

Orleans County Historical Association

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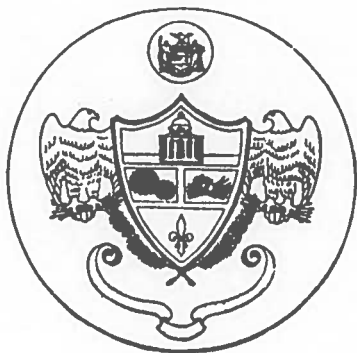
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Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

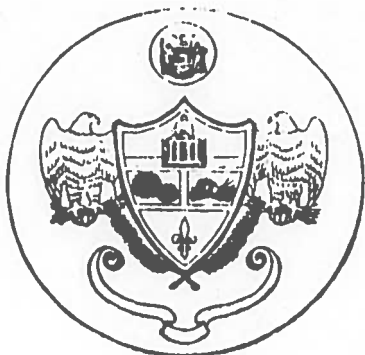
Mrs. Katharine Acer Newmeyer
309 West Center Street
Medina, New York 14103

Katharine Acer Newmeyer was born June 6, 1892.

This interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina.



Mrs. Katharine Acer Newmeyer



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.

Katherine Deer Newman
Signed

March 5, 1982
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister
INTERVIEWER

March 5, 1982
Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, March 5, 1982.
Helen McAllister of Medina, New York is interviewing Mrs.
Katharine Acer Newmeyer of 309 West Center Street, Medina.
Mrs. Newmeyer is almost 90 years old.

M Katharine when and where were you born?

K I was born in Shelby on June 6th, 1892 on a Monday.

M What doctor attended your mother?

K Doctor Edward Munson

M Did you have a nickname for him?

K "Docky."

M What about your home at that time; can you tell us briefly about it? Was this the homestead?

K Yes, this was the Acer homestead. My father was born in the same house. Grandfather had it built, that's all I know

M What was your father's name?


K V. A. Acer, really it was Volney Alonzo. He didn't especially like that name. Just the fact that my mother had her calling cards made up Mrs. Volney Alonzo Acer dried him off. Everybody called him, "V. A. Acer" and they usually wrote it that way.

M What about when he took tests in school; did he sign with his full name?

K No, he just signed it V. A. Acer, initials and then for the regents examination he signed it V. A. Acer, and they wrote in and said they didn't accept any initials for the report and would they please send the boys real name! The teacher wrote back; "This poor boy has no name, nothing but initials." So when the report came back from Albany, it came back as Victor A. Acer; and so my father said at that time if they ever had a boy his Name would be Victor.

M What was your mother's name?

Katherine, we called her Kate. Katherine Elizabeth Bowen.
Her father was Adna Bowen.

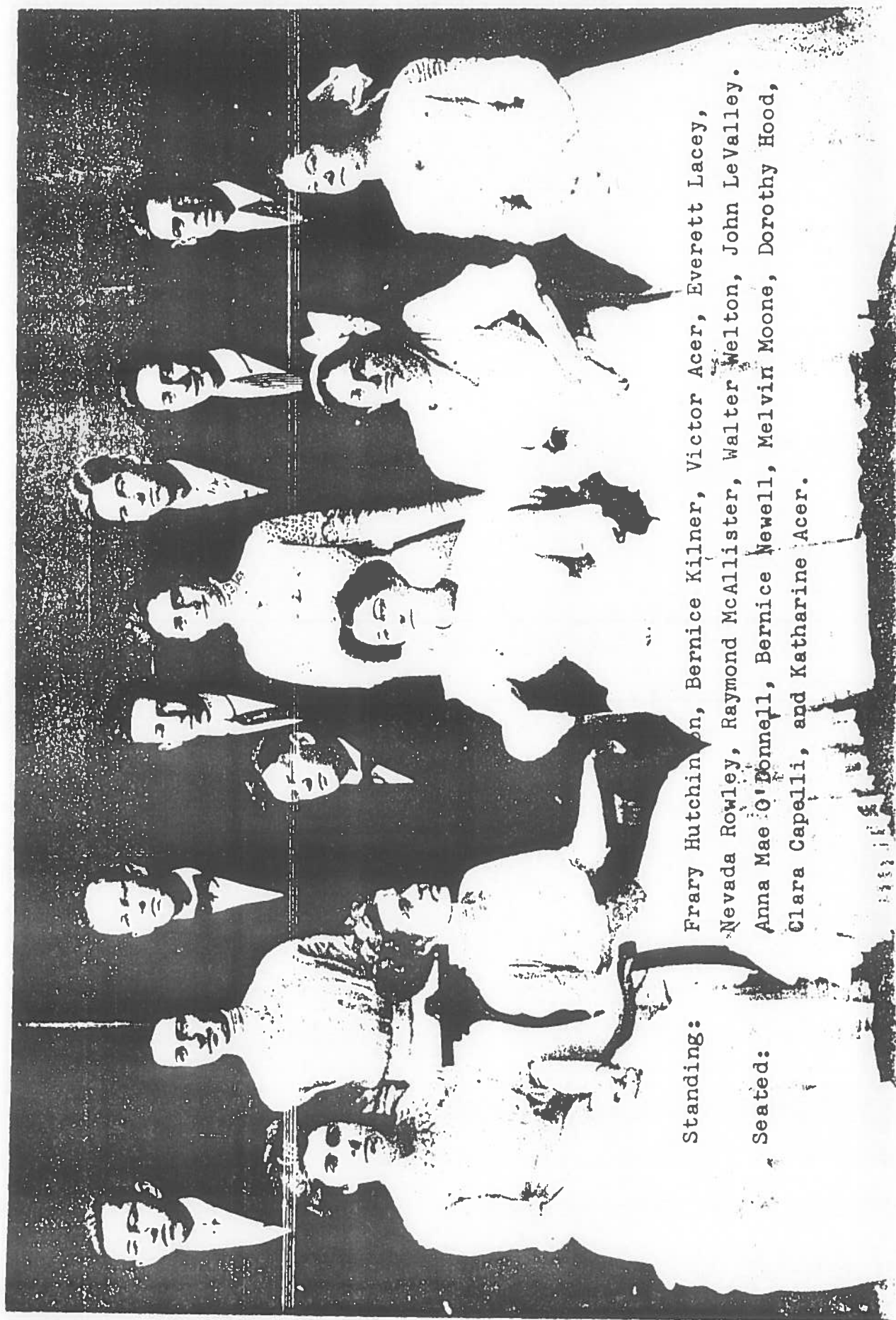
M You were telling me that your grandfather, Adna Bowen made a Humerous will. 

K Yes, I suppose it is still down in Albion, a very humorous will. The only thing I remember was that he left to John Manderville, better known as "mean devil", fifty dollars to buy a rope to Hang himself!

- M You had a brother that was born about a year after you?
- K Yes, Victor was born, 9th of July the next year. Also in Shelby and also attended by Doctor Munson.
- M Katharine, I believe you went through the Medina School system and graduated with the class of 1910 and you have given the Medina Historical Society a beautiful picture of your graduating class. Now, after your high school graduation, how come you didn't just stay home; what did you do?
- K Both Victor and I wanted to go to college and Victor decided that he wanted to go to Cornell. Father had a sister out at the University of Illinois whose husband was one of the professors and she wrote to father and suggested that I come to Illinois. So I did.
- M Did you live with her?
- K Only my first year, because you couldn't live in a sorority house; then I moved into a sorority house.
- M What was the name of the sorority?
- K Sigma Kappa. Rah! Rah! Rah!
- M How many were in your graduating class from college?
- K More than a few, up in the thousands.
- M What was your major?
- K Home Economics.
- M Did you hope to be a teacher?
- K Yes, I did.
- M So you were going to be graduating from college in Illinois, I suppose you invited all of your family to come?
- K I can't remember asking anybody except Uncle Mort. He came every year. You see, my grandmother was his sister and so he would come to see her.
- M We didn't say who your grandmother was. Your grandfather was Adna Bowen, (humorous will), and then he married your grandmother Eunice Post Bowen. Her son was M. A. Bowen.
Was that her only son?
- K She had twins but they didn't live long; one lived to be two years old and one didn't make two years even. I remember their names, I remember grandmother talking about Abe and Andy; Abiel and the other was Andrew.

Medina High School Graduating Class of 1910

2 1/2



Standing:

Seated:

Frery Hutchinson, Bernice Kilner, Victor Acer, Everett Lacey,
 Nevada Rowley, Raymond McAllister, Walter Welton, John LeValley.
 Anna Mae O'Donnell, Bernice Newell, Melvin Moone, Dorothy Hood,
 Clara Capelli, and Katharine Acer.

M So your great Uncle Mort came to your graduation and then what happened?

K Well we came back to Medina and I said I was going to get a job to teach school and he said, "Oh No ~~You're~~ going back to California with me." And I thought to myself, "oh I wouldn't want to go way out there!" But then I thought, I would like to see it. So I went and backpacked to California in 1914.

M How did you go?

K Went by train to Santa Fe.

M Tell us a little about your great-Uncle Mort.

K His name was Morton Everall Post and his nickname was "Colonel". He was born, December 25th, 1840 in West Henrietta. His father and mother came to Shelby, and he went to school here. He was just a little boy when they came here.

Mc He didn't stay around here?

K No, when he finished school, I suppose he had enough money to get out. He went to Saint Joseph, Missouri. I don't know if he went on a wagon train. He got a job driving for some firm that was foraging and he saved money and bought a farm.

M He had quite some experiences out there didn't he?

K Well he had experiences with the Indians; he was attacked by the Indians several different times. One time they got away from the Indians by driving out onto the ice of a pond and the Indians didn't follow them. And one time they scalped one of his men!

M Is that when you used the term earlier, trepanned?

K Trepanned, uh-huh.

M That must have been a horrible experience, did the man live?

K Yes, he had kind of a skull thing here; I suppose when they scalped what they did was to take this center thing and they evidently didn't cut far enough to kill him, 'cause he was alright. Another time they caught one of the Indians and they shot him and so they hawled him on the operating table and they wanted to take the bullet out. They were giving him whiskey for an anesthetic and somebody said, "You've given him enough." The Indian said, "Heap big snake bit me, Give me more!"

M You said that your great Uncle Mort crossed the plains, twenty-three

K times. That is from St. Joe, to Denver; that is what I call crossing the plains. He was there when the golden spike of the Union Pacific and Santa Fe. was wedged in 1869. (railroad)

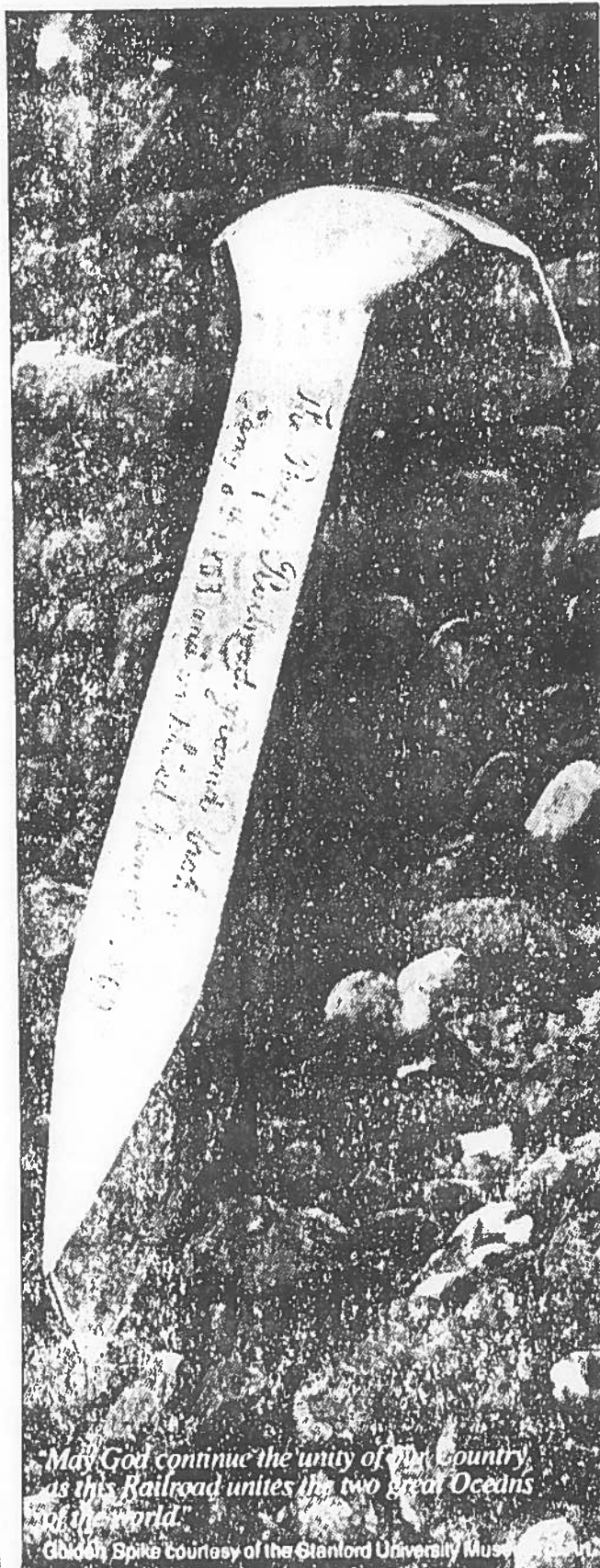
Myth:

19th-century land grants are 20th-century subsidies for freight railroads.

N.Y. Times

3/10/'82

3 1/2



Fact:

Railroads paid back those "Grants" by more than ten times their value.

On May 10, 1869, at Promontory, Utah, the Golden Spike was ceremoniously driven to open the first modern transportation link between East and West. This completed the transcontinental railroad and changed the history of the United States. Millions of eager Americans and immigrants poured into the West—to farm, homestead, mine and make things. The two shining steel rails linked this wilderness with the marketplaces of America.

Farsighted government investments called "Land Grants" made it possible. But the myth persists they were gifts. In fact, they were sound, hard-driven business investments in the future of a nation. And, for nearly 100 years, the U.S. Government and taxpayers earned a high rate of return on those investments in the form of greatly reduced rail rates. Railroads were required to transport government personnel and freight at 50 percent of established rates, and mail at 80 percent. This included the massive numbers of troops and unprecedented freight volume carried during World War II.

By the time the reduced rate provisions of the land grant acts finally were repealed in 1946, the debt had been repaid by a sum nearly 10 times the original value of the land, according to government estimates. Furthermore, less than 8 percent of today's rail mileage stems from those long-ago land grants.

The U.S. Government got everything it wanted from railroad land grants—and more. The policy opened the West, increased the value of adjacent public lands, and earned the taxpayers a return on their investment of some 1000 percent.

For more facts, write: Paid In Full, Dept. 67, Association of American Railroads, 1920 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

Surprise:

Railroad land grants were one of the best investments the U.S. Government ever made.

M In Denver he met his wife, who was Amelia Nichols

Did they live in Denver then for a while?

K Evidently they left very shortly after their marriage and went to Cheyenne, Wyoming to make their home.

M What was his business there?

K I don't really know except that they had a horse ranch.

They had Percheron horses. He built a home there in Cheyenne. They had no children.

K From Cheyenne they went to Washington.

M Oh, yes, tell us about that! He became what, a senator?

K No, a territorial representative; Wyoming was a territory.

M He served more than one term didn't he?

K Yes, he refused a third term. He was asked to run a third time but refused because he couldn't afford it. You had to furnish your own transportation, your own outfit to drive around in. You didn't go around in automobiles with a chauffeur, and they furnished their own money, everything their own home and all. They only got just a very little pay and they said Uncle Mort's outfit and the Chinese outfit were the most beautiful ones in silver harness and things like that. Sterling silver.

M He must have been thought a great deal of because I believe you told me that there is a museum out there...

K Yes, I guess it is the Wyoming Museum, because they wrote to me to get all the things about the Black Hills. You see I always thought it was interesting that he dug the first gold out of the Homestead mine in the Black Hills and sold the mine to Mrs. Phoebe Hearst (the mother of William Randolph Hearst). He had a bank in Cheyenne; I know he had a bank, because he had a five dollar gold piece from 1805 which he saw while he was there and that was the date of his father's birth so he always kept that gold piece.

M Is that in the museum now?

K No, I had the piece of gold and diamonds in a box and I used to keep the box in my dresser and I would shake it like this (demonst to see that they were there, I wouldn't open it up every time and one day I thought I would take a look and see how some of the things were and there was nothing but little stones, Someone had taken all of it! And I have no idea when because all the time I was shaking stones. There were cuff links and diamond pins and things like that.

Newmeyer



Morton Everall Post

M You did send a lot of his things to the museum?

K Yes, I sent them, the bank statements from the Black Hills; when they were in the Black Hills they had a bank there and he was President of the bank and I sent them the books from there and I sent the stationary from the Percheron Horses. He had saved a lot of clippings from the Indians you know, from the different ones. I sent them everything I could find.

M Was your Uncle Mort instrumental in getting Yellowstone National Park developed in Wyoming?

K Yes, he was very interested in having it belong to the state of Wyoming and managed to do that.

M Did he talk about that?

K The only thing he ever said about that was when we went to Yellowstone Park. He said ——— to me, "This is Wyoming and I saw that they had it in Wyoming."

M He must have been a very strong person.

K Yes, he was.

M Was he quite tall?

K No, short and fat. And he kissed everybody, every woman. I said to him, "I wish you wouldn't kiss everybody that comes here, I really do, I don't like it at all." I said, "Did anyone ever come here, a woman, that you didn't kiss?" He said, "I can't think of anybody that ever escaped." And one night in the night he yelled, "Katharine, Katharine, my God, come quick!"

I thought he was having a heart attack or something and I jumped out of bed and ran into see him and he said, "You know I never kissed Mrs. Perry's mother!" And that was the Mrs. Perry the Mrs. Zuba Perry that lives here in Medina. Wasn't that funny. He was very humorous; Uncle Mort was very humorous. He kept people laughing, but he was very set in his ways too. He was right; he was always right.

M Is that what drew you to go to California?

K Well, I wanted to see it and after I had been there a little over a year I wanted to come home and he said, "You know, you haven't seen Yellowstone. Wouldn't you like to go there?" I don't mean Yellowstone I mean Yosemite. And I said, "OH I want to see Yosemite;" so then I stayed another few months and I saw Yosemite. He would always find something to keep me there.

So I was there two years before I ever came home for a visit.

M You came in the summer-time usually?

K Yes, you see he had the Mission Vineyard Company.

You see, it started in September when the grapes were getting ripe and see we had a thousand acres of grapes.

M You had to come before the grapes were ready. Was he Married at that time?

K Well Mrs. Post, his first wife had died and he had remarried, the second time but I don't know anything about when he married. I only know he found his wife in bed with a man after they were married and he said to her, "I will send you \$500 a month and if that doesn't suit you, get a divorce." He walked out and said, "I never want to see you again." And so one day we had a letter from her and she said she couldn't live on five hundred a month and she had to have \$750 and would he increase her to \$750. He told me to write to her and tell her that instead of increasing it he was reducing it to \$300! She wrote back that she had two pills and she would commit suicide and blame it on him. So he said to me, "I wonder if you would mind driving up to Fresno and seeing her. See if you can't talk some sense into her; that I don't have the money to give her money like that and we have other things to take care of etc." I could tell when I saw her that she took dope. When she talked to me she beat herself all the time on the chest.

M Did she get a divorce?

K I don't know anything about her except Uncle Mort sent her the \$300 up until he died. Then she started right in after he died writing for half of his estate, and only one-fourth of his estate was community because he only had 1/4 of his estate when he married her. She fought to get more and she kept getting attorneys all the time and they kept eating up what she had. The final straw was - my attorney was Ralph Kohmyer and the bank we had the trust fund in attorney was Steinmyer.

I had married by now and my name was Newmeyer. When they called the case her attorney who was a Jew, none of us were Jews but her attorney was. His name was Jacobs and when they announced the case against Kohmyer, Steinmyer and Newmeyer, he withdrew; That was much to much for him!

M You were a young attractive lady with red hair; did someone name you Brick?



- K Yes that was M. A. Bowen. He always called me "Brick-Top".
- M So you went out to California; What was the home like that you're Uncle had?
- K Well we rented an apartment, then finally we rented a home because you see we didn't want to live at the ranch. We had a big home at the ranch but we didn't want to live there and so we rented and then we finally bought a home there. This was at Los Angeles. After Uncle Mort got so he wasn't very well he deeded me four lots and I built a house on one of the lots.
- M Was this the ranch land?
- K He had a orange grove and it was there. He had property down in (cotton land), the Imperial. He was really a very interesting man. He told me if I built the house with my own money, which I had inherited, that he would rent it of me and that would be an income for me from the house. That was in Alhambra where the Orange Grove was. We sub-divided the Orange grove into 60 lots and we sold one of the lots to Amelia Earhart and we had to sue her 'cause she didn't pay. She paid. I may have met her but so many people came in and out that I don't remember. She was a famous aviatrix.
- M When you went out to California you said that your Uncle had a great many friends and some of the people who visited were extremely interesting persons.
- K Well he went around the world a couple times. Uncle Mort took two trips around the world. He met a lot of people on these ships. One was George Roper of the Roper Range and he visited us for a week. He had one arm off. He said it was burned when he was a young boy. I remember sitting at the table and Uncle Mort had broken his arm and I had to cut up his meat for him. I turned to Mr. Roper and I said, "Would you like me to cut your meat?" I was just being kind. He said, "Why, I've cut it all my life, I don't need any body cutting it up now." And he said, "I don't even see why one needs two arms any more than a cow needs two tails." I said, "In fly-season wouldn't two tails be kind of nice?" (C)
- M How did he manage? How did he cut his meat?
- K Like this; he just bore down with one hand and the way he put on his coat, just lift it up so. He had done it all his life. George Roper had the Roper Range in Rockford, Illinois.
- M You also said ~~Senator~~ ^{General} John Pershing came.
- K Well Uncle Mort's partner was Senator Warren in the Percheron

Horses and Pershing was his son-in-law.

M Do you remember anything about Senator Pershing?

K Just that he was very dark and tall and straight and quite dignified. I always had a feeling that Uncle Mort didn't like him very much.

M Katharine, did your Uncle have servants to help with the house work and preparing the food for your guests?

K We had a housekeeper always, then if we had extra people we just hired extra help to come in. We always had a chauffeur and he always helped.

M Did they live in the house?

K They usually lived in a apartment over the garage. I never did the cooking or anything except try to play the piano. I thought I would like to learn to sing and the first piece that I learned was "Gods Promises" and I always was playing that and singing it and Uncle Mort said, "I wish to Heaven God hadn't promised you anything!"

M Now, that wasn't very nice!

You said your Uncle also owned an Olive Company.

K Yes, he was president of the American Olive Company and he had an Olive grove too. He was involved in a Oil Co. The 57 Petroleum Oil Company. These were all in California.

M What part did you play in all this besides going to see his former wife?

K I just had a good time. I was always hostess for any time he entertained but we did most of our entertaining at the Johnathan Club. One of the old clubs in Los Angeles. The Johnathan Club and the California Club were the two old clubs that started in California and he joined the Johnathan Club. The Huntingtons were the leaders, you know the Huntington Library and the Southern Railroad. They served lunches and dinners. If I wanted to visit somebody awhile, Uncle Mort would go up to the Johnathan Club and stay. It was a men's Club. I could go in the ladies entrance only the part where they let the ladies go. When I went with Uncle Mort, we had to separate; I had to go in the ladies entrance and up the ladies elevator. Probably some of the men were in bathing suits and had been swimming. They might be on the men's elevator and they didn't want any woman getting on there.

M Can you describe what you wore when you went to dinner there?

K Whatever I had unless it was a formal dinner, just a street dress.



K It wasn't a dress up thing. I seldom wore a hat but I nearly always wore gloves but it wasn't a dress up thing.

M Did you ride horses when you were in California?

K No, I didn't. I rode once in awhile out at the ranch. I would get on some of the old mules out there.

M What about your own personal social life? You said you had some friends.

K I had a lot of friends, college friends and I belonged to a Bridge Club and when I entertained the Club it was at the Johnathan Club usually. Uncle Mort would make the arrangements in a special dining room. I would take my friends there for luncheons and he had a car and chauffer which I could use because Uncle Mort was playing dominoes most of the time at the Johnathan Club. Nearly every summer I came back to Medina to visit, after the first two years. Sometimes twice a year for a few weeks. Sometimes Uncle Mort came with me and sometimes he didn't and I came until he had a stroke and then I never came back for nine years. I came on the train. My first airplane trip was with my brother. He came out after Uncle Mort died and we came on the first plane run by instruments. They drove it by instruments; they were calling, telling them what to do from the ground. They would take the passengers up and let them sit there and watch for awhile, and listen.

M I believe, you said your Uncle Mort died on March 9, 1933 and that there was a terrific earthquake at Long Beach at that time. Would you tell us about it?

K The newspaper came out and said that Colonel Post died suddenly from shock and exposure in the earthquake. That wasn't true. He was in bed, unconscious, and didn't even know there was an earthquake. He had a stroke before. It was a strange thing. He came in the living room and said, "I don't feel very good."

I said, "Shall I call Dr. Alexander?" He said, "OH NO. Doctors are only guessers, said I don't want him." I said, "Are you sure?"

He said "Yes, so I went on about whatever I was doing and when I came back he said, "What time is the Doctor coming?" I said, "Well, I haven't called him. You said you didn't want him, he was just a guesser." He said, "Well, I want him to come." I said, "Now he is over at Downey at the hospital." I said, "I will call Downey and tell him to stop on his way back to Alhambra, to come to the house." The doctor came and sat down

- K He talked to Uncle Mort and took his pulse and all that kind of stuff and the Doc said to me, "You know Colonel and I would like to have a high ball; will you fix it for us?" I fixed them a high-ball and he said, "I want Colonel to go back to bed and I'll help him." I said, "Why I can get him back all right." He said, "No I'll take care of him." Then he came back and said to me, "Colonel is dying; most of his organs have stopped functioning."
- M How old was your Uncle at this time
- K He was 92. The Doctor said, "They will probably all stop within 24 hours anyway."
- M Did you realize this was happening?
- K I didn't. I went in and sat down beside of him on a little stool by the bed and took hold of his hand. He said, "The Doc told you I was dying didn't he?" I said, "Yes, he did Uncle Mort." "No use of me telling him different. He said, "Well, I knew it too." He said, "I want you to make me a promise." I said, "Uncle Mort, PLEASE don't make me make a death bed promise. That is not right because you don't know what's going to happen." I said, "It's just wrong for anyone to make a deathbed promise!" He said, "You can make this one." I said, "alright." He said, "I don't want you to have any cemetery happings; when I'm gone bury me and forget it. Remember all the good times we had and don't be thinking about cemeteries and getting flowers and etc.. Forget all about it." I thought that was a very nice thing for him to say. I never went to the cemetery afterwards. He was buried in a mausoleum and I never went back.
- M Did he have a large funeral?
- K Oh yes, it was quite a large funeral but it was by invitation only. Private funeral. We were afraid of Mrs. Post coming. The Doctor was afraid she might come and demand that she run the funeral.
- M Did Mrs. Post ever commit suicide or do any of those dreadful things?
- K I don't know a thing about her; some one said they heard she died but it was just hearsay. They didn't have any children.
- M You came back to Medina in 1959 so you were in California about 26 years. How did you handle things after he died?
- K I was executor of Uncle Mort's estate. It was quite complicated. Lots of property to look after and there was hard time^S in 1933. It was the middle of the depression. There were mortgages to

K look after, and people couldn't pay, and you had to help along. We had quite a bad time, and of course I married.

M Oh I want to hear about this again! The other day when I came with Mrs. Pearl Eddy (who introduced us) you were telling us how you met your husband. Would you tell us again Please? George Newmeyer

K Well the people he rented a room from were my tenants and my mail was left over at their house. (the Reagan house)

M Your name at that time was Katharine Acer, yes?

K Mrs. Reagan asked if he would take the mail over to me. He came to the door and told me who he was and we just talked and then Mrs. Reagan had a party later on and she invited me to the party and said, "I'll send Mr. Newmeyer over to get you"; and so that was it.

M When George Newmeyer first met you what did he do for a living?

K He was supervisor for the American District Telegraph Co. 45 years. He was short and not very heavy and he had reddish hair.

M Two redheads together. You must have been a stunning couple!

K He was a nice looking man. He was the kindest man that ever drew a breath of life. I never heard George say an unkind word about a person - never-! I remember my sister-in-law saying I ^{had} just joined the band of everyone loving-George; you just can't help it and mother thought he was marvelous. He was one of these kind that everyone loved.

M You met him soon after your Uncle died?

K I had seen him before but Uncle Mort was not very kind to any man that came to see me. If he thought I liked them at all, any inclination, Uncle Mort was mean. He would say, "You certainly come here enough!"

M Maybe he was being protective of you, didn't want you to get hurt.

K I think he was afraid I might leave him and he didn't want that, and he didn't want some man coming to live there either. I didn't care particular for Will Forbes and he ^{uncle mort} was always asking him there.

M Will Forbes; was he another ^{beau} calling on you?

K He was a real estate man, that had charge of selling our property - The house I built in the Orange Grove. We had 60 acres there and we divided it up into lots. Will sold the lots. We tried to sell in the thirties during the depression. We sold some but most of it had to keep.



George Newmeyer

M When and where did you get married?

K We were married in Mexico City. George was supervisor for ATT and he had to go down to put in some smoke detecting for Sears Roebuck in Mexico City. He had charge of it, had to ^{get} a crew of men to go. So he suggested that I come down and meet him. So I stopped at San Diego and then I went on to Mexico. We were married 15 of July, 1933.

M What did you wear?

K A pale green, very pale green silk suit, pale green hat and I had green shoes to match and gloves. I don't remember any flowers at all. We went into this place what was called the attorney generals room and we were married with an interpreter. (Ha Ha.) The interpreter said, "Miss Acer do you take Mr. Newmeyer?" and I said, "Si". He said, "Mr. Newmeyer do you take Miss Acer?" and he said, "Si". The interpreter said, "Do you have a ring?" and George said, "Yes." He took the ring out and it was a diamond circle they shut it in the book and I said, "Ye God's! Maybe he'll keep it and you shouldn't let him have it." But he opened the book and handed the ring to me. I just put it on, I forgot myself. The interpreter said, "The Judge he says 'Happy Marriage'." (Laughs). George and I went out and we wanted to send a telegram to mother. To me this was the funniest thing of the whole wedding. We went into this telegraph office and I said I wanted to send this telegram to Medina, N. Y. and I said, "George and I were married at noon today". The telegraph operator said, "Where is Noon?" We thought that was the funniest thing!



M Where did you and George make your home?

K In my house right there in Alhambra because I owned that house I had built. George just moved in; packed his trunk from accross the street and came over.

M In 1959 your husband died?

K On the 3rd of April. Then I sold my home in California and came back to Medina on Labor Day. Father had died and mother was alone. I thought I should help Victor out. Mother lived right in this house. My brother lived in Buffalo and he was having to come down every day to see Mother. She insisted on seeing him and he was getting worn out. He had a big business. He was Vice-President of Linseed Oil in Buffalo. He didn't have much time. So I said I've been thinking I ought to help you out taking care of mother. He had done it all these years

K "What would you think of my selling?" He said, "sell it right now; put it on the market and get here tomorrow if you can; glad for the help." I thought I would go back after Mother died and I said something to Victor that I thought I would; and he didn't want me to. He said, "We are all that are left." He said, "I don't want you to go back." When he died, I think his death shocked me more than any death at all. He died on Armistice Day in 1968.

M Was it unexpected?

K Well he had cancer but I think it was unexpected because I was having my hair done when they called Dorothy from the hospital that he was dying, to get there quick. They called Canon Wilkinson; he was the Rector here. Victor never gave up his membership in St. John's Church. I gave mine up, but he never did. He always said he wanted to have Wilkinson or whoever was Rector. ~~and~~ So Dorothy tried to get me and I was to the hairdressers. She called Ruth Wilkinson and said, "Have you any idea where Katharine can be?" She said, "Yes, I know she is to the hairdresser's because I follow her. I go after she does." So she told her and that is how I found out.

M Katharine, ~~I would like before this tape ends~~, you were saying earlier when William Jennings Bryan was campaigning for President of the U.S. he came to Medina and he came to talk at Slawsons Grove.

K He stayed at the home of my grandmother at 321 West Center St. on the corner. He gave me a doll with a green dress. I didn't like dolls and green wasn't my favorite colors so I wasn't pleased. I had to be so polite and thank him for this nice doll that I wanted to smash!

M You didn't keep the doll? How old were you?

K I imagine I was seven or eight.

M Katharine, would you please tell about your Aunt Kitty going to Queen Victoria's funeral. She and Uncle Edward went over to Europe just for the funeral. He was Canadian. I don't think they were invited. It was quite an event and he was anxious to go. My father's sister was Sarah ~~Bever~~ ^{Acer} better known as Kitty. They used to say she was real quiet like a kitten so they got to calling her Kitty. Everyone knew her as Kitty. We always used to call her Aunt Kitty and you know when John Acer was here from Phonex, Arizona, he had three girls. I said "Did you name Katharine for me," and he

Old Orleans

C.W. Lattin • County Historian

THE DAY WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN CAME TO KNOWLESVILLE

It was September 3, 1896, a beautiful sunny day and all roads led to Slawson's Grove just north east of Knowlesville. At daybreak a steady stream of carriages, wagons and bicycles from all over Orleans County started to converge upon the spot where William Jennings Bryan, that eloquent orator and master of rhetoric was to speak in the afternoon. Special trains on the New York Central and special boats on the canal were pressed into service, each carrying capacity loads. Bryan was running for President against William McKinley and this brought out the largest political gathering which ever assembled in our area. A special dancing platform was constructed for the occasion and several lunch counters did a thriving business while boys hawked Bryan badges and pictures. Many local farmers made extra income that day caring for the teams of horses.

The program opened with band music at 9:30. At 10 o'clock Gen. A.C. Fish of New York spoke, followed by Marcus H. Phillips of Hulberton, James W. Lawton of Clarendon and Rev. John A. Copeland of Rochester. The committee for the occasion headed by Mayor S.A. Cook of Medina went to Niagara Falls to meet Mr. and Mrs. Bryan so as to accompany them on the train to Knowlesville. The train left Niagara Falls at 11:00 A.M. and was delayed at every station arriving in Knowlesville at 12:45. There were at least fifteen hundred people at the Medina station eager to catch a glimpse of Bryan when the train pulled in. At Knowlesville a hack drawn by four grey horses elaborately decorated with flags awaited the Bryans. They were taken to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Woodford for dinner and were greeted all along the way by a throng of people. Mr. Bryan had great difficulty entering the Woodford home because of the eagerness of the crowd assembled to shake his hand.

During dinner the guests were serenaded by a band concert and group singing outside the Woodford residence. Following dinner, until it was time for Bryan's speech, he shook hands from the porch. The band preceded him to Slawson's Grove followed by a long line of carriages. At the grove Mr. Bryan was picked up bodily by two strong men and carried to the platform over the heads of those who had come to hear him. Congressman William Sulzer (who was later elected Governor) and the committee had great difficulty reaching the platform through the throng. The shouting of the crowd was finally reduced when the Lockport Glee Club appeared and sang "America".

Mr. Bryan had such command of his audience through the art of public speaking that no one noticed several pickpockets until he was almost finished. Finally one loud voice hollered "pickpockets". Twenty-seven wallets had been taken at that point. Several were found later but were empty.

Following his speech Mr. and Mrs. Bryan were driven to the home of Mrs. Sexton for an informal reception while Mr. Bryan rested. They had intended taking the late afternoon train back to Niagara Falls but the crowd surrounding their carriage caused them to miss it. Instead they were driven to Medina to the home of Mr. and Mrs. M.A. Bowen where they were given supper prior to leaving on the 7:08 train back to Niagara Falls accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. James Hanlon.

- K said, "No, she was named for Aunt Kitty". I said, "Well, Aunt Kitty's name was Sarah." He didn't know that.
- M Well Katharine, you have certainly seen many changes in your almost 90 years of living; many years living in Medina.
- K I had a letter today from Dorothy Hood. Anna Mae O'Donnell lives in the green house down the street. We are the only ones left (from the graduating class). I don't know about Melvin Moone. Someone said he had passed away. I don't know it for a fact but I wouldn't be surprised. ... When I was a little girl there was a house on the corner. That's where we lived. Then there was a vacant lot, then Tillman was building the house next door. Then there was this house, then Dr. Chapman, and S.A. Cook on the corner. Judge Childs was where the Maple Crest (Inn) is. Next was ~~the~~ Tripp house where Anna Mae O'Donnell lives. The people by the name of Tripp had a Hardward Store. Next was a little house on kind of a knoll.. where the Mormon Church is now
- M Do you remember when it was like that?
- K Yes, I remember that knoll because ^{Belle} ~~Bill~~ Harlow lived in that little house on the knoll and it was owned by Harry Bickel... Next was the little stone house and Griffins lived there, and next to that was Aunt Ella.
- M You could probably go right down every street in town!
- K Well, I can on this side, but I don't know the other side of the street at all.
- M While you are remembering back on the olden days, what else can you tell me?
- K Do you want me to tell how we played house in the hearse? The Holdridges lived where the Baptist Parsonage is. All their trucks and all were in the back yard. When we wanted to play house, we didn't have any place to go so we played house in the hearse! (Note: See transcript of Ethel Hartt Helmkamp).
- M Do you remember when you first voted, Katharine? When women first got the vote, it was a big thing. Was it to you?
- K No it wasn't because I was in California.
- M How about your first hair cut?
- K That I can remember because Uncle Mort said to me, "I never want your hair to be cut... never!!" I had so much hair and I was having such a time with it. I went and had it cut and I didn't say anything to him. He said, "You know, I like the way you are doing your hair. You're doing it better." I said, "It will

K always be this way because I've had it cut. It's all gone". He said, "Well, never let it grow again".

M How wonderful!

Katharine, I would like to thank you very much for this interview for the Orleans County Historical Association.

K I enjoyed talking with you; enjoyed it very much indeed.

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This interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina. This was transcribed by Miss Becky Mathes of Holley. Pictures were copied with thanks to Mrs. Newmeyer; Minor corrections were made with some edition, and compilation by Helen McAllister.

My sincere appreciation goes to Mrs. Pearl Eddy of Medina for introducing me to Katharine Acer Newmeyer.

H. M. McAllister



Helen McAllister with Katharine A. Newmeyer