



3-4103-00034-5944

Orleans County Historical Association

Table of Contents: Mrs. Cecilia A. White

SUBJECTS

Working on the muck farms in Shelby Center

transportation	page 2
clothing	page 3
salary	page 4 etc... page 16
lunch hour	page 5
three crops	page 6 etc....
location	page 8
windbreakers	page 9
snakes	page 9
fertilizer	page 14
puff balls	page 15
Polish and Italian workers	pg.16
"wrong side of the tracks" and the "400"	page 18
St. Mary's School	pg.18
Sacred Heart Church	pg.18
friends...	page 19

Pictures, newspaper clippings, etc.....

1911-1987

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin
County
Historian



Vol V

No. 4

**MEET
CECILIA A. WHITE
Historian, Village of Medina**

Cecil White, Village Historian of Medina was born, grew up, and has lived much of her life in that community. Before marrying she was Cecilia Hoffman of the family for which Hoffman Road gets its name. Prior to graduating from Medina High School, she worked part time in the office of Dr. Howard Maynard, M.D. She was much influenced by him and wanted to be a doctor. However, due to various reasons she opted to attend Rochester Business Institute from where she graduated in 1928. As a secretary, Cecil says, "My first job was to suffer through the stock market crash in of all places, a brokerage house." From there she was a secretary and public stenographer in a sales office for a Steel Company, and then worked in the advertising department of B. Forman's. Yet medicine was on her mind, so she took a job at Strong Memorial Hospital where she also

enrolled in their program with the University as a major in pre-med. Working and going to school, she completed three years of studies in six but finally gave it up due to health reasons.

It was then that she married James A. White who passed away in 1961. They moved from Rochester to Geneva where she became chief clerk in a government office involved with rationing during World War II. During this time she also worked many hours as a volunteer at Samson Hospital for Red Cross.

In 1948 Cecil and her husband moved to Medina and took up residence in the East Avenue home she grew up in. Back here she worked first at the Journal Register and then took a job at FMC in Middleport where she was a secretary to the Director of Research and Development.

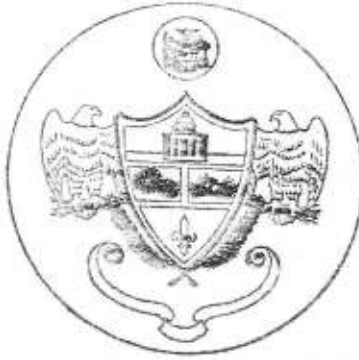
In 1966 she ran and was elected a trustee to the Medina Village Board. This was the first time a woman was ever elected to that body in Medina which opened the door for women to run for public office in other parts of Orleans County. Being frustrated with village politics she resigned that position to become Village Historian in 1969. At the time she succeeded Dwight Waldo as historian.

Archival and historical material for the village is housed in the third floor of City Hall on Main Street. As historian she has tried to organize this material so that it would become useful in some sort of filing system. Cecil writes frequently for the Medina paper a column entitled "The Historian's Scrap Book". She also has given innumerable lectures and slide presentations on Medina history to service clubs and students. In 1972 she wrote a booklet on Medina history for the 140th Anniversary. At that time she felt that it was necessary to have some sort of local history museum in Medina. With the help of Robert Waters the Medina Historical Society was chartered and Cecil White became its first president. In 1979 a building was acquired which was dedicated this past Fall. It was this past year that she also updated her booklet on Medina's history for the Sesquicentennial.

Aware of the importance of microfilming, Cecil has seen to it that area newspapers and records have been done. Thanks to Louise and Abbott Brownell, early Medina papers are now preserved for posterity. With help from Bob Waters, she hopes to have all the Medina Journals on microfilm. Through a grant she acquired, the village minutes dating back to 1832 have been microfilmed up to 1904.

Cecil White is one lady who is involved in the betterment of her community. She is on the Board of Medina Memorial Hospital, a member of Medina BPW, and is very active in Sacred Heart Church, its Rosary Society, as well as serving as secretary to the pastor. She is a member of Region 8 Municipal Historians and has been president of that group. She also holds membership in the American Association for State and Local History and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It's not surprising that she was once the Journal Register's Woman of the Year or that in 1979 she was given the Distinguished Service Award by the Medina Chamber of Commerce.

January 1983



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mrs. Cecilia A. White
573 East Avenue
Medina, New York

Mrs. Cecilia White was born April 4, 1911 in Medina, N.Y.

This interview was conducted by Mrs. Helen McAllister, Medina.

Mrs. White tells of her memories of working on the muck farms.



Mrs. Cecilia A. White



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.

Cecilia A. White

Signed

2 - 8 - 1982

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. MacAllister

INTERVIEWER

2 - 8 - 1982

Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, February 8, 1982, Helen McAllister of Medina, N.Y. is interviewing Mrs. Cecilia A. White of Medina, N.Y. Ciel is the Village Historian of Medina. This interview has primarily to do with her memories of the Muckland.

Mc Ciel, would you begin this interview by telling us when and where you were born, and the names of your parents, please?

W I was born in Medina on April 4, 1911 in my Aunt's home down on Gulf Street. My parents are Anna Radzinski Hoffman and Joseph Hoffman. Shortly after my birth, they moved to Shelby Basin for a short while and then purchased this home here at 573 East Avenue where it's been in the family ever since. I was about four years old when we came over here.

In those days the conditions were bad and everybody worked, including my mother and myself, as soon as I was able to do so. I was a husky young gal and in the summer-time my mother would take me down on the muck farm because she felt I could work right along with her.

Mc Ciel, when you say "down on the muck farm", where was that?

W It was in Shelby Center .. just west of Shelby Center. I can remember going down there and then turning to the right, and down the road about a mile was a stretch to the south of a muck land that was owned by a Rowley, a Fred Boots, and John Raymond. Now, Mother somehow or other was asked by Fred Boots if she would like to work out there and if she could bring any of her friends and of course, any of the children too as there were no Child Labor Laws in those days. So actually I went to work around six or seven years old on the muck.

Mc ... What about your schooling, Ciel? Did this interfere in any way?

W No. I went to school during the school year, but on Saturdays and in the summer, which is when they needed the help the most, I worked on the muck. So it didn't interfere with my school.

- W In fact, I remember the Armistice of 1918. I was working on the muck and it was in November, as you may remember. But the weather was decent and I think we were pulling carrots at the time, when everybody went wild at the Armistice.
- Mc ... Was this the false Armistice or the real one?
- W I don't recall, but I remember that you could hear the whistles blowing and the bells ringing and everything else.. even out there on the muck.
- Mc How did the workers on the muck land react?
- W Well, they were happy that it (World War I) was over because some of them had sons and husbands that were in the service, of course. And I just vaguely remember that excitement; and then we came into town and of course there was excitement here in town too. ...
- Mc ... You have so much you can tell me! Did your father work on the muckland at the same time, or was he employed elsewhere, Ciel?
- W No. My father worked for Bill Gallagher as a mechanic. Mr. Gallagher was a road builder and contractor, and my father worked for him a good many years. Then he went to Heinz's. No, he never worked on the muck. Just my mother and I.
- Mc What was your transportation to get to the muck?
- W Well, Mr. Boots used to pick us up in the morning about 6:30. Sometimes he would swing around and pick us up at the house, and other times we would have to walk up to the corner of East Oak Orchard and Main Street, right about where Myers Store is now, and he would pick us up. Most of the people who went with Mother were Polish people from down in the Gulf Street area.
- Mc What kind of transportation did Mr. Boots use for you?
- W A truck. The back of the truck had crates on it, and boards across. And you just sat on the boards 'till you got there. It didn't take too long to get out there.
- Mc Did you work regardless of what the weather was like? ...
- W No. If the weather was bad, it was sort of understood that you wouldn't go to work that day. However, if it was

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

White

2 1/2

Vol. IV

No. 13

WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER 1880 - 1944

"To achieve what the world calls success a man must attend strictly to business and keep a little in advance of the times. The man who reaches the top is the one who is not content with doing just what is required of him. He does more." -- Edward H. Harriman

These words are surely true of William Joseph Gallagher of Medina for he was not only successful in one business but in many. Beyond a doubt, "He was quite a guy!" Born and brought up in Medina he attended the local schools there becoming a very popular and influential citizen.

In 1904 he was appointed mail carrier out of the Medina Post Office when the rural free delivery system was expanded. Two years later he resigned that position when he bought out the business known as the "Dime Delivery" from George Hall. Out of this he expanded his transfer or later trucking business into one of the largest in New York State. Someone once said to him when he was first starting out in this venture, "Bill, what you need is a d--- good bookkeeper". As the years went by, his successes grew which were in part based on good business management. He kept "a little in advance of the times" and was the first delivery service to use motor trucks beginning in 1913. The building pictured herein, now the offices of Garrick Insurance on North Main Street in Medina is where he operated from until around 1913 when he moved to Orient and East Center Streets. Note the sign above the door "W. Gallagher Moving Vans".

In 1921 he started in the road contracting business with Charles Ingersoll and their first project was the construction of the Medina-Middleport Road. Later he continued in business alone and built over 300 miles of improved highways in Western New York. Among those in this vicinity are Niagara Falls Boulevard, part of Route 18, the Batavia-Bethany Road, Medina-Lyndonville highway, Brockport Spencerport Road, Route 5 from Westfield to Erie, Pa. and all the cement streets in Medina were installed by his company at the time.

From an engineering and construction point of view his most important work was the completion of the bridge over Oak Orchard Creek on Route 18 at The Bridges. Another company had attempted the project but failed

due to quicksand in the creek bed. When Mr. Gallagher completed the 400 foot bridge in 1937 it was the largest single span in Western New York. One of his last construction jobs was a million dollar contract in 1942 building roads in the Lake Ontario Ordinance Plant at Model Town. In the Fall of 1943 he liquidated his trucking business together with his road building machinery. However, the trucking business continued on for a number of years under the Gallagher name.

In the mid-1920's Mr. Gallagher purchased a large farm on Gravel Road north of Medina almost across from Boxwood Cemetery. He became interested in livestock and was a very well known breeder of Belgian horses and Guernsey cattle. In May 1943 he disposed of his entire stock at an auction which attracted stockmen from all over the eastern United States. At the time of his death he still owned four large farms. For several years he was the owner of a stable of race horses which ran largely over Florida racetracks. As a winter visitor in Florida he also became interested in the development of real estate there. In 1939 he erected the Sir William Hotel in Miami which he owned and continued to operate the rest of his life.

William Gallagher was actively engaged in the Democratic Party politics and served for many years on the State Committee. He was a delegate to several National Conventions and was a trustee for several terms on the Medina Village Board. He was also an organizer of the Medina Trust Company and served as a member of its Board of Directors.

He was a Fourth degree Knights of Columbus, Elk and a member of the Holy Name Society of St. Mary's Church. He and his wife Beatrice built for their family the large yellow brick home with imposing green Spanish tile roof on West Center Street at the corner of Erie in Medina. Mr. Gallagher was a veteran of the Spanish American War and served with Co. F 3rd New York Infantry. In his will he left a former residence in Medina which for a time had been Van's Grill to the Lincoln Post 1483 V.F.W. That building which is located on East Center at Orient is known to this day as "The W.J. Gallagher and Son Memorial Veterans Club, Inc." So ends the story of one of Medina's shrewdest, most diversified and enterprising men, a high achiever who left accomplishments for his community.

W cloudy and you weren't sure if it was going to rain or not, you got picked up. And then we went to work and hoped it wouldn't rain.

Mc Well, in November it must have often been cold but you still went to work?

W Oh yes! You just dressed warmer. (laughter)

Mc So it was just by word of mouth to get people to work there?

W Yes. You see, telephones weren't so prevalent in those days. We never had a 'phone but they used to call Mrs. Ellis, across the street, if there was any message and she would relay it to Mother and me. And sometimes if we had a holiday, I might go and work. Later in the year it was not an every day proposition because practically everything was in. The carrots were about the only things that were still to be pulled out and crated. Everything else was cleaned out by that late in the year.

Mc Ciel, let me interject something right here. One man whom I was interviewing, and who has since died, said that at one time carrots were only fed to horses, not people. Do you believe that?

W Well, that may be but at that time, people were eating carrots...

Mc ... Ciel, you said that you were six or seven when you first went to work on the muck with your mother. What did you wear?

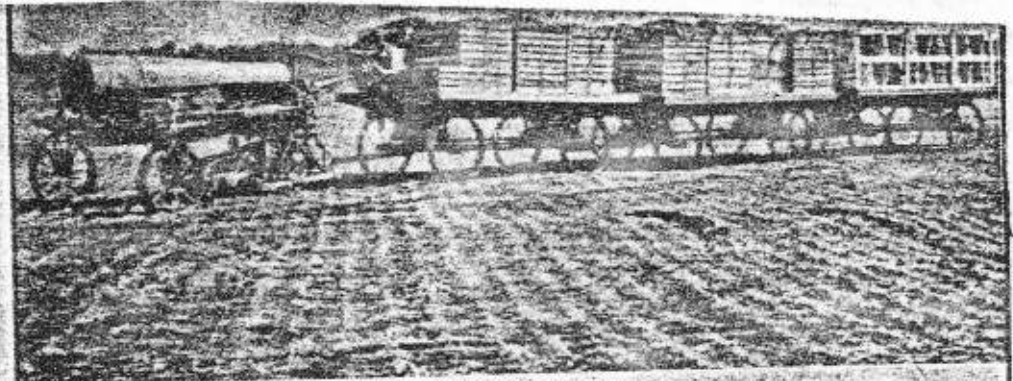
W Well, we used to wear bloomers, as we called them. They were a very full pant-like affair that came down to the knees, with elastic, and a middy blouse which was the "go" thing in those days, and a sweater. And I can remember the black-ribbed stockings, and laced shoes. They were high-top shoes; no sneakers or nothing. They were ankle supporting, so to speak. That was the usual dress.

Mc That was for women as well as children?

W Oh yes. You see, actually, as you went down the rows, whatever you were doing was between your legs. You didn't go to the side of it; like the rows of carrots or lettuce were between. You would have a knee on either side. You had to

- W straddle it, so you had to wear a garment that you could go through without doing any damage to the crop, and everybody wore pants of some kind, or bloomers. They ^{were} typical bloomers like they had in school for gym classes in those days.
- Mc Yes, I can remember wearing bloomers in my gym class! (Laughter) Now Ciel, we have a picture, a snapshot of your mother taken at that time, with one foot up on a crate and I think she is wearing bloomers. They are really quite full; more full than I remember.
- W Yes, this is true. They were the kind they wore in gym.
- Mc Do you remember how they held up their stockings?
- W Yes. We had either garters, or a garter belt. The belt had long elastic from the waist down to the stocking.
- Mc I remember those garter belts! (laughter)
- W This was necessary because you worked on your knees, and the muck was hard in some places because, after all, it was decayed wood.
- Mc I think of muckland as being moist.
- W It wasn't though. It was normally quite dry.
- Mc Did you have knee pads?
- W You had to put pads in the knees or you would kill yourself otherwise. Your knees would be raw. So the women designed the pads that they would put in their stockings -- whatever was comfortable for them. Usually it was several layers of flannel or some sort of soft material which acted enough of a cushion so that the wood and that type of muck did go through it and ruin your knees.
- Mc ... How did they know how much to pay you? Did they keep a card, or did they credit you by the box, or the crate, or what?
- W During the regular season when you were weeding, as it was called, you got paid by the day. If I remember rightly, the women got \$1.50 a day, but the kids only got \$1.00. I guess they figured you wouldn't do as much or that you would monkey around so much, or something. But it was by the day, and it was from seven (a.m.) to five (p.m.). You would have an hour for lunch and, of course, everyone would have to

- W bring her own lunch. There was a well there which they had dug so that you could get water.
- Mc Did you use a common drinking cup or common dipper?
- W Oh yes. There would be a pail there, and a dipper, and everyone helped themselves. And a privy, a two-holer, or whatever you called it.
- Mc Was that set off, in a field?
- W Yes. Also there were sheds on each of these (muck) farms. Of course they held tools, crates, a tractor, and any of the implements that were needed on the land in these rather large sheds. In one section, there wasn't any dining room so to speak, you'd put ~~xx~~ a couple of crates together, put a board across and sit down and take another crate and use as your table when you ate your lunch. Or sometimes you'd just eat out of the (lunch) pail.
- Mc Was there one person in charge of the workers to determine when your lunch period was over, so that nobody "goofed off"?
- W Yes, they had a manager. Mr. Boots was there, or somebody else. It was sort of an "over-seer" because, primarily, it was his job to determine which fields needed attention and then if you finished one field, then you'd go on to some other type of job. So there was always someone there to kind of look after the people's needs, etc.
- Mc Was there a good feeling among the workers, Ciel?
- W Oh yes. Everybody worked together. There was very good rapport. And it was nice .. dirty but nice.
- Mc Clean dirty work! You said that you usually started with either thinning or weeding. What time of year was this?
- W In the spring. I don't know when they actually planted. Things grew very fast there.
- Mc Did your mother help with the planting or did somebody else do the planting?
- W Someone else did the planting. They would plant the seeds and then it was the job of the workers to be sure that the plants survived the weeds, because the weeds grew as fast as whatever was planted.



2nd - FROM MARSH LAND TO MUCK LAND No. 38B

The second event taking place in the near future relating to Orleans County's heritage and development will be at the Barre Grange on Saturday, Oct. 3 at 8 P.M. Mrs. Patricia Burr of Elba will present her slide-tape show "From Marsh Land to Muck Land" for public viewing. Mrs. Burr, an artist and retired art teacher from Elba High School has thoroughly researched the history of the muck farming lands found half way between Albion and Batavia. This is a most informative presentation and should not be missed by anyone interested in farming or local history.

Beginning around 1913, 11,000 acres of swamp lands were drained to provide black muck soil for cultivation. Up to this time the Oak Orchard Swamp had lain idle and unproductive. Until drainage and reclamation were vigorously pursued with gratifying results by the Western New York Farms Company. By 1915 almost twenty-one miles of main canal for drainage had been constructed while the feeder or lateral lines amounted to twenty miles. This construction successfully accomplished, released several thousand acres of previously submerged muck land. Adirondack woodsmen were then obtained for their skillful use of axes in cleaning underbrush. Larger trees were felled and the resulting timber used for making barrel staves and heads. Cultivation was first done by a caterpillar type of tractor engine. The season of 1915 produced the following crops: hay, wheat, corn, rye, oats, buckwheat, potatoes, kidney beans, white beans, string and wax beans, peas, lettuce, celery, onions, beets, carrots and spinach. Shown here is the "Steel Mule" hauling spinach grown on the Oak Orchard muck lands probably destined to the Elba Foods Products Company.

W Our job was dependent on the crop: onions and carrots required weeding, and after the lettuce had reached a certain height it had to be thinned out because the end product was a Head lettuce. We had little sticks, they were probably twelve inches long, like a ruler, and we would lay this (stick) down on the ground and pick out the plant that was healthy at one end of it (the stick) and then rip out all of those in between to the other end of the stick and pick out a plant there that was healthy. You had to be very careful because the ground was soft. In the dry weather or in the wet, it never packed -- so to speak. So you had to be very careful with the plants and be sure you didn't disturb the healthy plant. ... The carrots, we didn't do thinning. They left those just as they were seeded. Onions the same way. But I remember, they had a weed there; it was called the "tumble-weed" and it grew three or four feet if you didn't pull these out.

Mc Is that the same tumble-weed that we see out in the west?

W Yes. They just rolled along like that, you know. Sometimes when we got to the field, the tumble-weeds would be up a couple feet and we had to pull these out. The roots were not too deep or too extended but you had to be very careful. And then the rows were so many feet apart. You had room between the rows to put all the weeds to dry, you see. And then sometimes it was a windy day and the tumble-weeds were tumbling all over the place. But none-the-less you did pull them out.

Mc What did they do with the weeds once they had been pulled out and laid in the rows?

W Well, most of them would wilt and just deteriorate in time. The sun, in the summertime, would dry them out quickly.

Mc Perhaps the weeds were used as mulch along the way?

W Yes. If I remember rightly, they did have at times, a type of machine that would go between the rows and sort of rake it to be sure that it doesn't get cluttered with weeds. They had to be very careful, of course, because the plants, until they grew quite large, were pretty delicate.

Mc ... You are not saying at all about wearing gloves, Ciel.
Did your hands suffer, or did you wear gloves?

W Sometimes. I don't recall having worn them except in the fall when it was cold. When it came time to pull the onions, because the tops had wilted down and become dry, they would kind of mess up your hands unless you wore gloves. But I don't recall wearing gloves for the weeding process at all.

These rows were actually, I would say, a quarter of a mile long. You would start out in the morning and go down the end of the row. The other thing was you were not right next to the next person. ... You'd be working a single row between your knees straddling this row, then they would skip a row and that was your "coming back" row. The next worker would be in the next row, so there was space between you. That would allow the weeds, etc. Usually if we would pull one day and go back the next day, most of the weeds would be wilted enough -- other than the miserable tumble-weeds -- that took longer.

Mc It must have been awfully hard on your back!

W It was. It really was bad because, I said, I think I got all my praying done because out there I was on my knees all day long. But it was always a delight to get to the end of the row and start back. Sometimes, depending on how thick the weeds were, we wouldn't even do one row in a day -- early in the year -- because that was when the weeds were growing the fastest. Then we might go there later on and weed them again to give the plant ample room to grow because the products, especially the onions, needed space. Of course, the lettuce too.

Mc Was your mother quite protective of you, Ciel, or did she try to help you, especially, once you got there?

W You were strictly on your own. No. No, you were told what to do and you did it; and that was it. If you didn't do it right, you were apt to get bawled out.

Mc Did they ever fire anyone?

W I don't ever recall of their ever having fired anyone -- this type of work, I don't ever recall -- if someone wasn't dependable. The work had to be done -- that is the point -- in a

- certain length of time, and if someone didn't come regularly-- of course the women worked. Mother worked every day. When I was in school, of course, I only went there on Saturdays.
- Mc How many people would be working there at one time, Ciel?
- W I would say probably six, seven or eight people, adults. And I don't ever recall there being any other youngster other than my cousin, Pauline Cichocki. ... She and I were the only young ones that I recall. But you went there to work. No messing around, no playing around, and you had to keep up with the adults.
- Mc You must have had to set a pace to keep up with them, and you must have looked forward to your lunch hour!
- W And how!! In the summertime, when it was unbearably hot with that sun reflecting on that black dirt, we used to wear wide-brimmed hats -- as you probably saw in that picture of Mother's. (NOTE: for pictures, in addition to those in this transcript, please see transcript of Mrs. Anna Kuspa, page 15). I had something similiar to that, and the dust, when the wind would blow, was terrible because it would get in your eyes and all. It was very, very hot and usually someone, it was usually the kids (as they called us) had to go get the jugs of water. Then you could stop and relax for a few minutes, and have a drink and go on again until noon. Then you would have to go back to the sheds, as we called them, and have your lunch, and then start back again. When it was one o'clock, you didn't start walking, you were at your place of work, at one.
- Mc Were most of the people that worked in the muck-land women, and were they usually Polish?
- W Yes. In that particular farm, as I recall, the ladies that worked with Mother were Polish: My mother's sister and some of the other people from down in the Gulf Street area. This was true on the other muck farms (they all had the same crops) as I recall.
- Mc How many muck farms were around this area, as you recall?
- W In that particular area, I remember only those three and they were along side of the other. A stretch of ground had been cleared. To the west of us was a woods. It hadn't been cleared

but presumably there was more muckland there. But this particular section had been cleared. Now, how long it had existed there before I went out (to work), I don't know. In later years I did go up to Elba just to see the mucklands there and they had much larger plots of ground, but the products were the same.

The one thing that I remember very distinctly in all the mucklands were the wind breakers -- the rows of trees. I think they were Lombardy (trees) because they would break off a stick and put it in the ground and another tree would come up very quickly. Everything grew very fast. This helped prevent the wind from removing the top soil, the black muck. And not very far away was a very large ditch which provided drainage for those fields, because they had apparently enough rain to satisfy the needs at that time. I don't ever recall complaints about there being too dry a season. Rain would drain into these ditches.

One horrible thing I remember about it (working on the muckland) was that for some reason or other the snakes used to come around! Those black snakes. They were black, I can remember them! You would be going along sometimes in a very weedy section and all of a sudden you'd see this thing wiggling. Everyone would yell, you know!?!

Mc Did anyone ever get a snake bite?

W Not that I recall. The snake was more afraid of us than we were of him. They'd scurry away but, you know, it's frightening!

Mc Certainly, especially when you are on your hands and knees down where the snakes are!

W And something wiggling down there isn't a plant. But that was the only thing about the muckland that I thoroughly disliked.

As I got older and realized that I was working on the muckfarm while some of my kids (friends) in school were working in the store or something, I got a little self-conscious of the fact that I was working on the muckfarm. It was sort of degrading -- you know how kids are. So, Mother finally said that when I got into High School I wouldn't have to go and work on the muck. I did go and help sometimes.

- W At the end of the year, after the onions had gotten their full growth and the tops began to dry, then we would pull the onions. Each would take two rows, and there would be two people. We would grab the tops of onions, pull them out and put them on a single row between the two of us.. in the space between the rows. That would be so the roots would dry out. You would have to pull those onions up and pile them there. So, there would be four rows of onions on the one pile. And that is just what you would do. ... After they had dried out they (the managers) would check to see if the tops had dried out enough; then you would go back with the crates.
- Mc Was this all in the same day, Ciel?
- W No. They would lay there for a few days until the roots had thoroughly dried. Otherwise they would mildew, or whatever they do. I don't know. Whoever ran the mucks (farms) knew when it was time to pick the onions up. Then you would work on piece work.
- Mc Until that time, you were working by the day?
- W By the day, yes. Whatever they did. Then you'd start on the onions.
- Mc Was that piece work?
- W You got ten cents a crate. You had to pick these onions up, out of this row, and fill the crate.
- Mc Where were the crates, Ciel? Were they stacked at the end of the field, or were they placed around the field?
- W They would place the bundle (of crates) around in the fields and you'd have to get your own crate. You would put it behind you, put the onions in, and then move the crate along. ... Consequently, two people would work with the one crate.
- Mc About how large was the crate?
- W Oh, let's see. About a foot or eighteen inches. They were quite wide . They weren't square but more rectangular. It's a normal sized crate, like they use today. I'm no good on dimensions.
- Mc Did you twist off the tops of the onions?
- W No. They were so dry that by the time you went to pick them up, they were practically gone. You would almost be just picking up onions and not the tops.

Mc Do you know what kind of onions, Ciel? There's such a variety.

W The names of them I wouldn't know, but they were not Bermuda onions or sweet onions. They were cooking onions, so to speak. You got 10¢ a crate, so Pauline and I would work together and after we had filled a hundred crates why, we'd call it a day which was \$5.00 for each of us, you see. Sometimes we'd get through (we'd work like mad to get through early) while the women took a little longer. We might be way ahead of them, which was alright with them, then we'd goof off a little bit, or we'd go help our parents so that they would earn some more money (depending on how we felt). This was also true of the carrots which was the last crop that we finished on the muck in the fall.

Mc There were just the three crops?

W As I recall, that's all there was at that time: the lettuce, carrots and the onions. And there, of course, you wore gloves. Because you not only had to pull the carrots out of the ground but you had to wring the tops off of them and put them in the crate.

Mc Did you get 10¢ a crate for the carrots too?

W That's all.

Mc Did the women get 10¢ a crate too?

W Yes, everybody worked on piece work. I can remember sometimes we couldn't go out early enough because there would be frost on the tops, and then as it began to warm up enough, they thawed out a little bit. Boy! You really got wet because it was late in the season and there were heavy dews as well as frost! There isn't much more to tell about carrots. We would simply leave the crates in the field and the men would come along with the tractor and the trailer and pick these crates up and load them on and take them into the shed. I don't know what they did with them, to be frank with you, but I suppose they went to market or somewhere with the carrots.

Mc Ciel, I have a picture of a tractor pulling a large wagon. Was that the sort of thing you are speaking about?

W That's the sort of thing - like a flatbed. We didn't have to load them.

- W You have also asked about the lettuce, Helen. ...
- Mc Did you have to tie the heads together?
- W No, they just did that all by themselves. (laughter). There was a time when they considered the lettuce ready to be shipped. They provided a stand with a sloping platform forward - - that is, it went down, it sloped down, and you put this lettuce crate in this sloping position.
- Mc Can you describe this a little more, Ciel? How many of these would be in the field, for instance, or would they be off to one side?
- W Well, each of the workers, there was usually one stand. One person worked at the stand, and two people cut lettuce - - one on either side. So, one stand would take care of three people. If you had six people working there, you would need only two stands, you see, or if they had more, why, they had crates. They were crude frames really, these stands, designed primarily just to hold the typical lettuce crates. I don't know if you've ever seen them in the super market, when the lettuce comes in, but you will see that the heads are in the bottom row and face up, and then there's a layer, and the ones on top face down. They are packed so many in the crate. (In the muck land) two workers would bend down -- they had a knife designed to cut the lettuce head.
- Mc What was the knife like, Ciel?
- W It was a little curved, so you would just reach down to where the head touched the ground and cut the root off. You have seen how the core of the lettuce had a smooth surface? Well, you would cut that, and this person would hand that head of lettuce to you and you would have to take the loose leaves on the outside and wrap them around the inner head part, and then pack these in the crate. In the bottom layer, the heads were up. When you got the bottom layer done, there was a divider: a very thin piece of wood that lay across it. Then the top layer, you would reverse the procedure. You would wrap the leaves around the head with the head facing downward.
- Mc Why did they do that if there was a piece of wood between the rows?
- W I don't know why they did it that way other than maybe the leaves

W wouldn't be affected -- because they put a cover on it, you see, after that. These covers were not solid. They were very thin wood, frankly.

Mc Almost like plywood?

W Yes, and there was space in between so there was ventilation. You couldn't have it packed in a solid crate. The crates were very light. ... But bending down to cut those heads of lettuce was terrific on the back! ... You would be leaning over to fill the crate. The people that were cutting would normally be standing, so we would take turns packing, so to speak. Gives your back a rest from bending over.

These stands were very light and very mobile. As I recall, because I was not as big as the adults, it was a little more difficult for me to pack because the back of the stand came just about up to my arm pits at first. Of course as I got older and taller, it wasn't so bad. But it was this reaching over. It would probably have been about three feet (the back of the stand) and of course the pitch forward and down. Then as they handed the lettuce to me, they would move ahead. I would have to pick up the stand and move it along so they wouldn't have to come back to me with the heads of lettuce.

Mc Did anybody ever toss you a head of lettuce, Ciel?

W Oh no! That was a "no no". You might do damage to the head of lettuce. You had to be very careful, and they were very fussy about it. If you found a head - and sometimes you know, they get big leaves on it - that were hanging all over the place, why you might just rip that off and keep whatever appeared to be just a nice head. But they were very nice heads of lettuce to begin with so we didn't have to do this very often. ...

Mc Speaking of not damaging the lettuce, how about damaging the fingers? Did anyone ever get cut?

W Oh, that happened! But you learned very quickly to keep your hand out of the way and how to cut the lettuce. You would usually grasp the top of the head and cut underneath.

Mc Supposing you did get cut. Who would take care of that?

W Oh well, they had a first-aid kit there so that you could get a Bandaid or something.

Mc Did they provide the knives or did you have to bring your own?

W No, they provided. It was a specially designed knife used for cutting the lettuce.

Mc Ciel, do you remember if they used fertilizer on the muckland? Was that necessary?

W I don't recall that they ever used fertilizer. It was very rich soil, but I don't recall they ever used it while I was there. Now in later years. I understand, after awhile the nutrients are used up in the soil, and I don't know if that muckland still is there. I have driven over to Elba where the other mucklands were and there was a muckland between Fancher and Holley, right along the road there at one time. Now it is overgrown and is not used at all because they didn't bother to fertilize the soil. Apparently the need for speed in the growth of these because of the season, they probably couldn't do so without adding a lot of fertilizer and stuff. I don't know the psychology of those who used the muckland.

Over in Elba, as near as I know, the only thing they grow over there is onions. They have huge storage temperature-controlled barns there and it's sort of a cooperative arrangement. They do the same thing but they store them in there until the market is good, or when they can make a good sale of the onions. There have been some years that they couldn't -- the market was glutted with onions and they couldn't sell. If they did sell, it would be at a loss.

Mc Farming has changed so much over the years. Do you remember that they used spray for the crops grown in the muckland... ?

W ... I can't honestly say whether they did or didn't spray for anything. I doubt it because I'm sure that these individuals were very reliable muckland owners, and in the sprays where most of them have poisons of some kind, your exposure to the sprays might do harm to you.

Mc In conducting some of the other interviews, when we talked about fruit farming, I have been told that they did use sprays on the fruit farms.

Ciel, when you were thinning out some of the plants, the excess or the plants that were left over, did the muckland owners ever allow you to take these excess plants home to your own

- Mc garden. Were you able to bring back carrots or onions for supper?
- W They never said anything to us if you wanted to take home some onions or carrots. They had so many.
- Mc So you were able (allowed) to do that?
- W Oh yes. And they never charged us for it either. If you wanted to bring home a head of lettuce, they never charged you. They were very generous that way. They never charged.
- Mc I wonder if today (Feb. 1982) with lettuce being 99¢ a head, I wonder if they would allow that?
- W I don't think it was that costly in those days. One of the by-products of working on the muckland is, as you know, mushrooms spring up around wooded, decaying trees. And they had mushrooms there, and puff balls; huge puff balls! The women (who worked) there got to recognize that they were healthy ones and you'd find a patch where these mushrooms would come up and you'd go and get enough to take home. You'd help yourself. I've seen puff balls about as big as an inflated balloon. They were huge! You would take them home and slice them. I never cared much for the flavor of the puff balls.
- Mc I am not familiar with the puff balls, Ciel.
- W It's an over-grown mushroom -- like a huge ball. Well, you've seen crystal balls like the fortune tellers have? Well, you consider it about four times bigger than that, and white. It has a texture very similiar to the mushroom.
- Mc Is it mostly water?
- W No, it is solid.
- Mc ... The puff balls weren't marketed?
- W Oh no, no! They are apt to spring up anywhere on the muck farms and if you were lucky enough to be wandering around and found a spot where the puff balls were, you didn't tell anybody because you would go back there in two or three days and you would get another batch to take home.
- Mc How would you cook puff balls if you did get some?
- W Most of the women would slice them and dip them in batter and fry them, much as you would an egg plant or that type of thing. I never cared much for the puff balls. Mother did bring some home; but I did love the mushrooms! Oh, they were delicious! We had them checked one time; Mr. Boots wanted to be sure that

- W they weren't the poisonous kind. They were alright. I remember that having mushrooms was a delicacy in those days. Of course, they're not cheap today either, except once in a while.
- Mc Ciel, you said that as a child you were paid about a dollar a day, and an adult was paid \$1.50, and then piece work was ten cents a crate. How did they pay you?
- W Once a week, and you were paid only for the hours you worked. In other words, even though you may sign up to work Monday through Saturday, if it rained on Thursday, then you didn't get paid for Thursday. It was a daily wage. He always had the pay for you at the end of the week. It was cash.
- Mc Was your pay in an envelope, or was it handed out?
- W They had those little brown envelopes like you get at the bank. They were always down there and had your name and the hours you worked on them. ...
- Mc Ciel, did your mother allow you to keep the money you earned? ...
- W No, Mother kept the money, and it was primarily a family "kitty". We had bought this home here on East Avenue and it was mortgaged. We never had that kind of money, and we wanted to pay off the mortgage. The family was one where they didn't get anything unless they paid cash. That was the idea. It all went into the "kitty". Of course, Mother bought all my clothes and my books, and I think I got a dime to go see "The Perils of Pauline" and "Tarzan and the Apes" at the old Diana Theater on Saturday, if I was good during the school year if I didn't have to work. So I never had an account of my own.
- Mc Did you have time to make friends with the other workers on the muckland, Ciel?
- W Well, these muck farms were joining, down there in Shelby Center, and each muck farm had its own workers. They were all about the same level of society, if you want to call it that; people earning money to buy homes and buy things for themselves. It was more or less the poorer class in Medina, who really had no trade. These were mainly wives of Italian families and Polish families. Primarily; I don't remember any other than that.

W As we finished one field and happened to be next to the next farm, and they happened to be at the same end of their land, you might go over and visit during the noon hour, and things like that. You got to know them, or meet the trucks coming and going at night. There was not much socializing. We were too busy working. In those days you really worked! You didn't have time to be flitting around or you didn't last on the job. They (the workers) were all anxious to earn their pay -- they really felt that they really wanted to earn their day's pay.

Helen, you asked me if we had any amusing incidents and frankly I don't recall other than the fear of the snakes and running around, trying to get them out of the way. But some days you didn't really feel like working so one of our pet acts was going along singing at the top of our voices, "It ain't gonna rain no more, no more", hoping it would rain! We'd see a little cloud drifting over the horizon; we'd hope it would get bigger and bigger and rain on us so we could go back to the barn.

Another thing I didn't mention but I think it would show the attitude of the people working: they sang a lot. One of the things they sang were many of the old Polish hymns. I can hear those echoing even today because all the workers knew them. The ladies sang as they went along in their work.

Mc That's interesting, Ciel. Were they Polish hymns?

W Yes, or Polish songs. Some were humorous. I didn't know what they were saying, but the Polish people knew, and they would sing the songs. But Pauline and I would sing, "It ain't gonna rain no more!" (laughter)

Mc ... Ciel, you insinuated, when we first began this interview, that maybe there was just a little hint of social caste. Would you speak to this?

W Well, I think there was, in the early days. When you stop to think of it, you know, I'm almost half as old as the village.

Mc Oh now Ciel!! (laughter)

W Medina is celebrating it's 150th anniversary and I'm hitting past 70 pretty soon, so it's almost halfway there when you stop to think of it. But in those early days there was, more or less, a "caste" system. In those days you called it "living on the wrong side of the tracks". There were the poor people and the rich people. The rich people were generally known as the "400". That was the way they said it in those days.

Mc That was in the Medina area?

W Well, that is as far as I know; only in Medina. I am speaking of Medina. It was probably true elsewhere. But these people had established businesses on Main Street or in industries in town and had made a considerable amount of money. They were wealthy by the standards of that day. Had built some very lovely homes, and brought their children up with the finest of everything. Consequently, we on "the other side of the tracks," meeting them in our bloomers and our sweaters, and probably at the end of the day very dirty, were considered "poor trash", or "poor whites". We were in a different category, even though we washed ourselves and cleaned up just as well as they did. None-the-less, you felt this; and this was true in school.

I can remember Henrietta Hellwig, and this was when I was over at Oak Orchard Street School. I went to school and she wanted something and I refused to give it to her. She hauled off and hit me! We went to the Superintendent's office there and he called in the mothers to discuss this thing. For years Henrietta would have nothing to do with me. I told them that whatever it was, it was her fault for hitting me. This also happened to me when I was at Saint Mary's School with another one of our citizens who lived in the "400" class.

Mc By the way Ciel, you went to St. Mary's School for just one year?

W Yes. You see my folks went to Sacred Heart Church and there the language was Polish; we had never spoken Polish in our house. I couldn't even say the alphabet. They tried to teach me but I didn't have much luck. So, Mother thought I should go to St. Mary's and make my First Communion. She enrolled me there for the one year. I think it was the fifth grade. In the process, in the old school, there were two (students) sitting in a double seat. I was there for the one year. And again, you have to remember, I

You can understand the present only by respecting the past, and Cecilia Ann White, Village of Medina historian and community leader, is energetic testimony to the truth of that axiom.

Committed, outspoken, appreciative of our history but enthusiastically engaged in the present, Ciel White is part of the character of Medina, expressing in her interests and involvement what is best about our community.

A graduate of Medina High School, Ciel had dreams of becoming a doctor, and was well on her way toward a degree in medicine from the University of Rochester when financial pressures forced her to alter her career plans. If she was discouraged, it was never evident to anyone who knew her, least of all employers who were to witness her capacity for hard work, strong organizational ability, and quiet determination.

From 1935 to 1939 she served as secretary at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester. Later Ciel became chief clerk in the Office of Price Administration in Geneva, N.Y. In the late 40's, she joined the Medina Journal-Register as receptionist and society editor, contributing greatly to the paper by her skill in developing news sources and establishing valuable contacts.

In 1954, Ciel White was hired by FMC Corp. as stenographer, and it was the beginning of a relationship that was to last more than two decades. While an employee of FMC, Ciel served as chief clerk in export sales, senior stenographer in the research department, secretary to the director of research, and supervising secretary. She retired from the company in 1978.

Her involvement in community affairs has been widespread and constructive. Ciel was the first and only woman member of the Medina Village Board. She was elected in 1966 and 1968 as trustee on the Village Manager Party, and this year was appointed by Mayor Cobb to the Medina Housing Authority.

Her deep interest in the community was encouraged even further when, in 1967, she was appointed chairman of the Committee on Arrangements

for the Village's celebration of the Barge Canal Sesquicentennial; and in 1969, Ciel was named Medina Village Historian, a responsibility she has discharged with effectiveness and professionalism. She has been reappointed to the position every year since that time.

In addition, Ciel is president of the Municipal Historians of the 8th Judicial District of the State of New York, and was a key member of the committee which published the "History of Orleans County" in 1976. The first president of the local Medina Historical Society, Ciel's respect for the traditions of this community has had a lasting effect on new generations of Medinans.

Her spirit of service has been far-reaching. Ciel served for years as secretary to the Comprehensive Health Planning Board for Orleans County, now called Health Systems Agency of Western New York. She has been a member of Red Cross Lady Corps in Geneva and a member of the Red Cross in Medina for many years. A member of the Medina Business and Professional Women' Club, she was named "Woman of the Year" by the Medina Journal-Register in 1967.

A devoted parishioner of Sacred Heart Church, Ciel White is president of the Rosary Society, a delegate to the Deanery of the Diocese of Buffalo, and a member of the Medina Area Council of Churches. She has seen to the secretarial and clerical requirements of the church,

and has still found time to help care for garments, participate in the choir, and drive the elderly to services.

An activist with gracious manners, a reformist with tolerance and common sense, and a historian with an eye on the future, Ciel White has given generously of herself to the community she loves, and has, in the process, won the respect and affection of hundreds of people.

In recognition of a lifetime of contribution and accomplishment, the Medina Chamber of Commerce is pleased to present this Distinguished Service Award to one of our most deserving citizens — Cecilia Ann White.

A Profile Of Mrs. White

1979



W was older than Mary Gallagher was my mate in the school, there in the seat. She was having difficulty with her arithmetic, or algebra, or whatever it was called in those days. She would snatch my paper the first thing in the morning and see what my answers were and then compare it with what she had done. We had assignments, we had homework to do and nine times out of ten, hers would be wrong! She had trouble with her math. So I was a little annoyed with this, because after school they used to follow me home sometimes, or they'd be coming down to Mary Gallagher's home, she and her friends, and I'd be walking in front. They'd pick up little pebbles and throw them at me and call me "Pollock", and things of that sort.

I remember that the settlers in this community came over from Europe in the late 1800s, and they didn't have the opportunity for an education, and they were bound and determined their children were going to have this education. Consequently, they were uneducated and their work was of the laboring class, while those I speak of as the "400" had the benefits of a good education. So it was rather obvious in those days of this class distinction.

But when I grew up and began to realize that this was a type of mental barrier. I think most of the people here today never think of it in that same light. Now there may be a few, but that has passed. Of course, the Stock Market crash, and the bank failures, and a few other things took some of the kinks out of the pocketbooks of some of the "400". (laughter) So today I don't feel so, and many of the people I speak of earlier, we became good friends and can laugh at some of the things we did: Mary Gallagher, Henrietta Hellwig, Ellen Ennus, Marsha Munson, and there's a few others. But when we were young, it was there and I was conscious of it. But I was never ashamed of it! I always said, "If you do an honest day's work, you gotta be proud", and I always was.

Helen, you asked about the disposition of the produce from the muck farms. I don't really know where it all went but you've got to remember that was before the days of 'Super Duper' and 'Bells Market' and there were many, many grocery stores, and stores of this sort, in town.

W I can remember (that) Conley's and Coopers and Franchells, and even the meat markets carried things other than meats. Then there was Melands, as I go down the street there, and then there the little local stores out in the areas here. We have a little store down here on East Avenue. I imagine a lot of them picked up this produce as it became available. You'd go up to the Ridge (route #104) and pick up a bushel of apples or something like that. I imagine quite a bit was distributed here but I think the bulk of it was distributed to the large markets in the Buffalo and Rochester areas. In those days it would probably be (distributed) by train or truck. Of course there was trucking then. I never was, of course, that interested in the final disposition of the products, but in later years I found out that most of the products from the muckland were shipped out.

I think that kind of winds up about everything I know about the muckland.

Mc Thank you so much, Ciel for this interview. You've given us a wealth of information. I think so many people wouldn't be able to appreciate the vegetables that they have on their tables unless they had learned about this. You have run the gamit of all this work. Thank you very much Ciel.

W Well, I always said I did all my praying out there when I went miles on my knees.

.....

This interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina, N.Y. The taped interview was transcribed by Marjorie Radzinski, Albion. After examination of the transcript, with several additions and several deletions, by Mrs. Ciel White, Final typing of this interview and compiling of the pictures, etc. and final compilation was done by Helen McAllister.

Editorial

At Long Last -- The Watershed

A screaming headline in the Batavia Daily News last Monday read: "Muck Growers Fear Crop Damage" and the Page 1 story was accompanied by a large photo of standing water creating a small lake in the Elba area.

Other headlines this week called attention to something of vast importance to the agricultural community of this region. It was the groundbreaking ceremony for the long-awaited and hard-won Small Watershed Project for Genesee and Orleans Counties.

For decades people with a relationship to the rich agriculture of the muckland area, and people associated with the Soil & Water Conservation Service, plus lawmakers on the federal and state levels, labored hard to get movement on this program, authorized finally in 1975 but not begun until now. Even at this date, Congressman John J. LaFalce notes that continued funding is strictly an "if" proposition because of the stringency of budgeting in Washington.

Over the long span of years some growers who have worked the black earth of the 2-county muck region have made a great deal of money. Others have lost everything, despite the rich soil and great vegetable potential.

The central fact is that 6,500 out of nearly 50,000 acres in the muck drainage area are regularly put under water by run-off from higher ground and tons and tons of soil are eroded in the process. High value vegetable crops are lost through this occurrence.

The long-planned drainage program embodies 90 miles of channels and over 100 water control devices. Only 10 acres of land will be taken out of production.

Federal funds and local taxes will combine to support this sweeping project and everyone in this region, with its agricultural heritage, can be encouraged by the start of the work, even at a late date.

The dictionary will tell little about the word "muck" that is so familiar to us. It is listed mainly as black earth with decaying matter, or simply "vile filth". That hardly tells the story of this "black gold" in our vegetable raising area.

Rep. LaFalce said, in turning a spade of earth to start the work, "Everyone who worked to bring the Oak Orchard proposal to this point joins me in feeling that we did not give up when the going got tough and the project seemed bogged down."

We salute all those people, past and present, who labored 30 years or more to bring the watershed plan to reality.

J-A
6-10-82

Obituaries

Cecilia A. White

Cecilia Ann (Clél) White, 76, of 573 East Ave., died Thursday in Medina Memorial Hospital following a lengthy illness.

She was born April 4, 1911 in Medina, daughter of Joseph and Anna (Hoffman) Kuspa. She graduated from Medina High School in 1927, and from Rochester Business Institute in 1928. She completed three years as an enrolled student in extension at the University of Rochester with a major in science aiming for a pre-medical background. This was discontinued due to health reasons.

She married James A. White in 1939 and moved to Geneva where Mr. White supervised housing during construction of Sampson Naval Hospital as well as manager of Holland Furnace Co. office there. She served as chief clerk of the Rationing Board in Geneva during the second World War years, and later at American Can Co. in Geneva, as a secretary.

Mrs. White returned to Medina in 1948 due to the illness of her husband. Her father died in 1937 and her mother married James F. Kuspa in 1939 when they opened a restaurant outside of Medina, known as Kuspa's Restaurant. Due to the illness of Mr. Kuspa Mrs. White assisted in running the restaurant.

Mr. and Mrs. White moved into the family residence at 573 East Ave. and he continued in the plumbing and heating business in the community until his death in 1961.

She was employed at the Journal-Register for a short period of time after her return to Medina, and then went to FMC Corp. Ag. Chem. Division in 1953, ending up as secretary to Dr. Robert L. Gates, director of research and development. She was employed there for 22 years retiring in 1976.

As a member of Medina's Village Manager Party, Mrs. White was elected to the Medina Board of Trustees in 1967, the first woman in Orleans County to hold an elective office. She resigned in 1969 and was appointed village historian.

She was a member of the American Red Cross Gray Ladies in Geneva during the second World War where she served as Sampson Naval Hospital. She was a member for over 15 years in the county committee in the early stages of the Health Systems Agency. She was a member and secretary of the Medina Housing Authority for approximately 16 years, and was a member of the Board of Trustees of Medina Memorial Hospital for 12 years.

She was also a charter member



and former board member of the Senior Citizens of Western Orleans, was a member of the American Association of Retired Persons, and was the first president and a member of the Medina Historical Society and was instrumental in obtaining the building which now houses the local museum.

Mrs. White provided many articles for the local paper including "Historian's Scrapbook", "Medina in Bygone Days" and miscellaneous articles of interest to local residents. She has spoken before many groups including school groups on the history of Medina and has written two booklets on the subject, one in 1972 at the 140th anniversary of the incorporation of Medina as a village, and a second larger edition in 1976 for the sesquicentennial of the United States of America, both for the Medina Historical Society.

She was also a member of the Medina Business and Professional Women's Club, a member of Region 8 Municipal Historians and a former president, a member of the American Association for State and Local History, a member of National Trust for Historic Preservation, a former member of Catholic Daughters of America, as well as a grand regent, and was a member of the Catholic Golden Age Group, a national society.

Mrs. White was a member of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church. She served two terms as president of Ladies Rosary Society there and was a member, served as church delegate to the Medina Area Association of Churches, served as delegate to the Region 27 meetings of the Diocese of Buffalo, was secretary of the Parish Advisory Council at the church, and per-

formed secretarial duties for the pastors at Sacred Heart since 1961. She was also responsible for printing of the weekly church bulletin.

She served as lector and Eucharistic minister at Sacred Heart Church and taught Confraternity of Christine Doctrine (CCD) classes for several years under the Rev. Joseph Rydz.

She was honored by Bishop Edward Head in 1986 with the St. Joseph The Worker Award for her many years of service to the church. She was given a plaque from the Medina Housing Authority for her many years as secretary of that committee. She received a plaque from the board of directors of Medina Memorial Hospital for her 12 years of service there.

She was named Woman of The Year by the Journal-Register in 1967. She received the Distinguished Service Award by the

Medina Chamber of Commerce for her many years of service to the community in 1979.

She is survived by her mother, Anna Hoffman Kuspa of Medina, and several cousins.

Family and friends will be received Saturday and Sunday (2-4, 7-9) at the Gulinski Funeral Home, 420 Eagle St., where funeral services will be held Monday at 9:45 a.m., followed by a mass of Christian burial at 10 a.m. at Sacred Heart Church. The Rev. Thomas Taton and the Rev. Msgr. Eugene Marcinkiewicz will officiate and burial will be in Sacred Heart Cemetery.

Members of the Sacred Heart Rosary Society will meet at 2 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home to recite the rosary.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Sacred Heart Church.

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

A Tribute To Cecilia A. White 1911-1987

Medina Historian Vol. IX No. 38

On behalf of the Orleans County Municipal Historians I would like to pay tribute to the memory of Cecilia A. White, Medina Historian, who passed away recently in Medina Memorial Hospital after a long illness. She was a devoted historian and since her appointment to the post 25 years ago, had many accomplishments to her name in the field of historical research and interpretation. Her lengthy obituary which appeared in the Journal Register on Sept. 11 certainly gave testimony to Ciel's accomplishments and many well-deserved awards during her life-time. To publish here a biographical sketch of her life, would only reiterate what appeared in her obituary. Therefore, I'm going to let Ciel speak for herself. It seems that back in 1982 Ciel was interviewed by Helen McAllister through the Orleans County Historical Association's Oral History Project. Through Ciel's love of local history she wished to impart historical appreciation to others. Therefore, what better way to pay tribute to the honor of one whose heart was so intrinsically a part of Medina's history than to learn from the life of this most respected lady in her own words.

Here then, follows numerous excerpts from the Oral History interview: Ciel speaks, "I was born in Medina on April 4, 1911 in my Aunt's home down on Gulf Street. My parents are Anna Radzinski Hoffman and Joseph Hoffman. Shortly after my birth, they moved to Shelby Basin for a short while and then purchased this home here at 573 East Avenue where it's been in the family ever since. I was about four years old when we came over here.

"In those days the conditions were bad and everybody worked, including my mother and myself, as soon as I was able to do so. I was a husky young gal and in the summertime my mother would take me down on the muck farm because she felt I could work right along with her.

"I went to school during the school year, but on Saturdays and in the summer, which is when they needed the help the most, I worked on the muck.

"My father worked for Bill Gallagher as a mechanic. Mr. Gallagher was a road builder and contractor, and my father worked for him a good many years. Then he went to Heinz's.

"During the regular season (on the muck) when you were weeding, as it was called, you got paid by the day. If I remember rightly, the women got \$1.50 a day, but the kids only got \$1.00. I guess they figured you wouldn't do as much or that you would monkey around so much, or something. But it was by the day, and it was from seven (a.m.) to five (p.m.). You would have an hour for lunch and, of course, everyone would

have to bring her own lunch. Our job was dependent on the crop; onions and carrots required weeding, and after the lettuce had reached a certain height it had to be thinned out because the end product was a head lettuce. . . rows were actually, I would say, a quarter of a mile long. You would start out in the morning and go down the end of the row. The other thing was you were not right next to the next person. . . You'd be working a single row between your knees straddling this row, then they would skip a row and that was your "coming back" row. . . As I recall, the ladies that worked with Mother were Polish; my mother's sister and some of the other people from down in the Gulf Street area. This was true on the other muck farms (they all had the same crops as I recall).

"The one thing that I remember very distinctly in all the mucklands were the wind breaks — the rows of trees. I think they were Lombardy (trees) because they would break off a stick and put it in the ground and another tree would come up very quickly. Everything grew very fast. This helped prevent the wind from removing the top soil, the black muck.



"As I got older and realized that I was working on the muck farm while some of the kids (friends) in school were working in the store or something, I got a little self-conscious of the fact that I was working on the muck farm. It was sort of degrading — you know how kids are. So, Mother finally said that when I got into High School I wouldn't have to go and work on the muck.

"Mother kept the money (I earned) and it was primarily a family "kitty." We had bought this home here on East Avenue and it was mortgaged. We never had that kind of money, and we wanted to pay off the mortgage. The family was one where they didn't get anything unless they paid cash. That was the idea. It all went into the "kitty." Of course, Mother bought all my clothes and my books, and I think I got a dime to go see "The Perils of Pauline" and "Tarzan and the Apes" at the old Diana Theater on Saturday, if I was good during the school year and if I didn't have to work. So I never had an account of my own.

"Another thing I didn't mention but I think it would show the attitude of the people working; they sang a lot. One of the things they sang were many of the old Polish hymns. I can hear those echoing even today because all the workers knew them. The ladies sang as they went along in their work.

"But in those early days there was, more or less, a "caste" system. In those days you called it "living on the wrong side of the tracks." There were the poor people and the rich people. The rich people were generally known as the "400." That was the way they said it in those days. . . . these people had established businesses on Main Street or in industries in town and had made a considerable amount of money. They were wealthy by the standards of that day. Had built some very lovely homes, and brought their children up with the finest of everything. Consequently, we on "the other side of the tracks" meeting them in our bloomers and our sweater, and probably at the end of the day, very dirty, were considered "poor trash," or "poor whites." We were in a different category, even though we washed ourselves and cleaned up just as well as they did. None-the-less, you felt this; and this was true in school.

"Another thing I didn't mention but I think it would show the attitude of the people working; they sang a lot. One of the things they sang were many of the old Polish hymns. I can hear those echoing even today because all the workers knew them. The ladies sang as they went along in their work.

"But when I grew up I began to realize that this was a type of mental barrier. I think most of the people here today never think of it in the same light. Now there may be a few, but that has passed. Of course, the Stock Market crash, and the bank failures, and a few other things took some of the kinks out of the pocketbooks of some of the "400" . . . I always said, "If you do an honest day's work, you gotta be proud", and I always was.