

# Orleans County Historical Association

Table of Contents: Mrs. Wilda Edick Gomsrud #1

## SUBJECTS

Practical Nurse.... training and experiences

Class of 1923, Homopathic Hospital, Rochester, N.Y.

Class of 1924, Medina Memorial Hospital, 1st course

Private Duty Nursing

Letters of recommendations from local doctors and  
from Miss Estella Douglas.

Numerous pictures of doctors and nurses, and friends

Memories of patients and hospital experiences, etc.

Women's Ward / Men's Ward

Polio Patient

two pound and seven ounce baby

night nurse in the new hospital

Estella Douglas, M. M. Hospital Administrator

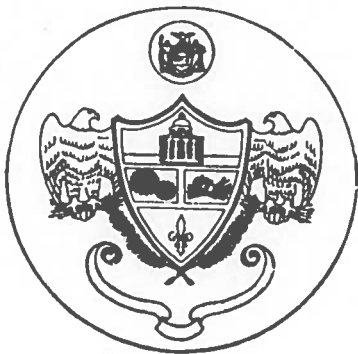
watching construction of Medina Memorial Hospital

The Great Depression

Elmer Gomsrud (from Norway) - husband

Travels to Norway

Travels in the U.S.A.



# Orleans County Historical Association

## Oral History Project Interview

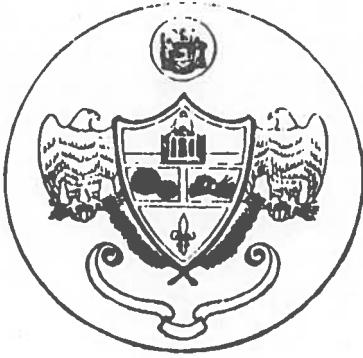
Mrs. Wilda Edick Gomsrud  
North Wing, Long-term Care  
Medina Memorial Hospital  
Medina, New York

Mrs. Wilda Edick Gomsrud was born December 5, 1902.

This interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina  
in the Chapel of the Medina Hospital (for privacy).



Mrs. Wilda Edick Gomsrud



# 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.

Wilda E. Homestead

Signed

Jan. 26, 1982

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

Jan. 26, 1982

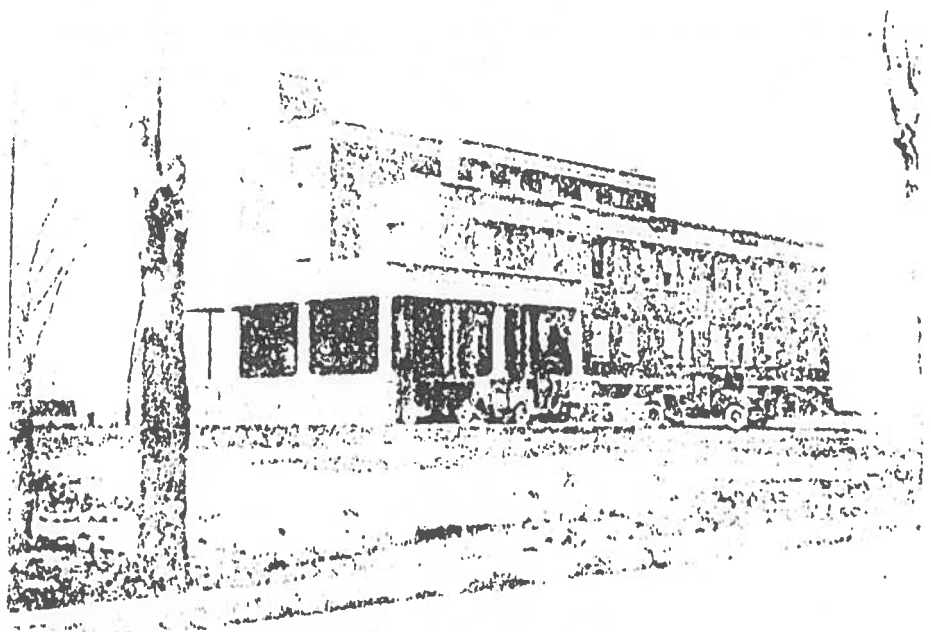
Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association,  
January 26, 1982, at the Medina Memorial Hospital,  
Helen McAllister of Medina, New York is interviewing  
Mrs. Wilda Gomsrud. Mrs. Gomsrud was one of the  
first nurses at the Medina Hospital and this is  
primarily what this tape is about.

- Mc Wilda, thank you for allowing me to come and interview you.  
I'd like to start by asking you when and where you were born ?
- G I was born in Rochester, New York on Jefferson Avenue in  
1902; December 5, 1902. I'm 79. I'll be 80 next year.
- Mc Almost a Christmas baby.  
What was your father's name and your mother's maiden name ?
- G My father's name was Archie Vernon Edick and my mother's  
name was Sadie Naomi Myles.
- Mc What was your father's occupation ?
- G He worked in the office of the Freight Claim Agent and  
eventually became the Freight Claim Agent.
- Mc What railroad was that ?
- G Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railway; but later bought  
out by Baltimore.
- Mc Did you have any brothers or sisters ?
- G I had one sister, she was two years and a few months older  
than I. Her name was Ethel Fay and she died before her  
25th birthday. I think she had Rheumatic Fever.
- Mc Did your mother work outside of the home at all ?
- G No, Mother never worked out - - not after Daddy married her.  
He met her working, when she worked for her uncle who had a  
hotel or rooming house and she was the cashier and the book-  
keeper. She was from Canada.
- Mc Tell us about your early school years. Did you go to school  
in Rochester, New York ?
- G I went to school in Rochester and I graduated from 29 School.  
I wasn't what you would call a brilliant student. I went  
two years to West High and then I quit and eventually ended



Class of 1923, Homopathic Hospital  
Rochester, New York (W.E.G. 2nd from left, top)



Medina Memorial Hospital 1924

up in Homopathic Hospital in Rochester.

Mc Then do I understand that you did not graduate from high school ?

G No I didn't graduate from high school.

Mc But you could go to the Homopathic Hospital and train ?

G Yes I went there for - - - well the thing of it was, my father married again, and of course I was keeping house for Daddy after Mother died.

Mc Your mother died, you said, when you were about 18 ?

G I was 18. Sister was in college and of course she wanted to finish college so I stayed home and kept house for them and then Daddy sprung on us that he was going to get married. He married this - - she was a missionary in a rescue mission there in Rochester. Sister had gone to Warsaw to teach, she taught arithmetic and biology in Warsaw High School. So I was left home and they didn't want me kicking around so he wrote to Homopathic Hospital to find out if they would take me and I went in there and of course I didn't have the background for the solutions and there was something else - - I thought of it the other day and I went to write it down and now I can't think of it. I just couldn't get it through my head.

Mc How about chemistry, did you have to have that ?

G Well I suppose that was the background of it but of course I was all upset over having him getting married and everything. So they kept me for a three months trial and they told me to go back to school and come back and they would keep me there. I had pictures, I didn't bring those - - first I wasn't going to tell you about it and then I thought I'd better come clean. So then Daddy wrote around and he found out about this place in Medina and he sent me down here and talked with Miss Douglas.

Mc Before we get to Medina Wilda, let me ask you how long did you train at the Homopathic Hospital in Rochester ?

G I was probably there three or four months, that was all.

Mc What kind of training did they give you ?

G Well, of course, it was practical nursing right in the wards with the patients and studying and I learned a lot there. But I was upset because my father was married again

and everything was all - - oh, I don't know, I wasn't a student anyway.

Mc It was quite a traumatic time for you.

G I raised every kid in the neighborhood down home; there wasn't one I didn't raise.

Mc You really were a nurse at heart.

G I was eight years old and I lugged Leonard Hand all over until he was too big to be bothered with a girl. Then across the road from us was Jean Averyborn and she was a little mite and her father was an old man and her mother was a white-haired woman; and she had a daughter and he had a daughter and they lived right across the road from us. They went to our church. He carried Jean around on his hand, she was so tiny. I lugged her all over the neighborhood and to this day she nor her daughter - - - after she was married her daughter would come down and stay with us in the country and she was up a week ago Saturday and she says: "Wilda, I can remember playing on your concrete steps with a yellow cat." All those people have just clung to me.

Mc I think that's wonderful.

G I've had an interesting life. I was a "Big sister" to a girl who was kept by her grandmother, and the welfare felt she was abused and they got me to try to get her out of that life that she was leading and I finally - - she knew some French people, French Canadians, down on our street that I thought a lot of and they finally took her in and helped her. And from there she went - - - she was a bright girl, much brighter than I was - - I was in the Big Sister Council and I helped her.

Mc Was the Big Sister Council a certain group ?

G It was a certain group in Rochester, it was at that time, they had the Big Sister Council, and I was supposed to be a Big Sister to her but I was almost her age and usually they were older people.

Mc You really were a Social Worker weren't you ?

G I had my finger in every pie.

Mc So after your training at the Homopathic Hospital in Rochester how did you happen to come to Medina ?

G Well Daddy wrote around. I don't know how he happened to hear of Medina but of course as I say he didn't want me

around there with him and this new bride so they wrote here and they brought me down one terrible day and the ruts in the road - - you couldn't get out of the ruts in a touring car, a Buick Touring Car with side curtains and we had a heater, a pig, or something that heated up on the floor, one of those concrete things.

Mc You said a "Pig" ?

G It was porcelain. They called it a "pig". It was like a bottle and it had a cork in the end and you put boiling water in it to keep your feet hot and we had that in there trying to keep warm. And oh, my father couldn't drive, he didn't have a mechanical bone in his body, but my step-mother drove, and we were in ruts like this that you couldn't get out of them, they were about six or seven inches deep. Oh, they were terrible !

Mc What year would this have been ?

G It was in 1924 when I came here, because I came and they unloaded me and I've been here ever since.

Mc Where did you stay ?

Murdock.

G When I first came I stayed with a Mrs. A - I don't know as I can remember her name - - - it was the second house from West Center Street on Prospect. She died while I was there. There was a lady staying with her.

Mc Did you board there ?

G No, my boarding was all at the hospital; I took all my meals at the hospital.

Mc Tell me about your first experiences in Medina. Did you first come to the hospital or to your rooming place ?

G Well I think we came right to the hospital and I think Miss Douglas had found this place for me so that I had a place to stay. She died one night there, she had a practical lady with her, and she came in in the night and called me and told me she was gone. Then I had to move again. So then I went down to Florence Fox and Elmer Fox; he was a barber, Donald's father and mother. Donald died a few years ago. They lived on Prospect Street. I stayed there until - - oh, I don't know just how many years. Finally they needed the room for someone. Oh, my sister was taken sick and I went home for three months and then they let me



know that they had to have the room. I think my sister's boyfriend paid for my room while I was down in the city to help out with expenses and so I could keep it because I couldn't afford to keep it when I wasn't working, I was taking care of my sister.

Mc What was your sister's name ?

G Ethel Fay. She died before she was 25 years old. Rheumatic Fever and they didn't know what it was - - - did everything wrong as I look back on it now. Gave her transfusions and everything but nothing helped her.

Mc When you say your father brought you, your father and your new step-mother brought you to Medina in 1924, did you come to the hospital that we now call the Medina Hospital or was there another hospital ?

G Down on Prospect Street.

Mc On the corner of Prospect and Eagle ?

G Yes.

Mc What was it like ? I know the brick house is still there.

G Well, there was a big living room, that was where the office was; and off of that as I remember - - I've been racking my brain to picture the place - - there was folding doors, or something, to shut off a room on each side. And, that room on that side was a patient's room. I'm trying to think whether the big room off of that was - - Miss Douglas and Miss Somerville I think had a room in there together, I'm not sure but I think they did. I can't recall whether there was a bathroom in there or not but there was one upstairs that I never shall forget.

Mc Why won't you forget it ?

G (Laughter) Well it was a room, kind of under a roof and the window was small, but we clowned up in there.

Mc Clowned ?

G They'd bring us - - - well you can't imagine - - they'd bring flowers from somebody that died there, they'd even bring a cross in from a funeral ! And Mrs. Devick was a devil on wheels.

Mc Who was Mrs. Devick ?

G She was a "psychic", she claimed. She lived up on West Center Street, or up that way somewhere - - - I just can't

remember where she lived, great big woman - - and she was a clown. Oh - - she was supposed to be a very religious person. She was supposed to "read people" you know, but I don't know whether she ever did or not.

Mc She didn't mean to be funny did she ?

G Well she could be but I don't think she meant to be.

There was Catherine Male and I that came in at the same time. Catherine's father later was a janitor at the hospital. This hospital; or the first one here.

Mc Did you know Ceil White's mother ? Was she Anna Hoffman at the time, or Mrs. Kuspa, or whichever ?

G No, I didn't know her until she came in here, <sup>Medina Hospital</sup> then I met her.

Mc To live as a patient, yes.

G ~~They~~ lived across the road from that hotel. I don't know whether my husband ever went over or not; he liked to drink a beer once in awhile. He probably went over with our next door neighbor. But I was a Prohibitionist from the beginning to the end because we were Methodists ! You couldn't have anything in the house and yet I seen them drinking, what I thought, was hard cider and they thought it was sweet. My step-mother and father were Methodists.

Mc Let's try to stick back with this first hospital, the Community Hospital or whatever they called it.

G I don't know what they called it, I don't remember.

Mc How many patients would go in there ?

G I was wondering that the other day. I can't just off hand say but there was quite a few for the little place it was. There was a sun porch.

Mc Maybe 40 people all together do you think ?

G I don't know if there was 40; we could have had two in a room upstairs. It's awful hard to picture. The one thing I do remember, there was a sun porch to the east, that's been taken off I noticed the last time I went by. Mrs. Shannon, Margaret Shannon's mother, had a son in there and I took care of her. Everytime she met me on the street she say, no matter who was around, "This is your baby !" I remember I used to be embarrassed to death.

Mc You mean she gave birth to a son in there ?

G Yes. She gave birth to a son in this sun porch.

This Document Certifies that

Miss Wanda Edick

Has satisfactorily completed a course of six months  
practical nursing at

**The Medina Hospital**

and is entitled to all the privileges thereto appertaining.

Medina, N. H., July 31st 1924

Wm. Thompson

Pres. Board of Managers.

Esther B. Overholser

Superintendent.

Edward Munson

Chairman of Staff.

6/12

And then this other that I remember a Mrs. Lake was in there for a long time. She lived on the Ridge later.

Mc Do you remember any of the doctors' names ?

G Oh, I remember them all.

Mc Who were the doctors that came to that hospital that you can remember ?

G The doctor from Lyndonville was Dr. Fairman. There was a Dr. Mudge from Gasport but I don't know whether he came to that hospital or not. And Dr. Scott. Dr. Munson, William and Ed Munson. Ed Munson was the father and Bob Munson was the son. William Munson was a lawyer. Dr. Waters. I don't know as he was there when I first started or not, I just can't remember. Oh there was so many.

Mc Do you remember any of the nurses that were there ?

G Oh yes. MacAvoy, Miss MacAvoy. I think she came from Lockport originally. Mrs. Ernest; she's the one that caught me for going out. The time I went downtown and got a thermometer. That little Polish lady but she married and left there and I can't remember what her name was. She lived over near where the Polish Club is. Oh, I should remember more than that. Catherine Male, she went in when I did. Mrs. DeVick.

Mc Was Mrs. DeVick the one who you said was a psychic ?

G Yes she was a psychic, she thought she could read everybody. Catherine Male and I went in together. We were both students there at the same time. I named MacAvoy. I don't know as she was there then, she came later maybe. Oh I forgot one thing; I wanted to bring my autograph book ! That might have jarred up memories, 'cause I think most of them have their names in my autograph book.

Mc Autograph books used to be very popular and I think they are coming back.

G Oh mine is full!

Mc I'll bet it is.

G I intended to look through that and I didn't happen to see it in the drawer and I just completely forgot it.

Mc Wilda, how long did you work at this first hospital ?

G Well, this present hospital was started then and I couldn't tell you just exactly how long but we went up and watched them build it. Every night when we would get through work

we would walk up and see what they had done to the new hospital. We moved up there - - - of course I don't think I ever kept a diary or thought of such a thing. There's no dates on any of my pictures, are there ? Darn it.

The trolley went back of the hospital. Many a night I stood out there thinking that somebody or something was going on out there - - - an accident or something. It was nothing but the old trolley line out there behind, by the canal.

Oh, and I took care of Dr. Maynard's wife after he was dead. I must tell you this, it hasn't anything to do with this but I never met her while he was alive and my heart was broken when I met her that I hadn't met her while he was alive, and I guess he was a "pill". And she said: Homer or Dr. Maynard would sit at the table and if they got going they were just as apt to pick up a glass of water and throw it at one another as not. She said: "Oh, they were full of it !"

Mc Wilda, we were talking about your childhood in Rochester. Tell me about your experiences at the Methodist Church.

G The West Avenue Methodist Church. Everybody went when there was something doing, everybody turned out. We had a Rev. - - oh I didn't think I'd ever forget that man's name -- Simpson, I don't think that was it.

Mc You had a good attendance ?

G We've had minister friends ever since Elmer and I've been married. Rev. Pasel, in Tennessee now, is one of our former ministers. Sent me 20 Christmas cards and 20 stamps to go on them and 10 extra cards to hand to the nurses.

Mc How beautiful.

G And friends in Oakfield brought me a box of Disabled Veterans' cards and stamps, they brought me those. Why, everybody is so good to me. We went out to Tennessec.

Mc Wilda, going back to your childhood in Rochester; you were saying that when you were a child, even the snow couldn't keep you away from church.

G Oh no. Sometimes Daddy would pull me on a sled behind him. I had a little painted sled that they gave me.

Mc Did it have sides and a back on it ?

- G No, it didn't have a seat or anything but it was all painted, a pretty painted sled. I remember something hit it and broke the boards and they had to put other boards on it and my heart was broken. We had doll carriages, the cutest darn things, I wish I had one now to show people. Little wicker doll carriages, and I went all over.
- MC I had a wicker doll carriage and I used to wrap my kitty-cat up in doll clothes and push her around the yard. I loved it !
- G Cat ! My father wouldn't let us have a cat. The cats got his pigeons and we couldn't have a cat. One day a cat came to the house and he said: "Now if you want to put that cat in the attic you clean up after it in the morning and you can do it !" And I put that cat in the attic but he never told me to put dirt with it. Of course it was more my idea than my sister's, because she wouldn't, and "my land" did I have to clean that attic the next day ! I never wanted another cat. But down home we had two and we just idolized those things.
- MC Everything you are saying ~~more~~ sooner or later and (mostly sooner) gets around to your husband, Elmer. I think I had better just jump in here and jump you up to when you were married. Would you tell us how did you meet the man who became your husband ?
- G He lived over here on Eagle Street, and I lived down at Elmer Foxs' on Prospect, roomed there. Elmer lived with Mrs. Mayes, she was eventually a cook here.
- MC When you say "here" you mean at the hospital ?
- G Here in this hospital. She was a lovely woman, But her husband had asthma. He was a farmer and he had asthma. She worked all her life. She ran a restaurant down there by the railroad track there where there used to be a bar; I don't know whether it's still there or not, she ran a restaurant there. She had children by her first husband and she had children by her second husband. She had three children by her second husband and Elmer by her first and another one, I think he's dead, an older boy. And - - she cooked here. Well Elmer stayed there at their place and

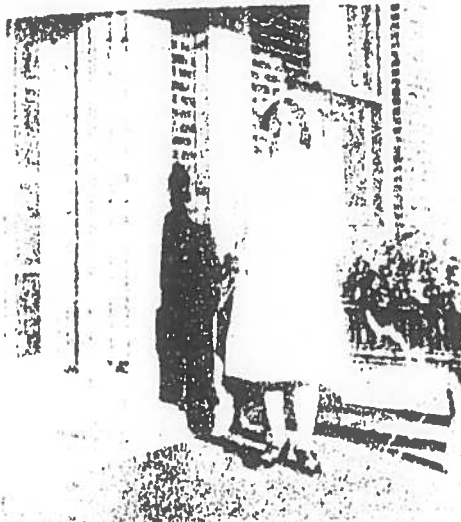
Will was taken into the hospital and I went down Eagle Street - - up Eagle Street from down at Elmer Foxs' - - up, he went down to the Stamping Works. Every morning we said "good morning". And Will Mayes was in here sick and we got visiting and talking to each other, cause I was nursing here.

Mc Did you wear a uniform at that time ?

G Yes, I was in uniform from the time I came. I lived across the road from Mrs. Mayes' at Seefeldt's. After I left Foxs' I moved up to Seefeldt's. Florence wanted the room for somebody so I had to move. And I lived there and Elmer was across the road. Well, my folks were coming up on Labor Day in the fall if they went to Erie, they were going to stop on their way back. And Elmer came in to see - - Will Mayes had asthma just terrible and he was in the ward and Elmer was in all the time to see him and of course we'd speak to each other and that was the extent of it. He was going with Ely, she was one of the nurses from Niagara Falls, and this day she had to work and she said to him: "Why don't you take Wilda out with you tonight ?" And he said: "Oh she wouldn't go with me !" And she says: "Ask her and see." And he asked me if I'd go for a little ride with him, he was going down to see George Roberts, down at Kent, about picking apples. He loved to pick apples on his two weeks' vacation. So I said: "Sure." And I went with him and that was the last date she ever had. From then on we went together ! And - - we stopped on the way up, there was a little place on Rt. #31 that served lunches, and I don't remember what I got but he got an egg sandwich and he said: "That was the worst egg he'd ever ate !" And I never forgot that. But from then on, Ely used to laugh about it, she said she didn't care about him anyway, and she didn't care because I went with him but she never got another date with him. From then on he was mine !

Mc How soon after that were you married ?

G Well I just don't remember exactly how soon. Of course my folks came when they went to Niagara Falls, They came and stopped to see me and I wasn't there. Daddy was quite perturbed over that and he wondered just what I was out with, But when I took Elmer down and introduced him



Wilda Edick Gomsrud



Mary Dockery



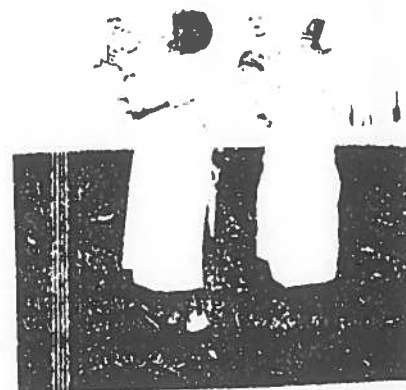
Emily Brown



Emily Brown



twins: Florence & Betty  
Woodard



twins !!  
Mother: Mabel Woodard  
Nurse: Wilda E. Gomsrud



why they fell in love with him too. I just can't say when that was, I can't remember when Will was in here.

Mc When were you married ?

G June 27, 1931.

Mc That was about the time of the Depression wasn't it ?

G Oh yes, we were in the Depression. Nobody had two nickels to rub together! We rented half a house from Homer Jackson and he heated it for \$25.00 a month. It was a great big old house. He was going to loose it anyway. He was related to Rockwell Kingsley, the dry-cleaner; he was Rockwell's nephew. Homer's baby was born just before we were married and that's how we got to know them. Elmer was fixing up the apartment while I was down in Rochester and then he came down to marry me. We had a lovely wedding.

Mc Where were you married ?

G In Rochester on Marlboro Road.

Mc In a private home ?

G Yes, in my father's home. They went all out. He hired a caterer and had everything. Then I had a girl friend, I don't know whether you have ever heard of her, probably a long while before you, if you were around here you would have knew her - - a crippled girl friend, Mary Dockery. She was in here, she was a patient and we got to be awfully good friends. Mary helped me fix my wedding dress, I got the dress made at <sup>\*</sup>Curry's and she fixed it where it needed it. I said: "Well my wedding wouldn't be complete without my friend, Mary." And of course they operated on her and made her legs out straight. When I first saw her, she'd take a hold of her ankle and move her leg - - like this - - and move the other one, in a hunched position - - like this, moving her feet.

Mc What caused her to be crippled ?

G She had Infantile Paralysis and there was nothing they could do. I think it was the doctors in Batavia tried operating on her and she was in really as bad condition when they got through because they felt they were going to make her walk upright. They put braces on her and she tried to walk on crutches but her body was too heavy for

*\*(Curry's - local dress shop)*

her legs and she couldn't. She was a seamstress, her mother was, and she taught Mary to sew.

Mc Did you say your dress was made at Curry's? Is this the Curry's dress shop in Medina?

G No, I bought it at Curry's and Mary fixed it where it needed fixing, where it was a little too long or something. She did all my sewing. I'd go in there and if there was something I had on that she didn't like - - - I'd go over there on my time off, I had two hours off every day - - go right over to Mary's, and her mother was a seamstress too - - oh, they were wonderful to me! Mary was in here <sup>(M. Hospital)</sup> and that's when I got to know her. She always laughed her head off at me because she was in the ward and there were four beds in the ward and there was a great big spider on her bed and I was scared to death of that spider, ~~and~~ I screamed and yelled trying to get him so he wouldn't get her, and she never got over it. She kidded me till she died over that spider. I think we were friends for 25 years. One of the girls and her boy-friend, Grace Benthin - - she's been in to see me here too - - she and her boy-friend, Ed Short, she finally married him - - - brought Mary down to my wedding. I said my wedding wouldn't be complete without Mary. Two or three of the men carried her in on a chair and she told me before I was married that when I got ready to throw my bouquet, I wasn't to throw it. I was to put it on my mother's grave, ~~and~~ have somebody put it on my mother's grave, and I promised her I would. So when I got ready to throw my bouquet I got up in a chair and I said: "There was one friend who had done so much to help me get my wedding right and do things right and help me get my dress and everything in order and the dearest friend I ever had and I had wanted her to have that bouquet of flowers." And I handed it to Mary. She went all to pieces and I'll never forget it. Grace Benthin and Ed Short were going together, they married later and of course Ed died since, but they brought Mary down and the other men went out to help her in. Oh, I loved her, she was the dearest thing! I was crushed when she died. She was all crippled. She could bring her feet up and lay them up

like this, and lay them down. If I was on a case and the patient died in the middle of the night, I'd go over to Mary's. ~~and~~ The side door was right there and I'd go in the door and Mary was lying on that couch and I'd crawl in with her and there we would stay for the night. They were wonderful to me.

Mc A real friend.

G Agnes was her sister but I was never close to her. Mary was a twin and the twin was just as funny as Mary. I don't know what had happened to her; Mary had Infantile Paralysis but she was a bright girl. But Margaret was a odd one.

Mc You said that you and Elmer were married in the Depression in 1931, and What did Elmer do for a living ?

G He was a plater and polisher at the Stamping Works. He worked there for years and years and years. Leo Collins and Elmer thought the world of each other.

Mc You and Elmer never had children ?

G No. He was 36 and I was 28. Well, he came from a large family and he knew what his mother went through and he didn't want to bring any more children into the world.

Mc You said Elmer had come from Norway ?

G Yes he was born in Norway and raised there. He came away when he was 18. He was a sailor and he jumped ship in New York; and then he was afraid he would get caught and wouldn't be allowed to come back, so he got back on a ship and came in legally. He had a nephew in New York who died 10 days after Elmer. He went to Norway to see his folks. Elmer and I had been to Norway twice. I've been all over anyway. My father would get us a pass to anywhere we wanted to go.

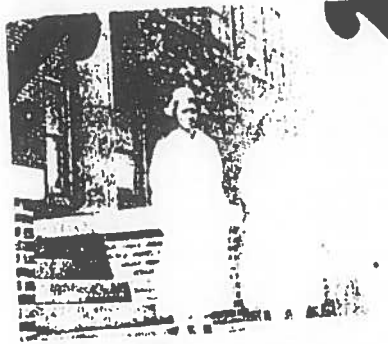
Mc Because he worked for the railroad? Do you mean the pass was good on other than the railroad ?

G Yes he could get passes on other railroads.

Mc And ships ?

G I don't remember. We had an annual pass to Cobourg, from Rochester to Cobourg. We could go anytime. Mother wouldn't go.

- Mc You got married during the Depression?
- G Oh boy, the Depression hit hard just after we got married.
- Mc Do you remember when the banks closed ?
- G Oh yes, we had money in the bank. We had notes from our wedding, we had a note on a dining room suit that we bought with money that was given to us. We had money in the bank and of course we got a percentage of it back. They paid up the note on the dining room suit anyway. We had a dining room suit, we didn't have a buffet or anything, but we had a china cabinet with it.
- Mc Those were hard times.
- G Oh boy! We both worked and every nickel we got - - - well Homer came down in the price of the apartment because he knew he was going to lose the house anyway so he let us have it heated and we got along. Elmer worked at the Stamping Works for a lot less than he had. They informed me they were giving a nurse with the room. They'd charge so much for a room and you'd go along with it. The nurse would be furnished with the room. And I said: "Oh no, I'm not working like that!" And Elmer said: "Indeed you're not !" He said: "If you have to work like that you're going to stay home." Miss Douglas was going to rent a room and the nurse went with it. Special nursing - - oh no, nothing doing!
- Mc Let's go back to this - -
- G 28 and 35 for 20 hour duty. That was 28 for 12, and 35 for 20. You slept on a cot in the room with your patient.
- Mc Now, that was private duty nursing ?
- G Yes, private duty nursing.
- Mc Did you always do private duty ?
- G I did a lot of it, but I worked when Miss Douglas wanted me to help in the hospital. It was harder at the hospital because you never knew what shift you were going to be on, you had to wait until she put the time slip out. After I got married it was hard to work that way. Mostly I did private duty in private homes.
- Mc Most of the time ?
- G I did with Mrs. Maynard. I remember I lived down on West Avenue, at Homer's there, and they'd send for me to



Miss Somerville and  
Miss Douglas



Wilda Edick Gomsrud



Helen VanNorstrand



Dorothy Forder



Miss Douglas  
and  
Miss MacLaughlin

come and take care of her. And she'd lie in bed and she could see down and she'd say: "I can see my girl cross that railroad track." I was there at Thanksgiving one year and I wasn't going to try to go home for Thanksgiving. I called my step-mother and she had bought a turkey and was all ready for us and she was so disappointed. And Mrs. Maynard says to me: "You're going home for Thanksgiving." And I said that I didn't think I should. And she said: "Well you're going to." So she said when I got ready to leave, she said: "Now I want you to take this afghan, (I don't know what they called them then) and put that around you so you don't get sick, cause I want you back here." And she sent us home. Elmer and I went down for Thanksgiving, had dinner with the folks and came back in time so I could go back with her that night.

Mc It sounds like you got to eventually like your step-mother ?

G Oh my step-mother was good. She was a good soul. But of course it was just the idea that Mother hadn't been dead only about a year and Daddy was bringing in another one. (wife). Mother was pink-and-white ! She was a Canadian. She was fair complexion and pink-and-white skin, and to me she was handsome. Of course I don't suppose she was. I don't look like her; I don't know whose dropped chin I got. Ethel had Daddy's square chin, but I didn't. My step-mother was swarthy color; dark hair, gray and white hair, and she had funny colored skin.

Mc You were really comparing the two?

G Yes, that's what I mean. She was a good Christian woman but to me she wasn't as fussy about her person. Well, she was a poorer soul. She hadn't had the advantages that we had. She was a missionary at the Rescue Mission in Rochester and I think probably she worked for a lot less than Mother would have if - - - Mother was a book-keeper in her uncle's hotel. I don't know just what it was but she was his book-keeper. She was the one that rented the rooms and everything. My uncles came from Canada and they had this rooming house I guess they called it. That's where Daddy met her.

Mc (The room in which we are seated is the Chapel here in the

hospital and with the door shut it's gets awfully hot. *Opens the door*  
 To go back to the first hospital in which you worked in Medina, you worked in that hospital and was Miss Douglas in charge down there ?

G Yes. Miss Somerville was her assistant. Miss Somerville was a cousin to somebody that Miss Douglas was related to, that's how she knew her. I don't know what hospital Miss Somerville was from but Miss Douglas was from Sister's Hospital in Buffalo, and the head of Sister's Hospital was a good friend of hers. I can't think of her name, she used to come down on the week ends and spend the week end.

MC So you came here in 1924 and then you came up to the Medina Hospital that we know today when it was first opened ?

G I *almost* think it was the same year but I'm not sure.

MC I think it was that fall.

G We used to come up and look it over.

MC What was it like when you first came in here ? Was there cement and sawdust around, or what ?

G The first thing that we wanted to see was if you could go in a room and shut the door and not hear the noise from the next room; that was the thing that bothered them at the hospital. So we did and we could hear the noise from the next room, ~~and~~ we were terribly disappointed, but it didn't amount to anything because it never bothered us after we got our furniture and stuff.

MC How many floors were there ?

G There was two floors; the second floor and the first floor. Maternity was toward the north.

MC On which floor ?

G On the first floor. And closing the doors, the swinging doors. Oh that makes me think of the little colored people that we had here. Then there was the second floor, upstairs, and there were private rooms up there. Of course Maternity had some private rooms and they had a ward with four beds in it.

MC Where was the operating room ?

G Operating room was on the second floor - - - no it was on the third floor.

MC Oh, they had a ~~thi~~rd floor ?

G Yes, I think it was on the third floor. There was an elevator to go up and down with. Maternity had its own delivery room right in the maternity department. But upstairs, I'm sure the operating room was on the third floor.

Mc Now what do you call the basement; is that first floor or is that called the basement ?

G That was the basement and I got quarantined down there all the time.

Mc What do you mean "quarantined" ?

G Well I got in with an *erysipelas* patient. Someone was broken out with *erysipelas* I got quarantined with a polio.

Mc They took polio patients inside the hospital ?

G He was down in the basement. He wasn't too bad but everytime I'd leave the room he'd jump up and dance up by the window, looking out the little basement window, to see if his legs were alright; ~~but~~ they said he had polio but he wasn't too bad. I could tell you something funny about that too. I was in with Miss Nudd down there - - can't remember what she had - - she had some rash or something and they had to be careful on account of maternity - - - and I had this patient down there and there was just these little cellar windows, like this, was all you could see out of. I had a cot and she was in her bed.

Mc You were a private duty nurse at the time ?

G Oh yes, I was doing private duty. I was allowed to go out after there was somebody who could relieve me but I guess I must have had sometime off in the afternoon. I don't remember that I had to stay full time - - I'd have crabbed if I had and would have remembered it. Anyway there was nothing but these little cellar windows and I could stand on my cot and just see out the window, that was all. I wasn't allowed out in the hall or anything until I was leaving and then I could go right on out. Couldn't stop and talk to anybody, couldn't go up to see my friends in maternity that had babies, for fear I'd take something up (germs) with me. Oh, I was down there two or three times. I guess I was an easy mark cause I got quarantined. Well anyway we had a minister here, Mr. Finley, did you ever know him?



Mc I know the name.

G He was a little bit fresh, not bad, but a little bit. I was a little bit scared of him and he had to come in and see my babies all the time and I didn't want him too. He'd try to put his arm around me. He used to come down to the basement too and his shoes squeaked. Well this night it was Elmer *but* I thought it was Mr. Finley. And he came and knocked on the door.

Mc You mean it was really Elmer ?

G Yes, Elmer coming to talk to me and I thought it was Mr. Finley and I wouldn't open the door. So after he went, I got up on my bed and I peeked out the window and there was Elmer going down the walk! Oh, I went back to my bed and cried ! Elmer didn't want to disturb me.

Mc I bet you did.

Maybe this is a good time to ask you to tell me the story about the broken thermometer because now-a-days you have thermometers by the dozen.

G Well I broke the thermometer. I was taking care of one of the special nurses' patients. This was in the old hospital. My one thought was: "Oh, they'd kill me for breaking that thermometer!" ~~So~~ Miss Douglas and Miss Somerville were out for the evening and there was this other nurse upstairs, ~~and~~ I asked her if she would watch the patients while I ran down to the drug store and got a thermometer. She said: "Yes." I ran into the drug store and here was the woman whose patient I was taking care of! She saw me! Well I knew she saw me and instead of turning around and beating it back, I stopped at Bickle's and I got some ice cream.

Mc What's Bickle's ?

G That was just around the corner in the Odd Fellows' Block. They had an ice cream parlor there. They lived out south of town in a lovely home; I took care of her later. And I got this ice cream and I ran all the way back to the hospital. This was the old hospital. And we had the ice cream and "by-goll" didn't this Mrs. Ernest report it and Miss Douglas looked at me and she said: "If it weren't that you had a step-mother, I'd send you home !"

Mc I bet you didn't do that again.

- G She kept me but she balled me out good; ~~and~~ I wouldn't have ever done that again.
- Mc You were young.
- G Of course she didn't want to part with me either.
- Mc Did you work on the floor with other nurses ?
- G Oh yes I worked with all of them, in here too. There was Catherine Male and Mack and Dorothy Forder, Grace Benthin, lots of "specials."
- Mc What did you wear; did you have a certain uniform that you wore ? Did everybody wear white ?
- G I don't remember. You wore white when you were - - - I don't think I have any pictures of anybody in anything but white. In the other hospital I had a blue and white uniform. I think maybe they allowed them here.
- Mc Did you always wear white stockings ?
- G Yes, white stockings and white shoes.
- Mc In one of the snapshots you showed me, the lady is wearing black stockings.
- G Well maybe we did. It's kind of hard to remember; that's a long time ago.
- Mc Did you wear caps ?
- G Miss Douglas made a cap for us and we all had to have them like that. It was kind of a plain one, came back up like this. There might have been a little pook on it there and it came down like this and a piece in the back and these two sides fastened. It wasn't anything fancy but we had caps after we graduated. We had to take this course from Miss Douglas for so long.
- Mc Tell me about the course that you took. You took the course here in Medina Hospital ?
- G Yes, just a little training that she gave us, it wasn't anything.
- Mc How long would it have lasted ?
- G Just about ~~three~~ <sup>Six</sup> months is all. She taught us and we had our lesson every day. Of course I had had training in the city hospital.
- Mc The ring you have on your little finger, where did that come from ?
- G Two or three of us got it. We sent away and had ~~it~~ made.

It was our little hospital ring. *(see photo)*

Mc Is that when you graduated from this first course ?

G Yes - - - well I don't know as we got it right then, but before Miss Douglas left we got them. I haven't had it on in a long time. I wore it when I came in here because everybody was interested. There are initials in it I do believe.

Mc Let me describe it! It's a very tiny little ring, you have tiny little fingers.

G Dorothy Forder had one and I had one and I think there were three of us that had rings.

Mc It says 1924. M Hospital M, which would be Medina Memorial Hospital. That's lovely.

G My own initials are inside of it.

Mc Oh, yes they are!

G I wore it all the time when I came in here. *(as a patient)* When I had to close up everything I didn't want to leave my diamonds around so - - *(Note - "Came here" - to MMH as a patient)*.

Mc You got some training here? did that make a difference ?

G Yes but of course I had had some training before I had that three months, and that also helped me. If I had kept my nose in my books I'd have probably made it through but I hated to study.

Mc Would you have been called a Practical Nurse ?

G I was a Practical Nurse, that's what my license says. Of course I haven't renewed it because I haven't needed it. I kept it up while I was working.

Mc Did they have a cafeteria in the hospital here ?

G Oh no, no cafeteria.

Mc What did they do for food for the patients ?

G They had a kitchen and Mrs. Hall worked in the kitchen. I can't remember but we must have had trays. I know Mrs. Hall was in the kitchen and she was the crabbiest old thing! You'd think she's take your head off but she really wasn't half as bad as she sounded. She had a daughter who taught music here in Medina. They lived next door to Mary. She finally married and I think she eventually moved away. Her mother died.

Mc You were telling a darling little story earlier about a

little black boy who came to the hospital. Would you tell about Little Freddy, why did he come ?

G He had rickets. Dr. Gowans brought him to have him get sunshine. "Put him out in the sun." he said "let him get the sunshine." Well he wasn't there very long before <sup>we</sup> had him all new clothes. Everybody bought him something. *Doctor* looked at us girls and he says: "Good heavens, I bought that child in to get sunshine and for rickets and you've got him all covered, every inch of him !" Dorothy Forder told later that she saw when he was older.

Mc How old was Freddy when he came in ?

G He was a year old and he was the size of a six month old baby.

Mc He was creeping around and crawling ?

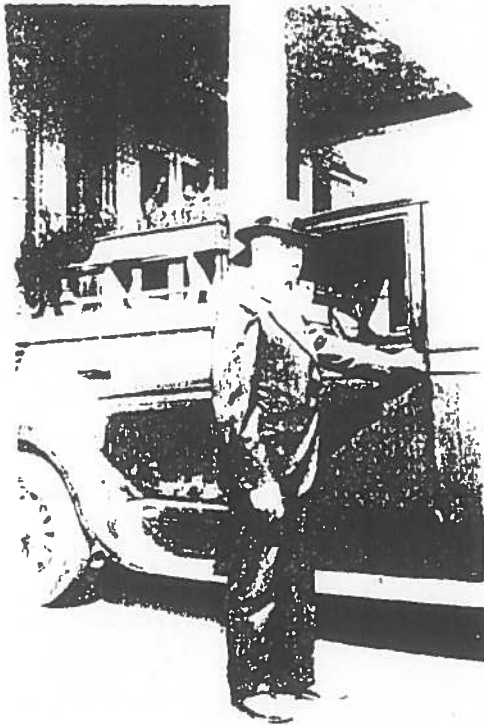
C Oh yes, he would come creeping down the hall. The maternity doors would be shut. He called Miss Douglas "Dougie". He'd put his head down at the crack of the door and he'd say "Dougie, Dougie, Dougie". Another thing, you know he was eating everything and it wasn't too pleasant to have to change diapers on him. So I got him a pot. We put the pot up on the little counter where we dressed the babies and sat Freddy on it.

Mc Do you mean he was in the nursery department ?

C We did for awhile, we had him in the nursery. He wasn't in there as a patient but we kept him in there once in awhile. I remember one day I was dressing him and I was having him throw a kiss and he was so cute and I was having him patty-cake and he was doing such cute things that I grabbed him and kissed him. My father told that on me to everybody ! Well I realized what I had done, I had kissed that black child. Daddy would tell everybody that, 'He got such a kick out of that !

Mc It didn't hurt at all, did it ?

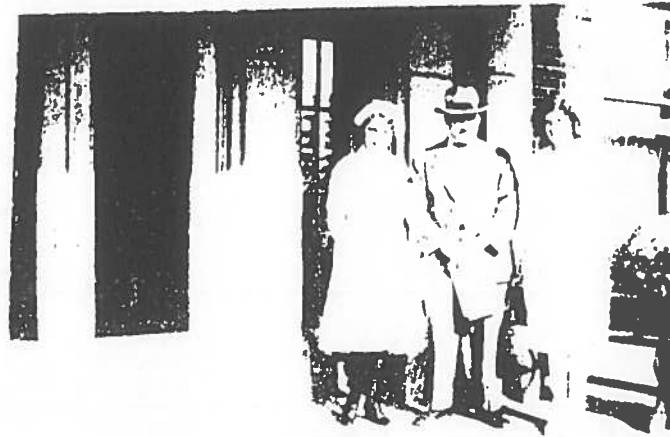
G No, not at all ! Then we had a bathroom with tiled floors, you know little tiles like they used to have, and there was a tub in there and a toilet, cause of course it was the hospital and it was this hospital that it was in - - in case they had to give a patient a tub bath then you had the things to do it. Well I got Freddy this little gray



Dr. Scott



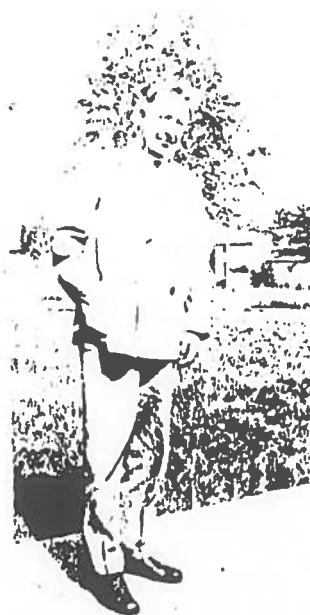
Dr. Fairman



Dr. Thomas



Dr. George Rogan



Mr. George Bowen



Dr. Maine

and white enamel pot, just big enough for him. I was sick washing those diapers ! He was eating everything. So Miss Douglas said all the girls had to put him on *the pot* and he slid around that floor until he had the enamel all worn off, ' It was all shining on the bottom.

Mc He sat on the potty and slid around the floor?

G Somebody went in there one day and went to pick him up, it may have been Mr. Bowen, - - and picked him up and the pot was stuck to him, and away went the pot. ' Oh, we had some times here ! *(laughter)*

Mc You have enjoyed working with people.!

G I enjoyed every minute of it. I didn't care what hours I had to work - - unless I had a date with Elmer, then it was out.

Mc You said you had to work different shifts ?

G Yes, we worked from 7 A.M. till 3 or 3:30 P.M. We worked three shifts of eight hours each however that would be divided. I think we worked longer at night; maybe 7 to 7 at night.

Mc I think the nurses here change at about 3 P.M.

G Do you know Mrs. Stork here in Medina ?

Mc Yes I do, Mrs. Florence Stork.

G I "specialled" with Florence, she is a lovely person. She might be able to give you some pointers on the hours because she worked with me. I specialised with her too.

Mc When you say you "specialled" do you mean she was your patient ?

G No, she was a special nurse. I was, and so was she. She'd be on a different shift than I would. I like Florence, she's a dear.

Mc When you got married it was difficult for you to want to change shifts. Is that when you did private duty more than working in the hospital ?

G I got married in 1931 and the Depression hit so I was glad to work. I worked all shifts. Any shift - - 12 to 12, or 7 to 7.

Mc If people became ill during the Depression and they could not afford hospitalization what did they do ?

G Well it wasn't cheap to have a nurse at home, it might

have been a little, I don't know. I nursed in Middleport, I nursed all over. I know Miss Douglas was going to give a nurse-with-a-room during the Depression. She thought she was going to put a certain amount on a room and let the nurse work it out. I refused to work that way.

Mc It would have helped some nurses wouldn't it ?

G I don't see how it would help because there was a shortage of nurses and people had to have help; they had to have a nurse.

Mc Was there a shortage of nurses way back then ?

G I don't know if it was exactly a shortage but there was some girls that wouldn't work for little or nothing. I've had small-pox cases.

Mc Did you ever catch it ?

G John Linkey I had with small-pox. *(see bottom of page 24)*

Mc Really? Did you ever catch it ?

G No I didn't catch it. She never forgot me. I was down in Rochester, I guess maybe I told you about it, she called me - - my step-mother called at this house and my cousin was visiting there. I was taking care of this woman, her husband had disappeared, she claimed her husband had disappeared and I had gone to Connie's Nursing Agency for a job and I got this job through her. It was on Alexander Street and she lived in this little apartment, the back of this house, and I went there. She was working at the Normandy Apartments on Alexander Street and she came home and her husband had left her. There wasn't even a sock left in the place to show there had been a man living there! She was sick in bed and she had to have a nurse and she had called this agency and they sent me. They were all on the porch on this one floor and this was an apartment over here. So the first chance I had to get out I called my step-mother and I said: "Oh Sophie I've gotten into something and I don't know what." "She says her husband's left her and she wants me to stay with her until she's allright." Finally she got so she could get around and my step-mother said: "Well don't leave, don't go anyplace with her." And I said: "I won't, don't worry." I was afraid to open the window, I slept in the living room

and I was afraid to open the window for fear the man would crawl in the window when he came back. Well of course he had no intention of coming back because there wasn't even a sock in the place that looked like a man. And she was sick in bed and the police were coming - - great, big policeman who filled the door.

Mc Why did the police come ?

G Because she had reported her husband missing. The police came to talk to her and then I would leave the room. She wanted me to stay in there and I said I didn't want to be witness to anything. So I would go out by the corner and try not to hear cause it was only two or three rooms. They would say: "Well your husband didn't leave you." And she said: "Yes he did and he took the car." And they traced the car over to the Canadian Bridge and he had gone over into Canada. So she says to me: "Now you and I are going over into Canada and look for him." And I looked at her. And my step-mother says: "Don't let her talk you into anything." And I said: "Don't worry, I won't." So she says: "You and I are going over into Canada and see if we can find him." And I said: "Oh no we're not." Now I hadn't gotten my pay and of course I had to pay Connie's for getting me the job. I didn't care whether I got paid or not. She says: "I'm going downtown and cash a check and then you and I'll go over into Canada." And I called my step-mother and she says: "Don't let her talk you into anything." I said: "Don't you worry, I'm not leaving, I know when I'm well off." And so she came back and she had her money and she thought I was going to go with her, but I said I wasn't going. I left her and she paid me and I got out of it.

Mc She did pay you ?

G She paid me. I expected I would have to leave without anything. I never heard the end of it, I don't know what ever happened but I was glad to get out of it.

Mc That was a sad situation.

G Then Mrs. Linkey saved me. She called - - Mrs. Linkey - - he was a contractor - - - that's when I got into the small-pox. She called my step-mother and asked to have me call her. Her husband was sick and she wanted me to come. So

Cont.