don't think he was over 17. He didn't dare enlist in Medina because people knew his age. But it took boys: James Clark, for whom the Post (American Legion Post) was named, was about my age. Many of them came back, and many of them didn't.

Mc Did you have a member of your family that served?

C My older brother, Mortimer, had completed his four years at Dartmouth College and was working for his degree at the Thayer School of Engineering when he enlisted. He was called to Washington, and expected to move right out. They sent Mortimer back to Dartmouth and told him to finish. That was the mistake that England had already made: they had put many of their engineers right into the front lines, and they needed men like that. Well, by the time he (Mortimer) graduated from the Thayer School of Engineering, the War was over. But he was in uniform.

Mc After you graduated from high school, did you go right into teaching.

C I went to Geneseo (Normal School) that summer. It was just about one building too. This wasn't like it is today! I could

go over there today and get lost, easily! (chuckles).

Mc How did you get there?

C Well, friends took me once or twice, but I most always took the train into Rochester, and then this electric line into Geneseo. I don't remember much about it. I do know though that I came home by way of Rochester. I only came home once. You see, it was a six weeks course and I just came home once through the summer.

Mc Where did you stay in Geneseo?

C I lived with a family by the name of Smith who took summer students. There were about 700 students there for the summer. Many of them were older women who were going back for refresher courses. I ate at a club, nearly across the street. They called it the Seymour Club; this was their last name. This woman and her brother took about 30 girls. We ate in groups of ten.

Mc Would that be three meals a day that you ate there?

C Yes: breakfast, dinner and supper. And if we wanted to go on picnics or hikes, she'd put up basket lunches for us. There were a lot of interesting places around Geneseo. The Wadsworths were there then. Those estates were beautiful at that time, you know, and they were all open to the public. They were especially pleased when the students came there, to the gardens.

Mc Would that be like the Smith's in Lyndonville; landscaping?

C Yes; beautiful! And I saw their dogs. That group all rode to the hounds there, you know. And Geneseo had a cavalry and most all of the young fellows around there, that I got to know, belonged to the cavalry which was very interesting. I had a young man come to see me from the Infantry, and he really got razzed! (laughter).

Mc Did you get to ride horses?

C No! Oh no! They were horses that were mostly used to ride to the hounds. It was really quite an experience. Then, they had their dances at the school, you know. It was fun!

Mc You said that these fellows belonged to the cavalry. Were the horses theirs; did they use them in the war over in Europe?

C I suppose so. I suppose that when they went, the horses went with them. But the Wadsworths themselves had a lot of horses of their own. I think the cavalry horses were all kept down

at a little place near Geneso: Ashante.

Mc Is that a town?

C About like Shelby Basin would be a town. (laughter)

Mc So, you took a six weeks course and then you did some teaching?
Where did you teach school?

C In district #10, where I had gone to school

Mc Back to the "scene of your crime"! (laughter)

C Back to the scene of my crine, where my Grandfather Uriah Coon
and I think two aunts (Myra and Cecelia Coon) taught ahead of me

Mc You had charge of all the children in that room?

C Oh yes, all eight grades; about one or two in each grade.

Mc Was that overwhelming, or did you find it easy to do?

C It was at first. I don't know what I would have done without
my father. He was a great help to me.

Mc In what way?

C Mathematics mostly. I had passed arithmetic in Mrs. Peters
room in the 7th grade. I had no 8th grade arithmetic. They
allowed us to take algebra in the 8th grade. Miss Cora Newnham
taught it. And I might mention here that Miss Margaret Lenahan
taught 4th grade across the hall when I was in the 6th grade.
My mother had gone to school to Miss Lenehan. Oh, she was the
nicest woman! She told Dora Tanner one night, she says, "Don't
keep your kids after school. All you are doing is punishing
yourself; and I'm not going to punish myself". She had an Irish
sense of humor. She was so nice!

Mc You taught for two years and then I think you said you lived
on Fruit Avenue. There was a house across the road, and that
changed your life, and you changed your name. Right?

C That's right! He shouldn't have moved there! (laughter)

Mc Would you want to tell us about that?

C Well, I met my husband there. The Frank Colton family moved
across the road. Mr. Colton was a farmer and he had three
sons: Grant, Earl and Fred.

Mc Three sons! What one caught your eye?

C The youngest one, Earl.

Mc What was Earl doing? Was he out of school and working?

C Yes, he was with his father when they moved there. And he had one brother, Grant, who had already gone with Company F. He had one brother, Fred, in the new Company F that was organized; and he was married. Earl went down and tried to enlist and they wouldn't take him because they said that there were two boys in the service and to go home and help his father on the farm. So he did.

Mc But you said that he didn't like farming.

C There weren't any of the boys farmers; none of them. They were mechanics, every one! Earl stayed with his father, on the farm as long as his father was living, but he never liked it. Cars were getting where they needed mechanics, you know, and they were getting more and more, a few at a time. All three of the boys were mechanics, that is all. That was their life!

Mc When did you and Earl become man and wife?

C We were married in 1919 in Avon in the parsonage. We ran away and got married! I don't know whether you should add that or not.

Mc Sure! You ran away and got married; why was this?

C Well, we just did. I was never the kind who wanted a wedding, that was all.

Mc Did you have friends who stood up with you?

C No, just two people.

Mc From your marriage you had two children?

C Yes, Grant and Allie Lou.

Mc You were saying (earlier) that Allie Lou's name is Alice Louise. Why is she called Allie Lou?

C Because I had a sister Alice, and Bertha Wilson told me I must not call my daughter "Alice"; that we'd call her "Allie Lou". And the name stuck. That's the only reason.

Mc Now, while we are on nicknames, you were saying that your name Myra is a family name, and you have said that you aren't too fond of your name (which is the way a lot of us feel about our names). Even as a little child starting school, you chose a different name. What did they call you then?

C Well, I was called Molly a lot.

Mc And nowadays your closest friends call you... what?

C "My". That's the way I sign my name too, except my checks. I

don't dare sign them like that, but I sign everything else.

Mc Would you tell us the names of your brothers and sisters Myra?

C Mortimer was the oldest, then Myra (self), then Carl, Alice, Sheldon and Lloyd.

Mc You said there were really two separate families because the ages were that far apart: the first three and the last three?(Yes

Mc In talking about Company F returning after World War I, what do you remember about that? They went away in a blaze of glory, and the whole town was out. Right?

C Yes that's right. They came back, and the whole town was out, but they were a sorry looking group. Of course so many of them were in hospitals and some had been killed. The group didn't come back all at once.

Mc Was there a parade in Medina when they returned? (Yes). Who was in the parade beside Company F?

C I don't remember. I know that they were honored and there was a lot of fanfare. But I really don't remember. I remember my husband and I went down and saw them.

Mc The home-coming impressed you as being a very sad time?

C Yes. Earl's brother, Grant, was among the ones who didn't come back. He was killed at the Battle of Kimmel Hill in France on July 23rd, 1918. He was buried in a French cemetery set aside for the American dead. After my father-in-law died, she (Earl's Mother) was determined that she was going to get his (Grant's) body back and he was going to be buried in the family lot at West Shelby. She never gave up and she accomplished what she started out to do. He was brought home and he was buried by the side of his father. (This particular section, answer, is not on the taped interview but was added later by Myra Colton). ... Earl's brother, Grant, was killed before my husband and I were even married and he wasn't brought back for a long time. His services at the Armory were the day before Allie Lou was born. We already had our son, Grant born in 1920. My mother-in-law had quite a time. Well, at first they weren't going to bring the bodies back at all because they had been buried over there. That land had been set aside, you know, but she finally got his body back here.

- Mc Am I right, that there were some Gold Star Mothers who made the trip over (to Europe) at the expense of the government?
- C That was later.
- Mc Did she ever do that? (No). Were there many from here that did?
- C I think so, yes. There were quite a few in the surrounding area. Not mothers of men who were in Company F especially by Gold Star Mothers, yes. In the parades that we had, there were a lot of Gold Star Mothers.
- Mc You named your son after Earl's brother, Grant?
- C After him, yes. Grant's death killed my father-in-law. He never got over it. He didn't live to see his son's body brought back or anything. But he never got over it.
- Mc How old was your father-in-law when he died?
- C He was 60. It just seemed as if he just gave up. He left the farm and they moved into town. He just gave up, that's all there was to it. (This has been added by Mrs. Colton: My father-in-law always felt that if Grant could have come back he would have come back to the farm and would have liked it. In fact, in some of the letters he wrote home, and which I now have, you knew how much he wanted to come back to the farm)
- Mc Was Grant the eldest boy?
- C Yes. He was not the oldest in the family. The two girls were older, but he was the oldest boy.
- Mc They also had two sisters. Their names were Alta and Florence?
- C Alta taught school for a great many years.
- Mc Myra, would you tell us about your grandfather, Uriah Coon, and his family of four children? Would you tell us their names?
- C Myra Gordon, Cecelia Scofield, Daniel Elmer, and Mortimer.
- Mc Mortimer became a medical doctor and do I understand correctly that he was a teacher too? (Yes). He was a very ambitious fellow! What else did he do?
- C Uncle Mortimer Coon also was a farmer, and he helped my grandfather with the dry-house; and he was a Road Commissioner. He was in politics right up to his neck. I think that's where my interest started. I also was in politics 26 years as a committee woman. I think he had many interests. He loved to go to horse races. Walt Whipple and old Doctor Scott were race fans also.
- Mc What kind of horse race was that?

RED STAR LINE

New York—Cherbourg—Antwerp

S S. "ZEELEND"

SAILING FROM NEW YORK

Wednesday, September 25, 1901, at 12.00 noon.

Captain W. J. ROBERTS

Surgeon: M. J. O'Neill, A. M., M. D., C. M. Purser: I. Dubois

Chief Steward: G. W. Campbell

Miss A. A. Atkinson	Mrs. A. C. Ireland
Miss Yvette Borup	Mrs. Eliza Kent
Miss Ann C. Carlson	Dr. G. P. Levering
Mrs. T. B. Catron	Miss L. L. Perin
Master Tom Catron	Miss E. P. Perin
Master Fletcher Catron	Dr. Thomas P. Prout
Dr. L. Pierce Clark	Miss Susan W. Randall
Mrs. L. Pierce Clark	X- Miss Ramsdell
Mr. Horatius Pennock Connell	Mrs. Charles W. Robson
Mrs. Connell	Mr. S. Siegel
X- Miss Coon	Miss Lottie Siegel
Dr. Charles H. Corwin	Mrs. H. M. Mott-Smith
Miss Irone Hare	two children
Mrs. J. B. Hartley	Miss M. S. Tyler
Miss Jenny Heymann	Miss Ethel Walz
Mr. J. K. C. Hobbs	Mrs. J. J. Yates
Mrs. Hobbs	
Miss Elvira W. Hobbs	
Master Clarence W. Holbs	
Miss Holt	



Myra Coon and Mary Louise Ramsdell (pg.9)

- C The kind you bet on!
- Mc No, I mean were they trotters?
- C Yes, I think so; over at Fort Erie. Yes, he loved horses and he loved to go to horse races.
- Mc Would you tell us about your Aunt Myra Coon?
- C She was a teacher in country schools, to start with. She had always wanted to be a nurse and she took her training at the Buffalo General Hospital, in Buffalo, New York.
- Mc Was she a private-duty nurse, for the most part?
- C That's what she did all the time except for, I think, one year when she was matron of the old Black Rock (Hospital) which is no longer in existence.
- Mc Where would that have been? Near Buffalo?
- C Well, it would have been at Black Rock. And she didn't like it for the simple reason she said there was too much city politics. Up to that time she had been doing private nursing. Then she had an opportunity to go with a patient to Europe for a year. I believe the girl had epileptic fits. She was from Boston and a wealthy family.
- Mc What was the girl's name?
- C Mary-Louise Ramsdell. Aunt Myra travelled with her for a year through most of the countries in Europe.
- Mc That would have been about 1900?
- C 1900 and 1901. She was in London the day the King was crowned. Now, I can't tell you which one it would have been. Would it have been Victoria's son?
- Mc Yes, I think it might have been Edward VII.
- C But, her patient had had a bad day and she couldn't go out. She was in Paris for a long time. She was in Italy, in Venice and she was in Austria. Then she had an opportunity to go through the stables of Franz Joseph and see the beautiful horses, which they make such a fuss about today; you know, Lipizzan (horses). She said that something which impressed her so much was the fact that these beautiful black horses that were used for funeral processions, and then the beautiful white ones. She loved Venice, and the gondolas, and the Isle of Capri. It was over a year, probably nearer two years, that she travelled in 1901 and 1902.

Mc Your Aunt Myra Coon was instrumental in setting up the first hospital in Medina. (That's right!). Did she call that the Mary Louise Hospital ?

C I don't know because the Adult Home had been set up by a Mrs. Perry, a Mrs. Fred Perry. Her name wasn't Mrs. Fred Perry then. She came here to Medina and she had one daughter, and she was going to start a hospital. She met Mr. Perry, and that ended the hospital as far as she was concerned! She sold out to my aunt. That was on Academy Street. (Note added by M. Colton's daughter, Allie Lou C. Collins: "Mrs. Azubah Barton, who later wed Mr. Fred Perry, sold the equipment of the Adult Home to Myra Coon . The Adult Home was on South Academy Street"). That was what my Aunt (Myra Coon) was hunting for. There were three women, I can remember them all, who went to work for my aunt: one was Violet Rose and later was Mrs. William Blount; and one was Clara Dewey; and one was Minnie Kams. Only one of them went on to become a nurse. Miss Kams went to South America. She was down there a long time, and I think that's where she met her husband. Then she (Myra Coon) moved the hospital onto the corner of West Center and Ann Streets.

Mc How long were they there?

C My father told me it was a year, but I don't remember that. Then she moved it onto the corner of Park Avenue and Prospect. That is the first that I remember seeing a sign. I don't remember the sign, but it said "Mary Louise Hospital!"

Mc That building is totally gone now?

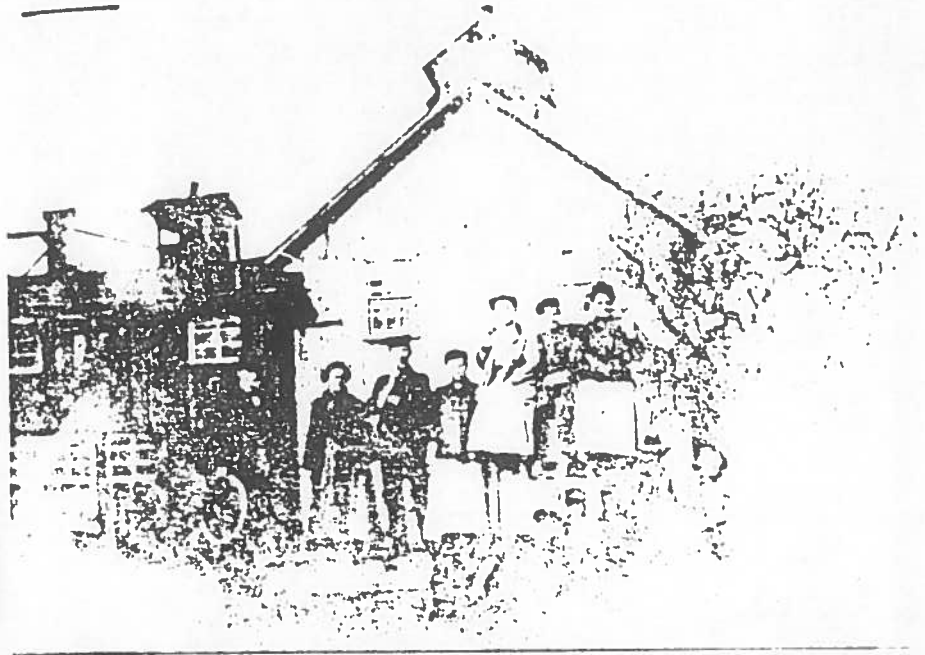
C Yes. It was called the old Landauer house. It was owned by some Landauers; not the Albion Landauers, a brother and a brother of our Mr. Landauer who ran the store here in Medina. But the house is gone.

Mc They moved from there to Eagle and Prospect?

C Well, she never moved. That is where she met her husband. Mr. Fred Gordon came there as a patient (Frederick Talmidge Gordon). She finally prevailed on the city fathers that they needed a hospital. ... The doctors who worked with her at that time were Dr. Maynard, Dr. Scott, and Dr. Munson and were all very close friends of hers and who came to see her, at the farm, when she would come back here from Chicago. (She went to Chicago to live after she married Mr. Gordon). Each time she



Grant C. Colton, W.W.I



U.G. Coon & Son Dry House (pg. 12)



Mrya Coon (pg.11)



Dr. Mortimer S. Coon (pg.11)

came back, these doctors would come out to the farm to see her. Her surgeon was Doctor Rooth from Buffalo and he always brought his nurse with him: Miss Lawrence. They were very dear friends. In fact Miss Lawrence died not too many years ago but the family kept track of them up until she died.

Mc Most of the doctors that were here were general practioners, is that right?

C That's right. There were no surgeons. Doctor Rooth was her surgeon.

Mc If they wanted or needed a surgeon, they either had to go there or had to have the surgeon come here?

C Yes, and he came on the train.

Mc So, the Village of Medina bought and set up the hospital on Eagle and Prospect and then eventually moved to the present site on Ohio Street.

Mc Would you tell us why your Aunt Myra Coon became a nurse? What prompted her to go into nursing?

C I don't know. I do know what prompted her to want a hospital though. That was, the death of her brother, Doctor Mortimer Coon. At the time that he died, there was no surgeon available; no doctor that could do anything for him. If you had appendicitis in those days, it was fatal if you did not live where there was a surgeon. That's what he died with.

Mc He had appendicitis?

C Yes, and peritonitis, and it broke. After the death of her brother, Aunt Myra said that if there had only been a hospital, or someone to have helped him, that he was much too young to die. He was only, I believe, 37 when he died.

Mc Was he married at the time?

C Yes, and had one daughter, and another child on the way.

Mc What were their names?

C Margaret was the older one (Mrs. Leo Engle from Albion), and Cecelia was the baby born after he died. (Added note: Cecelia later married Roland Botting and is the mother of Peter Botting).

Mc Doctor Mortimer Coon had married Mary Kennedy?

C Yes, from Saint Annes, Ontario, Canada. She was a classmate of Aunt Myra's and was in training and used to come to the farm with Aunt Myra, when they had a day off. That's how my uncle

met her.

- C My father and my grandfather, Uriah, ran a dry-house. The dry-house was another project of my Uncle Mortimer; with my grandfather to start with. Of course, after Doctor Mortimer died, they then wanted my father to come back and help out.
- Mc Now where was this dry-house located?
- C On Fruit Avenue, right straight across the road from the Paul Blackburn homestead.
- Mc What do you remember about that? I know that you have said that your mother would not allow you or your brother to go out to the dry-house unless she took you.
- C There were a lot of people involved to run a place like that, to start with, both men and women. The women worked in the paring room, two to a machine.
- Mc Were these neighbor women that came in, or women from Medina?
- C Well they were mostly women from up around Shelby Basin: next door here and on up the Road in Dublin. There were men from there who worked.
- Mc Where is Dublin?
- C Well now, that's the road where now the bridge is gone. You go over this bridge up here (on Fruit Avenue) and then it "dead ends" up there now. Well, when I was a little child, there were houses. Lots of them up that road.
- Mc That's right across the bridge?
- C Yes. There isn't a house up there anymore, and there were several when I was a child. It was a Polish settlement, but when my father was a child, it was settled pretty much by the Irish.
- Mc The dry-house pretty much used the drop apples? (Yes). And you said that they hired a number of men?
- C Usually transients for the time that it ran. It usually started in September. It seems to me that it was going by the time that we went back to school, and they got through early in December. Probably a two or three months operation. It was a busy time because the farm was all fruit and you hired many people - both men and women. Everything was, of course, picked by hand then. The trees were tall and they had to use tall ladders. Today it's all short apple trees and so much of it

is done by machinery. But in those days it took a lot of men. There were men who worked sorting and picking and men who handled the fruit. The fruit had to be set up in the paring rooms for the women, and there was a man who ran the bleacher. Then there were the night men who turned the fruit to keep it from burning.

Mc You said that there was something that they put on the apples to bleach them?

C Sulfur. I have a pot around here now. It's a small iron pot and I suppose the sulfur was put in that and burned. And oh, the fumes from that!! You know, when this man would work it, the fumes from it, you know, were really something! But, it bleached the fruit. It was spread up over, to dry; the drying room. There were four in operation all the time.

Mc Are those the kilns?

C Yes. There were three for the white fruit, and one for the parings.

Mc You have said something about dried pumice. What is that?

C Well, that's what we called the parings.

Mc Now, the apples that were not drop apples were packed into barrels?

C Into barrels, yes, and they were taken to the village. A lot of them went out by the canal then. That area there where the ford was. Well, it would be where Bramer(store) is now. You see, that was all open area then, and these apple buyers would come in here. A lot of them!. Of course there were a lot of them shipped on the railroad, but also there were a lot shipped on the canal. And everything was packed into barrels at that time.

Mc What about the apples that were dried? Did they pack those into burlap bags?

C Yes, those were put into bags and then put into storage until they were sold.

Mc You have said that we sold most of those to Europe?

C There was a good market in Europe. When my father and grandfather were in business, there was a good market then. It was that market that went to pieces that killed the dry-house business.

Mc Was that after World War I ?

C Yes. All the machines in the paring room then were hand-driven. They were not electric.

- Mc You were telling us about some of the problems of some of the transient workers; that some of them were pretty heavy drinkers and how your father would hold their pay?
- C Yes. Father would hold the pay, not so much on the day workers. It was his night men that worried him because he was always afraid that they would burn the fruit, you know. I think mother paid every Saturday. I think she paid the women in the paring room. It closed down at noon on Saturday, and I think she paid the regular men. And of course they immediately took off for town to spend the money fast!
- Mc Where would they spend their money?
- C In the saloons!! Yes, and then they would start coming back all hours of the night, one by one, as they could get back. They must have had to walk and we were three and a half miles from the village. I don't remember anyone bringing them back. But Sunday was quite a day! It was a bad day, always, because none of them came in to eat on Sunday. They weren't in any shape to come in to eat. Sunday night about 5 o'clock, or when Father went out to do the chores or to milk, he would start gathering up. They'd bring the beer home in cases. For years there were wooden cases kicking around down there that they had brought the beer home in. Father dumped the beer, and whiskey he would take in and put in a corner cupboard in the dining room. He knew if he didn't, there wouldn't be a man able to go to work on Monday morning! Some of them were kind of sick on Monday morning as it was. But he said that was the only way.
- Mc When the transient workers came in September, where were they housed and where were they fed?
- C Well, they slept in rooms in the back part of the house, over the kitchen, which was always kept for the help. My mother and the hired girl fed them, and my grandmother used to come and help sometimes.
- Mc Did you eat at the same table with them?
- C Yes. My father waited on all of them, and we all ate at the same table; always.
- Mc You said that the workers had a different vocabulary out in the work area?
- C Oh yes, entirely! That's why my brother and I were not allowed

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to go out around there unless my mother was with us, or father. Once in awhile mother would let us go out if she'd see Dad out there; but not very often. I can remember him saying very distinctly, "If your mother catches you out here, you'll get tanned!" But we didn't get away from her too often; but once in awhile it was kind of fun. (chuckles) You'd certainly hear things you never heard before. But the men who came to the house to eat were always perfect gentlemen, in the house. They never spoke out of turn. They were very good. They loved my little brother. Carl was a little fellow.

Mc Was he called "Little Buster" ?

C "Little Buster". A little blonde, he was, and they just loved him to death. Any one of them would have taken care of him, except on weekends.

Mc You said there were two Irishmen: Sullivan and Buckley? ...

C Yes, they took care of the kilns at night. Father held out on their pay as long as he could because he knew that when they went to town he'd have to tend the kiln by himself.

Mc You were saying that there was a saloon in this area, up on the corner, and that Ceil White's parents had owned it? (The name was Hoffman: added notes). Then someone else owned it?

C Mr. Fiertz.

Mc You are talking about Shelby Basin?

C I mean Shelby Basin.

Mc You said that men would stop there with a team of horses and your father had to go back and get the horses?

C All the barrels of apples, when they were put up, they were hauled to the village. As I say, they went out on the boats or on the train. But this didn't happen too much except the weekend. Father would wait until 9 o'clock at night and if his teams hadn't come home then, he'd start out. I remember one night he started out, in the rain. Mother objected seriously but he said, "I don't care anything about the men. I'm going after my team! And that's the only way he'd get them home. They'd be tied up there.

Mc You have mentioned Dr Tanner's house on Park Avenue in Medina.

C That's where my grandmother and grandfather lived. They moved

in there when my father and mother came back to the farm. They bought the place in Medina and moved. Just my father and mother lived there at the farm. My grandmother and grandfather never lived there after that. My grandmother had come there as a bride, and never had moved in her life, and didn't know what it was to pack furniture or pack anything. She had lived there all those years. My mother always said she had to go down and pack, and do everything to help her. She didn't know what to do before they could move down from Alabama. In fact, Mother did two movings, you know. In other words, she had to help them get out before my father and mother could move in. Grandfather came to the farm every day. I would drive the horse to school and grandfather would drive the horse back out. We went to school then until 4 o'clock and so about half-past-three he would leave so that my brother and I could come home.

Mc Your own husband, Earl, was a mechanic and was well known around this area for repairing cars. I understand that you and Mr. Colton were called "the gypsies" because he liked to travel a lot! (laughter). You did a considerable amount of traveling?

C That's right!

Mc You covered the United States pretty thoroughly?

C Pretty thoroughly yes. We were into old Mexico once and we crossed at El Passo. I don't know as we would have gone up into the north-west so much but both of his sisters moved out there.

Mc Out to Washington?

C Yes. And they both died out there.

Mc So you became familiar with that area?

C Yes. My boy and girl went to school out there three different years. And they went to school for awhile in New Orleans. When we were in Houston that winter, we stayed in Houston for awhile, the school was too far away. They didn't go to school for awhile until they got out to Washington.

(END OF TAPED INTERVIEW)

This interview has been transcribed, edited & retyped by Helen M. McAllister of Medina, N.Y. — Additional notes and picture courtesy of Myra Colton and Allie Lou (Mrs. Roy) Collins.

Editorial

A Long Way From 'Mary Louise'

10-5-79

The Medina Historical Society recently devoted one of its meetings to the history of Medina's hospitals.

Starting with what would today be categorized as a nursing home, Medinans were served by various residences that were so-called hospitals. Starting with the "Mary Louise", the local medical facilities moved from private home to private home until expanded to command the purchase and use of the brick structure at the corner of Prospect and Eagle which was given the official title of Medina Memorial Hospital.

There are still many local residents who well remember the Prospect Street hospital, including the editor-publisher of this paper who first saw the light of day, having been born in that building.

As interesting as the past history of the local hospitals may be, the founding and growth of the present structure on Ohio Street makes an even greater story. From its inception it steadily expanded into one of the finest small hospitals of the state. It has its genesis and construction principally as the effort of one person in particular, the late George A. Bowen.

It is a complete story in itself. The story of his dedication has been attributed to a promise made and later fulfilled relative to the health of a member of his family.

George A. Bowen gave as much of his energy and talents to the betterment of Medina Memorial as he did to that of his manufacturing concern, S.A. Cook & Co., And it was largely under his direction that the Cook concern grew into a manufacturing name of national acclaim. Another story in itself.

But the development of hospital service down through the years from the "Mary Louise" to the Medina Memorial marks the fine contributions of a proud community. Many have given generously and have watched it grow in size and services.

At no time does the public pride in its hospital rise more fiercely than when some survey team tries to tell us to convert it into a "first-aid station" and travel to the city for full health care.

MARY LOUISE HOSPITAL

A child whimpering in the night; a husband or wife not sleeping; nausea; pain. What do you do? If it persists, there will be a 'phone call to the doctor who, if it looks suspicious, orders a trip to the hospital for tests or treatment.

But what if you lived in Medina in the early part of the century? You called the doctor or went to the nearest 'phone to call the doctor. An operation needed? If the patient could be moved, a two hour train trip to Buffalo or Rochester; otherwise, a surgeon was called and he made the train trip. The kitchen or dining table was cleared and he did the best he could.

This situation occurred in the family of Miss Myra Coon when her brother, Doctor Mortimer Coon, died of a ruptured appendix in 1905. She had grown up, graduated from Medina High School, and taught school in the vicinity. In the late 1880's, she went to Buffalo and entered Buffalo General Hospital, graduating about 1889. For more than fifteen years she nursed in Buffalo hospitals and did private duty. She knew the leading physicians and surgeons very well, and they knew and respected her.

After her brother's death, she felt there was a need for some hospital facilities in Medina. As a result, she offered nursing care in a house on South Academy Street in 1907. Because a former patient made a monetary gift, she named her hospital "Mary Louise" after the donor.

Some babies were born there and illnesses treated. She needed more room. The next site of the "Mary Louise Hospital" was on the corner of West Center and Ann Street in the J Derr Lott house. Here, she acquired more equipment and succeeded in getting local doctors to cooperate in improving the care offered.

Her next move was to 225 Park and Prospect Street, and was owned by Mr. Ward. This house was demolished some years ago and the lot is now owned by Mrs. Gilbert.

The hospital on Park Avenue provided surgery, and many operations were performed. Doctors from Buffalo would come on the train when called by local physicians for consultation and surgery. In those days there was a train every two hours. Among them were Dr. Herriot C. Rooth and a Dr. Schwartz.

During this time, the Barge Canal was being built. Injuries were treated at the Hospital. One of the pieces of equipment was a large metal contraption used to treat rheumatism with steam heat. The patient was rolled into it on a stretcher. A curtain dropped, leaving the head and neck exposed. While he perspired, he was given water to drink. It was also used on those who had been celebrating too well but unwisely.

At this time she employed kitchen and nursing help. A pretty girl named Violet Rose presided over trays and a Mrs. Kane, wearing a big, white apron over a blue dress, gave nursing care. Her hair was as white as her apron. Dr. Coon's widow, also a graduate of Buffalo General, was sometimes called upon to help. There were many young girls who came to work for Miss Coon and who went on to later become registered nurses. Their admiration for her was to carry them on, into this honored profession.

The hospital had the reputation of serving exceptionally good food. A couple of young state engineers named Harry Nelson and George Kellogg, having been patients briefly, were sure they were developing ulcers and persuaded Miss Coon to let them come for dinners.

Then as now, a group of ladies organized to give help to the hospital. There was also a group of girls in their early teens, who helped to raise money for the hospital.

In 1912, one of the patients persuaded Miss Coon to consider matrimony. She started talking to local doctors and the village board. There were many things to iron out, but by now the community was hospital minded. They wanted their hospital to grow. After moving the hospital again, this time to the brick house on the corner of Eagle and Prospect Streets, the village underwrote the effort, and the Medina Memorial Hospital was formed. Medina assumed the responsibility of the care of its citizens, and Miss Coon became Mrs. Frederick Gordon and went to Chicago to live.

Today, with all the drugs and techniques, such an undertaking would be impossible. Cost of equipment would stagger an individual and wipe out his bankroll. Miss Coon had no bankroll when she began and she had none when she left. She did give Medina the first hospital care in the county by several years. She also gave the personal touch of love and understanding to those ill and in trouble.

Her memorial? Every so often, in the daily paper under news of years ago, there is an item about the "Mary Louise Hospital", Miss Coon Superintendant.

Myra Coon Gordon is buried in the family lot in Boxwood Cemetery with her father and mother, Uriah and Louise Coon, and her two brothers: Daniel and Dr. Mortimer Coon. Her only sister, Mrs. Cecelia Scofield, is buried at Philadelphia, New York. .

Her picture does not hang on the walls of the Medina Memorial Hospital with those who have given so much to make the hospital what it is today. She had no material wealth to give. But she did give all of Orleans County its first hospital.