



Orleans County Historical Association

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NAMES

Ethel N. Willis, 35 yrs./Bignall
father: Elmer E. Willis
mother: Ella Bailey Willis
brother: Gerald Willis
sister: Genevra Willis
brother: Robert Willis

Ziba Roberts/Callie Roberts

Ebba Peterson (Clifford Wise)
Eather Peterson (Chas. Overholt)
Victoria Peterson (Harold Swans)
Edith Grant (Walter McAllester)

Henry Robbins, Bignall Pres.
Thomas Robbins, Bignall V.P.
Clarence Holmes, Bignall Sect.

school teachers:
Miss Letts
Albertina Yagge
Margaret Lenihan
Cora Newnham
Grace Rugg
Josephine Turner
Edith Benedict
Winifred "Do-do" Clark
John Harry Parry, principal
Maggie White, night school

Dr. Rogan, health officer

Harold Suzanne
Boyle sisters
Stanley & Francis Rook

Bridgett Kelly

1901-1989



Orleans County Historical Association

INTERVIEW

Miss Ethel Norene Willis
520 Eagle Street
Medina, New York 14103

Ethel N. Willis, Born January 28, 1901

Interviewed by Helen McAllister, Medina, N.Y.
June 27, 1979

W = Willis

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.

Ethel M. Willis

Signed

June 27, 1979

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Heleen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

June 27, 1979

Date

W I am 78 years old. I was born January 28, 1901 in the village of Knowlesville. My father was Elmer E. Willis and worked in Mr. Gillis Cooperage making apple barrels. In those days, a family bought their apples by the barrel in the fall and stored them down cellar, and they were their fresh fruit for the winter. We had only an orange or a banana on very special occasions. My mother was Ella Bailey Willis. I had an older brother, Gerald, five years older than I; an older sister, Genevra , four years older than I; and a younger brother, Robert, three years younger than I.

Of course I remember nothing about living in Knowlesville. But I do remember this: when I was a little girl, my mother told me that it snowed the day I was born -- big, soft snowflakes. And she told me that I came down from Heaven on one of those big, fluffy snowflakes. I thought that was much nicer than to be told, as some of my contemporaries were, that you were found in the garden, under a cabbage plant! .. You see, in those benighted times, it was not considered necessary to begin a child's explicit sex education at the age of four.

We moved from Knowlesville to Medina when I was 14 months old, and lived on East Center Street. There were then no streets between East Center and Elizabeth Street. My brother and sister went to school at the Elizabeth Street School. When I was playing in the back yard, I could look across and see the children at recess at the school. There were no houses between State Street and Bates Road. That is, there were no streets between, and very few houses beyond our house on East Center Street.

One thing that I remember that occurred when we lived on East Center Street was this: in those days, the village garbage was collected in an open wagon and the man who collected that was a man named Silk, probably Silkowski, who lived somewhere east of the village. He had a dog who accompanied him on his rounds. One day the dog bit my sister on the back of her knee. When the doctor came to take care of her, Mother sent me outdoors but I knew that he cauterized the wound with a hot iron. Of course, the eight year old girl had no anesthetic.

When I looked across at the Elizabeth Street School I could hardly wait until it was my turn to go to school. When I was five years old, we moved from East Center Street to Bennett Street and then I started kindergarten. At that time we had kindergarten for two years. The first year, we went in the morning and the second year in the afternoon.

When we were in the fifth grade I went home from school one day and announced to my mother that the little girl who sat in front of me had lice ! And Mother said, "Ethel, that's an awful thing to say about any little girl!" I said, "But she does! I saw them crawling on her hair!" And Mother said, "Ethel Willis, don't you ever let me hear you say that again!" Two or three days later, I didn't have to say it because some of Mary's lice had taken up residence in my long, thick hair. Mother discovered them when she brushed my hair! Very soon all the pupils in the fifth grade had lice. Mother sent my older brother to the drug store to get something to take care of them. Of course he was terribly embarrassed but Mr. Ross, of Wright and Ross Drug Store, sensed his embarrassment and said, "I'll give you what my mother used on me when I had lice". So he sent him home with Tincture of Larkspur. A few days later our teacher, Miss Letts, came to Mother and said, "I have lice too. Can you help me?" (laughter). So she came each day after school until her lice were taken care of.

At that time we had no school nurse, no school doctor, no dental hygienist. In fact the school paid very little attention to the health of its pupils.

When I was 12 or 13 years old, during the school year 1913-14, an outbreak of smallpox occurred in the village. The Village Health Officer, Doctor Rogan, decreed that no pupil could go to school without being vaccinated. But that was the village action, not the school.

Mc What were the vaccinations like?

W The doctor scratched my arm in a tic-tac-toe board form and then smeared it with vaccine. As a friend of mine said the other day, it bubbled and boiled all over the place! A celluloid shield was put over it and held on with a bandage. That formed a big scab and a scar. My brother knocked my arm and knocked the scab off. So I

now have a scar about the size of a penny on my arm.

I always loved school and all my teachers. In second grade we had dear, little, shy Albertina Yagge. In fourth grade our teacher was quite different. She was a big, hearty Irish-woman by the name of Margaret Lenihan. All the pupils loved her. Then there was Dora Tanner who made bird-watchers of all her pupils.

Mc How did she do that?

W Why, she had pictures of birds all around the room above the black-board. And we talked about birds, and we kept a bird calendar.

Mc She really stirred up your interest!

W Yes, she really did. In fact in all of nature. She made us aware of nature, but particularly the birds. Then there was Cora Newham and Grace Rugg, Josephine Turner, Edith Benedict. Edith Benedict was the one who gave us an appreciation of the beauty of good literature. At that time, there were two men teachers in the high school, but aside from them all of our teachers were women and with exception of Mrs. Turner, all single women.

One interesting event which occurred when I was in the lower grades, was our annual celebration of Memorial Day, which we called Decoration Day. On that day we assembled at the school by grades, the boys wearing white blouses. Not shirts, blouses! And the girls, white dresses and each of us carrying a flag. At the appointed hour, we marched to the Armory where veterans of the Civil War and the Spanish American War had already assembled. The ceremony started with our singing the Star Spangled Banner. Then there followed speeches, during which the boys wriggled and squirmed, and other musical selections. One which was included in the program every year was a solo by my great-great uncle "Zibie" (Ziba) Roberts. He always sang "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder" and was accompanied on the piano by his daughter, Callie.

Mc Who was the music teacher at that time?

W Miss Winifred Clark was the music teacher and she directed us in the singing of some patriotic song. We called her, which wasn't very respectful, but she was known to the children as "Do-Do Clark" because she always started our session with "Do-do".

Mc That was for do-re-me?!

W Yes! (laughter).

There were three elementary schools in Medina at that time: the Elizabeth Street School which carried pupils as far as the 4th grade I believe; the Oak Orchard Street School which was located on the south side of Oak Orchard Street, east of West Avenue. Pupils attended that school until they were through the sixth grade, and then they came to the Central School which was located at the head of Pearl Street, where the High School building now stands. All of these buildings, with the exception of the Elizabeth Street School, were built of Medina sandstone, as was the High School building.

Mc Where was the High School?

W The High School building was on the same block as the elementary building on the south-west corner. That would be the corner of South Academy Street and Ann Street.

Mc Did the youngsters that came in from the country do "basket-boarding" ?

W Basket-boarded. Yes.

Mc Did you know of any who did that?

W Yes, we had a brother and a sister who basket-boarded at our house for awhile. The pupils from the country who drove in kept their horses in the drive-barns, so called, at the foot of Pearl Street.

Mc Would you tell us a little bit about your High School experiences?

W Well, High School: nothing startling happened in High School in those days. We had no high school chorus or band or anything of that sort. It was strictly business. I completed my high school course in three years, and that meant studying every evening because most of the time I was carrying six or seven solid subjects. So I personally didn't have much time for frivolities.

Mc At this time, you started working at the age of 14, right?

W Yes. I went to work at the Medina Dry Goods Store at the age of 14, working Saturdays and vacations.

Mc You really didn't have much time to lolly-gag around!

W No, not too much. (laughter)

Mc You were graduated in 1918 with, how many in your class?

W Twenty. Our High School principal was a young man, really in his middle twenties, by the name of John Henry Parry. He was the one who introduced, first of all, the idea of a high school play each

- year, and then also the idea of the Daisy Chain for graduation.
- Mc Where were your graduation, or commencement, exercises held?
- W In a building called the Cook Auditorium which was west of the present Cook block. The Cook Auditorium has since been demolished.
- Mc When you graduated in 1918, that was the time when we got into World War I. Do you remember much about that?
- W Oh yes! I remember some of the older boys running down to the Armory and enlisting. My brother, who was through school and working in Niagara Falls, enlisted. Many of the boys my age and a little older eventually wound up in the Army or the Navy. Of course it meant that we didn't have a lot of the things that we normally would have had, social occasions at the school and so forth, because everybody was deprived on account of the War. I remember the parade when Company F left to go to camp. All the Boy Scouts and the Campfire Girls, and all the other organizations in the town took part in the parade.. Then of course when they came home again, there was another big celebration.
- Mc That was about the time of the flu epidemic ?
- W Yes. In fact the day that the Armistice was declared, my sister and my brother and I were all in bed with the flu.
- Mc Do you remember how you were treated for the flu? They didn't have Penecillin or Sulpha did they?
- W Oh no. We just wore it out. That's all. Of course it was a very severe epidemic and many people died. After we all had the flu, my mother went to take care of other people in the town who were sick with the flu.

After I graduated, I went to work full time at the Medina Dry Goods Store. Of course it was not necessary for me to have had working papers previous to that time because if a boy or girl could find a job, they were free to go to work. At the Dry Goods Store we worked from 8-6, five days a week; and on Saturday from 8-10. We worked for the magnificent wage of \$8.00 a week! As a matter of fact, I worked for fifty years without having more than two weeks vacation in any one year! During the year that I worked at the store, after I graduated, I went to night school. It was a little private school run by Maggie White, and there I learned shorthand and typing.

- On my 19th birthday I accepted a job at the Bignall Company office.
- Mc How did you hear about this job?
- W Mr. Henry Robbins, who was the President of the Bignall Company, spoke to my brother Robert at church one day, and told him that if I was interested in working in their office to go to see their office manager, Mr. Clarence Holmes; which I did on my 19th birthday 1920. Now I was getting \$10.00 a week for a 48 hour week!! When I finally reached \$20.00 a week, I thought I was a millionaire! Why, I was earning over \$1,000.00 a year! (laughter)

The Bignall Company was one of six foundries in Medina. In fact Medina was really a "foundry town". There was the Medina Stamping and Machine Company on North Main Street. They were strictly a brass foundry and machine shop. There were three foundries where they made pipe: the Butts and Slack Foundry at the west end of town where the Fisher-Price plant now is; there was the Medina Iron and Brass Foundry located on the railroad at East Avenue; and the Central Foundry located across the canal on Glenwood Avenue on the east side of the street. On the west side of the street was the Swett Iron Works. They did not make pipe, and neither did the Bignall Company. Those two foundries did make pipe fittings. The Bignall Company was located on the East side of Main Street in the space between the railroad and Starr Street. Incidentally, that was the oldest foundry in town. It was founded in 1850. I do not know under what name it was organized or who the original owner was. I do know that in the later part of the 19th century it was owned and operated by Mr. L. C. Bignall. He had a daughter named Rose, who married Mr. W. B. Robbins. They built the three story mansion which is on the corner of Catherine Street and Park Avenue. Around the turn of the century, I suppose Mr. Bignall had then died, Mr. Henry Robbins (who was always called "Harry" for some unexplained reason) moved here from Pittsburgh and bought an interest in the business, with his half-brother. When I went to work at the Bignall Company he was the President of the Company, W. B. Robbins having died. His son Thomas B. Robbins was the Vice President, and Mr. Clarence Holmes was the secretary of the Corporation and the office manager. When he died in 1930, I succeeded him. In the meantime, I had taken a correspondence course in accounting and had become the book-keeper of the Company. I still continued to keep the general

ledger and to do the financial statements, and the income taxes. But the part of my work that I enjoyed the most was the cost-accounting. Of course, in order to do that I needed to know every step that was involved in the manufacturing of the product and the cost of the raw materials that went into each unit. It was very interesting work.

Mc What did the Bignall Company make?

W They did not make pipe, but made pipe fittings. We also made job castings for other people to incorporate into their products. Originally the Bignall Company made a line of pumps, both well pumps and cistern pumps. But by the time I went to work there, that part of the business had been discontinued. However, they did make iron sinks ranging in size from 12 by 20 inch kitchen sinks, to a mill sink that was two feet wide and ten feet long. The best houses in town all had black iron sinks in their kitchen and most of them had been made by the Bignall Company. In fact at one time they shipped out freight car loads of these sinks. Of course that business had fallen off when I went there, but as late as 1930 they were still selling several hundred sinks per year. We also made boiler stands. This was a round iron stand that supported the cylindrical galvanized iron tank which stood in the family kitchen next to the range. Of course the range at that time, used wood or coal for its fuel. In conjunction with the reservoir at the back of the stove, these range boilers supplied the family's needs for hot water.

Mc What about getting the materials here on the canal, or taking it away. Was the canal used?

W Well, the Swett Iron Works and the Central Foundry deliberately located their plants where they did in order to use the canal for bringing in their raw materials. The three other iron foundries that were located on the railroad, brought in their supplies by rail. They also shipped their products out by rail. When I first went to work at the Bignall Company, it was carted to the freight station in a wagon drawn by horses. I continued to work for the Bignall Company for 35 years, until the business was sold in 1954.

Mc Do you remember the time of the Big Depression of 1929?

W Oh yes! Indeed I do! At the time, it was pretty grim but there

funny things that livened it up too. My mother and I lived in the east apartment of our house at the time, and in the west apartment there were three teachers by the name of Peterson, plus the school nurse, Miss Edith Grant. The night that the banks closed, we were standing, the six of us, around the door between the two halves of the house, bemoaning the fact that all of us had lost money. Suddenly a mouse ran out of their kitchen, across the corner of our dining room and into our kitchen! Quicker than a wink, Esther Peterson snatched off her shoe, ran out into the kitchen and whacked the mouse over the head with the heel of her shoe. Then, triumphantly she came back, holding the mouse by the tail and saying, "Meat on the table, girls! Meat on the table!" (laughter)

Mc Who were the three Peterson girls who lived here?

W Well there was Ebba Peterson, who became Mrs. Clifford Wise; Esther Peterson her twin sister, who became Mrs. Charles Overholt; and their older sister Victoria, who married Mr. Harold Swanson.

Mc These ladies were all school teachers?

W All school teachers. The other lady was Miss Edith Grant the school nurse. She later married Walter McAllester.

Mc You have told me that during the Depression, you used to rent jig-saw-puzzles?!

W Yes. Curvins Store carried jig-saw-puzzles which you could rent for, I imagine, 25¢ for a certain number of days. So we used to put them together to amuse ourselves. That was cheap entertainment. One Saturday evening the girls all came into our house. Some of us went down to Curvins and got a really big jig-saw-puzzle and brought it home, and all six of us started working on it. About midnight, Mother made some coffee and sandwiches. We continued working on the puzzle 'til 2:30 Sunday morning. But Mother insisted that even if we didn't get much sleep, we still had to go to church.

Mc When the Depression came, it seemed a rather sudden thing. Were you able to continue working?

W Fortunately I worked steadily but all the other girls in the office were laid off from time to time, for a week or two at a time. As I see it now, the reason why I probably worked continuously was that I understood all of the office procedures. Therefore when I was alone in the office, the business could be carried on in a normal way.

- Mc Did the Medina foundries suffer at all because of the Depression?
- W Oh yes! Business fell off very decidedly, and like every other business we suffered. In fact, Mr. Harry Robbins owned stock in the Union Bank here in Medina, and at that time a stock holder in a bank was doubly liable for the value of his stock. So in the process of raising the money to cover his double indemnity, Harry Robbins lost the Medina Stamping and Machine Company, and also the beautiful stucco house that he had built, up at the end of West Center Street.
- Mc Is that the house where Doctor Corlis lived?
- W Yes. Dr. Corlis bought that home during the Depression when the bank receivers had the sale of it, and they sold it to Dr. Corlis.
- Mc But Mr. Robbins was able to keep the Bignall Company going?
- W Yes, and they moved back down onto Park Avenue in the house where they had originally lived. In the meantime, that house had been sold to someone else, but they were unable to keep up their payments when the Depression came and so it reverted to Mr. Robbins. Both he and Tom Robbin's family moved into that house. Both families moved into that house.
- Mc Do you remember the banks closing and how it affected the people in Medina?
- W Well, it was pretty grim. It was pretty grim for everybody. There wasn't anybody in the town who wasn't feeling it; really feeling it!
- Mc How did this affect people's relationship, one to the other? Did they become more closely knit or did people go off by themselves?
- W Oh, I think that people, as people will in any disaster, helped each other out and held each other up.
- Mc Do you think that at that time, the church's social life, as well as their religious faith came more into the foreground?
- W Yes I do. I think that in the early years of the century the church was a social center anyway, but I do think that during the Depression.. Well, for example: there was a group of boys and girls in the Presbyterian Church which I attended. They were high school boys and girls, most of them, and they had no money for good times and they wanted to organize a young people's group. They asked me if I would help them organize and be their advisor. I had taught some of the boys in Sunday School when they were about twelve years old. That young people's group became very much the center of their social life during the Depression. There were about 35

members in the group eventually and they were "brothers and sisters" to each other. They really loved each other, those boys and girls, and they still do!

Mc Could you think of several that might have been in that group?

W Well, there was Stanley and Francis Rook. The Rook family was very well known here in town, and there were two Boyle sisters. Harold Suzanne was very much a part of it too!

Mc You were telling me about a play that the group put on and how they worked with, really nothing.

W They wanted to do a Biblical play, so we sent for a copy of, "For He Had Great Possessions" by Dorothy Clarke Wilson, which is a very excellent play. And they set about to build their own scenery, but they had no materials. So, they went to the furniture store and begged the cardboard boxes that the mattresses had come in, and with scrap lumber that they could pick up anywhere they built their own scenery and covered it with crepe paper, with a stone pattern, so it looked like a stone wall. They made their own costumes out of any materials that they could find anywhere. Boys and girls alike sat on the floor and sewed stripes on the Biblical coats, and when it was their turn to go up onto the platform to say some lines, somebody else took over the sewing. They really had a ball doing it, and they loved it! They made their own fun. Everybody had to make their own fun during the Depression!

Mc You were their leader during that difficult period of time; did you continue as leader for a number of years?

W Oh yes. That group held together for, oh I wouldn't know how many years. Probably ten years. I have always been interested in working with teenaged boys and girls and young adults, and have for some reason or other always had a good rapport with them.

Mc You have said that you started going to church at a very early age.

W Yes, I was five years old when I started going to church. As soon as my brother was big enough to be carried to church, we all went to church, the whole family; every single Sunday! In 1909, Mrs. Robbins, who was then my Sunday School teacher, gave me my first Bible in recognition of the fact that I had not missed a Sunday in Sunday School for over a year. I still have that Bible.

- Mc Then you went on to hold another office in the church?
- W I was Superintendent of the Intermediate Department in the Sunday School for a number of years, sang in the choir, and I was also treasurer of the Presbyterial Organization (the women's group of the Presbytery). Of course, as I say, our life has always been connected with the church. I have many happy memories of going to the Sunday School picnic at Elm Park, as all Sunday Schools in town did at the time. Maybe not all of them were conveyed there in a coal wagon, as we were. But the Superintendent of our Sunday School when I was a little girl, was Mr. Watson Barry and he ran a coal business. So when it came time for the Sunday School picnic, his coal wagon was carefully washed down and blankets put along the sides of it, and that way we were taken to the Sunday School picnic! I remember the first time we went in an automobile, and that was quite a treat!
- Mc At one point in your life, you went to the Lyndonville Presbyterian church and were active there as a teacher too, weren't you?
- W That's right, and there again I was teaching high school juniors and seniors.
- Mc Didn't you write a church pagent?
- W At the time we had the 125th anniversary of the Medina church, I wrote a historical pagent for that occasion.
- Mc Earlier, I was asking you about evangelistic services that might have been held in the area and you were telling me about one. I wish you'd tell it again.
- W In 1914, when I was in the 8th grade, a team of evangelists called Burgess and Butts came to Medina to conduct a campaign, which was backed by the Protestant churches of the community. They built, of all things, what they called a tabernacle. It was a very rough building, covered with black tar paper. The building was erected on the corner of West Avenue and Park Avenue, on the southeast corner. They didn't lay a floor; it was just the dirt, covered with sawdust. They made rough wooden benches to sit on, and built a platform with raised seats behind it for the choir. It was just an ordinary evangelistic campaign of the sort that was carried on in a good many places at that time. Of course, that was about the time of the Rev. Billy Sunday, you see, and so it was quite a movement through the country at that time.

Mc You said that the tabernacle was packed every night?!

W Every night for about three or four weeks that the campaign went on. And I do remember that some 20 people were added to the role of the Presbyterian church at the close of the campaign. The other churches added a number of members too. Some of those people became very staunch officers (supporters) of the church.

Mc What happened to the tabernacle building?

W Oh, it was torn down when the services were over. It was very much a temporary structure.

Mc Miss Willis, do you remember "Old Home Week", back in 1906?

W Oh yes! That was quite an occasion! We had booths built on the sidewalks, all up and down Main Street. The first ice-cream-cone that I remember was made at one of those stands, and it was a wrap-around type of cone. The cone was made on a hot iron, like a Swedish waffle would be, you know. A round, thin wafer-like, wrapped around to make it cone shape.

Mc Was that similar to what we would call a sugar-cone?

W Yes, like a sugar-cone.

Mc Did they have a parade?

W Oh yes! They had all sorts of parades and fireworks, and all sorts of things! The Sunday Schools each had a float in the parade, and the grownups of the church walked in front of the float. I rode on the Presbyterian church float. I remember that we carried parasols made of folded paper, like you'd fold a Christmas bell. My parasole was pale green I remember. I have a picture of that parade, and in the picture it shows that the street was just a dirt road. The cross-walks were at the corner and one was between the two corners and were of stone. All along the curb were hitch rails where farmers hitched their horses when they came in on Saturday night to do their shopping. Of course there were no automobiles at all. I remember when automobiles first started here in the town. A few people had them, and you could tell for half an hour after one had gone by because you could still smell the fumes. Talk about air pollution!! (chuckles)
Old Home Week was quite an occasion!

Mc Was Old Home Week a celebration every year?

W No it wasn't. In fact I only remember that one Old Home Week while I was growing up.

Mc Did people return to Medina for this?

W Oh yes, people did come back. They came back as they did for the Bi-Centennial a couple of years ago.

Mc Do you remember riding the trolley cars?

W Yes. The trolley ran down East Center Street and along Main Street to Commercial Street, and up Commercial Street. Our family used to go down to Olcott sometimes, for an outing, and of course we rode on the trolley! Miss Benedict, our English teacher in high school, commuted back and forth from Brockport on the trolley. And I had an aunt who taught in Lockport, and she commuted on the trolley. In fact, there were some of the pupils in high school, when I was in high school, who came up from Knowlesville every day on the trolley.

Mc You have been driving for quite some time. Do you have any memories of your first ride in an automobile?

W Well, the first one that I really distinctly remember was when we went to the Sunday School picnic in an automobile, way down to Elm Park! (laughs).

Mc Elm Park was just down the Gravel Road (route 63), wasn't it?

W Yes, maybe a mile and a quarter from here. It was quite an occasion.

Mc How long have you lived in this lovely home, Miss Willis?

W This ten room house, at 520 Eagle Street in Medina, was built where the Armory now stands. Were you aware of that?

Mc No, I wasn't.

W Well, it was built about 1850. In fact at one time I found in the crawl space over the bedroom, 1852 newspapers. So I'm sure it was built about 1850, and I know from other things too. It stood on the property where the Armory now stands. That whole piece of land surrounded this house. Then when the Armory was built, this house was moved across the street and was turned around.

Mc This house was moved, across a street?!!

W This house, yes, and turned around! And I played in this house as a child. My friends lived in it, on Pearl Street. And then in 1911 my friend's family, their name was Rowley, wanted to build a new house. So they sold this house to Bridgett Kelly. Bridgett couldn't even sign her name, but she was sharp as a tack! She bought this house, and again it was moved and turned around and

brought up to its present location. It was moved on rollers, and pulled by horses. I remember watching them move it. They had to take down telephone wires that were across the street, to let it pass. But this big ten room house was moved twice. I have lived in this house since 1925. I begin to feel at home here. (laughter).

Mc Did your mother always live with you?

W Oh, I always lived at home, yes, with Mother.

Mc You have traveled a little bit; you went to Alaska?

W Yes, I have been to Alaska. That trip was 15,000 miles, and then I took a 10,000 mile trip to the west coast. I've been three times to Nova Scotia. Oh, Nova Scotia is beautiful!! And of course, New England and Florida and the Great Smokies. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to see all those things.

Mc When you traveled, did you usually go with a group?

W The long trips, to Alaska, the west coast and the Great Smokies, were bus trips. But to the New England states and up into Canada and Nova Scotia, we drove. Every time I've gone to Florida, I've flown to Florida.

Mc I've noticed that there is quite a bit of beautiful needle-work, needle-point, around your home.

W I like to do needle-point. I like to do sewing, I like to knit, I like to read, I love to write. I have written some children's stories, among other things. And I've done a bit of painting, miniatures. But I'm no artist, really.

Mc I think you are. I've seen some of your work. Miss Willis, would you be so kind as to read one of your own creations for us?

W Well, this I've entitled The Channel . It was inspired by a sentence in the minister's prayer one Sunday morning, and it goes like this: (see next page, page THE CHANNEL).

.....

Mc Thank you. That is beautiful. And thank you very much for this interview. I know that many other people will thank you too.

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Transcribed, edited, typed by Helen McAllister, Medina, New York.

long and he too, will welcome rest.

I sit in the twilight, quiet and alone. I think back across the day that has been mine. I knew morning and midday. I have seen the sunset and the lingering afterglow and now a cool little breeze gently stirs the maple leaves against a sky of pale gray-blue. I know that the color will deepen into darkness and it will be night. But what have I to fear? He who gave the day and all else beside will surely give the light of His stars to guide me. I am content.

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"Lord, guide us into the channel that is marked for us."

At first it is a little, laughing brook where shy bluets venture down to the water's edge, where birds sing and daisies smile a happy greeting from their sunny meadow.

But ever the channel becomes deeper, the current swifter. One day you round a bend and see white water ahead. There temptation swirls fiercely around you and there are the rocks that would capsize your frail craft and maim you for the rest of your journey. All of your strength and skill will scarce avail to bring you safely through. But just beyond are quiet pools where willows dip their branches. Here, for a little while, you can find rest and peace, - and joy. Joy in the knowing that if other rapids lie ahead you need not fear, since courage and strength are given for the asking.

Sometimes your river flows through pleasant pastures and abundant fields. These, perchance, give way to desert, - verdureless, without life. But wait! What stirred beneath that leafless bush? 'Tis some creature, ugly in your sight perhaps, but God's creature nonetheless. Grudge not to let him drink of your stream.

Or does your river's course lead into a deep canyon whose walls shut out the sun, making it seem the very valley of the shadow? Now lift your eyes and behold in the towering cliffs the everlasting might and majesty of your God. Now know that this, your course, was planned for you from time's beginning.

"Yea Lord, guide us into the channel that is marked for us and grant us the grace to trust Thee for a safe journey"; until all rapids passed, the desert crossed, the dark valley left behind, we come at last to the changeless sea of Thy great, eternal love.

Written by

Ethel N. Willis

Eventide

by Miss Ethel N. Willis

The soft first light of dawn gives no hint of what the day will be like when the sun reaches its zenith. Only when one experiences midday can one know its scorching heat. And the sun riding high in the heavens tells nothing of the sunset. Only when one has seen its brilliance grow dim can one imagine what dusk is like.

After a hot and weary day I sat in the twilight, quiet and alone. The sun had sunk in the west and the afterglow had faded. Now a cool little breeze gently stirred the maple leaves against a sky of pale gray-blue. Soon the color would deepen to darkness and the stars would appear. The hour of rest had come. I thought, "How like a day is the span of our life".

What can the little child, happily playing in the morning light, know of the toil and heat of midday? Only when noonday comes can he feel the burden of it. The strong man, striding so confidently across his own noontime world, notes the slow, uncertain steps of another. "When I grow old", he tells himself, "I shall hold my head up and my shoulders straight and I shall walk like a man!" How can he know? Duty may impel him to visit an aged one. He listens politely but the faltering speech annoys him and he wonders if this oldster has anything to say that is really worth the saying. As for himself, he has "important" things to do and he is impatient to be doing them. So he soon rises to take his leave. But before he goes, trying to be helpful, he would say, - he offers some advice.

Advice! He has learned so much since dawn but he does not think about how much the day has yet to teach him ere it ends. There are things that the harsh, glaring sun of noon does not reveal; wondrous, eternal things that can be seen only in the softer, gentler light of eventide. But how can he know? He has not yet seen his sky turn flaming gold and crimson nor sensed its fading into night.

In the full light of day let him learn all that the day has to offer. Let him know love and loss, disappointment and hope, fear and courage, struggle and triumph. All too soon the shadows will grow

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