

Orleans County Historical Association

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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.

J. Carl Kowling

Signed

April 6, 1979

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister
Arden R. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

April 6, 1979

Date

Orleans County Historical Association

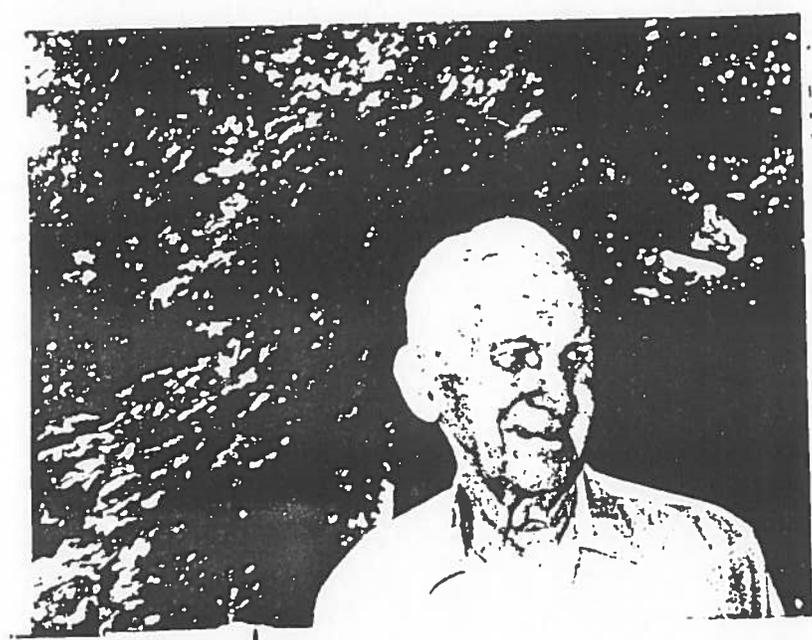
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mr. E. Earl Harding
Five Corners
Albion, New York

Earl Harding was born in 1895 and at the time of this interview
his age was 84 years.

* * * * *

H Harding
Mc McAllister: Arden &/or Helen



H I was born in 1895 in the house where I now live. That was before the days of going to a hospital to be born. This house is on the farm that was taken from my paternal grandparents, who bought it from the Holland Land Company in 1820. The house was built in 1835 and still is in very good condition and is made of brick. The brick was probably purchased from a brick yard about one mile north of here on route 98. In the winter this became a pond where we would skate. My grandmother told me that the first house on the farm was a log cabin down by the creek and pond, where there also was a saw mill. My father's name was Elias James Harding; my mother, Gertrude Ross Harding. They both lived in the town of Gaines. My mother's father and brother ran the store at Childs. When they were married, they were married in the room above the store. Dad lived over nearer Gaines. His father was a farmer and a school teacher.

I went to school at the Five Corners School which was across the road from our house. At that time, because it was so close to home, I had to come home to dinner, and that was a great "cross" (to me) because Mother would make me stay home and eat a proper dinner. I couldn't get back to play baseball with the children as quickly as I would have liked to. Across the road, right back of the school, was a large pile of logs where we played. Those logs were there because over on the other road was a large saw-mill and foundry where they made fancy furniture. That foundry is gone. It was located right north of the office building that is now on the triangle. Also bordering our farm was a cemetery. That was also a good place to play and a good place to shoot woodchucks once in awhile. With the dirt the woodchucks brought up, I used to find black cloth, and once in awhile a casket handle!

I remember one time we had a group of young people here at the house and we were discussing ghosts and like that, because it was near the cemetery. So, we all dared one another to go down to the cemetery. Well, unbeknownst to us, Dad heard our conversation. He grabbed a sheet and went down the back way to meet us. Well, when we met him there (covered with the sheet) we left the cemetery rather quickly and came home!! (laughter)

Mc Mr. Harding, you said something about someone carrying a coffin down to the cemetery.

H Yes. One of the things I remember very vividly about the cemetery was the death of my great uncle, who lived next door.

His home was about 600 feet from the cemetery. Although I was very small, I went to the funeral. The casket was put in a hearse, drawn by horses. It was a good summer's day. We all walked up to the cemetery, behind the hearse. I remember that impressed me very much. He was, as far as I can remember, the very last person buried in that cemetery.

Also, one thing that impressed me very much in that house, they had a room where they had taken off the name-plates of the caskets, and they were framed and hung up on the wall. Well, that room was so spooky that I was kind of afraid to go in there!

One of the big chores at the school: the school got their water from the house next door. They had a large flock of turkeys and two of the larger boys were delegated, which was quite an honor, to go and get the water which was gotten in a pail. One boy with a broom was delegated to go along and keep the Tom-turkey away. At the school the water bucket was set on a bench and we all went up, when we needed a drink, and got our water out of the same pitcher, or dipper.

At school one time, I was the janitor. I got 50¢ a week for my work and was doing very well until one day the door of the stove blew open. I ran home and got Dad because I didn't know what I had done. Although there was no damage, Mother wouldn't let me be janitor anymore. One of the big games at school was baseball. (We had) no inside plumbing of course. When you needed to go to the bathroom, you raised two fingers, and out you went.

Mc Do you remember who your teacher was?

H I can remember several teachers: one was Miss Barnum; one was Roy Bacon. Some of the teachers weren't very strict. I remember in the last part of my school year some kids, when the teacher wasn't very good, would put a lot of the waste papers in under the desk and light them! And then ~~when~~ the teacher would come running back with a dipper of water, and the fire would be out. Of course, in real cold weather we all gathered around the big stove that sat in the front of the room. That warmed the whole room. I don't know how many grades there were, but we all listened to everybody recite, so we knew all the grades. My father was school trustee for quite awhile. We had just one teacher for all. There was a Miss Wood, I remember, who was a very fine teacher and was there for quite awhile.

After District School, at the 7th grade, my family started me in the Albion School. At that time there were no busses or any way to get there except how your family got you there. Dad rented a stall from a man close to the school and for a time I rode horseback to school. Later I walked, or rode a bicycle. To cross the canal, we went over a swing bridge on Main Street. The bridge was a wooden affair operated by a man with a long pole inserted in a capstan in the center of the bridge, walking round and round until the bridge was parallel with the canal so that the boats could get by. There were no barriers when the bridge was turned, so you wanted to be sure the horses were steady and stopped.

Mc Did you say that your father rented a stall? Do you mean a place to park the horse?

H A place to park the horse, yes.

Mc Is that what they call a drive-barn?

H No. This is a private man's barn, rather close to the school. When I would go galloping through town on that horse, I really thought I was something!

After awhile school busses started working and they were, at that time, busses drawn by horses, a wagon with side-curtains on it. The wagon just went around one square near Albion. I remember all of the children here at Five Corners gathered together at Mother's house until the bus came. They would come in when the weather was cold. Then we would all get on the bus and be delivered to school. Our bus was owned and driven by Harry Lattin, who owned a livery stable and drive-barn on Main Street just north of and next to the canal. We would hitch our horse there on stormy days and nights.

One thing I remember, maybe not so good, was that one small boy had an epileptic fit on the bus. I remember carrying him into the school. I was one of the larger boys riding the bus at that time. Also, boys up to the age of their early teens, dressed differently a bit than now. They wore short trousers that came to their knees, sort of Lord Fauntleroy type, either just plain short pants or bloomers that fastened at the knee, and long stockings. As they got older, they started wearing long trousers and if their mothers had them still wearing stockings, to wear them out and not socks like men wore they were apt to be kidded a lot by their friends.

I remember one day when I was in high school, all the boys were excused to go up to the Onley Canning Factory to husk corn by hand. The factory in turn gave some money to the school Athletic Association.

Later on, of course, busses were made from trucks. Automobiles and trucks were just coming into use. But in those days if you heard a car going by, you quickly ran to the road to watch it go by. And it didn't go by fast because the roads were very deep sand. If you had a car and the tire blew out, well, first, if you got three thousand miles on a tire, you did very well. When that tire blew out, you generally had a repair kit with you. You'd stop and fix the tire (pump it up by hand) and then on you went. At any kind of a hill, you shifted into second gear, or first gear, to be able to get up the hill. Our first car that Dad bought was a car he bought for us to learn to drive. It was a combination of two different cars put together. Later on, he bought a new car, and as I remember, it was a Cadillac and cost \$2,000.00. We really thought we were something when we had that! That was a car with a top that you put up and down according to the weather. Mother was very much against it when we changed cars to a Sedan because she was very sure that that would be top-heavy and tip over! (laughter)

Mc Do you have any recollection of the very first time you saw a car?

H Not any vivid recollection of it. I do remember that if you saw one coming, you came running to watch it go by the house. The only vivid remembrance of a car is when they first started with electric lights. Doctor Whittier in Albion had a car with electric lights, and when they were so much brighter than the others, we kids could identify that car coming down the road. I remember the first car I rode in: a white steamer, powered by steam not gasoline, owned by a relative in Michigan where we were visiting.

Mc What kind of lights did they have before that?

H Gas lights, in a little tank, with tubes to the lights.

Mc Probably most people did not drive after dark, nor during the winter?

H Not very much, no. Also cars were not used in the winter because the roads were not cleared. Cars were jacked up to save the tires. I remember our first long trip. It was to Jeddo, north of Medina where Mother had a good friend that she had made through the Good Templars (organization). In those days the Good Templars Lodge was rather the high social gathering of the year. That was really some

trip. We chugged our way up there and back , ground our way, I guess you would say.

One of my joys in the winter was hitching rides on thr runners of the cutters on the road. Sometimes a nonfriendly driver would take a lick at us with a horse whip!

The woman that we would visit (in Jeddo) was Josiah Paine's wife. She was a step-mother of Mr. Gordon Paine, an attorney in Medina at that time. She had three daughters and we visited back and forth.

Another of our childhood friends was the Burroughs family. Our family went to church in Gaines and Mr. Burroughs was the minister there at that church. Our families were very close and I went to college with one of his sons, Ambrose Matson Burroughs (usually called Matson).

As I say, I went to Albion school, graduated in 1915. From there I went on to Cornell where I spent three years. During Cornell, World War I was on. During the War, I was classified as 4-F because then it was thought that they needed help on the farm. Well I came home and was on the farm a little while one year; Junior year I believe it was. All my friends were going to camp, so I went up to the Draft Board, most of the boys were drafted in those days, and told Isaac Schwartz, head of the Draft Board, that the next time they sent a group to camp, to include my name. So in about a week, I was on my way.

Mc How did your family feel when they found out what you had done?

H Well I don't know that I had told Mother or not before, but I remember that it was kind of a sad day, the day that I went. They weren't very happy about it. As it turned out, the week that I was drafted was the week that the Germans started to retreat. Whether they knew I was coming or not, I don't know. (chuckles). But that's the way it was. Really my experience in camp was a good vacation. I spent two months at New York University for the Army, studying to be a telegraph operator. From there I went to Fort Hamilton for a little while, out on the island near New York City. Then I went to Fortress Monroe, Virginia where I was in the officers training camp until the end of the War. At the end of the War, I was very quickly discharged and was home only a month after the War was over. So I didn't have any experiences that were at all dangerous. To me as a farm boy, walking and marching and like that were just

plain good exercise.

Mc When you returned home, did they have any kind of celebration for the fellows who returned from the War?

H Not particularly, at least as I remember. Because you had a uniform on, you strutted around and looked like something. But I don't remember whether we had local celebrations or not. I doubt it.

When I was (stationed) in New York City, for one thing, it was very pleasant. That was before uniforms were very common around there. You could stand on a street corner on any Sunday and by using your thumb be invited home to dinner, have a good dinner and be delivered back! It was really very pleasant. Of course every week they had dances, and like that, for the soldiers in New York City, up near New York University. So it was really, as I look back on it, a very pleasant experience.

Mc Uniforms usually caught the eyes of pretty young girls. Is this how you met your wife?

H No. Oh no. I got home from the Army and eventually decided that I needed a degree so I went back to school, completed my work at Cornell and graduated in 1920. In coming home and being in the Army, it set me back one year in college. I would normally have graduated in 1919. Then I came home to the farm to work. I did quite a lot of looking around, and finally met a girl that I fell in love with and married: Marguerite Hazard, an Albion girl. On June 7, 1979 we will celebrate our 55th wedding anniversary. We have one daughter and three grandchildren, of whom we are very proud.

Mc What was your wedding like?

H We were married in the Episcopal Church in Albion, which was Marguerite's church. We were married on my Mother and Father's 30th wedding anniversary in 1924. Of course we had a lot of our good friends around then; about three of them are still alive. We see quite a lot of them. We had a (wedding) reception at Mrs. Harding's family house, which our friends came to. We spent our honeymoon in a cottage down at Lake Ontario. At that time I was actually farming. It was right during spray season, so I had to be available to spray quickly and often. At that time we had a Model T Ford coupe (It cost, as I remember, around \$400.00) which at that time was quite the thing for young people around Albion to have. Before we were married, we and several of our friends had rented a cottage at the lake and that

was our headquarters for playing. At that time, in front of the cottage would be parked a row of Ford coupe, which was our status in life.

Mc You said that you were actively farming. Then where did you make your home; with your parents?

H No. We spent one winter with my parents, then we had a house about a quarter of a mile up the road that was our tenant house. We fixed that up and lived there for 15 years. It was close enough that I could walk back and forth to work. Mother and Father passed away in 1940 (both in the same year) and then we moved down here and have been here ever since.

One of my first jobs on the farm besides feeding the chickens, was turning the grindstone while Dad would sharpen the sythe or mower bar. During my first experience on a farm all the farm work was done with horses; tractors were not around yet. With horses, there was sort of a comaraderie: you worked for awhile and then rested the horses. You lifted their collars to let them cool off underneath while you sat on a plow handle and ate a roxbury-russet-apple that you had brought along for just such a purpose.

Our first tractor was a Fordson. They did not have electric starters in those days and sometimes it would seem like I was tired out from cranking it by hand before the thing would run. It had iron wheels, not rubber tires which made for a rather rough ride. And since it had no muffler, it was rather noisy. Our second tractor was called a Moline tractor. It had two large front drive wheels and the operator rode on a light sulky-like rig behind these wheels, which also supported the draw bar. Our first truck was a Seldon, made in Rochester. It had solid rubber tires, and a governor that kept it from going over 18 miles an hour.

Thinking of the old time methods: corn was cut by hand, in my youth, and shocked up in large round shocks to cure. A field, after harvest with the long rows of shocks, was a very good looking sight. Later the shocks would be drawn to the barn, the corn removed by hand, and the stocks fed to the cattle.

I was farming and eventually I became active in activities around town and state. I started out, I guess, being Chairman of the Methodist Church Board of Trustees. I was in that for quite a few years. I was Secretary-Treasurer of the local Extension Service for about 12 years. Also one of the first organizers and Directors

of the Albion GLF Cold Storage Co-op that operated a large cold storage and common storage. They also did fruit and onion grading, packing equipment and a cherry packing operation, sold feed and fertilizer. This was affiliated with the GLF organizations. After that and along with that, I was active in Farm Bureau work here. I was one of the first committeemen. I was on the local Town Board of Gaines for 22 years. Being a member of the Town Board was not as competitive a job as it is now I guess, because I never at that time asked for one vote. I was appointed to fill a Mr. Burns place and was re-elected from that, five times. At that time it wasn't a highly paying job. As I remember, we got \$100.00 a year. But it was a most interesting job.

The most interesting job I ever had was being Director of the local bank, a branch of the Marine Midland. When you were on the Bank Board, you knew what was going on in a town generally before it happened; which was very interesting.

Mc What were the years that you served on the Bank Board? Was that during the Depression?

H It was after the Depression. I remember one of the things that impressed me a lot on the Bank Board was the number of people, husband and wife, who both worked. And the amount of debts they would have because they would buy all these things "on time". I used to think that if they'd just quit buying for about a week and catch up! Because the interest and all the rest made the equipment rather expensive. One thing I remember very well in the Depression: at one time we had a farm in the town of Kent. During the Depression, I sold that farm and bought a farm closer to home. Both of those farms changed hands for less price than the buildings were insured for! On both farms, if the buildings had burned, the insurance on the buildings would have more than paid for the price of the farm.

Of course at that time we were growing almost everything we needed to eat, our groceries and like that. I remember we had one very good man on the farm who we paid \$12. a week in the summer and \$10. a week in the winter, and he rented his own house. I went to the grocery store once and I remember telling the grocer that if I didn't need salt and pepper, we wouldn't bother to come in and see him.

Mc Did you "trade off", as they say?

H We raised strawberries, and we used to run up quite a bill, and he would kind of have to take it out in strawberries if he wanted to get his money. So that was one way of selling berries and eggs too. We had quite a lot of chickens and sold eggs. I remember once I had a contract with Sibley's in Rochester selling eggs for \$1.00 a dozen, which shows that eggs now aren't as high as they have been!

Also among my activities: I was the first President of the local Farm Bureau. I was on the State Board of the Farm Bureau for six years. I was on the Board of Directors for the Virgil Bogue Home for many years. That was a job that I inherited from my father. The Virgil Bogue Home was a home set up for wayward children and they would come and stay there for several years. There are several people around town who are graduates of that home, and they are doing very well. So I'm quite proud of what we did. We had a very fine woman as a matron. I remember at the time I was going to the Methodist Church and she would have all those children in church and fill about two pews with the children from the school. Eventually the children would grow up and be placed in other homes, and get jobs and be on their own.

Mc Were the children placed in the Bogue Home by social workers?

H By social workers. They weren't particularly disturbed children that had to be watched closely. They were just good children without homes.

I was also President of the State Cherry Growers Association and later on, Chairman of the National Cherry Pie Baking Contest that was held every year in Chicago on Washington's birthday. The year that I was Chairman was the 21st year of its existence. We used to go there every year. The year that I was Chairman, we had 50 contestants, one for every state in the union, which in my book was quite a do. I was also President of the State Horticultural Society at one time. Also on the State Advisory Council on Employment and Unemployment, that I was appointed to by Governor Rockefeller. I was also a Director on the State Farm Family Insurance Board. While being a general joiner, I was a Mason. I Joined the Masons when I was in the Army. I was home on furlough and I was initiated in the Masonic Lodge, getting three degrees in one day! They met in the afternoon and evening. My uncle, Chester Harding who lived near Knowlesville at the time, was very

active in the Masonic Temple here in Albion and he kind of sponsored me and got me through in a hurry. And it did some good for me when I was in the Army: I remember one time, a sergeant there appointed two other men to be on latrine duty. He later told me that he appointed them because he saw that I had the proper kind of a ring on. (Masonic ring). I've been a Mason for 60 years, and was presented a 60 year plaque recently. I also belonged to the local Lions Club, and the Town Club of Albion. I guess that's most of my joining.

Mc At one time, you also helped work with migrant camps?

H Yes, I was on the committee that had to do with migrants. One time that committee went to Albany to meet with the Commissioner of Health and owners of small migrant labor camps. We helped to work out regulations for migrant laborers. At that time, migrant laborers were housed in about any kind of a shack and people thought they were very much put upon and not treated properly. I remember "Lon" Waters of Medina at that time was a member of the Assembly in Albany. Three of us went to Albany to talk to "Lon" about migrants and their treatment in the camps... There were a lot of people, we called them "do-gooders" at the time, who complained that we farmers were not treating the migrants properly. "Lon" was kind of in-between, trying to protect the farmers, and please the "do-gooders". Two people went with me: one was Charlie Bush from Kendall, or Kent way and who was very active in writing letters that were rather strong. Charlie, Lon and I and the others met with the Commissioner of Agriculture at that time who was Don Wickham (who is one of my very good friends now). I remember how he introduced Lon and Charlie to the group there: "Poison pen BUSH and troubled WATERS" I thought that was pretty good! (laughter)

Mc Going back to the time when you were a young boy, do you remember the circus or the fair?

H When the circus came to town it was really a big do for the kids and the people around Albion. The circus came to Albion by railroad and was generally set up north of Albion where the bowling alley now is and in that field. That being fairly close to my home, all of us kids would get up early in the morning and go up to watch them unload, and help where we could. We would watch the elephants walk down, and watch them set up their tents. If you

could get a job carrying water or something, maybe you could get a pass into the circus. That night after the circus, they would load, and be on their way the next morning. The next morning we would get up early and go up to the circus grounds and snoop around. We were quite apt to find a few coins on the ground that people had lost out of their pockets. You just went up and looked around to see what you could find. It kind of prolonged the excitement of the circus. The Albion Fair was also quite a do. I got a job and I used to work there in the fruit part of it. That gave me a reason for being there all the time. Eventually I had a job at the State Fair. A local man here in Albion was in charge of the fruit exhibit at Syracuse. He would give a job as a helper to a boy in high school that was interested in agriculture. Well, I qualified, so Charles Porter was the man and he had a very nice daughter that I used to see some. He gave me a job in Syracuse (at the State Fair) where we would go for ten days. I remember the first day of the Fair; we would generally work all night helping set up the exhibit and help the other exhibitors set up their exhibits. After that we'd get there early in the morning, dust off all the exhibits and just walk around in an important way, because you were working there and maybe answer a few questions. We stayed, I remember, at the old Yates Hotel which was right in downtown Syracuse. I guess maybe it is still there. At that time it was a good hotel; and the railroad went right down the street in front of it.

Mc How did you get to the Fair; on the railroad?

H We'd go on the railroad. You weren't running around in automobiles then. For me it was a big do, and a good vacation. I enjoyed it very much, and it gave me a chance to see the Fair. I remember one time it rained so hard while we were setting up, some pigs drowned where they were, out in the pig sty. What little sleep we got that night, we slept in automobiles that were there for exhibition.

Mc The Fair has grown considerably since you were a young man?

H Yes, I imagine. In fact I don't know whether I am much Fair-minded now, because I haven't been there in quite a few years. I remember the last time I was there; after a day and a half, I was ready to come home. I guess I did all my Fair-looking when I was a young man.

Mc Did they have a midway section at the Fair? What did they have?

H Mostly merry-go-round and ferris wheels; not quite so scary looking as they are now. Some the "girlie" shows, I don't remember much about them. Most of our time was spent at the horticulture building where I was. I remember that much more than whatever else we did. But I remember we'd a "duck-out" for a few minutes every once in awhile.

Mc What about eating; did they have facilities on the grounds or did you have to take your lunch from home?

H I was there for ten days, so I bought my meals there and probably lived on hot dogs when we were there.

Mc When you were a young boy, were you active in the church?

H Yes. My family would all have good attendance at church. One thing I remember: Mother and Father were sitting where they belonged and we boys were sitting off to the side, where all the boys would sit. One time the minister stopped in the middle of the sermon and looked over our way and said, "I'll expect great things from those people over there!" We were whispering too much. Another thing I remember: one of my friends had a job pumping the organ, and he invited me back there to see how it worked. Well, they had a long stick which you pushed up and down to pump the organ and to pump the bellows full of air. He let me do that, but I didn't know enough about it to keep it pumping fast enough. Maybe I got to talking to him, I don't know. Anyway I let the bellows run out of air, and the organist was not very pleased! All at once she couldn't play the organ. That happened when we were older and had started going to the Albion Church. When we were very young, because Mother and Dad lived in the town of Gaines, we went there to church. The bellows were in the Albion church. I remember Teed Woods, a very good friend of mine for years, had the job of pumping the organ. He was the son of Alfred Woods (of Woods and Sprague) who had our flour mill in Albion.

Mc Do you remember Saturday nights when you were a youngster?

H Yes; Saturday night was the big social event in Albion. All the families would go to Albion to do their shopping. Probably one of the main things that I remember is that in Landauers store, there used to be stools in front of the counter, and they would be right up by the door. (Landauer and Strouse, at that time). Well, in the

summertime the store doors were open, and on that stool (by the door) would always be the same rather fleshy woman, watching everybody go by! Another thing I remember about church was the Sunday School picnics that we all had, down at Lake Ontario. Dad would load up the surrey and all us kids with our lunches would go down to the lake for the Sunday School picnic. Well, we wouldn't get there an awful lot before time to eat. After eating, we would get a swim and a little time to play, and then it was time to start for home. Of course you didn't do that very quickly. Dad had a team on the surrey and that pulled us along pretty good.

Mc Would it take you more than an hour to get there?

H Yes, an hour and a half anyway. It was still a big day.

Mc You probably went up to Point Breeze?

H Yes, on the Oak Orchard side. At that time there was a big Hotel there on the west side. Along the front of the lake was a row of bath houses where you could change your clothes. It was a huge Hotel, with a big veranda around it; both an upstairs and a downstairs veranda.

Mc Did you ever know Charlie Howard, the Santa Claus man?

H Charlie Howard, the Santa Claus, was one of my main buddies when I was a kid. We went to school together. In fact his parents and my parents were very good friends and used to go back and forth for dinners. Charlie and I went to Albion High School together. Charlie, at that time, was very active in putting on plays. At that period we carried our dinner to school, and after dinner, Charlie and I would sort of put on semi-entertainment for the kids there. We were darn foolish mostly, horsing around and with jokes. I would be the straight man for Charlie because as I say, at that time he was very active in show work. Later on, Charlie did a lot of shows around town and around the county. I was in some of the shows with him. Later on he became very famous, really nationwide famous, as a local Santa Claus. He had a business that manufactured Santa Claus outfits which he sold. He also ran the Santa Claus School both of which are still in existence, I believe. I was just reading in the Albion paper today, there is a woman, Mrs. Babcock telling about her business in Santa Claus outfits, cleaning them and manufacturing them, and the Snata Claus School. I believe it is now run by a man out in Michigan. Charlie was, as I said, a very famous Santa Claus. He was there in the Macy's

(Thanksgiving) parade and was also Santa Claus of Macy's store (in New York City), I believe. He also was Santa Claus in the Nieman Marcus store in Texas. Also in his early years, he was quite a man to get around doing things. He and his wife, Ruth, manufactured the best ice cream you could get anywhere around. When you wanted ice cream, you would go up to Charlie Howard's and get his ice cream. He really had some! Later on, he added the business of manufacturing toys and had a factory in Medina; also the business of combining wheat around the country.

Combining wheat brings up more memories. Before the days of the combine, my father was one of the first ones around here to have a self-binder for cutting grain. He would cut grain for some of his neighbors. With the binder, you cut the grain. It was bound into what we called sheaves, set up in shocks to dry out. It was dried out and stored in the barn until the local thrasher could come around and put his thrashing machine on the barn floor, if it was in the barn, and thrashed. Sometimes it was shocked and thrashed in the field. The thrashing machine had a large steam engine along to run it. Before the thrasher would come, we'd get ready and have some soft coal for him to burn. Mother would cook up a big meal because all of the neighbors were coming to help us thrash. They would come into the house, and it was quite a do! The farmers would change work in thrashing, help each other, so you didn't spend a lot of money doing it. That was the way the grain was thrashed.

Mc Farming has changed so much, hasn't it? Now it is mostly big farms and a very few small farms.

H At that time, of course, we were farming with horses. I remember the first tractor that Dad got was a Ford tractor with steel wheels. It didn't start with a battery and sometimes in the morning you cranked it to get it going, and by the time you'd get it going, you'd have done a day's work! In those days the farm was just 100 acres. Later on I bought another farm on the West Bacon Road which had 120 acres, which increased my farming some. Then I rented the Larwood farm which was across the road on another corner. So it finally built up so that I had 400 acres on those farms that I was farming; a lot of fruit, a lot of tomatoes (about 25 acres) which was marketed locally. At that time in Albion there were at least three factories where you could sell tomatoes: you could sell them to Lipton's, General Foods had a factory which

finally became Hunts. Friends all took tomatoes, and in Barre Center Wally Dale had a factory for tomatoes. At that time also, there were three cold storages in Albion where you could store your apples. Now I don't think you can store your apples at any one of them. Two were condemned, and the other used as a common storage (warehouse) for other produce.

Mc Do apples require a certain humidity?

H Cold storages were refrigerated storages; they required refrigeration. The common storage only kept the apples for a short period of time.

Mc I understand that you had a rather unique watering system?

H Yes, that was rather new around here; one of a kind. I don't know if you know what a hydraulic ram is? A hydraulic ram is set up so that a stream of water runs down a pipe, and pours straight out of a valve that flips shut from the force of the water, forcing some water into an air chamber. When the flow stops, the pressure drops down and the valve opens, and the water from the air chamber is then forced up into the storage tank. That's a hydraulic ram! Of course there are all kinds: some, at that time, were big enough to supply cities (called hydraulic engines). The one we had would pump maybe three or four thousand gallons a day. We had a pond on the farm that raised the water level up enough to get the force to start this ram, and from the ram it was piped to the barn. I think at that time there was also a ram down by Lyndonville. That ram would go "thump, thump, thump" 24 hours a day with no other power to run it but the pressure from the flow of water. No grease, no gas to be used; just on and on.

Mc You have some memories about the Ho-Jack railroad line?

H The hoboos used to ride the freight cars and if you wanted extra help during apple picking, or any other time, you would go down to Carlton and stand by the rails. When the freight trains would go by, you'd holler "Ho-Jack" and perhaps one of these hoboos would get off and you could bring him, or them, home to work. That is how the railroad got the name of Ho-Jack. Mostly here, our help during apple picking time would be what we called hoboos, men without a home, evidently, walking the road most of the time. They would stop and do your work. Those hoboos, as I remember, had a camp back in the woods near the tracks where they would stay over-night and camp.

Mc Did you or your father have seasonal workers?

We always had seasonal workers. There would be somebody who would come in the spring and stay here through the summer. Mother would give them board and a room up in the back chamber. Our house was divided into two parts; there was no way of getting from the front part without going up or down stairs. So Dad would hire a man with a wife (who would help Mother) and the men would work on the farm. Then during apple picking time, we would get some of these other men. I remember one time we had four men who came up every year from Pennsylvania. They were miners, but they came up here to pick apples. At that time they were talking about their work in the mines. I never could, and I don't yet see how people could enjoy working underground as much as those people did. But to them it was their life. They thought no more of working underground than I would think of working up on that straw stack.

Mc Did doctors make home visits?

H In those days, yes doctors did; didn't mind getting called. The doctor that delivered me was Dr. Frank Lattin of Gaines. I almost used to try and get ill so that Mother would call him up because Frank Lattin was very famous as a collector of birds eggs. I used to do some of that myself, so if I could get Frank Lattin up here and talk about bird eggs, I liked it! I understand that at that time, he had representatives, or people that he knew and corresponded with, all around the world selling him bird's eggs. He was supposed to have quite a famous collection. At that time too, there was quite a migration of our people to Wayne County to buy fruit farms, and Frank Lattin was interested in that project. He had a farm in Wayne County, as I remember.

One of the things that happened in our life fairly recently: ten years ago, Mrs. Harding had a stroke while she was shopping in Rochester. The stroke paralyzed her right side and she has been in a wheel-chair ever since. But thank goodness, her health and her spirits are very good. We've had a very good life together ever since that happened. Right now, she's still with us, as I say, in good health. As I say, that was ten years ago.

Mc You were telling me that you and your wife have taken a number of trips and vacations?

H When we could, we went to Florida for awhile every winter. One winter we took a trip to Baja, California. That is the very tip of the peninsula that borders Mexico. Down there we were in a very good motel. There wasn't a house or a town within 15 miles, and it was a beautiful place! The sky looks a lot bluer than it does here, maybe because there was nothing around to produce any smog. There was good fishing; I caught a one hundred pound fish one time, as well as a lot of smaller fish. Any kind of game you wanted to play was available: tennis, golf, shuffle-board, and all the food was flown in. We were kind of unique there because we had landed by air in LaPaz and the man we hired to show us around, talked us into going down Baja, the tip of it by car, which was about 50 miles. That was going through very interesting country, desert country; a lot of cactus. I remember the cows that came out of that country. The ground didn't look like it would support a mouse, but the cows were in pretty good shape. Not dairy cattle, just plain cows. Any kind of cattle I should say. I was very sorry that they didn't have to ship out some while we were there because I understand that when a ship would come in, there was a corral near where we stayed and they would run these cattle into the corral, swim them out to the boat, lasso them, and draw them up by rope into the boat. I would have liked to watch them do that! Then we flew home, flew to Los Angeles, and came home from there by train. At that time, the train had an observation booth on top where you could go up and ride. It was a very pleasant trip. Right now if I was going somewhere and had the time, I would go by train because it was a most pleasant ride, looking at the country. Sometimes you would see both ends of the train at the same time, going through the mountains. Crossing the country was very pleasant.

Mc Well Mr. Harding, thank you very much for this interview.

H It's been my pleasure. Thank you.

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End of Taped interview

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Final typing and all editing has been done by Helen McAllister,
Medina, New York.

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