



Orleans County Historical Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS Horace Bird Interview

SUBJECTS

NAMES

- Agricultural Stablization
- Conservation Service (A.S.C.S.)
- Soil Bank Program
- Fruit Inspector for N.Y.C. RR
- Jeddo Creek constructed
- Holland Land Co.
- Murdock School , two rooms
- Middleport High School
- horseback to school
- World War I
- Armistice Day, false!!
- Cornell Agricultural School
- drying apples
- jelly factory
- Civil War
- ice-skating
- fruit orchards
- red kidney & pea beans
- Dairy cows: Jersey & Holstein
- the Great Depression
- dry-house: Mrs. Mietz
- first auto
- Ithaca 1st Baptist Church
- Jeddo Baptist Chapel
- Hartland Baptist Church
- covenant meeting/pre-communion
- Shelbyville, Kentucky
- trip to Hawaii & Japan

- William Bird, father
- Sarah Clark Bird, mother
- Aurelia Dodson Vaughn, wife
- children & spouse:
- Robert/Leah Lofthouse
- Leslie/Joan McMorran
- Emily Ann/David Horner
- Horace Jr./Dayle Cross
- Helen/ Donald Rhoad
-
- Jeremiah Brown
- Col. Edwin Brown, head of all
- Vet Hospitals in U.S.
- Marcus Phillips
- Glen Grimes
- Harry Flatt
- Kay Bartlett, Albion
- Elmer Brown
- Mrs. Peterson
- Harold & Earl Coon
- Mrs. Harold "Jo" Tuttle
- Gordon Payne/Josiah Payne "J.P."
- Craig Ross
- Albert Grinnell, teacher
- Miss O'Brian, teacher
- Valida Beck/Glen Wakeman, teacher

Brown - Bird Homestead

1901 - 1979



Orleans County Historical Association

INTERVIEW

Mr. Horace Bird
Ridge Road, Jeddo
Medina, R.D.# 3, New York 14103

Mr. Horace Bird: Born October 26, 1901

Interviewed by Mr. Arden McAllister, Medina, N.Y.
December 9, 1978





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. H. Bird

Signed

12/9/78

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Orden R. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

12/9/78

Date

B I was born right here in the house where we are talking now on October 26, 1901, and I've been here ever since, right here in Jeddo. This house was built, I believe, in 1865 or 1866. It is on the south side of the Ridge Road, now route 104. My father was named William Bird. My mother's name was Sarah Clark Bird.

Mc Were your parents from this area?

B Yes; Father was born just a little west of here. He started to work on this farm when he was 13 years old.

Mc How big was this farm at that time?

B 128 acres. Now we have added on 33 more acres. At one time the Browns were quite influential people. This farm house has only been owned by two families: the Browns and the Birds. At one time, Elmer Brown's cousin, Mrs. Peterson, intended to give a half acre of the west corner of the farm next to the Ridge, for a Home for the Elderly Women; a retirement home. But it was never built here. In front of this house, before it was built, was the log cabin; the original house. That was right straight in front of our house. That was Jeremiah Brown, Elmer Brown's grandfather when they gained acquisition of the farm by the Holland Land Company (Purchasing Co.). We have the original deed. It never changed hands except Brown and Bird!

Mc Where did you first go to school?

B Murdock school, down on the corner of the Murdock Road. Fruit Avenue they call it now. It was the Murdock Road years ago. I went there through the grades. Then I went to Middleport High School because Middleport was two miles nearer than Medina and you didn't drive a horse any farther than you had to. I had to hitch up the horse and be on the road, pick up another boy on the Stone Road towards Middleport, put the horse down at the livery stable, unharness it, and be down at school by nine o'clock.

Mc When you went to the Murdock School, you probably walked there?

B Oh yes, but not always. I'd walk ordinarily, but on bad days

three of us rode on one horse and when we got to school, the horse knew enough to come back home! We'd just get off the horse and the horse would come back here and my father would put him away.

Mc Then you would probably walk home after school?

B Oh yes, generally. That was a two-room school house. They had the first four grades in what was called the "little room", and four grades in the "big" room. One teacher was Valida Beck. She lived up in Jeddo and married Glen Wakeman. The other teacher was Miss O'Brian. She was from Medina and taught the higher grades.

Mc Could they keep discipline pretty well?

B Oh yes. When my mother taught on the Seaman Road in the Cobblestone school, during the winter the older boys would come in from maybe November to maybe March or April and some of them would be older than she was and they'd be over 21! One year she had over 70 in the school. That was a single room school where she taught. She boarded around some at the houses, but when she was teaching school and had that number her top pay at that time, I think, was \$3.00 a week.

Mc She probably had to do some of the janitor work too, didn't she?

B Well, the older boys did that. They got the water and the wood. When I attended the Murdock school, Mr. Albert Grinnell was one of our teachers. He is relations to the Blackburns somehow. Finally he taught vocational work at Miami University, Ohio.

Mc What year did you graduate from Middleport?

B In 1919. There were 19 in our graduating class and the same year, there were 19 in the Medina High School graduating class.

Mc Since you graduated right after World War I, do you have any memories of that? You probably knew some of the boys that went to France?

B Oh yes. The first one in Orleans County, I was in District School, and that was Harold Coon, Earl Coon's younger brother. He was 14 I believe, but he was a lot older looking, and he

was real stout. His father was a thrasher; lived down on the Marshall Road.

Mc Do you remember Armistice Day?

B Armistice Day I was working in the dry-house over across the road for Mrs. Mietz. There were dry-houses then all the way along here, every two or three miles.

Mc That was right across the road, here in Jeddo?

B Right across from where I live now. The second day, the time that it actually was, about a week later. You know they had two (Armistice Days).

Mc They had the rumor of the false Armistice Day.

B That time I was sick in bed with the flu!

Mc Did they do anything in Jeddo to celebrate?

B Communication didn't come around so easy then. It was supposed to be the "war to end wars".

Mc What further education did you pursue?

B I went on to Cornell and took agriculture there. I graduated in 1923. I met my wife-to-be there. Her name was Aurelia Dodson Vaughn. She took arts and specialized in Greek and Latin. We met in the First Baptist Church of Ithaca, N.Y.

Mc That was at the young people's meetings?

B Church and Sunday School. She was the president of the girl's class and I was Vice-president of the men's calss.

Mc And this young lady (now Mrs. Bird) was one of those charming southern girls?

B Oh yes! She came from Shelbyville, Kentucky. She'd tell me about the "bars". That was bears, but she would say "bars"!

Mc Is that name "Shelbyville", Kentucky? Is there a relation to our Shelby?

B Not that I know of. It was named after the Governor of Kentucky.

Mc I believe that this is true of our Shelby in Orleans County too. It was named after the same man!

Did you attend church in Jeddo as a youth?

B Yes. The Baptist chapel in Jeddo. It was connected at that time with the Hartland Baptist church in Johnson's Creek... The same pastor was at both churches, so we had to have Sunday School at three o'clock in the afternoon, and then the minister

- came down and we had the evening service at night. In the morning he was at Johnson's Creek and in the evening, here.
- Mc Do you mean that as a family in the morning you would go all the way over to Johnson's Creek. Then in the afternoon go to Sunday School, and in the evening here? Boy! You really were religious in those days! (laughter)
- B At that time we also had to go on Saturday afternoons for the "covenant meeting". You weren't allowed to take communion if you hadn't gone to covenant meeting beforehand. That was for all people.
- Mc What did you do in a covenant meeting?
- B It was to prepare you for taking communion on Sunday.
- Mc Being a Baptist, the baptism ritual is immersion. Where was this done?
- B Two of us, "Jo" Tuttle (Mrs. Harold Tuttle) and myself were baptized together, plus others, in Johnson's Creek on the Silsbey farm. A swimming hole. It was summertime.
- Mc In the meantime this romance had been developing. When was the union?
- B June 30, 1925. That was two years after we met. We weren't in a hurry.
- Mc ... Did you have any brothers or sisters?
- B I didn't have any brothers or sisters, and Aurelia didn't have any either, except that she had a brother who died before she was born.
- Mc Maybe this is a good place for you to tell us about your own family?
- B The oldest is Robert, born in 1926 and runs the Mill at Jeddo now and he is married to Leah Lofthouse. Our son Leslie was born in 1929. He married Joan McMorran from New Brunswick, Canada. He is now teaching at the University of Bridgeport, a professor of engineering. Emily Ann was born in 1932 and she lives at Newfane, New York. She's married to a Methodist minister, David Horner and they have four children. Horace Jr.

is married and lives in Rochester, New York and works for Eastman Kodak. He married Dayle Cross. Helen (the twin of Horace Jr.) was born in 1938 and she married Don Rhoad and they live in Cincinnati and he works for Proctor and Gamble. They have three children, two boys and a girl.

Mc Was your family all born in this house?

B No, Robert was born in Rochester at the Park Avenue Hospital. Leslie was born at Medina Hospital, and the rest in Medina.

Mc That takes us back to right after your graduation from Cornell and to your work and career.

B Well I graduated in June of '23 and supposed I was going to be on the farm the rest of the time and was recommended by a professor and interviewed by a representative of the New York Central Railroad. They hired me for a fruit inspector. In August I left and went out to Toledo, Ohio where we had a training session. Then I went from there to Michigan to the grape area: Benton Harbor, Laughton, and Dowagiac. All in Michigan. ... First they sent me to Benton Harbor. Later I came back. They had a telegram come in there and told me to report to Yampen, New York. It was on a Saturday afternoon and I knew that (telegram) was wrong. So I went over to Laughton and took the train to this area and reported over to Pen Yan on the Monday following. I was there for a month or two, and then up to Williamson and Sotos.

Mc You were doing fruit inspection?

B Right. We were the same as the federal inspection, but we looked for what condition the fruit was when it went in so that if there were any freight damage claims on it, they could look back and see what the condition of it was when it went in. If we found that some had been damaged or rotted a little bit before the railroad got it.

Mc Did Marcus Phillips (of Hulberton) happen to go in at the same time that you did?

B I had known Marcus Phillips at Cornell, and he got on the train at Middleport. He was in the same class with me. He just worked for a year, or about that, and then he came back and went with the bank in Albion.

Mc How long did you work with the railroad as a fruit inspector?

B ... After we were married, we lived in Detroit. I was with the state for four or five years, and after that I just worked winters. I worked on the farm in the summers.

Mc You worked part time here on the farm, with your father?

Mrs. B. Loading apples and stuff like that on the sidings.

Mc This farm was mostly a fruit farm?

B Well originally my father raised a lot of beans, red kidneys especially, and pea beans. One year, I know, we had over 40 acres of beans on the farm. Well, then the blight started in the beans, and fruit got paying a little better. About 1898 people pulled out all the orchards, the same as they did here after the freeze. So they didn't pull the fruit out here, but on the farms in general they began taking orchards out because they weren't paying. So, after a few years they began paying better and people started to set new fruit orchards. We got up to as high as 40 acres of orchards. But that changed again! Saw the rotation of crops... this year. Now it's largely hay, corn, wheat and grain.

Mc Did you have any kind of a dairy on this farm?

B We did for 25 years I guess. First we sold cream. We took it over to Middleport and shipped it up to Buffalo on the train to the Fairmont Creamry. They made the butter too. They shipped butter back and you'd see it in the stores.

Mc What kind of cows did you have on the dairy farm.

B We used to have just Jerseys, but that gradually changed from Jersey to Holsteins.

Mrs. B. That was about the time our son Robert had his heart attack. We had to give up the dairy because we couldn't get capable help. Well, we had them for a few years after that. Now we cash-rent the land to the neighbors mostly; wheat and barley.

B Yes, we have the wheat and the barley ourselves, and rent out the balance to a neighbor, for corn and hay and the orchards, to another neighbor: Glen Grimes. Some acres to Harry Flatt who lives on Fruit Avenue.

(End of side one of tape)

- Mc You were working on the farm and on the railroad as fruit inspector when the Great Depression of '29 came along. Do you have any special memories about this, or know of any affects that it had on you or your work?
- B It just about closed the bank, practically. I remember that we had \$15.00 in the Middleport Bank. Father and I had just put in a half car-load of lambs to fatten, and they were just getting ready to go. So we were able to use that money to carry on the farm. If not, we'd a been broke because my father didn't have any money in the bank. Besides that, he had a few shares of bank stock at Middleport, and that failed. So, it was all gone then.
- Mc But the farm managed to survive in spite of the very low prices at the time?
- B Oh yes. About that time the work with the railroad stopped because everything was going by trucks. It got so everything went by trucks. The trucks would come by the homes and picked the produce up instead of shipping it so much, and they were able to deliver it better at the other end. Didn't have to unload the cars and everything.
- Mc What did that do to your inspector's job?
- B Well, that ended that because during the time that I was Inspector, Kay Bartlett (of Albion) was the Home Demonstration Agent in Orleans County. We got her to write up some recipes and we'd put in each bushel of apples around that went all over the United States. She told how to use the apples and what the variety was and what they were especially good for, whether cooking or pies and like that. We got replies from people that said they'd never tasted such apples! About all some of them were used to were the "Ben Davis" apples.
- Mc About this time you started a new career?
- B Yes. The A.S.C.S. (Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service) came along and they wanted a person to administer that in the different counties, and I was available. They hired me and from then on I was connected with the farm nights and mornings and holidays. But the rest of the time I was full time with the agricultural department (Federal Government).
- Mc Where was your office?
- B In Albion, for Orleans County. Each county had an office. The

Niagara County headquarters was in Lockport. Now they have combined so there aren't so many.

Mc What was your major duty with the agricultural department?

B To administer the program in the counties. They came back for conservation, for use of lime; we had to allocate that, acreage allocation. During World War II all the farm products such as gasoline for tractors, barbed wire, farm machinery, etc. had to be rationed out and came through our office.

Mc What about the Soil Bank Program?

B Yes, the Soil Bank started while I was there.

Mc How did that work? Did you check the different farms?

B Yes, we'd check the various farms. A man would put in all of his farm, or a part of it. We'd measure the acreage he wanted to put in and we'd assess the value of it and the productivity of the farm to see what rent he should receive for it to put it out of production. It was taken out of production. The theory was, we had so much food and products that they weren't bringing any money in, and it was depleting the soil. They could put it into the Soil Bank, and use it later on when it was needed. At that time it was known as the "Fifth Plate," that some day they would want some more food... like it is at the present time and needed to feed the world. Therefore they stored that, all the minerals and all, in the soil at the time. It was just saved.

Mc Actually improved the soil. It was called the "Fifth Plate"?

B At the start that's what they called it.

Mc You worked in your office in Albion for how many years?

B Thirty years. I retired from that in 1966.

In 1966 our son Robert had a heart attack. We were going on a trip right at that time, in September. We waited, but Robert improved so that in January 1967 we left on a trip to Japan. That was when the blizzard was real bad in Chicago. We got to Chicago and the plane circled there for two or three hours. We were the first plane to land on the run-way. Then we went on to San Francisco, and then we went by boat to Japan, by way of Hawaii. We arrived in Tokyo two weeks later. We visited friends in Hawaii. Horace Jr. was in the Air Force and stationed there at Camp Tachikawa. He'd been in the service for five years and

was resigning his commission, so he wanted us to come over and see the country before he got out. He'd met his wife there. She had been there a year longer than he had. She taught at a military school.

Mc Horace Jr. was a pilot, wasn't he?

B Yes. C-1-30, a large cargo plane. He went on to Hong Kong and Bancock and Tiwan and all over.

Mc How did you get back?

B Flew back. Coming back, instead of coming by boat which we had tickets for, we changed those for air tickets, and flew direct from Tokyo to San Francisco. There we had to go through customs office and then on to Los Angeles where we met my cousin. We were so tired out that it took us about three weeks to get over it! (laughter). Every place in Japan where we were, we met people we knew who were missionaries. We visited out mission stations (baptist denomination). And we knew people in other places. We were entertained by a fellow that Horace Jr. had been in college with. ... In March, he entertained us in an open-air-hotel in Bancock.

Mc Let's discuss some of your community activities. This little church in Jeddo was closed for awhile, wasn't it? Where did you attend church during that period?

B In Medina.

Mc What other community and fraternal organizations have you been associated with.

B Since I was 12, I joined the International Order of Good Templars. Gordon Payne had been the National Grand Chief Templar at one time.

Mc Gordon Payne had been a Jeddo native, and a neighbor of yours? Did you go to school with him, by any chance?

B No, he was older. He went to study law at Columbia University and was the highest in his class!

Mc His father was the store-keeper in Jeddo?

B Yes, I remember him: "J. P." (Josiah Payne).

Mc So, for your groceries you went to this little store in Jeddo?

B Yes. Maybe once a month we might drive over to Medina or to Middleport.

Mc When you went to Medina to do your grocery shopping, what kind

of a store would you go to, or were there a number of different stores?

B Yes, there were a number of different stores. There were no super-markets. There were just grocery stores: like Gotts, and a meat market. Dan MacCarthy (Jack MacCarthy's grandfather) used to run a meat market over there.

Mc Did you belong to any other organizations?

B Nope. That's the only one. We worked in Scouts when our children were small, with our boys.

Mc Did they have a scout troop here in Jeddo?

B No. Johnson's Creek. Aurelia (Mrs. Bird) served on the library board (in Medina) before the new building.

Mc Quite often the change from the horse and buggy to the automobile is rather interesting. Do you have any memories of your first automobile?

B Yes. My Dad gave \$390.00 for it. It was a Ford. It was a demonstrator when Walker was the dealer, over in Medina. I think that the show-room that LaVern had was about where the Medina Daily-Journal newspaper is now. It stood there all winter long (on the floor there) because you couldn't run a car in the wintertime. No snow plows. So, you'd just jack it up all winter anyway. That was 1916 I think.

Mc Was the Ridge Road paved at that time?

B Yes, it was paved by here. A concrete road by the house here in 1912, and the same pavement center now. It is cracked but they've patched it and everything, but the same concrete.

Mc Do you remember seeing your very first automobile?

B One of the first automobiles I saw was Mr. Oren Britt Brown's cousin, Elmer Brown. Had his car shipped by boat from Cleveland to Buffalo. They motored down here to Medina to the celebration in 1906 (Old Home Week). That's the first one I ever rode in. I was five years old. I got a seat in that! Of course, they were different. You had to crank them on the side. I don't remember if it had a windshield or not.

Mc Where were you when you saw your first airplane?

B It was over near the Fisher-Price plant, in Medina, to the west... Terell lived there. He had horses and a race track and that's how there was a landing field there. There was a big crowd!

- Mc ... You said that Jerimah Brown, one of the original pioneers, had built his log cabin on a spot that would have been right in front of your house.
- B He lived there until he built the house where we are now.
- Mc There are some stories about Jeremiah and the creek that runs through Jeddo.
- B Oh yes. (Looking south from the house). About that time, the land out there was all swamp. They called it "Wild Cat Swamp". They wanted to drain it because there was good soil there. So Jeremiah took his oxen (it was in the spring of the year when there was a lot of water standing around) and dug a trench across the Ridge Road right in Jeddo where the Mill is now, to drain it. The neighbors to the north of that were furious because the water flooded over onto their land. So, the next night they filled it up! The next night Jeremiah opened it up again! And they filled it up again! The third night, he opened it up with the oxen, and he got so much water coming that they couldn't stop it! That's why there's no natural depression in the road at Jeddo. It goes right straight. The water at that time, went east and flowed into Oak Orchard Creek, below the hill where Craig Ross lives...
- Mc Did this form a new creek, going north?
- B Yes. After that they began using the water for the Mills. At one time there was a jelly factory, and a heading mill to make heads for barrels.
- Mc What kind of jelly factory?
- B Quince probably, and apple. There was lots of apples. I've heard my father say that in the fall of the year my Grandmother would have strings all through the house (like you'd hang clothes on). There would be slices of apples drying. At about Christmas time of the year, they'd take what they had dried over to town and trade it for groceries...
- Mc Do you remember the flood of 1905?
- B 1902 it was. I was in a baby carriage. My Mother took me up to Jeddo to see how it was.
- Mc That washed out the Jeddo dam. Did they ever replace it?
- B Oh yes. It's been replaced.... That broke the canal bank and the water all rushed down. They'd had a steady rain all night.

B As far as the tools and everything goes, they have changed so much a boy wouldn't know how to harness a horse or use the wagon tools or anything else. He could run a tractor alright. In the cellar I have an ox yoke and a wooden shovel. My Dad had driven oxen. We have the old wooden skates; they screwed them into the heels on their shoes.

Mc Where did you go ice-skating?

B Right out in back here. We had a swimming pool out there with the water about ten feet deep, so I never remember the time when I couldn't swim because I lived right near the creek. My folks saw to it that I knew how to swim. ... The boys always used to gather here. There were 8-10 boys.

Mc Jeremiah Brown had a couple of sons? One of them made quite a record for himself as a Judge, didn't he.

B Yes. Judge Oren Britt Brown, of Ohio. He's relation to Mrs. Ethel Britt Martin.

Mc Almer Brown, a grandson, came back here every summer. He came sick here in the fall of 1922 and died here, where he wanted to be. He had lived in Toledo, Ohio. At one time he the manager of a big farm in Ohio, at Wapakoneta.

Mc Colonel Edwin Brown was in the Civil War, wasn't he?

B Yes, whiskers and all! I remember him. He had lost an arm in the Civil War. I can remember that I stood right by that door there and he came through the door. His one arm was what impressed me.

Mc He also contributed to the Veteran's Hospital institutions?

B He was chosen by General Grant (and I think he was an orderly to General Grant) to go down to Vicksburg, Virginia and "heal the wounds". He did such a good job doing that, and he'd had the experience of digging the Erie Canal, managing men, and he had furnished horses and dug one section from here to Lockport. And he'd had all this experience, business experience: County Clerk in Albion. He died in 1904, age 81. He was made the head of all the veterans hospitals in the United States. And he built seven or eight, saw to the building of them. He gave the men, the veterans that wanted to work, why they were paid a little something. ...

B Our tool shed now, the timbers that came out of the original barn that was built back in the middle of the field south of the farm. We moved it. It was built in the middle of the farm because it had been all swamp from here to up there. Lots of times during the winter they had to walk on a rail fence up to the barn to do the milking, and then carry a pail of milk down back, walking the fence.

(End of tape)

Services Set For Horace Bird, 77

Horace C. Bird, 77, of Ridge Road, Medina (Jeddo), died today at Medina Memorial Hospital, following a long illness.

Mr. Bird was born Oct. 26, 1901 in Jeddo, the son of William and Sarah Clark Bird.

He had been a farmer on his own farm and manager of ASCS in Albion.

He had lived in the area all of his life, was a 1923 graduate of Cornell University, and a member of Alpha Zeta fraternity.

He was a member of the Jeddo Chapel, the First Baptist Church of Medina, the Orleans County Historical Association and the Orleans County Ostomy Association.

Surviving are his wife, Aurella; three sons and two daughters, Robert of Middleport, Leslie of Bridgeport, Conn., Mrs. David (Emily) Horner of Newfane, Mrs. Donald (Helen) Rhoad and Horace C. Jr. of Rochester, and 14 grandchildren.

Friends may call tonight (7-9) and Wednesday (2-4 and 7-9) at the Bates, Wallace and Heath Funeral Home, 38 State St., Middleport. Funeral services will be held Thursday at 2 p.m. at the Jeddo Chapel. Burial will be in West Ridgeway Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Jeddo Chapel.

(Transcribed, edited and typed by Helen M. McAllister, Medina, N.Y.)