

**PALMYRA KINGS DAUGHTERS FREE LIBRARY, INC.**  
**ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION - TAPE #33**  
**INTERVIEW WITH DURFEE PALMER**  
**MAY 6, 1985**

*Mr. Durfee Palmer lived on the Walworth Road just north of Yellow Mills for many years. Mr. Palmer is going to tell us about his early recollections of Palmyra:*

Mr. Palmer, can you tell us a little about your parents, and your grandparents, and where you lived when you were a young boy?

Well, we were born on the Macedon Center-Daansen Road. I was born in 1905. Two brothers were preceding me, two brothers were older, which was Ford and Clyde (?) and we lived there until 1910. We moved onto Walworth Road, onto an old farm that was an abandoned gravel bed. We lived there for five years, I think, then we moved down below Palmyra on the Yucker (?) farm on Faas Road. We were down there for three or four years; then we returned back to Charlie Johnson's residence on Quaker Road again, when Dad worked for Charlie Johnson for four or five years. Then we moved to the present house on Walworth Road, which was Theodore Whitlock's (?) residence. The farms were sold in 1924 for gravel purposes. So we stayed and Dad bought the little house. I lived there for 65 years, or something like that. The farm was sold several different times. They never did mine any gravel there.

1924, we worked on the power house and the canal. They rebuilt that power house which was to generate electricity for the locks, in Palmyra and Macedon. But the one before there went over on her side. The piling was undermined and they had to blast that all out to get the refuse (?) out of there before they could build a new one.

Question - Was that when they rebuilt the canal?

No, no. The canal was built first - the power house was built at that time - the first one.

Question - What year would this be?

1924. They used the water power to make electricity for the Palmyra locks and the line ran from Palmyra to Macedon - operated that too. But five, six, seven, eight years ago they tore that down. They thought they didn't use the power any more; they could but it cheaper, I guess, than they could operate. And it's still going on that way today. That's all I can tell you about that, John.

Question - What about the railroad? The Main Line and the West Shore. Did the West Shore Line go out along the Quaker Road?

No, too bad we didn't ask Coveney (?) that, because he's up on...The New York Central Railroad was built somewhere in the 18...29 or 30, I don't know. Then the West Shore, of

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course, is a branch of the Central. But that went from, oh my, I suppose from Buffalo to Albany. It didn't go to New York - I don't know, maybe it went to New York. But that was a branch of the Central. And there used to be some awful heavy traffic there.

Question - By your house?

No. It went by Garlock, where the lumber yard is today. It set right on top the railroad, right by Walton's. You can see that when you go by Don Walton's. Right up the line there. It went north of me, where you go under that curve, round the ...

Question - Going toward Walworth.

Yeah

Question - By the bus garage?

Yeah, there's a sharp curve there. Well, if you looked up on the inside, you can see traces of the railroad there.

Question - Yes. That was the West Shore.

Yeah, that was a two track line. They hauled the freight exclusively. Someway or another they'd get up to Wayneport, which is this side of Fairport. They could change from one track to the other there. And if the freight was heavy on the Main Line, they could shoot them on the Wes Shore. And at Lyons they could get back together again, on the Main Line, see? That would give them a chance to clear it. Same way with a wreck. If they had a wreck on the Main Line grid, couldn't get by, maybe the dispatcher would send the train down through here and get back on the Main Line in Lyons.

Question - All hours of the day and night? You could hear them?

Yeah, oh sure. Heavy, heavy. But there's a grade from Garlock to Walworth Road - I don't know what percent it'd be, probably a 4 or 5 percentage grade - and then trains would get hung up, oh boy, oh boy. They couldn't make the grade because they had such a pull. And then they'd have to cut them loose, or they'd have to get an engine to push behind. That's my recollection of it. Now the pit behind me, that's Kent's Pit, that was where they got the gravel for the ballast of the

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railroad before the crushed stones ever came out. And that stone pit up by Frank Smith's (5 pits) this side of the Walworth Station. That's a big one. That's the same outfit. They bought the two farms for ballast for the railroad track bed.

Question - The railroad?

The railroads.

Question - When you say ballast, what do you mean?

Well I mean instead of crushed stone, they used gravel.

Question - They set the ties on that?

Yeah, but when crushed stone came along, gravel was gone. But that one up by Frank Smith's is still around two hundred and fifty acres, or pretty close. That Kent's - the Kent's were very famous around that corner because there's four or five brothers. And where Wege lives, the brick house - that was a Kent. and the pit up there was the Kent's pit, where I am, and across the road where Dave Jordan is, so that when you go around that curve up around that way it was all Kents. But who I don't know. They said there's a couple of brothers, and they're probably well-to-do. But the church that started there - they called it Kent's Corners, when they had the Baptist Church started there.

Question - The Baptist Church on the corner?

No, no - where the schoolhouse was.

Question - Corner of Quaker Road and ...

No, it was next to me, with the Church. But they called it Kent's Corners because - (the Walworth and the Quaker Road)

Question - Did you belong to that church?

Well my dad and my grandfather were one of the deacons that helped start it.

Question - Your father?

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No, my grandfather.

Question - Your grandfather?

My great-grandfather was probably gone. I think I spoke to you that when Palmyra was young, that was the first Baptist Church for Palmyra and Macedon. Now that's the way I understand it. They came thru for years, but they had services in the houses before they built the little church. It'd be - Sunday - your house, my house, and then they built this little church; it's probably about as big as my garage - 24, 25 by 30 and they had a wood stove in there. And they had ministers different months and the house where I live was the parsonage. That's how they came to be so if the church was built in 1823 probably the house was ... same time probably. And they had church there for 10 or 15 years. Then as they grew, Palmyra grew and Macedon grew. Palmyra didn't want to come out, Macedon didn't want to come down, so Palmyra Baptists built one below the church there on the corner of Canandaigua and Main Street today where Mrs. O'Brien lives? That's what I've been told. That was a small small church. And Macedon then they moved the little church next to me up to Macedon and added it on to the one that's there today. But how, I don't know. I suppose they skidded it up, on skids. And then the one where Mrs. O'Brien was, they outgrew that one and they built the present one there today.

Question - And where did you go to church?

The one there now. Canandaigua and Main. And my older brother played the organ there for about 20 years.

Question - what was his name?

Ford

Question - Ford?

Yeah

Question - he played the organ?

Well, he was always a musician. My folks were always musicians. He used to ride a bicycle down to church. Remember Ray Converse in town?

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Question - Yes

Well, Ray Converse's mother played the organ for years there. And they had no electricity for the organ. Before electricity they had a bellows for the organ.

Question - have you ever seen a bellows work?

That's what my brother Ford did. He pumped this organ with air for the church's organ to make it play. And he was so enthusiastic over the music, he took a few organ lessons at Eastman. So when Mrs. Converse stepped down, then Ford took over. He played for about 20 years. But he fell and broke a hip and a knee and a lot of mishaps happened.

Question - did you sing in the choir?

No

Question - did your family?

No. Well, no.

Question - How would you get to church from your place?

Well, we had to drive with a wagon and horse probably.

Question - and where would you park the wagon at church?

Well they had sheds down behind the church, well behind Mrs. O'Brien's there is an alley in there.

Question - yes

And everybody that was anybody at all, at the church anyway, you put your horse in there. When you get talking to (Larnes Coveny ?) you go over there and ask him about a horse. He drove to school - a horse to school, and put the horse in the shed all day and drove home at night. That's the way he got in. These sheds were long, there was just room to put the horse and wagon in. They were closed. They were nice. But as they got dilapidated they tore them down about 20 years ago.

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Question - What would you do for entertainment when you were young in Palmyra?

Well, I suppose that I went to picture shows where, what was it, the Town Hall where the ..next to the ... oh, upstairs.

Question - the old fire house, the Village Hall.

Yeah, Yeah - the Fire Hall. They used to have shows there. I could come down on the trolley for a nickel and 10 cents for up in the balcony, upstairs at the it was called "nigger heaven" and a bag of peanuts, that was a quarter. We got 'em of George Brandetsas for a quarter. I could go to the show and eat a bag of peanuts and back home, and they were silent pictures of course.

Question - Did they ever have circuses in Palmyra?

Not that I recall. I've been to the city to see it.

Question - how much would it cost to go to the city? On the trolley?

I don't remember exactly John, probably 50 or 60 cents on the trolley. This aunt lived up in the city there - my father's sister. And her husband was a railroad man. I used to go up on Friday night and stay until Sunday night. And we'd go to the circus and we'd go to Vaudeville shows. Vaudeville - Mr. Bones and all them guys. They used to have some at the opera house then too. I can remember seeing them there - the black face comedians. But as far as the circus, that's the only one I every saw - the big ????. That's when they had the parades out in the city, but they did have them in Palmyra but I never went to any of those. But in 1914 I think they had a firemen's convention in Palmyra. Oh, they had a wire strung across from where Knapp's building was, or just beyond there, over across to the other building - and they had a tightwire walker, walking. I did have a picture of him, but I suppose it's gone. He had a thing here.

Question - a balancing pole?

Yeah, and he walked across the street.

Question - Were the Fair Days a big day? Big time?

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Oh, it was...now the Fair Days of course were always the last 3 days in September. Always, they never had 'em earlier because they had such a display of stuff - they waited for it to get ripe. Apples and squash and all that stuff. They had just as much fruit there as you'd have in a fruit stand in ... around the place. Apples and ice and stuff and grapes. Then this Woodley's (?) from Lyons. One son is living still. I ran into him 2 or 3 years ago. Used to come up with a great big load of bananas. Nice bananas, 10 cents a dozen. But the father's gone. Had his two sons - I used to see them a lot when they peddled there - one's alive yet, far as I know.

Question - Weren't bananas an unusual thing to have? Were they hard to get?

Well, they weren't too plentiful

Question - Did you win any prizes at the Fair, for produce?

No, I never took any myself, but I know different people who did. I won a prize once, (chuckles) on the midway there - they used to have all kinds of catch-alls there. And this one guy there had a thing you'd crank, and a monkey climbed a pole and at a certain speed, this guy would go up there, but too fast or too slow...If you went too fast, he wouldn't go up there. I won an alarm clock, (laughing) an old hand cranking alarm clock.

Question - Did they have a horse racing?

Oh yeah. You know, being young...I was...this was all before I got hurt of course. Doc Waters, he was veterinarian in town - he had a race horse. Don't you remember Doc Waters?

Question - oh yes.

Well he was veterinarian in town and he had a horse. And Gilmans they had, they used to have good races there. The grandstand over on the west side, where the bleachers are today. That was a great big monster of a grandstand and all the horses stables were underneath. About 13 or 14 years ago it all went up one night. (Fire was on January 4, 1964)

Question - Do you remember Pliny T. Sexton?

I just recall who he was. I think that's the first check I ever cashed in there...had a white beard.

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Question - Where was he located, Sexton? Right at the bank?

Why he was located on the corner there, where the -

Question - First Federal?

No, the northeast corner, not the one across. That was all Sexton property. And the park was all the park was Sexton's. And these free shows...your wife should remember those. They had free movies for the kids there in the park. They had a big thing set up on legs and the screen on the side of the building, where the restrooms are and stuff today. And it was all free for the kids.

Question - when did they have those?

Once a week in the summer - and of course the kids would hoot and holler. Our gang was one of them on the show. There were 4 or 5 boys and they had a day. It was painted with one black eye. Everything of course in those days, all the reading was on the screen. If they do something you have to read it. There were no talkies of course. It was a lot of fun.

Question - What about O. J. Garlock? Did you know him?

Well, my mother...I only knew him as he was in town. It seem, there's a book somewhere around, I ...she can't find it home but that book - the Garlocks were born, originated in Port Gibson. Garlock used to be in Port Gibson when he started "cooking". He had a kettle and some hose and something he melted (chuckles). That's the way the book reads. And then he - the 1st Garlock factory was down below the main office on the Main Street in Palmyra. Otto told me that, because he worked there. That was behind teh main office. Some way or another - don't know whether it was electricity or steam, they ran from the factory over to the big Garlock House, before anybody else had steam or electricity. I think it was a steam line that ran across on the street. Oh, I remember Garlock. He was just the...one who took the butter for five pounds for 75 cents. That's what they got for 5 pounds of homemade butter in those days. 75 cents. But as far as Percy, I never met the man, never talked with him. Of course, when they started Garlocks, you've probably heard how they did start it. Four or five fellas around town? Garlocks and Senator Griffith - the Senator's father - and oh - Main Street, there with the big house...there were about 5 of them who started it, had the money in there. Then somewhere in the later twenties they went to ... consolidated, or whatever you call it.



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Question - incorporated

They went to the stock market about that time. But they pretty near had their downfall there, and they were in pretty bad shape there at one time. You know Dick Parr don't you? Dick says to me one time, I know it used to keep (bc?) books then how they could make money, but now we know how to keep books and we don't make any money. That was ten, twelve years ago.

Question - Charlie Congdon, do you remember him?

Oh, year, Charlie and Edgar, his brother. It was his brother who ran the shoe store with his...Johnston Congdon? George Johnson was Charlie Johnson's brother. And Mrs. Walton, Don's mother, that was his sister. The three of them, and they were born I guess on the Marion road. It was about a mile, maybe a mile and a quarter from the bridge. Do you know where the Jehovah Church is on the Marion Road? Well that ... these people own it, next door now. That is the (?) Johnson farm and that was where Walton's mother was born, and Charlie and George Johnson. That's all I know. But George Johnson ran the shoe store where the Edgar ... er, next to the gas office on the east there - that was a shoe store. Johnson and Rogers, it started off with. And Rogers must have passed, and Edgar Congdon, or Charlie Congdon's brother got in there - Edgar. Nicest fella that ever came to Palmyra. He had that ... creepin stuff you can't walk or do (?). That's where, his downstairs - great big line to boots and bag, it was nice to go down there - those rubbers, you know? I had a pair of rubbers in felts - they were felt like they use in the snowmobile boots today. They were little boots, about that long, and there was one or two buckles on them. They got me a pair, I suppose for maybe a couple of dollars. I must have worn 'em home at night and they couldn't get them off me. I went to bed with them. I don't remember the episode, but that's what they said. They got 'em off me in the night of course. Oh they were...about that long. Your feet and all - you could stay out in zero ... just as warm.

Question - and Charlie was a lawyer.

Charlie was a lawyer. He went to school in Palmyra. But he got his start, you know, from Mormon Hill and all them buys. And Sexton, he Sexton was a, made a lot of ? country on this Mormon Hill, the Sextons and Charlie went in with that deal.

Question - did he own the land?

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Sexton did. The banker. He owned two or three places out my way. I don't know all of them. Then he owned some up on old Route 31, around the curve there. He owned that place where Warren Jordan ? lives, that's one of them. I don't know how he got them, well, I know how he got them, but ...

Question - And Charlie was his lawyer?

Charlie was his lawyer. That's what put Charlie on his feet there, that deal, there with the Mormons. That was...but Gallagher lived next to Congdon's. I think maybe one of them live there today, I'm not sure. Gallagher used to be the president of the First National Bank, where the Marine is today. I don't know what happened there. I drew wood there. I drew some, I drew Congdon a lot of stuff for his flowers, and a lot of wood. Used to have a fella who took care of his furnace. I drew, bought manure and sold it. Charlie said you snitched on me. But he got my place straightened up out there. Most places you have a deed, of the footage there. There was never no footage because that school, that church - I imagine it was a gift because at 50 or 75 cents and acre, or a dollar, a hundred years ago - it didn't mean too much. So I never could find out where the property came from the Johnson or the Whitlock farm. There was probably about 2 acres of the graveyard where I was next door. As I say, when the old fellas, now the granddad when he came up, he was a soldier in the 75, that was Revolutionary. And I imagine that the pension he drew bought that farm over where I was born, if the truth is known. No way of telling, but I think he drew 75 or 80 dollars a year.

Question - Is that old church still standing there, the old school?

No. Next door ... that's the third building on that same site.

Question - What about the little cemetery out in back of your house where Winston Churchill's relatives ...

That must have started about the time that church was there, or even before maybe because they go back to about 1800 in there. The Churchill's, I don't know what you're talking about that. But the first church, and as I say they dissolved and went to Palmyra and Macedon. And they built the little school. Don Walton said he went to school there when he was a boy and Don is 84. And they set the apple trees; the apple trees are all gone, but that was all apples where I was - all the way around. There were probably 25 apple trees there at one time. But

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they...kicked the bucket. And then they tore that school house down about the time the canal was being dug. Because I went by my dad was there and down where the bridge is by the canal, you had to detour over a little bridge to get around because they were just building the iron bridge and they had the great big hole there. And as I recall that must have been about 1913 or 1914. I don't know, it's so long ago. It's when they dug the canal they put the bridges up. Ted Weber. You know Ted Weber don't you? The different ones who built the bridges, different contractors and the piers that it set on, maybe you might have 2 or 3 contractors. Maple Avenue in Palmyra and Church Street or I mean Division Street and Church Street and maybe one up my way, was all built by the same man. And when you get on further maybe somebody else had it. That's ... well they got the gravel and they all built it by hand there. Then the trolley cars of course, the trolley cars were built, or opened up in 1906. Or a little after. 1906 that was all electric of course. It ran from Syracuse to Rochester, and the Auburn branch ran from Weedsport to Auburn, the same line. And then I think they had one from Syracuse to Oswego, the same company. There's so much to it John.

Question - I know. Tell me more about the railroad, the Main Line. You mentioned that there were 4 tracks. How could you tell which track ... who went which way and why?

The tracks, as I recall Track 2 and Track 4 were eastbound. And Track 1 and Track 3 were west bound. The fast passenger trains ran on the Track 2, the fast freights same way with going west - the number 1 going west was the fast passenger train. Track 3 was for slower freights or slow passengers.

Questions - Reading from north to south on those tracks, which track was number 2?

The first track eastbound was number 2 as I recall.

Question - to the south?

To the south. To the extreme north, or left would be the same - would be a slow freight eastbound.

Question - That was the number 4 track?

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That was number 4. Then the two tracks in the middle are west bound trains, one and three. Because they never ... by having four tracks, east was east and west was west. Today they got the two and they run them both ways on the same track. But they change them different places.

Question - Now can you tell us a little about how they picked up the water? For the fast freights and the fast express trains, east of Palmyra. How did they do it, and what happened?

Well, they had a water pan that was about a thousand feet long. It was a pan that looked like a long trough in the middle of the tracks.

Question - a trough?

A trough. It was 18" wide and maybe 10 or 12 inches deep, and it was a thousand feet long, roughly. And in the middle of the track - now this is East Palmyra, but they had them every fifteen or twenty miles because these engines had to have water for steam of course. From where they left Albany I think between Albany and Palmyra there were five different, four or five water stations. And when the engineer would come to this water, I never knew that but, well there was a blue light on the pole and you'd press a button somewhere and that would drop this pan and gravity would push this water up onto the back end. Oh they'd probably take 3 or 4 thousand gallons in a couple minutes and when you got to the end of the pan, the pan sloped up (which I didn't know) and that would raise the scoop up and lock it up under the tender. And that would shut the water off, from coming out. I still think that only the two tracks #1 and #2 fast tracks took water. In Waynesport which is east of Fairport there was a coaling plant and a water and cinders where they dumped the engine. That was run right around the clock of course. And this engine, if he wanted to take water - a great big monster tank - he'd let down in the back end, and fill himself with water. And the same way with the coal. They had the coal elevated up on the trestle, and they'd drive under, and let the coal down, a whole careload of coal. And the cinders, they could probably hold enough for a couple thousand pounds of cinders there, and drop them into a pit. There was a lot of live coals, they had to water that stuff. They went into a pit and when they got cool they elevated them up into a tank and drew them away into a car, because they had so many of them. That's, I was only there once in my life, so ...

Question - To change the subject, do you remember when Prohibition came in?

Oh yeah, yeah. Do you? ??? beer?

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Question - No. Before Prohibition, were there many beer places? What did they call them, saloons?

Well, they might have called some of them taverns, but I think they called most of them saloons.

Question - Is that ... what did they use cuspidors for?

Chewing tobacco.

Question - to spit. They chewed a lot of tobacco?

Oh that - that's customary.

Question - And did each saloon make their own beer?

No, I don't think so. As I recall, they shipped in small kegs. I don't remember seeing ... well, they had bottles, but they had half kegs. I guess the 30 gallon or 15. I suppose the Genesee Brewery or somebody ...

Question - What were the leading saloons in town, before Prohibition?

Well Eddy Crocker (?) was the ... he was the canal man so they tell me, and he was on Market Street right below the hardware where the dress shop was on the left side there. I guess it's apartments there now. That was a big one.

Question - Big Saloon?

Oh it was a big one, and down on Canal, which is all gone now there were 2 or 3 there. That was what made Palmyra - the Canal Street. The boat and everything. Riffenbergs, Hughes. Oh yeah and over across. There was that one across there, that's been there for a hundred years.

Question - Don McGuire runs it now. It was Hughes? Yeah it was Hughes. Our Place

Before that I don't know who. The Hughes brothers, two brothers. Doug and Tommy used to serve pork and beans there every Friday. Baked beans. I never had any but everybody else,

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anybody at all went in and got baked beans. And then there's that big house that they moved across the street from below the Journal office. It's over on the other street now. That was Riffenbergs. That was a small hotel. It had rooms and had a bar there. And down on the corner of Canal and - what's the one where the Market? That's Clinton? There were a couple down in there for the canal. Oh boy they were, they must have been ... and down where the dining car is today that was a big hotel, that was a big place on there. That was a bar room. There must have been all of six or eight in the heydays, the canal days. But of course, I never used 'em, I never got into 'em.

Question - What happened after Prohibition?

Well, a lot of boys made their own and a lot of it came out of Canada.

Question - did they have any speakeasies?

Well, if they did, John, I don't know. The Moose Club down there - they tore it down I guess behind the bank. There used to be a bar in there for Moose. That was a pretty elaborate place. But the different classes of people had different ones they went to , if you know what I ...

Question - Did you work at Garlock?

I got a job there, in - Pearl Harbor was December 7, ,1941 wasn't it. My brother's birthday (Clyde?) and on the 8th I went down to apply, when help was scarce and I went to work the 12th of December 1941. Garlock of all things, they had a guard all day. That was something they had guards all round, outside and in, those days. And they must have had around 6 or 8 on every shift. They had them til almost the end of the war. Them boys ... Gerald Wehrin? Both of them at one time, they were guards. If I took my time I could think of a lot of them.

Question - were you a guard?

Year, for a while. Never felt so foolish in my life. Started off with a shotgun, to patrol. But they had outside guys, this fellow you were just talking to \_\_\_\_\_, he was talking about the Hibbards; he's alive yet, up on Foster. He came out as an outside guy. Colder than the devil. They had keys outdoors, making a round every hour. At that time I happened to have two fur coats at home. I brought one down to him and he wore it one round and somebody said you hadn't better wear that here, because somebody might take you for an animal and take a shot at you.

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He wouldn't wear it anymore. But they continued on about 2-½ or 3 years outside until the war slowed down. I got 26 years down there. I worked from 1941 to 1968. And the thing I did last, I did for the ... after the war closed down I thought I'd be out of there, but ... I had some lubricating yarn and soaking and I did that thing all the rest of my life there. It was full of asbestos of course, and fiberglass. And of course they moved me; I put 13 years in at Garlock, then they moved the department over to Dealers and I finished up over there until I was ....?

Question - Did you see many changes in your time at Garlock.

Oh yes. Yeah. Well of course I was never around when they shipped the stuff of anything. They processed ... they had their testing over there but they made so much .... The old thing was all in regard to packing, years ago but then they made so many different things. They made a lot of stuff for Johns-Manville one time. And DuPont there - you wanted to see stuff going through for Dupont. But the asbestos mines in the world. One is in Africa and the other's in Canada. Did you ever see that one in Canada? That's the white asbestos. It's up around Montreal somewhere. It's mined. They have to blow the asbestos apart and it's like rock. Then they regrind it. That's where they get the stuff they use. And the blue asbestos comes from Africa. It's just as blue as the water would be. But they're both still asbestos. That's awful stuff to work with. You get it in your lungs you know, and it hardens there and you don't know it.

Question - You mentioned before about Don Walton on the Quaker Road. There was a regular little community up there wasn't there? There was the Waltons.

Well, Don's father. Don had one brother and one sister. There were three in the family. The older brother was ... he married a local girl in town, but they lived in Pennsylvania but they would come home every summer. The sister - she used to work in the Garlock office. She moved to Illinois and married somebody out there, but misfortune overtook her. So Don was the only one left of course.

Question - I that the Walton homestead where he lives?

No

Question - Was that called Wintergreen Hill at one time?

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Well now there you got me John. If it was it's beyond me. It's where Don Walton's father was born. Now the Dannsen Road today, goes down the railroad, Don, John's father or somebody, lived on that farm just before you go down the hill, but who I don't know. Don's father and mother probably lived there, two thirds of their lives. Mr. Walton senior was the president of the fairgrounds one time and the Fair, and also one of the banks, he was president of. Each and every morning he'd have to go down and register his name at the bank, and I remember that when Don was just a boy, he played basketball with the school team. Oh by the way, his brother's name was Clifford, and he married a Jones girl, which were all local. But as Don got older, why they - Clifford didn't want the farm, I guess and Don took over. Course he had a horse and everything to work with. Always had one or two hired men around there.

Question - Did the Flynn sisters live out there along Quaker Road?

Oh yeah, I don't remember if they were born there or not, but there were four sisters and three brothers that were all born there. One of 'em was a schoolteacher in Detroit, one brother had the Byrd Flynn store on the corner where the dress shop is today. There where Rubery was and Ann never married. She was the oldest, I guess. Anyway, we knew 'em all.

Question - what about Henry Mason?

Henry?

Question - Yeah. Did he live on Fox Road? Did he build piers for bridges?

Yes, he's the one I told you that built the - I told you some contractor built the piers. Well it seems he built the one at the Walworth Road, and I guess Maple Avenue or Division. That's what Ted Weber told me. That was before my time, before my recollection. They called him Hank, I guess for a nickname, Hank Mason.

Question - What was that Yellow Mills, that you remember?

That old mill was built way back in the 1800's sometime. Used water power for grinding and everything. They ground grain there for people. They never made no flour there, to my recall, but everything was one. They had two big water wheels - they took the water out of Mud Creek. That's how that dam came to be there. The water wheel - just like the power house - they'd open the gate and the water would come in and it would turn the wheel around and



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around and around, and whatever ... They had stone grinders years ago. They had two big stones that ran opposite each other. I don't know how they...and they'd set them down fine enough to grind the grain. Man, of man, when that was working she'd hit the stone and they'd, they blew! But that all went to pieces. Barnhart's building was the same thing, that was water power at one time. They took the water, as I say, out of Mud Creek. They had a dam, what they had was a surplus there and if it's any interest to anybody they tell me then was four or five mills between Palmyra and Victor at one time on Mud Creek. I can think of three but I can't think of any more.

Question - What are the three you can think of?

Well, the Yellow Mills, one in Macedon, and the old Red Mill which is up south of Marvin's golf course today. It was right down in the hollow. There's traces of it in the middle of it. Then there was one up this side of Victor, probably, there's a trace over there. But that was gone before I ever saw it. It's said, between Palmyra and Victor - five mills.

Question - Was there a mill east of town at the Wizeman's? Where the funeral home is today, that little creek or the ice.

No, no. That was an ice plant, ice house. That big pond, out back of course it's probably filled up now, but on the old 31 road they'd block it off, flood that place. Probably two, or three years they'd flood. Fall and winter time. And when the ice got ten or twelve inches thick, they'd start cutting by hand. And throw them big monsters in the ice house - probably two or three thousand tons they'd hold. Then they'd peddle the ice around town in the summer in wagons, and everybody had an ice box. If you wanted fifty pounds, then he'd chop it off, maybe estimate it, and throw it over his back, bring it in and put it in your icebox. Lot of people fell in those creeks then. When you saw ice, you sawed it length wise, a long strip, and you sawed a bar off about the size you wanted. Most of them were 18 by 24 inches. And you'd take a cake that felt thick, that had some weight. But they had an elevator. But I know of two or three that fell in the water there. Not nice in the winter time. That must have been a cold one. Good ice don't make though until you get down to zero or something like that. But that all went by the wayside.

Question - Then, there was a Schraeder that lived at ... did they live at Yellow Mills?

Well, Leroy lived right down on the corner below me. He was a son of some of the original ones around town.

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Question - Well, Cyril Batterby - his mother came from England. I don't know, they weren't Schraders, Batterbys was ...

Question - Reggie Neale and ...

Reggie Neale had 2 or 3 brothers. He lost his mother young. George was his father and they lived in that corner house where Schrader did at one time. Whether they knew it was Mrs. Batterby or not I don't know, but she came over from England somewhere around 1922, with Albert and Cyril. And I suppose married George, which he had four boys to begin with. There was six boys in that house on the corner where Schrader was. Reggie's brother was an attendant up in mountains at the Raybrook Sanatorium. I don't know, the two more, what happened to them. But Albert ... Is he gone too?

Question - yes

He was just about 3 years old when he came over and he used to come up and see my mother. My mother was kinda sickly. But the funny thing was Albert says to my mother, I gotta go home when it gets so dark. He measured it. Nobody ever determined how dark it was by...

Question - Me measured with his fingers

He described when he had to go home, maybe an inch apart, when it got so dark.

Question - he'd pinch his fingers

That's what he told mother. He used to come up and see her. Well, Cyril is Cyril is gone too? He married a girls who used to work in the Post, no the Journal office.

Question - You knew tappington? Tap?

Oh, Ed? Tappington was Charlie Congdon's father-in-law. I guess he must have been a Garlock guy. But he chewed a little tobacco, on the? His wife wouldn't let him chew at home, they tell me. That's how I know. But in later years he'd take care of people. A great big deep voice. A big tall man, always dressed with a bow tie, fine, you know. And Gert (?) Chapman's wife, she was sister to Tappington...or she was the daughter. Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Congdon were sisters. Charlie's wife. But Tap, of course, he'd bum a little tobacco off somebody. Used to have a fella that carried the mail from the Post Office to the Garlock office. He was always bumming a little tobacco off him.

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Question - There were Durfees around the North Creek Road, near Swift's Landing, are you related to them?

No, They were big farm owners. Somebody must have picked their name to name e. That's all I can recall.

Question - It's a historical name, isn't it?

Yes and it's fairly unusual. I think ... When I was born we lived on the Daansen Road, I told you, the old house... There was a lady who lived up the road, she thought that would be a pretty name, now I've been told. That's all I can tell you.

Question - You were talking about the Mitchell place on the North Creek Road.

Yeah, that I understand was a Durfee farm. Remember where Vern Cater (?) lives on the Jeffery and... I don't know - that intersection. That was one of the farms, I do know that, and where the rest were I don't recall. And of course the Durfees probably bought some of this ground off of the Phelps & Gorham purchase. Phelps and Gorham started in Pennsylvania and run all the way to the lake. And they sold these sections off in different places. Maybe that was some of it.

*Editors note: John Swift and John Jenkins bought townships of Palmyra and Macedon from Phelps Gorham and then sold acreage to individuals.*

Question - How did you light your home in those days.

Well it was

Question - Before electricity. Did you have electricity right away?

No we had kerosene

Question - When did you get electricity?

I didn't have electricity to the old house until almost in the... I got it in the last end of the war days in 1944. I guess it was at the house there.

Question - What did you use for light before that?

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Kerosene lights and lanterns. But they had lead in lights they came out with and probably somewhere in the late 20's or 30's. They burnt kerosene but they had a mantle in 'em. The mantle would generate air, oxygen, which made kind of a white light, which was very good. We had two or three of them. But they had little core (?) on them, like the gasoline lantern and you had to be careful of kerosene of course because it made a smudge. Heydays - Rochester Burnin (?) made a big kerosene light, and the old Diety (?) made kerosene lanterns. And all railroads - on the railroads, it was all kerosene lanterns. But you could swing them things over your head and they were broad. They had a red and white lantern on the railroad. Red for danger and white was all the different signals. We paid 10 cents a gallon for kerosene when I was about 12 or 14 years old. Guy came around with a great big barrel, had two barrels on it - five or ten gallons or whatever you could put in a container.

Question - Looking back, can you remember the first time you saw an automobile?

I would say about 1910, I saw my first one. Had solid rubber tires on a lot of them. The shifting levers were on the outside of the drivers. You had a shifting lever and a great big hand brake, which only broke the two back wheels. Mr. Sherburne originated in Walworth and somewheres around that time he picked up the Ford agency for Model T's. and they'd ship 'em to Walworth station in a box car unassembled. They would ship probably three or four cars in a box car. The wheels were off and the tops were let down, and they would stack 'em some way. The wheels was hanging in the roof. They would come down from Walworth and assemble these cars, bringing some gas down, and drive 'em to Walworth because that was where the man lived. He had a garage up there before he came to Palmyra. It was Sherburne, Sherburne Garage - U. W. Sherburne. And Home Bassage was his son-in-law. I guess Home's alive yet. He worked for the garage as a mechanic in those days. Him and I talked about driving them up there. And the little joke about Model T cars - one's going down the road after the other - what time would it be? Tin after Tin. That's a joke of the year.

Question - Were the horses afraid of them?

Well I suppose yeah. More or less.

Question - When was the first time you had a ride in a car?

Well, my brother bought one, in Palmyra, where the lawyer is there now. That was a big garage there. Still there isn't it?

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Question - Where is it?

Where the lawyer is - Morrell and Converse?

Yes. That was a big garage. Used to be a great big monster of a house set there, but they tore the house down and put a garage in there. And Blazey was in there at one time, a welding shop and Wizeman Brothers were in there.

Question - Right in the center of town?

Right where that, where Jerry is now.

Question - What's his name, the lawyer?

Gary Morrell

Question - Morrell. There's several lawyers in there. Used to be the Star Marken once.

Yeah

Question - Right in the center of town.

Before it was the Star Market it was a garage. Loghery & Chisholm had the dealership for Fords at that time. That was before Sherburne came to town. My brother bought a Model T car somewheres in the late twenties for four hundred and thirty dollars for the car, delivered! No tax. Just the top on it. Course they never closed until later years. You had side curtains. It was Mica you put on there. No heaters, no nothing. Just the bare...four cylinders. Two or three pedals on the floor - clutch, reverse and brake, I think. The clutch you'd push down to go ahead slow, then you'd get maybe ten miles an hour, you'd lit it back quick and you were in high gear. Then the rest of your speed was controlled by whatever gas you - 25 or 28 miles an hour top speed. I drove one to Ohio in the dead of winter to take the fellas out to Ohio. Took us 14 hours! Right in a blizzard, oh man, oh man. Those side curtains - I said they went on to the top and on the bottom, with screws, turns. And no wipers, you had a hand wiper then. If you got in a sleet storm, why you hung a salt bag onto the...put salt into a bag and put it on your wipers and that was to cut the ice. It all ran down into, oh ... no heaters.

Question - Can you remember what kind of cars O. J. Garlock and Pliny T. Sexton had?

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No

Question - Did they have cars?

That's beyond me John.

Question - There's a picture in the Village Hall of an automobile, with O.J. Garlock and Pliny T Sexton beside it. And it has great big square headlights, high windshield. Well, they were, they used a lot of 'em with an awful lot of brass on 'em. On the old cars, they had the big brass...from the radiator up to the top there.

Question - What kind of cars would they be?

I don't know, John

Question - I mean what kind of cars did they make in those days?

Well, they made Cadillacs in them days. Of course General Motors picked up a lot of cars that they discontinued.

Question - can you remember the Marmon? (The Marmon was produced from 1902 to 1933 in Indianapolis and was often called "the nearest American approximation to the Rolls-Royce—this data was entered by C. Deys in 2025)

I remember hearing about 'em. Marmon, Packard, Duran? (I think this might be a Darrin built by Kaiser Motors in 1954 - info added by C. Deys), and Star.

Question - Did they make a car in Rochester?

I don't know about a car in Rochester; they made a truck up there. Selden, I think it was.

Question - Selden Roadmaster

Yeah, that was a big one. And then the Essex. That was discontinued. Hudson    ?   's father was a great Hudson man. They had two or three of them. A little thing about Don Walton, him and his mother were coming from downtown one day - one night - in a snowstorm, and the train going west on the West Shore and Don didn't see it and he ran right into a box car with the train moving! But they didn't wreck the car and didn't hurt either one of them. But Don

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will tell you that today if you ever talk with him. It seems as if they could have heard it, but they didn't. But they'd been right down below Don's house between that and the corner of Maple Avenue. A train going east hopped off there one time. The car came right down the road on the highway there. Then of course they had a big crane, they picked it up. That's why I was always leery about going along there at night.

Question - Can you remember the first tractor?

Well, I remember the first Ford of course, there were tractors before that.

Question - What was the first tractor you owned?

Well that was a Ford. Crank all day on it, wouldn't get started. Had a magnet on it, that guaranteed the power. Well the Ford did too.

Question - What year would that be?

The tractor? Well the first one I saw was probably somewhere in the late '20's. Used to be made over in Ireland at one time. Yeah they had two factories. Ford had a factory over there, they claimed they were a much better tractor than here. But all Ford cars on the flywheel had magnets, and as that would turn, it would generate electricity. And that's the only way that a Ford Model T ever ran. Until later years, they put a battery onto 'em and they had a starter on them. But I had an old 1915 you cranked your head off and it was the same way with a Buick. Some - when they perfected the starter - all old cars never had no starters on them years ago - but the Buick, I guess, had about the first starter ever to go on the line. It was electric, of course. Now the Dodges used to be an independent - Dodge owned the Dodge brothers, and the northeast factory in Rochester built these great big monster starters for the Dodges. They were a starter and generator combined. Just as quiet - you'd step on it - hmmm - motor would start. Then she'd throw a switch and you'd generate. The things were that big around. I had two of those. But if the generator ever got out you'd want to have a good fact pocketbook.. I had 3 or 4 Dodge cars, used cars and 3 o 4 different trucks in my lifetime. The Dodge, even when they had them big generators, they had a 12 volt battery on them. And if one of them went to pieces you had some trouble. You couldn't buy them like you could today. You paid ...

Question - how were the roads? Were they very comfortable to ride on?

Oh they were all dirt roads.

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Question - Would the horses balk when they saw you coming?

No, not a good horse. Every farmer had mostly their work horses for the farm and they'd generally have a driving horse for going to town or church or something because farm horses were big and clumsy, and a driving horse was like a racehorse. That's what Coveny drove to school all them years.

Question - What's his full name?

Ernest. Ernest Coveny

Question - He drove a horse to school?

Yes, I told you he put the horse in the church shed. We had a couple of horses on the side.

Question - When the first tractor came in, did they come to see it from miles around? Did they introduce it at the fair?

Oh they had demonstrations.

Question - at the fair?

Yeah at the fair, and I guess they - I think Sherburne had - I know Sherburne had the agency - not early in life, but later on, and they'd have plowing contests. Maybe you know everybody'd go see what they could do. But they were bulky, oh man, and they were on iron wheels. There was no rubber of course, on all four wheels was iron. Great big lugs on there. Jar your eye teeth out. If you weren't careful, if you had a spark, it'd either advance or retard it and if you forgot to retard that, it would twist your wrist, or you'd go flying over in the ditch there. It was the same way with International Tractors. That was the same thing. Course that did have a breaker on the lag(?) that you could drop down so she couldn't backfire. But I had one, oh, 10, 20 - when that barn b burned across the road where Wege was; the barn went up in the early 40's. The people lived there, Frank Sptiz(?) lives up by the railroad now, by the Walworth. He had two boys. I says to Frank, you can take the tractor to clean out the junk. They intended to build but they never did. So Frank didn't come over; the boy came over which was about 16, 17, set the gas on it, didn't doop that thing down, twisted his wrist. Snapped right over. I wasn't home at the time.



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Question - These plowing contests, what would they do? Between tractors or between teams of horses?

No. If you were a dealer, why would you have this demonstration of what a tractor, a plow would do. I don't recall any others of that time, but of course there was a John Deere and the International and Moline. At one time the Moline got a two wheel tractor that you set on to your tools as you use. If you had a cultivator and drove this two wheel job. They were steel too. But I guess they didn't go over too good. The leading ones of course - International, Ford and John Deere.

Question - It saved a lot of work didn't it:

Oh, well yeah.

Question - Saved a lot of back breaking work?

But them old Fords would get so hot, oh, they burnt kerosene in 'em. If you got 'em hot. You started 'em on gas - they had a little tank on there. You'd start them on gas and get 'em hot then you would burn kerosene in 'em.

Question - What would a tractor cost?

Well you got me there John. Not too much, probably eight, nine hundred, a thousand maybe, I don't know. Where the gas station is - Contents and all of the school street - that was Pliny T. Sexton's too. That was all into beans one time and another time it was all into corn, all the way from the road clear to the back end where Dick Parr and the school is.

Question - Tell me again when that is. Contant's gas station.

That fronts on 31 and the school house is way back. Where all the houses are on the street, that was all farm ground. Two fellas had it into beans one year - I remember that. And then later, another fella had it all into field corn. Where Dick Parr lives today, was a great big elm there, great big monster. And this man that had the corn then, they husked corn with a machine - they still do - and I can remember seeing the corn down here and blowing the stalks out there in a great big pile.

Question - What about the thrashers?

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Question - Did you feed them?

Yeah, they'd stay nights too. That's a funny part. If they were only 3 or 4 miles from home, they'd stay all night with you. Dirty? Oh my God. And when everybody's thrash of course that's call for a big dinner. That's what you hear people tell about, a thrashing dinner. They had 3 or 4 kinds of pies and probably five or 10 pounds of roast beef and vegetables in season. Oh, I can't begin to tell you, John; This is my day, but ... and the farmers would trade work. Walton would trade work with Whitlock and Whitlock would change with 3 or 4 more, Wells and ... whoever was your neighbor would trade work.

Question - what does that mean?

Well, I mean you come help me and I come help you. There was no money involved. There was just the friendship between the two. You'd get your work done. But we had one old fella in the neighborhood, particular he had a great big watch - one of them old \_\_\_\_\_?\_\_\_\_\_ key winders. And he only had a small farm. It might take him three hours to do his job, but if he came back and helped you five hours, he had to get paid for the two hours over what his was. And I remember that watch. Thirty cents an hour, thirty-five something like that. But the old steamers, you had to buy the steam coal for them. You went down to Sessions which was down where the lumber yard used to be and you bought steam coal for this engine. Then they had to have a water tank dragging along behind. They had to have water for the engine. So wherever they get water around the country they'd have to take a team and go get this water in great big oh, 2, 3 or 400 gallons of water, and pumped water into the tank. You had a hose there. It sucked into the engine. That;s what made the steam. All kinds of steamers - there was the Case and the Fritz and there was an engine Clyde one time down here in Clyde, NY. I can remember about four or five steamers. If they ever have that steam contest in Canandaigua, you ought to go see it some time. Boy, the Baker engine that was a beauty. But that Case engine, that was a marvel, oh - very quiet. The old Fritz, these they made in Pennsylvania somewheres. They were a double cylinder. Most of the engines just had one big cylinder on. But these others, the double action, they had a lot of power. The old steamers drove with a great big gear from the - they had a big lever and that throwed this into where you could drive it on the road. A great big cog. If you ever stripped them, you didn't go. That was a steam engine in my day, was the thrasher.

Question - They'd go from farm to farm?

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They went from farm to farm. If you had a big barn, you could put your oats in, which is first harvest, maybe raise some barley for your pigs or something - this is ground feed. And your wheat, of course. If you had a big barn. But if you had a small barn, they had to come a couple of times to do it. But your crops were as big as what your barn could hold. So this old big steam engine would come around. He burned coal. And he carried 3 or 4 men with him, I guess, three. And a big separator, put in your barn, and this old steamer there, he'd line up the belt with the machinery, and then back up there, and the steam engine drove the thrasher. A long time ago, of course the bundles, the man after the reapers, that bound the bundles. He'd come down to the bundle and they'd have to have two men to feed it. One man'd set there on his knees and cut the bands and then the guy shoved it into the machine. There's been a lot of mishaps there, because they wreck the devil out of you. But then they got the automatic cutters on there - blades - and that done away with any chopping. So you harvest your grain out in the lot with the binder and set it up in shocks. That would dry thoroughly and then you put it in the barn. Bundle for bundle. Then you'd pitch it all out into the machine and the straw went outdoors onto the stack generally. First they had carries, they didn't have blowers, they had carries that would carry it out. You put two or three men on a stack to make a big stack. And that was the dirtiest thing that ever came down. But then when they got the blowers on there they'd replace the carries - that was worse yet, because ... Then of course they separated the grain from the chaff, and you had to carry your bushels. They had bushel baskets that the grain ran into and you carried it into a big bin you had in the barn. On the machine, to keep track of the bushels they had some kind of clock that they'd trip it every bushel and that told how many bushels you had, see? Otherwise you wouldn't know what they're thrashing.

Question - How would the thrasher charge?

I guess he charged so much a bushel as I recall.

Question - He took part of the crop? So how many shares?

No, you paid him whatever. If it was two or three hours for the job there and you got two or three hundred bushels, whatever he charged a bushel you'd pay him in comparison.

Question - Would he pay his own men, or would you pay them?

No, no, he paid his own men.

Question - but that is gone forever?

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Yeah, I guess there's some thrashing machines around yet.

Question - But the combine replaced all that?

Yeah, they thrash the lot and draw it to the barn. But your wet grain, and your corn especially, today you have to take it down to Agway and dry it when they ... the gas. It's so much a bushel. You'd probably eat a tenth of your crop up before you'd get any money.

Question - why is that?

Why, the moisture in it. Everything has moisture in it. This wheat dried in the lot generally was bone dry when you draw it into the barn. And as it sets in the barn it would re-dry more. Today, when you harvest out of the lot - you can go out there after a rain and this here dampness - the moisture, of course, takes up everything that goes in the grain. And when they sell it, it's - they can't sell damp grain because of mold. It's got to be so dry before they can resell it, to the mills or anything, or the corn. That's why they have to dry all this stuff today, down to Agway with the gas. It's terrific - you know what gas is. Imagine using probably - what would a house use for a month an ordinary house?

Question - 2 or 3 hundred dollars?

But I mean the quantity of cubic feet. That down there - great big flames. So therefore

Question - It has its advantages, and disadvantages?

Yeah, today it's nothing to go out and sit on a combine and harvest 15 or 25 acres a day. Nothing to it. But still ... now the old - did you ever hear of a ... well anyways, like a scythe. They cut this grain by hand. Cradle. Did you ever hear of a cradle? It's a blade, they cut the grass, or the grain, then they had three or four tines that the stuff would fall onto and laid in a row. That was two or three men doing it. They probably didn't raise over four or five acres. But you cut that by hand. Then somebody came along and tied that up into bundles with the grain, what they called a grain tie. I can ... do it years ago. Then they'd thrash it with a flail, for a shape around it. It was long - stick about that long with a handle put them in a \_\_\_\_\_ and bang it. That knocked the grain out. Then you would take the straw out and clean this grain somewhere and that where you got your grain. But this cradle was a great big monster.

Question - That's what the pioneers did?

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That's what the pioneers did. But before they - after they got the cradle they had a something that went around and they'd cut it, and made a little bundle and that they threw on the ground. That was before the binders came along - a reaper. It kinda went around and around. It would cut here and pass it around and drop it over here. But then they perfected the binders which is a grain binder, the ....

Question - McCormick

McCormick and Deering (?). I think they merged in later years but they were 2 separate ones then and the knotter, a knotter that tied a knot to the grain. That was quite a stroke of perfection. It tied a knot, and it elevated it up the elevator and when it got so big, that thing would trip and tie a knot. There would go your bundles

Question - Well, I want to thank Mr. Palmer for his wealth of information and conclude this interview on this day, Monday, May 6, 1985. Thank you very much Mr. Palmer.

