



Orleans County Historical

Association

Table of Contents : ETHEL H. HELMKAMP Interview

SUBJECTS

- * Fancy Dress Ball, Medina Armory
customs, clothing worn,
Moll's Orchestra/Dr. Wells Orch.
Pixley's/Reynold's Livery
- * undertaking business
Hartt & Hill
Holdridge, Hartt & Hill
H. LeBaron Hartt Company
clothing worn by undertaker
burial on private property
Pearl Street funeral home
schools: Medina, Albright Art
- * Bent's Opera House
-theatrical performances,
professional & amateur
Robert Charles Dry Goods Store
The Plaid Front Grocery Store
Holdridge Skating Rink
Camp Nundawaga
Rotary Club
Y.M.C.A.
Handel Choral Society
Girl Scouts begun in Medina
transportation:
trolley car
canal boat trips
tandem bicycle
- County Fair, Albion *Owned on boat*
- Olcott, Lakeside, Elm Park
Shadigee Skating Rink
Wheelman's Rest
canal workmen
First Baptist Church, Medina
Fannie Fisher's Board-Room House
Belle Stanley
Fred Flagg's Gas Station
Medina Dairy
- hobbies: collecting stones, music,
dramatics, monologues, painting
holiday customs
Albion Sesquicentennial Boat Parade

NAMES

Lottie M. Kendall, mother Henry LeBaron Hartt, father Francis Addison Hartt, sister Albert Bohle Helmkamp, husband

- Ernest I. Hill
- Dan D. Holdridge
- David Barnes
- Albert Swett
- Marian Swett, Raymond Swett
- Marjorie Falcnor Johnston
- Pearl Eddy
- Adah Olds
- Jessie Breitbeck
- Mrs. Elizabeth (Don) MacDonald
- Tom Hickey, Harvey Moore
- John P. Kennedy & Sons
- teachers:
- Hood, Posson, Whittleton,
Ryan, Newnham, Rugg, Boyce,
Mosher, VanEtten, Ferger
- Mabel S. Hobbs
- Miss Brainard, seamstress
- Charlie Hood
- Clark French
- Harry T. Krompart
- Helen Curtis, Lyndonville
- Cedric & Herbert Dygert
- John Q. Dresser & Charlie Hurd
- Godfrey Stork & Betty Clarke
- Allie Chase & Nat Newell
- Marjory Card
- Mrs. Charles Mack
- John Schuyler, laid sidewalks
- Mrs. John Schuyler
- Virgil Parker & Bill Beitz
- Christine Kenyon
- Carl & Watson Barry
- Kim Clemons & father

1889-



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mrs. Ethel Hartt Helmkamp
614 Ann Street
Medina, New York

Mrs. Helmkamp was born March 6, 1889.

At the time of the following interviews, she was 90 years.

The homestead on 614 Ann Street was purchased in c. 1903.

H = Mrs. Helmkamp
Q = Dorothy Corlis
and/or
Helen McAllister





Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Edna M. Helmskamp
Signed

June 7, 1979 *June 26, '79*
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Lorothy B. Carlin
Helen M. McAllister
INTERVIEWER

June 7, 1979 *June 26, '79*
Date



Homestead
614 Ann Street
Medina



H. LeBaron HARTT



Ethel Hartt Helmkamp
Rock Collector

Q Mrs. Helmkamp will you please tell us about your family?

H I'd be glad to. My mother, Lottie M. Kendall, was the daughter of John Kendall of Stratford, Ontario, who was an official of the Grand Trunk Railroad. My mother had a beautiful contralto voice and was a concert singer. Do you want the places where she sang? There were just a few of them.

Q That would be nice.

H Goderich, Brantford, Stratford, Clinton, Ontario. My mother was a very civic minded woman too. She was blind the last years of her life and she conducted all of her civic minded business by telephone. I really think she was a wonderful person.

My father, Henry LeBaron Hartt, was the son of Charles Addison Hartt, a judge of Huron County, Canada. (A judge is a barrister in Canada). My father's mother, Eliza Taylor, was the daughter of Sir William Taylor, one of the first Premiers of New Brunswick. I visited up in New Brunswick and went to the museum there and saw some artifacts that had belonged to my family.

We used to take Sunday walks. (I'm interested in the clothes that we wore in those days. I think perhaps that is why I was remembering this). I remember that we always took these Sunday walks and my father always wore a morning-coat, and a silk hat. And he always carried a silver-headed-cane. It was not to help him walk. It was to swing!! I think he was a "gay blade"! (laughter)

Q Did he wear spats?

H I don't remember his wearing spats. Maybe he did. They did wear them in those days.

Q How about a vest, and a pocket-watch?

H Oh yes. Oh yes indeed! He wore a vest and a pocket-watch with a big gold chain across his chest.

Q What was your father like? What was his build?

H He was six feet tall, he was pretty heavy, and he was a jolly man. People loved him because he was friendly with everybody. I think that's why he made a good undertaker. He could be a great comfort to the people.

I had one sister, Francis Addison Hartt, two years younger than I. She had our mother's lovely voice. She belonged to several singing groups. The best known was the Handel Choral Society,

under the direction of Mrs. Elizabeth MacDonald, wife of Doctor Donald MacDonald.

Q You had a "pet name" for your sister, right?

H I always called her "Ad". I think I'm the only person who called her "Ad". Everybody else called her Addis. She was named after my grandfather. He always felt badly that none of his sons were named after him and so my father named my sister after him. And everybody wants to know: what a funny name for a girl!

Q I think that you told me that your sister taught Homemaking?

H My sister graduated from Brockport Normal School. She graduated from Mechanics Institute, now R.I.T., in Rochester. She taught Home Economics for a couple of years in Hammondsport and then she came up here to Medina and taught here. People were meeting me on the street and saying, "Oh, I know your sister. I went to school to her". And they were as old looking as she! (laughter).

Q Did your sister teach here for quite some time?

H Several years. My sister Addis was also instrumental in starting the Girl Scouts here. I remember one time this last year, just before she died, that they were having a 50th anniversary (celebration) and she couldn't go to the dinner. The girls sent her a Girl Scout candle and wanted her to light that candle at the same time when they were lighting theirs. Just a little ceremony.

Q Am I correct in remembering that there were Boy Scouts here (in Medina) for years, but no Girl Scouts?

H There were Boy Scouts but no Girl Scouts, and it really was quite a thing when the Girl Scouts were organized here.

Q How did you happen to come from Ontario, Canada to Medina, N.Y.?

H We came to Medina from Clinton, Ontario in 1895. I was born in 1889.

Q How old were you when your father made this decision?

H About five. My father knew Mr. Robert Charles who owned a Dry Goods Store, and had offered him a job. My father had a wife and two children and he needed a job. That's how we happened to get here. At first my father was connected with the Robert Charles Dry Goods Store at 513 Main Street and was there from 1895 to 1899. Later, he bought a grocery store, which was for sale, next door at 515 Main Street. He was in that business from 1899 to 1903. He painted the front of the grocery store black and white. It was called the

Plaid Front Grocery. It was nothing like the Super-Duper Markets are today. There was a cracker barrel around which people could sit and talk, there were kegs of dill pickles, there was a cat to keep the mice away, and the cat ate beef kidneys. I remember that cat sitting on a little bench all his own and having his beef kidneys cut up for him. He spent his life in that store.

Q Did people sometimes bring in crocks of butter or eggs for trade?

H I don't remember whether my father traded them or not. I do know that he had crocks of butter for sale, so probably there was a reciprocity there somehow or other. I really don't remember.

Q Were there quite a few small grocery stores or meat markets around, or were they all under one roof?

H None of them were under one roof. They were little individual self-owned grocery and meat markets.

Q Do you have any idea how many people your father had working for him?

H About three. I really don't remember too much more about it. I wasn't particularly interested.

Q After 1903 what happened?

H My father turned to the line in which he was engaged for the next thirty years: furniture and undertaking.

Q How was the business conducted?

H In those days, there were no facilities for rent. He had to have all of his own tools and vehicles: the hearse, the truck, the chairs; everything that one uses at a funeral. He also thought he had to have an ambulance because there was none in town. So he built, in back of our yard (clear across the back of it), an eight stall garage for all of these purposes. It was a two story garage so that on the second floor they could keep the caskets. There was a hole in the floor so that the casket could be let down by a pulley. There were other things that were kept up there too: the catafalque and urns, and things like that. There was a stairway, but they were raised by hoist. In those days, too, embalming was done in the homes. The men who did the embalming, the undertakers, were often given breakfast if a death occurred at night. Funerals were held in the homes also, and there was always a crepe hung on the door of homes where a death occurred; a black crepe. Later, a wreath or a spray of flowers was used.

At first he did business with a friend of his, Ernest I. Hill and they called the business Hartt and Hill. Then they combined with Dan D. Holdridge as Holdridge, Hartt and Hill at 421 Main Street. That was in existence from 1913 to 1925 when Mr. Holdridge died. From 1925 until his death in 1933, the business was carried on as The H. LeBaron Hartt Company.

I forgot to say that David Barnes, who was a former secretary of the YMCA here, had come into the business with my father just as an associate for awhile. After several years, he became a full partner. When my father died in 1933, Dave Barnes carried on the business for my sister and me.

Q At what time did they buy the funeral home? When the customs changed?

H My father had nothing to do with the funeral home. Addis and I, and Dave Barnes bought that. Of course they had it fixed over for the convenience of the funerals. They took all the caskets down there. They are stored down there. The chairs are stored down there. They have the embalming room down there. They have a "slumber room" where the body rests until they are ready to show it. When David Barnes retired from the furniture business in the 50's, he took over the funeral business and bought, from Addis and me, our shares of the funeral home on Pearl Street. Tom Hickey and Harvey Moore bought the furniture business from Dave, Addis and me. Addis and I still owned the building at 421 Main Street, which the new tenants eventually bought. That is, Tom Hickey and Harvey Moore. They subsequently sold it to John Kennedy and Sons, the present owners.

The funeral home was a lovely home. It was the home of Albert Swett, the iron man, the electricity man. It was a beautiful home. The hardwood floors were matched, parquet floors and there were lovely chandeliers and leaded glass windows. The place was so beautiful!

My father, as the conductor of the funeral, wore a cut-a-way coat and grey pants and grey gloves and a top-hat.. And I think that was very good looking and appropriate.

Q Furniture and undertaking seemed to go together in by-gone days. Do you suppose that's because large trucks were needed to transport furniture, and you had to have large floor space. And, were caskets often placed on the third floor (for storage)?

H Well, that could be. To tell the truth I really don't know. I imagine it could be that funeral business wasn't the money-making business it is today. A person in those days couldn't make a living with one interest, one business.

There is an interesting thing that happened while my father was in the business. The Smith's from Lyndonville, from Robin Hill (Estate), Lyndonville lost a lovely young daughter. They wanted to bury her on their own private property, which by the way is like a park. There was a law against burying bodies on private property, and my father had to go through any number of officials to get permission for them to do so. He finally got permission and the little girl was buried on their lot in a lovely setting which is open to the public if they want to go and look at it. It's a beautiful place to visit. A nice, quiet place.

I don't think we ought to end on a sad note either. My father was not only the friendly, sympathetic man in his business, but he also was a jolly, happy-go-lucky sort of person at home. We had good times. I remember so many of our Christmases and New Years! We used to go out into the highways and bi-ways and bring in the loners. There were a lot of lonely people in those days too. We had the traditional food, I guess. We always had turkey on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and goose on New Year's Day. There always were just as many people around on all of the days. I do remember that my father never failed to bring home gifts for everybody. He was a happy, generous man and the gifts really were quite nice.

My mother was a beautiful hostess too. She was blind the later years of her life, but when she was young she was a beautiful woman and a beautiful hostess. We always of course, in those days, had linen on the table. Never paper cloths or paper napkins the way we do today.

Q At Christmas time, did you have a real Christmas tree, large or small?

H We had a real one. It wasn't really a large one. We had real candles in all of the windows. Now I am using electric ones, but we used to have real candles in the windows, which was probably a hazard but they were pretty!

Q As a child, you went to school in Medina. Do you remember some of your teachers?

H I can remember two or three of them. I started in the first grade

of course, and Miss Hood was the teacher. Miss Posson was a second grade teacher. I don't remember the third. There was Katie L. Ryan, Margaret and Francis Whittleton, and Cora J. Newnham. That was up to the 8th grade. In high school I had Grace Rugg for German and Marjorie Boyce for science. And who was the Latin teacher, Miss Allis? Mr. Mosher was our principal and taught math. Mr. VanEtten was the Superintendent of schools at that time. That's about all I remember about that. I hadn't thought about them in years! We used to march to classes. Marjory Card and I used to play the piano for this. (Graduated in 1908; about nine in the class).

Teaching young ladies to sew used to be the fashion when we were children. There were two sisters in Medina, named Feger. They had a brother who was a priest of a parish in Buffalo. The sisters lived at 608 Gwinn Street and they taught young ladies to "sew a fine seam". My sister Addis and I used to go to them once a week, on a Saturday usually, and learn the rudiments of sewing.

Q What would you sew? Did you make your own clothes?

H It never went as far as that. No, we didn't do fancy work but it was fancy sewing. It was nice sewing. We'd do a little hem-stitching some times, make a nice seam, take small stitches, and back-stitch, if you know what that is. We learned to do that kind of hand sewing that you could really use for machine work if you wanted to. There were quite a few others learning to sew but I've forgotten their names. It was almost a private lesson. Addis and I would go together. There would be a couple of people at a time, but never a class.

After high school, I went to Albright's Art Gallery in Buffalo. That was a school at that time. (It's not, any more). There were quite a few people from here who went up there. We used to go by trolley. I used to spend the week up there and come home on weekends. The trolley stopped at the end of Ann Street, so it wasn't hard to get home. I must say, I didn't enjoy it very much. I used to paint. I thought I was pretty good. I used to do water colors, and I went up there and they put me in what they called "Antiques", a place where there were just old statues. We were supposed to do the statues in charcoal, with the point of a charcoal pencil that took forever to do! I was bored to tears and I only went two years. After that I studied dramatics. That was my favorite and I just

loved it.

Q You were putting on plays in Medina when you met your husband?

H Yes. I had studied quite a lot under Mrs. Mabel Hobbs. She taught me how to do everything there was to do about the theater. She taught me how to do lights, make-up, and all that kind of stuff and I really enjoyed her. She gave me lessons in monologues. I was a monologist for years. I used to read for the hospitals and the Home for the Aged down in Elmira. I put on all the plays for my husband's school in Pittsford, New York and I was a pretty good monologist too.

Q I've heard that you were. Do you remember the play that your husband was the leading man in, when you first met?

H Yes, I do. It was "Butterflies".

Q Did he perform in some other plays?

H Yes, quite a few of the ones that they had at Christmas time, when the kids came home from college. That was before we were married.

Q Were you married at home or in a church?

H We were married here at home.

Q Did you wear a long, white dress, and a veil?

H Yes. I wish I could tell you who made my dress because she was one of the people who was making all the wedding dresses at that time. Brainard! That's it. I can't remember all of her name; isn't that awful? But I do remember that Clark French's wedding present to me was that he came and decorated the house with flowers. I thought that was a beautiful thing to do. Then, right after the wedding, we went to Avon-on-the-Sea for our wedding trip. That's down near Asbury Park, on the Jersey coast.

Q Mrs. Helmkamp, would you tell us a little bit more about your husband?

H My husband was Albert Bohle Helmkamp of Rochester, New York. (Bohle is a family sir name). He was a serious student and educator. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa, second highest in his class, from the University of Rochester. He earned his Masters Degree and Doctorate, highest in his class, from Columbia University in New York City. He came to Medina in 1911, right out of college. He taught History and English and stayed in Medina until 1914. During that time, he became acquainted and a friend of Raymond Swett. The two of them wanted to play tennis and there were no tennis courts in town.

There was an empty space on the hospital grounds so they got permission from the hospital authorities to build a couple of tennis courts up there. And with their own two hands they built these tennis courts. They were there for a number of years. They were just plain dirt courts but they made a nice place for other people besides Albert and Raymond.

After we were married, we moved to Pittsford, New York, which is a suburb of Rochester. A lovely little old town. He became Principal there and we were there for 19 years. That was when we went to Columbia (University) and he got his degrees. Then we came back to Elmira, New York which is in the southerntier of New York State. Everybody knew Elmira College and they all knew the Reformatory! That was the thing that Elmira was noted for!

Q Then you set up housekeeping in Pittsford?

H Yes, we did.

Q And that's where your husband was an Administrator (of schools)?

H That's right.

Q And did you put on school plays for him?

H Yes, I did. (chuckles).

Q You put on a great many school plays; and you continued to put on plays when you moved to Elmira?

H Yes, I'm afraid I've been doing it all my life, practically.

Q And giving monologues?

H Yes. I used to entertain for the hospitals and for the Veteran's Society, and for the Home for the Aged. I think I was asked to be on the Board for the Home for the Aged because I could read for them.

Q Well, they enjoyed any treat like that.

H Well, they did. They had nothing else to do.

Q You even came back to Medina sometimes and entertained?

H I came back to Medina several times to give programs for the Tuesday Club. Marian Swett was the one who got me to come several times for their Guest Nights, and it was always kind of fun. I remember one time I brought a group of people with me for a little operetta. We gave that program up in the Alert Rooms. (That was in the Cook Building).

Q ... where the Elk Rooms were, in the Cook Building. Before that, was the Alert Club (and rooms).

Q Can you tell us about Bent's Opera House?

H I can tell you about Bent's Opera House because we loved it. It was one of the big things in our lives. It was in that stone building where the Liberty Bank now stands, on the corner of Main and West Center Street. The entrance was on West Center, a wide stairway going up three flights. The Opera House was on the third floor. The Odd Fellows (organization) used the second floor. It was a typical 1900's show house, playhouse with painted scenery, drop curtains, wings, flies, proscenium arch. Everything like the old playhouses used to have. Charlie Hood was the promotor. He loved dramatics and he had a flair for them. It was through his efforts that Medina had many years of pretty good theater. Plays like "East Lynn", "Uncle Tom's Cabin", "Way Down East", "The Fatal Necklace", and Minstrel Shows. And Charlie Hood was right there in his Mark Twain outfit.

Q I can remember the flowing tie that he wore!

H Yeah! The flowing tie. There were several kinds of shows there. The Odd Fellows promoted theatrical performances too. They hired professional companies to come in, bring their own staff, their costumes and scenery, and use the local amateur talent for the cast. And you know, they were kind of pretty too because the costumes were more beautiful than anything! More beautiful than any homemade costume would be. They were made of gold lame and silver lame. They were really very handsome, and they were pretty good shows. They were mostly variety shows. Then there were the really Home Talent Shows, on the order of TOPA (Theater of Performing Arts), or Little Theater. Once a year for several years Harry T. Krompart would put on an opera like Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pinafore", "The Mikado", "The Pirates of Penzance", and "The Co-Eds of Glenwood". This really was fun and everybody was in them. We had some pretty good talent too: Helen Curtis from Lyndonville was the soprano star. Cedric Dygert, John Q. Dresser, Charlie Hurd, Godfrey Stork, and Betty Clarke. They were the regulars. The rest of us were the "sisters, cousins, the aunts, and the pirates." Allie Chase and Nat Newell were the accompanists, and Doctor William Wells orchestra... at Bent's Opera House.

Q Cedric Dygert was brother to the man who was Town of Ridgeway Clerk: Herbert Dygert. Right?

H He was a brother, and he was handsome! You'd be surprised how

handsome he was! And Charlie Hurd was handsome! They were handsome leading men, both of them.

Q I knew Charlie Hurd in his old age. He was like a grandfather to me. I lived next door to him.

H Well, they were good looking leading men. This was around 1907 to 1914. How long before that, I don't remember. After the movies began to crowd out the live talent, Bent's Opera House became a Bingo Parlor and that lasted through the '50s and the '60s. I've always been grateful that my father finally relented and took us kids to see "Uncle Tom's Cabin". He was very strict and he was not going to let us see "Uncle Tom's Cabin"! To him the theater was the invention of the Devil. But we teased to go, and I remember the soul searching over "Uncle Tom's Cabin". My parents had read Harriet Beecher Stowe, and could anything that Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote be bad?? So, they relented and we went. And that was the entering wedge. I was hooked!! After that there was nothing but dramatics for me. One night at the Opera House, we were rehearsing for one of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas. It was the night that Halley's comet was going to be visible and we all went up on the roof to watch Halley's comet. (1910) That really was something. It's the last thing I remembered about Bent's Opera House.

Q Did that have a slanting floor?

H No it didn't, and I don't know how people really saw because it didn't slant.

Q Were there gas foot-lights?

H Yeah, gas foot-lights.

Q Where were the first movie places in Medina?

H One of them was down on East Center Street, near Corky's Bakery. The first movie that I saw down there was Scott's "Lady of the Lake". They used to have some pretty good shows in those days. A little better than they do today.

It seemed to me that my mother and Mrs. Charles Mack were always heading up some project to earn money for the YMCA and the Scouts. An annual event during the years 1908 to 1912 was the Flower Carnival in the summer, and a Home Talent play during the Christmas holidays. That was every year! The Flower Carnival was held on the high school campus. There were booths erected for the display of flowers, and prizes given. There were booths erected

for snacks and crafts and other salables. There was always a platform built for a one act play on the last night. Mrs. Mabel Scheiner Hobbs, a dramatic teacher from Briar Cliff Manor who spent her summer vacations with her mother Mrs. John Schuyler, coached these one act plays. (Mr. Schuyler is the man who laid all of the flagstone sidewalks in Medina, and most of the later cement ones). These women also handled the YMCA baked-bean suppers and we girls got to wait on table.

Then there were the annual plays . Those were for raising money too, and Mrs. Hobbs was the director of these plays. They were three-act plays and were really something like TOPA, or something like the Little Theater.

Q Where were these plays held?

H They were held in the Delmar Theater (later known as the Diana Theater; still later as the Four Fathoms). There was really a more or less resident cast. There was Virgil Parker, Bill Beitz, Cedric Dygert, Christine Kenyon and I. We were the regulars. There were always others to fill in. I remember I was thrilled one time because a traveling show watched our dress rehearsal and they asked me to join their tour! They even came up to ask my parents if I could go with them! And years later, I was also asked to join a Chatauqua team, and that really was bona fide. I'm not sure this other was. I think it was anyway. I often wonder what my life would have been like if I'd joined them. I don't think as satisfying as it's been so far anyway. But it was a thrill to be asked!

Q That gym on Park Avenue that S. A. Cook built was turned into the Park Theater 'cause I went there to the movies when I was a child.

H Where was that?

Q Back of the Cook building (Main Street). S. A. Cook built a gymnasium and that became the Park Theater later on. After the school had their own gym I guess they didn't need it for a gym any more. But years ago I can remember the kids walking by with their sneakers, on the way to the gym where the Park Theater was, and that became a theater and there were two theaters. There was that (Park) and the Diana. It was called the Allen Theater. Sydney Allen ran it.

H Yes that's right. There used to be a skating rink in there too. Mr. Holdridge had a skating rink...

- Q That's what I was wondering, if that wasn't what later became the Park Avenue Garage... and then that burned, I would say 25 years ago. But I think before it was the Park Avenue Garage that could have been Mr. Holdridge's Skating Rink.
- H Yeah, I think perhaps it was.
- Q ... When Dave Barnes first came to Medina as the first secretary of the YMCA, where was that located; on Main Street?
- H On Main Street across from the Journal (newspaper) building, upstairs. That's where they held their suppers and had their meetings. Did I say anything about the bean suppers, and that we waited on table?
- Q Yes. Then later on, I don't know who all the secretaries were, but there was a man named Richardson who was a secretary after Dave Barnes was in full time business with your father.
- H That's right.
- Q There was a Mr. Richardson, and the last one of all was a man named A. V. Chamberlain. I remember them because they were directors at the times I went to the camp sponsored by the Y, down on Lake Ontario, near Barker: Camp Nundawaga.
- H Yes. I don't remember the man, but I do remember that camp. I'd been down there because my husband was down there with them. He was a councillor down there for awhile. It was a nice camp.
- Q It was a lovely camp! Some of the ladies from town would go down in the strawberry season and make jam to be used later on.
- H That's right. I'd forgotten that.
- Q When I went there, Mrs. Teal (who was the farmer's wife, and I think she was the mother of that Dennis that was here for awhile, Norman Teal) was the chief cook at the time that I went down there. Then the Depression came along. That's why they no longer sponsored that Y. But Mr. Chamberlain was the last Director.... Instead of tents, first they had platforms and then tents. In place of the tents they began building little, what they called "bunk houses". They had a roof and a platform, and the walls came up about waist high. And they could put canvas flaps down to protect it from the weather, or at night. The Rotary Club used to give a day a year and go down and build one (little house). They were getting four or five more by the time the camp closed; getting quite nice facilities. The Depression ended their sponsoring a Y, and for a

few years they rented the camp out to other organizations. Some college sorority, I think, ran the camp for awhile. Then they ran into some problem about the sewage and I think the camp was sold back to the farm that it had belonged with. Anyway, it's no longer in existence.

When you were in high school, Mrs. Helmkamp, I suppose you were in a lot of events at the Armory? They had basket ball games, didn't they?

H They had basket ball games. The Armory was one of our delightful places to go. They had more things going on over there! I think we went to everything that ever happened. We went to all the drills, and the band concerts, and the dances of course. The Armory really played a large part in our social life here.

Q We are hoping that it will again now that the community has taken it over. It sounds as though it's going back, like it was when you were younger.

H After some of the drills and the basket ball games, there was music for dancing too. We used to sit up in the balcony, and then come down and dance. But the really gala affairs were the Armory Balls! Perhaps, now that the community has taken over the management of that beautiful sandstone building, it will again resume its rightful place in the community. Of course, it will never be the same type of facility it was before. The teens and twenties were a different era. There were always several dances during the year, but the students coming home from college for their Easter vacation and their Christmas vacation, started the social season.

The women all wore long dresses, and the men all wore tuxedos in those days. They didn't dress the way they do today. I understand that there's getting to be a "disco" costume. I've seen people either knitting or crocheting these scarves that kind of tie around their necks. They are called "disco scarves". But I've never seen anything but (blue) jeans in the pictures. (laughs). Anyway, we used to dress up. We all wore long dresses, and the women wore long elbow or shoulder length white, kid gloves.

Q With the little buttons all the way up!

H With the little buttons all the way up. And we had a tiny silver button-hook to fasten them too. I still have one.

Q You carried that in your reticule?

H Yes I did. You know, most people don't know what "reticule" means. I'm so surprised that nobody does. We don't know the word anymore but "reticule" is a tiny little bag to carry your keys, if you carry them. You never carried lipstick in those days, but you did carry your handkerchief, and a button-hook.

The men usually called ahead of time to ask us the color of our gowns so that their corsages wouldn't clash. (By the way, the telephones were hung on the wall. You rang a bell to get "Central", the operator). We almost always walked to the Armory. There weren't many cars around in those days. On an inclement night, Pixley's or Reynold's Livery would furnish a cab. We might have to double up four or five or six to a cab. Possibly on a really bad night, we might have to wait 20 or 30 minutes because there weren't too many cabs available either.

When we arrived at the Armory, I remember our escorts scurrying around, exchanging dances and filling our dance programs. They would reserve the first and last dances, and two intermission dances for themselves. The orchestra was on a bandstand in the center of the floor. (Moll's was the favorite, and Dr. Well's orchestra was an alternate). The first number was always the Grand March!

The intermission and refreshments were served in the basement, although in later years I understand they served them on the main floor. It always seemed to me that the serving of the ice cream and cake never quite matched the "style" of the rest of the evening. Here we were, all dressed up, and then we'd go down in the basement and sit in a row (chuckles). In the basement there were two rows of chairs along the side walls of that huge room, and two rows down the middle, back to back. I remember, one evening, a guest with an artistic flair sketched pictures of the row of feet of the people across from him that were facing him. It was a fascinating, original study of a row of detached feet. I've always wished we had preserved that picture!

The gallery was always full of parents, friends and guests. The floor was always full to capacity of participants in the dance. And the floor was always full! It didn't matter when. There was always a crowd.

Those days are gone now and it seems a little sad. However, with the dedicated Community Action Committee guiding the Armory's

progress over these next years, I am sure it will serve a much broader purpose than it ever did. My wishes go with them.

Q You said that you often walked to the Armory Ball and that you used to carry your dancing slippers in some kind of a bag?

H Just a home-made velvet bag.

Q And you'd leave that with your coat? But you carried a fan and your reticule?

H Yeah, wore a corsage and long gloves. Doesn't sound much like what we do today, does it?

Q When you were a child did they have the County Fair in Albion?

H If you want to hear about the County Fair, I'll have to tell you about the canal. We used always to go to the County Fair. Sometimes we'd go by horse and buggy, sometimes on a truck. You didn't call them trucks in those days; hay-rides! And sometimes by canal boat. Of course that was the most fun because we didn't come back until midnight. And we danced on the boat!

Q Where did you get on the boat? Would it be down back of your father's store?

H It must have been down in back of my father's store because that's the only place there is to get on the boat.

Q And it left you off quite near the fairgrounds?

H Yes, right there on the Main Street really. I don't know how we got to the fairgrounds. We probably walked. I don't really remember much of anything else except that we danced on the boat coming home. (laughs).

Q When you went in the horse and buggy, did you go for all day, and take your picnic lunch?

H Yes, we always took a picnic lunch. We went for all day and usually there was a crowd of us. We didn't go with our parents. For some reason or other we went with the kids. It was a lot more fun! The boat to the Albion Fair was a replica of an old Mississippi River Boat, with a dance floor and entertainment. It was a double decker and had a canopy.

As young people, we used to go to Olcott. We used to go to Lakeside because there were dance halls there and roller-skating rinks, and a Little Theater; a rustic theater. We went to all those places.

Q It was quite a trip to Olcott, wasn't it?

H It was quite a trip, but we went by trolley. And those two hotels, the one at Olcott and the one at Lakeside, were beautiful hotels! The one at Lakeside had porches all the way around, all covered with vines. The one at Olcott had porches all the way around too and it was built way out over the water. We used to dance on the porches at Olcott. We used to dance on the floor at Lakeside. There were always dances there, and we went to them. We used to drive by horse and buggy to Lakeside.... That was about 16 miles. Shadigee is about ten miles from here, and there was a skating rink at Shadigee. We had a cottage at Lakeside and my father used to come down every weekend. He used to ride a bicycle.

One time we just wanted to go down, off-season, and he and I went down on a tandem bicycle. I think he did most of the pumping probably. We stopped at a place called Wheelman's Rest. Do you know anything about Wheelman's Rest? That was Marjorie Falcnor Johnston's home. We stopped there and they always had cookies and milk for bicyclers. That little Wheelman's Rest (with a little summer house) was on a high bluff on the banks of Oak Orchard Creek.

You have asked me about Elm Park. Well, it was ^{at} Oak Orchard Creek just the same as Wheelman's Rest. It was a private park, owned by a man who allowed us to go in there and swim. And he had boats. I think he charged a little something to get in. There were boats there that you could ride. He had a merry-go-round, and Sunday-School-picnics went there almost every year.

Q I remember that was a different kind of merry-go-round. It went out over the water! We sat in these chairs!

H Yes, you went over the water, in chairs.

Q How was that propelled, by water power?

H No, it wasn't. It was, I think, by man-power.

Q I think you're right. Anyway I remember that was fun to go out over the water. I only went there after it was revived.

H Let's see, that would have been back of Ann Richards, on route 63.

Q ... When you were growing up, they built the Barge Canal?

H They were building the New York State Barge Canal, that's right. Along about 1900 is really when I remember most of it, or a little after. I know that my father and a number of men from here used to go down and hold services for the workmen, mostly Italians. There

were a few Irish, but most of them were Italians. (Note: Father was a Lay-Preacher of the Plymouth Brethren Cult). I don't know how much English they understood, but the workers enjoyed having the men come anyway. My father would always take Addis and me down there. We were embarrassed to tears, but of course we loved it too. We would sing for them. I think the men enjoyed it. It reminded them of their kids at home.

Q Do you want to tell us some of the things you sang? Can you remember?

H All I can remember really is "Whispering Hope", and "The Tie That Binds". Some of the little familiar hymns, little ballads, and things like that. I think the men enjoyed it, probably. Later along about 1908 or 1909, some of the (local) boys became time-keepers for the men on the canal. The boys we knew were at Knowlesville and we girls used to pack a picnic lunch and go down and have lunch with them after they were through their day's work, which was five o'clock.

Q You went in the horse and buggy?

H No, on a trolley in those days. Later, after my husband came to Medina as a teacher, he used to go down and teach the Italians some English. They always walked him home, and they always insisted on his having a beer! He had the hardest time refusing, because he was a teacher. He wouldn't have minded having the beer himself, but he didn't dare take it in public!

Q Today's teachers feel free to drink beer, or anything else. Would you tell us a little bit more about the times when teachers were not "encouraged" to drink?

H I can't tell you too much about it. They certainly were not encouraged to drink. They were fired if they did anything like that in public! Teachers led a very restricted life in those days. They had to be examples for their students.

Q What is your feeling on how that's changed? Do you think that's fair to the teachers, or to the students?

H I don't think it's awfully fair to the teachers. On the other hand, I think teachers ought to be examples. It's pretty hard to feel awfully restricted every time you turn around.

H And then a tragedy happened: one of the Italians killed a man. He had to get out of the country fast. He fled back to Italy. He owed my father money, and my father wrote it off as a bad debt, never expecting to hear from him again. In a few years, he got the full amount that was owed him! So, a man can commit a murder and still pay his debts.

Q Was your family active in the church? The Medina 1st Baptist Church?

H My family was always active in the church. They loved their church and they were always active. They were civic minded too.

Q You said that your father taught a Sunday School class?

H Yes, he taught the Baraca Men's Class. He taught that, by the way, practically up until the day he died. He also was a Trustee of the church. My sister was a member for over 50 years! The thing that I remember about my family is that they were generous, happy, and jolly really.

Q I think that you've been a happy person most of your life too.

H I have been, I guess. I can't see any point in being sad.

Q Do you remember Halloween when you were a child? Is "trick-or-treat" something new?

H We didn't know anything about Halloween, really, until a few years before I was married. I remember when I got into New York City, when my husband was getting his Doctorate, the kids in the apartment house came around looking for treats, on Thanksgiving!

Q On Thanksgiving?!

H Thanksgiving. And we didn't have anything. I was surprised and they said, "Well, they do this every year." I think Halloween is getting a little beyond us now. But I do think it's kinda fun.

Q What are some of your memories about Medina, Mrs. Helmkamp?

H Well, there are so many things, really.

I do remember Fannie Fisher's Boarding and Rooming House . It was a popular place and a long time establishment. We stayed there when we first arrived in town. I remember the meals: all sitting at one table. We kids had a good time playing all around the building, and the alley. Fannie Fisher's was on West Center Street and the alley that runs down near the Medina Dairy. The House was run by Fannie Fisher, a big fat woman whom everybody loved. In later days, after Fannie Fisher, Belle Stanley took

over. The building was later torn down to make room for Fred Flagg's gas station. After the gas station, it became the Medina Dairy, which still stands.

There was another popular eating place in those days: Coleman's, on Telegraph Road. It was just a farmer's home. They served fried chicken, family style. They served a whole chicken to a family of four, and any meat that was not eaten was always put in a bag and sent home with you. The beauty of this place was the atmosphere. Everyone sat at one long table. One usually saw all one's friends there, and really felt like a family.

Q Would this be on Sunday, that you'd go to Coleman's ?

H It was mostly on Sundays, but I think that people went there weekdays too.

I remember too that the sidewalks were board-walks, with cracks between the boards; a hazard if one was wearing heels. The walk in front of our house on Ann Street was a board walk. The boards were only about six inches wide, or seven. The walks were about the width of, maybe a yard. Most of the streets had wooden sidewalks.

Q At that time, were roads paved or were they dirt?

H No, they weren't paved. I remember walking out West Center Street. That was usually where we went on Sunday because it's pretty out there along the canal. There was a stream along side of the canal. When people start talking about the mill-race on Main Street, I always think about the stream along the side of West Center Street. But very few people seem to remember it, so it couldn't have been there very long.

Q With your husband being in Education, you had summer vacations to do some traveling?

H Yes and we used them too because his family was pretty well spread around in California, Kansas and Colorado. So our summers were almost all taken up with visiting. They would visit us, and we would visit them. We took all kinds of side trips, and that's when I started collecting stones. I didn't really start then. I started when I was a kid, down at Lake Ontario where we had a cottage. I collected stones then, and I still have the Lake Ontario stones. But our country is so beautiful! I used to marvel

at how different each state was: different scenery, different formations and all, so that I began picking up a stone in every state. That's why I've got a pretty good collection of rocks. I love them. They are beautiful and I've shown them a number of times. Usually what I do is to mount them with a piece of jewelry, if I have it, made of that particular type of rock. And people love that! I've shown, I think, to most of the churches here in town, and to the Orchard Manor (Nursing Home), and various places. I think people enjoy it because they are mounted, and they are with something that they can identify with. I happen to have quite a bit of jewelry. It's not all good jewelry, but it describes the stones.

Q It's not only a beautiful stone to you, but it probably brings back the site where you picked it up, or makes you think about that particular state?

H That's the beauty of them, that's right. It brings back the story and the state. I also have picked up a number of stories about the stones that I usually use. I think that if you have a story to tell, it usually makes the talk much more interesting. Would you like to hear one of these stories?

Q Love to!

H There was this woman out in Care, Arizona who is the same kind of collector that I am. She collects because she likes stones, and because they are pretty. She liked them. Arizona is a "rock-hound's heaven". It has so much! And she collected so many stones that she finally decided that she'd open a little shop. She did, and tourists stopped and looked things over and bought things from her. One day she found a particular stone that she thought was so beautiful, she didn't want to sell it. So she hid it behind some other rocks on one of her shelves. (chuckles). A man came in one day and was looking things over. He evidently was a collector because he snooped around and finally he pulled this rock out from behind the other stones and said, "How much do you want for this?" She said, "It isn't for sale!" And he said, "Oh, you'd sell it, I think, wouldn't you?" She said that "No, she wouldn't". She didn't want to sell it. He said, "How much would you sell it for if you were going to sell it?" She thought she'd make the price high enough, so she said "Twenty-five dollars". He hauled out \$25.00, took the stone and left the store. A little

while later, a friend of hers had been visiting in New York City, and she came back and told her that her stone was in Tiffany's (store) window in New York City, marked for \$25,000.00!! Also a couple of ear-rings had been made from it for \$800.00 apiece.

That seems criminal to me.

Q He took terrible advantage of her, because he knew that rock was worth something.

H Yes he did. He knew, of course he did! I have a piece of that sort of rock. It isn't as good as she had; it hasn't got the good crystals in it. It's called chrysocolla, a poor grade of copper. That's what her rock had, and he knew it.

There are all kinds of stories like that, that I tell with my talks, as a rule. That makes it much more interesting.

Do you want me to say anything about the Canal, anything modern?

Q Yes, if it's your experience.

H Carl Barry and Watson Barry used to be our neighbors. They used to take us for rides up to Middleport and down to Albion in their motorboat, which was fun!

In 1976 the (Medina) Senior Citizens wanted to go to Lockport to see the old (canal) locks. They also wanted a boat ride, so they chartered a boat called "The Sundowner", owned by a man from Gasport. It was a replica of the old side-wheelers. There was a wheel and it was running and spattering water, but not propelling the boat. This was done mechanically. The canal is so beautiful with the greenery that has sprung up over the years. The many homes along the banks have been landscaped clear down to the water's edge. Many of the old towpaths are overgrown but others have been turned into bicycle trails. We (Senior Citizens) had lunch in the Lockport Marina. The boat ride was more interesting to us, really, than the locks which we went to see.

In 1978, Pearl Eddy, Jessie Breitbeck, Adah Olds and I went down to the Albion Sesquicentennial. We went to see the canal boat parade. We got a good seat on the bank of the canal in the marina, in a picnic area. There were picnic tables and chairs on the banks of the canal. We were sitting there and a boat came along and moored right in front of us. We kind of half recognized the boat as having seen it on our trip down the Niagara River to the Fort of Niagara from Lewiston. This boat was moored at Fort

Niagara. There was something going on with the boats that day, and we spoke to them about having seen it up there. We got into conversation with the skipper and his daughter: a man by the name of Clemons, and his daughter Kim Clemons from Tonawanda. They had a couple of dogs, and they were walking the dogs. They were going to be in the boat parade. It came time for the parade and they said to us, "Would you like to ride in the parade with us?" We did, and it was more fun than a circus, to ride in the Albion Sesquicentennial Parade. When we came back (to the picnic area) we asked them if they would have dinner with us. They couldn't because they had some kind of affair with the other boat people. But I just heard from Kim this last week, (I had said "You have a rain check"), asking whether the rain check still held, and could she come for dinner. I said, "Of course! I'd get the women together". We got the women together, but then Kim had an infected ear and couldn't come. We were very disappointed at that, but we had our lunch together and played a little Bridge (card game).

Q After all your travels around, Mrs. Helmkamp, here you are, back living in Medina where you started out.

H Funny isn't it! (chuckles). And I'm not sorry. I came here because of my sister. My husband had just died. I was alone and Addis was alone. I came up one day and we talked things over and we decided that I would come up here and live with her. That was in December of 1969. I've never been sorry. I'm glad I did. She needed me, and I needed her. It's been a beautiful life. I've found a lot of friends here. There are none of my old friends here. They're practically all gone, but I've made new friends and they've been wonderful! They really have been beautiful to me. I've gotten into the Tuesday Club and enjoy it; I've done some Twig work (hospital association) and have enjoyed that. I've got a lot of nice Bridge friends (card game), and I've joined Senior Citizens and I love that. I've gone on several of their nice, long trips, so I'm still traveling.

Q Thank you very much for this interview. It has been fascinating!

H You are welcome. I've enjoyed it very much. It really has been a

circus! It's gotten me thinking of old times, which I don't suppose an old person ought to do. They ought to look to the future, but it's been really more fun than a circus. I've enjoyed every minute.

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Additions, deletions and changes made by Mrs. Helmkamp from the original transcripts.

Miss Dorothy Corlis of Medina conducted a sixty minute interview with Mrs. Helmkamp.

Mrs. Helen McAllister of Medina conducted a thirty minute interview with Mrs. Helmkamp as a follow-up.

Because of the nature of this interview, the two transcripts have been interwoven to make for more comprehensive reading.

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