

# Orleans County Historical Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS Marcus H. Phillips, Jr. #/

## SUBJECTS

- \*\* Sandstone Quarries
  - operation, locations, workers, changes, etc.
  - problems:
    - excess water accumulation, t.b. in workers
    - quarry stripping operation, re-activation, etc.
  - Klondike Quarry
  - Balmforth (John & Wm. H.)/ Phillips Quarry
  - Clark Moore Quarry
  - Eagle Harbor Quarry
- The Syndicate
- \*\* Ice-Boat Sailing and Ice Skating... on the Canal
- \*\* Family Reunions
  - Saint Rocco's Catholic Church, Hulberton
  - Point Breeze: piers built
  - Hulberton
  - Moore's Grocery Store and Jay Burn's Meat Market
  - R. L. & B. Trolley
  - Cornell toboggan slide
- \* Orleans Trust Company (the National Bank, Albion)
  - NOTE: see PHILLIPS transcript on BANKS
- \* Schooling
  - Hulberton, Holley, R.B.I., Cornell Agricultural College
- \* construction of the horse barn

## NAMES

Marcus H. Phillips, Sr. / Julia E. Balcom Phillips: grandparents  
John, Clara (Comstock), Jennis (Smith), Arthur H.  
Arthur H. Phillips, father / Jessie Benedict Phillips, mother  
Marcus, William and Harold = children of A. & J. Phillips  
Doris Jessie Rodwell, wife  
Marcus H. Phillips, III (son)  
Ann P. Drechsel (daughter)

plus others.....

SWAN LIBRARY  
4 NORTH MAIN ST.  
ALBION, NY 14411



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mr. Marcus H. Phillips , Jr.  
Hulberton, New York

Marcus H. Phillips, Jr. was born September 6, 1899.

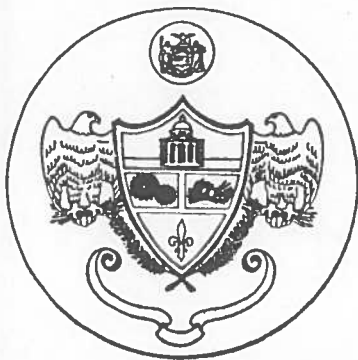
Interviewed by (first part) Mr. Arden McAllister and  
(second part) by Helen M. McAllister.

P Phillips

Mc McAllister



SWAN LIBRARY  
4 NORTH MAIN ST.  
ALBION, NY 14411



# 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.

Marcus H. Phillips (Jr.)

Signed

5-3-78 / 7-24-'79

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister  
Arden R. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

5-3-78 / 7-24-'79

Date

SWAN LIBRARY  
4 NORTH MAIN ST.  
ALBION, NY 144

For the Orleans County Historical Association the following interviews were conducted on May 3, 1978 by Mr. Arden R. McAllister, and on July 24, 1979 by Helen M. McAllister of Medina, New York.

P I, Marcus H. Phillips Junior was born in Hulberton, N.Y., September 6, 1899, so my age went along with the year until my birthday in September.

To start back a ways, the Phillips family moved from Candor, Tioga County, to the Allis farm west of Braggs Corners and when my grandfather, after whom I was named, was one month old, the log cabin burned. They wrapped my grandfather in a blanket and put him out in the snow, but the Phillips family lost their family Bible and all of their records.

About 1853, the family moved to the Budd Farm in Hulberton because rails were getting scarce and there was plenty of stone for stone walls. Budd was the founder of Hulberton and had built the Medina sandstone house on the east side, the date of which was 1848 (ingraved in a white stone above the front door). My great-grandfather lived in the small house across the road which later became the manse for the Catholic church and is still standing. My grandparents lived in the stone house.

Marcus H. Phillips, Sr. married Julia E. Balcom from Brockville and they had four children: John M. Phillips, Clara Comstock, Jennie Smith, and my father Arthur H. Phillips. Marcus and Julia lived in the stone house all the rest of their lives.

My grandfather was County Clerk and very well known throughout the County. He was County Clerk for a number of years and also served in the New York State Assembly. Later, he ran for the New York State Senate. I well remember my Uncle Alan Comstock and Cousin James Balcom (both County Supervisors: Alan from Carlton, James from Murray) reminiscing about the fact that the night before election, there was a black carriage, its shades drawn, drawn by a team of black horses, the driver dressed in black, which came into this area and stopped at every bar. A small man dressed in black, wearing a black derby and carrying a little black satchel, got out and went into the bar and left a dollar for each patron of the bar. Needless to say, my grandfather lost the election. A Wadsworth from Geneseo became Senator. Thus a man who was widely known and had estab-

lished a reputation as being sincere, honest and very capable came to the end of his political career. Grandfather had many powerful connections in Albany and continued to go there often on business for himself and in the interest of others until he was in his 80s. When on one of his New York Central train trips he had what the family talked of as a slight stroke.

People used to come to him to draw up deeds, mortgages and other legal papers, which he never charged them for. Grandfather and Attorney Herbert T. Reed (later of Signor, Reed, and Signor of Albion), who was born and grew up across the road from this house, whom Grandfather had placed in an Albion law office to study law, used to appear before the Public Service Commission many times in order to get the best possible trolley service for Hulberton and other towns along the Buffalo-Lockport-Rochester trolley.

When the principals were waiting in the hall for the hearing to begin and the arguments would get too heated, Grandfather would break in, get them quieted, tell a story which would have them all laughing. Grandfather looked pretty sharp with his whiskers and small goatee, and on three different occasions was mistaken for Ulysses S. Grant!

Another story about my Grandfather that I very well remember was told to me by Jennie Moore who lived next door and who was 93 years old when she died last fall (1977). She said that in Rochester they were going to build a new Post Office. One faction wanted it on the west side of the river, and the other wanted it on the east side. The West faction employed my Grandfather to lobby for, as she said, West side of the river. He was successful, and the first Post Office was built where he had worked to get it. In return for this, the Rochester people gave him \$2,000. She says that when he received the \$2,000., he built the horse barn with the gambrel roof, which is one of the earliest gambrel-roof barns in this part of the country and very well proportioned with a large cupola, two windows each direction, hollow copper driving wind vane on its peak. Having grown up here, I did not appreciate this barn until about 1967 when three men who had visited all the big horse farms in the country came in to make inquiry of me. They started looking the barn over and telling me about it. It has a cobblestone floor

all the way through it, a six foot cobblestone porch out in front of the big front doors, the siding is vertical boards with battons having O gee edges. Three windows in the peak of the barn are four leaf clovers, and the horse stalls all have four leaf clover windows. It has a cupola about eight by ten feet with two windows opening on each side, and a hollow copper driving horse for a wind vane on its peak. From this cupola, Lake Ontario can be seen and when weather conditions are right, the Canadian shore across the 40 mile lake.

Both my aunts and my father (Arthur Phillips) attended Brockport Normal School; also my Uncle John Phillips. It was there that my father met Jessie Benedict. They married and built the home on the west side of the street in Hulberton where we lived.

The farm operations were carried on from the stone house where my grandparents lived. The horses, equipment, and all of those things were kept there. The farm comprised nearly 200 acres with the addition of several smaller neighboring farms which were purchased at various times.

I have two brothers. I am the eldest, William next, and Harold next. Harold died several years ago.

I have two children: Marcus H. Phillips III, and Ann Phillips Drechsel. My son "Marc" has two children: Linda and Bruce. Karen, the eldest one, died at about five years of age of leukemia. My daughter married J. Andrew Drechsel and they live in Tenafly, New Jersey. They have three sons: Richard, Andrew, Duncan.

My brother, William Phillips, has two children: Hanford Phillips, who lives in the cobblestone house north of Hulberton, and Sally who lives in East Liverpool, Ohio.

I attended the three-room school in Hulberton until the last half of the 8th grade when I went to Holley where I graduated from High School in 1916. The next year I attended R.B.I. (Rochester Business Institute) taking commercial, or book-keeping course. Then for two years when help was very scarce during the later part of World War I, I was home on the farm. In 1919 I started in Cornell Agricultural College, and graduated in 1923. Following that, I started inspecting fruit on the New York Central railroad lines until the first of the year.

January 2, 1924 I started in the Orleans County Trust Company in Albion, New York. The year before it had been the Orleans County National Bank, owned by the Hart family and used mainly for their own investments. A group of Albion men had bought the National Bank and changed it to a Trust Company about a year before. At that time the Bank was located on the south-west corner of Main and Bank Streets. They had already purchased the block on the north-west corner and were remodeling it. The vault was completed and the nine ton door installed, I think about June, when we started taking our money over to the new vault nights and bringing it back mornings, across Bank Street. (NOTE: See M.H. Phillips other transc't on BANKING) .

In 1925 I married Doris Jessie Rodwell and we lived in Albion from that time on: 17 1/2 years at 138 South Main Street in the red brick house just below the hill on the west side, the house having a porte co-chere. Then in 1950, we moved to the Wheeler Homestead just south-west of Kanona in Steuben County where we lived for 15 years until 1965 when we moved back to Hulberton to the Phillips stone house which I had inherited from my father about six and a half years before. Doris and I have lived here since that time.

The Medina sandstone quarries, of which Hulberton was in the center, were coming into their biggest operation about the time when I was a young boy. They were operated at first by the English, then the Irish; the English and the Irish giving way to the Italians. When I was a small boy in the first room in the school, I have a picture that shows me beside 18 and 19 year old Italian boys, practically full grown, standing several times as tall as I. My Aunt, Jennie Phillips Smith, taught this room. The Italians had just moved to this country from Italy and could talk practically no English. They were very poor, they were hard workers. The quarry operations took them from spring through summer and fall but left them unemployed during the winter when they would congregate in Moore's Grocery Store (now a home) on the north side of the canal, east of the highway, and talk in Italian.

Most of the Italians were Catholic and there was no way for them to get to Holley (four miles) or to Albion (seven Miles) to attend church. In order to give them a place of



worship, the Catholic Diocese built the Hulberton Saint Rocco's Catholic Church. It was built of the native brown Medina sandstone, the cornerstone of which says it was laid in 1906. The stone was furnished by the quarry operators. The cutting was done by the Italian block-breakers and stone cutters who cut the curbstone. Those days they worked a ten hour day in the quarry. They had Saturday afternoons and Sundays off. The quarrymen, blockbreakers and stone cutters all helped in building the church, beside cutting the stone. They would work on holidays and on Saturday afternoons. They hired an expert who knew how to mix the mortar and he would direct the operation. They had scaffolds. I can remember them wheeling the stone and the mortar up the ramps onto the scaffolds, up for the height of that building. The stones are laid in Ashler style and it is a very fine building. The first priest, a very capable man, came here from Batavia and later went way up in the Catholic Church in Buffalo. This church operated for quite a number of years.

When they came, the Italian people were very poor and Moore's Store carried many of them thru the winter on credit, recorded in the old McCasky Register. It was years before only one or two of them had a horse and buggy. The Italians were thrifty, hardworking people and not at all prone to go on relief. Each family tended to its garden. The smell of garlic was usually quite pronounced on their breath. Spag<sup>h</sup>etti was a main food, and to make the paste they grew tomatoes. These were mashed and put on flat pans, boards, or anything flat and clean that would hold them, and then put out in the sun to dry; anyplace where the dogs could not reach, even on the roof of the three-holer! Stirred occasionally, this would dry slowly and when moisture had evaporated out, the paste would be canned for use until the next season's crop. The first chee-chee beans I remember seeing were in the garden of the DeLill family who lived in the house on the Phillips-acquired "Littlefield Place" farm which had made the south boundary of the Phillips farms on the west side of the Hulberton Road. This house my Dad later rebuilt into a packing house for peaches and apples.



The front portion, with its roof rebuilt, is a shed and is painted red and still in use.

The Rochester, Lockport and Buffalo Trolley went through and started operation in 1908. On the first car, which went west, my father took me to Albion and we returned on a later car. I was eight years old. This new transportation east and west was a great advantage to the whole area. The trolleys ran each way about every hour and there were "LIMITED" cars which only stopped at the main stations, and Grandfather made sure all stopped at Hulberton. In fact, I went to Holley High School on the trolley. It was always a battle to make sure that the express cars stopped in Hulberton, one in which Grandfather always figured... going before the Public Service Commission. As I remember, the "LIMITED"s always stopped in Hulberton!

To get back to the quarries, the quarry with which I was most familiar was the Klondike which is straight down back east of the Phillip's barn at the end of the lane, a little bit to the north. The Klondike Quarry was one of the earliest quarries and operated 24 hours a day with carbide lights. It got its name from the Klondike gold rush.

Later my grandfather, Marcus Phillips, started a quarry on the Phillips farm a little ways south-east of the farm buildings. This was operated by John and William Henry Balmforth, two Englishmen. The only access to this quarry was through the farm yard. The road that served the barns went around the shop and down back to the quarry. The workmen, when they came in the morning, <sup>and</sup> all the loads of stone were drawn out through the yard. How my grandmother ever lived with the two and a half inches of dust that used to accumulate in the summertime, I'll never know!

Another thing that I remember about the quarry was that the quarrymen wore wool shirts that were, without any exaggeration, one quarter inch thick! They had an oval yoke on the front, probably all came from Moore's Store. The reason they wore these heavy wool shirts was that the perspiration would evaporate from the outside and keep them cool. Later on, when the

boys got to operating in the quarries, they'd be working in their B.V.D.'s. (underwear). By the "boys", I mean the grandchildren. By this time, they had realized that tuberculosis had become a common disease with the stone cutters from breathing so much stone dust. So, the desirability of working in the quarries greatly diminished about that time.

The quarry as I remember it, had about seven or eight feet of dirt which had to be removed from on top. That was called "stripping" and was done with teams of horses. Men would shovel the dirt onto the wagons, which had dump boards, about three inch square boards with the ends rounded for handles. They would take them up on the dump, lift one board at a time and dump the dirt. Later they had quite sophisticated dump wagons which would self-dump when they pulled a lever. Then they could crank the bottoms back up in place. Beneath the dirt there would be one layer of layer stone which was used for curbing and other purposes, and some for sidewalks. Some of the very smooth sidewalks in this town came from those quarries. Below that were either two or three layers for eight to ten feet deep, of solid stone. Originally the drilling had to be done by hand. The hand drills were about five foot long and had a tapered handle in the center which got to be about two and a half inches in diameter and beveled both ways to give it weight. This, as you can realize, was rather a slow process. They would drill the holes and then blast with black powder. Later, they got to using steam drills, and after that, air drills.

One of the problems of the quarry was to pump the water out. During the winter the quarries would fill with water and then it had to be pumped out in the spring. The Balmforth Quarry had a large stationary International engine, the flywheels of which were about nine feet in diameter. It was a single cylinder with "make and break" ignition. The way they started it was to prime it with gasoline, walk the spokes of the wheel backward to get the engine against compression, snap the breaker, and it would fire. What seemed like an eternity later, it would get around to the position of firing again and then take off. That used to run a compressor from which the air ran the various drills around the quarry. In the spring, it was

\*\*(NOTE: See Stanley Judwick transcript: re: QUARRIES).

used to pump the water out of the quarry. Later after that had worn out, they had a big International, single cylinder tractor which performed the same operation. To make larger blocks of stone smaller, they would drill a series of holes about  $3/4$  to one inch in diameter and then put in what were called swedges on each side, with a steel wedge between. They would put these in all the holes and then drive them, one after the other, until the stone finally broke, which it usually did with the grain. The stone had to be cut to sizes that could be handled where it stood in the quarry. The big problem was getting it out to the surface of the ground where the blockbreakers and the stone cutters could cut it into the proper dimensions. In the early days this was all done by horse power and wagons. The wagons which drew the stone out of the quarry were known as "swing wagons" which were very heavy bedded, hung beneath the back axle and pivoted beneath the front axle with two large bolts like interlocking screweyes. This made a low wagon which could be easily loaded and unloaded.

My memory of the quarry operation was when it was a large quarry and they would break the blocks on the edge of the quarry, throwing the chips over into the quarry to fill it up so that there would not be the large area that would require pumping out. The curb was drawn up the lane and cut in the shade of a row of black walnut trees which my Dad had planted when he was 22 years old. The cut and finished curbs were drawn on these swing wagons, either to Fancher and loaded on Falls Branch of the New York Central trains (which was a very difficult operation), or loaded onto boats at the docks along the canal. The paving blocks were cut and loaded into dump wagons and taken to Fancher and loaded onto gondola cars, or loaded onto canal boats at the docks.

There were two other quarries near the Klondike: one north of it toward the canal, and one north-east. When I was real young, they brought in what was called a "channeler" which, as the name implies, cut a straight channel through the stone instead of drilling every little ways and blasting. This channeler ran on railroad rails which, as I remember it, were about eight feet apart. To move it forward required ten horses. The horses for this purpose were stabled in the carriage house

part in the front of our gambrel roof horse barn for quite a period of time. They put wagon dump-boards between them to keep them separated, and had mangers along both sides where they fed them.

During the First World War, I remember that this machine was setting just south of the canal on its rails. It was dismantled and shipped out for scrap iron, which was very badly needed.

I believe that it was about 1901 when the Syndicate was formed. The syndicate brought in outside capital from New York and other places and purchased a number of quarries with the idea of having a central quarry operation. When I was very young the land in back of the Phillip's Quarry belonged to the Syndicate. The Klondike and the other two quarries were located on the property. The land around the three quarries which were not operating was rented by my father and used for a cow pasture. The land south of it, he farmed. Also what was known as the "poplar tree lot" to the west of it, was farmed. I can remember riding on a bean-puller, sitting in a tool box on the divided tongue when my Dad was pulling beans there when I was a very small boy.

The Syndicate was run, in my recollection, by Ed Fancher who had a great deal to do with my grandfather during those times. They were always conferring about something or other. Ed ran the Syndicate for quite a number of years and then later it was taken over by Schuyler Hazard, also of Albion. The details of the Syndicate operation are in the office of the Orleans County Historian and is filed under QUARRIES; information which Lucy Fancher has given.

The Clark Moore Quarry in recent years became the Medina Sandstone Quarry Incorporated. (Clark Moore lived next door to the stone house, was a principal in the grocery store, and later opened the quarry). Back when I was a small boy they dug the Barge Canal and this required considerable amount of dirt to be drawn in. So they opened a barrowing pit where Clark Moore's Quarry later was started. The dirt was loaded by steam shovel onto little dump cars which were drawn by a donkey engine over into the canal and to the west to fill in the north canal bank is all I remember about it. But this removed the dirt above the stone. This depression filled with water and my brothers and I

used to go over there and swim in the pond. A number of years later, Clark Moore opened the quarry as an operation and quarried it for quite a number of years. After the death of Clark Moore it was closed.

Then when I came back from Steuben County in 1965 I met Gregory ("Greg") Monacelli whom I had always known, on the street in Albion and asked him how things were going. Gregory said, "You probably know that the stone ran out of my Dad's quarry (which was the old Eagle Harbor Quarry) and I went down to operate the Moore Quarry." And this is a quotation: "The stone in the Moore Quarry was so hard that it busted me and I had to put a mortgage on my house". Two or three years after that the man who owned the Greater Buffalo Press came down and bought the Moore Quarry and operated it for a number of years.

In stripping to the south, toward my north line, they put the stone over to the north and filled the original Moore Quarry. Later they built a large building back beyond the quarry where they installed foundations for two saws. They installed one large German built saw which operated for a number of years. The two saw foundations were built resting on the solid stone. They drove piles down to the stone, cut them off at the proper height, and welded a large plate on the top of each one. These plates were incorporated in the concrete foundation for the saw. The saw itself was an immense electrically driven saw: the blades about six inches deep and about twelve feet long. The difficulty was that as the saw fed down, the stone was so hard that the bottom of the saw would heat up and expand and the saw would wander. They had great difficulty in overcoming this.

About that same time, they installed a crusher way out behind what had been my property. This was just before the building of Route 18 and intended to supply the foundation for the highway. It is my recollection that they were a little bit late so that they didn't get the contract for the whole thing. Later when I asked Howard Michaels (the Quarry boss) about getting various size stone from this operation, he said that it was set up to give the mix which was proper for a highway foundation, to change it over so that they could get different sizes of stone in the process would cost \$150,000. or better. So that was the reason they didn't do it.

Clark Moore's widow, Jennie Benson Moore who died last fall (1977) at the age of 93, lived in the house just south of the Phillip's stone house, was always talking about the Moore Quarry. So about two years ago I took her in the car one Sunday to show her the Moore Quarry. When I got over there to show it to her, I had to stop and figure what had happened. What had been the Moore Quarry had been completely filled in with stripping from the new quarry operation, and so there was nothing left of the Moore Quarry. About four years before, they had left that location and moved back and started a new quarry, the north-west corner of which was the corner of the old original Klondike Quarry. The man who started the quarry told me this himself! He had gone in there with a large bull-dozer to start the operation. Before opening this quarry they made a large stripping operation, stripping the dirt from practically the whole field where the (original) Klondike had been located, and piling it up to the east along the east line so that it was cleared of dirt down to the stone. They had opened a channel from this corner toward the east, quarrying the stone down the depth of the first layer of layered stone, and the two layers of solid stone. These varied in depth of 7-8-10 feet. They had also quarried to the south making a right angle, and in doing so they had crossed several "seams" which are vertical breaks, smooth as can be, the whole depth of the quarry. These ran from the east-north-east to the west-south-west. The original seam they had located from the Squire's Quarry across the canal, had come across through the Moore Quarry, across my horse barn, and the corner of Jennie Moore's house. These other seams were parallel to this original. Of course, in this day of operation, the following of a seam was not as important as it used to be back in the old days. In the Phillip's Quarry I don't remember that there was any seam.

During the first years of operation, before installation of the saw, they took immense blocks of stone on big semi-flat-bed trucks to Buffalo where they were cut for curbing and various operations. It seems that the stone cutters in Buffalo had some hold on the installation of curbing as long as they



could supply it. The quarry company was supplying the stone to the curb cutters and it was used in Buffalo during this time. After installation of the saw they gave up this quarrying of the stone and drawing it to Buffalo for cutting.

In 1976 the quarry was re-activated. There were two contracts one contract for putting stone along both sides of the canal from Albion east. This required comparatively small stone. The other contract was for building a dam, a retaining wall at Lackawanna so that the material which was dredged from the bottom of the Buffalo harbor could be dumped behind it for a fill, as they could no longer dump it out in the lake. With these two contracts it was ideal because the top layer of layered stone was blasted and broken up and trucked to use along the canal. The two layers of solid stone were quarried for the job at Lackawanna. They would blast off about a six foot strip of rock and break it into large pieces which the smaller would be 5-10 tons, then 10-15 tons, and 15-20 tons; some going as large as 22 tons. These were quarried and drawn by pay-loaders up a road to the north and sorted into the various sizes and piled along the canal bank. As they were drawn out they were weighed and the weight marked on each stone. They did this with electronic scales which weighed one end of the pay-loader and then the other on each load, and then arrived at the weight. They started loading the stone on large steel scows which they loaded with an immense crane. The first crane was a hundred ton crane, and that would tip when they brought the stone out over the scow. So they brought in a new crane, and on the side of this new crane was "FMC" (Food Machinery Corporation) trademark. So you can see how diversifed they had become. They had taken the smaller stone and put in the bottom and then as they got toward the top of the water they put in larger stone. The last stone being the very large ones.

Also during this process, the year before, they had built the two piers down at Point Breeze in the same manner, replacing the old original piers which, as a boy, I remember were out there: the west pier terminating in a light-house. These piers were built, and then a concrete walk with a post embedded in its center, all the way out. Just beyond the end of these piers



they built a header to give protection from the waves and the storm, and make it so that a boat could enter the harbor from either the east or the west.

(This is the end of the first interview with Mr. Marcus Phillips, with Mr. McAllister interviewing.

The following interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina, and are vignettes of the early life of Mr. Marcus Phillips).

Back in the early days of the old Erie Canal, Hulberton had an overhead bridge with approaches on both sides. On the south side, west of the highway, right north of the present house, the "back street" went through to the west and, north of that, stood a two-story Medina Sandstone building, the upper floor of which was used for living quarters and the downstairs for years, during my memory, was used for a meat market by Jay Burns. Back before that time it had been used as a grocery store by the Curwins. Thus there were two grocery stores in Hulberton. When the Republicans were in power, the Post Office was in Moore's Store, east side, north of the canal. When the Democrats were in power the Post Office was moved over to the Curwin's stone building, north of the stone building. At the side of the bridge approach there were two or three one-story small wooden buildings of which one was a cobbler's shop. When the Barge Canal came through, they left the north bank approximately in the same location so as not to disturb Moore's Store or the Hotel on the west side of the highway, and widened the canal to the south. So this did away with all these buildings including the stone store.

On the Erie Canal the tow path went along beneath the north end of the overhead bridge; but when the Barge Canal with its lift-bridge was put through, it was put through with the idea that there would no longer be mules and horses towing boats. Everything would be mechanized. But for a number of years there were still horse-drawn boats; so a wooden road-way was built out into the canal to make room for the horses and mules to go along after the lift-bridge was raised. While the new lift-bridge was being installed, during the canal-closed season, they used the back street and put a temporary wooden bridge

across the canal with 2 by 4 inch wooden rails. When this wooden bridge was in use Fred Cole drove the team of grey horses up from the north farm to do something up here in Hulberton. When he came to the canal, when the horses were crossing this canal bridge, the horses suddenly reared up on their hind legs, crowded against each other and it's a wonder they did not go into the canal. It was a terrifying experience for Cole. When it came time for Cole to go back across the canal to get home, the horses started doing the same thing. Finally my Dad, who was now accompanying Cole, had the inspiration that they change sides with the horses. That worked perfectly! They walked across the bridge, and no problems. Clark Crawford and Newell Albee, the hired men from the Hulberton homestead were also accompanying Fred Cole and my Dad. This team of "CUB" who was born the day Marcus H. Phillips, Jr. was born, and "STAR" were lanky 1450 pound horses, both well "broken" by my Grandfather, M.H. Phillips, Senior, were ordinarily perfectly dependable. Apparently they were scared by the narrow board-rattling bridge with its flimsy railings.

#### THE STORY OF THE SAILING ICE-BOAT

When my father, Arthur Phillips, was a young man he built an ice-boat from instructions in Popular Mechanics magazine. It had three runners: the front runners were spread out, probably about eight feet wide, and then one runner in the back which had a tiller lever attached so it could be steered. Like a sailboat this had a mast with a jibe-sail in front and the big sail behind which would sail just exactly like a sailboat. This boat could be taken apart and wrapped and tied into a package. He would take it to the canal in Hulberton on a windy day and go to Rochester on the canal. Back in those days most of the bridges were overhead and he could sail under them. When he came to a swing-bridge (I don't believe there were any lift-bridges; I think there were only swing-bridges) they would be too low. So he would take the mast down to get underneath the bridge and replace it, so he could sail all the way to Rochester. When he got to his destination in Rochester, he would take down the mast, take his sailboat apart, wrap it in a big package, get

a dray which was a wagon drawn by two horses, to come and load it on and take it to the New York Central railroad station where he would have it shipped on the Falls branch of the New York Central back to Fancher, New York, a mile and three quarters from home. Then, from there, he would bring it home.

Around the mast this boat had a flat section where a person could ride. On the back there was a raised seat over by the tiller where a person could pull on a hand brake, which was an iron spike that could be pulled, and go into the ice and slow the ice boat down some.

When I was a boy with my two brothers, my father and the three of us pulled the ice boat against the wind the mile and three fourth to Brockville where we turned around. The two brothers rode on the ice boat along with Dad. I had my big Flexible Flyer sled and towed it behind on a long rope. Dad said that just before he got to the Hulberton lift bridge, when he got around the bend to Hulberton he would stop and that I wanted to be sure that I was not fast to that Flexible Flyer sled because the boat would stop and I would keep right on going!! So we came down the canal. Everything worked fine. We travelled very rapidly. When we got around the last bend before the Hulberton lift bridge by the Ford house, Dad turned the ice-boat sharply in to the left bank, and as the mast came over he slid off the boat onto the ice and took the mast into his arms, which tipped the boat up on edge. My Flexible Flyer sled kept on going to the end of its rope and then stopped, but I kept right on sliding down the canal ice on my stomach!! (laughter) That was really my only experience in ice-boating.

.....

At our annual New Year's Balcom family reunion where we would have from 45-50 people, I can remember the older members talking about the old canal which was four feet deep and 14 foot wide, and they would have their horses <sup>sharp</sup> shod which means that the toe-caulk of the horse shoes were sharp; and both heel caulks came to a point so that the horse could walk on the ice or travel on the ice without slipping. In those days they would go out onto the canal, this was before the deeper Erie Canal, and drive

to Albion on the ice rather than take the roads. Also some of the people who had fast horses used to race their horses on the canal!

### SKATING ON THE ICE

My first skating was done with old curl-toed skates. They were made with a metal runner and a wooden top and the front of the metal runner curled up around and back. They screwed onto the heel, and the front part through a slot in the wood was strapped over the toe. That was my first experience.

Mc Marcus, when you screw a skate into your shoe, the heel of the shoe, wouldn't that ruin your shoes?

P No, it just made a hole in the center. As I got older, I had a pair of clamp skates which had a lever on the side and when properly adjusted and you pulled this lever back, it would pull clamps back against the back corners of the heel as well as against the sides of the sole and the ice skates would stay on very well. Then in later years I had skates with shoes attached to them.

But to go back to the days of my clamp skates, Holley was four miles by road: two miles south and two miles east. The canal went diagonally at about three 1/4 miles, probably on account of the many bends. When the ice was good and we wanted to go to school, instead of taking the trolley, we would go down to the canal and skate to Holley. There were places along where there were air holes where you had to be careful because the water wouldn't freeze. If you got into one of those, you went right down to the bottom of the canal, which wasn't very deep in most places (a few inches to one foot). Down by the Squires Quarry east of Hulberton, there was a place there where the rock was a little higher than the rest of the canal and when it was frozen real hard there would be a strip of ice about three to four inches wide so that you could skate between the rocks. Sometimes, if it had thawed a little bit, you had to walk over the rocks to get by this particular spot. Then when we got to Holley, we would take our skates off under the east bridge and go right past the trolley station and walk up to school.

Now, back in the skating days, the greatest skater in these parts was my grandmother's brother, Darwin Balcom, known to everybody as "Dar" Balcom. When he was over 75 years old, Uncle Dar used to skate with his hands behind his back. He wore curl-toed ice skates like I have described to you, had them excellently sharpened. He was an expert at that and he would skate into the wind, bent way forward, with his hands behind his back, faster than anybody else around this part of the country. Also, when you came to a skate stroke that went from one side of the canal to the other side and then back the full distance, there was just one person had made that stroke: and that was Uncle Dar Balcom!! Harry Prince who lived in Hulberton and was considerably younger than my Dad, used to skate very well and he would make long strokes. But he used to laugh that he couldn't even approach the length of Dar Balcom's strokes.

One time when people used to skate for pleasure up in Albion, the society people would get on the canal on a Sunday afternoon, all dressed up, and skate. Uncle Dar Balcom and his son Marc skated up to Albion. While they were there, he knew all the people, and some of the boys, young boys (Gerald Fluher who later became County Judge and some of the boys) got to kidding Marc about his curl-toed skates. Uncle Dar finally said to them, "Well you know boys, he can skate to that next bridge faster than you can!" Oh they laughed at that; they just knew better. So Uncle Dar unwound the scarf that he had around his neck and criss-crossed under his arms, it was about 12 feet long, and handed one end of it to young Marc. He took the other end and towed Marc to the next bridge, way ahead of the other boys! So the laugh was on them!!

#### REUNIONS

Since I was about eight years old I remember the family reunions that we used to have. The various families would get together and there would be 45 - 50 of us. They would be members of the Balcom family, which was my Grandmother's family. Horace came in 1812 to Brockville. They would meet at the Balcom

homestead north of Fancher, the Jim Balcom homestead down by the mill dam on the west side, the Phillips homestead where I now live in Hulberton, or the Nelson homestead east of Hulberton Road north side of Telegraph Road where the Tinkous now live. Also we would meet over at my Aunt Clara and Uncle Allen Comstalk's on the Sawyer Road over north of the Ridge Road. These reunions always came on New Year's Day and regardless of the weather the families would all come, either in their buggy, their surry, or their Democrat Wagon pulled by horses, or in a sleigh, or if there were a number of them they would come in a bob-sleigh which would have two or three seats across the box. The food : the person that had the gathering, at whose house it was held, furnished the main dish. But the different families would all bring something. As I remember, chicken pie with the biscuit crust was one of the main things. Of course you have to remember that back in those days all butter was homemade, bread was homemade. Practically everything we had to eat was homemade. When we had ice cream, we had an ice cream freezer, chopped up the ice, put the ingredients in the can in the center, put the chopped ice around it, and turned the crank until it froze. And then we had ice cream. You didn't go out and buy ice cream in those days.

These family reunions lasted for a good many years until the family got so spread out that we no longer had them. One of the last family gatherings was held when our children were small, down at Judson Archer's at his farm near Clifton Springs and there were over 50 people there at that time!

.....

My wife, Doris, had a group of Cub Scouts. There were eight of them and every Sunday when the weather was good we used to take out the eight foot toboggan and go usually to Pine Hill where there was really good tobogganing. Those kids had the best time sliding down that hill! One day we had a new Flexible Flyer sled for Ann. It was the biggest Flexible Flyer that would go into the trunk of a 1939 Buick. Marc took it out on the hill and the first thing we knew, we missed Marc and were looking all over for him, when all of a sudden we saw Marc on the little sled going out into space from a ski jump, over the brow of the hill which we could not see!! (chuckles). Marc

stayed with the sled and all landed safely and continued down the hill. There were a few anxious moments.

Mc Mr. Phillips, would you please tell us about your tobogganing days while you were a student at Cornell?

P Okay. When I was at Cornell we had a toboggan slide that was iced. It was a double slide and always iced on the bottom and sides. We had a platform to put the toboggan at the top, with a pivot so when you got ready to go you lifted the back end and the toboggan took off and soon were on the ice of Beebe Lake. I always had the steersman place which was on the back end of the toboggan, on my knees, hanging onto the ropes while steering with my toes. If I do say so, I was pretty good at it because we never had any accidents. But you went over sixty miles an hour going down that slide and if you got to sliding sideways on the glare ice of Beebe Lake and should hit a frozen-in stone or pebble, it would throw the toboggan over and break arms and legs, which very often happened! Our fraternity, Alpha Gamma Rho, had the longest toboggan on the slide. One night when I was not along the boys went across Beebe Lake, started up the other side and it broke the toboggan right in two; right in the middle!! So that was the end of our nice long toboggan. A few years ago they took down the toboggan slide so that's no longer available to students.

.....

#### SCHOOLING

My schooling in the grades went through the three rooms in Hulberton, except that the last half of the 7th grade I took in Holley under Miss Maybe. To go to Holley School was really a very simple thing compared to the drives with horses that many people had. I had to walk about an eighth of a mile to the trolley station in Hulberton and when I got to Holley, got off at the station; it was about half to three-quarters of a mile up to the High School. The trolleys ran about every hour so that if you got kept after school for any length of time, why you could always get the next trolley home and it worked out very satisfactorily.

School Principal Prof. VanZile who taught first year Latin and Caesar (four years of Latin was prerequisite to a college



degree in those days) decided that I was not doing very well in my declensions in the first year Latin. He had me stay over and spend a half an hour in his office studying declensions for several months. Probably that was the only reason I ever got through Latin because I had pretty good marks from then on. But that meant that I had to get the next trolley home, which was not too bad to do.

Professor VanZile was a strict disciplinarian and in Caesar class one day while one of the boys was cutting up in the back of the room, the first thing I knew a Caesar book sailed over my head! The boy moved just in time or he would have had it right in his face!! VanZile was an old football player and coached football team at Holley School.

Mc Do you mean that he actually threw the book at the student? Did he ever hit a student?

P I don't know if he ever hit 'em with a book. I've seen him "mop the floor" with them. He'd come up the stair outside the big Study Hall, he'd look up over the stairs as he came, and you didn't want to be "cutting up" when he appeared! (laughs) I think that's what made the school amount to something back in those days.

.....  
(END OF TAPED INTERVIEW)  
.....

The foregoing interviews were conducted by

1. Mr. Arden McAllister of Medina, New York
2. Helen M. McAllister of Medina, New York

After some additions and some deletions by Mr. Phillips,  
Final typing and some editing was completed by  
Helen McAllister (Mrs. Arden McA.) of Medina, New York.