

Orleans County Historical Association

Table of Contents: Rebecca Wood Kennedy Interview

SUBJECTS

emigration to America
Glasgow/Govanhill, Scotland
school in Scotland
accommodations aboard ship
Ellis Island
New York harbor
Statue of Liberty
N. Y. skyline
head-tax on immigrants
"damn immigrants!"
Brooklyn
living quarters
name changed
Robertson to Wood
adoption by Sam & Mgt. Wood
schools in America
Flatbush: Erasmus school
"Geo. Washington-dirty renegade"
father's labor
Union in Scotland
Chrysler Building
News Building
Inter-Brough Subway
J. P. Coates Thread Mill
first vote: on father's paper
U.S. citizenship questioned
employment:
Doll & Smith Advertising Co.
Bennetts Rare Books & 1st Editions
Marcato Elevators
Brooklyn Navy Yard
welder
ship fitter
clothing worn
F. B. I. work
married in Ohio
move to Medina
farm on South Culvert Rd., Medina
Civil Service Test
Orleans Co. Highway Department

NAMES

Mary McClelland Cameron, mother
Alexander Robertson, father
Sam J. Wood, adoptive father
Margaret Cameron Wood, adopt. moth
Grandfather Cameron, stone mason
Rebecca W. Cameron, grandmother
Agnes & John Wood
Joseph P. Kennedy, husband
Vera & George Gerling

SUBJECTS & NAMES

Bank moratorium (Depression)
Hell's Kitchen (N.Y.C.)
Soil Bank Program/farm
employed at Heinz
Bemis Bros. Bag Co., Albion
Bell Aircraft, Wheatfield
Henry Hannan
pet dog: Woodie
very much a part of the intervi
London, Ontario - Canada
Paris, France



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.

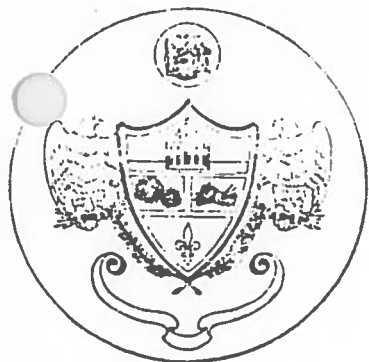
These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Rebecca W. Kennedy
Signed
Nov. 6, 1978
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister
INTERVIEWER
Nov. 6, 1978
Date



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mrs. Rebecca Wood Kennedy
3903 South Culvert Road
Medina, New York

Mrs. Kennedy was born near Glasgow, Scotland on Nov. 6, 1912.
This interview was conducted on her birthday by
Helen M. McAllister, with Mr. Arden McAllister.

K Mrs. Kennedy

Mc Helen McAllister



R. Kennedy

Deceased

At Age 66

Rebecca Wood Kennedy, 66, of Medina, died unexpectedly at her home Friday.

Mrs. Kennedy was born in Scotland, Nov. 6, 1912. She had worked for the Orleans County Highway Department in Albion, as a bookkeeper.

She had been a past Matron of the Medina Eastern Star Lodge, member of the First United Presbyterian Church of Medina, and a member of the Medina Women's Bowling Legion.

Surviving are four step-children, Irene Berzon of Las Vegas, Nevada, Joan Salunck of Williamsburg, Va., Regina Reith of Buffalo and Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.; 11 step-grandchildren and 14 step-great-grandchildren.

Friends may call today (24 and 7-9) at the Barnes-Tuttle Funeral Home, 226 Pearl St., Medina, where funeral services will be held Tuesday at 2 p.m. with the Rev. John Francisco Jr. of the First Presbyterian Church officiating. Interment will be in the Tanners Cemetery, Medina.

Mc

This interview is conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina with Mrs. Rebecca Wood Kennedy of the South Culvert Road in Medina. Mrs. Kennedy was born in Glasgow, Scotland and came to America as a child of 10.

Mc

O-K, Maggie, would you tell us please where and when you were born and the circumstances of your birth ?

K

I was born on November 6, 1912 in Glasgow, Scotland. And my mother was Mary ^{McClelland} ~~Robertson~~ Cameron. My father was Alexander Robertson.

Mc

You said that your mother was ill ?

K

Yes, my mother was - - oh - - sort of, she wasn't a weakling, that's not the idea, but she was not sturdy and healthy and she had this very active youngster.

Mc

This was in Scotland and it was War Time ?

K

Well 1912, we were leading up to the war. And my mother and father were having a hard time making things go so she returned to her parents home, Grandma Cameron, to get the medical attention that needed and the rest and eventually she was well enough to go to work.

Mc

Your mother ?

K

My mother. And she went in to a mill. Now one of her companions being married by 1914, there-a-bouts, and the girls all decided to get married but Mary Cameron came home from work and washed her long hair and went out to the cathedral where the marriage was being held. There was no coal to heat the cathedral and she sat there with a wet head. Then the way home, the trolley car was not coming fast enough to suit so she began to walk and she got drenched to the skin in a shower of rain. And as a result of this she came down with a cold which

developed into tuberculosis. And shortly thereafter she died. I was with my Grandmother Cameron and my father every so often would come and collect me on a Saturday or a Sunday and take me off for a day's outing. Grandma Cameron had another daughter, Margaret, and her husband Sam, who used to look out for me, buy me clothing and toys and so on. When my own father fell away from taking care or sponsoring me in any fashion Sam and Margaret invited Grandmother and myself to move into their home which was in a new section of the town in an area called Goven^H and it was from their house that I went to school in 1917 - 1918.

Mc. What was the school like where you went ?

K It was a big building through a child's eye. It had 3 stories and it was made of, I presume it must have been sandstone cause that's what the houses were made of and it was near by our home because all I had to do was walk up 2 or 3 doors to the end of the street and then along half a block to my right. This made it nice cause I could ~~XXXXXX~~ skin horse 11 o'clock to get my snack and 12:30 come home for my lunch and then quit school at 4 in the afternoon. ~~XXXXXX~~ Between 3 and 4 we had, like Home Economics, knitting or sewing or something like that. Even little ones, little children.

Mc. You went to that school until, how far ?

K 1923, that would be 5 years worth of school there.

Mc. To the Fifth grade then. You said, what kind of work, let's see you weren't really adopted, what would you call it - - -

K No I was not adopted at that time.

Mc. What kind of work did Samuel Wood do ?

K My father was a electrician over on the other side.

Mc. This is your, you call him your father now right ?

K My adopted father. I don't know much about my own father.

Mc. O-K so from here we'll call Samuel your father.

K That's right. My father was an electrician and he worked, in the way

he worked for the British Navy in the Marine Division of the building trades. And at the time of our immigration he had moved to, into a factory where they made shoes. And the name of that factory was R. J. Dick and my father was the top ^{maintenance} ~~main~~ man of all these machines that did the sewing and the splashing of the glue and ~~the~~ what-not and he could not see that he was going to be able to advance himself in any fashion and it would be soon time for me to go to work because the ordinary family didn't send their children to secondary school. And it always had it in the back of their minds that maybe Alexander would step up and say, "Well alright she's 14, I want my daughter back now." So that is what prompted their ^E ~~imm~~igration to America.

Mc: Did they, when you came, ^{with} ~~was~~ Margaret and Samuel to America, do you know if they contacted your blood father?

K: No to the best of my knowledge they did not. And it was an arrangement where-by Meg and Sam and myself picked up and came to America.

Mc: Let's see you would have been about 10 years old then you said?

K: Yes I was 10 when I came to this country.

Mc: Would you tell us about, pretend we're just getting on a ship, do you remember anything about that? What was the ship like and all that?

K: I just remember that there was lots and lots of excitement about it and I got myself engaged to my cousin.

Mc: Did people come down to see you off.

K: Unhuh, and at the time of our leaving, we were sailing on August 1st but it was necessary for us to go aboard on July 31 so that we would be able to sail at midnight tide. When we got down, all our packages and our sea chests and what-not were aboard, Mother and Dad asked the grandparents if they would come aboard and see our accommodations and when we got aboard we found out that the barber, lady's hairdresser, the ship had been a student of my grandfather in the college, in the

Hairdressing College in Glasgow. So, of course we were invited in for Tea.

Mc Your grandfather taught then in the college ?

K Unhuh, hairdressing and barbering.

Mc So you had Tea.

K We had Tea. We were very elegant. The accommodations we had I thought were quite interesting. Mother and myself were in one cabin, along with two young ladies and one of the girls had a brother traveling on the ship and he was bunked in the same cabin as my Dad. So that made it of nice because the adults had company.

Mc You left on the high tide at night, midnight ?

K Unhuh, midnight. And the folks woke me up out of bed, woke me up and carried me down so I could wave Good-bye to the last of the dear old island.

Mc Well so you remember pushing away from there.

K Yeah I remember, you know it's a very clear experience for a youngster to feel all this vibration under you, under your feet, under your boots. And everybody was all excited, everybody was all bawling and crying and carrying on.

Mc Let's see, you went as what were you second class passengers ?

K Yeah we traveled Second Class because my father, Sam, would not permit my mother and myself to come through Ellis Island since most immigrants were treated so harshly on the Island.

Mc Let's not get there yet. What else do you remember about coming over

K I remember it was a very smooth voyage we had no trouble at all. I was the least bit seasick. I remember getting in touch with lots of stevedores and lots of little boys, they had young cabin boys I guess you would call them, that handed out the bouillon and the tea and especially the cookies and the cakes.

Mc. How many days did it take you to come here ?

K 8 days to cross the ocean. I remember that we got into New York harbor just about 5 o'clock and I think it was a Wednesday.

Mc Did you see the Statue of Liberty ?

K Oh yeah. It really was worth while because we got in ~~50~~ 5 o'clock, the stevedores had gone home and we couldn't be unloaded until the next morning. So we lay out in the harbor all night and we could see the Statue of Liberty and the outline of the buildings of New York all the lights.

Mc Did it excite you ?

K Oh yeah. It was exciting for the folks and it was lots of fun for me.

Mc When did they hit Ellis Island to let the ~~people~~ people off that had got let's see, who went to Ellis Island ?

K Steerage Class. Third Class. The least paying class went to Ellis Island and they would take them off on launches. They went down the ship not a rope ladder, they had steps, like we have the inside steps to the attic, they'd have steps that they put down and they'd hand the folks down onto those launches and then they'd run them over to Ellis Island

Mc Did they take their possessions with them ?

K No their possessions were unloaded at the dock and then they would be claimed once those people were released.

Mc Well then what did, this was before you docked?

K When the boat did come up to the pier then onboard from the American authorities came the doctors and the immigration people who checked the passports. In Second Class you went into the, what would be like the Dining Saloon and you lined up so, you know, many lines and then you would pass in front of a doctor and pass in front of this immigration

officer and you had to show your passport and you had to, you know, he would look at your skin to see you had no breakage or scabs or what-have-you. Also checked your vaccination.

Do you remember having had to get shots or anything to come to America by the way ?

No except the vaccination, but I'd had that, you know, going into school so I didn't have to have another one. And they had you, I had long hair in two great big braids and they had that undone, they asked that to be undone and then you - - -

Why ! Oh to see if you had lice ?

Unhuh. Then they popped it over your head and you know you run your hands through so the doctor could look at it and see you didn't have lice. Then we had no trouble coming through this immigration deal. Of Course we did have to stay together, the three of us had to be together. And the funny part is that on the passport it says Margaret and Samuel, and his wife Margaret and child. Doesn't say on there, "daughter", and that's where we ran into trouble.

Now just the three of you, well other people, but the three of you came together as a family.

Yes the three of us ^E ~~imm~~igrated.

Your grandfather didn't come with you ?

Oh no, my grandfather had come and my grandmother had come, as near as I can count it out, somewhere between 1865 and 1870. And they ^E ~~imm~~igrated at that time by sailing vessel which took eight weeks on the ocean. Bring your own tea and your food and your blankets. And they came to, must have landed at Boston because they eventually wound up in Fall River, Massachusetts. Now Grandfather Cameron was a stone mason, the sort of

person that builds cathedrals, you know like the ~~Army~~ Armory down here. And Fall River had no stone buildings at all, they were all frame, you know wooden houses, wooden buildings like this house is, ~~and~~ Grandfather couldn't find work and couldn't find work so eventually he capitulated and he went into Coates Thread Mill.

Oh the Coates Company.

Yeah, J.P. Coates. And up there and with his first week's wages he stopped on his way home and planked the whole kit and kitboodle down on their passage back to Scotland because he didn't like factory work, the didn't have his kind of trade. That's astounding because surely he could have found it somewhere else in this country.

Now this is the same grandfather who died but then you went to live with the grandmother ?

That's right.

I see. So she had been to America before.

She had been, yes, very briefly.

For a brief period of time.

And then she went back to Scotland and she had her family, you know, Margaret and Mary and the others of her family.

Well so you came to America. When you came to America then where did you live, what did your father do and how did you go to school, etc. ?

We have to be claimed. You have to have a sponsor when you come to America, when you ^Eigrate. We came to the first cousins of Margaret who were the descendents of the grandparents' brother and sister; so we were all of the same family.

Did you have to be assured, your father have to be assured of a job ?

No, my father didn't have to be assured of a job but he had to have a Head Tax.

3 Head Tax ?

That's right. A certain amount of money that would guarantee that we would not, you know, become public charge. You know, step off the boat and go on welfare. So they didn't have enough because they had spent all their money on the fare and what they did was to go to the 2 brothers-in-law and borrow enough money to say to the man, "Yes here is so much money I have with me." We landed, we got off the boat on the Wednesday, Father had us out sight-seeing on a Sunday, on the Saturday and Monday the letter and the money was in the mail on the way back to Scotland.

c So the Tax Money was paid to - - -

Was borrowed from his brothers-in-law.

c Who lived ?

In Scotland. And he sent it right back. So here we ~~were~~ were in America without a penny. Not really. Not that bad. Father went to work in the electrical work. He belonged to the Union in Scotland, an International Union in Scotland and he contacted the Union offices here in America and eventually he got to work.

ic They helped him get a job here then really ?

No not really. They didn't want any "damn immigrants" so he fought them and he got in. And he worked in the News-Building in New York and he worked on the Chrysler Building and many other sky-scrappers. He worked on the, we called it the Inter-Borough Subway. It's just the Subway now. But it's all been consolidated. He worked there right up until his retirement at 67 or what-ever.

ic Where did you live when you first came to New York ?

Agnes and John Wood lived in St. John's Place which was in the Prospect Park section.

ic Right in New York.

In Brooklyn. We all moved in to the same, I mean they were already the


it was their apartment. Mum, Dad and myself moved in, you know, with them, ~~and~~ Come the Spring, John and Agnes went out to California so we took over the running of the apartment; never told the landlord. We're all Wood, what difference did it make. So anyway once the apartment beneath us was vacant we asked if we could have that and by this time John and Agnes had returned from California so we had Wood on the second floor and Wood on the third floor. And it made it good, you know, for the ladies because they had somebody to talk to. I think that helped my mother, you know, that she wasn't so homesick. Me, I never got homesick; I thought this was the best place in the world.

Really, you became right away you felt like you were right at home when you came to America.

Yesterday or Saturday I received a card from a girl that I met the day I came to America.

Really, how wonderful.

We've exchanged birthday cards and Christmas cards all those years. And that was '23 that's 55 years. That's a long time. Woodie stop crying. (dog, Woodie, barks & whines for ball-throw),

That's all right. (NOT FOR THE TYPIST) A good dog ought to be heard. (?) (DON'T EVER INTERVIEW ANYONE WHO KEEPS CHICKENS IN THE HOUSE) 

What was the school like and how did the children in New York, did they differ at all from the school you had been used to ?

Well my family was where, was very strict. You did what your parents told you to do and if you got too sassy, you heard about it. I came in August, that meant I went to school in September and because of the change from Robertson to just Wood, Mother had destroyed all the school records, cause they were all under Robertson. I don't know how she explained it but she did.

Mc Your name had been Rebecca Robertson and they just changed it to Rebecca Wood ?

K Well no, you see — — — Wood, they were Mr. and Mrs. Wood.

Mc Yeah but I mean changed your name to Rebecca Wood ?

K Yeah. It's an entirely different family. We just dropped the Robertson. So when I came to school in America and I went to Public School Number 9 in Brooklyn on Vanderbilt Avenue. I was simply known as Rebecca Wood.

Mc You adjusted quite easily ?

K Oh yeah. No trouble.

Mc How about the kids did you find the, how about their Brooklyn accents, did that throw you ?

K No but mine threw them! Oh we had a very broad accent.

Mc Could you give an imitation ?

K No. I have forgotten. I was very much anxious to become an American and I think the first week when I wrote back to my Grandmother Cameroun I kept on writing: "I guess, I think, Ish-ka-bibble".

Mc Ish-ka-bibble. (POPULAR SINGER),

K You know, whatever the popular phrase was then. But my mother and father never lost their accent. They retained some ~~it~~ of it. But I was too anxious to become an American. I lost mine in no time.

Mc Did you go through school and graduate in Brooklyn ?

K Yeah, uh-huh. When I went to school in Brooklyn I was put back a couple of years, I guess it was a couple of years because I didn't know the American history and geography. I was ahead on the English and on the arithmetic and on the reading but I did not know American geography. One day in history class the teacher was talking about George Washington and she was trying to have the children say that he was the Father of

this country so she asked "who was he ?" and I stuck my hand up - -
 "I know, I know" and she says "All right Rebecca, who was he ?" and I
 promptly got up and I said "He's a dirty renegade and if we could of go
 our hands on him we'd of hung him."

You forgot that you wanted to be an American at that point.

At that point. I was provoked you know. I knew all about the Kings
 and the Lords and the Richard the Thirds and so on, I knew all about
 them. But I couldn't see George Washington to save my soul, he was a
Bad Guy! I didn't understand why the whole class went uuhhh ! !
 Poor teacher, she had to leave the room. Go out in the hall.

But you did catch up and - - -

Oh I graduated early from Grammer School because when I took my tests.
 I was further ahead and of course I could sit there and ~~from~~ dream
 through the other topics and ~~concentrate~~ concentrate on the geography.

Did you graduate from High School then ?

Yes, then I went to a Girl's High.

Girl's High ?

Yeah. By this time my family had moved away from St. John's Place and
 were in Flatbush and we were close to a school called Erasmus and that
 was co-educational. And I liked that. You can ~~th~~ see that and it was
 only 2 blocks away from my house and I thought that would be a lot of f
 But Momma and Poppa said ~~XXXXX~~ "No way, no way". So I went to Girl'
 High which was the first high school in the whole city of Brooklyn wher
 girls were educated. A very old school.

Now was that a Public School ?

Oh yeah. A regular high sch~~ool~~, a regular New York City School System.
 And that's all we had in it, females. We did have a man Chemistry
 teacher and a man algebra teacher, poor guys, gee they had a hard time.
 But I graduated from there and went to - - -

Mc. Well after school, let's see how old were you approximately when you graduated then ?

I was 18 when I graduated.

Mc. Did you then go to work ?

Yeah, I graduated January 28, by about February 3 I was working. In an office. I was doing office work. And then that was '31.

Mc. You said that you registered to vote ?

Yeah, I had been reading up on it and I found out that if you would be 21, which was the date to vote in those days; 21 on the day ~~next~~ before or the day after your birthday was you know, voting day; then you could register in the previous September. So I sailed down and told the man I wanted to register to vote. And he said, "How old are you ?" and I said "I'm 20". "You can't vote." And I said, "Oh yes I can". So they all had to run in the back and read it up. And then he wanted to know how come, you know, I could vote on my father's papers.

Mc. What do you mean on your father's papers ?

K His Naturalization Papers. So they registered me and I voted. We took a great deal of pride in voting because British women had the vote before you did, the Americans did. And it was one of the things that I heard in my house, in my Mother's house.

Mc. What, that we should vote ?

K You Vote !

SIDE TWO

Let's see. I'm trying to count out the years. 12 and 21 would be 32, right? ~~and~~ I proceeded to work in various offices in Manhattan usually, and my job was a book-keeper, typist, telephone girl, what-ever. Not secretarial work.

What places, for instance, can you give some names of places you worked?

Oh yeah. I worked in Doll and Smith. That was a advertising agency. Syndicate Newspaper Advertising. And that was when, I was working there when the banks went under. The Bank Moratorium I think they called it. And you couldn't put money in the bank, even if the guy sent you the check, you still couldn't take it to the bank and deposit it. So things got bad and newspaper advertising just fell. So they had to let a lot of us out. And from there I went to Rare Books And First Editions. That name was Bennett Brothers. And they were on 26th Street, no 56th Street. I enjoyed that job, I got all of \$15.00 a week. \$15.00 a week, all the books I could read and when Mr. Bennett went on a rare book buying trip up to these, you know, New England or Upstate New York and he bought, you know, a half a carton of books for \$2.00, I got all the ones that I didn't like, didn't need. So I had a lot of books. And from there I went to Marcato Elevator. And their office building, we had the whole building. First floor was where the equipment was, the truck was, trucks. Second floor was the office. Right in the heart of Hell's Kitchen. 41st Street between 9th and 10th Avenue. If you worked late you were locked into the office. When it was time to go you took a stick and you bashed on the ceiling and the man who lived upstairs would hollar down and you'd tell him you're ready to go - - - "Well wait a minute and I'll come unlock the door and then I'll walk you to the subway."

You mean it was a dangerous area?

Oh yes, it was a bad area at night.

Why was it called Hell's Kitchen ?

It just all the dregs of humanity congregate there.

Would that be where Skid Row would be, that type.

Yes, it was that sort of thing. It's a place where ~~XXX~~ Al Capone hung out. I don't mean that he hung out in that particular building, the whole area, it's bad. Well Marcato got out of there, they moved out Long Island. By that time I was done. Somewhere along about oh '39, '40, '41, something like that. Word came through from the State that they were not to advance any salaries, this was a way of forcing us into *quitting*. Why I was getting all of \$24.00 a week there. Big money.

You were still working at the elevator place ?

At the elevator concern, yeah. We did repairs and installations of elevators and getting a little bit provoked because you couldn't make \$24.00 go. Prices ~~were~~ were going ahead all the time.

Were you living in an apartment by yourself ?

No, no, no I was staying home with my folks. And my father had gone back into Marine work in the Navy Yard.

That would have been the Brooklyn Navy Yard ?

Umhuh. So I thought maybe I ought to go into war work but I didn't know what to do about it until I saw in the paper they were giving a test for working in the Navy Yard. So I went and I took the test in July.

Now was this a Civil Service test ?

No, it wasn't a Civil Service test. It was a, I guess it was really comprehension test. It took them 3 or 4 months to tell me that I had passed it. And then I was called down to take my physical and I passed that. And then I came home. Now Mother knew I had taken the test, she knew I passed it, but never said anything to my Pa. So the night that

came home, having passed all my physical and that, I had to tell him, my Pa, that I was going there. Then he told me that if he saw me in the Navy Yard he was going to look the other way because no decent woman worked in the Navy Yard. So, I saw him twice in the Navy Yard and we both looked the other way.

Well he had to have changed his mind on that because when the war came along, the Second World War came along, lots of women worked there, right I know but, you know, his daughter was better than everybody else.

What kind of work did you do ?

Oh, I went in there, the idea was you was that you went to work as a Trainee and they were looking very strenuously for anybody that would take to welding. So that every girl that went in there started as a welder. You were a welder trainee.

Is that where the song "Rosie the Riveter" came from and you were the girl they sang about ?

So anyway, I was in there a week, tack welding, when this little 4 by 4 Irishman comes along after I had set my lock on fire, and taps me on the shoulder and he says "You don't want to be a welder do you? You don't want to be a welder; follow me." So I followed him, which was, I mean was the boys, so I followed him and that's how come I got to be a Ship Fitter.

A Ship Fitter ?

Ship Fitter, instead of being a welder.

O-K, what was a Ship Fitter ?

Transfers the design, the pattern, from the wood or the paper onto the steel with a center punch and hammer and drop line and squares. Some the steel is so thick and some of it is 4 inches, depends on what you're working on.

Do you have to wear a mask of some sort to protect you ?
Did

No, you had to wear Safety Goggles. Had to wear a uniform. Trousers.

At that time women didn't wear slacks very much.

I didn't have a pair of trousers to my name. I went out and I bought some oh, in my family we called them Boiler Suits. Blue jeans. Bib over-alls.

Did you have to put your hair in a net ?

My hair had to be under a cap all the time.

And your rings had to be off ?

Nothing on your hands. And after a while I got my box of tools.

You had to buy your own tools ?

No, no, no. Issued to me. But that's a great achievement when you got your tool box. Like getting a label on you.

Well War Work, there was probably a lot of it.

Yeah. Well we were in, you know, late '41 early '42, we were very, very busy because what was happening the - - - the German Submarines were not too far out from New York Harbor. And the ship would leave tonight and out and not being equipped or ready the easiest thing to do was to ram the submarine. So we kept getting, we'd finish getting a ship ready and come in the next morning and it was all bashed up again. The whole bow would be caved in where they ^{enemy} had rammed the submarine. That's all did for, oh, ^{for} months and months on end, make bows for Destroyers.

Do you remember any blackouts that you had to participate in because of the war ?

No, I don't remember that. I know that we were all sworn to secrecy.

We had to pass by the Marines every time that we went in and out. And had to have an I.D. with your picture on it. They sent us to school.

And well I was picked to work for the F. B. I. And he spied on me for weeks and weeks to see who I talked to and who I didn't talk to. Then eventually why I was asked if I would do that. Then it was my job to

around and listen and spy on the other people.

Oh my goodness. Somewhere along the line you met a young man.

Oh yes. My chum and I, Vera, Vera, my chum. - - - and I. George was in the Navy Department, she was alone. I was alone.

Who was George ? (*Vera + George Gerling*).

That was her husband. I was ~~xxxx~~ alone. So we decided that we would go to the Y W and take some classes. Well when the ten week course was finished we still wanted to have some exercises so we thought we'd go bowling at the Y. Which we did. And we got to know other people there and we made up two teams of, you know, four. So that was eight. Came down this particular night with our Allys reserved for 8 o'clock and ~~xxx~~ was somebody playing on them. And we asked how soon he'd be done and oh, "He'd get off right now!" "Well don't bother because our party isn't complete yet, someone else to come!" Well the someone else never showed up and he was asked to join the group of eight and that's how I met him. Picked him out in the Bowling Ally.

What was his name ?

~~XXXXXXXX~~ Joseph P. Kennedy.

Now when were you and Joe married ?

We were married in 1948.

In New York ?

No, we were married in Ohio.

How come ?

Because I didn't like New York and he had a - - -

You didn't like New York, wait a minute, I've got to hear this. You didn't like New York ?

Up here, up here. We were going to be married and come to live up here

Where's up here ?

In Medina. And I didn't like the winters that were up here so I didn't want to move up here. Because well, after you got out of New York

if you got up beyond Central Park it was full of Wild Indians and Snow Storms!

Mc

So you went on to Ohio.

K

Joe had worked in the Navy Yard and of course when you're let out there is, of the Navy or any place I gather, when you're let out of war work there is a time when you just can't walk from one job into another. So after me crabbing about coming up here and all the snow there was he decided that he would go to Ohio where he had a sister living in Vanworth. So he got a job in Vanworth. Then he started bugging me about getting married so I went out to Vanworth and married him.

Mc

What brought you to Albion and your work there ?

K

Well we had owned this farm, Joe owned this farm. He brought this farm from the war money. From the war earnings.

Mc

You mean this place where you're living right now ?

K

Yes. He had bought this farm. And he had always wanted to live in this area because he remembered from the time he was a boy traveling from Buffalo to Irondequoit to see his grandmother. His mother's mother. And he always thought this was so pretty. Now the only time I can think about would be that he came through here in May when the apple blossoms were out. No really - - - -

Mc

So that convinced you to live here too ?

K

No. So we had to decide what we were going to do, let this place go to pot or come home and take care of it. So we came home.

Mc

Well when did you start working in Albion for the Highway Department

K

I came home in 1951 and the only job I could get was with Heinz's. That summer season. Tomato line. And then as a result of getting started in there and becoming known around I went to work in an automobile agency on Maple Ridge. And - - a - - where else did I

work here - - I worked in Bemis Brother Bag out there in Albion, and the someone got me a - - - after Joe died - - recommended that I be interviewed by the Personal Man down there in Albion and I got the job.

Mc Now what job is that, would you tell us ?

K Oh, I'm an account-clerk-typist for the Orleans County Highway Department

Mc You've been there now for how long ?

K 10 years, since 1968.

Mc That's wonderful.

K October '68.

Mc And you are working in a different building than you were.

K Yeah, when I first went to work I went to work in the Court House. I went to work for Henry Hannan and he bugged me and bugged me to take the test. Take a Civil Service. And I decided that I couldn't take a Civil Service test in November, starting my job in October, I wasn't ready in November so I delayed it, taking the test, but in the meantime I sent to Albany and I got the book to study up and then I took the Civil Service test.

Mc You took a trip to Canada in 1946 that was quite meaningful to you ?

K After the war service I decided that I needed a nice long vacation so I went to visit some relatives my, Sam Wood's side, in London, Ontario. And I stayed there about 5 weeks. And John Wood suggested, instead of going, returning to Joe's parents the same way that I had come up, why didn't I take the circle around and see more of the country. So I did and when I crossed the border back into the United States the clerk, the immigration clerk, did not ~~recognize~~ recognize my ~~father's~~ folder's transcript from King's County - - - suggested that I get off the bus and go into the Naturalization Bureau where I met an older man, longer in the service than this young chap and was advised to get my own citizenship because I was traveling under my father's citizenship. So I proceeded on the following Monday to go to the Department of Justice with my litt

\$5.00 and say I want my citizenship. He started to ask me when I came and what I did, etc. And then announced that I was a alien and I had been a alien and I had no rights as a American citizenship.

Mc. And here you had been voting all this time.

K Yeah, I'd been voting since - - -

Mc Working in the war - - - how come the F.B.I. didn't find that out ?

K Because every time they asked me , - - "Oh, I'm a citizen, my father's a citizen, I'm a citizen." But you see there was no reference at all to the fact that Margaret and Sam had adopted me legally.

Mc. They did legally adopt you ?

K Yes, umhuh. And they legally adopted me, I guess it was not quite 18

Mc When were you adopted ?

K Margaret and Sam Wood legally adopted me on October 30, 1930.

Mc O-K. So even though you were legally adopted you were not really a citizen ?

K No, I was not a citizen because adopted children do not get citizenship ~~Derivative~~ ^{Derivative} Citizenship. You have to apply for your own. So I proceed to apply, I bet you my file in Washington is yay thick. And finger-printed, mug shots, and between the time I made my application, under the name of Rebecca Wood, and the time that I got my citizenship, I married. And I moved to Ohio. So that I had to wait longer time than ordinary to get my citizenship, but I have my papers, which were ~~issued~~ issued in 1949.

Mc So now you are a complete American citizen.

K Absolutely.

Mc We will now stand and sing the National Anthem. 

Ma When your husband, Joe Kennedy, came up here you said he had bought the farm - - - did he intend to be a farmer ?

No the farm was too small to make a living, a family living off it. And it was too big to work and hold an outside job because at that time Joe was working in Bell Aircraft in Wheatfield. So we would put the fields into grain crops, wheat or barley or corn, and we'd have our Truck Garden.

Mc Was he into the Soil Bank at all?

K Yeah. That was under the Soil Bank. The wheat was under the soil bank because you could not, you could only put a certain number of acres in it. And we bought a brand new 1952 Ford Tractor which was his pride and joy. He taught my mother how to drive it and that pleased her immensely.

Mc Well as coming from Brooklyn do you like it here now to this area ?

K Well I was astounded to myself because having lived in Brooklyn where your garden was just a - - - maybe 4 foot from the building, ^{that was} ~~not~~ the grass : have, I just loved all the outdoors things. And I like working with

Mc What about the winters ?

K Oh, I manage, I managed. It wasn't too bad. Joe had the tractor and he'd sweep out the drive-way and that would let us get out and in to go to work. When he was working in Bell and I was working down in Middleport we'd leave together. I'd have, of necessity, have to go an hour early and walk over to the plant, Food Machinery and then he - -

Mc How long have you lived on this road then ? (S. Culvert.)

K I've been here since 1951, but we've owned the place since 1943. We had tenants on the place while we lived in Ohio.

Mc I don't understand why you don't have a Brooklyn accent.

K Well I don't know either, my mother said that I didn't sound like a Brooklyn that I sounded like a Western New Yorker. People say that I sound like a Brooklynite, I don't know. Maybe I'm just adaptable, this

I listen to

Kennedy 22

1~~st~~ what other people say. Other people.

Since your dog is on tape, what is your dog's name ?

My dog is called Woody. Because she runs like my father does, did she as brave as my mother. As soon as somebody comes she hides behind me.

Oh, Wood, sure. Woody sure.

Well Thank You very much, Rebecca for letting us interview you on your birthday. (Box of Candy).

Well Thank You for the nice gift.

Well this is wonderful, we haven't had anybody from Scotland and I think this is grand.

Well one day when work is over I hope to be able to go back there.

Have you ever gone back?

No I never have. My folks went back. They had 3 trips over to Scotland. Not in the war time, after the war was over. And they went after they retired. Me, I like to go to foreign places where they don't speak my ~~language~~ language. I like to see how they live. ~~example~~ A couple of years ago I went to London, England.

That's not foreign.

No, but then I crossed the Channel and went to Paris, France. On the same trip.

But you didn't go to Scotland.

I think all my folks in Scotland, the ones that I would know, that would be in my own generation, we have grown so far apart, ~~that's~~ that we'd be strangers.

The above interview was transcribed by Mrs. Betsy Hoffman.
