



Orleans County Historical

Association

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plus many other doctors,
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stories of people, places,
events, experiences.

1896-1985



Orleans County Historical Association

INTERVIEW

Clayton H. Thomas, M.D.
215 West Center Street
Medina, New York

Dr. Thomas was born November 23, 1896 in Ontario, Canada.
The interview was conducted by Helen McAllister at the
beautiful, spacious home of Dr. Thomas.

T Thomas

Mc 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.

C. Thomas, Jr.

Signed

April 11 80

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

April 11 and 18th '80

Date

For the ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION,
April 11, 1980, HELEN MCALLISTER of Medina, New York is
interviewing DR. CLAYTON THOMAS of Medina, New York.

T I was born in 1896 on November 23rd in the backwoods
of Ontario, Canada. My father's name was Frederick
Thomas. I had one brother, living. His name was
Stanley J. Thomas; and one deceased brother who had
got caught up in the Infantile Diarrhea Plague they
had there some time before I was born.
My mother's maiden name was Mary Russell.

Mc What was your father's occupation ?

T Farmer and Thrasher; and he made his living. My
father was a great fellow to work. He was working
summer and fall and spring and winter. In the winter
he sawed wood rails and sawed for people with a big
steam engine. Drawing grain in the fall, thrashed,
and the rest of the year he farmed. So he kept busy
pretty much of the time.

The way things existed in 1896: there was no telephones.
There were no cars in the country. I think it was in
the middle of the night on November 23rd that they
decided that I was going to arrive, and my father
sent my brother across the field and around the
corner for about three-quarters of a mile to get
the midwife. Midwives delivered most of the people.
And, at the same time my father started for Forest,
seven or eight miles, to get the doctor.

Mc Forest was the name of the nearest village, right ?
T Yeah. But my brother had to go across fields and that year the snow was up to his shoulders, almost. It was a heavy snow year. It was so heavy that they had no clear roads until spring. In those days there was no snow plows, of course. And, they kept running over the roads, and over it and over it. And, the more they went over it and packed it down, the higher the road got. So you were riding along on the level of the fence posts.

My brother was 11 years older than me. Then came the brother that died with Infantile Diarrhea. That killed a lot of children. When we cleared that up, we lengthened the span of life greatly from the standpoint of figures.

I was delivered by Mrs. Demick, who had 11 children of her own, and delivered children all around that part of the country.

Mc They made it back through the snow-storm ?

T Oh, yes. They got there. You know, you should ask those questions when you are growing up, but most people don't. I just remember these things by them telling me, you know.

Well, there are a few things I remember. One, I remember when I was four years old, and younger. One of my occupations was drawing in gravel from the road and making a path for my mother to the barn and to the pump. And another thing: in the middle of the morning we would break for a rest and a cup of tea. A cup of sweet tea and an egg. In the middle of the afternoon, I would take a cold water drink for my brother who was in the back fields working. And, I remember an old elm tree that used to squeak and squawk where I would rest and I would run because I was scared of it. Then when the wind

was quiet I would come back the same way.

T Well anyway, my father was hulling corn in July that year. It was very hot. They had no spades, for everything was done by hand. No cultivators for cultivating weeds. So my father was out in the back "50", hoeing, and he didn't come home at noon which was not quite altogether unusual. He didn't come 'till late on in the afternoon. They went to look for him and they found that he had been overcome by a sunstroke. So, how to get him up because he was a good sized man of 200 pounds. So, my mother and my brother got the old horses, hooked to the Stone Boat and put him on that and brought him up to the house. The Stone Boat is a kind of thing they draw along with railroad ties under it and big planks on top of it and is used to remove stones from the fields in preparing the land. I don't know just how, but I suppose it was a pretty rough ride back. Anyway, I guess he got over it and they probably had the doctor out to see him. And what could the doctor do in those days? There were no hospitals within 100 miles. So that didn't bother him much in his early life, but when he began to approach the age of 60 it began to show up on various nervous symptoms, and it was a direct result of the sunstroke.

Mc Would you like to tell us about your early school years ?

T At about 1900 we changed farms. We left one farm in one part of the county and moved about 12 miles to another farm that my father had bought. He made a deal with the man. The two of them made a deal. They traded farms and then the other man threw in an old thrashing machine outfit which my father changed and repaired.

T They didn't send children to school very early. I was

about eight years old before I started school. And, I being the only one that looked like a girl in the family, my mother kept me dressed in dresses until I was ready to go to school ! She was going to have a manufactured girl in the house, anyway.

Mc I think that really was the custom, wasn't it ? I remember a little boy in our neighborhood who had long finger curls down his back.

T So did I. I had golden curls!

Mc Is that right ? Now Dr. Thomas, I find that hard to believe. (Laughter)

T Yeah, that's true.

Mc That was the style.

T Yeah. They didn't have a girl in the family and they attempted to make the youngest boy into a girl for a while, anyway.

I had to walk to school about a mile and a half each day. There were just four classes in school in those times: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. When you graduated from 4th, you went to High School. I don't remember too much of my Public School. I remember one year: We had a bunch of big boys in there and they got into a fist-fight with the teacher in the back of the room and scared us little fellows half to death ! They were 16 and 18 year old lads and they were just coming in.

Mc Was the teacher a man or a woman ?

T We had various ones. I used to get out at three o'clock and I would paddle off home. And it got to be a kind of a habit. Teacher decided to change it that I would have to stay until four. Well, when he wasn't looking, I took off for home at three. And, the teacher had long legs and was big and tall and it wasn't long before I heard him flying down the road after me. He took me back by the hand to school. (Laughter)

The three R's: reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, I guess, was the main things we were taught. Every

day, I remember, we used to end the day with a spelling match. We'd line up on each side of the school. I was fairly good at Spelling. I wasn't very good at Mathematics. Mathematics, even at that early date, was much like a fellow in the army that they used to tell me about. He was very fond of figures, but he wasn't much in Mathematics! That is sort of an inherited trait. One or two of my kids were not very good in Mathematics. Ann, my daughter, will still count with her fingers. I told her today that soon she would not have enough fingers to count on ! (Laughter)

Mc You have told me that you went to McMaster's School,
a Baptist Training School ?

T Yes, for ministers. The bulk of the students there were for General Arts. That is what I was entered in. I knew when the time come, I would go to McMaster. In those days, you used to take your clothes mostly home-made. I think I had five or six shirts, one suit, a couple of spare trousers; I had an overcoat; but that was about all the clothes we took. I had a couple of sets of pajamas and underclothes. I was always running short of underclothes, so I put on a pair of pajama pants on in place of shorts to go down-town one day. And, I saw people looking at me as I walked along Yonge Street. I looked down and I had a trail of the pajamas around the top of my shoes ! (Laughter) Well, I suppose today it wouldn't bother me but it certainly embarrassed me then. Of course everybody was looking at it.

While I was at McMaster I saw ^{for} the first ^{time,} woman going down the street, in Toronto, with a short hair cut ! It was amazing ! Everyone was turning around looking

at her ! She had a very close clipped cut. She was a square headed woman and it showed off pretty well.

Mc Did you take Greek and Philosophy at the McMaster School ?

T Yeah. They started us in on Greek Philosophy. I didn't mind the Philosophy but the Greek and I didn't agree. It was pretty stiff going, stepping off from a country High School into a University in those days. You got no personal help. You'd land in a class for 50 or 60 or 70. The professor, I remember, would come marching in, throw his book down on the desk and he would start calling your names out. He would translate a little bit and then he would call your name out and you were supposed to continue on. He never bothered looking up to see who you was. He would wait about a half a minute and then he would go on. Usually I never reported because it was a mystery to me, you know. He would take a chapter in Greek and I had never known any Greek before.

Mc Was this when you decided to leave that school and go back to the farm ?

T Yeah, I decided that thing wasn't for me, at all. I had completed the year's course all right. And I passed my exams in a kind of miserable way, I suppose. I didn't take any high marks because that wasn't my strong point. History, English, Geography and so on was my favorite. Not Greek and Philosophy, and Old Testament.

Speaking of the Old Testament, we all dined underneath the McMaster Building; a large dining room. It was heated by pipes that went around the ceiling to heat the dining room. We'd all be down there for our meals,

dinner each night, and somebody had to ask the blessing. I don't know whether they ever got around to me or not. I am sure I can't remember now. But my room-mate, they called on him to give the blessing before the meal. His name was Billie Way and he was going along fairly well until a drop of boiling water from one of these pipes that was leaking hit him in the back of the neck. Of course he sprang in the air and let off an awful yell ⁽ⁱⁿ⁾ and we thought Bill had gone crazy ! (Laughter) It caused quite a commotion.

Mc This was while he was praying ?

T While he was praying. He was right beside me. I think I was most surprised because he was a quiet fellow. But I soon found out the boiling hot water had come dropping down then and caught him right on the neck.

Well, they had quite an initiation there. I will just mention one thing that was kinda breath-taking. They painted you all green, the Freshmen, anyway. But they had two wooden horses up with planks on it and you would get up on that blindfolded. Then a fellow would take each hand and rush you down this plank. When he got to the end of the plank, he said: "Out of the window !" Of course you stepped off into space, it was only about two feet, but it felt as though you were going right through the window ! That may not sound like a very violent form of initiation but certainly it scared the life out of me. I was sure I was done for.

Mc A lot of initiations have caused harm. Some schools have stopped them.

T They stopped that type of thing later on.
The end of the year I came home.

Mc What was it like to go back to the farm ? What did you do ?

T Well, my father and mother didn't have over a second grade education. They could read and write, of course; that was all any of them could do in those days. I guess he decided to encourage me to go back to college again. He put me at shocking barley. He did the same thing when I was in High School, and it worked very well because I began to look around to get away from hulling the corn, and the thrashing of barley, with its beards, and all the other jobs around the place.

Mc That was a good way to encourage you to go on to something else; not farming.

T Of course I would never become a Baptist Minister. That was beyond their doubts ! My father wanted me to be a lawyer. I don't know why he had that idea. I suppose they thought the lawyers must have had an easy job, probably, sitting in an office all day; and doctoring wasn't easy. This was the days before cars. It was all horse and buggy. A doctor would make a round in the morning. Start out around seven o'clock and get back about eleven and see three or four patients. Then he would grind up his medicine on the kitchen table. He had his scales. I have the scales, yet, that I think was first used down at Burroughs Drug Store. They would set up their scales on the table and they would put a weight on. They would put a little powder in, probably Baking Soda and something else. It wouldn't be very bad.

When we moved from this farm, where I was born, we moved into this other farm. It had a very large log house, two stories. It was bigger than the ordinary ones you see now. The only drawback was, it was full of bedbugs ! I slept with my brother and the bugs didn't bother him. They took it out on me, I guess. You know, we worked on those bedbugs for days. They sprayed the wood in between and shut the doors and


windows off and burned sulphur, and all sorts of things. But the bugs still persisted ! When we left, they made a henhouse out of it ! So it changed from bedbugs to chicken-lice, I suppose. (Laughter) (3)

Mc You were telling earlier that many of the young men, after they quit school, would work on a livery.

T Yes. They still are delivering goods around town in a wagon and a horse. There would always be some of those jobs left. They got \$3.50 a week and they had to board and work for that. They lived on that.

Shortly after we moved to the log house, my brother came in one day; he had been out shooting rats in the barn. He had a revolver, and some way or other he shot himself. He sent a bullet up between his eyes and his nose! Now, we were miles from Toronto. I remember him coming in from the barn with his handkerchief over his head. Then, we had to use any kind of dressings we could get. There was nothing the country doctor could do for my brother, so we sent him to Toronto. He had to go by buggy to Forest, and then by train from Forest, and swing around to the north, over to Toronto. X-Rays had just come in then and there was one Eye Doctor in Toronto. They used that X-Ray for the first time on my brother's eye, to locate the bullet. They took the bullet out of the corner of his eye, up in there. Of course, he lost the sight of that eye. But, the bullet didn't go into his head, apparently. Now that was in about 1903 when he was 11 years old. About two years after that, he developed an acute appendix and I remember they had to bring the surgeon down from Sarnia. There hadn't been many appendixes done. The doctor had come down on the train, 30 miles to Forest, and then seven miles by buggy out to the farm. I remember them using the

boiler they boiled clothes in. They boiled up the sheets in the house for antiseptic purposes, you know. Everything was boiled. They operated on him in the usual appendix way. If something went wrong they would have to remove the appendix from his back. So, he was pretty well scarred up. But my brother was a great fellow to get sick. He was quite a worker. He got over the bullet operation, he got over the appendix operation, and then he came down with Nephritis. One winter we had him having convulsions and one thing and another, but he got over that eventually. That was one of the reasons we sold the farm and went into Forest to live. Because he wasn't able to farm, and Father was beginning to feel the evidence of the sun-stroke. So we left the farm and had a sale and went into the town.

Kids had a pretty good time in those days. I had a goat. At one time I had seven or eight goats. I was getting so many around that my mother couldn't hang the clothes up. They would eat them off the line ! (Laughter) 

Mc Were they Nannie Goats ?

T Nannie Goats and Billie Goats.

Mc Did you use the milk ?

T Oh, we couldn't begin to use it all ! We didn't know much about the milking. I guess we let the young ones have the milk. You don't milk a goat the same as you milk a cow. At least we didn't. You have to milk them from the back. And, you're always terrified that the old Nannies will hit you a kick ! (Laughter)

Mc When did you decide to be a teacher ?

T When I got home from the McMaster. I had pretty well made up my mind that I wasn't going to do anything

else in the line of education. Then the work got pretty hard again and my father always said that I was too lazy to work and I had better go to school. (Laughter) So you see the opinion they had of that. Well anyway, the Minister of Education of the Province of Alberta, Canadian West, his sister had a farm right back of our farm, so we were back and forth. And she spoke about "why I didn't go west?" Her brother had written her and told her he wanted teachers. It didn't matter whether they had much education or not, but they had nobody to teach the schools down there. I had a year in college, which didn't amount to very much so far as teaching goes, or anything. So she wrote to the Minister of Education and he sent me an application. I sent it back to him and he sent me where I was to go in Comrey, down in the southern part of Alberta.

Mc You said your father gave you the money to go ?

T Oh yes, my father gave me \$30.00. Bought my ticket and said: "There, you are on your way for a while anyway, I suppose." \$30.00 was quite a lot of money then, you know. \$30.00 would buy a lot of eggs. Eggs were a nickle a dozen and butter about a nickle a pound, if you could get it.

Mc What was the train ride like ? Do you remember ?

T Oh, it was a long train ride. We had to go from our little town to Toronto, and from Toronto we went up to North Bay at the head of the Georgian Bay, and then swung west across Ontario, and across the top of Lake Superior, through Manitoba and through Saskatchewan Provinces and into the edge of Alberta, and I landed in Medicine Hat.

Mc Medicine Hat is a name of a town ?

T Oh yes, it's a town now, I suppose, of 60 or 70,000. But in those days, you know, it was about like

Middleport; about that size. I landed in Medicine Hat and then I took another branch of the railroad down to Seven Persons. Seven Persons is a town south of Medicine Hat, about 40 miles. I landed there about eight o'clock at night in June. It was cold and it was rainy and I got off the train in Medicine Hat. Strange to say, I was down in there to teach around in the neighborhood. My future brother-in-law, whom I had never seen yet; he was over in the Army, taught there at that time. Ten years later his brother-in-law, which was me, taught in the same place ! Anyway, an Indian killed seven people there and that's how the town got the name. Then, from Seven Persons to Comery. That was around, let's say 100 miles, and to get there I had to - - - I had to take a coach, which I won't describe. Anyway, I landed in Comery, in Seven Persons, about eight o'clock at night. I went to the station agent. It was dark and I asked him where I could stay over night, and he said: "There are two places: there is a Swedish family that has a Boarding House, and there is a Hotel." The Swedish place was the cheaper place and the hotel was a bit dearer; so I said: "I'll take the cheapest place." You couldn't see the town. You could just see the lights through the rain. The town, from the station, was about a quarter of a mile. So I decided that I had better stay in the station tonight anyway.

Mc When you say lights; did they have electric lights or just lamp lights at that time ?

T I think just lamp lights. There was no electricity. No. Where there was gas, they used gas.

Well, I lay down on the space in the waiting room. All those waiting rooms in Canadian Railroad Stations

looked alike. A kind of curved bench; not very good to sleep on. So I went to sleep. In the morning when I woke up, there was a drunk beside me. He had cuddled up to keep warm. I didn't recognize that he was there. I had on a hard sailor hat that I was wearing, which I shouldn't have been wearing out there. He wanted to know where I was from and what I was going to do, ~~and~~ I didn't feel that I should divulge all my secrets to him, whom I had never seen before. He said: "You must be the new preacher that is coming here." And I said: "No." I denied that ! (Laughter) "Well," he said: "it is only preachers that wear those kind of hats." So anyway, I'll tell you now, a couple of days later I got rid of it. I found my way over to the Swedish rooming house. There was nothing but a room and a bed and a chair. The house had just recently been built and the table was a storm door on a couple of wooden horses. Of course, I don't remember them washing their hands or anything at all. They were just workmen from around the village; Cowhands that would come into town and people like that. Well, I decided I didn't like that. I went up and took a look at the room again and then checked out and I went up across the field to the hotel. It was there that I was standing on the veranda talking to the hotel man and the wind caught my straw hat and the next thing I knew it was half a mile across the prairie and still going ! (Laughter) (C)

Mc How much did your hotel room cost ?

T I think that the Swedish place was \$2.00 a week and the hotel was \$3.50, I think. So they didn't give you much for what you paid.

Mc What were the meals like at the hotel ?

T Just ordinary meals. Everybody in those days ate what they called "Mush". It was ground wheat. My father ground tons of the stuff for neighbors. He would take and run the wheat

through the chopper that he used to grind feed for the pigs and that was your breakfast food until spring. About that time Gusto came out, if you ever remember that. Gusto was the first cooked cereal, like Corn Flakes is today. It didn't have much taste to it but it had a little Iron Horse, or a little flag or something in it that was an enticement for the kids to shop for Gusto in the store. When you went to the stores in those days, the kids always got a little bag of Gumdrops or some stuff like that.

Mc Like Penny Candy ?

T Yes.

T I told you about Queen Victoria's 60th Anniversary, didn't I ?

Mc I don't remember that.

T Well, this would be retrogressing back quite a bit. In 1900 was the 60th Anniversary of Queen Victoria of England and of course all work stopped in town on that day and everyone went to the towns. My mother had a Little Lord Fauntelroy suit she'd made for me. Of course there was no place for people to congregate except on the street corners and in the stores. There was not much washroom facilities and I was getting pretty restless. Some clown gave me a hunk of Black Licorice Candy and I was chewing on that and I got that mixed up with my mother's apron and my clothes. So, my mother looked around and I guess she didn't know if she had a white baby or a black baby, (Laughter) 'cause the Licorice was all over me. I think we soon departed for home after that. (Laughter) (C)

Mc You were telling me earlier about a Chinese restaurant and how there was a fight outside of the restaurant.

T Well, they rode right into the restaurant; these Cowboys did. They chased the Chinaman around the restaurant. There was no police force there anyway. The Royal

Canadian Mounted Police, I don't think, was formed. That was a form of amusement they used to have. The first night it was quite upsetting 'cause they'd come tearing into town, you know, yelling and howling and getting into the Chinese Restaurant. The Chinamen were all restaurant keepers out there. At the White-Tail-Horse-Ranch, they had about 5000 horses. They had a Chinaman there and he cooked some meat that had spoiled and the Cowboys didn't like it; so they loaded him into a wagon and took him halfway to Lift Bridge, which would be about 60 miles, and kicked him off and let him go on his way.

Mc How long did you teach at Comrey ?

T I went there the first of July and I taught through, until, I would say; it must have been November. I taught in two schools; one a winter session and one a summer session. The summer session was very uneventful. I used to like to get on horseback and go out and bring my cows in to milk in the morning. They'd be over the prairie some place behind the roll of land.

Mc You told me that you had a most unpleasant experience while you were riding back from a party, and you were near a barbed wire fence ?

T Oh yes. That was during the fall and winter. There would be a dance at the school there; someplace or other like that, or at new houses. I remember Carl Larvick, who was a very entertaining sort of guy, - - - Carl had built a new house and got it fixed and his Preemptions" proved up, that's what they called it when they got their land in their own name. He was having a dance and I was standing outside the door in the moonlight talking to Carl. Mrs. Olsen came out and said: "Carl, where is your washroom ?" Carl said: "Mrs. Olsen, you are in it



right now." (Laughter) There weren't too many things to remember about that summer 'cause my nose was pretty well to the grindstone trying to figure out some way to teach these kids; 'cause I had no training in teaching at all, other than being taught myself for 12 years before.

Another incident was when I moved to my second school in the winter time. I had about 27 students, I guess, including all the classes. My oldest pupil was about 20 some years old, 6½ feet high, a Swede from Sweden. He had just come out to "larn" some English. A huge fellow. How he expected me to teach him any English, I don't know. But anyway, he come and I had him set up in the front row with the kindergarden. The rest were scattered around. His chief diversion in the school was that he was a great Snuff-chewer. In all the schools in those places or any place, in those days, there was a big round central heating thing, you know. You would put the wood in the thing or coal or whatever it was.

Mc Was that a big Potbellied Stove ?

T Yeah. So he would open the door of the "furnace" and almost put the fire out with a great gob of snuff !
(Laughter) Well, that was nothing. Everybody took it as just a natural thing to do. The other kids weren't old enough to chew yet.

At that school, they'd have a dance there about every week and they all brought food. Above the stove was a hole in the ceiling, about three feet square, up to the attic. I would ride over; everything was on horseback. I would ride over on horseback, put the horse in the shelter there, and then we'd be in the dance all night. Then when the dance was over, I would crawl up into the attic. I had a lot of newspapers there on the floor of

the attic. I would lay them down and the heat would come up there. It was a beautiful place to sleep. It was a little hard, but it was pretty good. I was always glad to see the dances !

Mc What kind of music did they have ?

T Mostly a couple of fiddles. But most of these public buildings, not the schools, but the community sort of buildings, would have a piano. There would be a piano and a fiddle.

Well, I was living over in Comery and I went over to a dance to this Ponderay place. There was about six of us in the group and we were all riding horseback. I happened to be riding next to the fence and one of the horses crowded my horse into the fence. My leg got caught in the barbed wire and ripped it open from my ankle to my knee, almost. It turned over to the side. Of course, it stopped bleeding. I think if it had been today and I went into the hospital here I'd a probably have had about 120 stitches put in it. But we all did at home, we painted it with Iodine, and tore the tail end of the shirt off and made some bandages and wrapped it up. It gradually closed. For a long time the scar was about an inch wide. No infection, you know. (T)

Mc You were very fortunate.

T Well you see, it's only where you have people that you have infections. There was only about one person to a square mile there, you know.

My brother at home had Scarlet Fever and they wrote me a letter after the quarantine time. I never have been able to figure out what caused me to get the infection I got. Because here I was, 3000 miles away and my brother was over the Scarlet Fever and no Scarlet Fever in my locality for miles around. At this particular time I was cook and

water-boy on a breaking outfit and I had a horse, Shorty, and I had trained him to lie down; just a matter of amusement, you know. After school hours there wasn't much to do out there but watch the Coyotes and the Jack Rabbits. Shorty, he was a Quarter Horse. For a quarter of a mile he was wonderful but after that he wasn't much good! (Laughter) He was a quarter miler. He was a beautiful horse, anyway. The Swedish boys, I think there were about seven of them working on the breaking outfit, and as soon as they saw me, I was red and blossomed out with a rash all over me. They kicked me out of there! They got me my horse and told me to be on my way. I was about 14 miles from home, cross-country. I decided that I was getting sicker all the time, so I started off, and I decided to cut across country where our shack was; where we were living. I don't think I would have got there if the horse hadn't been trained to lie down. All I had to do was pull his head around, hit him a tap on his foot, and down he would go! He'd lie and you would get on him and away you would go. Well, going cross-country there was a lot of gates I had to open. They weren't much of a gate; they were two wires on a post. But you had to get off and unhook them and hook them back again. So I would get him through there and I would get on his back and go on to the next one. I got home, I guess, around five or six at night. I found a note on the table that the fellow I was batching with had gone to Manyberries, or someplace. But anyway, it was about 75 miles, with a load of wheat, and he wouldn't be back for three days. So I was alone for three days! I really don't know where that Scarlet Fever came from. I had all the symptoms. I went over it later when I got into medicine; it must have been Scarlet Fever. But how could it carry that far?

Mc Do you think it came in the letter?

- T Well, there was none in the country around and never had been. And, this letter was a direct connection so it must have carried. Well, that was quite a deal. I was kind of scared there. Although, you know, when you are young you don't mind these things. You take it as it comes.
- Mc You mentioned the town of Manyberries. Did you teach there ?
- T No. Manyberries was on the way between Seven Persons and Comery. The stage-driver and I was going along the wooden street; everything was wooden streets, and sand and dirt in the center of the town, and we come up to a big dog. Much to my surprise, he gave the poor old dog an awful whack ! I asked him what he did that for and he said: "That dog bit me last time when I came through here and I was just getting even with him." It's a funny thing, you know, the things you remember don't amount to a hill of beans.
- Mc When did you decide to stop your teaching career, Dr. Thomas ?
- T Oh, teaching, and water-boy and cook and ranch hand and spike pitcher. That was the worst job !
- Mc What was a spike pitcher ?
- T Well, I got working for a thrashing outfit. They had a big thrashing outfit, the guy on the team goes out in the field, they load it on the wagon in those days, and drove up to the machine and then he would pitch sheaves into the machine. They had what they called a spike pitcher. and, that "pitcher-nut" was me; as long as I didn't have enough sense to stay any longer. He would hop onto the wagon and it was from one wagon to another; you never got any rest at all, you know.
- Mc The spikes were from what ?
- T That would be wheat. This was bearded wheat. That didn't bother me so much on the end of the fork handle. When my dad had me in the barley business, it was shocking it up

you know, and you had to put your arms around it. It really got into you. I decided, I guess it was in - - - I got out there the first of July and it wasn't that next October; it was the one after that.

Mc Let me interrupt you just a second.

What was your salary as a teacher ?

T My salary as a teacher was \$60.00 a month. You maintained yourself, your food, your transportation - - which I had a couple of saddle horses. Why I wanted two, I don't know.

I never told you about getting the second horse, did I ? Oh, that's a dilly ! (Laughter) I decided that I needed another horse. There was a big ranch right on the border between Canada and Montana where there was a big horse ranch. They ran about 5, 6 or 7000 horses. I lived with Mr. Houger and his wife and son, Bidwell. Bidwell was a real rough and tough guy. Wherever there was liquor, there was Bidwell ! He'd be drinking as long as he could stay there. Well, we decided we'd go down to the ranch and we'd pick a horse out and I bought a saddle horse for \$125.00. He was a good horse and he could run like mad ! I used to get tired of Shorty fading out on me so quick. So, Bidwell and I went down and picked this range horse out of the corral. He had never had a hand on him in his life and how I expected to ride that horse is more than I can know ! They were promising delivery on a certain date and one day that certain date came along and this group of three Cowboys and four horses arrived. Well, we had to get him in the barn and he didn't want to go in the barn. So each of the Cowboys got an end of a rope onto his tail, and the other fellow went through the barn with a rope around his neck; and everybody worked together and we heaved him into the barn much to his discomfiture. I made up my mind that I would never ride this brute. But Bidwell; he promised to break him in with me and he began to weaken too.

So we got him into a stall and between the stalls there was a low, about three foot, partition. Well, the result of the whole matter was that the old bronco got over that partition and he wore all the skin off between his hind legs! ~~and~~ The poor fellow walked like a man in trouble ! Oh dear; poor fellow ! (Laughter) So Bidwell thought this was a good time to break this brute in. So he rode him for a few days and everything went along fine. He was getting better all the time, you know, so I got on him. Well, I just got outside the door and he give a couple of good snappy bucks and I was on top of a haystack; about four feet away ! (Laughter) They piled the hay up in green feed and green oats. They called it green feed. That put me out for a while. So, Bidwell went back and rode him and eventually I got to ride him all right. That winter I was riding him from where I lived to the school to teach. I had a lunch pail in my hand, on top of the horse. then there was a mark in the snow - - just one trail on the road - - - a marking in the snow and apparently the horse was following that 'cause the trail turned off into a field where there was a bachelor living. In place of going on, which I wanted to do, he went through. Well, he threw me off. I wasn't looking for it at all ! He made a sharp turn and through the fence he went and cut his front legs. The old farmer came out and we doctored the horse up with some salt bandages and I turned him loose. I never rode him again ! I decided he wasn't very trustworthy.

Mc

You let him go ?

T

I just turned him loose on the prairie. I think I got \$50.00 for him or something like that. I was glad to get anything. I don't know who would catch him. Maybe the Coyotes. (Laughter)

Mc

So that was the end of your teaching. Did you go back home ?

T

No. I made up my mind that \$60.00 a month - - - I was never going to get anywheres here. The teaching profession wasn't very much in those days; pretty cheap. So I decided to

enter medicine. My aunt had always wanted me to go to medicine. I didn't like the lawyer business, and I didn't like the teaching business, and I didn't like the preaching business; so I thought the thing for me was to become a doctor.

I wrote to the University of Toronto asking for an application card. They sent it right back and I filled it out and mailed it back. They received it and stamped it and sent it back and I signed on. It didn't take them over a matter of three weeks and most of that time was in traveling. There was no problem in getting into the University because the war was going on and I was classified as a B2 physically on account of my flat feet. The poor flat feet never give me any trouble. So, it took about three weeks to get all signed and sealed 3000 miles away.

Mc

Then you went to Toronto ?

T

I went to Toronto then. I went home first for a short time, of course.

Mc

How did your parents feel about your going into medicine ?

T

I guess they thought anything was better than farming, 'cause farming was really slavery in those days. I really don't know how they could afford to send me to school. They were quite far-sighted as far as I was concerned. I landed in Toronto and I got a room with a boy from my home town by the name of Mike McCordick. One little incident: Mike was a very bashful sort of a fellow and we were going along quite nicely and he got a present for his birthday; he opened it but he didn't show it to me. I found out later his sister asked me if her brother got his birthday present. She had sent him a Pigtail for the birthday. They had been killing pigs. (Laughter) He never showed that to me.

(2)

I was going to give you the cost. Another chap and I, we got a room for \$5.00. That was \$2.50 a piece. We

would get all of our meals at one of these houses. There were houses, every two or three blocks, that fed people. You got to buy tickets and you went in there and they would seat 20 or 30 people of the select crew. Well, that was \$3.50, including Sunday dinner. Room and board; then there was another item of cost in there.

Mc What was your tuition ?

T \$50.00 a year. In Buffalo, across at the Niagara College it was around \$700.00 a year at that time. That was a private school, you see, and ours was a government school. I had this figured out about meals; for \$6.00 we could live comfortably. I got to thinking about it one day here recently. I sent my son to school and he would often eat \$6.00 for breakfast ! And here I am going to school and had good comfortable quarters for \$6.00.

Mc How many were in your class ?

T There was, I would say, about 80. Now when I went back after the first year, it had swelled to about 140. Because I completed the first year, and then I started the second year and the guys that went over to war in 1914, 1915, and 1916, 1917, and 1918, all had their first years. So we all went in together in a group and we ran about 145 or so, and there were 27 girls there, which was unusual. There was room for quite a number coming back from the war; but they didn't get back. You see in 1914 I volunteered in the Army. But they found that I had flat feet which put me in class B2. So they wouldn't take me. They said: "You'll never have to go to fight, you can't walk." I've never had any difficulty walking yet ! So I was kinda put out about it; but I was happy afterwards that I had flat feet.

Mc By the way, what year did you start going to College in Toronto ?

T I started four years before 1922. It must have been about March 1918. The war was going rather badly and the University decided to form a Tank Corps. 1000 men, all

from the University. So I got my courage up again and everybody else was joining, so I joined too. I went down to the Recruiting Office to sign up with my B2. They looked at me and they looked at that, and they said: "You are going into the Tank Corps. You'll never have to do any walking. Yeah, get in line and sign up." I signed up but I found that on the parade grounds of southern England, we would have to go from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock at night; right out in the old browning sun !

Mc This was the 1st Canadian Tank Battalion and you went over to England ?

T Yes. In April we went over to England. In the water we were followed by U-Boats and half the time we would be going one way, and half the time the other, and some of the time going no way at all. Ships pointed in all directions. It finally took us about 27 days to go over. The ships were all camouflaged, you know.

On board ship an incident that I ran in to: I was sick from the first day I saw the Atlantic Ocean. Desperately seasick and all we got was Fat Pork and Australian Jack Rabbits and soup, which wasn't very good for a sick stomach. So I didn't eat very much and early on in the voyage over, I was up in the front of the ship on the top deck where there was a little house built on the thing. That's the place that the cook would dump potato peels and garbage overboard. So I was standing in between the house and the rail and all of a sudden down came one of these Sailor Cooks and tossed the whole bucket full of potato peelings; garbage and apple peels, rinds, and everything else, all over me! So I was sitting and looking at myself. Roll call was to be in about 10 minutes and I knew I couldn't make it. So I went down in the bottom of the ship and got myself straightened

around. Of course, I wasn't at Parade and there was a big hellabaloo about that. So they eventually found me and hauled me up in court. And finally, four days to be in the ship's kitchen; that was a pleasure when I got down there. There was very little movement in the ship and I felt better then. They did me a good turn; but not through any intention of theirs. The food was pretty raw at times. Usually we were issued a five pound can of - - say, raspberry jam. Somebody between the line of us and the commissary would take half of it and they'd sell it to us and then we'd get the other half watered down. So you didn't get very much of anything. The Army wasn't a very pleasant place to be in.

I was discharged from the Army after a year and a half, in September 1919, and entered the School of Medicine, graduating in 1923. I had been discharged in 1919. I was graduated in 1923 and I came to the City Hospital on Grider Street, in Buffalo, in June of 1923. I spent one year in regular internship and one year specializing in Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat. Upon completion of my internship in 1925, I went to New York City to observe some things and to see if I wanted to work there. But I found that I didn't think much of the heat in the summer. It was in July I went. So I came back to my own home in Canada for a month. Then I returned to Buffalo and entered the State Hospital on Forest Avenue. I stayed there about seven or eight months. Besides, I didn't like taking care of mental cases. So from there I went to work for Dr. Graney, in Leroy, as assistant. I stayed with him about six weeks because I found I was doing all the obstetrical cases, as well as working all day. He had been doing them. He always had an intern and they stayed about that long because they couldn't really work night and day. So along in the fall I came back to work for

Dr. Edward Male on Main Street, an Eye, Nose and Throat Doctor.

Mc Where was that ?

T In Buffalo.

Mc Excuse me, Dr. Thomas, were you married at this time ?

T No. No. I was happily single. (Laughter) I was single at that time. So I worked for Dr. Male for the next - - - two or three months - - - over a year.

Mc May I ask what your salary was ?

T My salary wasn't a bad salary at that time. It was \$350.00 a month. And while I was earning the \$350. for myself working for him, I was earning for him over \$1500. But the salary was still pretty good.

Sometime in November I decided to get married.

Mc What year was this ?

T That would be in November 1927.

Mc What was your wife's name; her maiden name ?

T Ruth Evelyn Sotheran. So we got married early in November and went away on a honeymoon. It was understood that I was going to keep on working for Dr. Male; but when I came back after ten days on my honeymoon, I came back and found that he had hired somebody else! He made a great evidence of sorrow. He thought I wasn't coming back, and so on. But that wasn't the truth at all. I found out afterwards that all his previous assistants stayed about a year and a half, or two years, and then he would get rid of them. He didn't want them starting up and taking his patients, see ? So here I was with a wife and about a month's rent in an apartment in Buffalo, Days Park. At that particular time I found out that there was going to be a vacancy in Middleport. Dr. Robert Munson was the doctor there. Doctor Maynard, the doctor in Medina, died, and Dr. Munson was going to move from Middleport to Dr. Maynard's place here in Medina. So I went into Dr. Munson's place in Middleport and it was a very good place, a little town.

The Niagara Chemical Company was going and I landed in there, and was Medical Health Officer of the village, and School Physician, and all the other kind of little jobs that go with a small village. I stayed there until 1950.
I started in Middleport on December 1st, 1927.

- Mc You must have been there during the Great Depression.
 T Oh, yes, yes, yes. Oh, I can tell you stories for an hour about the Depression.
 Mc How did it affect the people with whom you came in contact?
 T Well, the Depression as it occurred in those days: you had all kinds of food, but no money. The money was all tied up in the banks, so you had no money; and you had quite a bit of bartering. I will tell you my favorite story.

There was a little chap out on the Ditch Road, near Wolcottsville, that owed me about \$15.00. He come in one day and asked me if I would take a pig for my services. I said: "Sure, I will take a pig." So two or three days after that I was sitting in the office and I saw this fellow coming up my walk with a pig on his back, bigger than him. All dressed and polished up and he walked in and set it over in the corner of the waiting room. So we marked him off as "Paid In Full". Now I said to myself: "What am I going to do with the pig?" I didn't know what to do with the pig. He was about ten feet long. Well, I called up my neighbor back of me, Phil McCabe, and I said: "Phillip, do you want a pig?" And he said: "Sure, I'll take half a pig." So he came over and the next thing I knew Phil and the pig was going out the back door, over to his place to be processed. (Laughter) That's one of my favorite ones. (C)

Everything has changed. You got so many chickens to eat, you know, and geese, and everything. They bartered them

for pay, yes. I had one fellow that owed me \$17.00 for a long time. I billed him and one day he came in and laid down the payment. He said: "Doc, you know, I have been getting your bills all along," he said. I sent the bills out about every three months. "But," he said: "you know I only pitched them in the waste basket. I didn't even bother to open them." He said: "I couldn't pay it." "Well," I said: "that's all right." And, we parted friends. There wasn't much sense of billing people at that time, in that Depression.

Mc Your bill of \$17.00 doesn't sound like much today. When you walk through the door it is usually \$20.00. What would an office visit be in those days ?

T An office call ? About a dollar. One of my competitors, down the street, his price was 50¢; Dr. Ady. Well, he was a peculiar old gentleman too. There were Housecalls made. Housecalls were pretty standard at \$1.50.

Mc Did you make Housecalls ?

T Oh, I would start out in the morning at eight o'clock and get back around 11; Work at the office until 12 and come down to Medina here. You know I was doing some throat work, Work until five and come home, have supper, and be in the office again at six o'clock or seven. We figured on working about 16 hours a day.

Mc Were you the only Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist around ?

T In Lockport there was Dr. Morgana, the only one. Dr. Koester in Batavia.

Well in those days very few of the hospitals paid any salary to the doctors. The City Hospital in Buffalo paid \$25.00 a month to the Interns and \$75.00 a month to the Residents. All the Interns got a book allowing them to issue 90 prescriptions for liquor. Most of the

Interns and the Residents got this. They would go to the Drug Store across the street and turn in 10 prescriptions. The druggist would give them \$10.00 and then the Interns would be busy looking at the telephone book picking out somebody's name, at random, to write the prescriptions on. You see, you had to have a name. That made it a little "extra revenue". Most all the doctors availed themselves of it, I think.

Mc That was in about 1923 to 1925 ?

Mc Eventually you and your wife became parents. Would you tell us the names of your children ?

T My oldest daughter is Rosemary Thomas. She married and she got divorced from Campos.

Ann Thomas; she married a Lowensbury.

Mc And then you have a son ?

T Jon Clayton Kent Thomas. Jon must have got all the names, I guess.

T Everything was booming in 1927. I remember being in New York just the week before the '29 Crash came and you couldn't get into the hotels. The dance floors were full. The restaurants were full. I hadn't been home a week from New York before they were beginning to jump out of windows there on account of the Crash ! It was the most remarkable change you've ever seen.

Mc Did it take you by surprise ?

T Oh yes. Everyone thought that everything was booming, you know. The city was full of people.

Mc You lived in Middleport with your wife and children at that time ?

T Yes, I lived in Middleport.

T Speaking about churches there; I belong to the Methodist Church in Middleport. When I came to Middleport, many

times in the church you wouldn't have more than four or five people for a Sunday morning service. I remember that I was even on the Pastoral Committee and the other two fellows couldn't be there that day so I had to go to Buffalo. I can advise anybody not to get on the Pastoral Committee again. Because I chose the best I had heard there in Buffalo; before two years, half of the congregation was after me and the other half were on my side. I won't tell you why, but there was that division in the church. Then Mr. Ives came and the church was filled in a very short time. Within a year after that you couldn't get a place to sit in the church.

Mc Well that was better than four or five people !

T Oh, yes, yes.

Mc Did you find that people were more active in the church during the Depression ?

T No, I don't think so. During the Depression there was, as I said, hardly anyone in the Methodist Church in Middleport. I could name many a Sunday, beside myself, the ones that would be there. There wouldn't be over seven or eight.

Mc What about the schools at that time. Did your children attend the Middleport Schools ?

T Oh, yes, they attended and when I came down in '50 one had been already through and the other two continued on in the Medina School system.

Mc When did you come to Medina, Dr. Thomas ?

T Well, I had an office down near Main Street since 1930, but I still lived in Middleport. I moved from Middleport down here in July 1, 1950.

Mc Did you move to this house at 215 West Center Street ?

T Yes.

Mc This is such a beautiful home. Who lived here before you did, Dr. Thomas ?

T Strange to say; my present wife. They rented it for some years. This house, when I first wanted to buy it in 1935, they wanted \$15,000. for it. Things went bad and the Depression went on. The Depression didn't end in 1930. It went on and I finally bought it for about \$6500. Of course I spent quite a lot on it. Property went down. The Maple Crest, up here, - - I could have bought that for \$4000. in 1930.

Mc Well, you moved to Medina and your practice was in Medina beginning in 1930 ?

T Yes. An Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Specialty.

Mc Where was your office; you said on Main Street ?

T Well, it was down where George Collins and the Natalie Newell house used to be. Back where the Liberty Bank Drive-In is located, across from the Post Office. It was a big yellow house; I had an office there. From there I moved up here in my home. I had an office on the main floor and then three or four years later I went down in the basement.

Mc Have you been active in the local Medina Hospital ?

T When I first came down here, during the war years, I was on the Board for one year. We would all take turns, the same as they do now. But there would only be about, possibly, five doctors there. Since I came to Medina, there have been over 100 doctors come and go; either through death or move out.

Mc You have seen the hospital expand considerably.

T About three times. I think it had about 35 beds when I first came here and now there are over 100 beds. I'm still on the Honorary Staff there.

Mc Do you go to the hospital often ?

T Yes. I don't have many patients there now. Mostly because

(NOTE: see MYRA COLTON transcript) - Medina Hospital
Also - W. A. LEDNE transcript).

I don't like the system.

Mc What don't you like about it ?

T Oh, the paper work is tremendous ! It takes you a lot longer to take care of your paper work than it does to take care of your patients.

Mc I think that is a common complaint.

T Yes. The patient is just a number and the important thing is his Chart.

Mc What makes that different ? Why so much paper work ?

T Because of government regulations. Every time we get a new government in, they cook up a new set of regulations, I suppose. Dr. Maines was Associate at that time when I first came and that about made ~~him~~ up the Staff.

Mc What about Medicaid and Medicare ? Has that added to this problem or has it helped ?

T Well, of course, when I started out, my Day Book, the only book-keeping I kept; it was one of those long books like a store-keeper used to have - - - ~~We~~ we would write there what you were going to get - - - that was my complete book-keeping system. There was no Income Tax at that time. I didn't pay Income Tax until after I had been here pretty near eight or nine years. But a person's chief gripe is the tremendous amount of book work that nobody looks at. Nobody looks at that stuff.

Mc The insurance companies do.

T Possibly. I don't know what there would be in one of my Charts, because I don't write very legibly.

Mc I think that's how you can tell who's a doctor. You can't read his writing! (Laughter) ☺

T I was talking to Dr. Fitzgerald, a leading surgeon in Lockport at one time. I was in his office and he had awfully legible writing. His writing was perfect ! And I said: "Fitz, if I were to write there, you wouldn't be able to read my writing the next day." He said: "What's the good of your writing if you can't read it so you can bill them ? No sense in that." (Laughter)

- Mc Medina, as do other places, has a number of foreign doctors. This is quite new in recent years.
- T The blame for that lies on those medical schools that won't take over 60 students or 40 students. For years Rochester was screaming for doctors but you couldn't get in there with a gun ! You'd be beyond 40 in numbers. Buffalo was the same way. My home school in Toronto never ran over 60. Then along came World War I and following the war, in my year, it had gone up to 140. The result was we graduated about 140, with the hold-overs and everything. When we got graduated there was no Internship hospital space for us so we had to come over here. When we came over here they paid - - - we got nothing in Canada - - - we at least got \$25.00 a month and there was room for expansion. So that is the reason why we came over here. I would say one-third of the class came to the United States and I would say 90% of them stayed over here. After they had finished their Internship, they naturally stayed on.
- Mc Are the doctors that are coming today from foreign countries finding it easier to come because - - - why ?
- T Well, I don't think the salary of a foreign doctor at home is very much. Here they step right in to \$70,000.00 a year, without any problem at all.
- Mc Are they as well qualified as doctors that have graduated from the United States schools ?
- T I don't think they are. As far as I know. It's an awful hard proposition. You don't know what the school standing is and I imagine that a lot of them are not very high.
- Mc Don't the doctors have to pass a certain test here before they can practice ?
- T Yes. They spend two or three years in the hospitals and manage to get by all right. You know, some of our foreign doctors up here are very good. I think the ones that

weren't so good have left town and gone back to their home again.

Mc It's changing our community to have doctors from all over the world come here; not just in the hospital or the medical field, but in the community, too. We are seeing people from foreign countries become citizens and, of course, keeps this the "Melting Pot". How have you seen the community change in regard to different races ?

T Well, the biggest change, I see, is when I go downtown on the street corners; all the Puerto Ricans and the colored folks. It seems that the Puerto Ricans will sit outside their house, on the steps, and there wouldn't be anybody inside at all. I suppose that is due to the kind of living they have over there. The hot climate and probably their customs in their own land.

Mc Dr. Thomas, have you belonged to many organizations ?

T This is where I think I can state that I have belonged to more organizations than probably anyone else in the state! For instance; I have joined the Rotary in Middleport. I stayed a few meetings there, but the meetings always came at my office hours. Then, of course, when you went down to the Rotary, they had the meeting [?] down there. You go down to the Rotary and get back to the office about eight o'clock or eight thirty; everyone would be in there and they would say: "Where have you been ? Having a sleep for yourself ?" It got so annoying, I quit. So when the Lions formed down here, I don't think I got beyond the "tail-twister stage", on that. I did join them but I don't remember being at a lot of their meetings. When I was in the west, I joined the Knights of Pythias for one meeting. I belonged to a

Masonic Lodge in Middleport - - - I still belong, but I don't go to any of their meetings. Besides, any time I would go to their meetings, I would no sooner get in there and the phone would ring and I would have to get out again; which was a hazard. So I pay my dues on that one; but the other lodges, I haven't attended.

Mc Not the Masons ?

T No. I don't think I joined any clubs in Medina. I had about done my joining days.

Mc How about Senior Citizens ? Are you a member of that ?

T Oh, yes, yes, yeah.

Mc Your first wife, Evelyn, was a homemaker. She wasn't one of these women who worked outside of the home. Was she active in the community ?

T No, just the Study Club and the Church. She was quite active in the Church. She was one of those mad at me when I choose the Preacher that didn't coincide with their views. (Laughter)

Mc Your wife became ill in 1964 and went to Roswell ?

T Yes. She was diagnosed Cancer in November and the following February she was dead. That was the year of the big snows in February. When she died we were isolated out here. I couldn't get to Buffalo. Even the hearses couldn't get through for a matter of about five or six days.

Mc Where were your children at this time ?

T Ann was taking Occupational Therapy in Western Michigan, and Rosemary was working in New York. She had worked there for quite a while, about five or six years - - and then she decided to go to California. There was one of those German cars; what do we call them ?

Mc Volkswagons ?

T No. The fancy ones. Somebody had to deliver the car from New York to Los Angeles; so she drove it out. Took

it out and delivered it and established herself in Los Angeles. She works in a very peculiar type of Brokerage Office. They cater to these Moving Picture Stars. Jerry Lewis and Groucho Marx were two of their clients that I remember. One day before Groucho died; he was in the office and she wanted to know if he would talk to me. So he said: "Sure." He called me on the phone and the next thing I knew I was talking to Groucho ! These girls in this brokerage have so many clients and these Movie Actors turn their salaries in to these girls and into the office and they pay the bills and keep track of the Income Taxes and that sort of thing. It's an unusual type. I had never heard of it before. But there was about 18 girls in the office. Jerry Lewis called and had her send down two maids. And there was another woman who had a big chicken ranch and she might call for someone to do some work there. It was quite an interesting life, all right.

Mc Dr. Thomas, you said that Ann was in Michigan and Rosemary was in New York when your wife died. Where was your son, Jon, at that time ?

T Going to High School here.

Mc How did Jon like school here ?

T He liked it all right. He liked it. There was only one complaint that I have and this applies to all school systems. They'll pack these kids off to college that have been in the High School here. They have had a lot of personal attention. They send them down to - - Jon went to City College in Cleveland - - - I think they had a scout up here. They did that I believe, didn't they ? Well, here he was in a class of about 300 or 400, you know, completely bereft. And he didn't do good there at all. They should have more High School before they go to college.

Mc Perhaps Prep School ?

T Yes. They ought to, yes.

Mc Well since that time Dr. Thomas, you have remarried. Will you tell us a little bit about that ?

T The only thing unusual about that is, that my wife was in the process of buying this house when I bought it. She was pretty mad for a while. She was living in it, you know, and I had been trying to buy it for 10 years. Nobody seemed to own it. They'd own it for a little while and apparently they couldn't keep their payments up. ~~and~~ Then she and her husband rented it here for several years. I didn't know they were trying to buy it at all, By Gosh, and she was up at the lake and when she came back, the house was sold. Made her very annoyed. But outside that we've had no problems at all.

Mc Your present wife's name is Evelyn ?

T Yes. Evelyn, a name she doesn't like.

Mc She's a very charming person.

T Yes. She usually works in the Episcopal Church over there. But I still stick with the Methodist Church.

Mc Dr. Thomas, I think it is quite unusual for a doctor to have the ability to practice medicine at such an age. I think it's wonderful. Would you care to tell us how you feel about this ? You have a number of patients every day. Four days a week is it ?


T Four days a week and then I generally work on Friday and Saturday too. But I keep the end of the week open so that if I am not here they can't tell me about it. I graduated in 1923. How many years is that now ? 57 I guess it is that I have been a docotr. It doesn't do any harm to work. I think probably people live longest; eat and drink and work, if they don't go all out.

Mc Do you still keep in touch with the home territory up in Canada ?

T Well I have a cottage up in the Georgian Bay, up at Victoria Harbor. I go up there every year. It's quite a long drive and I think the time is approaching when the cottage and I will have to depart.

Mc What is this you are showing me, Dr. Thomas ?
T It's a Certificate that shows I have Practiced Medicine
for 50 Years or more.
Mc You are the Senior Member around here, right ?
T Oh yes, I am the grandfather here now. In the last two and
a half years, I have had half of my teeth out, four weeks
in the hospital with the flu, two cataracts out, and a
hernia done. That kind of knocks your feet out from under
you. But I had an uncle that, at 101, died when he was
plowing out in the back field with a team of horses. I
think a lot of that is how your ancestors were. As the
fellow says: "Choose your ancestors right. Don't drink
too heavy. Drink a little if you want to. Don't eat too
heavy. That eating is bad."

I am going to tell a story or two on Dr. Addy, who was in
the practice of medicine in Middleport for over 50 years,
and worked at the Medina Hospital. He did Obstretical
work. He delivered around 5000 babies and there were many
stories told about him. The story that tickled me the most
was the time it was a cold night in winter. The snow was
blowing, there was a young apprentice barber across from
his office by the name of Howard McKee, and he wouldn't
go home. He said that no matter what happened he wouldn't
get out of that shop until 10 o'clock. You see, Barber
Shops stayed open until 10 o'clock in those days all over
the country. So, he was in the Barber Shop shaving some
one by the name of Tommy O'Brien. He was a State Senator,
eventually, and very witty. He went home and he called
the Barber Shop up and he said: "Is this Howard McKee ?"
Dr. Addy spoke with a nasal twang. He had a cleft palate.
"Is this Howard McKee ?" "Yes." "Would you come over
and shave me ?" It was Dr. Addy, supposedly. He said:
"Howard, will you come over and shave me ?" So Howard



said: "Yes, I'll be right over." So over he goes and began to take his "weapons" apart in the office. The old gentleman looked at him and he said: "Howard, what are you here for? I think we are the victims of a practical joker." So Howard's pretty mad; he packed his "weapons" up and went home, across the street. About this time Dr. Addy said: "There is a Dr. Hoyer around the corner. He's always been sick here." And he said: "Howard, it might have been he that called you, not me, by mistake." But Howard was pretty mad by this time so he says: "Oh, go to hell!" He says, and hung up the receiver. (Laughter) Well, anyway, a few days later after that, the story got around Middleport and Dr. Addy accosted his friend, Tommy O'Brien about pulling the joke on him and he was blistering away at him. Tommy O'Brien just stood quietly and he said to him: "Well, Doctor," he said: "time heals all wounds." And away he went. (Laughter) (C?)

That was a funny one! He was a character. He came down to the hospital one time and Anna - - - one of the nurses there - - - was told to take Dr. Addy to his patient. Anna got it mixed up and she saw the doctor coming. (He had a little black satchel.) She took him to fix the sink in the kitchen! There was some disagreement on that! (Laughter) Oh, there are many stories!! (C?)

- Mc I would like to ask you if your medicine or treatment has changed much since you graduated?
- T Since I graduated, in medicine alone there is only, I imagine, three or four used now that was standard medicine in my days. When I started out Digitalis is now used and was used then and I can't think of much else. All the old medicine is gone out. Another reason: you could buy a bottle of what we call Tonic Medicine - - Laxative - -

Tonic Medicine. You could buy a gallon of that for \$2.50. Now when I was over with Dr. Graney, we would buy 40 or 50 gallons at \$2.50 a gallon. Now I have a druggist make it up and it costs me \$45.00 a gallon. So that one isn't used much more. And very seldom the cough medicines, Chloride, Epicac and those things. Hardly anyone ever uses them any more. And, of course, the old Mustard Plasters have gone haywire.

Mc I can remember Skunk Oil. Do you remember Skunk Oil being used for colds ?

T Yes. I remember when I was with Dr. Graney, an Italian patient brought a child in that had been bitten by a dog. And, they had a poultice on it when they brought him into the office. So when I took it apart, it consisted of Olive Oil and dog hair. They claimed that you caught the dog and cut some hair off him and mixed it with Olive Oil and put it on that and it would cleanse it, you see. Then I had the Seneca Dispensary down on Seneca Street in Buffalo and near the City Hospital. All the foreign element came in there. One woman had a bean on her arm with a lettuce leaf over it; the bandage was on the outside. So we popped the bean out and that was supposed to cure it.

Mc You don't see much of that around here now, do you ?

T Believe it or not, in 1930 or 1931, I had a woman come into the office downstreet, and it was the Whooping Cough. And I asked her what she was doing for it. "Oh," she said: "she was treating them." I said: "What are you giving them ?" "Well," she said: "she was catching field mice and cooking them and feeding it to them !" Now that was not so many years ago, right down the street here.

Mc Were you able to convince her that that wasn't proper ?

T Well no one could convince her I am afraid. Various forms

of treatment. Another treatment was - - - I don't think I spoke about it - - - the worst ear ache that I ever had in my life. I was about five years old and they decided that they should blow smoke in my ear. My father chewed tobacco; nobody else used it. So my brother got a plug of tobacco and dried it on the stove. He made a pipe with a goose quill and a potato, and lit this tobacco and blew it in my ear. You know, my ear has never ached since ! It cleared up immediately, but my poor old brother got sick and vomited. (Laughter) He had never used tobacco. I am not recommending this cure, either. But that's the way it went. Swallow's Nest, if you had Quinsy, was put on.

Mc A Swallow's Nest ? You mean a bird's nest, really ?

T Oh yes. Break it off the roof of the barn, dissolve it in water and make a poultice of it. You did a lot of home doctoring. We used to have chickens in the barn and they used to have crops of barley beards. My brother and I would cut them open and take them out like a big billiard ball, and sew it up again.

Mc What would you do with that ?

T Oh, get rid of it. You'd open the crop where this ball and stuff was, and make a slit in it and then peel it out and throw it away and sew it up again. And the old hen was singing again in about a week. (Laughter)

You know medicine was a funny thing in those days. We were playing shinny at school with a tin cup and a can, and a fellow hit me over the eye. Now, I'm sure I must have had blood in the Anterior Chamber; but in those days you just got a red eye and what the heck are you going to do ? You have another eye to use anyway. Why get excited over the bad one ? The Eye Doctor was in Toronto, 100 miles away and two days by train, to get there. --- (end of tape).



BIRTHDAY TREAT--Dr. C.H. Thomas has many memories of his early days as a physician and as a Canadian native he remembers the rural life. A few days ago friends surprised him by arranging a one-horse wagon ride in honor of his 84th birthday and the fact that he is still very active as a specialist here. He has practiced medicine for 55 years. The scene here is at the Forrestel Farm at Shelby. -(J-R Photo)

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