

Orleans County Historical Association .

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Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mr. Fay C. Hollenbeck
13443 Ridge Road
Gaines, New York

Mr. Hollenbeck was born July 31, 1889.

The interview was conducted by Marjorie C. Radzinski, Albion.

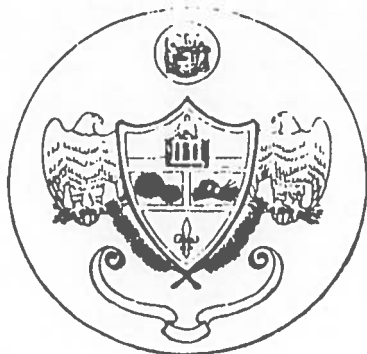
H Hollenbeck

R Radzinski

(NOTE: There is a second interview; Mr. H. and H. McAllister).



Mrs. Radzinski and Mr. Hollenbeck



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.

C. Hollenbach
Signed

6-17-80

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Margaret C. Edginske
INTERVIEWER

6-17-80

Date

R Mr. Hollenbeck, before you tell me about your occupation of farming, I would like you to tell me a little bit about yourself and your early years.

H I'll be 91 next month. I was born July 31, 1889. I was born in the Town of Gaines on the Ridge Road just east of Gaines Village. Most of my life has been spent in this vicinity only for a few years when I lived in Olean, and a few years in Lockport when my father was working for other people and I was a real small boy. We came back to Gaines before I was in my teens and then from then on I've lived in the vicinity of Gaines, and Waterport, and Clarendon, but all in Orleans County. I farmed it all my life. I never earned a \$1.00 an hour in my life. When I was 18 years old I worked for a farmer. I was the only man he had. I done everything there was to do and I got \$30.00 a month. Not an hour or a day, but \$30.00 a month. My board and my horse kept too, come to think about it. In those days we drove horses, all together, no automobiles.

R How about your wife, when you got married?

H My first wife was Beulah Miller and she lived on a adjoining farm so after I called on her I could walk home. Sometimes, though, we had the horse to take care of but usually I could walk home. It wouldn't be day-light either; I didn't stay till day-light, I walked home while it was still dark. When I was in my teens I lived a lot of years north of Waterport. And at that time there wasn't a telephone pole or a wire anywheres in the country. I well remember when they first strung the wires for the telephone. They called it the Home Telephone Company and there was a lot of opposition to it.

Some farmers, they didn't want the poles set on their land! When they had the poles ready to set, the farmer and his wife would go out and they'd jump down in to one of these holes; then the people that were trying to set the poles would go to another one. They'd run over and jump in that hole so they couldn't set the poles. Another man, named George Fuller, he gave them permission to set poles on his farm but he wanted them set right along by the fence, on the same line. In those days all the farmers mowed their own road-sides and he didn't want the poles out where they would bother him. But they did set them, about 4 foot outside of where he wanted them. The next morning they were all chopped down! Nobody see anybody chop them, but everybody had a pretty good idea who had done it. Then the Telephone Company reset them and they set them on the line of the fence where the farmer wanted them. That phone company they called it the Home Telephone. There was anywhere from 4 to 8 or 10 people on one line. Everybody had their individual rings and everybody on the line got that ring. Some of them would be like one long and two shorts, or three shorts and two longs. Everybody knew everybody's ring on their line and you could ring anybody on your line without calling "Central". Every home had a little telephone on the wall with a little crank on it; you could crank who ever you wanted and you could call anyone on your line. Of course there wasn't many secrets in those days. Everytime the phone rang and somebody would go to answer it, sometimes it would be 6 or 8 on the same line all listening. I don't know how much I can tell you about the telephone business although my father took a team of horses and a wagon and strung the wire for all the phones. When I was a youngster in the vicinity of Waterport there wasn't a telephone pole nor a wire anywhere in the country. Then after the Telephone Company got organized then they finally hooked up with the Bell people so you could get places outside



of the vicinity which, of course, at first you couldn't. You could just call the people in that vicinity on your call.

I worked with my father for several years. I quit Albion school, I was going to Albion High School, and my father always worked for other farmers and when he got \$1.00 a day for the year around that was top wages. He raised his family. He got a few privileges along with that money. He got his potatoes and his firewood. Firewood consisted of old rails and apple tree wood that they drew up and threw off at the back door and just as quick as Fay, myself, was old enough, they gave me a buck-saw and I had to saw the wood up so we could get it in the stove. It was full length when they brought it there, it was 8 or 10 feet long, and I had to cut it up so it would go in the cook-stove.

My father had a bad accident at the Waterport Crossing on account of a rail-road car that was illegally parked. He sued the rail-road and after the lawyer got his cut, my father had \$300.00. That was the most money that he ever had in his life at one time.

My mother and I talked him into quitting working for other farmers and start working for himself. I told him if he would ^{do} that, I would quit school. I was at that time in the Albion High School. So I quit school when I was about 16, and he and I went to farming on a farm of 80 acres, on shares. We got half, and the owner got half. We lived on it and finally accumulated a little money so that we could buy better horses, better machinery. At first my father took that \$300.00 and he went to auctions around and he picked up an old team of horses here and there, and some used machinery, and we hired the machinery and we done the best we could. As we farmed it, we built up a little reputation for honesty, I guess. Then we could buy stuff and give our notes for it. So then we worked into better horses and better machinery and the man that



(Mr. and Mrs.) Lewis and Belle Hollenbeck

(1915)

Fay Hollenbeck

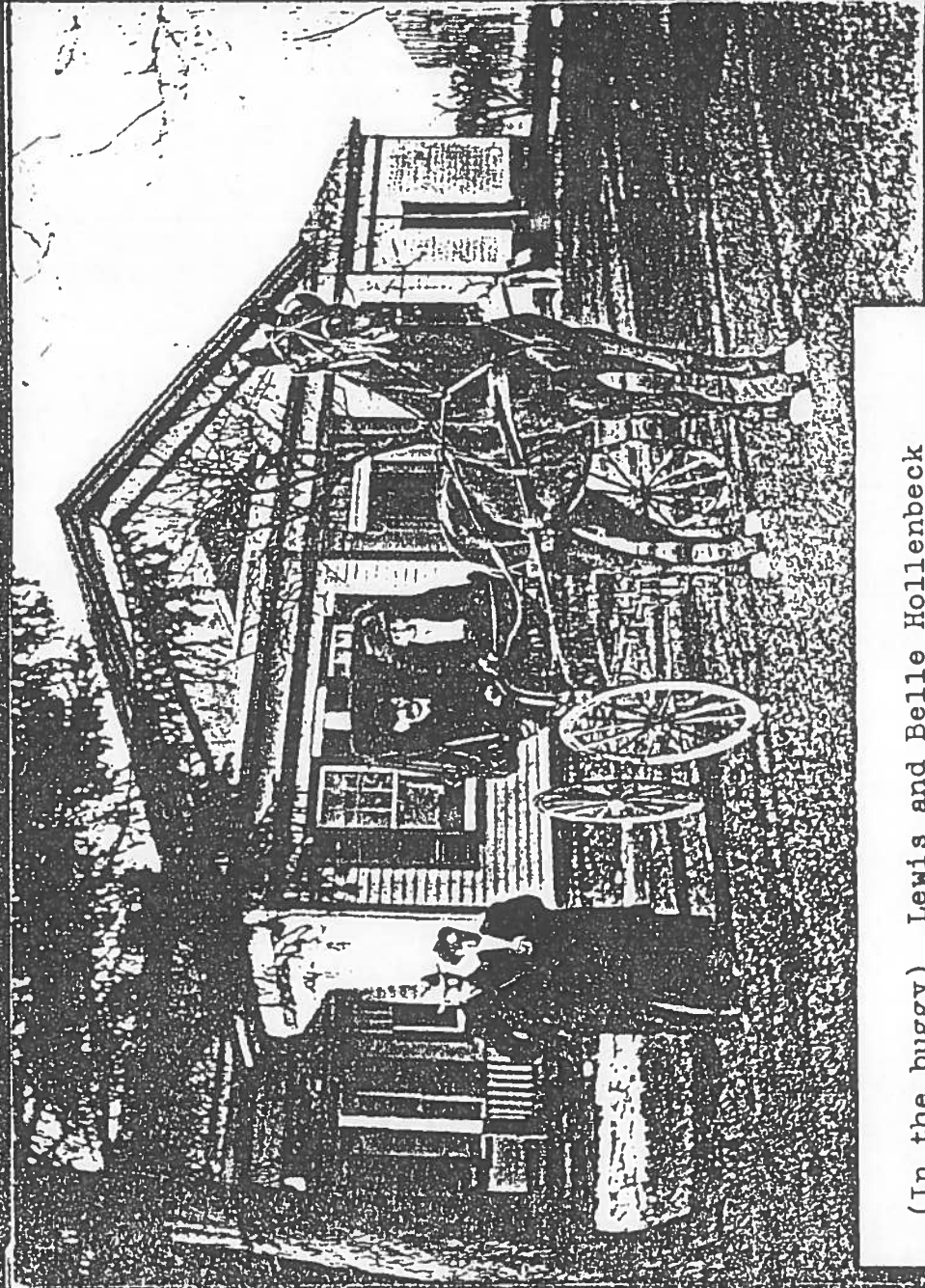
Ross Hollenbeck

80 acre farm died, we was there about 5 years I think; and he died and then we moved onto 180 acres, about twice as big a place and that was owned by another man named Fuller. We lived there two years and he died. So they said we were kind of tough on the Fullers!! At that time, after Andrew Fuller died, my father moved up on the Ridge Road on the Bullard Farm, and I moved 18 miles to Clarendon. I moved up there with 3 teams, I was 22 years old; I moved up there with 3 teams of horses, 2 hired men, a hired girl, a wife and a baby. I stayed in Clarendon, that was a 180 acre farm also - - - I stayed there three years. In the meantime my father's health got bad; he had a bad heart, so I moved back onto the Ridge into the tenant house of the farm where he lived.. That fall he died and I stayed on that farm, the Bullard Farm, for ten years. Of course in that time farming changed a lot. When I first started to farm and all the time I did farming, we worked with a one-furrow plow. Only in later years I did buy a Ford tractor that drove two plows. But that darn thing; I'd go out after supper thinking I was about to do some work and by the time I got it started I was tired out and it would be dark. So my Ford tractor never done any plowing for me much.

In the beginning there was a wooden frame made about 3 by 3 pieces of wood with spikes drove down through them, square spikes, and that was our drag. That was a Peg-Tooth Drag. Then in later years they come out with a Spring-Tooth Drag made on a steel frame with a dead-spring lever that you could regulate the depth of it. It was a lot better. The first drag was 17 tooth and they were slowly developed for a two horse drag. And then as the time went along they enlarged this drag so it got up to a 4-horse drag. Then one man would drive 4 horses and do the work that it used to take 2 men to do when they used a 17 tooth drag.

In the beginning, really before my time, they used





(In the buggy) Lewis and Belle Hollenbeck

Rose and Dry Fellows

Horse: "Barney", Lewis' pride and joy!

a reaper, and even before that they used a cradle. Every man to a cradle when they went to bale the grain; maybe 5 or 6 men would swing cradles till they got it cut. They'd lay these bundles off in piles and somebody else would come along and bind them. They had to bind them with the same stuff - - - like if they was cutting oats they'd take a handful of oatstraw and give it a funny twist and make a knot and use that to bind it. Really, I never did a great deal of hand binding. About the only work I done like that was when a Binder would skip. When I was first starting to farm it much, the Grain Binders were just coming in to style and they wasn't perfect by any means. The twine was very poor so there was lots of skips. It would kick out a bundle that wouldn't be tied. So that was the only hand tying I ever done. After the cradle era was over, they had a Self-Rake Reaper. They'd reap this grain and there was big rakes come around and raked it all up in a bundle at a time on one side.

Other farmers or their wives, or anybody they could get to work those days, come along and bound them.

When I moved into Clarendon I moved into a strange (NEW) town! I went down to the grocery store and I told the man where I lived, and what my name was, and how big a family I had. I said: "We'll have some eggs and some butter to sell but the majority of the stuff I want to get trusted for and I'll pay in the fall. And I want my wife to come here and buy my groceries and get trusted for them." I remember he was Floyd Gillis, he was the merchant there. He looked at me and he said: "Well you look as though you'd pay." He said: "You come and get anything you want."

SIDE TWO

H We was walking down the road. That made a nice wide place for the horses to travel in. There was no automobiles at all in those days. Afterwards the first automobile that I remember looked jus' about like a top buggy with no frills on it. The engine was under the seat and the crank over on one side and it had a hard rubber tire, just about like what was on the buggies in those days. Even some of the buggies when they were first put out had a whip socket.

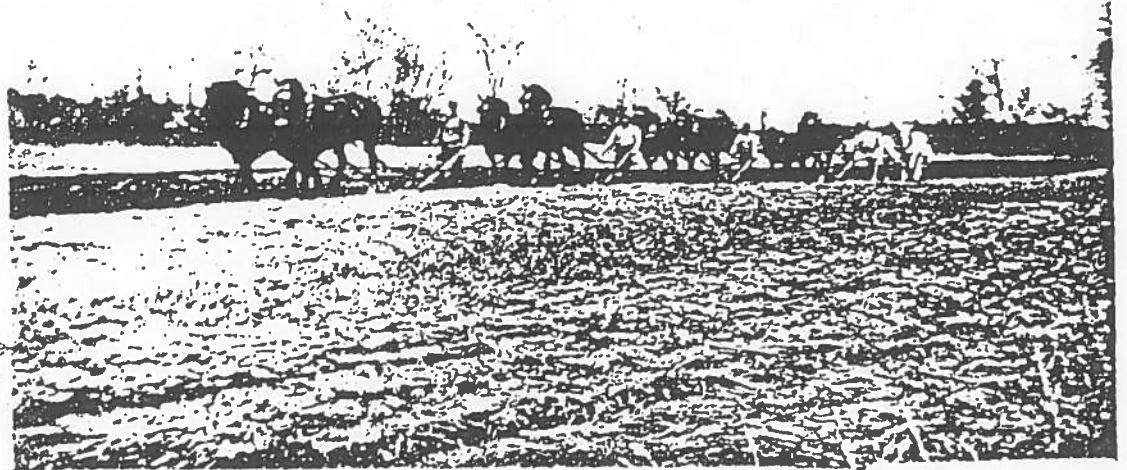
Buggies in those days had a whip socket, so they put one on the automobile for some unknown reason, but that's what they do.

My father was driving one of those rigs that when they got with the horse and the automobile. When he got started in farming with that \$300.00 he was driving one of those buggies, and the horse run and kicked and had quite a bad time.

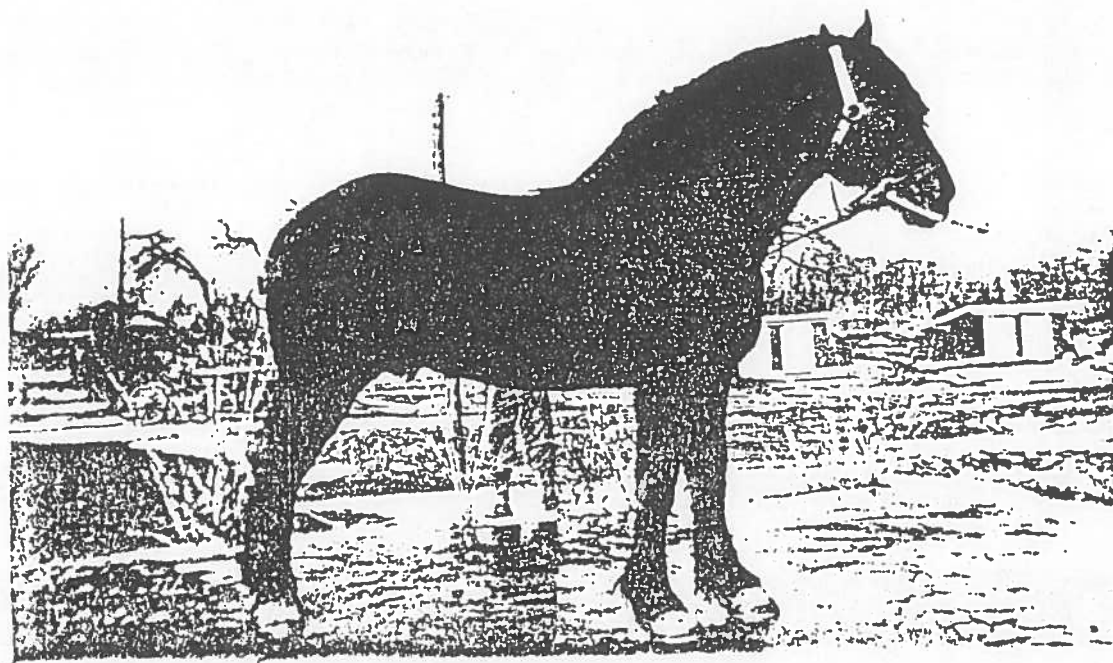
So automobiles gradually improved and they had the nuematics tires on them. You used to always have to carry a spare tire and a spare tube with you because if you went ten miles you were pretty sure to have a flat tire and you'd have to stop and take that tire off and put on another and a new tube, and take your pump and pump it up by hand. That was a lot different than it is now-a-days when they just change the wheel in a few minutes.

R How about your raising of horses ?

H After I moved back from Clarendon onto the Bullard Farm on the Ridge, I stayed there ten years. In that ten years I bought some Hemlock trees and cut them and drew them and built me a house on the corner where it is now. On the corner of the Waterport Road and Route #104. One of my children was born in this house, only one of them, my youngest one who is now in Seattle. During this period in



Percheron work horses

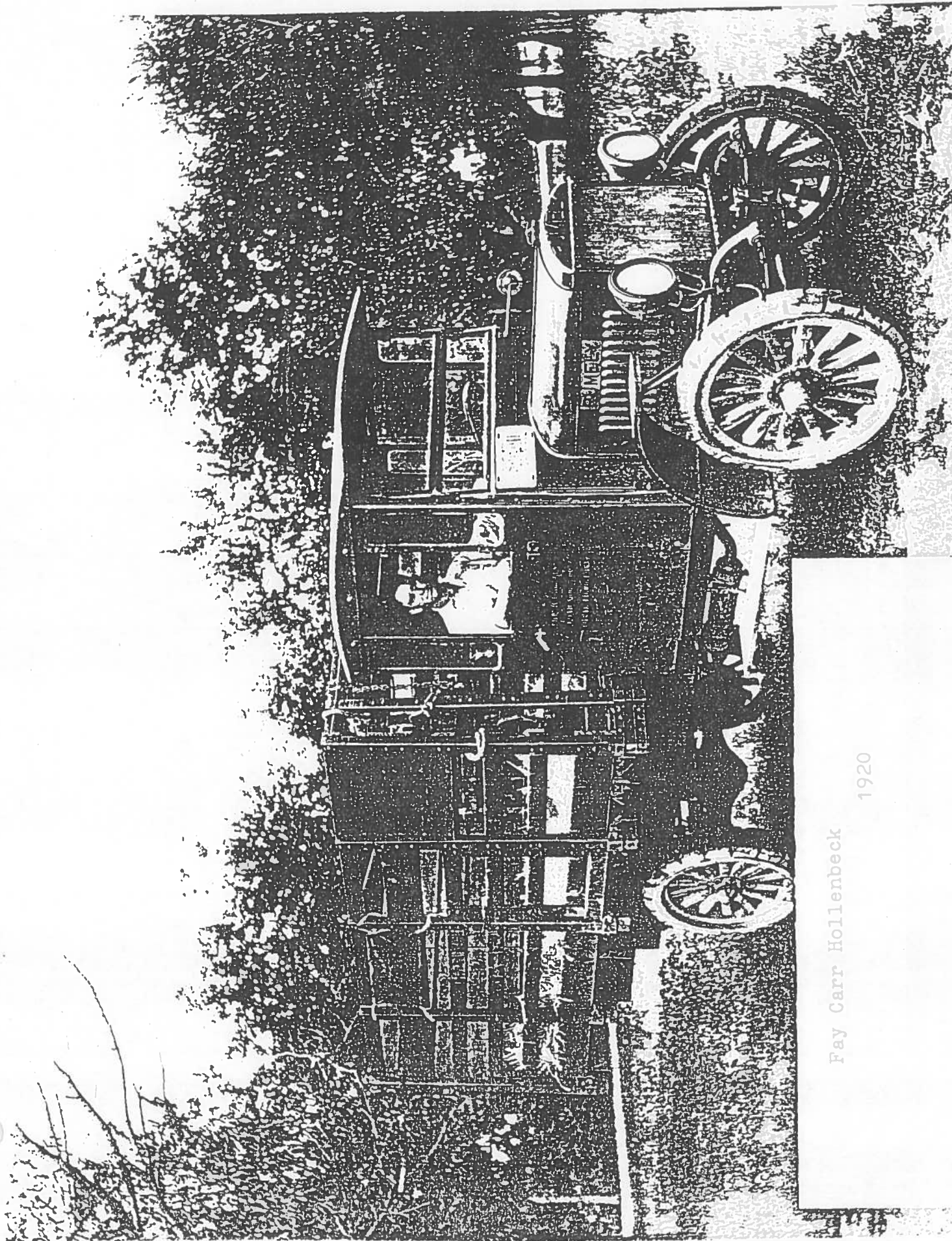


Registered Percheron horse

time when I was on the Ridge, I got into the raising of Percheron Horses. I went out to Ohio and bought four registered Percheron mares with foal. Then I went down to Cornell and bought a registered stallion and started raising colts. I built them up to 30 head of horses that I had on this place.. About that time when they reached their peak, tractors commenced to come in and the horses were on the down grade. I sold good, big Percheron horses that would weigh 1800 pounds for \$40.00 a piece. If I had bought Holstein heifers when I bought those horses, I would have been a lot better off. Then afterwards I bought a farm down north of here, 200 acres, and started to raise cattle and that was a good turning point because the dairy business was on the ups and I did sell milk for \$3.00 a hundred, That was awful cheap, but it kept getting better and better, and finally it got up where it is now. Now of course they pick it all up with the trucks, come right to the barn and siphon it right out of the big holding tank into the truck tank. They go all over the county, all over the country, I guess.

R Mr. Hollenbeck, you used to transport cattle to Buffalo ?

H Oh yeah. During those years I got into the racket of buying livestock and I bought calves and hogs and sheep and everything else, and took them to the Buffalo Stock Market. I remember one item - - - I took up a load of lambs one time and the buyer wouldn't give me what I wanted for them. I was going to loose money and I wouldn't sell them to him. But he thought he had me over a barrel, of course, because I had them there and he says: "What are you going to do with them ?" And I says: "I'm going to load them back on my truck and take them home." And I did. I placed them out to other farmers and we weighed them in



Fay Carr Hollenbeck
1920

and I paid them so much a pound for all they put on them. When they got them fatter, I took them back to Buffalo and I got a better price for them. So I finally came out all right! But the buyer up there, he was from Boston I remember, he said: "What are you going to do with them?" And I said: "I'm going to load them up and take them home." And that's what I did. But I bought a lot of stock for 4 or 5 years. I had then what was a hard-tire-truck, and that was quite a job to go to Buffalo with it.

R Did you have somebody go with you when you went up to Buffalo, another man ?

H Oh hardly ever. Once in a while somebody wanted to go.

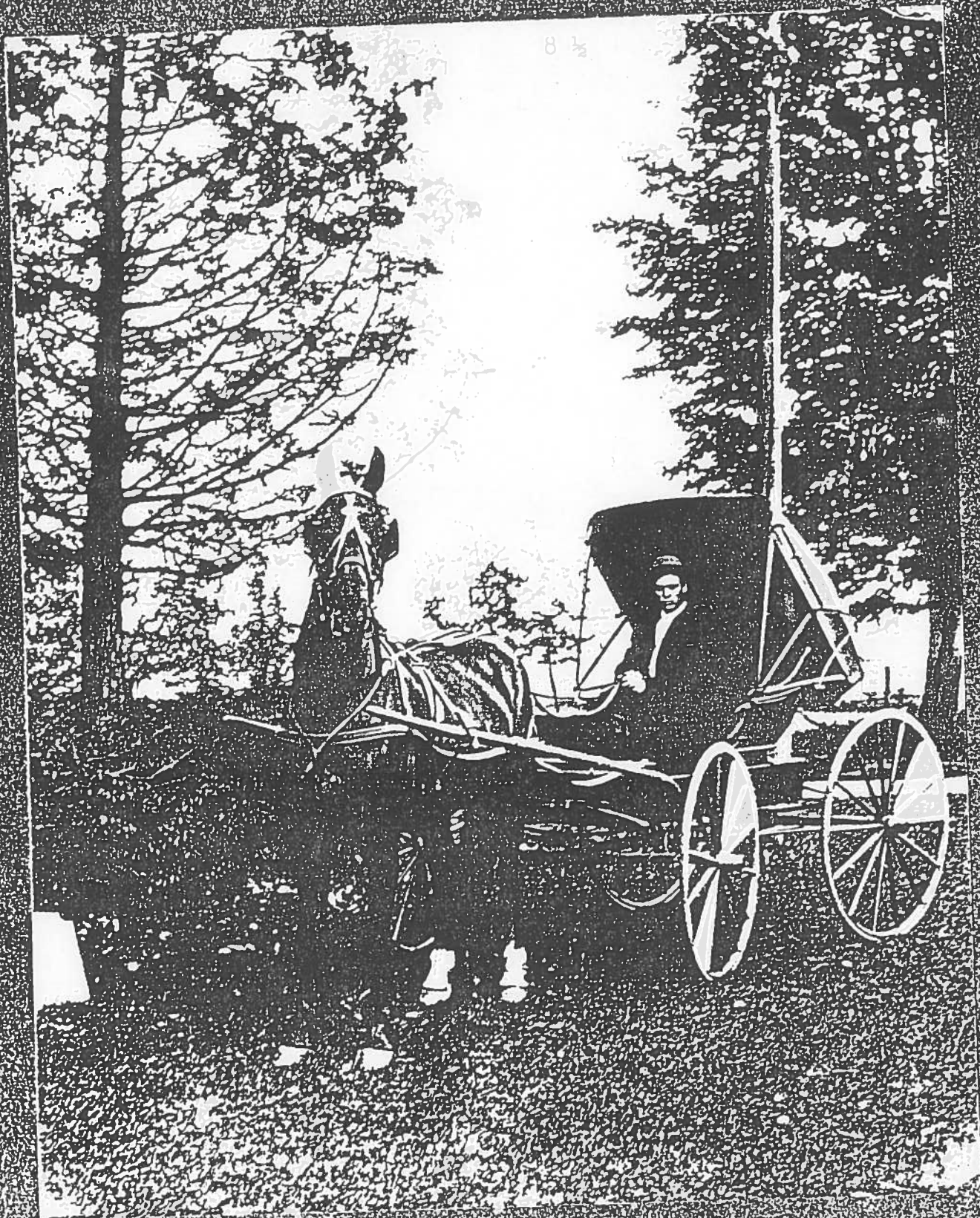
R How about Clayton Woodruff ?

H Well Clayton went with me. How did you happen to know about that ?

R He told me.

H Oh he did ? Several different people went with me. I know one man, his name was Rivers, and he was black, and we was going up there after dark and he says: "Suppose somebody holds us up ?" I says: "If they hold us up then you just keep your eyes and your mouth shut and they won't know that you're in there." I had a lot of people ride with me out of curiosity you know. I very seldom hired anybody to go with me. But after a few years Cecil Park learned to drive my truck and then he had to make these Buffalo trips and I'd stay home and do my farming. In the evenings, I'd go out and buy stock from other farmers. I gradually worked from a hard-tire-truck to a better truck. I think the first Ford I ever bought, I paid \$300.00 for it. Seems to me that was what the cost was. A Ford Touring Car. And then we gradually got into better ones. I've had several cars. My family used to laugh at me; I'd buy a car and I'd say, "this is the last one I'm ever going to get." Then I'd get rid of that and get another one. So in my day I've had 3 Buicks and 2 Cadillacs. Well in these





Horse is the grandson of Dan Patch // Mr. Fay Hollenbeck

late years when these Fords got good, I got back into Fords but they were some different than the first ones I ever had.

They tell me how good I look and I tell them: "You can't tell by the looks of a frog how far he can jump." I look a lot better than I am I guess.

Betty says I don't ^{Look} much different than I ever did but it seems as though I must. Look at the pictures of me in there.

But he has always looked the same, no matter how old or how young, he's always looked the same. Like my husband Ross (his brother) as a child you would never know him as the name he was; not a bit the same.

(NOTE: Betty Emerson speaking here. She is a *sister* in-law who often comes in to help care for Mr. H.).

R Mr. Hollenbeck, how did you happen to build a house on this particular corner ?

H Well I owned this piece of land and I thought this would be a nice place for a home. A nice spot you know. But at that time I can readily see why nobody thought so because there was a locust thicket. This place was a wilderness all grown up to everything. At that time it was owned by an old lady who lived down here on the hill, and there was no building here until I built here. I built all the buildings on this corner; the barns, the garage, everything. As quick as I bought it, the town says, "you've got to cut that corner off; it's a blind corner." The old lady when she owned it, they never said anything about it. They knew she couldn't do it but as quick as I got it then they said: "Clean it up." So I cleaned it up.

R How many acres on this corner ?

H I've only got 33 now. But I've got a 400 acre farm,

or did have, down here where my daughter, you know Frieda - - - do you know Frieda Hobbs ?

R No I don't.

H My son-in-law, he's dead now. But, well my grandson works it now. But I sold that to them. All I've got left now is 33 acres.

R You planted these trees on this property ?

H All these trees around this corner I planted. All but that one; the one north of the drive-way there. It was there. But all of the rest of them I planted. Look at them now.

R They are beautiful Maple trees.

H Yeah, I went in the woods and dug them up. Found them all in the woods. Dug them up and brought them up and transplanted them.

When I got ready to build this house, this land all fell away from the Ridge, sloped gradually away. It was really high land but the roads were considerably higher. As I was building this house a man come along one day and he says: "Couldn't you find any place to build a house only down in that damn hole ?" I've often wondered if he has ever been by since. Of course I drew in all this fill around here. This was down low and now it's all level. I drew it all in here with trucks and horses. I've got pictures in that book of horses drawing stone up this north road to lay up this wall around the back here. I layed that wall up, you see, to the level of this around here.

R And you drew the plans right from the start to the finish for this home, didn't you ?

H Yes, that's right. I don't know how I did it. I know that I drew plans almost every night and the next night I'd think of something different and I'd draw it different and then I finally come up with this.

R And you have a how many bed-room home ?

H Eight.

R Eight bedrooms!

H I needed them when I had a family and a hired man.

R How many hired men did you have?

H Oh, I had a half dozen there. Now here, I guess three is the most I ever had in here. Then, I had the two daughters and the boys, and they all had separate rooms.

R Who did the cooking for all these people?

H My wife.

R No help?

H Only the girls when the girls got bigger. We had a hired girl at first when we was down on the Bullard farm, but never one at this house. No, I don't believe so. (Mr. Hollenbeck addresses Betty Emerson). Do you remember any hired girl here, Betty? I don't think I ever had a hired girl in this house.

One of my boys, my youngest boy, is the only one that was born here. The rest of them were all scattered around; all in Carlton and Clarendon.

.....

(end of taped interview, with Mrs. Radzinski)

(NOTE: a second interview with Fay Hollenbeck was conducted by Mrs. H. McAllister at a later date).

This 30 minute taped interview was transcribed by Lysbeth Hoffman of Waterport, New York.