

Orleans County Historical Association

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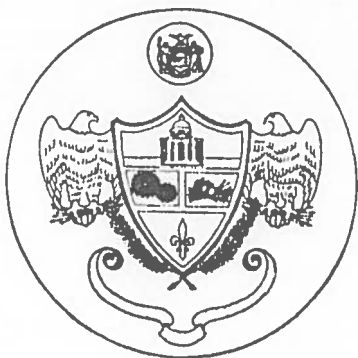
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Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mr. W. Earl Waterson
Oak Orchard River Road
Lyndonville, New York

Earl Waterson was born August 11, 1896.

This interview was conducted by Helen M. McAllister of Medina, N.Y.
Also present during the interview was Mr. Arden McAllister.

W Waterson

Mc McAllister





Orleans County Historical Association

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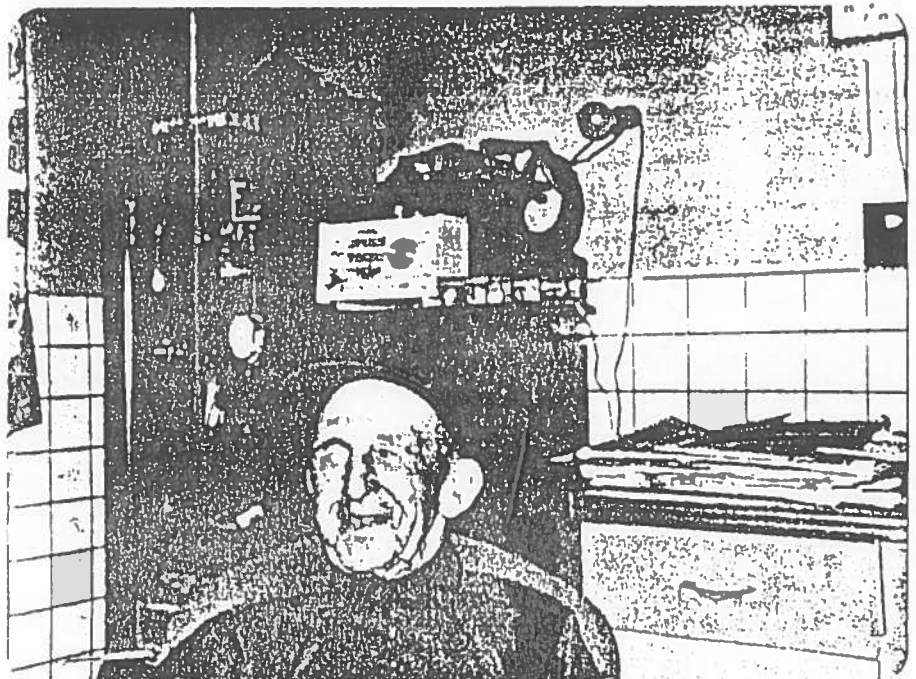
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Orleans County Historical Association

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.

Earl Materson

Signed

April 2, 1980

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

April 2, 1980

Date

For the ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION,
April 2, 1980, Helen McAllister of Medina, New York
is interviewing Mr. Walter (better known as Earl)
Waterson.

Mr. Waterson, a farmer, lives on the Oak Orchard
River Road, outside of Lyndonville, New York.

Mc Earl, will you please tell us the date of your
birth ?

W I will be 84 in August; born on August 11, 1896.

Mc What was your father's name ?

W John Waterson.

Mc Your mother's maiden name ?

W Cora Furnace.

Mc You said your father was from England ?

W Yes. He came over here when he was in his twenties,
I should say. He worked for Harmer, up on the road
here about a mile, as a farmer.

Mc You said your father was known as Johnny Bull ?

W They used to call us kids that as we went to school.
"Johnny Bulls". They figured we was stubborn. (Laughter)

Mc You have said that there were eight children. Do you
remember all the names ?

W John, and then William. He fell out of an apple tree
and broke his back. Then I was next, Earl Waterson;
and Louie, Jane and Ernest. Molly (now Rorick), and
Ruth, her name is Postle now. She is in Florida.

Mc Do you have any remembrances of your early home life,
as a little boy ?

W Well, I started work when I was about six years old, baby sitting.

Mc For your brothers and sisters; because your folks were working on the farm ?

W Well Dad couldn't do it all and Mother was out helping him.

Mc When did you start school and where did you go ?

W Down to a country school, District 16. I had to quit school when my brother William got hurt, to take care of him.

Mc How did that affect him ?

W He was paralyzed from his waist down. My folks says to me one night, it was on Christmas Eve; they says: "aren't you going to bed ?" And I says: "I ain't. He ain't going to live out the night." "Oh yes he will." "Oh no he won't," I says. He died at twelve o'clock. He was sixteen years old when he fell out of the apple tree. He weighed a hundred and twenty. I used to carry him around. The worst time I had with him; I took him to Rochester to have some X-Ray pictures taken. I had to carry him up to the second floor. And, I got up there and an old fellow said: "Hold him awhile 'til I get a place to lay him down." I was pretty near out of wind. He weighed twenty pounds more than I did.

Mc He had a broken back ? How did you take him, in a car ?

W Oh, yeah. I would pick him up in my arms and carry him like a baby.

Mc What was your school like, do you remember ?

W I only went to the country school here. I was in the eighth grade when I left school. My education ain't too good.

Mc You had just a couple of teachers then ?

W Only one. She was at grade school District 16. We only had one teacher and one teacher taught for six years.

Mc Do you remember that teacher's name ?

W Her name was Margaret Pettit. She was a good teacher but I learnt more from Petit. She married a Petit. Her name was Hearne, in Medina.

Mc Was this school in Kenyonville ?

W No. It was right down the road.

Mc Which side of Kenyonville; west of Kenyonville ?

W That would be west of Kenyonville.

W My sister taught school most of her life.

Mc Which sister was that ?

W Jane. One fellow she started in school; when he died he was a millionaire. (Laughter)

Mc Any of that rub off on her ?

W Oh, she is dead. Died real young. And her husband is dead too, passed away.

W My first job, I went to work in a cemetery.

Mc Where was that ?

W Way down below the hill there in Lockport.

Mc What did you do ?

W Dug graves. It was right busy after World War I and we had the flu on then. We was busy!

Mc I think you said that in World War I you were drafted ?

W Yes. I went to camp in Lima, Georgia. There was 250 of us; two train-loads of us. There was one train from Orleans County and they picked the other up on the other side of Rochester. That was a nice trip. Every station you went through, they was out there to give you candy.

Mc Was that the Red Cross or just town people ?

W Just town people, trying to get acquainted with the soldiers.

Mc What was it like when you got down to Atlanta, Georgia ?
W Oh, the first thing you had to get used to was the bugle call. If you was sick, you had to report before four o'clock. I didn't happen to be sick. I was only there ten days.

Mc Why was that ?
W This hip bothered me and it spoiled my arch; and they kicked me out.

Mc That was the result of what ?
W Falling out of a cherry tree. That was when I was about six years old. And them days they didn't take you to a doctor. You just stood it out.

Mc So that your ruined arch, gave you a bad hip and as a result, Didn't they give you any kind of an examination before you got down to Atlanta, Georgia ?
W Oh yes. They put me down as a "weak arch". I went over to Albion to see the head one there. He says: "You're the last one on the list," he says: "You got to be over there but you may not go." Well, I says: "I don't like to be that. I'd like to be the first one." So he put me down the second. I didn't want to go over there and have to come back home again.

Mc Over there ? What do you mean ?
W Over to Albion to catch the train.

Mc You had to catch the train at Albion ?
W They took us to Rochester and they set there in the Lehigh Valley Station; we set there from 10 o'clock to four in the afternoon. A cop beside of each one of us.

Mc Why was that ?
W Waiting for the other train load to come in.

Mc Were most of the fellows drafted ?
W We was all in the draft.

Mc What was the train like at that time ? Comfortable ?
W Oh, yes. All but when we went through the tunnels.

Mc Then what ?

- W Then we had cinders in the foot of our bed.
- Mc Then you didn't have to go over ^{to Europe.} You were glad about that! Do you remember when the war was over, the Armistice celebrations or anything?
- W That night we went out with two bugler boys and marched around the square once, went to Kenyonville and came back up around. We figured we was celebrating. (Laughter)
- Mc Then so many people did catch the flu.
- W I had it but I was only sick three days of it. Doctor came one day and doctored me, and the next day I was out doing chores. And he says: "You'll be dead in the morning." I fooled him.
- Mc The doctor came to your house?
- W Two dollars a person. That was Doc Waters. He was in Knowlesville at that time. He's got two sons now in California; doctors.
- Mc How long did you work in the Lockport Cemetery?
- W Oh, one summer.
- Mc Did you get paid by the hour?
- W I think we got two dollars a day for digging graves.
- Mc What was a funeral like at that time? Was it different than now, wasn't it?
- W Oh no, it was the same. But there was more people went to the cemetery then there is now. I got the devil one day. I thought they (the mourners) had all left and I had to put the lid on the casket and nail it down. I jumped down in, and an old gal come up and gave me to understand that she didn't want me jumping on her husband's coffin! (Laughter)
- I didn't know that anybody was around; but she was watching somewhere. She probably was hiding behind the tombstone.
- Mc They didn't use to put the caskets in the heavy containers that they do now?
- W No, they were wooden. You would nail the lid on.

Mc And then you would put the dirt back on top ?
W Shovel it on, in them days.
Mc Did you work alone or did someone work with you ?
W There was six of us. Quite busy at that time. You
Couldn't lower a person into the grave unless you
had the right papers there. One we kept on top of
the grave until nine o'clock at night before we got
the papers. They had to come from the Town Clerk's
Office. You had to get a burial permit.

Mc How did the doctors treat anyone for the flu ?
W Put a - - - our doctor put a hot mustard plaster
on your feet.
Mc On your feet ?
W He claimed that drawed the fever away from your
head. He saw my sister. She had it but she didn't
take any of the pills. She throwed them under the
bed, and she got over it as quick as the rest of us.

Mc What kind of pills did he give ? Sugar pills ?
W I couldn't say. In them days the doctor would just
hand them out to you and there was no name on them
or nothing.

Mc Did they ever have you take whiskey or anything like
that ?
W Well, I do once in a while but hardly ever take a
drink of whiskey.

Mc But I mean for the flu ?
W No. I don't smoke nor drink, only water.

Mc Well you save a lot of money. I guess that stuff
is expensive.
W I don't drink too much pop. That ain't good for you.

Mc After the cemetery job where did you go to work ?
W If I remember right, I went to Heinz's.

Mc You worked there about a year ? What did you do there ?

W Well, half a day I was boss over seventy-five girls, and that cured me of being boss. (Laughter)
There was one of the big shots died there and all the foremen~~s~~ went to the funeral. (He was killed in the war.) And, they told me to take over. So I did; tried to.

Mc You didn't like that ?

W No. That cured me of being boss. You take seventy-five girls and they knew you was boss for half a day. (Laughter)

Mc What did you do for the most part while you were at Heinz's ?

W Well, part of the time I had to spell the girls off. They had a job and when they wanted to take a ten minute break, I had to relieve them. And then I would straighten the bottles after they got them. That was quite a job to spell them off, work on a capping machine, go from there to a labeling machine. You had to pick that bottle up and put that label on just right. I notice the bottles today. They are very particular how that label goes on there.

Mc I don't think they pick up each one individually anymore. It's probably all done by the machine.

W Sometimes you had to turn it over and put on two.

Mc Is that right ?

W In them days we tied a cork on each bottle.

Mc What were you bottling ?

W We was bottling vinegar then. Then I worked in bottling catsup. That was different. And, I worked with the girls on apple butter. I had a forty minute noon hour and I walked clear down to the Catholic Church for my dinner and went in and back again. Forty minutes.

We boarded right on the opposite corner. Pritchards boarded us.

Mc That is quite a hike from the Heinz plant .

W I could do it in them days. Nothing to it.

Mc When you worked at Heinz, did you live at home here ?
On the farm ?

W No. In them days I didn't believe in going ten miles
to work. I boarded in town.

Mc When World War I started, I worked in the Pierce Arrow
plant in Buffalo, on Niagara Street. I can remember
that well because Woodrow Wilson come there and made
a speech. He said: "Vote for Wilson and keep your
sons out of war." He got in one day and the next day
we was in war.

Mc How much did you get an hour when you were at the Pierce
Arrow ?

W Nineteen cents.

Mc Pierce Arrow was a car, wasn't it ?

W Oh, they built cars and trucks. It was one of the
best cars in the country. My brother polished the
windows for Woodrow Wilson's car.

Mc What did you do at that plant ?

W I was a kind of a operator there, mechanic. I had to
take care of 150 belts and about 60 machines. Had to
keep them oiled. And, I stopped the machines at noon
and started them up. The same at night and morning.
Every place I went; they gave me an important job.

Mc You must have been a very responsible person.

W I don't know. They didn't ask me. (Laughter)

Mc How many hours a day did you work ?

W Ten. Once in a while I would work twelve. Six days
a week.

I had my oil can. I could go into any place in the
factory. They couldn't kick me out.

Mc Did many women work there ?

W Not then; all men.

Mc Women didn't work at the Pierce Arrow, but they did
work at the canning company ?

W Oh, yes.

Mc Why is that ?

W Well there was quite a few years difference.

Mc You worked at Heinz in about 1918 ?

W Well, you see I worked at the Pierce Arrow plant before that. I worked at Curtis Aircraft before that and I worked for Clifton Pipe Works before that.

Mc Where was Clifton Pipe Works ?

W That was just off from Niagara Street in Buffalo.

Mc What was Clifton Pipe Works ?

W We had to dip pipes in acid to clean them. And we dipped them in a tar solution, kind of. That was for these electric pipes in them days. They put all their electricity through pipes. And then good pipes were galvanized. Well, I quit there and they wanted us to stay.

Mc How much did they pay an hour ?

W Nineteen cents. Those two weeks there; it cost us more for board than we made.

Mc How did you find a job in Buffalo ?

W Well, there were three of us. We'd go out and take off and go around to the factories. Be there in the morning when they opened up. We only went to Pierce Arrow plant once. There were about fifty there and they picked the three of us out.

We would just stand there in line until they got ready to interview you. I don't know - - - I think they could tell that we were hay-hookers.

Mc Did you work at the Curtis Airplane factory later ?

W A year later, after that.

Mc How long were you there ?

W One winter.

Mc What was it like ?

W It was a good place to work. We were assembling wings for planes over across; over-seas. That was right in the war times. I think we turned out around sixty wings a day. And, there were four wings on a plane.

Mc That was what they would call a double wing plane - -
Biplanes ?

W That's all they had in them days.

Mc You said that two other fellows went with you. Were
they from around here ?

W One was my brother, Louie, and the other was - - -
well he worked for me off and on.

Mc What was your friend's name ?

W George Franklin. He has passed away.

Mc You were three young - - - what did you call yourself:
"hay hookers" ?

W Someone in the factory said we didn't know nothing.
We could show them up!

Mc Somewhere along the line you said you decided to
become a hobo. Tell us about that, will you ?

W It was right after World War I; the war was declared
over then. We went to Buffalo and got a boat to
Detroit. And then we hired out on the railroad, the
New York Central.

Mc When you hired out to the railroad, what do you mean ?

W Well, they wanted help down in Texas. And, we went to
the Employment Office and they was hiring help for the
railroad, so they booked us up.

Mc Did you know anything about the job ? What were you
going to do in Texas ?

W We was laying tracks for a new railroad.

Mc That's hard work.

W Well, we never got there!

Mc Tell me about your ride - However far you went.

W We went to South Dakota.

Mc What was the train ride like ?

W They had nice easy chairs and good feed and he didn't
have many when we got there.

Mc Was it mostly young men ?

W Old men.

Mc Did they get off hither and yon, or what ?

W They'd get off here and there along the line.

Mc They couldn't stop you from doing that ?

W I guess they could if they wanted to. But the old fellow in charge, he wasn't too particular. He didn't watch us too close.

Mc Was there a Texas representative on the ride with you ?

W I think there was because there was a man went with us, to oversee us.

Mc Who went with you ?

W Harry Nudd. He was just a friend then, but he married my sister, Jane.

Mc When did you decide to jump off the train ?

W That was in South Dakota.

Mc What did you do ? Had you ever been to South Dakota before ? What was it like ?

W Well, we didn't see too much of that. But North Dakota, I worked in there. They fed you five times a day where we were. Worked for a German family. Boy, they treated you like kings!

Mc What kind of work did you do ?

W I hired out as a binder man. The old fellow said the second day, he says: "I'll see how much you know. Go out and churn that binder up." I did and he give me credit for it.

Mc Had you learned to do that here on your father's farm ?

W Oh yes. I used to work. The man wanted me to drive four horses, but I told him: "I never drove four horses." "Well that don't make any difference. If you can drive two, you can drive four." And the women folks said: "You gotta drive Maud." I says: "What's wrong with her ?" "No one can work her." They said they hadn't had a hired man yet that could work that horse. Well, I said: "I'll work her." Pulled her out and fed her some grain that night and

next morning brought her out and harnessed her and put her on the binder.

Mc Just like that ?

W I was up to the neighbors and come riding her in and the old fellow says: "There comes that damn kitten now." (Laughter) He said: "He can do anything with a horse." I went up to the neighbors and he gave me another one, and that's what I got out of it. *(shows us his finger)*.

Mc What happened to your finger, Mr. Waterson ?

W Broke the joint in it. I broke the horse though.

Mc How did you do that ?

W I put my fingers in the bit, like this. *(Demonstrates)* It was a big horse and it took me up in the air about six feet! My hand went against the horse's jawbone and broke the joints of my finger. You've seen the bits on the horses ? A fellow showed me that was how to hold a horse; but I learned different. I had it set, but they should have taped the two fingers together; but they didn't.

Mc Does it bother you ?

W Not too much. I went to a doctor two years ago and wanted him to cut it off, but he wouldn't do it. I said: "I will pay you for it." But he said it didn't make any difference, he wouldn't do it.

Mc Why would you want it cut off ?

W It bothers me in picking apples. It don't come right.

Mc So you worked with the binder and driving the horses ?

W The first field we worked in was 350 acres.

W Out there they didn't ask you to do anything; they would tell you to.

Mc You said the German people were really good to work for ?

W Oh, yes. When we quit there we went to work for Brownley Brothers. They had 170 acres. We filled silo there. Their folks died and the boys were

taking over. And, their binder broke down and I went over and fixed it for him. When I quit, he wanted me to stay and he said: "I will give you a job as foreman, if you will stay." But I said: "Nothing doing. I don't like the job as boss."

Mc Now were you still in North Dakota ? Did you ever get up into Minnesota ?

W Worked in Minnesota; three days is all.

Mc Why is that ?

W Did n't pay us enough. Thirty cents an hour. The first day I was there, I was stocking up oats and my partner was a bigger guy than I am. He come to me and said: "I want you to drive a team on the binder this afternoon." He said: "Nothing doing, go ask him." He didn't ask me. He said: "This afternoon you are going to cut oats." He put the horses on the binder and he went across the cross road. And, there was a car come along and scared them horses, four of them on the binder. I stayed with them and I missed a telephone pole by about twenty feet.

Mc It scared the horses so they took right off ?

W On the dead run ! His eyes were about that big. He was surprised that I stayed with them. He says: "Never mind. You keep on cutting and I'll cut around them posts." He went away and left me. This is the first time I drove four horses, for 60¢ an hour.

Mc What was it like in Dakota ?

W You could see for miles. The government had set some trees out there. When they took up a claim, they had to set an acre of trees. They was Poplar Trees. If it wasn't for them, there wouldn't be nothing there. It was clear sailing. He was a hotel keeper before he started farming and he didn't know much about farming.

Mc It was windy out there, wasn't it ?

W One day we quit. Afraid the wind would blow the

binder over.

Mc You have said that you were not really a hobo, but you were away from this area for about a year ?

W Well, we was out there only five months. When we come back home there they called us "hoboes." (Laughter) I got a kick out of that. At one place there was 20 of us. One of them hoboes, he could preach a better sermon than any minister I have heard around here. I think if it hadn't been for him I would have been hoboeing again. He says: "You'll have nothing." He says: "Many times I have slept outdoors." Well, I have slept outdoors. In Chicago I slept under a berry bush.

You know, everybody thinks I stayed on the farm. I don't tell them any different.

Mc Why did you come back ? Was it because of that man's sermon ?

W That was one reason I come back. I come back to start picking fruit.

I hired out to the neighbor. My cousin come and wanted me to work for him. He said he'd pay me good money. He said: "What will you take to come and work for me ?" And I said: "Ten dollars a day." He went in the air about that high. (Laughter) I kept track of it. I made eleven to twelve dollars a day picking apples. We picked in barrels them days. The best I done; I got 40 barrels in eight hours.

Mc That is pretty good, isn't it ?

W Take 40 barrels is 120 bushels. And, they was quite a few of them around here that was going to show me how to pick apples. Some of them ain't shown yet.

Mc What did they do with the apples after they were in the barrels ?

W Then, they put them in storage. In the winter time you'd pack them, repack them and sell them to different buyers. I done that two different winters; repacked apples.



Mc What cold storage would that be ?

W I worked in Waterport Cold Storage and I worked in three dry storages. And, I worked in three storages in Medina. Go from one to the other. I think one man owned them all. Claude Grinnell and Posson, they were brothers-in-law. I think they were.

Mc Was it really cold in the cold storage ?

W No. We would work in the packing room. In the storage part it was cold. You wouldn't be in there only long enough to roll out fruit enough to work on. We would repack them. Take them out of the barrels, repack them, face them up and put them back in again. 'Cause there would be a few rotten ones in. And they shipped most of them overseas. We had to put the head in, and nail them in so they wouldn't get out. You probably knew Fred Squires who used to live in town ?

Mc Yes. Mr. Squires lived on Elm Street. I think he is the man that showed us our house, on Highland Avenue.

W He worked for Possons. Me and him would do the heading. He could beat me, but I wasn't far behind. Nice fellow, he was.

Mc When you worked in Medina did you live in Medina ?

W I boarded in Medina.

Mc When did you get married ? Was that about that time ?

W Right in the Depression, 1930.

Mc How did you meet your wife ?

W Well, it was a blind date first. I was going out with a fellow and he wanted to know if I wanted a blind date. I said, "okay" and went out with her. Then I don't think I see her again for six weeks. She was working in the paper store in Medina, Wills. I used to go in there and visit with her and finally got a date with her.

Mc Where did you go on a date ?

W Well, we went all over, practically. We went to Watkins Glen and Olcott and around over to Toronto Fair. And in those days the girls tried to see which one could go the farthest.

Mc In your fancy car ?

W Oh, the car I dated her in; I bought it off of my my friend. I gave him \$19.00 for it. (Laughter) It run good. It was a Model T Ford, with a canopy top.

Mc Now what was your wife's name ?

W Her name was Thelma Oderkirk.

Mc Was it a long courtship ?

W About three years, I'd say. My mother-in-law - - - I would go in the back door and she would go out the front. (Laughter) I was "no damn good."

Mc Tell us how you got married.

W It was twelve o'clock Saturday night.

Mc Was that a surprise to most everybody ?

W How it happened to be so late; they had a surprise party for her, from her old boyfriend, that day. That was her birthday. Her brother-in-law took her up town and kept her up there. She got so mad ! At six o'clock she started to walk home; so they brought her home. We was supposed to get married about six o'clock. And, she had to get her clothes ready and everything else.

Mc Where did she live ?

W Over on the Angling Road. And that was a surprise for them.

Mc You were married in Medina at the Baptist Parsonage ?

W Yes. I can't think of the minister's name at the moment, but he said: "I don't know whether this will be legal or not." I says: "It don't make any difference." (Laughter) My brother, he was there waiting to stand up with me. My brother, Ernest, and his wife.

Mc Then did you have a honeymoon ?

W We went down south. We was gone three days. And then we come home and they give me a charivari. (Laughter)

Mc What was that like ?

W Well, they carry you out. And sometimes they drench

you and they are liable to throw you in the creek or in something. There was 100 of them, men and women. My wife hid up. They couldn't find her. She got in my brother's car and covered up in the back seat on the floor. They looked in there but they couldn't see her.

Mc That was just a way of having fun ?

W They dassn't do it no more now. Well, they didn't catch up to me. I went down - - let's see, that road over the other side of, - - just - - I can't think of the name of that road. A fellow was chasing me with a Studebaker auto. And, he got behind me and pushed me and finally I got away from him. I went in a neighbor's yard and they pulled in behind me and I went around the house and out across the front lawn. (Laughter) I got away from them and I got down to my mother-in-law's and I parked the car there. And they come and I went down through the house and out the cellar and out the back door. My brother was with me. There was about 60 cars there and I come back up and I stole a car. There was an old Model-T like mine, and I took that and come home here. (Laughter) They caught up with me. I had the drinks for them when they got home. He accused me of stealing his car and I had to put gas enough in it for him to get home. If that had been today, they would have had me arrested. I told them I just traded cars. I left mine and took his.

Mc Did you and your wife live with your parents here on the farm ?

W Yes. Well, I had to in a way, to take care of my brother. And my dad was a cripple for years, with rheumatism. I had to take care of him. If he heard me coming to the house, I had to turn him over. He says: "You can do it quick, with only one hurt. The rest of them take too darn long." So I'd pick him up. I was quicker than lightning in those days.

Mc You and your wife had a family ?

W Three. The third one was stillborn.

Mc You have a son ?

W He lives down - - this next house down, Roger Waterson.
I got two sons now ! A grandson.
I brought him home Monday. A new baby, last Monday.
I was just down to see him today. They got three children now.

Mc Then you have a daughter too ?

W Yes, she lives in Medina. Her name is Barbara Becht.
She's got three of her own. Her oldest, Cindy, is adopted.

Mc Could you tell us about Cindy ?

W Her name is Schwab now, Cindy Schwab. She's got three children and another on the way.

Mc Well, where did Cindy come from ?

W Korea.

Mc How did this all happen ?

W Well, my son-in-law, Ronald Becht, was in the Air Force. He went into the orphanage, there in Korea, and he took a liking to this one. Our daughter never had any children. He took a liking to this little girl and sent her home.

Mc Did she come with someone ?

W A nurse come with her. She was one of the youngest to fly the ocean.

Mc This must have been during the Korean War. How was Cindy when she got over here ? Was she healthy or what ?

W Not too healthy. Two different times she was in the Children's Hospital in Buffalo. It was funny that there was a doctor from Korea in the hospital the last time they took her in there. He knew her soon as he see her. A better memory than I got. And, he gave her the best of care too. I took care of her mostly. My daughter was staying here at that time. She stayed here for awhile and then she went to

Texas and then she was in New York City. I went to Texas and see them when they was down there. Me and my wife and son; he wasn't married then. We left here Saturday morning, and Sunday night at twelve o'clock we was in Houston, Texas. Some people won't believe that, but that's the truth !

Mc You said you lived at home here. Did you and your wife always live at home with your parents then ?

W Yes.

Mc Did your wife work away from home, or on the farm ?

W She worked away from home at Harrisons. She worked at Newells, and she worked for Penny's in Medina, as a clerk. Well, Mother did most of the work. That made it nice for her. She could get out. My brother took care of the kids mostly. He had a wheel-chair with a board on it and he had them up there, setting on it.

Mc Did you come back and forth to work then ? Back to the farm ?

W The time I worked at Harrisons I drove back and forth.

Mc You worked at Harrisons for quite a long time, didn't you ?

W Before I went to work for Harrisons I worked to Norton's in Lockport.

Mc What kind of place is that ?

W Plastics.

Mc What did you do there ?

W Worked on a machine. Turned out vanity cases, 22 of them a minute. I didn't like that. It was too fast, too hot. I put my name in at Harrisons, and I put it in at Niagara Falls at Curtis, and I put it in at Brake-Shoe. I got a notice - - well they was two days apart - - and I picked Harrisons.

Mc How old were you when you went to Harrisons ?

W 56, I believe. I worked mostly on dipping parts.

Mc My husband did that one summer. (*Arden McAllister*).
W Up to Harrisons ?
Mc That's hard work !
W I didn't mind it. I told the boss, I says: "We ought to have an automatic dipper." He says: "It can't be done." I said: "Oh yes it can." About two years after that he said: "Waterson, we've got an automatic dip," he says: "you can come over and run it." That was one that was as long as from here to the road.
Mc And you were put in charge of that! You said you worked there about eleven years ?
W And after that I was working for Scotty on the line, at Harrisons on Air Conditioning. That was when they first started Air Conditioners. They wasn't coming out good and the "big shots" come down. I didn't know who they was, and they was standing around in my way and I said: "You fellows will have to get out of the way. I can't work with you fellows standing around here." (Laughter) And they said: "We are coming in to see why these parts ain't coming out good." I says: "Anybody ought to know that." And he says: "Why ?" "Well" I said, "you are emptying these parts and putting them through hot water." I says: "Anything won't stand to be empty going through hot water." I says: "You put a drum out in the door yard empty and the sun will dry the sides right in." I says: "If it is full, it won't harm it a bit." They said "okay", and they went away. And the boss come and he said: "You know who you was talking to ?" And I said: "No." He said: "They was the 'big shots'." It's a wonder they didn't fire you !" The next day he come and he said: "You know what you got for talking to them ?" I said: "no" He said: "You are put on the 500 List. Nobody can fire you or bump you off." I never got no papers to show it but, that's what he told me.
Mc Did they adopt your idea ?

- W The next day! They got along good after that. I was mad; that was the reason I told them.
- Mc They didn't give you any money for it though ?
- W I should have put in for it. But they got me mad quite a few different times and I'd tell them off, and they would take my advice. Let's see. One of the "big shots," I can't think of his name now; he come bawling me out on that big dip and I said: "I don't mind it. I can get two hours overtime." He said: "You should order new parts for it." I said: "Bawl them out instead of me." That was Tracy, and about two hours later he said: "I done as you told me." He brought the parts and he said: "Open them up." He hadn't opened them up yet. Gregory, he bawled me out - - that was the first year I was there - - - 'cause I wasn't doing it right. And I says: "You bring the parts in the way I want them; I could keep up." Next day he come and asked me and I told him. And he says: "That's the way you'll get 'em then." Oh, I got along good there. But generally I told the bosses what ! I done it in a pleasant way and they took my advice.
- Mc Then when you became 68 they thought you had been there long enough ?
- W Yes. They kicked me out.
- Mc They figured you ought to retire ?
- W My boss didn't even know it. He didn't know I was through that day. You see I was working for Scotty. I can't think of the other fellow's name. He wanted a different man but he couldn't fire me so he let this other fellow take me. So he got reports on me. And, he even got my pay check every week and then he brought it over. The boss that I was working for; he didn't know it. And Yankee ! He used to work in the Hospital here in Medina, he was a foreman up there at that time. He stopped one day and says:

"Why didn't you tell your boss that you were going to be through." And I said: "I thought I would let him find it out." (Laughter) He was looking for me in. He asked Yankee where I was, 'cause he knew Yankee knew who I was; knew me.

Mc After you got through working at Harrisons, did you come back to the farm to retire, yet work harder than ever ?

W Well, my son took over. I am helping him.

Mc One thing we talked about the other day; you said that when you started in with farming, you had about 70 acres on the farm, or your folks did.

W Yes. When they died they left the farm to me. I had to promise to take care of them for 20 years, which I did. I figured it up. I paid good money for the farm!

Mc You said that you share the farm with your son, Roger, and now your farm is about 500 acres ?

W Well, that's, we rent land. The farm isn't any bigger but if you have time I'll show you the farms we work.

Mc How many different farms do you figure you rent from ?

W I was figuring it up the other day. It is twelve now. We have lost two farms. They are figuring on taking over. They did work at Harrisons and that and now they are going to try and farm it.

Mc One is your friend, Mr. Rinker.

W Yes. He is pretty good.

Mc Is your farm mostly fruit ?

W No. We are mostly vegetables. Last year we had in 100 acres of sweet corn and 40 acres of string beans and 220 acres of field corn. And then we had 40 acres of wheat; besides our hay.

Mc Where do you sell your vegetables now that the canning companies are mostly gone ?

W Oh, so far we have been lucky. They have took them. Snyder's is one of them, beans go to Bird's Eye, I

think. We just signed up for beans again yesterday. 60 acres this coming year. They cut us out on our sweet corn. We can't get anymore. The company has more than they can handle. All this north of the Ridge, they cut us out.

Mc What do you do with the land that you were going to put into corn ?

W We ain't decided yet. Last year they told us how many acres of field corn we could put in.

Mc Who tells you what to put in ? The company or the government ?

W Well, if you want to belong to the Farm ASC Office, why you gotta do what they tell you.

Mc What is ASC ?

W That's the office over here to Albion. They keep track of the farm business.

Mc Do you have any fruit on your farm ?

W Yes. 30 acres of fruit here. We sell that to the Lyndonville Canning Factory. I heard bad news about them; they are going to fold up. That's the rumors I heard today.

Mc That's Pillsbury owned, isn't it ?

W I think so.

Mc They bought it last year.

W I hope it is just a rumor.

Mc We just heard today that Lipton's, in Albion, is closing.

W This neighbor works for them up there. And, my son's mother-in-law works there, and there is a lot of friends that work there.

Mc Earl, as we continue, we are talking about your farm. You have been showing us your pigs and your sheep. Did your folks used to have cows ?

W Yes, we used to have cows and chickens for a living practically.

Mc How many cows did your father have ?

W About five. We would make butter and sell it and trade it for groceries. And then you could also trade your chickens in for groceries.

Mc Did the grocery wagon come around to your house ?

W Yes, one was from Knowlesville. I was going to tell you his name but I can't think of it. And then one was from Oak Orchard. That was Jesse Oderkirk, my wife's relatives. They'd have two horses on their wagon and take their time.

Mc How often would they come around ?

W Once a week. You were supposed to get enough groceries then to last the rest of the week. We went to Medina at least once a year. (Laughter) That's when we were small. It was really something around Christmas time.

Mc What was it like, when you would go to Medina ?

W Well, there was quite a change. Then they didn't have the freezers and that. Stands, about four feet wide and twelve feet long, with bananas on them, down to the last ones that would be rotten. Different prices on them. I always liked the ones when they were pretty near black; they taste the best.

Mc How did you get to town when you were a young boy ?

W Well, in them days our dad would take us to town. And, it would take two hours with a team of horses. When we got bigger, a bunch of us all would get together, kids, and we'd all go up to Knowlesville and catch the trolley and ride to Medina. We'd stay until the last trolley and then come back to Knowlesville and walk home. We thought we had a lot of fun.

Mc Well, what did your father do with the milk besides make butter, or was there just enough for your family ?

W He would sell the butter.

The rest of the milk he would feed to the pigs. You would take the cream off it and make your butter.

Mc How did they make the butter ?

W A churn, I guess. I got the churn out in the woodshed now.

Mc What kind of a churn is that ? I understand there are different kinds.

W It had legs it stood on. And, it hung on three rods; you pushed it back and forth. If the cream wasn't the right temperature it might take you an hour, or an hour and a half, to churn it. If it was the right temperature, you could churn it in 10 or 15 minutes.

Mc What would the temperature have to be ?

W Not too cold and not too warm. If it was too cold it would come in little round balls. If it was just right it would come in one big hunk. Mother had a record of making good butter and she didn't have no trouble selling it.

Mc Did she sell it to the traveling grocery man or to the people in the neighborhood ?

W She sold it mostly to the grocery man. He put the name right on it and the customers would pick it up in a hurry then. But you was lucky if you got 30¢ a pound. Eggs was around eight to ten cents a dozen.

Mc What kind of chickens did you have ?

W We had everything. Mixed varieties. We sold eggs, quite a bunch of them, to Ted Poler. He lived up on Fruit Avenue. They say his wife works up there in the church where we get our lunch very often. (Nutrifare at Medina United Methodist Church)

Mc Have you seen how they raise chickens today ? It is some different, isn't it ?

W I'll say it is. I went down to Eagle Harbor and see them down there.

Mc Were your chickens in a pen or were they loose ?

W Loose. The eggs tasted different then too.

Mc Did they really, or was it because we were younger ?

W Oh they tasted different. I had some chickens here a few years ago and the coon caught 'em all. And my brother, he teased me for eggs. He said they tasted like eggs.

Mc You said that you and your son had a large herd of cattle at one time ?

W We had around 70 head.

Mc What did you do with the milk ?

W We didn't milk. Just replaced the heifers. We kept them until they was ready to have calves and then sell them. Let the other fellow worry. There was pretty good money in there for two years. One year we lost money on them. We sold them for less than what we give for them. We bought the heifers, year old heifers. We figured on keeping them a year, a year and a half, and then selling them.

Mc How would you go about selling them ?

W Well, the OK Farms used to come in and buy them. And we sold some to Wheel in Caledonia. They'd come over and get them sometimes. We sold them to the highest bidder.

Mc How would you get them out of here, on trucks ?

W Trucks. I went on 3 dairy tours and they was interesting.

Mc You said then that you finally got rid of your cattle, why was that ?

W Well a year ago it was so wet we couldn't get our corn and couldn't fill the silos; so we didn't have no feed for them. And, they was too high and we didn't buy them anyway. We ain't had good luck since. My son says he is going to try again next year, again. We built all them barns for heifers.

Mc You have quite a few buildings. How many are out there ?

W We have six grain bins. That big barn there is about 200 foot square, I think, counting the roofs and all that. Me and my son built them. We do our own carpenter work. The house down here, we even built that.

Mc That is a nice little two story house.

W What me and him can't do, there ain't many can take on what us two do.

Mc That is very nice. That must give you a great deal of satisfaction to have him follow as a farmer.

Mc Arden and I went with you ^{Today} over to the barn to see your sheep. When did you start raising sheep ?

W Oh, my dad raised them ever since I can remember. My dad didn't take care of them too good. Just fed them and took care of them. Different ones told me if they don't have a lamb, you are supposed to help them out. My mother wouldn't believe that, so I told her a sheep was having trouble having a lamb. And, I would have to go out and help, so she said: "Come out and watch me." (Laughter) Sometimes they get tangled up and you have to turn them around, kinda. Their feet get mixed up and it is quite a job. They laughed at my son - - - the doctor didn't come in. My son says: "Don't worry. If the vet don't come I will deliver it." He delivers them now. (Laughter)

Mc Did you ever have to call for a veterinarian ?

W Oh yes. The first one I ever got was Bolton from Lyndonville and then I used Arnett. He was good at it.

Mc I think his wife's maiden name was Oderkirk. Was that relation ? (NOTE: See Arnett transcript - at library).

W Yeah, some relation. He always held it against me, the way I got married.

Mc He did ? For marrying an Oderkirk ? That sounds like Doc Arnett. (Laughter).

Mc What about ticks on the sheep ? Has that ever been a problem ?

W Well it was until the Farm Bureau got a sheep-dipping outfit and we haven't had any bother since. We would shear our sheep and you couldn't count the ticks on it. The way my dad got rid of them; he would turn the chickens in with them. The chickens would eat the ticks.

Mc Off from the sheep ? Is that right ! I have heard something about using tobacco leaves.

W Well we never done that. We always buy the dip now.

Mc It sounds like you dip the sheep in something. How did you dip sheep ?

W Well in them days they had a ramp made, and the sheep would go up and they couldn't jump across. They'd try it and they'd fall down in. Then a fellow would stand there and push their head down.

Mc Wouldn't the oil on the wool keep the wet off ?

W No. They had something in there to cut that, kinda. But now, we just put them in a flock and spray them.

Mc Do you spray with a machine overhead or what ?

W We have one of those hand machines. But I saw in the paper a while ago and a fellow stayed in too long. It killed him ! You got to be very careful and get out of there quick, and not keep the sheep in too long. It will affect them too.

Mc What about shearing the sheep ? That has changed quite a bit, hasn't it ?

W Oh yes. The first shearings they done with a hand clippers. I could show you some of them. Now they use electric clippers.

Mc Do you shear them or do you take them some place ?

W We hire it done. Earl Young shears ours. He lives down on the Ridge. He can do about ten an hour.

W He puts them on the floor and uses a clipper just about like they have for a haircut, only bigger.

Mc What do you do with the wool ?

W We put it in square bunches and take it over to Albion to the wool pool.

Mc What is the Wool Pool ?

W They take it off from the farmer and then they sell it and then they pay the farmer according to what they get for it.

Mc Who runs that; the Farm Bureau ?

W I think so. You take it over to that Agway building over ther near Knowlesville. They weigh it and grade it and then mix it all together. They have a buyer come along and buy it.

Mc How do you grade wool ? How do you choose it ?

W Well, they open the fleece up, some of the farmers put straw and dirt and every other thing in there; but you are supposed to keep it clean. And then some of the wool, in under their bellies, is dirty. They pick that out. They have to be careful. I had a hired man. I didn't watch him shearing and the hired man got drunk. I caught the devil when I took them over there ! He put chaff and everything else in. He thought he was making me money. I took that up to Middleport to Jackson.

Mc J.J. Jackson ? I thought he ran a Bean House ?

W Well he bought wool too. His business is all closed up now. He was a darn good man. If I hadn't been well acquainted with him, he would have sent me home with the wool. But he docked me, and took it.

Mc Mr. Waterson, as we continue on the final side of our taped interview, how many lambs do you usually have during the spring ?

W There was about 60 lambs the last year. This year there ain't quite so many. Around 40, I think.

- W We figure on keeping 50 old ewes, and they are getting too old. They are dying out on us. We have lost seven so far this year.
- Mc Do you kill off the sheep or do you send them some place ?
- W We send them some place. That's out of my question - - butchering. I used to butcher them but Roger won't eat them and I won't eat them alone.
- Mc You don't like lamb ?
- W I used to when my mother cooked it. But my wife cooked some once and it didn't taste good. She wouldn't eat it ! It makes a difference who does the cooking.
- Mc We have just gone over to the barns and have seen your pigs. Did your father used to have pigs ?
- W Small ones. He only raised two and that was for this pork barrel.
- Mc For your own use ? I suppose your father would do butchering ?
- W Oh yes. Me and him used to go out butchering. That is something in the past now. We got a dollar a head for butchering. Two pigs would take pretty near half a day. Heat the water and butcher them. Some of them would weigh around 300 pounds. Butcher them and scald them and hang them up. I used to butcher cattle, too.
- Mc How much would you get for doing that ? The same price ?
- W Butchering ? I never went out, I just butchered my own. The neighbors from Knowlesville used to come down and do it for a dollar. I have sold beef for seven cents a pound.
- Mc Boy, that was a few years ago !
- W Pork for three dollars in Roosevelt's times.
- Mc I want to ask you how has raising the pigs changed ?
- W Well, at home here it ain't too much difference only you keep them separate. Years ago we put one or two

together and let them run. Turn them out in the orchard and let them run. Now we keep them separate, and keep lights on them, and baby them more.

Up to Schwabs, they have crates they put them in. The pig has got to stand right there. She can't turn around, and the little pigs come in from each side, to nurse. I went on a pig tour two years ago. Some of the farmers, they market 30 pigs a week; 220 pound pigs ! I went through this slaughterhouse down in Pennsylvania. At that time they was butchering 700 pigs a day. Six months after I was there I was talking with them, and they had raised to 1200 pigs a day. That's a lot of pigs !

Mc They can raise pigs today with not much fat on them, isn't that right ?

W Well, they figure on fattening a pig now in six months, from the time it is born until it is slaughtered. It takes me longer than that.

Mc Someone has told us that during World War II, people would drive along, come to the different farmers and try to buy meat. We call it the Black Market. Did you ever have that experience ?

W Well, I sold quite a few on the Black Market. They got rich on it. They would buy them off the farmer for market price, and sell them for what they would give. Some of them, out of the city, would get an awful price for them ! Just for that meat. A fellow in Ridgeway, he butchered a Stag Pig.

Mc What's a Stag Pig ?

W A boar pig. A father pig. And, it was a big old cuss. He had it hung up side of the Ridge and a fellow stopped along by the hotel and he said: "What will you take for a quarter of that beef ?" He told him; and he took it. He sold that pig for beef ! (Laughter) I couldn't believe it. Well, it was big enough for a beef.

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Mc Earl, are you a Methodist ?
W I ain't much of anything.
Mc I don't believe that ! You said the other day that you sometimes go to the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Ashwood ?
W That's where I was brought up, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, but I go to Kenyonville, once a year.
Mc Once a year ? When do you go, Easter ?
W Uh-huh.
Mc Good for you ! So you are going to go next Sunday.
W Yes, this coming Sunday. I got an invitation to go to Niagara Falls but I am going to break that. Jehovah's Witnesses was down preaching me a sermon.
Mc They come by, don't they ?

Mc You have had several hip operations?
W Two on the same hip. This one ain't doing as good as the first one.
Mc You said this hip was damaged as a result of a fall when you were six years old ?
W Yeah.
Mc But it hasn't slowed you down.
W Not too much.

Mc You have said that your wife was very ill, before she died.
W She had sugar diabetes and rheumatism and everything you could mention, pretty near.
Mc Were you able to have her at home ?
W Well, when she wasn't in the hospital; yes, she died in the hospital in 1974.
I had my first hip operation March, 1975.
Mc Since then you have lived alone in your own home; but you manage very well. You have a nice stove. What kind is this ?
W Round Oak, 1896.

Mc Made the same year you were born ! (Laughter)

Mc You mentioned that you didn't especially care for the way lamb was cooked. We have seen you at Nutrifare here in Medina. When did you first start eating at Nutrifare ?

W Well, this last time I started right after I had my hip operation. That was in December. Bill Rinker wanted me to go before that and I says: "wait" - - I didn't tell him what I was going to do. When I got home from my operation I says: "I will go up with you once a week." I went twice, I think, before that. Working on the farm, it takes about three hours to go up there and back. And trimming trees, you would be surprised how many two of us can trim in three hours. If you hire a tree trimmed, it costs you from two to five dollars.

Mc You said that on the farm you hire people to plow your land, is that right ?

W Yeah. We hire Bruce Rutherford to do the plowing. He does that nights.

Mc He works somewhere else during the day ?

W He works for Oak Orchard Sand and Gravel, cement.

Mc Then you prepare the ground, is that right ? How do you prepare the ground ?

W You have to have a disc or a drag and go over it; or a cultipacker. If you take around four or five hundred acres, go over it three times, it will keep you busy all summer.

Mc And you do that ?

W Well last year I done all the spraying of 30 acres. I cut the hay and raked it and baled it. I keep my son busy cultivating and planting; and weed spraying.

Mc What do you do when it comes harvest time ?

W We just take over. We do all the combining now. Years ago we used to do it all with a binder; shocks. Cut it, shock it up, draw it to the separator. And, the fellows that done the harvesting made me mad. I would have to wait until they would decide to do it. So I bought a combine and had one ever since. Four foot cut, the first one, \$360.00.

Mc Well at \$360.00 today you couldn't get it for that. What would you pay today for it ? Quite a bit.

W Now this one we got was \$26,000.00!

Mc Well, Earl, thank you ever so much for the interview. It has really been most interesting and we appreciate it.

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