



Orleans County Historical Association

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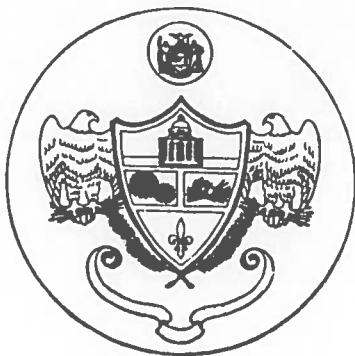
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Orleans County Historical Association

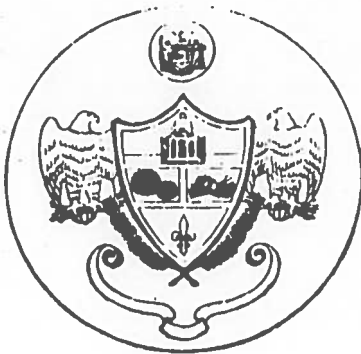
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mrs. Olga Laird Hinckley
11050 West Center Street
Medina, New York

Mrs. Olga L. Hinckley was born December 23, 1895. She began teaching in Medina in 1921 and was the first Guidance Counselor in the Medina schools.



Mrs. Olga L. Hinckley



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.

Olga L. Hinchley
Signed

3-16-1983

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAlister

INTERVIEWER

3-16-1983

Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, March 16, 1983, Helen McAllister of Medina, New York is interviewing Mrs. Olga Laird Hinckley of 11050 West Center Street extension, Medina, New York.

- H I was born in Middleport, New York on December 23, 1895. My mother was (Florence) Estelle Rose Laird, and my father was Alton Kendall Laird. My Dad had a grocery store in Middleport but he left during the first year of his ownership because of a fire which ruined the merchandise. Dad was in partnership with the Steen brothers in Middleport. I have already told you about the fire which ended his association with them; however, they went on with the store afterwards.
- Mc Well, the fire didn't destroy his store. It was in the nearby livery stable.
- H Yes. The smoke and water ruined the merchandise!
- Mc In those days grocery stores were quite different than the ones today, right?!
- H I suppose so but I was so young, I don't remember. I was less than a year old.
- Mc After your father left Middleport with his wife and child, where did he go?
- H He went to a place in the central part of the state called Machias; a little bit of a village. He was a traveling salesman. I don't even remember what his merchandise was because he didn't last very long in that, and finally he went to the R.T. French Company in Rochester. They dealt, and still deal, in spices, mustards, coffees and teas. Then we moved to Phelps, New York, because that was the central part of his territory. His territory included western New York and northern Pennsylvania, the western part of Pennsylvania.
- Mc You have a brother; ~~and~~ was your brother born sometime along in here?
- H My brother was born in Machias - when we were living in

H Machias and he was four years younger than I. His name was Alton Wilson Laird.

Mc So, Phelps really is your hometown?

H I started in kindergarten in Phelps, I finished High School in Phelps, and I came back to Phelps to teach.

Mc Oh my goodness! Well, going through school and graduating at the age of 16, how many were in your graduating class?

H Ten.

Mc Did you have caps and gowns, Olga?

H No, we wore middy blouses: white skirts with middy blouses with red ties because our class colors were red and white.

Mc What about the boys?

H Golly, I don't remember what they wore. There were five girls and five boys. I guess they just wore dark suits.

Mc After you graduated from school in Phelps, you went to Geneseo Normal School?

H Yes. That was in 1912. That was only a two year course then and so I was graduated from Geneseo in 1914. I remember that the principal of the school, Dr. Sturgis, said that we should give our age to the nearest birthday because we were all so young that we wouldn't get a job unless we made ourselves as old as we possibly could. So although I was 18 when I started teaching, I was 19 in my application letter.

Mc You stretched it a bit!! Well, before we go on with your working career and that part of your life, something very unusual happened at the Pan American Expo in Buffalo. Would you tell us about that? Tell us the whole story; about how you went, how you got there, and all.

H That was way back in 1901 when I was about five or six years old. We must have gone by train; there wasn't any other way to get there. I can remember the Temple of Music there. I was sitting on my Dad's shoulders and the cavalcade came in. President McKinley and all of his horsemen were galloping to the Temple of Music. We

H were clapping and we were excited about it. I can remember being excited, or else I can remember Dad's telling me I was excited. Then very shortly after that, we heard this cracking sound. It was the sound of the gun which killed McKinley. Immediately after, there was^a great deal of confusion and horses galloped out; they were carrying President McKinley. I don't know how, whether he was in a carriage or not, but they took him to the place in Buffalo where he finally died. That place in Buffalo is a historical museum now. You know what I mean.

Mc Yes. Was your Mother with you too?

H Yes.

Mc Do you remember lots of crying or such?

H No, just rushing back and forth. That's all I remember. I didn't know what it was all about, of course. But I really do remember it even though I was so young because the excitement was so great.

Mc Unfortunately, the killing of Presidents hasn't stopped.

H No, but it isn't so common that a person gets used to it.

Mc Let's talk about your first job as a young girl of, so called - eighteen. Where did you go, and how did you apply for your job, and where did you get it? Tell us about your salary and all of that!

H I had a friend in Geneseo who came from Avoca, New York; a small place in the southern part of the state. Her Grandfather was on the Board of Education. So we talked and we decided that it would be nice for me to go to Avoca to teach if I could get a job. I consulted with my Mother and Dad and they approved, and so I made application. The salary was \$450.00 a year that most of the girls were getting out of Geneseo. But mine was a fabulous salary. It was \$480.00 a year!!

Mc Where did you live when you went to Avoca?

H I lived in a home in Avoca and I remember I was paying five dollars a week for room and board.

Mc Did they have you sign a contract that you could not get married during that time, or was it understood that you would not go into a bar, or drink, or any of that? We read these

Mc things in the newspaper once in a while and so I wondered.
H No, I just signed a contract but it was just a contract to teach for a year .

Mc What did you teach, Olga?

H I taught four years of high school English , American History, and Biology. I hadn't had a bit of Biology since my Freshman year in high school.

Mc Did you have many students? Probably not because it was a small school .

H Well, the American History class was large, I remember. By large, I mean about 25. And my Biology class was large ; about the same size. When I taught Biology, I remembered that in high school in Biology we cut up live frogs and I thought that's what I'd have to do. So I ordered some live frogs . This makes me feel bad even yet because we had to cut off their back legs for some reason . It must have hurt them terribly, and the children didn't like it either. It was a bad experience, but otherwise it was just subject matter that I taught them and I got along all right and they did pretty well in their finals! I was ⁱⁿAvoca for just a year. Then my Dad, who was on the Board of Education in Phelps, New York, suggested that I come back home to teach. Which I did.

In Phelps I taught four years of English and American History. I lived at home with my parents.

Mc Was your salary the same, or don't you remember?

H No, I was advanced in salary. I got \$500.00 !!(laughter).

Mc You were there for about four years, from 1915 through 1919. That was the period of time when our country went into the First World War. Do you remember anything at all about that?

H I remember that my brother was then in Rensselsler Polytechnic Institute and he was drafted as a student soldier. He became ill shortly after that and was in the hospital all the time during the War. He had diphtheria. As a matter of fact, he wasn't too sick during the last year but the authorities in the college thought he should stay in the hospital.

Mc Do you remember the Armistice celebrations?

H In Phelps it was a small celebration, but a WILD celebration!! We thought it was wild. Just people out on the street: running and shouting and the band came out and played. Phelps was a little place, you see , and the celebration that we had was just spontaneous. Lots of flags, and we did have a tank!! I don't know where it came from . An Army Tank was found somewhere and was the center of our celebration. It was just parked (not driven around).

Mc Your brother did not get the flu? So many people got the flu at about that time. Did that affect your school at all?

H No, my brother just had diphtheria; not the flu. The flu didn't affect our little school . My brother was affected by his illness because he was in college and he lost that year.

Mc But maybe his illness saved his life!

H It might be .

Mc After 1919, I believe you have told me that you went to Columbia University for a year.

H That's right. I left Phelps and went to Columbia supposedly to get my Bachelor's degree, but Mr. Anthony^{the Principal} who was a friend of ours in Attica, convinced me that I should go to Attica to teach . So I did..... Mr. Anthony had a little trouble with the Board of Education in Attica. I always felt that his (eventual) desire to get me to go to Medina was just to get me out of Attica because he himself had had unpleasant experiences there.

the Medina Superintendent

Mr. Brown^{came} over, and watched me teach one day and offered me a contract. I had planned to go back to Columbia but I didn't. I came to Medina.

Mc You came to Medina in 1921, and your salary now was what?

H My salary now was fourteen hundred and something. That was fabulous! I had gone from around \$900.00 to \$1400.00 . I had taught four years of English, and American History in Attica. In Medina I taught 7th and 8th grade English, and that was it!

That was in the old building, the one that was torn down. I had taught there^{only} one year.

Mc That was in the Old Academy?

H That's right. It was made of Medina sandstone, I remember.

Mc When they tore the Old Academy down, where did you have your classes, Olga?

H They built shacks on Ann Street, and I do mean SHACKS. There were four of them.^{IN} Each room in the shack was was taught a different subject or grade. There was 8th grade math and 8th grade English. Miss Lenahan was there teaching writing and spelling. Miss Newnham taught arithmetic. Mr. Wise taught some arithmetic, and I taught English.

Mc How long were these "shacks" in operation, or used?

H As I remember, just a year. Each of the rooms in the shack was heated by a coal stove. Each of these stoves was operated by the teacher. We had to put the coal in; we had to shake it, and we had to do everything but empty the ashes.

Mc Did you have to start it in the morning?

H The fuel was coal & it held over all night. We didn't think it was any hardship. It was fun! The windows in these shacks were low and anybody who had difficulty with discipline, had difficulty with the windows, particularly in the fall and in the spring when the weather was nice and they were open. Sometimes the children would jump out the windows and then we would be a little bit worried for fear they would get in the way of the carpenters. But we didn't have any casualties.

Mc Were these rooms divided, and how large was each room?

H There were four rooms. My guess would be that each room was about 25 by 25. That's just a guess. They were furnished as any school room would be furnished. We had blackboards, and each room had a door that opened out onto the street. Then we could go from room to room also, so there were doors connecting us. There was one roof over the whole thing, but each room opened onto the street. There wasn't one main entrance. There were four different doors.

Mc Was this at the time when they were building the so-called "new" Medina High School?

H That's right. The one that is in existence today. That was on the site and, of course, much, much larger than the Old Academy from which we came.

H Back of that, on South Academy Street, there was a High School building that was later torn down. It eventually burned, but didn't burn so badly but what it had to be torn down.

In the meantime, I had broken my watch and I wanted to take it to a jeweler to have it fixed. I didn't know of any jeweler, so a Mr. Deane Hinckley was recommended to me as a jeweler who would take care of my watch. My aunt, who lived in Medina, introduced me to him. When I left his store, I said to her, "Well, who is that man? Is he married?" She laughed and she said, "No." In the meantime, he had inquired, "Who^{WAS} that woman was with Mrs. Gibbin." (Lela Gibbin). Anyway we were attracted to each other right away, you see.

Mc Where was the store located, Olga?

H The store was in the block that is now occupied by the Liberty Bank. The door was on West Center Street. It was just an ordinary door with a window on either side of it. He had his jewelry repair shop there, and some merchandise.

Mc Do you remember your first date, where you went?

H The first date that we had, we went for a ride from Medina to Gasport, along by the canal. I thought, "This is dangerous!" There was no fence there. If we'd made a misturn, we'd have gone into the canal! And I thought that was a very dangerous thing for a man to do - particularly on his first date!! But we weathered that, and weathered many more.

Mc You were eventually married in 1924?

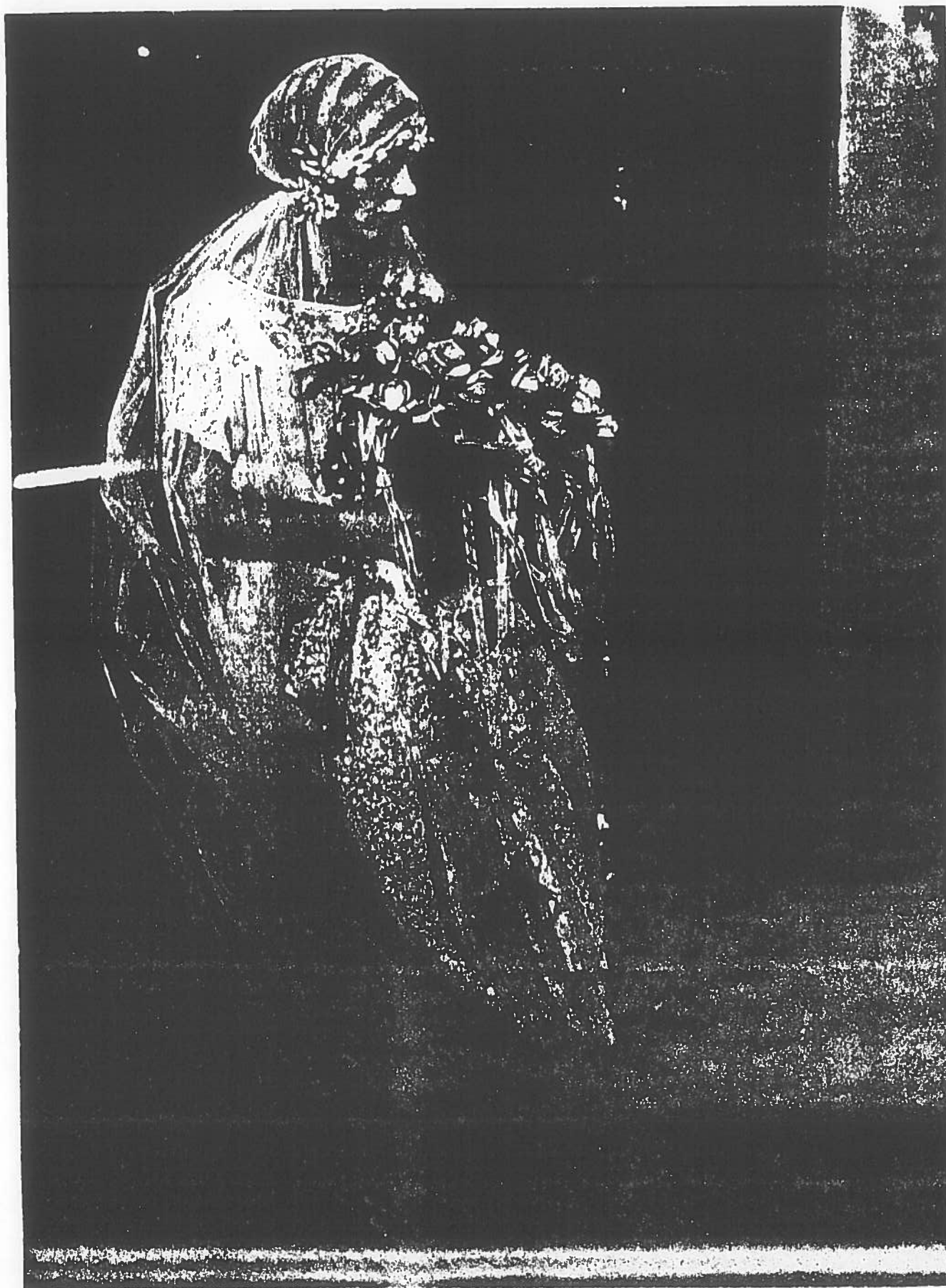
H Yes, August 21, 1924 in the Episcopal Church, Saint John's, in Phelps. And that was interesting because my mother was Episcopalian. My Dad and brother were Presbyterians, so I was married in the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterians furnished our banquet afterwards. We were married at two p.m.

Mc What was your wedding outfit like, your wedding gown?

H It was a crepe de chine, which is not even understood now. It was a white crepe with a pleated skirt and I had a veil that was long - probably three feet on the floor as I went up the aisle. But the dress wasn't long. The veil was long but the dress came down to about mid-calf.

Mc Did you have flower girls?

7 1/2



H No, I didn't have a flower girl. I had an attendant: my cousin, Doris Cooper from Hilton, was my attendant; there was no ring bearer.

Mc What about a honeymoon? Did you have a honeymoon?

H Yes, we had a beautiful honeymoon. We went up into New England. We drove Deane's little Ford coupe. We were in Vermont and New Hampshire and then came back down through Massachusetts, the Adirondacks, and home.

Mc School hadn't started, so you were able to get away?

H That's right.

Mc You were telling me something the other day when I was here, something about the period of Prohibition and that Deane thought he would make some homemade wine.

H This was after we were married!

Mc Would you tell us about that?

H Do you want me to tell about that? (laughter)

Mc Sure! This is a part of history. I think it's great!

H Well, we got grapes and put them in a big crock in the kitchen. By this time, we were living on Eagle Street in Medina. I can remember that we put this crock on a stool in the kitchen and covered the crock with cheese-cloth. We left it to ferment. And when we looked at it, it was just a scum of fruit flies! Well, we couldn't waste it, so we skimmed the fruit flies off and bottled it. It was pretty good wine!

Mc Is this the same wine that would, every so often, explode?!

H Yes. We put it in the basement. Then every once in a while we would hear a noise down there and sure enough - we would go down there and there would be wine all over the ceiling! A bottle had exploded! (chuckles).

Mc My parents used to bottle their own Root beer and I remember one year, I think every bottle exploded!! (laughter)

(end of side 1 of taped interview)

Mc Where did you and Deane live when you were first married?

H We lived on West Avenue in an upper apartment in Min Cummings' house. Min Cummings was quite a character in Medina. She dealt in antiques and our apartment was mostly furnished by her, although we did gradually buy furniture. ^{Then} she took her things out.

Mc Did she have an antique store? A store on Main Street?

H No, she just had another room in that upper story of this house and everything was in it! She was quite a character. But she certainly knew antiques.

Mc Did you buy your own home soon after you were married, or did you have to wait a while?

H No. Then we moved. There was a new house on Eagle Street and it was for rent. It's where Ed Feller lives now. He was a nephew of the woman who built the house. Anyway, we went into this new house. It was very pretty and we enjoyed it very much. Then we began to get all of our own furniture. I can remember that we had a massive dining room set which we've never been able to use in another house because we didn't have a dining room. We didn't have a formal dining room after that.

Mc While you were working at the school, the Great Depression came along and did all kinds of things to all kinds of people. We'll say from 1929 - '36.

H Well, that was the time when Deane's business failed, during the Depression. This was a great blow to him and a great blow to me. But we didn't have to worry about finances because I kept my job and we had no difficulty living. As a matter of fact, back in Phelps my Dad had a Hardware Store and he had a tough time, but he weathered the Depression.

Mc You said that one time during the Depression, you went back and made a surprise visit to your parents. Would you tell us about that?

H That was during the Depression, as you said. We didn't realize how people were suffering. Dad was a person that would discount his bills. He would pay his bills (even) if he starved himself. So, Deane and I surprised them and went

- H into the living room. My mother was sitting in the living room with a blanket over her lap. Come to find out, she had a maple syrup can filled with hot water under this blanket. The house was cold. Dad was down at the store when we came, but Mother was there with this blanket over her lap, keeping warm in that way. I can also remember that they were living on five dollars a week. Dad was able to get five dollars a week out of his business, and discount his bills.
- Mc When you say "discount his bills", you mean pay them?
- H I mean pay them and get the discount. You see, if a bill was paid in a certain length of time, there was a certain discount. ...
- Mc There wasn't any Welfare at that time, or Federal Aid? If you couldn't make it, you just went without.
- H And Welfare would have been, at that time, a disgrace. People were very proud, at least my Dad and Mother were. I doubt very much their accepting it ^{if} it really had been necessary.
- Mc The banks in Medina failed?
- H Both banks in Phelps failed, and both banks in Medina failed.
- Mc How did that affect you?
- H Deane had a little money in the Union Bank and when they finally returned to their depositors the amount of money that they were able to, our amount was one cent. I still have the check for one cent which they sent to Deane!!
- Mc May I make a copy of that check to go with this transcript?
- H Yes, you may.
- Mc A check for one cent! That's not worth making a check for!
- H Deane was so amused by it that he had it framed.
- Mc You were a teacher during this period of time and many teachers had to take a cut in salary during the Great Depression. Did you have to do that?
- H I don't remember that we did. The salary was small anyway; if they'd cut it, there wouldn't have been much left.
- Mc What about the rural school children taking Regents (tests) ?
- H I'd like to tell you about that because the rural schools seemed to give them very good preparation in math, and very poor in English. They had very little difficulty in passing the Math Regents, usually, from the Rural schools. But English

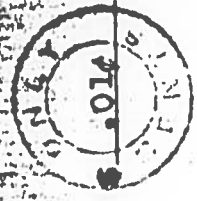
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MEDINA, NEW YORK



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Medina, N. Y.

Charles E. ...

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SECOND PAYMENT

- H So a great many students, when they came to school in Medina after they had taken their elementary Regents examinations, had passed everything but English.
- Mc Do you suppose this was because they didn't have access to the library?
- H No, there was great stress laid on grammar at that time and I don't think that there was time for them to drill as they should because they had eight grades in ^{one room in} the rural schools. I can't help but think that it was a matter of drill more than anything else.
- Mc I went to a country school for one year, in my 4th grade and it was just like a continual television program. I watched all of these little kids go up to the front of the room; I'd listen to them. They'd go back and sit down. I flunked everything!! (laughter)
- H Because you were watching the little kids!
- Mc Yeah. I wasn't used to it. It was a very different experience. When Dr. Arthur Trippenssee came to Medina, he made quite a few changes. Or I should say that quite a few changes were made during his period of time. Wasn't that the time when the rural schools were closed and our schools became centralized?
- H I believe so. Now I'm not quite sure when that happened but I think it was during his regime that that happened. He was very emphatic about scholarship and it was at that time that English, which had never been emphasized before, came into its own.
- Mc That made you happy?
- H That made me very happy!
- Mc Were you the only English teacher?
- H No, there were other English teachers. Of course, all this time Dr. Trippenssee was very Guidance-minded too, and he was getting ^{Me} out of English and into Guidance. He did it without my knowing it, almost. There was a certain correlation between the two at that time. There isn't now.

Mc You were the first Guidance Counselor in the Medina High School?

H Yes. At first I had one period a day, of counseling. Then it finally went up until that was all I was doing.

Mc At first did you only counsel the boys and girls who were Seniors in High School?

H No I didn't. I was staying with my age group. The Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors weren't getting any counseling. I was just staying with my group; the 7th, 8th and 9th grades. Not the 7th. Just the 8th and 9th grades.

Mc Then that became your full time job? With an office set aside for that purpose?

H That's right. At first I shared an office with Mr. (Ed) Devlin who was the Principal, and then I had my own office. It was a gradual process.

Mc Had you had training as a Guidance Counselor?

H Not a bit! But then I went on, at the University of Buffalo, and I got my Guidance certification.. That was summers, and evenings I would go to classes until I finally did ^{certification!} get that

Mc You were telling me the other day when I was here, that you had been asked to teach retailing. Will you tell us about that?

H Well, that was during the Second World War. The people in the stores in Medina were handicapped because so many of their workers had gone into the service, and they were crying for people to help them in the stores. So, Dr. Trip-penensee got the idea that if there was a retailing teacher who could be ~~sponsored by the , not sponsored but~~ endorsed by ~~by the government in Albany,~~ the Educational system in Albany, that we could send our students down into the stores to work part time and get credit for it. And that's exactly what happened! But I had to get certification and the only experience I'd had was being the wife of a man who had had a jewelry store. But I got my certification anyway.

Mc You said that Mike Ferri helped you.

H Mike Ferri was in my class and he was very knowledgable because he'd practically been brought up in his mother's grocery store. I remember one assignment was "to rearrange

H more business, and he actually rearranged his mother's store so that the traffic flow would bring more business. Yes, he was in my class but he knew much more retailing than the teacher did.

Mc Speaking of World War II and this period of time, do you remember the ration cards that we had for butter and meat?

H I wasn't too concerned. I don't know why I wasn't.

Mc Did you and your husband eat out a lot?

H No. I don't know why we weren't concerned but I guess maybe we didn't eat so much but what we were adequately supplied.

Mc What about any black-out drills? Did they have that in Medina? Did you have people watching for airplanes, or guarding the canal? None of that?

H No, not that I remember. No, the War was very mild in Medina . It didn't create too much...

Mc You don't remember the boys going off to war? ("No"). They didn't have speakers in the school, that you remember?

H No, I don't remember it.

Mc And no parades or celebrations afterwards?

H No. After the war there was much more seriousness in school than there is today. The students seemed to realize the importance of education and discipline was not difficult. Everyone seemed to want to learn, everyone that was there. It was a pleasure to teach at that time. Of course, even though I was in Guidance after the war, I think I still had one English class and that was the time of the day that I really enjoyed the most because I was close to a number of kids . The classes would have anywhere between 30 and 35 in them. They were big classes but the children seemed to want to learn . Eager.

Mc When did you retire from teaching, Olga?

H I retired in 1961, but I was doing full time Guidance work at that time. I had wanted to retire in 1960 but Mr. Rankin was here at the time and he asked if I would stay another year because he felt that he would be going at that time and it would be easier for him. I was willing. I enjoyed my years

- H in Guidance. I enjoyed my years in English.
- Mc When the rural schools were closed and those children came in to school, did you notice a difference in the atmosphere of the school?
- H No, and I was always surprised at that because these children from the country seemed automatically to adjust. There was no difficulty at all and probably that was because they had been in to take their Regents examinations and it wasn't entirely a new situation.
- Mc Olga, while we are going on about the school business, your life in the community went on too. I believe that you said that you were one of the earliest members of the Tuesday Club? ...
- H The Tuesday Club started way back in the 1890s, I believe. Wait a minute! It was organized in 1898 and it was Federated in 1905. I joined in 1926 and ever since, I have been a member.
- Mc The Tuesday Club is a good study group.
- H I think it is and I enjoy it now because I am an Associate member and don't have to work quite so hard.
- Mc You have also been very active in your church. Would you tell us a little bit about your church activities? ...
- H I was an Episcopalian from the time I was a year old so I went to the Episcopal Church immediately when we came to Medina.
- Mc Father Wilkinson was here, wasn't he, at that time?
- H No, there was a Father Pierson. We didn't call them "Father" at that time. We called them "Mister". It was Mr. Pierson. Then he was followed by Father Wilkinson, and then Father Moss.
- Mc You said the other day that there had been quite a few changes in the church.
- H Well, recently there have been many changes which are very hard for older members to "take" because the emphasis is so entirely different from what it used to be. Father Moss was just here this morning and we were talking about it. It's been hard for him too because he was used to the older service. But he's adjusted better than I have, of course.

H It's very hard for me to adjust to the new service.

Mc Well, I think that most of the churches have changed.

H Someone else told me that. It's supposed to be a growth. To me, it isn't a growth. I liked it better the other way but that is typical of my age group. The younger people don't feel that way at all. But I could mention a number in our church who feel the same as I do. I guess older people do feel that way about everything.

Mc It's hard to change. I think we have to run faster just to stay in one spot, the older we get!

I should go way back, Olga, and ask you if you remember the time when the women first got their vote; 1919, I believe.

H You know, that didn't register with me. I can't help you on that at all. We just got our vote and voted, and it didn't seem to me that there was any revolution as a result of it.

Mc You didn't feel excited because women finally got the vote?

H Perhaps because I'm not the sort of person ^{who} is too much interested in politics.

Mc How about your first hair cut? Do you remember that?

H My hair was quite long and I had quite a lot of hair. I'm trying to think when it happened. I think I was in Medina and I can remember that my mother wasn't sad; she was shocked when I had it cut!

Mc Did you go to a barber shop?

H A barber! There were no hairdressers at that time in places the size of Medina. I had a lot of hair then and I can remember coming home with a package of hair under my arm. I saved it for a long time and thought that maybe I'd have a "switch" made out of it, but I never did. I never had long hair after that.

Mc Did you get a marcel or a permanent?

H No permanents, but we went to the hairdresser frequently. Permanents came after that. There was a Mrs. Body here in town that gave me my first permanent, I remember, and it was so frizzy and so awful that I thought I would be glad when it was grown out. But that has improved, of course.

Mc In 1971, at the age of 80, your husband died. The other day when I was here you told me of his last goodbye to you, which I think is very beautiful. Would you share that with us?

H I could show it better than I can say it because he was going to a Stamp Club meeting . He was going over, across the street, to go with Mr. Case to the Stamp Club meeting I was delighted to be alone. I was tired, and I was going to read and I was going to enjoy a quiet evening. When he left he said, "I have a bad cold, so I'm not going to kiss you goodbye." But he picked up my hand and kissed my hand, and went out the door. Then I noticed that there was quite a bit of activity out in front but I paid no attention to it . In the meantime, Deane had stood by our mailbox, waiting for the man across the street to come out, to go to the Stamp Club with him. While he was standing there, a car came by and hit him and carried him, probably twenty or thirty feet. Well, to make a long story short, the ambulance came and took him to the (Medina) Hospital. He lived only an hour after that. He was terribly, terribly hurt. He never regained consciousness enough to know that I was there. As a matter of fact, I wasn't there until they came after me. I didn't know what had happened over there. I knew there was excitement, but I didn't know what it was. He died in the hospital. Father Moss had been summoned by a neighbor and he was there with me at the time of Deane's death. I never saw him alive again because he died so suddenly.

Mc That must have been a real shock, but it was a beautiful exit, really.

H The way he left me was beautiful because it was this chair where I am sitting...

Mc You said that you and your husband had been contemplating your 50th wedding anniversary?

H Yes, which would have been in 1974. We had talked about it a little bit, about what we would do

Mc Since that time, you have continued to live in this lovely home, even with your broken wrist. And you have become quite famous for your poetry!

H Oh, not famous! Oh that's quite a story too because I always loved poetry and I always loved the environs of Medina - the

- H Iroquois Wild Life Center, and so on. Deane and I did a lot of hiking, particularly ^{on} Swallow Hollow (nature trail). We just loved that. So, I jotted down things about our Medina environs that appealed to me. I was talking with Bob Waters one day (editor of local newspaper) and I took him something I had written. I wanted ^{him} to make it into a Christmas card. He said, "Have you ever written anything other than this?" and I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, why don't we make it into a book of poems!?" - which was the beginning of the idea of publishing "ENVIRONS" which came out that next year. Bob was wonderful ! He took just as much interest in it, I think, as I did myself.
- Mc He's a terrific person!
- H He's a very understanding and artistic person. His literary accomplishments, I think, are wasted on Editorials.
- Mc Well, the Medina Journal-Register (newspaper) wouldn't be the same without him! ...
- H I want to tell you how happy I am that I came to Medina because I love Medina! I get emotional about Medina when I talk about it. I love its environs, I love the people in it. I'm just glad I'm here.
- Mc We're glad you are here, too.
- H Thank you!
- Mc You are a very up-beat person. I don't have to worry about "bringing you up". You are "up". You're not about to put somebody down, or some group down. You are always an "up" person.
- H That's the nicest thing I've ever had said about me.
- Mc It's true. A lot of people say it, but maybe not to you.
- H Well I think that's wonderful! You made my day!
- Mc Thank you ever so much for this interview, Olga. How many students do you think you've had altogether?
- H Oh, I wouldn't dare to attempt it. It seems to me I've had 50,000 - 75,000. I don't know, and I love every one of them!
- Mc Well, if they could tell you I am sure they would tell you that they love you too.

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This interview was conducted by and transcribed by Helen McAllister

Feb. 14, 1983

Dear Olga,

As if in atonement for not having sent out all the Christmas cards I intended, here are some poems and doggerel selected somewhat at random from my own, personal anthology. You will find quite a pot-pourri of works - some humor, some philosophy, some sadness and some sounds of war. Excerpts from the classics mingle with shiny, new, unpublished poems by close friends. You will find a few - a very few - from Medina people whom you may have known or even taught. And, of course, there are bits of my own "poetry, sometimes created with more help from others than was deserved. Perhaps you'll enjoy the free or blank verse which neither rhymes nor scans. I know I do. It was impossible to resist the urge to make some annotations. I can only hope they do not interfere with the initial pleasure or impact the poetry provides.

In many ways this bringing together of particular poems has been a "labor of love." Love, because of the depth of my feelings toward you who so graciously shepherded me through English, my favorite subject, for an all too short a time in high school. I was lucky. I not only had Miss Genevieve Smith and Miss Carol Hall for English teachers, but best of all, I had you.

How do I remember you? I remember a smiling face in which was set a pair of bright and twinkling eyes. I remember a gentle voice which, nonetheless, still conveyed enthusiasm and emotion. As for discipline, there never seemed to be any need for it. No one dreamed of disobeying or "cutting up" in your classes. Was that the reason I never saw a frown on your brow or heard harsh words from your lips? Such kind and patient understanding was almost unknown among high school teachers. Best of all was a certain spirit or presence which seemed to extend from you to points far beyond the classroom. Do you suppose that was why I always looked forward to the next class period to be spent with my English teacher, Olga Hinckley?

(A copy of a letter to
Mrs. Hinckley from a former
student: Herbert E. Pintler)

Love,

Herbert