



# Orleans County Historical Association

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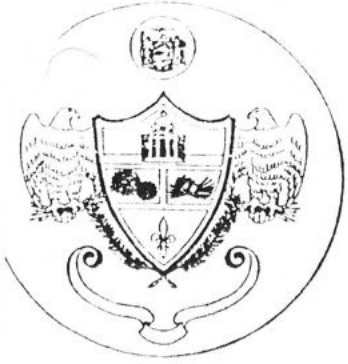
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# Orleans County

## Age

### ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mrs. Minnie Allis  
Bates Road  
Medina, New York

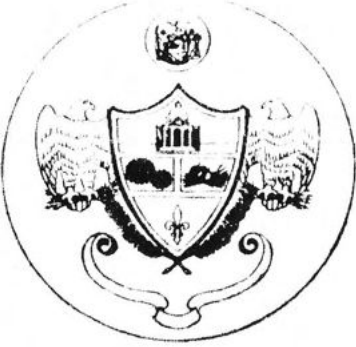


Mrs. Minnie Allis was born September 15, 1889.  
At the time of the interview she was 90 years of age.

A Mrs. Allis  
Mc Helen M. McAllister







# 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.

Minnie Allis

Signed

Sept. 27, 1979

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

Sept. 27, 1979

Date

A I was born in Ontario County near Seneca Castle, September 15, 1889. I was born in my parents home for there were <sup>No</sup> hospitals at that time. My father's name was William Mosey. My mother's maiden name was Martha Sydney

Mc What did your father do for a living?

A He was a farmer... of everything: grain, fruit and animals. He had sheep, cows, hogs, raised cabbage, wheat, oats, rye, and he had fruit orchards, with apples and cherries. The farm was fifty acres.

Mc Did you have any brothers or sisters?

A Just one sister, Carrie Mosey. She was eight years older than I. She later married Charles Buchan.

Mc What do you remember as a young girl at home, before you went to school; how you used to play with your sister, or help your mother and father?

A Well, I didn't play much with my sister because she was eight years older than I and we was always fighting. (laughter) I remember my mother taking me up in the pasture lot to get the cows. She put me in my child's wagon and lugged me up there. It was easily a half mile.

Mc Was she going to get the cows and bring them in for milking?

A Going to get the cows for the night. The cows, of course, was in the farther corner. My mother was tired, dragging me along, so she left me in the middle of the pasture and she went back to get the cows started. And they started on a run, all headed towards me! I was frightened! I was only about three years old. I guess she was frightened too; but when they got near me, they went right by and paid no attention to me. I was safe.

Mc What started them running? Do you know?

A Well, it was a very hot day and the flies was bothering them. They all just kicked up their heels and away they went! I can shut my eyes and see them coming towards me yet.

Mc Did that make you afraid of cows?

A No, I never was afraid of them.

Mc Did you have relatives near-by so that you enjoyed each other during Christmas and holidays?

A Yes, I had a cousin. She was a cousin to my father. We always went back and forth for Christmas. I remember one year that I came down with the Chicken Pox, day before Christmas, and I was so afraid I

couldn't go to the Christmas. But I went.... I didn't have a doctor for the Chicken Pox.

Mc Going back to the time of your birth, you said that you were born at home. Doctors made house-calls then, didn't they?! Did your mother ever tell you how much the doctor charged?

A Yes, \$15.00, and I've got the receipt! That was Doctor Delaney.

Mc Did your mother have any help around the house, doing her farm house work?

A Oh no. She done it all. Of course when she had her children, she had a nurse come in. The nurse was a relative of my father.

Mc Did she come in just for the time of the birth?

A Yes, and usually stayed a couple of weeks. Oh, I think she came a few days before.

Mc Was your mother creative in painting, or quilting, or anything like that?

A Well, she was talented but she never done it. She could of; she was a beautiful drawer. I have several of her drawings done in pen and ink.

Mc Did she sing, or have a piano?

A No she didn't sing nor play much. Oh, she could play a little, like chords.

Mc You played by yourself when you were a child? You didn't have any television to watch!

A No television, no telephone, and no mail delivery. My father had to go to Seneca Castle to get the mail; that was about two miles. I can remember when the first mail carrier came around and when the first telephone was installed.

Mc What was your first telephone like?

A It was one of those wall telephones, and with about 10 or 15 on the party line.

Mc Could you hear anybody talking when you picked up the receiver?

A Oh yes, and you could hear them when they were called, because the rings came into all the telephones. So when one of your neighbors got a call, well, you knew it! If you wanted to listen in, you could listen!

Mc If the operator wanted to call you, she might ring three long and two short.



- A Yes, you had to remember it. I remember that our ring was: one short and two long.
- Mc The time came when you went to school. Will you tell us about that?
- A When the weather was bad, my father always took me, and he'd come and get me. The rest of the time, I walked. Then when I got a little older, he bought me a bicycle and I used that to go to school.
- Mc Where did you first go to school?
- A It was the Sand Hill District School; a country school. It had all eight grades. One room and one teacher.
- Mc Did you start out in first grade?
- A They didn't have grades. You went through the readers (books). You went through first reader, second reader, and third reader. You were supposed to take a year to go through a reader, but sometimes we'd go through two or three readers in a year. You just advanced as you learned.
- Mc Did your reader have all the subjects, or just reading?
- A Just reading.
- Mc What about mathematics, and other subjects?
- A That was separate. My mother taught me my multiplication tables and division. I don't think she taught me interest. So, I was quite far advanced in mathematics when I went to school, as well as reading.
- Mc Did you take your lunch when you went to school?
- A Oh yes, took our lunch, and we all drank out of the same water pail, with the same cup! And of course we had the usual colds. On cold days, the stove was in the middle of the room, and on cold days we couldn't keep warm in our seats and we'd all circle the stove. Our faces would burn, and our backs would be cold. We'd hold our big Geography books up in front of our face to protect it from the heat! (laughter).
- Mc Do you remember any of the games you played during recess?
- A Oh yes! Played Pom-pom-pull-away, hide-and-seek, and tag. There was another game. I can't think of the name of it. You'd put a stone on top of another stone, and then take another stone and try to knock it off. It had a name but I've forgotten it.
- Mc How about Annie-Annie-Over? Throwing a ball over the school?
- A Yes, we played that too.
- Mc Boys and girls together?

- A Oh yes! We wore long stockings, and during the winter-time, we wore long underwear and tucked that into our stockings. (laughter) When we went to bed my father would fill the mattress with straw (from when he had thrashed) and we'd have that on our bed. On top of that would be a feather bed, and on top of that would be three or four blankets. When he first filled the mattress with straw, it would be so high it was hard work to climb up in bed!
- Mc When your mother did her spring house-cleaning, what, for instance, would she have done?
- A She took the carpets up off the floor and put them on the line (clothes-line, outdoors), and beat 'em. And how the dust would fly!
- Mc What would she beat them with?
- A A stick. Didn't have a carpet beater. The carpet beaters were on the market, but she didn't have one. She used a stick. My father would usually do that job. Then they would put clean straw on the floor, put the carpet over it, and tack down the edges, all around the edge. Then the next year, what a dirty mess it was to clean up.
- Mc What was the object in putting straw under the carpet?
- A Made the floor warmer.
- Mc Did she ever use newspapers under the rug?
- A After awhile she did, and then didn't use straw.
- But you didn't have many newspapers because we only took a weekly newspaper. Didn't have daily papers.
- Mc Papers weren't as big then, were they?
- A No, probably about six or seven or eight sheets for a weekly paper. But they didn't have the great big ads. Ads was very small, and the news was kinda condensed.
- Mc Would you describe what your mother's rugs were like? Were they home-made?
- A Most of them were... Mother didn't have many rugs. About the only place she would use a rug would be in between one room to a next. The carpets was all rag carpets.
- Mc Did she make them?
- A She cut the strips and sewed them together and rolled them up into a ball and took them to the weavers. There would always be some woman in the neighborhood that would weave rugs.



Mc What about the lamp light that you used?

A Mother would take a strip of paper, probably about an inch wide, roll it up real tight at the beginning and then looser at the end, and then would light that with a match and use it to light her lamps with. That saved matches.

Mc In those days people tried hard to save in every way.

A Every way possible, they saved.

Mc Did your mother do canning?

A Well no, because they didn't do canning in those days. They didn't have cans.

Mc Then she probably dried some food?

A She done a lot of drying, and they used to have those old Mason cans (jars) and she done some canning of fruit. But no vegetables because vegetables wouldn't keep.

Mc Probably (she) would salt down some meat too?

A Yes, they always butchered two hogs and salted down what we'd call bacon now; but they called it salt pork. She never made bacon; and salted down the hams and shoulders. They made the sausage with the melted lard and it would keep for a long, long time.

Mc Did she keep that in the basement of the house?

A No, she kept it in the pantry. They had pantrys in those days.

Mc Can you remember what breakfast would be like?

A We had toast and coffee, and Cream of Wheat (cereal), and sometimes, salt-pork.

Mc Did you have any fresh fruit, like oranges?

A Oh no! We'd get an orange in our stocking once a year for Christmas. I don't remember my father ever buying bananas.

Mc What would your dinner meal be like? Would it be at noon-time?

A Yes, it was always at noon. We'd always serve potatoes and some kind of meat. During the summer-time we would have vegetables; and usually pie for dessert, or pudding.

Mc Home-made pie?

A Oh yes, a home-made pie. My father was very, very fond of mincemeat pie so we had a lot of mincemeat pies. My mother always made mincemeat when they butchered.

Mc How do you make mincemeat?

A She would usually grind up the heart and the tongue and the scraps of meat that didn't go into sausage;

And about, I should say, one-third meat to two-thirds apple, all ground up, and then spices.

Mc Did she use raisins?

A Yes. We didn't have the seedless raisins. They were seeded, and I never liked seeded raisins.

Mc I can remember my grandmother's table with the linen cloth, spoons in the spoon holder, and a caster set always left on. It was always covered with cheese-cloth between meals.

A I can remember the caster, but my mother never had one. The caster contained salt, pepper, vinegar, catsup and a 5th bottle. That might have been cayenne pepper. That was in the center of the table and would turn round and round.

Mc You spent the early part of your life on that farm. Then did your father move to Albion?

A No, my father never moved. My aunt that lived in Albion offered to board me and take care of me while I went to school. So, I'd go up (to Albion) in the fall, take the train and stay until Christmas time. Then usually at Christmas she'd go with me for about a couple of weeks vacation, and then I would stay again until school was out.

Mc What was your aunt's name?

A Sarah Jane Allis.

Mc Was she related to your husband?

A Well, she married Elijah Allis, and Elijah Allis was a great-uncle of my husband, Ray.

Mc Then you went to school in Albion. How long were you there?

A Four years. While I was there, they built the high school building on West Academy Street.

I can remember when they built the school pretty good, because they had no place for the children to go to school. They used the City Hall, and they used the churches, and we had to go from one to the other to go to classes.

Mc Had there been a school before this time; did it burn down or something?

A No, they was building a new high school building. The upstairs part was the high school, and the downstairs was the grades. It's still in Albion; they don't use it anymore. There was one room in it for the Teacher's Training Class.

Mc Did you participate in the Teacher's Training Class?

A Yes, I was there two years. It was supposed to be a one year course, but I couldn't pass spelling so I had to go back the next year. While I was there the next year, I was used quite a lot for substitute teaching and I was sent down quite often to Mr. Carmer's office (the principal) to help him out. Whenever they wanted extra help here or there, I was usually sent because I didn't have much to do in the training class.

Mc Did you eventually do full time teaching?

A Not in Albion. When I graduated from the Training Class, I went back home and I taught two years in the District School.

Mc Somewhere along in here, you met Ray Erwin Allis, the man who became your husband. Would you tell us how you met him?

A Every year, my aunt would be invited to the Allis' family celebrations for Thanksgiving & Christmas. In that way I met the whole Allis family, including my husband.

Mc What was he like? Was he about your age?

A Just one month difference between us. The first time he came to see me, it was on a Sunday afternoon. Of course my aunt didn't have much room; only the sitting room and the dining room. She was there, so after awhile Ray suggested that we go to church. We went to the Methodist Church. Mr. Woods was the preacher. He knew the Allis family because he had married three or four of my husband's relatives. So he knew the family, and he said to Ray, "What are you doing down here in Albion?" And Ray said, "Well, I come down to see my aunt!" (laughter)

Mc Well, eventually you were married. Would you tell us about your wedding?

A It was a very small wedding. Just the two families and a couple of neighbors, and of course, in my father's home because they didn't go to church to be married then. Only the Catholics.

Mc Did you have a wedding trip or a honeymoon?

A Wes, we went to Washington, D.C. and were there for ten days.

Mc Do you remember who was the President?

A I think it was Woodroe Wilson. He had just been elected in 1912.

Mc How did you get to Washington; by train?

A Oh yes, by train. One of the neighbors took us up to Stanley, New York to take the train to Washington. That was about ten miles

from my father's home in Seneca Castle. I was married in the winter-time and he took us up in the cutter. It was a very cold night and he got pretty cold coming home. We were married on February 10, 1914.

Mc That leads us into your married life. Where was your husband's home?

A Right here on the Bates Road.

Mc Do you mean on this farm land where you live now?

A The same land. He owned the farm then; 140 acres.

Mc Are there still 140 acres?

A Still 140 acres, and my son has it now

Mc Perhaps this would be a good time to say that you have a son residing on one side and a daughter residing on the other, and that your home is right in the middle. Would you describe your present home?

A Well, I live in a trailer, and have my family on each side.

Mc This is a lovely compact small home. It is ideal. This trailer is on one floor with a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and a living room.

A Everything right handy and only have to take a few steps to do this or that. It's very handy for me now because I'm handicapped.... I can still get around and take care of myself.

Mc Minnie, you have just celebrated your 90th birthday. Would you tell us a little bit about that celebration?

A My son had a party for me, for the Allis family, with a birthday cake and everything! Then the next week my grandson took my daughter and husband and his wife to a restaurant and we had a dinner there with a birthday cake. Next month my grand-daughter is going to take me down to Seneca Castle to visit my friends down there. The Senior Citizens went to McDonalds (restaurant) and I went to that birthday party. So I had quite a 90th celebration! I also received a birthday card from President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter.

Mc I think you are most fortunate to be surrounded by family.

A My father also celebrated his 90th birthday. My sister and I had an "open house" for him. Then when my sister reached 90, my daughter-in-law packed up a dinner and we went up there with the dinner and surprised her.

Mc Were quite a few pictures taken of you at your party?

A Yes, over at Sydney's. They took several pictures. My son's mother-in-law has a birthday on the same day, so I had to share it with her. She's 77.

Mc As Mrs. Ray Allis you came to this farm, where you now live. What was your home like? Did you live with his parents?

A For the first few months we lived with his parents, until they moved out to Medina.

Mc You lived in the big farmhouse that has the barn out in back, with a cupola on its roof?

A Yes. The barn has been there, I guess, since 1872.

Mc You've painted many pictures of that barn haven't you?

A I've painted two or three.

Mc Was your husband a full time farmer

A Oh yes. He put in long hours sometimes.

Mc Was his father a farmer too?

A Yes, his father was a farmer. He grew peaches. Jay Allis was sometimes called the Peach King. He had almost 100 acres of peaches at one time.

Mc How did he harvest them? Did he have help?

A Yes, he had help harvesting. Then after they got them picked, they would take them to his barn up here and sort them out, and put them in little baskets. A lot of people would come and buy them. He'd take them to Batavia and sell them there too. They were shipped here and there and all over, mostly by express.

Mc Who helped do the harvesting, local people?

A Mostly. Didn't have migrants then. The neighbor women would help with the packing, not with the picking. I helped too.

Mc You came to this area as a young bride. Would you tell us about a typical day at home?

A I done my cleaning with a broom. I had no carpets; we had rugs. They were always swept with a broom and of course it raised a lot of dust. I had to dust afterwards. We lived on the east side of the road. The roads weren't paved and everytime a farmer and his wagon went by, or a horse and buggy, in the summertime, and it was dry, it raised a lot of dust and that would come in. So I had to do a lot of dusting. We had cows and I made butter. But I didn't make butter the first few years. I had it made.

Mc Did you know how to cook, right off?



A Yes, I knew something about cooking. I could bake bread, and I could make cakes and pies. I knew quite a little about cooking before I was married. I had to make my own bread of course. My husband didn't like home-made bread, so whenever we could buy bread, we bought it. I had a range that burned wood. I tried to plan to bake and iron at the same time. I'd make my pies and my bread and cookies and cakes, and get them ready to bake. Then I put my flat-irons on the stove to heat, and iron.

Mc The flat-irons had to be heated on the stove?

A Yes. I would have three flat-irons on the stove. Mine had the handle (separate), to be put on from one (iron) to the other.

Mc How did you do your laundry?

A We had a washing machine that would -- how do I explain it-- run by hand, I guess you'd call it. It had a wheel and you'd turn the wheel around. That would agitate the clothes and wash them. ~~It had a wheel and you'd turn the wheel around. That would agitate the clothes and wash them. It had a wheel and you'd turn the wheel around. That would agitate the clothes and wash them.~~ It had a wringer and I'd wring the clothes out and put them in the rinse tubs and rinse them. They went through the wringer three times. To dry the clothes, I would hang them outdoors on the line. In the winter-time I put up a line in the back room, and hang them upstairs.

Mc That's changed a bit today, hasn't it!

A Quite a little.

Mc Did your husband have cows?

A Yes, he always had cows. The first few years he fattened calves. He'd buy calves of the farmers, day old calves, and put them on the cows and fatten them and then sell them. Then he'd get another calf. Then in about 1920, he began selling milk. He sold milk first to Mr. Brunner. In the fall the milk was scarce. I think he sold to him for one year, and then he began selling all the time. He'd usually have around 25 to 30 cows, and they were milked by hand.

Mc Did you ever do any milking?

A I never milked by hand, but when he got the milking machine, I'd put the milk machine on the cows. That machine was run by gas engine.

Mc Did he ever ship the milk or cream?

A He shipped the cream; shipped it to Buffalo to the Fairmont Creamery Company.



Mc What did he do with the left-over milk?

A He had a few pigs, and he'd give it to them. He'd fat the pigs.

Mc My grandmother used to call that "Slop the hogs".

A Yes! ... Slop the hogs. Then I made cottage cheese, quite a little too, and sold it to Medina.

Mc How did you make cottage cheese?

A You'd take your milk and get it sour. Now, the first milk that gets sour, especially in the wintertime, it takes a long while for it to get sour. When it gets sour, it's got a bitter taste. So, I'd take that milk and take the whey off from it, and put it in a pan of fresh sweet milk.

Mc What is whey?

A The liquid stuff. The sour milk separates, you know, from the solid to the water. Then I put that whey in the fresh milk. That would be soured the next day and it would have a good taste. You heat that 85 degrees. I always used a thermometer so I'd get it cooked just right, and cook it until it gets to that temperature. Then I would line a colander with a cheese cloth and pour this cooked milk in it, and drain off the whey. Then take the curd, and I would put cream in it. Most people put milk in, but I would put in rich milk, and salt. I'd take it up to Medina and sell it to a grocery store.

Mc What grocery store was that; do you remember?

A I've forgotten the man's name. He run a store on East Center Street. I know when I first took it there he didn't want it. We almost had to beg him to take it. Well, he took the first batch and the customers bought it and then came back for more. Then he took all I made after that!

Mc Was the cottage cheese packed into one large container?

A Take it in a large milk pan. A milk pan would hold, oh I don't know, quite a few pounds. He'd weigh it out and sell it by the pound.

Mc Were you helping your husband with his farm chores?

A Oh yes. After he got the milking machine, I went out every night and morning and help milk. Especially when he was alone. Of course, when he had a hired man I didn't help.

Mc How did he get the cream to Buffalo?

A We shipped it in 20 quart cans. Took it to the railroad station and it went up by express. They paid for it according to the

- butter-fat content. They would give prizes for your butter-fat.
- Mc What kind of prizes?
- A A silver tea-spoon, a fork, or a knife. Whichever you wanted. I have some. You get so many pounds of butter-fat and you'd get a piece of silver.
- Mc Your husband eventually planted quite a few tomatoes in a special way. Will you tell us about that?
- A Yes, we always raised tomatoes, anywheres from five to ten acres every year. The tomatoes, at that time, were planted by hand. They'd mark out the ground both ways so they could cultivate it from both directions. One year we planted our tomatoes with a cabbage planter. Everybody said it couldn't be done, but we tried it! I sat on the planter with him and when we come to a mark, we put the plant in. Then we'd go on to the next mark and we'd put a plant in. We got them lined up, pretty good, from both directions. The people went by on the road, and they'd stop and watch us.... "Well, they'll never grow!" But they did! ... It was only a few years when everybody was planting with a planter. a lot easier, and saved a lot of work. You'd get it done a lot quicker.
- Mc That's how farming has gone, hasn't it?
- A Yes. One progress to another.
- Mc After a few years went by, you were blessed with a family. Would you tell us about that?
- A My daughter Martha was born in 1920. Both of her grandmother's names was Martha, and she was born on February 22nd. George Washington's wife's name was Martha. So we really had to have Martha. (Martha Elfredia Allis Bacon).
- Mc Then your son came along later?
- A In 1924. He is named Sydney Ray Allis. Sydney is after my mother's maiden name.
- Mc You have told me a little about your husband's mother, Martha Balch Allis, and how she was quite a singer.
- A Yes, she sang in the Baptist (church) choir for six years. She composed music, and she just loved to play. She said that she would rather sit down and play the piano than eat!
- Mc Could you tell us the name of one of her songs, that she wrote?
- A She wrote a march. She called it The Garfield March, after President Garfield. That was before she was married. She had it

published. My daughter has a copy of it now.

Mc Have you been active in any church?

A Yes, I was active in the Methodist Church in Medina. Before our children came along my husband ushered in the church every Sunday. But when we begun to have babies, we couldn't go every Sunday.

Mc You were telling me about how you and your husband used to like to go into buffalo, before the children came. Would you tell us about that?

A Yes, we would take the train up to Buffalo and spend the day doing shopping, go to the theater, and just have a good time. Of course, we'd always get our meals there too. Then later, when we had cars, we would drive up. We'd have to have somebody come and take care of the children then, so we didn't go so often.

Mc Do you remember vaudeville?

A Yes! We always went to vaudeville; see them dance and sing... and do other stunts.

Mc Nowadays we have television and that seems to take the place of going out like that. ... What did you do for recreation other than going to Buffalo?

A We went to church and the church doings that they had. There would always be something going on at the church.

Mc How about the Grange?

A We never belonged to the Grange. My father-in-law belonged to the Grange, but my husband never did. There used to be three Granges: one at Knowlesville, one at Medina and one I think, at Shelby. ... Once in awhile we used to have neighborhood doings and we'd go to them.

Mc What do you mean, "neighborhood doings"?

A Just a neighborhood get-together; have a good time. If they had room enough, they'd dance and have something to eat, and talk.

Mc Minnie, you are so creative now, with your painting and so many hobbies. Have you always had these hobbies?

A I didn't do very much of it until after my husband went (died). I didn't really have the time.

Mc When did your husband die?

A Eleven years ago, in 1968.

Mc And you didn't paint or ....

A I didn't paint, but I made my own Christmas cards. I started making them somewhere in the 1950's. Of course. Of course that was some painting. I made them and a few other little things. I did a lot of embroidery, done quite a little crewel embroidery before he went.

Mc How about making the dolls ?

A I didn't get started in them until after he went, but after I joined the Senior Citizens (Center in Medina), they got me going on that.

Mc Did someone teach you how to do it?

A Well in a way. Hellen Waldo wanted to know if I'd make one once. I told her I didn't have a pattern. "Well", she says, "I've got a pattern!" So she gave me the pattern and I started making them. The wolf, I started myself.

Mc What do you mean: the wolf?

A (The wolf doll, with grandma). It's Red Riding Hood on one end and Grandma on the other end. The wolf is on the back of Grandma's head. I made that pattern myself! You lift up Grandma's bonnet and there's the wolf with his tongue sticking out! (laughter)

Mc You also make apple dolls.

A Yes, I make quite a few of them. The Seniors (Citizens) taught me how to do that. Then, I make the toddler balls. I got that pattern when I was visiting my sister once. One of her neighbors was making one, and I got the pattern.... A toddler ball is made of cloth that has been cut in triangles and put together so it is easy to get ahold of. They're for a little tot to throw around. They are soft and they don't knock everything over and break it.

Mc You also refinish furniture.

A Yes. I learned that when I was down to Seneca Castle taking care of my father. I joined the Home Bureau down there. I learned to cane chairs, and do rush, and I learned to stencil and refinish. I think I've done over 30 stenciled chairs. But I've given it up now. It's too hard work. But I do caning yet.

Mc Do you remember when the Medina Senior Citizens Center started?

A Yes, but I wasn't one of the first members. I wasn't a charter member.

Mc You have been quite active there though?

A Yes, except for the last few years. When I first went, they was having their meetings in the (Medina) Methodist Church. I can remember their fixing over the old railroad depot for their home.

Mc That old depot is a beautiful place for it (Senior Center).

A It is; it's nice. Very nice!

Mc When they have the Fall Fair, you always have so much that you make and take in for them.

A Yes. I've had a table all by myself for years, with things that I've made. I've usually done pretty good.

Mc Do you make jewelry too?

A Yes. I made the necklace I have on. I've made quite a few beads and things.

Mc I like the note-paper that you make, using old stamps.

A Old stamps, feathers, tating and anything I can get my hands on that's small.

Mc We were talking some time ago about the big Depression. I think you said you were the treasurer for the school district?

A Yes, I was treasurer for the school district, and had their money in the bank when it failed. Of course the first month after it failed, there was no money to pay the teacher. She had to wait until we could get some money.

Mc How do you remember that period in time? How did people survive the Depression?

A Well, they just didn't have any money. You couldn't buy what you wanted to buy. You didn't have the money to pay for it (anything) and the prices went down too. They just simply dropped. Everything was high before the Depression, and then that came along and they just dropped you might say, overnight!

Mc I think our prices today are pretty high.

A They are! Much higher than they were in the 20's, and we thought they were high then.

Mc You were telling me earlier about a trip that you and your family had; that you went back to Seneca Castle?

A When we went there for Christmas (many years ago).

Mc Would you tell us about the car, and how you got there?

A Well, we had a Model-A car. It had a front seat and a back seat. There was no trunk, but there was a running-board on each side.



We stopped in Albion and picked up my aunt to take down to Seneca Castle. She had a suitcase, more than one I think, and the Christmas presents that we were both taking down. There wasn't much room in the car. I know I put the suitcase on the seat, and I took along some blankets for the bed, and I folded the blankets, put them on top of the suitcase and sat Sydney on top of the whole thing! Then some more suitcases and boxes by the side of it and my Aunt Martha sat on what was left of the back seat. Then some packages was strapped onto the running board. We was pretty cramped, but we got there! (laughter)

Mc Have you ever flown in a plane?

A No, never been in an airplane. I like to keep one foot on the ground.

Mc Well Minnie, you have lived to be 90 years old. Have you had many days of poor health, or have you been in the hospital?

A Never been in a hospital at all!

Mc Ever?

A Never!

Mc You had your children at home?

A Well, Martha was born in the old Hospital in Medina, but Sydney was born at home.

Mc What do you mean: the old Hospital in Medina. Which one?

A It was on the corner of Eagle Street and ~~West~~<sup>Preston</sup> Avenue.

Mc Other than that, you have never been in a hospital?!

A Never been in a hospital.

Mc Have you had occasion to call on doctors?

A Oh yes, I've been to the doctors for little things.

Mc Then you really can't tell me too much about how doctor's care has changed?

A No, I can't tell you much about the doctors. Only they used to come to the home to see you. I know I had the measles when Martha was two years old, and of course she got them. I had a doctor then; doctor for myself and for Martha. Later, when she was around ten, she had the measles again, but I didn't get them the second time.

Mc Did the doctor come to see her the second time?

A Yes. She and Sydney both had them, and I had both of them in bed. The doctor looked at her and he didn't say a word; turned around and he looked at Sydney... "Well, he'd got the measles." Then he



went back and he looked at her and after awhile he said, "Well, she's got the measles".

Mc Did you have to keep the shades drawn so that the children were in the dark (to protect their eyes).

A Oh yes. I kept the shades drawn. Kept them in the dark and tried to keep them quiet. Hard work to keep two kids quiet.

Mc That probably was before modern medicines?

A Yes, and I kept them in bed for three or four days.

Mc Did you used to worry about polio?

A Yes we did. Worried quite a lot about it when they had epidemics.

Mc My mother was always having us wash our hands; constantly it seemed. Trying not to do whatever you do to get it.

A Sydney had the Chicken Pox, and after a couple days the nurse came to see him. He was out in the field working. He was feeling good but he was still broke out (rash). So she said he couldn't come back to school yet.

Mc I think Chicken Pox makes children look awful, but they usually aren't too sick.

A No, and it only lasts a few days. But it lasted on him for a long time because he broke out, you see, all over his body. He had those rashes, but he felt good after the first couple of days.

Mc Now your son Sydney has this farm that your husband had, and his father had before him? What does your son grow here?

A Well, he rents the farm now. He rents it to Walter Webster.

Mc Then is your son doing any farming?

A No, he does trucking.

Mc He lives right next door ?

A Yes, he lives there just the same.

Mc Did you ever work away from home?

A Not after I was married. I taught school two years before I was married, but not after I was married because there really wasn't anything that a woman could do. She could teach school or she could be a nurse, or clerk in a store. Of course those days you was really busy taking care of your own home. You didn't have the conveniences to work with, and everything was done in a hard way. Took a long time. Washed our dishes by hand; didn't have any electricity, nor refrigerators, or vacus cleaners. It took a long time to do your housework.

Mc Things have changed!

A Yes, things have changed. Of course we done our own baking and cooking. Now, you buy a lot of that. With electricity to do your work, why, a lot of time saved.

Mc Minnie, now that you have reached the age of 90 and you can look back, how do you think our world is going?

A It's going too fast!

Mc In what way?

A Everybody's in a hurry. You don't have time for this, and you don't have time to stop and say "hello" to your neighbor. You really don't know your neighbors. We used to know all the neighbors. Know them personally, and know all about them. But now, you don't even know their names.

Mc Do you think this is because of the automobile?

A Yes.

Mc What do you think about our walking on the moon!?

A It's a great achievement. We've learned a lot about the moon that we didn't know before.

Mc Right! Now if we could only learn how to get along with our neighbors in the different countries.

A Yes; if we could only be at peace! There's too much greed in the world now.

Mc Someone has said that they think that is our greatest weakness: greed.

A Yes, greed and selfishness. If you want to get anywheres, you go and knock the next person down and don't think anything about it to get there. You don't think about your neighbor having feelings or anything.

Mc Yet there is a lot of good being done, too.

A Oh yes, there's a lot of good being done.

Mc I think the Senior Citizens Center is a good example of that.

A Yes, they do a lot of good. I know they have helped me a lot.

Mc Well, thank you very much for this interview, Minnie.

A Well, I hope I've helped you.

Mc You have helped a lot of people.

A I hope I have.

\* \* \* \* \*

*First transcribed by -  
Elizabeth Hoffman  
Watertown, N.Y.*

The above interview was conducted and transcribed by

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# 99-Year-Old Minnie Allis Says, 'I Don't Feel Old'

By NORMA HUTH  
J-R Staff Writer

She still likes to read, corresponds regularly with an old friend in Seneca Castle, N.Y., loves to do crafts, and is now preparing for an art show next year at Medina Memorial Hospital.

"I don't feel old," says Minnie Allis, who is celebrating her 99th birthday today. Mrs. Allis has been a patient in the Long Term Care Unit at Medina Memorial Hospital about three-and-a-half years, and except for not being able to walk, keeps active and alert in her senior years.

"She has the neatest sense of humor," says Arne McCauley, activities director of the unit, "and she's very, very alert."

Minnie was born in Seneca Falls, N.Y. and has lived in Medina since she married Raymond Allis in 1914. They lived on Bates Road for many years and have two children, Martha Bacon and Sidney Allis.

Through the years, Minnie has always enjoyed doing crafts of any kind and used to do a lot of chair caning in her younger years. She says she gave it up when she came to MMH. "I've been lazy since I've been here." She also loves to sew and has made numerous quilts. She is a former member of the Senior

Citizens of Western Orleans and the Homemakers Group. She is also a member of the United Methodist Church of Medina.

But her first love is painting. "I've been painting since I was a teenager," she says. "After I was married I didn't have much time for it, but I got started again after Ray died (in 1968)."

She paints with oil and copies from photos. "I see a pretty picture and I paint it," she says. The painter adds she has sold many and says she couldn't begin to count the number of paintings she has done over the years.

Currently, she is busy working on an art show planned at the hospital next year. McCauley would like to have the exhibit shown during National Nursing Home Week in the spring, but Minnie says, "I'm going to see if I can put her off until fall. I'd like to have the show along with my 100th birthday."

Today a birthday party will be held in the unit for Mrs. Allis. Her daughter-in-law's mother, Alice Dack, also a patient in the Long Term Care Unit, celebrates her 85th birthday today, and the two will be guests of honor at a party with family members.

