



Orleans County Historical Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS : N. Hellen Waldo Interview

SUBJECTS

Senior Citizen of Year 1979

pianist

silent movies
dance classes
etc.

nursing

Polar Nursing Home

newspaper work

Great Depression

child care

Senior Citizens
formation of Center

Office of Aging

construction of homestead

fires

fire horses

Universalist Church
Middleport

flu epidemic/quarantine

horses

sorrell/dray
black for funerals

Star Theater, Middleport :

Park Theater, Medina
Scenic Theater, Medina
Diana Theater, Medina

Carmen Road School
Middleport High School

Jeddo houses

NAMES

Tessora J. Jackson, mother
Lina Jay Moore, father

Emory J. Smith, great grandpa
Mary Ann Russell Smith, great gr-ma

Andrew Jackson Moore, grandpa
Margaret Adelaide Smith Moore, gr-m

George Washington Moore

John Jay Moore Moore

William Wallace Moore

James Thurber Moore

sisters:

Margaret, Inez Elizabeth,
Gladys Amanda, Catherine

Mary Hellen Smith

George M. Leach

Russell J. Waldo, husband

Marjorie Ann W. McCauley, daughter

Nancy Ruth W. Berardi, daughter

Dwight Jackson Waldo, son

Franklin Justin Waldo, son

Wilda Adelaide W. Palone, daughter

Wm. Hoyt & Son Insurance

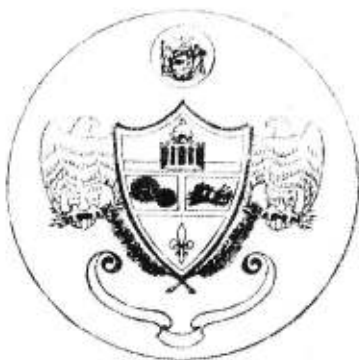
Levi Whitehead

General Store & Undertaker

Post Office in General store

Thompson Milling Company

1897-1995



Orleans County Historical Association

INTERVIEW

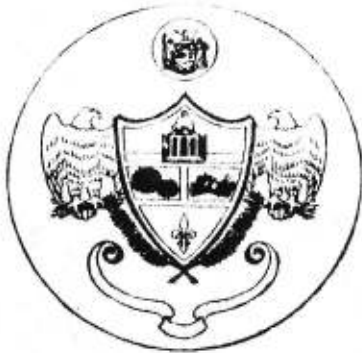
Mrs. Nancy Hellen Waldo
594 Mahar Street
Medina, New York

Mrs. N. Hellen Waldo was born March 6, 1897.
Interviewed by Helen McAllister, Medina, N.Y., Aug. 17, 1979.

W Waldo

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.

Nancy Helen Waldo

Signed

Aug. 17, 1974

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

Aug. 17, 1974

Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, Oral History Project, Helen McAllister of Medina, N.Y. is interviewing Mrs. Nancy Hellen Waldo of Medina, N.Y. At the time of this interview Mrs. Waldo is 82 years of age and has been named the Orleans County Senior Citizen of the Year, an annual award presented by the Orleans County Office for the Aging.

W I was born in Paris, Illinois on March 6, 1897. My mother's maiden name was Tessora Jessica Jackson and my father's name was Lina Jay Moore.

Mc Would you give us the names of your great-grandparents?

W Emory J. Smith and Mary Ann Russell Smith. My grandfather was Andrew Jackson Moore and grandmother was Margaret Adelaide Smith Moore. Her nickname was "Addie M."

Mc I think it is very interesting that your grandfather and his four brothers were all named after statesmen. Would you give us their names?

W George Washington Moore, John Jay Moore, William Wallace Moore, Grandfather Andrew Jackson Moore, and James Thurber Moore.

Mc Hellen, your great-grandfather Smith and his brother were famous for building some houses on route #104?

W Yes. They built all the brick homes from Jeddo to Wright's Corners and they all have a particular cornucopia that will earmark them. Emory J. Smith, my great grandfather, helped to build the Universalist Church in Middleport, N.Y. in 1831. That's 148 years ago!

Mc Do you attend that church?

W I go there. The original plaster on the walls is absolutely... well, it's unblemished! There's one little spot in the ceiling, caused by a missing shingle, the result of a terrific wind storm in 1931.

Mc Hellen, would you tell us how you came to live with your grandparents?

W My father and mother had moved back to New York State. My grandmother had lost a little girl at the age of one year. I was so near that age and resembled her that they decided they

had to have me! They lived in the house that his father had built on the Ridge Road, between Carmen Road and Drum Road, on the south side of the Ridge. It still stands and it's a beautiful old home. It has the original pillars on the porch.

Mc Was your grandfather at that time?

W Yes, he was. He owned a farm and had a tenant farmer who did the work with the help of day laborers. He sold farm impli-
ments and phosphates.

Mc Did he sell this from his home?

W He went around with a horse and buggy and canvassed the whole area. He talked to the farmers and anybody just starting in farming. He offered them special help to help get started. The phosphate was put up in 100 pound bags. Later it was left there to sell to the farmers when they came in. See, when he had to be away I used to have to take them out to the barn and show them which one they had ordered. He planted two fields: one was bone black fertilizer, and one was potash fertilizer. This was to show the farmers which was the best to buy. (The team of horses were later used as "fire horses").

Mc Did you have any sisters?

W I had sister Margaret, four years older, and sister Inez Elizabeth, Gladys Amanda, and Catherine.

Mc I notice that you sign your name Nancy Hellen. Why are you called Hellen?

W I am called Hellen after my grandmother's sister, Mary Hellen Smith. She married George M. Leach. They were well known here too, before they lived out of state (in Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and then came back here.

Mc You were living on the Ridge Road and eventually you went to school. Do you remember where you went to school?

W I went to the Carmen Road school, a one-room schoolhouse. Floyd Wiser was one of the teachers, and there was Mary Hammond. ... I stayed there until the 8th grade.

Mc You were telling me about a thunder storm and the school?

W It was on a Sunday afternoon and Mrs. Mary Swift was our custodian. She lived across the road from us. I used to go with them when they went dancing. I went to the school and was playing

the melodian while Mrs. Swift and another lady were cleaning the school when a storm came up and lightning struck the schoolhouse. It didn't demolish it, but it wrecked the schoolhouse so that it had to be rebuilt.

Mc You were all inside the building when the lightning struck?

W Oh yes! It went kitty-corners through the school, and I was up to the front, here to the side. And to this day when I experience an electric storm, my hands will go up just like this. Electricity effects me. It effects me terribly. I feel drawn to it. No, it doesn't frighten me. I have to watch it. I can't tell you why. But, none of us were hurt, but the schoolhouse was a mess!

Mc When the storm destroyed the schoolhouse where did the children meet to study after that?

W An elderly man who had been a teacher, Ecick Aldrich, had us come to his house and he taught us each day. He also, I never forget, taught us about the power of the sun by taking a magnifying glass and holding it over paper and letting it burn! That's how they started fires in those days. ...

Mc After you left the Carmen Road school, after the 8th grade, where did you go?

W I went to Middleport High School. I should say, we went to Middleport to school because the school had been burned shortly before that time and we went to school in the Opera House, and up over the stores, and in the fire hall at that time; and we made it! I graduated from there in 1916. (The new brick schoolhouse on State Street which has additions built during the years).

Mc You were telling me about a class trip?

W Not really a class trip but a graduation trip in my senior year. A man by the name of, I think it was Zimmerman, was Principal of the Lancaster School and he realized the importance of young people seeing the government, housing and so forth, and organized a trip. I figure about 14 of us went, and we spent ten days in Washington, Mount Vernon and Gettysburg. A memorable trip. I never forgot it.

Mc How did you go to Washington?

W By train. \$25.00 for the whole trip! Round trip. We had two

dollars for spending money. I don't remember how much the hotel was, but it wasn't very much in those days. I remember paying 25¢ for stockings, and my Grandmother had a fit because my Grandfather paid \$10.00 for a suit for me and 75¢ for a hat!

Mc What was your suit like?

W Black and white, and in those days there were the big brimmed hats, you know. Your hat was black and you wore 14 button shoes; high button shoes to protect your ankles. To make your ankles strong. They don't do that today.

Mc Did you carry a suitcase?

W No, not a suitcase. In those days there was a funny bag you carried: a valise. They strapped up.

Mc The name of Hellen Waldo means music to a lot of people. Would you tell us when you started to take piano lessons and who your teacher was?

W Yes. I was seven and Mrs. Carrie Denny Lamere was my teacher.

Mc Did you have a piano in your home?

W A four poster piano; C Kurtsman Scale piano, which was famous in its day. If you want to buy a piano, an old piano, and it says C. Kurtsman on it, no matter what it's condition, buy it!

Mc Did your grandparents encourage you?

W Yes, my Grandmother had taken music lessons in her younger years, and played in church. And that was one thing they wanted me to do.... They went to the Middleport Universalist Church. I took lessons for, oh gosh, until I went to high school.

Mc Where is the first place where you earned some money with your music, Hellen?

W The Star Theater in Middleport, during the silent movies.

Mc Did they give you the music that you had to use or what?

W No, we used our own. In the beginning you had no idea of what you were getting into to play for. You just had to follow the picture and you played the appropriate music. If there was a love scene, you played some love songs. If it was a wedding, you played the Wedding March, and so forth. You just followed the best way you could. ..

- Mc How often did you play the piano for the movies?
- W ... Saturday afternoons and every night.
- Mc This would have been when you were still in high school?
- W Yes.(Began second year in high school).
- Mc I have heard the name of Beth Birchell. Was she there too?
- W She's quit now; she played in Medina.
- Mc Where was Star Theater in Middleport located?
- W It was located on State Street in the building that has burned since; that was next to the Opera House. That would be adjacent to the corner of State Street and Vernon. The brick building next to the vacant lot.
- There was the Scenic Theater in Medina on East Center Street, near Main Street. This was the "dime theater" and was for children, especially on Saturday afternoons.
- Mc That must have been popular! Do you remember how much you were paid for playing?
- W I believe I was paid \$1.00 a night. That was a lot of money in those days. I played there until they brought in a player piano. From then on whenever the player piano broke down, I played for them until I got an offer to play in the Park Theater in Medina. That was located across from the fire hall on Park Avenue. S. A. Cook built it for a recreation hall. ... It was used for athletics and public functions.
- Mc You played the piano there?
- W Piano and organ. The piano was connected to the organ. There was a piano keyboard just below the organ keyboard. I don't know how they managed it, but they did. I used to play one or the other.
- Mc Was that an electric organ, or piano?
- W No, you pumped with your feet. But it was electric. You had to use your toes on the pedals. You had two pedals for increasing the sound. ... I got \$10.00 a week there, which was a fortune at the time. But not when you took your commuting fares from the B.L. & R. out of it. That took a little bit out of it! B.L. & R. is the trolley, yes. ... The trolley took me from Middleport to Medina. It stopped in front of Curvin's Store (located on North Main Street).

Mc Do you remember any of the movies that played there?

W "Birth of a Nation" was the first one I had ever played with an orchestra. We had a full orchestra for that movie and I played the piano with that. They had drums, cymbals, violins and horns and they were there for a whole week.

Mc Do you remember who was in the orchestra?

W I don't. They weren't known to me. It was somebody that came in.

Mc Was the Park Theater the only theater in Medina?

W At that time there was the Diana. Later it was owned by Mr. Allen. It has gone by both names. The Diana was the one that was originally there...The Schine people owned the Park Theater organization and they bought out the Diana. That's when I quit playing. ...

Mc After your graduation from high school I believe that you were offered a scholarship?

W That was through the influence of my father, I believe. He was in Chicago. I was offered a scholarship to Northwestern University! I was packed and ready to go when the telephone bell rang and they said that Middleport was quarantined on account of the flu and not to travel out of the state.

Mc So you didn't get to use your scholarship?

W No. Because of the flu epidemic.

Mc What did you do then?

W Well, I had been working for Mr. Hoyt in his insurance office in the Post Office Building; William D. Hoyt and Son. They were on Main Street in Middleport, on the corner. There was an alley next to the Whitaker Store and that was on the opposite side of the alley. You had to go to the Post Office and pick up your mail. There was no delivery.

Mc Hoyt's was an insurance office. Did they have many different companies?

W Twenty-seven companies and there was only one insurance man in the whole area. They weren't like they are now; each man has an insurance company. ... Because I well remember that one Christmas I got either a one or a two pound box of candy from each one, and didn't know what to do! (laughter)

Mc Did you use a typewriter in this office?

W It was an old Blickenderfer typewriter. I had never taken any typing in school, but I learned to use the hunt-and-find-'em system, which I still use. They were beginning to insure not only your homes, but the plate glass and automobiles as well.

Mc So they had automobile insurance too?

W Automobiles were just beginning to boom a bit then.

Mc How long did you work in the Hoyt office?

W I would say, about a year. Then I went to work for Levi Whitehead, General Store and Undertaker. In those days you went to the house to take care of the corpse, and the corpse remained in the house for the funeral. And you had to have some other compensation besides that, to live. Mr. Whitehead had a store on Main Street and he sold carpets, and wall paper, paints and dishes. And in the upper story he displayed his undertaking equipment. I mean his caskets and so forth.

Mc Did I understand you to say that school books were sold there?

W No, school books were sold at the Post Office by Mr. Hoyt. He had candy and tobacco there. You see, he rented space to the Post Office. He owned the building. In those days, you went to the Post Office for your mail, and in order to attract attention to his business, he had a counter with candy and tobacco, newspapers, magazines and school books. He took orders for the school books and some pencils and erasers. But the candy was the main thing for the kids! (laughter) Absolutely! Stick candy, in those days. And penny candy. He also had put in a gramophone, as they were called in those days. And they put in radios, probably around 1920.

Mc At that time when there was death, the undertaker would put something on the door of the house?

W Well sometimes it would be a wreath or a black cloth; what you could afford, according to your status. I'll say it that way. But there was always a black crepe.

Mc Was that with a big bow?

W Yes, usually, if they got it put up right. Sometimes it would just be hanging on the door knob.

Mc At that time the body was displayed in the home?

W Yes, in the home.

Mc What were your duties when you worked for Whitehead? Did you work as a salesman, in the office or the store?

W I took care of the store when he was away and I took care of the telephone calls, which was important because you took care of all the undertaking in the homes. It had to be somebody that could take the calls.

Mc How did they transport the body? Did he have a hearse, or ?

W Oh yes. He had his own hearse. I don't know what you'd call it, it wasn't a surrey. It was more like a democrat wagon with two seats, double seats and a team of horses. He always had black horses for those occasions.

W My Grandfather, when he came to Middleport to live on the farm, he brought his team of black horses and the team of sorrels. And the sorrels he used in those days, you didn't go around in an automobile as you do now. He advertised what he sold amongst the farmers by driving his horse and buggy from farm to farm and telling them what he had and when they could get it, and maybe taking an order.

Mc Your Grandfather's horses were often used for the fire wagons, weren't they?

W Oh yes! I remember if it was necessary, yes. You didn't want to leave them without tying them to a post or something, if you didn't want them to respond to the fire bell when it rang! We had one man in town that later did nothing but dray work, and used his horses for the fire department.

Mc What is dray work?

W That's like you use your trucks now, to carry furniture and all that sort of thing; anything that had to be moved. He had this powerful pair of horses and big wagons. And he'd be unloading something, maybe have one or two things left on the load and then the fire bell would ring and the horses would leave!! (laughter) Maybe the furniture, or whatever, would stay on the load, and maybe it would fall off. Those horses wouldn't stop for nothing if they heard the fire bell!!

- Mc If the horses were trained to be fire-horses, would there be more than one team like that in the village?
- W Yes, there were about three teams in the village, but nothing belonged to the Fire Company. I don't remember if the people did it gratis in those days. Probably, because you didn't ask for a dollar for everything you did then. You helped one another. You helped on another.
- Mc Do you remember how much you earned a week by working for Whitehead?
- W I think I got \$10.00 a week when I worked for him.
- Mc You must have felt rich!
- W Well, it was. I paid for my C Kurtsman scale piano in my young days, from my work. But I didn't have to pay board.
- Mc You paid for your piano?
- W Yes, I paid for the piano. Grandmother had a beautiful four-poster, but I wanted an upright.
- Mc Some time back, you were telling about delivering butter.
- W Oh yes. When we lived on the farm, of course you made your own butter, made your own bread, you took your grain to the mill and you had your own flour. You didn't buy any of that. About the most of anything you got from the store would be your spices, your sugar, your salt, molasses and things like that. We went around in ^a, well, you can't call them vans. They were enclosed like the top of a truck is nowadays and had shelves inside, and they'd stop right at your door. If there was anything in there that you wanted, you got it. You didn't go to the store for much. . . . And the meat wagon came around with fish and so forth, drawn by horses.
- Mc Was this kept fresh with ice?
- W I don't know whether they had ice or not. They probably did but I don't know. We had an ice house on our farm. We filled it from the canal, and then from the mill pond, as much as we could; and then from the canal if we could get it, you know; which was dangerous, but that lasted us from late August on. This was built like a house, and several layers of wood. Then inside the icehouse they had a little room that had pegs where they'd hang their slaughtered beef and pork and so forth.

Mc How did they keep the ice? What did they put around it?

W They used sawdust. The ice house would be as big as a small house is now. I didn't look the last time I was down (to the farm) to see if the old ice house was still standing; but the old smoke house is still standing! Of course, that's brick where the ice house wasn't.

(end of side one of taped interview)

Mc You eventually left working at Whitehead; why did you leave?

W Well, first of all he was about to sell his business, and I had an offer from the Thompson Milling Company in Middleport. The mill still stands, grist mill. People brought their grain in and then took their flour home. They sold the grain there directly, except what they wanted to use. That was a nice job because I could do other things in the evenings. It was an eight to three job, and that gave me a chance to earn some money in the evening.

Mc For instance, what did you do in the evening?

W I played (piano) anyplace I was supposed to play, whether it was dance music, or entertainment, or a store opening, what-have-you. Whatever you were asked to do. If you were asked to accompany somebody for something they were doing.

Mc Have you any memories of how much you might have earned for an evening of piano playing?

W Well, that I don't remember. I know that when you did anything decent and honest to earn your living you were alright. It wasn't the fact that one person gave you more than the other. ...

Mc Did you have to belong to a Union?

W Not at that time. I did belong eventually when I got into orchestra work; then I got in the Union. That was later when I worked with people that did belong to the Union. Everybody had to belong, or you couldn't play with them. It was only a matter of \$2.00, and that many dollars if you got a call for an evening dance here. I remember I used to play with Barone. His name was Barone. He is in the selling business in Lockport, I believe. (Music Store, Lockport, N.Y.). I wish I could

think of all the people I have played with at different times. They played for dances, especially Wick from Lockport, a dancing instructor. She had dancing schools in Medina and Middleport, and at the Ridgeway Hotel. Barone always went as an orchestra. And I played for dancing school; and I played along with the orchestra when they had an hour or so of dancing after the dancing school. (Doll Vanwick). ... We went once a week.

Mc Later on in life, I believe you worked at various nursing homes?

W From the time I can remember, my grandparents took care of all their relatives, friends and people that they'd known, that was up against it and didn't have a place to live; And buried a good many of them too.

My first memory of doing anything is making disposable bedpans out of brown paper. You didn't have bedpans manufactured in those days, and those disposable ones were taken out and buried in the fields. You were taught to wait on elderly people and always be kind to them, and things that they don't think about in these days. It's so important, especially an elderly person or a person who is crippled. to feel that they are needed and wanted! We all love it. We want to be needed, and we want to be wanted too.

Mc That was wonderful training. I believe you said that you worked in the Polar Nursing Home?

W Yes, I worked in the Polar Nursing Home. That was the time when money was scarce. I was bringing up a family and I worked in Polar Nursing Home. Before that I had been taking care of people around at different places. I was in Middleport taking care of a Mrs. Barnum and the doctor thought it was necessary that she be put in a nursing home because her husband couldn't take care of her at night, and I was only there on a day to day basis. And I went with her to the Polar Nursing Home.

The ladies that were running the Home were old old friends of mine and they said, "You are just what we needed. We want you now!" So, I went with them for a number of years. They were on Park Avenue, and then they dissolved partnership.

Frances Poler owned the building and she stayed there. Her sister Rebecca Wiedrich, took over a home on South Avenue, right behind the High School on South Academy Street. I was asked to go over there with them and Mrs. Alonzo Waters, who was not married to Alonzo at that time owned the Rosa Villa (Nursing Home) in Albion. She got sick and leased her facility to Adelaide Poler. Adelaide went to Albion and I went with her, I can't tell you how long I was there. It was for quite awhile. Well, anyway, Adelaide got sick and died and Mrs. - now Mrs. Waters, but I can't remember what her name was; but anyway, she took the Nursing Home back, and she didn't want anybody there that ever worked for Adelaide, and I went into private nursing, from home to home.

Mc Well Hellen, I would say that your World War I training came in pretty handy.

W That, plus the training I got as I grew up. It was second nature, if you know what I mean. And I like to do it. I like to do for other people, and oh, you never forget the people you have taken care of... and when you lose one, you lose just a little bit of yourself too. ... It's rewarding. It's memories to you. I mean you got memories of people and nice things.

Mc You are a very warm person, Hellen, and this is a great help.

W You know, the more you do for others, the more God does for you. Always! Don't ever forget it! What you put in the lives of others, comes back into your own, a hundred fold.

Mc Hellen,,as this interview continues, I'd like you to tell us what you were doing on election day 1926.

W Oh dear! I had just received a letter, the day before, from a Russell J. Waldo, newspaper correspondent and writer, asking me to be his critic. I answered the letter saying,"in no way!" I had so much to do, I couldn't be bothered.

When I went to work that afternoon, I got off at R & L Trolley in front of Curvin's Store, and then a man stood there on the curb, writing in his notebook. And when I was the only lady that got off, naturally he said to me,"You are Miss Moore?"

I said, "Yes, I am". And he said, "I am Russell J. Waldo". And I said, "So what!" and walked down the street. He followed and insisted on talking to me and he talked all the way up to the Park Theater where I was going to play ^{the matinee} that day. And when I come up to go to supper, he was standing on the steps to take me to supper. We talked some more and I still said, "No". When I got ready to go home at night, he was standing out in front and he said, "I don't think any young lady should be out so late, alone on the street". He walked me down to Curvins and when that closed we walked down to the station which was on East Center Street at that time, and I thought that was the end of that. But the next day he was at the trolley, waiting for me. And this happened all the way along, and things progressed. Well, I finally said, " Yes ", and we were married January 1, 1927.

Mc Were you married in the Middleport Universalist Church?

W It was the first wedding in that church in ^{many} years because people had been, unless you were very rich ^{and} powerful, you were married in your own home. But, this was a church wedding.

Mc Do you remember the pastor's name?

W Rev. Obdell.

Mc ... From this marriage, you have five children. Will you tell us their names?

W Marjorie Ann, now McCauley; Nancy Ruth, now Berardi and she lives in Canada; Dwight Jackson Waldo and he lives in Buffalo; Franklin Justin Waldo lives in California; and Wilda Adelaide, now Palone, lives in Medina.

Mc Hellen, what kind work did your husband do, besides writing for the Journal (newspaper); who did he write for?

W The Buffalo papers, the Rochester papers, the New York Times and the Associated Press.

Mc Did you ever do any newspaper work at all? Did you ever become a critic?

W Yes, but not so much a critic. I wrote for the Niagara Falls Gazette myself, and then I supplied news like weddings, social events, and anything pertaining to the ladies, and the lodges. He did all the rest of the work. ... Anything I did, I handed

over to him for his papers; so they were covered.

Mc Hellen, you have told me that at the time of the big Depression many mothers went to work and had to leave their children. And this brought you into another line of work, and love.

W Well, I didn't want to leave my own children for anything and it really was necessary for both a man and a woman to be working to support the family. So I started in by taking care of children by the hour, and by the day. Pretty soon it became by the week as both husband and wife had to work. And they couldn't afford to pay a baby-sitter to come in. In one case, I had a family of two come to see me. The little girl was suffering from malnutrition because children had used the money that had been for things for the child to eat, and then had parties of their own. Oh, it was just a case of taking on as much as you could, earning a little bit more. In those days, it was three dollars a week. Your own garden kept you in food all winter because you canned everything you could get your hands on.

Mc How many children have you taken care of, would you say?

W Twenty-seven.

Mc Hellen, will you tell us about this homestead, at 594 Mahar Street in Medina? You said that the wood for that house came from... where?

W Pat O'Donnell, a lumberman in this town, father of the original - of the O'Donnell Brothers Company; demolished a building left from the Pan American Fair in Buffalo in 1903. He used that wood in doing homes in Medina. The first two houses on Mahar Street were built by him; the Waldo's purchased the one and lived in there. It has the original clapboarding, with the replacement of a few here and there; the original pillars and roof on the porch. Not the same shingles of course. We had a fire. The original porch had to have new steps, and we took the spindles out and put the flat pieces in, on account of the children getting caught in the railing. It's pretty much the way it was, with the exception that we had a fire! I can't tell you just when, and we had to have the attic rebuilt.

Mc The fire was contained to the attic?

W Yes. It did a lot of damage to the house, but it was contained in the attic. The men (carpenters) didn't understand building dormers for those we had to repair. So we put it up as a peaked roof, as it is now. The only change in the house on the outside, with the exception of the roof, is a picture window in the front living room, and the modern windows in the kitchen. Otherwise the windows are the same. They took down the doors downstairs. We had sliding doors so you could shut off each room. They didn't want to be bothered with them, thought they were in the way. Now they wish they had them for the energy crisis coming up.

Mc You, ~~you~~ could have closed off one room and heat only that.

W They dismantled the stove that I had to heat the hot water when they put in a different system; they took the stove out, which they wish they had now. And they cut a big hole in the cistern which would have saved many dollars in the water bill. They made a fruit cellar. So I think if we went back to the way we were living about ten years ago, we would be in pretty good shape this winter.

Mc You played a large part in the formation of the Medina Senior Citizens Center, Hellen. Will you tell us about that?

W Well, the Grandmother's Club, which I belonged to, were asked by the Golden Agers of Newfane to come and spend the day with them, which we did. And from the time that we were greeted at the door, we were made so welcome, we didn't want for.. whatever. We hated to leave. And all the way home we talked about - we should have a Senior Citizens (Center) in Medina. "Well, we can't move there because they've got a bar! We can't go there because they've got stairs! We can't go to that church because the Catholics wouldn't come! We can't go to that church because somebody else wouldn't come. And when we came into Medina and crossed the New York Central (railroad) tracks, I looked over and I saw that beautiful old building all boarded up. It was the depot." And I said, "There, girls!!" .. "Wouldn't be caught dead in that dump!" .. I said nothing because I didn't believe in arguing. I got out of the car when the others did and walked down the street to Kennedy's Store. John

Kennedy was our Mayor, and I said, "Johnny, who owns the (railroad) station?" And he said, "We do. Do you want to buy it?" "Buy it with what? I haven't got a nickle!" And I proceeded to tell him what had happened during the day, and how we were moved by the way we were treated. And the fact that Murphy's Store (5 & 10) no longer had chairs where you could sit down, because they had been patronized by the wrong kind of people; so the store had discontinued it. There wasn't a place downtown where you could sit down at ease and rest. And he said, "Have you met our new coordinator?" And I said, "No, I haven't". "Well", he said, "go on up to the Village Hall and introduce yourself and tell him I sent you."

John Drigotas was our first Coordinator. He was a young man, deeply interested in making a name for himself, and doing everything he could for his job. He was behind me 100 per cent! He said to me, "I'll help you in every way. You know the Board will be behind you." And he said, "You get in touch with all the ministers in the surrounding area. Write them a letter, tell them you would like to form a Senior Citizens Center." And he said, "You talk to your Legislators, and the heads of the Clubs, and Organizations. Get them all interested". And he said, "I'll set up a date for you and we will see what the response is."

Mc Did you work with a committee, Hellen, or did you work alone?
 W No. I worked alone. Thirty-five people attended the first meeting in the Oak Orchard School auditorium. In that group there were only two ministers from this whole area, which was a very discouraging thing. We had a representation from the banks. We had representation from the Supervisors. Canon Wilkenson and Rev. Entrekin were the two ministers that backed us. And there was 17 Grandmothers and two husbands, and that was the 35. Everybody was in favor to go to Drigotas and he explained the whole thing to us; just what we could do and how we could do it, and so forth, in forming an organization. And he said, "You all go home and think about this. Encourage as many people as you can, and we will have the next meeting. John Kennedy got up and said, "We will have it down in the City Hall room in the chambers upstairs." That was February 1966.

The second meeting was held and Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Drigotas told us all the possibilities of having the New York Central (railroad) station, if we could possibly purchase it. But, first of all we must organize. So on my nomination of Clifford Wise as leader and Rev. Entrekin as Secretary and Treasurer, we started and that was the formation of the Senior Citizens. ... They were so busy talking that they didn't know they were elected. But they have been the most powerful people that I could have had to help; and we went on.

We formed what we called Project Hope, and we had people sign up as Senior Citizens. We decided that we would canvas all the roads and streets that our organization would cover. And this was all gratis! People went out and did it! We went to homes. We found out where there were senior citizens and we went to those homes. We interviewed them. We found out where they went to church; whether they had an infirmity and who their doctor was; what crafts they were interested in or could help other people in. After we got this started, it's down on paper in our files, we elected four people, or asked four people for each section, that they would keep track of the people in that section. They would call them at least - divide them amongst them - divide the names amongst the four people in their section; and they would contact those people at least once a week by telephone or by seeing them, and so forth. In that way a lot of people who would never have anybody look after them, would be looked after. That progressed for a long, long time.

I can't remember how many people we lost in one year, of our membership. So many people have left us (died) that were such nice workers; I mean, so interested. The people who are coming in now, I do not think they understand. It's a lack of communication. They just don't understand. One of the things we are trying to do is (concerning) the nutrition. I think if they took it on a one to one basis like we did, they would have something because either people see it or they don't, or they don't hear. So they don't understand and nobody stops to explain it to them. It is a tragedy. The Office of the Aging, the Advisory Committee, in Albion, that is one thing that I hope to bring up. I have tried to, but so far I haven't

gotten to first base.

Mc You are the Chairman of the Office of the Aging Council, is that right?

W Yes. And I have found the original papers and the original list of names, and everything we had and the divisions and the leaders. I found it when I was cleaning out my room the other day. At the next meeting, I am going to take it down and show it to them, and show what can be done, and they can go from there. I can't go any farther, but I can do that much!

Mc Well Hellen, again I would like to congratulate you as being named the Senior Citizen of the Year for Orleans County. I think it is a real honor to have talked with you for this Oral History Project that we are doing for the County Historical Association. Thank you very much.

* * * * *

(end of taped interview)

* * * * *

Mrs. Waldo was interviewed by Helen McAllister August 17, 1979. Original transcription was done by Luther Burroughs of Albion. After examinstion, several additions and several deletions by Mrs. Waldo, final typing and editing was done by Helen McAllister.

NOTE: After the interview was concluded, by request, Mrs. Waldo played several musical numbers on the piano. Each was played with no music, with fingers flying, in excellent rhythm. Mrs. Waldo is pictured while seated at the McAllister piano.

Editorial

5-11-1979

Hellens Make A community

The Orleans County Office for the Aging has given honor where honor is due in naming Mrs. Hellen Waldo of Medina as the county's "Senior Citizen of the Year".

Since the founding of the Senior Citizens of Western Orleans, the name of Hellen Waldo has been prominent in their affairs and as a matter of fact, no person has given more energy and talent to the success of the local organization than the person who carries this year's distinction of being the outstanding senior citizen.

Added to her Senior Citizen work have been a score of activities that would tax the energies of a person much younger. And her diversity of talents has permitted her to be of assistance in many fields.

Our first knowledge of the lady came when she was the "orchestra" that provided the music for the local movie theatres in the days of the silent motion pictures.

Since that time her name seems to have "popped" up in many adventures of local interest.

We must agree with the Orleans County Office for the Aging that she well deserves the accolade of being chosen Senior of the Year. However, should their decision have been made from the "rocking chair" approach, we must stoutly disagree.

We admire her statement in asserting that she will continue her work as long as she is able "but each year it gets a little harder".

Just think what could be accomplished if all those half her age gave as much of their time and talents to the betterment of the community. What a world of paradise we would



HONORED CITIZEN--Mrs. Hellen Waldo, chosen as the Senior Citizen of the Year, accepts her award from Yates Supervisor George Bane, chairman of the Aging Committee, at the second annual spring jubilee of the Salvation Army Nutrifare Program and the Orleans County Office for the Aging. The nutrition program provides hot noon meals for people over 60, five days a week in Medina, Albion and Holley. Mrs. Waldo, chairman of the Advisory Council of the Office for the Aging, and active in other community affairs received her award at the luncheon ceremony last week in Albion. (J.R. Proffo)

Waldo 18

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin
County
Historian



L. Monacelli photo copy

Vol. IV

No. 42

RUSSELL J. WALDO 1892-1959

"Brief were my days among you, and briefer still the words I have spoken. But should my voice fade in your ears, and my love vanish in your memory, then I will come again, and with a richer heart and lips more yielding to the spirit will I speak. Yes, I shall return with

the tide, and though death may hide me and the greater silence enfold me, yet again will I seek your understanding....."

Kahill Gibran

Russell J. Waldo was born into an old established family at West Barre, N.Y. to Albert H. Waldo and Ella Northrup Waldo. Following his education, he entered the newspaper field in 1908 as a field representative and assistant employee manager for the American Press Association with Butte, Montana as his headquarters. In 1913 he had personal dealings with Thomas Edison in the latter's copper mine at Butte. Beginning in 1914 until his death, he wrote for the technical and industrial press of the United States, Canada, England, Australia and India. During a seventeen year period he covered 4,000,000 miles gathering data for the National Electric Light Association. He was a "contributing editor" to three large business magazines in the United States and a corresponding reporter for sixty-three trade and technical magazines. Mr. Waldo was recognized as an international trade journal writer. In 1921 he devised a trade test for the more accurate selection of highly skilled workers for the Studebaker Corporation. He also wrote "Medical Economics" and "Industry Picks the Stethoscope" which dealt with workers in industrial hospitals. Mr. Waldo was the medical correspondent for the Buffalo and Rochester newspapers as well as the Associated Press for the Herald Tribune. In fact, it was through Mr. Waldo's efforts that the A.P. WIRE PHOTO SERVICE WAS FIRST STARTED IN Medina. For twenty-five

years he was on the staff of the Journal-Register covering the city hall news. He authored a column entitled the "Historian's Notebook" which appeared frequently in the Medina paper. As a freelance journalist Mr. Waldo accomplished all this without ever owning or driving a car or for that matter, graduating from high school. He married his first wife in Indianapolis, Indiana and they had two sons, Kenneth and Floyd. In 1927 he married the former Nancy Hellen Moore in the Universalist Church in Middleport and their five children are Marjorie, Nancy, Dwight, Franklin and Wilda.

Aside from Russell J. Waldo's journalistic accomplishments he is perhaps best remembered as a local historian. He was Village Historian for Medina from 1949-1959 and headed up the Old Home Week in 1956. He was the founder and president of the Medina Community Historical Association which later dissolved after his death. Through his immense interest in and research of Medina's history, much has been preserved for future generations. Appreciation is expressed to his daughter, Marjorie McCauley, for assistance in compiling this story.

In the weeks ahead this column will be most frequently devoted to a story each about our present day official municipal historians and what they are doing. As per state mandate, each township in Orleans County has a historian as does each incorporated village.