



Orleans County Historical Association

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father: Harry Austin Conner / mother: Edna Curtis C.
 wife: Catherine Rout Conner
 son: Harry Arthur Conner
 daughter: Marjorie C. Humphreys

1906 - 1983



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Curtis P. Conner
20 Maple Avenue
Lyndonville, New York

Curtis P. Conner was born January 24, 1906.

The pre-interview and the interview itself was conducted by
Lysbeth Hoffman of Lakeside Bluff, Waterport, N.Y. and
Helen McAllister of Medina, New York.



Curtis P. Conner



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.

Curtis P. Conner

Signed

4-13-1981

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Sybil A. Hoffman / Helen McAllister
INTERVIEWER

4-13-1981

Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, April 13, 1981, Lysbeth Hoffman of Waterport, New York and Helen McAllister of Medina, New York are interviewing MR. CURTIS PIERPONT CONNER of 20 Maple Avenue, Lyndonville, New York.

McAllister

- Curtis, I believe that you were born January 24, 1906 in Waterbury, Connecticut ?
- C Right.
- Mc What was your father's name ?
- C Harry Austin Conner.
- Mc What was your mother's maiden name ?
- C Edna Curtis.
- Mc And, you had no brothers or sisters ?
- C No brothers or sisters.
- Mc I believe that you graduated from high school in Waterbury, Connecticut ?
- C Yes, Crosby High School in Waterbury, Connecticut.
- Mc Why did you leave there and where did to come to, to get you in this area ?
- C Well, I had an uncle by marriage that was Vice-president of the A & P Tea Company, which is the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company. He offered me a position to go into training for a manager of aⁿ A & P Store.
- Mc This was in Buffalo, New York ?
- C In Buffalo, New York.
- Mc What was your uncle's name ?
- C James Green.
- Mc Did you live with your uncle for awhile ?
- C For the first two months that I was here.

- Mc What kind of work did you first do when you went into the A & P Store ?
- C Clerking and then as an apprentice to learn the book work.
- Mc How many were stores were there at that time for the A & P Company in Buffalo ?
- C They had 375 at that time.
- Mc This is just a small kind of family store, not a big supermarket ?
- C Right, just a neighborhood store. No supermarkets in those days.
- Mc When did you leave Buffalo ? Where did you go after that ?
- C Well, I had a store in Kenmore and I moved to Tonawanda. Then I was moved from Kenmore to Albion.
- Mc What year was that ?
- C That was in 1930.
- Mc Following along while talking about your work in the A & P Stores, a lot of things happened between 1925 and 1930; we had a big Depression.
- C Right !
- Mc In October of 1929. What do you remember about that, when it first happened ?
- C Well prices just started to drop, every day ! Every day prices would drop. Like for example: a can of tomatoes would probably sell for 25¢ a can, or 29¢, and it keep dropping three or four cents every day until they got down to a nickel a can. That was the same way with all can goods.
- Mc What about the things that the farmers brought in such as cabbage ?
- C Cabbage was "dirt cheap". The fact is at one time I bought two ton of a farmer in Albion at \$2.00 a ton.
- Mc Did you make money on it ?
- C No, I lost money on it.

- Mc How did you do that? Why ?
- C Because nobody would buy it. I sold it for a cent a pound and nobody wanted it; and they didn't have the money to buy it.
- Mc Did you have money in the bank at the time; did you loose money in that ?
- C I was fortunate in that I didn't have any money in the bank. But there were several people that did have a lot of money in the bank.
- Mc Did this close up any of the A & P Stores in that area ?
- C No. They all keep going for three or four years until they started to build supermarkets and then they closed up a lot of the stores; but not on account of the Depression, On account of changing over to supermarkets.
- Mc Did the A & P Store promote people right along? How did they handle their managers?~~and that sort of thing~~
- C Well, the way they done, we used to get \$32.00 a week and $1\frac{1}{4}$ % of the sales which amounted at that time to around - - - well it all depended on what volume store you had. They run any wheres from \$50.00 to \$75. or \$80.00 a week. Then they closed up these stores and fired the managers, took the clerks out of the stores that was working for \$15.00 a week and made them manager of the supermarkets for \$25.00 a week. Then they come out with the advertisement that they had "during the Depression they had not cut anyone's wages," which was true because they fired them all and promoted the clerks.
- Mc That was pretty hard to take wasn't it ?
- C Well it was, but everybody was in the same boat. Everybody was out of work and you got a job at what ever you could, doing anything. There was no "unemployment" in those days or anything. (No financial help from gov't.)

- Mc Interspersed with all this, back in Buffalo you had found yourself a pretty little lady and gotten married, is that right ?
- C Correct.
- Mc What was your wife's name ?
- C Catherine Routh.
- Mc Did you have children ?
- C Two. A boy and a girl. The boy is named Harry Arthur Conner. He was named after our fathers.
- Mc He married Audrey James and they have two children ?
- C Right, they have two boys. My daughter has two children, a boy and a girl.
- Mc Her name is Marjorie Humphreys.
- Mc This Depression came soon after you were married and so you really had a family to take care of when you were found without a job, is that right ?
- C Yes; but I had been married one or two years before the Depression hit. I think I must have been married in 1927.
- Mc Where were you living when this all hit ? Were you living in Buffalo ?
- C Yes.
- Mc You came to Albion when you were working for the A & P Store though, and you came in about 1930 ?
- C Just about 1930.
- Mc How many A & P Grocery Stores were there in Albion at the time ?
- C Three A & P. *(3 stores)*
- Mc Where were they located ?
- C One on Main Street, and one on Bank Street, and the other was up the hill there by that hotel, The Old Coach. That's up farther on Main Street.
- Mc These were still the small family stores ?
- C Right.
- Mc What kind of clothing would a clerk or manager wear in a store in those days ?

- C A white apron and maybe on Saturday a white coat.
(Laughter)
- Mc Did you have to wear a hat ?
- C No.
- Mc The meat cutter, maybe ?
- C The meat cutters had them, but they didn't wear them.
- Mc How many other clerks would you have had in the store ?
- C I had three and an extra clerk on Saturdays.
- Mc Did you have any farmers bringing eggs in ?
- C Yes. We had quite a few farmers who traded eggs for groceries.
- Mc How did that work ? Did they bring them often, every day ?
- C Oh, no. They'd bring them in once a week on the average; unless they run short of money and then they might bring them in in the middle of the week. (Laughter)
- Mc Suppose someone needed to have something delivered, how did you handle that ?
- C In town I had a delivery boy with a little cart that he pulled around and he delivered to them around town, but nothing outside of the village; they had to get their own.
- Mc Well, the hours were different than they are today.
- C Oh, yeah. We was open at eight o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night, and then on Saturday from eight o'clock until midnight.
- Mc Saturday night was a little bit different then wasn't it ?
- C Yes. (Laughter)
- Mc What was it like, how could you stay open till midnight ?
- C We just had to, that's all.
- Mc Why ? What was going on ?
- C Nothing particular that I can remember, they just come in every once in awhile.
- Mc Saturday night was a big night.
- C Right. The barber shops stayed open. The gin mills stayed open. (Laughter)

- Mc Speaking of gin mills gets us back to law and order a little bit here. Curtis, upstairs over your A & P Store I believe that there were a couple of lawyers.
- C Right, there was. There was other offices up there. Dart Porter, I believe was up there, the insurance agent.
- Mc Who were two of the lawyers ?
- C Burroughs Strickland and Francis Sturgess.
- Mc I believe that Mr. Strickland had a secretary that was Betsy's mother, is that right ? (Betsy = *Lysbeth Hoffman*).
- C Correct. Mary Covell.
- Mc When this Depression hit, you were a manager of an A & P Store, and you said that you didn't have any money in the bank, but you did have some stocks in A & P, is that right ?
- C Correct.
- Mc And that really helped to you survive, didn't it ?
- C When I got laid off from the A & P I had to sell the stocks in order to survive.
- Mc Did you get a profit out of that or not ?
- C Why no, 'cause the stock was way down. I think I sold the whole kibootle there for about \$400.00; but that lasted me all that winter 'till the next spring when I got a job with the Cold Storage in Waterport.
- Mc That winter with only \$400.00 and a family to feed and clothe and all that sort of thing! You had a child at that time, right ?
- C Our child was approximately a year and a half to two years old.
- Mc How did you eat; did the Federal Government help in any way ?
- C Yes, they had what they called the "scrip". They handed out "scrip" and then you got whatever they had in surplus.

Like there was flour, eggs, and bacon. That was about the only things and they handed that out.

Mc Where did you go to get it ?

C At the Town Buildings there in Albion.

Mc Could anybody go and get it ?

C No, you had to be out of work so long and with no money in the bank and then they would take your word for it.

Mc Just one person in the household or the head of the household or what ?

C Yes, that's all.

Mc Nobody really had to starve then ?

C No. No, if you wanted to eat baked bread and have bacon and eggs.

Mc That's pretty good.

C Well, yes. It was better than nothing.

Mc How did you pay your rent that year ?

C We didn't pay it.

Mc What did you do in place of that to help the land-lady ?

C The land-lady, in my case, bought some paint and had me paint our apartment. It was a two family house that we lived in; and I painted some rooms in the other family apartment.

Mc That made up for it, especially at today's prices.

C But those were different.

Mc Unemployment was pretty wide spread.

C Oh yes. It was hard to get a job.

Mc Do you remember who your land-lady was ?

C I can't remember her name. She lived there in Albion.

Mc When the supermarkets came in and the small A & P Stores went out; did the A & P have any competition ?

C Oh yes. They had Loblaws, The Market Basket, Red and White Stores, Flikinger's, they had a lot of competition, same as they have today.

Hoffman

- After you were done at the A & P Store, Curtis, where did you go to work ?
- C I went to work for the Correctional School in Albion. They was at that time building a big addition on, a new boiler house with a 90 foot chimney and they added three or four buildings. I worked at 50¢ an hour, unloading material at the railroad and transporting it up to the school.
- H Was that called The House of Refuge then ?
- C It was.
- H Were the prisoners there, or the inmates, then just women ?
- C All women, all females.
- H It's changed a little bit since then.
- C Yeah. (Laughter) By the way, we wasn't allowed to talk to them or converse with them at all on the grounds. If we ever did we was fired. And they was hollering obscene language out the windows at us all the while.
- H Would you say there were hardened criminals in there then or just Reform School girls ?
- C I would say they were mostly hard-core girls. They was everything.
- H Do you remember what year that was ?
- C That would be 1932 or '33.
- H After you left working at the House of Refuge what job did you go to ?
- C The Waterport Cold Storage.
- H What did you do there ?
- C Labor.
- H How much did you earn a week ?
- C I worked for \$15.00 a week.
- H Who owned the Cold Storage then ?
- C Francis Blake.
- H Would you tell us where you were living about this time ?
- C I lived at the same place where I did in Albion when I was at the A & P.

- This was only for a short while. Then I moved, I think in the summer. I rented a cottage at Lakeside.
- H Would you describe where that was ?
- C Well, it was on the Bluff, I think it was the third or fourth house from around the corner. It was a yellow cottage, I think, at that time.
- H I believe it was. Do you remember who your land-lady was ?
- C Daisy Tills.
- H Now this brings us up to a connection with my family.
- C I wasn't working at that time, in that summer or that winter, and I lived with your grandmother that winter. Her name was Ruth Hey. Her house was next door to the yellow cottage.
- H But what did you call her ?
- C "Whoses".
- H Everybody called her that. (Laughter)
- Mc Why ?
- C I don't know where it ever did come from.
- H Nobody ever told me where it came from. Who was living in that household then ?
- C There was her and her son, William, and a fellow by the name of Roy Drake.
- H That's the house where I live now.
- C Right.
- H There were some interesting things happening in Lakeside at that period of time. Would you like to tell us about Lakeside Park and some of the things that happened over there ?
- C There wasn't too much happened because nobody had any money. There was Art Case who had a "Kit Kat Club" there, which was a form of a "Speak-Easy", and he also run the Roller Skating Rink. They roller skated there all during the summer. In the winter they closed it up.

But then in the fall and in through there, and in the summer, oh, I'd say twice a year, they had a "Smoker".

Mc What's a "Smoker" ?

C (laughter). Well, a "Smoker" is where these strippers came down and put on a little performance for the men. It was an all men audience.

H Well, did they dance for you?

C Oh yeah! They danced and finally ended up by dancing in the nude! (laughter).

H I understand that the music at these "Smokers" were sometimes provided by a four-piece pick-up dance-band with some young men from Medina and Albion. ...

They tell me that the actual site of the Kit Kat Club is under water now. That area would have been washed away by high water in the later years.

C Possibly it is because it was right on the bank, right on the edge. In later years a lot of those cottages and the high banks was washed away.

H There were a lot of high water problems on Lake Ontario.

Were any of the girls, the "Strippers".. were any of them local girls?

C Oh no! They was all from the city.

H How did they get out here?

C They had their own transportation.

H Could you describe Art Case for us ? He was quite a "promoter" wasn't he ?

C Well, all I can describe was that he was about, oh, I would say, about five foot seven and I'd say he weighed 300 pounds.

H That was a big man ! (Laughter)

He had some other businesses down there too, didn't he ? Didn't you say he had a Hot Dog Stand ?

C He did, yes. He had a Hot Dog Stand.

H Who ran that ?

C Art or Al Swartz, Charlie Swartz's brother. Charlie runs the lumber yard now, down here in Lyndonville.

H Now I think the building that was the old Hot Dog Stand might be the site of where Ted Church's cottage now is at Lakeside. I think somebody told me that.

C I wouldn't know.

H Now, all of this Lakeside Park that we are discussing, was on the north side of the Lakeside Bridge.

C Correct.

H I don't know if you know this or not, but that bridge was built in 1894. There's a plaque on it on the north side of the structure.

What did you see as you came across the bridge to know you were in Lakeside Park ?

C There was field stones, white washed, and it spelled out Lakeside Park. These were on the side of the hill as you come in to it from across the bridge.

H You know, I believe those rocks are still there but I think someone has piled dirt over them and of course they are not white anymore.

What are some other things that were up in the Park area ?

C On the creek side, just on the north side of the creek, there was five or six buildings where they used to have, years ago they told me that they had carnivals come down there, like a merry-go-round and things like that. I never

H knew it, they was gone, but the buildings was still there that they housed this stuff in in the winter time. I'm afraid they are now all gone, too.

H What type of boats would have been around Lakeside at that point ?

C There was Chris-Crafts, inboards, and mostly all row boats, sailboats. There was very few outboard motors in those days. There was a few, but not many.

H Didn't you tell me that there was one large inboard motor boat down there that had a pilot with it; or the owner kept a pilot with the boat ?

C Yes. A fellow by the name of Claude Howell had a big boat, and "Duke" Bergeman ran it for Claude.

H When we are talking about Art Case, and Prohibition, and Lakeside, and "Smokers"; that was kind of an area where they brought in "things" from Canada, wasn't it ?

C Yes. There was a lot of beer brought in from Canada. They were the so-called "Rum Runners" from the United States that went over to Canada and got the beer from the breweries and brought it to this side, **I**t was picked up and distributed from there by either horse and wagon, or car or automobiles.

H You can tell us one particular story, can't you, about a boat coming in and not making it out again ?

C Yes. It was one night in October, in the middle of October of 1932, it was on a Friday night. A boat was coming in and they got the wrong signals to where they was supposed to land.

H Tell us the story about how they happened to get the wrong signals.

C Well, the story was that - - - and it was pretty authentic - - - that this fellow was down on Sunset Beach, and he sit there with his girl friend in a car, and it was after dark, and they were doing a little "necking." In those days it was either a Model A or a Model T Ford that most everybody had. There was a

switch on the dash, and it was like a latch, and every time he'd turn to "talk" to his girl friend, he hit the switch with his knee, which gave this boat that was coming in a signal and they thought they was signalling for where they was supposed to land. Well they come in about 200 feet or so west of the mouth of the creek at Lakeside and struck a rock out there in about seven feet of water. Well, I guess it was not even that deep - - about five or six foot, it was right near the surface. Stove a hole in the bow, and they had to unload; so they unloaded. Threw out all the cases of beer. They had 500 cases of beer onboard in quart bottles. They got rid of all that. Then they beached the boat up on the shore. Well, somehow or other, I don't know how it happened, or nobody else seems to know; but the Coast Guard come up from Rochester and took out all the equipment in the boat and left the boat there on shore. They had two reconverted engines, Pierce Arrow engines, converted to marine, The wheel and all the equipment inside, the compass, a marine compass, which later disappeared. (Laughter)

H It didn't disappear too far, did it ?

C Well, no, I guess not ! There's other people around here yet that can tell where it is.

H You might as well tell where it is.

C Well, I guess the wheel was disposed of in an auction, wasn't it ?

H Yes, in about 1971, I think.

C And, the marine compass is still at Lakeside.

H Yes, it sits in my living room in front of the fireplace. (Laughter)

MC Is that the one we have a picture of ? *(see photo of Mr. Conner)*

H Exactly !

C Yeah !

H I guess no one can take it away; the statute of limitations is up, and it was "obtained" before my birth.

C That's right.

H You were with whoever "obtained" the compass weren't you ?

C Not at that particular time because that was later in the week. After the Coast Guard from Rochester took all what they wanted out of there, they didn't bother to try to find out who owned the boat or anything. I don't think they ever did find out because after they beached the boat, they got some paint someplace and painted on there the name of "Sea Fox". And the waves washed up and you could tell it was freshly painted because it was runny where the waves hit it.

H Could you describe the size and the length of the "Sea Fox" and what kind of boat it was ?

C It looked like a reconverted tug, I'd say in the class of about 40 foot long. It was a pretty good size boat. It held 500 cases of beer well.

H Tell us about the beer. You enjoyed some of that, didn't you ?

C Well, Bill Hey and myself went out there Sunday morning, after the Coast Guard had left.

H That's wasn't after church was it ?

C Well, it was during church ! (Laughter) Or a little after !

We put on woolen pants and woolen shirts and dove for the beer and we, oh, I guess that week, - - - we'd get a few bottles at a time - - - but during the week there we accumulated around 150 bottles. Stored it ! (Laughter)

H Now how many bottles did you say you got from diving for it ?

C Around 150 we accumulated. These were all quart bottles. They was from five different breweries. I can't remember the name, outside of one of them was "Black Horse" and the other was "Labatt's", and the others came from three other breweries and I don't remember the names of the other breweries.

H Would you describe how these bottles were packed when

you found them ?

C They were packed in cardboard cases, 12 to a case. Of course when they threw those cases over board the cardboard disintegrated. Some of the bottles came to the top and some stayed at the bottom. It all depended upon what depth of water they was in. Now we found a lot of bottles that was half empty. Had the tops still on them and due to the pressure some how or other it forced the gas out of the beer and then, of course, they was lighter and they rose to the top. Those that we got, the beer was dead, flat, in other words, and it wasn't any good. But there was a lot of them that was all right. Then we couldn't find any more in five or six foot of water and we got so that we was going down in 10 foot of water and the pressure was too much for us to be diving. So Art Case got a couple of divers, hard hat divers, from Kodak in Rochester to come up. They lashed two row boats together and put their equipment in one of them, I think there was a pump, a air pump, telephone, and so on, and their helmets and everything in the other one, and they dove from from the one. But they didn't have very good luck. They hunted all one day and found one case, or 12 bottles. The diver telephoned up that he wanted to come up. Well he'd been down for four or five hours so we brought him up. And they went over to the "Kit Kat Club" and proceeded to drink the 12 bottles, and that was the end of that episode. (Laughter)

H We did clarify the point that this is when beer came in quart bottles, didn't it ?

C Right.

Mc How were they capped ?

C Just the same as a bottle is now.

H They didn't have corks ?

C No. No, just regular clap tops, the same as they are now.

H You have more to tell us about the divers, after they drank up the beer, haven't you ?

C Yes. The helper wanted to try diving. He'd never been down before. So the diver himself explained to him what he should do and everything and took in to the mouth of the creek. Now the mouth of the creek in the center was only about, - - - well, it was about eight foot deep right there in the center. This is right at the mouth of Johnson's Creek just at the entry to the lake. So that episode was all right, so he was going to go out and find some more beer. So they **put** him down, and let him go down, and the regular diver manned the pumps for him and the telephone. He found some and he says: "I see some !" Then he went to reach for the beer; consequently he got his head lower than his feet, and the air bubble that was around his head went to his feet and he was upside down and he couldn't right himself. So all we could do was to drag him in with a rope and the air hose and dragged him in on shore, took his helmet off, and that was the end of that.

H He was all right, he didn't have the bends or anything ?

C Oh yeah, no, no, he didn't go deep enough for that. He was all right. Scared the living hell out of him !

H Well, actually Curtis, you and my father ended up with more of the beer than Art Case did then !

C Yes. Art didn't get any ! The diver only got the 12 bottles and they drank that up that afternoon. So that was the end of that.

H And you and my dad had the 150 bottles to get you through the winter !

C Yes.

H Was there any problem with storing the beer in the attic of my grandmother's cottage ?

C No, no.

H She was kind of strict temperance, wasn't she ?

- C Well, she was, but she didn't say anything about that at all.
- H Boy, you two were lucky !
- C Yeah ! ! I know it ! (Laughter)
- H Nobody would have gotten away with it in later days.
- H At Lakeside at that time there weren't too many families, were there ?
- C I don't recall, in the summertime there might have been, but being it was October there wasn't too many there. I can't recall just how many.
- H Let's back up a little bit. Over in Lakeside Park was there a baseball diamond ?
- C They played softball on weekends there. They had a league.
- H Did you ever play baseball there ?
- C No, I didn't.
- H I have been told that years ago they had what they called famous teams that came down there to play.
- C Well, they did but I don't know how famous they were. They were local teams from around the area. They were just Middleport, or Gasport, and Albion.
- H Other than Lakeside there were some other spots along the lakeshore that were used for "Rum Running" or the drop off points for the "Rum Runners".
- C The only other place that I know of was Winghart's at the end of the Morrison Road. They had a cottage there with a boathouse underneath, that they run the boats right in on a track and pulled them up by pulley. Then they unloaded right out of the boathouse right into automobiles.
- H Then where did they take it from there ?
- C Well, it went several different places. The biggest place that I know of was Niagara Falls.
- H Didn't they use it in their own establishment ?
- C No, I don't think at that time, but he may have. I don't know really.

- Mc What was Winghart's ? Was that a place to go to eat ? This wasn't a private home ?
- C Oh yeah. It was a public place where you could eat and drink.
- H It has most recently been called the Park House. A few weeks ago that establishment burned to the ground.
[It was said that there might have been a tunnel running from this restaurant a mile north to the cottage with the underground boathouse at the lake. Did you know anything about this story ?
- C No, there was no tunnel. It would have been impossible. I'm sure there wasn't.
- H With all that land along the shoreline being such hard, I guess it is called red-horse clay isn't it, you would need a jack-hammer to get through that.
- C Right, you sure would. The story of the tunnel was a myth, more or less, a story somebody just handed down.
- H Any tunnel was just the run-way underneath the boathouse down near the lake, which was about a mile away ?
- C Right. *(See Photo of fire!)*
- H In those days they had "Bathtub Gin". Do you know how it was made ?
- C It was alcohol and juniper berries mixed together. The alcohol was cut to a certain extent and then it was just bottled and sold.
- H Did you have to age that at all ?
- C No.
- H Like if you drank it on a Friday you might have called it "Thursday's Gin" ?
- C Yeah ! *(Laughter)*
- H What did they do about open bars when Prohibition was going on and yet there were bars that were open ?
- C Well, in my time you mostly went in the back door, or in the side door, and of course in the front it was

advertised as soft drinks. But nobody seemed to care because at that time, ~~when~~ Roosevelt in 1932, ~~and~~ they knew that he was going to repeal the Prohibition Act, so they didn't bother them at all.

H Was that the Volstead Act ?

C That's right, the Volstead Act.

H And, it was the 18th Amendment to repeal it.

C They knew he was going to repeal it so they didn't bother anybody.

H How did they know that ?

C Through correspondence and that's what he promised that he was going to do when he was elected for the first time.

H Didn't the police have to enforce the fact that the bars should be closed ?

C No, they turned their heads. If you asked the police about it, they didn't know anything about it.

H Could you name some other bars in Orleans County that were called "Boot-Leg Houses" or "Speak-Easys" ?

C I couldn't begin to, because I can't remember the names, but I know in Albion, the only thing I can tell you about was in Albion, that in every other house where they would sell spaghetti and wine. You could go in and have a spaghetti supper, or you could go in there at any time and buy wine. "Dago Red" they called it, which was a good wine, but it was homemade wine.

H Can't you name some of the particular places.

C There was the "Snake Pit" on the east end of town. But that was a bar, they sold beer there, well, beer and wine and "White Mule". That was another thing they used to make.

H What is "White Mule" ?

C It was just alcohol cut with chemicals that they put into it for taste.

Then there was "The Castle" north of town. It was a big place that set back off from Route #98 and it had, oh, 18 or 20 rooms in it, it was a big house. They had a

bar downstairs and they danced upstairs in different rooms. (Laughter)

H Did they do anything else upstairs, Curtis ?

C All I know is the dancing ! (Laughter)

H The way you were laughing I thought you might be implying it may have been a "red-light" place.

C Oh, no ! We didn't have any such thing in Albion !
(Laughter)

H All through the 30's and the 40's I understand you were quite a fisherman and you fished an area that has kind of disappeared out in Lake Ontario that was called "The Grass Beds".

C Yes. Howard Green owned a farm down along the lake and he had three row boats and we used to rent one of them. There was a "Outer Bed" just north of his land, in Lake Ontario, in 20 foot of water where the grass would come to the top of the water. I dare say there was probably an acre of "Grass Beds" there. Then half way between there and shore there was a "Middle Bed" in about 10 foot of water. Then there was the "Inner Bed" in about four foot of water. And we could catch Perch on all three beds, but on the "Outer Bed" we got these big Jack Perch. Oh, they would weigh a pound or a pound and a half a piece. We also would catch, once in awhile, Yellow Pike and Black Bass on the "Outer Beds", and in the "Middle Beds" too. Oh, we fished there for years. Then one time there was a big storm and after that all three "Grass Beds" disappeared and they never have come back to my knowledge.

H How could you tell when you were over the "Grass Beds" ?
Could you see them from the surface ?

C If it was a calm day in August, the grass would be right on top of the water. Otherwise, we would make marks from shore. We'd line up a silo and, maybe on the other leg of the triangle, a telephone pole and maybe a tree behind it or something like that. So

that you would come to a point out there like that. When we got to that point where we could see the two line up with the other marker, that would give you a triangle out there, and we knew we was over the "Grass Beds".

H That's a good way to figure a spot out on the water. This was north of a area, a swamp like area. What was the word you called the swamp like area that was on the Green Farm ?

C Swale. It was where a small creek, I don't know the name of the creek, come down through there and before it went into the lake it was a kind of a swamp like there, it had cattails growing in it.

H There is a campgrounds down there now.

C Yes. They have dredged it all out so that they've got a marine basin in there now. It's called Green Harbor.

H Were there any limits on the amount of fish you could catch in those days ?

C Just on Black Bass. There was a limit of six. But no limit on Perch or Yellow Pike.

H Somewhere along in the 1930's you were living in Kuckville.

C Right.

H Could you describe any businesses that may have been in Kuckville then ?

C There was a Dry House, at one time, where they dried apples. In later years they processed cherries there. Now just what they done with the cherries, I don't know; whether they canned them or whether they made maraschino cherries, or what it was, I don't remember. Howard Miller was the manager there.

H Were there any stores in Kuckville ?

C One and it was run by John Cann. He had a General Store.

H What would have been sold in country General Store at that time ?

C Well, Old John had everything in there "from a baby's fart to a clap of thunder" !

H That is absolutely adorable. (Laughter) I don't know if I have ever had need for either of those items !

Also in the 1930's and we are going to move you back up into Albion, again, because not only did you live with my father and his mother, but you also lived with my mother's family when you and your family lived in Albion.

C Right. For a short while.

H This was on East State Street ?

C Right.

H Who was living in the household besides you, your wife, and your son, Harry ?

C There was your mother's sister, Gladys Covell, and Billy Covell, who was a younger brother of Mary and Gladys, and Harry Lattin who was a boarder.

H What did the boarder, Harry Lattin, do for a living ?

C He was a car salesman. He sold Chevrolets, I believe for Shelp. At the time I know Shelp had a agency.

H What else did Harry do ? I remember him as doing something else besides selling cars.

C He did drive race horses at Batavia for awhile, once in awhile.

H I really think that was the big thing in his life, because when I was a little girl I can remember him showing me pictures of some of his winners. That would have been driving Harness Race Horses, the kind with a sulky.

C Now, I don't think he was a steady driver over there. He might have been a once in awhile driver and a trainer too.

- H The trainers drove but yet they didn't race.
- C Possibly.
- H We have forgotten to mention the heads of that household who would have been my grandparents.
- C They were Ned Covell and his wife, Bertha.
- H Can you tell me where Ned Covell worked before his death in 1934 ?
- C Right off of Main Street there, there was a place in the back called Kenyon Cab. They built cabs for trucks, mostly custom jobs, for different trucks. They were built out of all wood, which all cabs were in those days.
- H Do you remember what year you and your family moved to Lyndonville ?
- C 1935 or '36, one of those.
- H Your daughter, Marge, wasn't born until you were living in Lyndonville was she ?
- C We was living in Lyndonville at the time she was born.
- H Where did you live then ?
- C We lived on Maple Avenue. I can't give you the number, but it was right next to Langdon's Truck Lines.
- H And you worked for Langdon's Truck Lines ?
- C Right. It was owned by Fred Langdon.
- H What did you do there ?
- C Drove tractor and trailer.
- H What kind of trucks were those at that time ?
- C Brockways, and they had a Mack, Studebakers, and Dodges. I think he had 11 trucks all together. That was quite a few for those days.
- H What sort of things did you haul ?
- C Mostly fruit. Fruit, vinegar, and then we brought back oil from New York for Crosby and Whipple.
- H Did they have refrigeration trucks in the 30's ?
- C Just beginning to. We didn't have any, but the Cold

Storage in Waterport did. They wasn't refrigerated trucks, what they used to refrigerate them was dry ice. We'd put 100 pounds of dry ice in them and that would keep them at six below zero all the way to New York.

H If you were carrying fresh produce you would really have to scoot right along, didn't you ?

C It took us about 20 hours to go to New York.

H Did you have paved roads all the way ?

C Not all the way. A lot of the roads were macadam roads or farm-to-market-roads.

H Could you name some of the other drivers who worked for Langdon Trucking at that time ?

C There was Bill Whitney and Ciff Zanow, "Jinks" Johnson, Everett is his first name, and Russ Johnson, his brother, then there was a fellow by the name of "Curly" Thompson, I can't even remember his first name, but everybody knew him by "Curly".

H How long did you work for Langdon Truck Lines ?

C Five years.

H What position did you go to next ?

C I went to Harrison's. It must have been in 1940, it was just before the war. That was Harrison Radiator in Lockport, New York.

H How long would it take you to get from Lyndonville to Lockport ?

C We used to figure 40 minutes, but we could make it in a little less than that.

H What kind of a car would you have been driving in the early 40's ?

C I started to drive in 1940, a Model A Ford.

H And that could get you from Lyndonville to Lockport in 40 minutes ?

C Yes. They went right along at 55 or 60, and we didn't have the traffic in those days like you've got today.

- H What did you do at Harrison's ?
- C I worked in the Research Engineering Building.
- H How did you learn to be a Research Technician ?
- C I took a correspondence course from the International Correspondence School in Scranton, Pennsylvania.
- H How long were you at Harrison's ?
- C 28 years.
- H That takes us up to 1968.
- C Right.
- H Now at sometime you moved to Garland Street, here in Lyndonville ?
- C Yes, we bought a house down there in 1942. It was at 38 Garland Street. Our daughter, Marge, was about a year and a half when we moved down there.
- H She must have been born in 1940 ?
- C Right.
- H As I remember, in the 1950's, your wife, Catherine, was quite active in various community organizations. Could you name some of the organizations that she was involved with ?
- C The Girl Scouts and the Yates Community Library were the main ones.
- H Could you tell us where the Yates Community Library was located at the times when she was librarian ?
- C It was located right on Main Street, right where the Lyn-D-Lounge is today. Barb Smith runs that.
- H In those days Bill Whitney ran a place right next to there called the Coffee Shop ?
- C Yes, he and his wife ran that.
- H Do you remember any other locations of the Yates Community Library before they went into their new building ?
- C That was the only one that I knew of there, because I helped move the books out of there into the new library.

- C I don't really remember, but it must have been in the late 1960's or very early 1970's. I had retired.
- H When Catherine was in the Girl Scouts, I remember her being a Girl Scout Leader, and in the summertime she would take her group of little girls or Brownies off to camp. Where was that camp located?
- C Archbald at Point Breeze donated the property there for them to have a camp.
- H Do you remember what that was called?
- C Yes. Camp Archbald. And, I can remember at the time there were several Bald Eagles and several nests, and I'd say, oh, there was as many as 25 or 30 that would nest there every summer. They'd build a nest and then they'd add to it the next year. They never destroyed it; they keep adding. There was one nest down there that was probably, oh, I'd say, 15 foot in diameter. I watched them. They used to catch carp out in the lake for food. They'd dive on them and bring them up. They'd catch a carp in their claws that would probably weigh eight or ten pounds.
- H A carp is a big fish!
- C And, they'd lift them up like nothing. Take them up to their nest for their young.
- H I think we should clarify the point that Camp Archbald was not on the Point Breeze side of Oak Orchard Creek; it was on the Oak Orchard side or the west side of the creek.
- C Yes, that's right.
- H Your wife also worked outside the home. Could you tell us the names of the businesses where she worked?
- C She worked at the Smith's Applesauce Factory, also the Shingle Factory, and outside of that she didn't work anyplace else.
- H That sounds like she was a pretty busy lady.
- C Yes, but it was just seasonal work. Except for the Shingle Factory, she worked there steady.

Mc Well, thank you very much for this interesting interview Curtis and Betsy. I think you have contributed a great deal to our historical files.

C You are entirely welcome.

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Transcribed by Lysbeth Hoffman, Lakeside Bluff,
Waterport, New York.

Edited with minor changes by Helen McAllister, of
Medina, New York.



Curtis Conner and Lysbeth Hoffman

(see page 13)

Prohibition, of course, may not be the answer. Most people would say that Prohibition was a failure when it was tried between 1920 and 1933. If it failed, one of the reasons was that Prohibition laws were hard to enforce.

It was illegal, for instance, to sell fermented alcohol. But nothing was said about selling grape juice that might ferment after it stayed in the cellar awhile.

This is where "wine bricks" entered the picture. Wine bricks were a grape concentrate in solid form, about the size of a pound of butter. They came in several flavors — sherry, muscatel, claret and others.

The secret was to let the bricks dissolve in a gallon of water, add sugar and shake the mixture every day. In three weeks you had wine with a 15 percent alcoholic content.

But to put these directions on the package would be illegal under the provisions of the Volstead Law.

So the makers of the wine bricks printed a list of instructions which said: "Do NOT dissolve this brick in a gallon of water, add sugar and shake daily for three weeks. To do so would give you wine with 15 percent alcoholic content."

J-R

3-26-1981



Firemen find saving the "one-time Winghart speakeasy" an impossible job.

-(Volkosh Photo)

THE YATES COMMUNITY LIBRARY
Lyndonville, New York

The library had its beginnings at an organizational meeting held on January 19, 1950. A State Provisional Charter was granted early the following year and plans were made for the growth of the library.

The library started in 1950 with about 900 volumes, and by November had increased the number to 1100 volumes. Additional shelves were built and installed.

When the library first organized, it was located in the building on Main Street now occupied by the Village Clerk's office. It moved into the Masonic Building some time later, remaining upstairs there until June of 1959 when it moved across the street to its present location.

Until 1954 the library was served by volunteer workers with Miss Jeannette McAdam of Brockport as acting librarian. In 1954 it was learned that in libraries serving an area of under 5,000 persons, a qualified librarian is not required; and about that time Mrs. Duane Kenyon took charge of the library. She was followed in 1956 by Mrs. Curtis Conner, and in 1957 Mrs. Kenneth Fraser, Jr. became librarian.

When the library moved in 1959 it also acquired a new librarian, Mrs. Harols McCargar. She remained here until August 15, 1960 when the present librarian Mrs. William, III took her place.

The library has made great strides in the 17 years since its inception, and advance has been especially noticeable within the last several years since the library has been in larger quarters. Circulation has risen from just below 3,000 books in 1957 to over 12,000 books in 1966. Book stock has now grown to include over 5,500 titles. More than 500 people are now registered borrowers.

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The above information was copied from a paper in the files of the Orleans County Historian.

(by Helen McAllister, Medina) 1981