



# 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.

W. Clure Appleton  
Signed  
8-9-79  
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Julia P. Burroughs  
INTERVIEWER  
8-9-79  
Date



# Orleans County Historical Association

## INTERVIEW

Mr. W. (William) Clure Appleton

25 Hillcrest Drive

Albion, New York R.D.# 4 14411

W.C.Appleton born January 31, 1902

Interviewed August 9, 1979 by Mr. Luther P. Burroughs of Albion, N.Y.

This is Clure Appleton. I live at 25 Hillcrest Drive which is across the creek from Kenyonville. Our address is R.F.D.#4, Albion. Our telephone is in Waterport exchange. We pay our taxes in Carlton. We pay our school taxes in Lyndonville. It's a private road, which we have to maintain for the benefit of all the cottagers. In fact, some of the houses are year around now, with the people living here year around. Some of them come from Rochester and some of them from Lockport, and from all over. It's a resort and a nice one. We like it here. Hillcrest Drive is really an extension of the Hanlon Road, but it is private. The town does absolutely nothing for us and our mailboxes are in a line at the end of Hanlon Road.

My father's name was Albert Anson Appleton. My mother's name was Alma Eleanor Johnson. I was born in 1902, January 31st, in the house that we - my father had owned for several years and the house where Kelleys live now. He (Kelley) bought it from my brother when my mother died. I had three sisters and one brother. Mabel was the oldest, Ralph was the second, Nettie was the third, and Laura was the youngest girl. Mabel married a man by the name of Guy Staines. Ralph married Mildred Hoyt from Gaines. Nettie never married, and Laura married Chet Shuler who lived in Gaines at the time.

Q. Can you remember your school days, your early school days?

A. Oh yes! I remember several things that happened in country school. Carl Greer and I couldn't get together unless we had a fight. We were continually battling throughout our school days and at the time I went to cobblestone school, Ella Bacon was the teacher. After I went to Albion to school there were several teachers there. I don't remember their names except Beulah Spalding, after I went to Albion School. I went to 8th grade in cobblestone and then I went to Albion and entered "Purgatory". I had passed spelling, regent's spelling,

but I still had to have a year of English, Geography, Arithmetic and History. Arithmetic I took from Miss Thorpe in the east room. Geography and History was taught in the west room by a teacher by the name of Miss Kopf. She was very tall and angular, and people called her "The Indian". Pupils called her "The Indian". I remember one day something happened in class and I didn't know what happened but she blamed me for it and she sent me back to my own room. And Miss Thorpe wanted to know why I was sent back, and I told her something happened but I didn't see it. I don't even know what it was and I told her so. She blamed me for it. I told her I didn't know what happened! Everybody laughed but me, and something funny must have happened. But I didn't see it. And Miss Thorpe and Miss Kopf had an awful battle about that. Miss Thorpe was one of the best teachers I had in my life. She could teach me anything, but she was very strict!

Q. How did you get to school when you went to Albion?

A. Walked! Most every day. Sometimes in cold weather Ralph Hatch would drive a horse and cutter, and come and get me one week and I would drive the horse and cutter the next week. And we put the horse in the drive-barn. Sometimes we went from the school down to the drive-barn to eat our lunch. After lunch, we had wrestling matches in the office, and then walked back to school. And I think it was pretty near a mile to the High School from the drive-barn, and we didn't mind walking that mile.

Q. Who owned the drive-barn at that time, or the livery-stable, or whatever you called it?

A. I don't remember. I think it was Doc Bebee. I'm pretty sure it was. Floyd Berns later bought that drive-barn and he and his boys

run it for several years , and then they turned it into the Ford Garage. There's where the Ford Garage is right now.

Q. Do you remember when you were young, the set-up of houses or business on the corner of routes 279 and 104 ?

A. Yes! Doc Lattin lived on the southwest corner, and at different times, different people lived on the southeast corner. My Dad bought that house from a man named Fuller. He was from New York, and he came up there and bought the place and moved his family: a wife and two children, into that house, and he went back to New York. He was a piano salesman, and he came to Dad one day and wanted Dad to buy that place. And he gave him a price on it and Dad bought it and we moved up there from the old homestead, and we lived there probably three years. Then we moved back, and Dad sold the place to a Mrs. Kelly, and then Dean Sprague bought it, and he still lives there. In the next house down east from the corner was the parsonage, or not originally. The parsonage was down on the north road on the northeast corner. But that was used as a parsonage, the place I started talking about, across from the church was used as a parsonage later on. Then, Will Thaine lived next door on the south side of the road, and Jennie Wright and Roswell Wright lived in the 4th house, and we lived in the 5th house. Old Grandma Shuler lived in the 6th house, and Bill Shuler lived in the 7th house, which was the last house in the village.

On the other side of the street was the corner, then the parsonage, then Harm Knickerbocker's store, built of brick. It's gone now.

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Then the Grange Hall which turned into a store. Dad sold out his store to the Orleans County Cooperative Company - the bought that - the Orleans County Cooperative Company bought that old inn, and they hired - dad sold out to them and they hired him to run their cooperative store and he had it in the Grange Hall. Then came the church of which Mr. Burroughs was pastor for years and everybody loved him. After the church, Mr. and Mrs. Seward lived in the next house and the next house was Len Wells and his wife and then John Daniels' farm. Next was some people by the name of Eggleston. Mrs. Eggleston was an artist and I'm pretty sure he was a retired minister and then was a man by the name of Dr. Fellows and he ran a cider mill that was located on his property.

Then, going west, on the south side of the road, was Doc Eamon, Dr. Eamon, and next was Hoyt's. My brother married Mildred Hoyt and she lived in that next house and then came the Hatchnes, Ralph, his wife and sons and one daughter. Then came George House, we called him "Hoddy". Then came the Sandles. Then it was a house that burned down next to them west and one time I was young belonged to Bill Grinnell. Then there was an old man lived in the next house and he walked with crutches and he had a small dog and I can't remember - Hen - Henry Clark lived in the next house. Then came Bill Greer and his wife and two sons. Then there was an old brick house, all run down, in terrible shape. It was falling down and there was two brothers in that house. Their names were Maxon, Newell Maxon, I don't remember - Len Maxon. That house was eventually purchased by a man by the name of Spaulding and he practically rebuilt it, a beautiful place today. The next house belonged to Bill Greer for

years and the house next to him was the old Palmer Homestead. It was a brick house and they lived there for years, Henry and Charles. Their mother died there and they sold the place and went dicfferent ways.

The northwest corner of 104, there was a small building owned by Doc Lattin and he used it to nouse fossils and different things, sort of a small museum. And when the store burned, he offered that building to my father and my father went right into that building and got a stock of groceries and went right back into this business. And when Clure White built the new building across the street, which was in 1910, he moved back over there, but this little building stood there for years. It's gone now. Next to it was the blacksmith shop run by a Mr. Hatch who was the grandfather of Ralph, Don and Winton Hatch. next to that was the cooper shop. Next to that was a small building. Gates Knickerbocker lived in this little building and repaired watches and did all sorts of small jobs. Then came George House, George House's father's place. Then, Bill Briar lived in the next place and a man by the name of Billie Martin, his wife and his wife's sister lived in the next place. I don't remember who lived in the next place now but it was eventually bought and lived in by Floyd Berns. The next house was owned by a man named Bill Finney. Years ago the house burned down. He had a daughter, Ethel, and she got married and her mother lived with her, he died. Then came Bill Leeper's house. It wasn't his years ago. He owned it for years but it's where George Hoyt, when he first got married lived and I guess most all his children were born in that house. next was the town building and next was Ed Waterson's place. Next to that was a house owned by a Mr. Burbank. Then, as i remember it, came Clure White and farther up the road was Mike Sandle's dryhouse.



Q Your father was Town Clerk for a long time, wasn't he?

A Over forty years. He never had any trouble running for office. He never did any electioneering or anything that I know of, but they put him back in, term after term. Along toward the last, before he died, he told Henry Palmer, the Supervisor, that he wanted to resign and Hank asked me if I would finish out his term. I was already deputy, had been for a number of years. So they made me Town Clerk to finish out my dad's term and I can remember some of the funny things that happened. At their town meeting, the supervisor and justices at some of the meetings could have finished and been out of there in one hour. But they talked so much about other things than business so it was sometimes twelve o'clock before the meeting was over. I used to get pretty sore about it because they talked crops, they talked corn, apples. They talked about wheat, everything but what they should have talked and then all at once someone would make a motion. Maybe it would be an hour before they passed the motion or carried the motion because they were too busy talking about their farms and I still guess it goes on that way today. I don't know.

I guess that's - there's one thing that I remember. A man came up from New York and he and Kenny Burroughs wanted to go hunting pheasants. He came in for a hunting license.

"When are you going hunting?" I asked

"Sunday." He said.

"You aren't supposed to shoot pheasants on Sunday, anyway." I said.

"Well, I'd feel better about it if I had a license." He said

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I met my wife in High School, in Albion and we got married on the 16th of June, 1924. Her name was Katherine Louise Parker. We had two - I was working in North Tonawanda at the time and we moved up there and we had two children. One, Barbara Jean and Dick. They were both born in North Tonawanda. In 1932 we moved back down here and the kids grew up and Barbara Jean married Bob Carver from Lyndonville. They now live this side of Ridgeway on 104. Dick married Rosalie Canham and they live on 98, route 98, in Carlton. Barbara Jean has three children, two boys and a girl and Dick has three boys. I guess that about covers my family tree as far as this family is concerned. My wife worked for the New York Telephone Company when we were married and she quit and moved to North Tonawanda with me. But then, when we came back, down here, Joddy Van Stone was the chief operator and she called her up one day and asked if she would like to work extra. And Peg said to me do you think I should and I said it's up to you, if you want to go work over there it's all right with me. If you don't want to you don't need to. So she went over there back to work as an extra operator. That gradually, after a few months, she started to work steady. She worked there for thirty four years. The last time she worked thirty four years in Albion. Then they sent her to Medina and from there she went to Lockport, drove back and forth every day. At the end of thirty four years employment by the Telephone Company she retired.

I remember when I was a kid, eight years old, one Sunday we had an awful storm. Thunder and lightning, rains and I had a dog. We called her Smut. She was a collie and wherever you'd see a bunch of kids, you'd see that dog. If you saw the dog, you'd see a bunch of kids. The daog was always withe the kids. The kids loved her but she was deathly afraid of thunder and lightning and she crawled under my father's rolled top desk and my dad was taking a nap on the couch and I crawled under the desk with the dog and tried to calm her down. But all at once the door burst open and in come a young boy by the name of Lorraine Fuller, everybody called him "Hickey". He lived on the corner in the house my father eventually bought, and he was very excited. He was dressed in a pair of overalls only, that's all he had on and one strap was over his shoulder and the other was hanging down. And he hollered; "Your store's on fire". And dad woke up and he said "Whose store?" He said "Your store" and out he went. He was more excited really than we were, really, so we up there immediately and lightning had struck the store and gone right down through the roof and through the store and then into a big kerosene tank buried in the cellar. Dad opened the store door and went in. And the store was full of black smoke and he immediately went to a rear room that they used as a town hall and started carrying out town clerk records and he saved well over half of the records he had. Some of them burned up but he was going to make another trip and they wouldn't let him. They was afraid he would be overcome by the smoke. They held him back and probably saved his life. Other people, that lived in Gaines, went into the store, went in the back, risked their lives, to throw

out a mess of old straw hats, or not old straw hats but new straw hats. I guess there must have been at least a hundred of them. (Chuckle) They covered the road and even over in John Hatch's blacksmith shop. And dad had some barrels of molasses and vinegar out on the front steps of the store and they rolled these down the north road and some of them ended up on Mr. Burroughs' front steps. We found them down there the next morning. But practically everything in the store burned up. They risked their lives to throw those straw hats out but dad had a brand new Hobart Coffee Mill, electric coffee mill in the window. It wasn't even bolted down. All they had to do was break the window, pick it up and salvage it. They let it burn up. And Dr. Eamon had a small building just west of the store and my mother was going to use that as a dry goods department store. And dad had ordered twenty five hundred dollars worth of dry goods to stock that little building. And it had arrived at the railroad in Albion on Saturday and we had gone over to Albion and brought it home, with a team of horses and that was setting in the store. It hadn't even been opened. the packages hadn't even been opened and that burned up. There probably was no insurance on it, it was a terrible fire. After the building had caved, Matson Burroughs and Doc Lattin and several other people including myself and Brick were down in the back of the building and there was a little creek. It wasn't really a creek, it was a ditch. A drainage ditch, run down back of the store and there was sort of a little pond. That ditch had created a little pond back of Lattin's barn and they were using well water with buckets and were dipping the water out of the little pond to throw on the fire. The building had caved in and it was burnt, but it was still

burning. Matson Burroughs dipped a pail of water out of the creek, carried it over and threw it on the fire - somebody threw a pail of water on the fire and it landed where there was some unburned kerosene, that was burning and it went "POOF", like that. And Matson threw that pail of water over his right shoulder and it turned bottom side up right on Doc Lattin's head. I'll never forget that if I live to be a hundred years old. It was a kind of serious proposition but (chuckle) a laughable one too. You couldn't help but laugh. Doc Lattin was soaked. Among other things, that's one of the things I remember but that fire is very vivid in my mind. It was kerosene smoke fire. It was a terrible fire.

Q What facilities did they have for fighting fires in those days?

A Just bucket brigades, bucket brigades is all. They had no fire facilities except buckets.

When I was a kid - eh - the boys and girls weren't much different than they are today except they didn't take drugs and they didn't drink to excess. However, they were full of mischief and I remember distinctly some of the things that happened on Halloween and at different times. One Halloween I remember the cooper shop. Out in front of the cooper shop was a big barrel rack that was used to deliver empty barrels to customers, to farmers. And one Halloween the boys must have taken that apart. They couldn't have done anything else and then put it back together again. The next morning, after Halloween, they found that barrel rack on top of the cooper shop and it wasn't any unusual occurrence to find a buggy or a sleigh on top of the schoolhouse. And they tipped over toilets, practically every toilet in Gaines was tipped over whether (chuckle) there was anyone in them or not on Halloween. And I

remember when the dryhouses were running, a half a dozen or more young men would get together and they'd decide they'd have a chicken supper. And they'd go out and raid henhouses and get four or five big plump chickens and take them down to the dryhouse and cook them over the fire in the dryhouse and eat them. One day, one night, Jim Thurber lived in the grange hall. He owned that building before the Grange owned it. And he lived in the east side of it. It was originally a tavern and he run a store in the west end of it and he had some prize chickens that he was going to take to the Fair to exhibit and he had a prize rooster. And two of the Shuler boys were elected to get the chickens. And they went up there. They decided to get the chickens from Jim Thurber. So they went up there. They went in the chicken coop and one of them stayed outside and the other went in to get the chickens. And the one that stayed outside saw Jim coming with the lantern. The chickens made a racket and he knocked on the door and run. And the one that was in the building, in the chicken house, crawled down in the corner under the chicken coops - er - chicken - er - they had racks in there chickens used to roost on. He crawled down under there, way over in the corner and Jim didn't see very good and he held the lantern up and he counted the chickens and he had all of them. So he went back in the house. He thought maybe it was a rat that disturbed them. And after he had gone, the Shuler boy reached up and he grabbed this prize rooster and he wrung his neck and he grabbed a couple or three hens and wrung their necks and he brought them all down to the dryhouse and we had a feed. When Jim discovered his

chickens gone, the next morning and was he mad. I don't blame him. They had taken his prize rooster and he had no chickens to display at the Fair.

Er - I don't think kids thought very much different today than they thought in those days, but they have automobiles to drive, which we didn't. Although, I did drive my dad's two cylinder Oakland when I was about ten years old and of course everything was dirt roads then and - er - the speed of your car was limited. But I used to get along pretty well with that old Oakland., two cylinder, right hand drive car.

Q Now you mentioned the Shuler boys but since the Statutes of Limitation have run out, who were some of the other boys who were implicated in this community. Do you remember any of them at all?

A. Oh, there was the Hoyt boys, Jim and Bob. Bob died when he was young and - er - there was quite a few kids of my own age. Ralph Hatch and Don Hatch. We participated but not very actively. We - like that chicken roast - we ate the chickens but we didn't go and get them. I remember once Al Schoonover, married Hatch, Ralph Hatch's sister and they lived west of Gaines and one year Al closed his house up - er - to save coal and moved in with the Hatches, the Hatch family, his wife's family. But they might just as well lived there all winter because we kept the fire going in the house anyway. We used to go up there and play cards. Certain nights we'd play - er - Ralph Hatch and I would play Schoony and Don Hatch and we played one night a week, five hundred, and that game, that one game, lasted all winter. Sometimes we'd be five thousand in the hole. I don't think we ever did finish it. We played that one night a week and other

nights in the week, we played poker and red dog up there. He burned just as much coal as he would if he lived right there. and, there's, you went into his house you always had a cup of coffee. The coffee pot was on the stove twenty four hours a day. He'd get up in the middle of the night and drink a cup of coffee. And then go back to bed.

Q Do you remember any incidents about Harm Knickerbocker's store in those days?

A Yes. But there's another thing I want to say about Al Schoonover's house. One night we were up there, about eight of us, I guess, seven or eight of us, and somebody said "You know what I'd like"? There was one man worked for John - er - er - where Swiercznski lives in that big brick house in Childs, John Anderson, he owned that farm and he had a bunch of chickens and this one guy worked for him. And we drew straws to see who would get the chickens and this guy was elected. So he took another man with him. I think Schoony went with him and drove his Ford. And \_\_\_\_\_ says; "I know where to get em". He went right down to where he worked, John Anderson, went in the chicken house and came back out with two fat hens. And Don Hatch cooked them and we had a big feed right there but he went to where he worked (chuckle) to get a couple of chickens. That was a funny one. Now what did you want to say, Brick?

Q In regard to any incidents in regard to Harm Knickerbocker.

A Oh - oh yes. Er - Harm Knickerbocker - Harm Knickerbocker run a store on the northeast corner, next to the Grange Hall. Ah - and it was a brick building and he and Gates Knickerbocker's wife and daughter lived up over the store. He had a room up there but they lived there. He run this store and I don't think he took in - well, if he took in ten or fifteen cents a day, he was doing big business. He didn't - they opened a can of peaches after he had gone, they claimed



it was probably two years old, but it still tasted good. He had the store but he didn't work at it much and we kids would go in there and order a clay pipe or a penny's worth of nails. He had to go way back of the store to get them. And while he was back there, we'd help ourselves to cigarettes and tobacco. Candy, you couldn't eat the candy it was so old but we took it anyway and - eh - we just run over that man something terrible. It was awful. We could smoke the cigarettes and the tobacco but my dad told me once, when I was a kid, he said; "if you want to smoke", he smoked cigars continuously. He quit twice in my recollection and you couldn't live with him. He - he - he was grumpy and ordinarily he was a pretty normal man. But when he'd quit smoking, he'd - you couldn't live with him. He was miserable and mother used to say; "I wish he'd start smoking again" and he would. He started and then he'd be all right. And he never inhaled but he had to have that cigar in his mouth. He told me when I was a kid, if I wanted to smoke, to smoke right out in the open. If he caught me smoking back of the barn somewhere, he'd tan my hide and so I never did. Not back of the barn, although I smoked cigarettes probably sixty five years or more. But - er - some of these stories are - er - when I think of them they are just nostalgic. Er - Brick and Kenny, not Matson Burroughs was also in the gang that used to do funny things on Halloween. But I practically lived down at his house (LB) and he practically lived at my house when we were young school kids. Brick and I were good friends all my life. One day I was down to his house and he and Kenny had gone somewhere. I don't know where Matson was, and I started playing with the crokinole board and

monkeying around with toys. When all at once, I was just a kid, probably six or seven years old and finally, one time, I once said to Mrs. Burroughs; "Mrs. Burroughs, is it a sin for a man to get drunk?" and she said; "Why, yes, of course it is. But" she said; "Clure, its also a sin for a man to eat too much. It's a sin for a man to work too much. It's a sin for a man to play too much, or a woman to play too much" she said. "Everything that is carried to excess is a sin" and you know I've carried that with me all my life.

Q Were you around Orleans County during prohibition days?

A Yes. During part of it. I moved to North Tonawanda about the middle of it. But there were several speakeasies. You could get a drink most anywhere you went. There was one down at Lakeside and that was wide open and there was one on Brown Street. In fact, several of them , I guess, down in that district, East State and Brown St. There were two on State St that I remember and there was one on Route 98 just south of Childs. That was a beautiful place. Er - it really was a showplace in the old days. It was later purchased by Kirke Hart. I don't remember who run the speakeasy, but after prohibition went out, Kirke Hart bought the place and he lived there until he died. And we moved to Tonawanda, North Tonawanda, and that was loaded with speakeasies. So was Tonawanda, Buffalo, Lockport, but right around here there was one or two on West Avenue in Albion. And down in what they called "Polack Town" was several.

I had one of the first radios that came around this part of the country, in Gaines or Albion. I built it myself. Er - it was a one tube, regenerative set. We called it a bleeper because it squealed if you turned it up so the tube oscillated. It generated a squeal which other sets picked up and the first thing I did with that

radio, when I got it home, was to tear it all to pieces. And I bought a magazine that had a picture and diagram of a regenerative set and I built it according to their instructions and it worked. So I listened to it for a couple of weeks and tore it all to pieces and built it up according to another diagram. I went from that regenerative one set tube to reflex, from there to superhet - er - tuned radio frequency. From there to superhetrodyne and I guess I built every kind of a radio there was ever a circuit drawn. And I serviced radios here and in North Tonawanda for several years on the side. Then when I came down here in 1947, I bought a television set from Stan Allen. And he said to me one day; "What are you going to do for a few days?" and I said "I don't know. Nothing, probably" and he said; "I wish you'd help the boys, my boys, put up antennae. I got a half a dozen or more of them to put up" and he said "I can't seem to get anyone that seems to know what they are doing on antennae". And I said; "Stan, I can't climb". He said; "I don't want you to climb. I want you to see that they go up right. We'll do the work. You tell us how". I said "All right" and I went home and said to my wife; "I think I am going to work for Stan Allen for five days". And I ended up working for him for five years, I did all his television work for five years and that is some different from the communications system we had when I was a kid. Boy, its some different today.

(END OF TAPE)

Transcribed and typed by Mr. Luther P. Burroughs, Albion, N.Y.