

PALMYRA KINGS DAUGHTERS FREE LIBRARY
ORAL HISTORY OF PALMYRA
THERESA BOWE WIZEMAN
TAPE 32
PART 2

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This is the story of Theresa Bowe Wizeman who took her place in the unfolding like of Palmyra, interviewed by Betty Troskosky:

In a way, my early life in Palmyra was somewhat like a typical pioneer woman's life where she had to get out in the fields to help her husband get in the crops; only in my case, it was to help my father, as he had no sons.

While I was growing up, I helped my father with his ice business. He had an ice pond with two ice houses across the road from our home on Vienna Street. When my father and his men cut the ice in the winter, they drew the ice cakes into the ice houses and then packed them all around with sawdust to preserve it for the following summer. It was hard work, and my mother held an ice cream and cake party for everyone who had worked on the project. There were about 20 men. They had a great time relaxing after their labors, cracking jokes, talking and laughing together.

I did my part on weekends in the summer months when the ice had to be delivered. I drove two fantastic big gray horses with the wagon load of ice through the village while a man rode along to cut the ice. To save a trip to each house for the iceman, people put a card in the window telling whether they wanted 25 lbs., 30 lbs., or whatever their ice box would hold. The customers each had books of tickets they had bought for \$2.50 or \$5.00, and tore out the appropriate amount to pay for the ice. Children along the route would run out to get the ice chips that fell as the ice was cut. It was a great treat on a hot summer's day. I did this year after year until I went to Rochester to business school.

I also helped with a neighbor's grist mill that later became a cider mill, and at one time I drove other horses in Macedon to collect hay to go to the farm my father owned then. His farm was on the Vienna Road, on what was known as the Murphy farm. On the property was a little private family cemetery that tells a tragic story of Martin Smith and his family. Martin lived from 1808 to 1859. The dates of the life of his wife, Welthea, are obliterated by time. The tragedy is told in their children's short lives: Peter, born in 1833, died a year later; Michael was two years old when he died; little Margaret lived one year; finally William lived at least nine years. No one knows much more about the family or what happened to the little children. John Tsroskosky became interested in the little plot that was overgrown by sumac, and interested some Boy Scouts in clearing part of the little cemetery, and did some clearing himself in the myrtle covered ground, just out of respect for the little family.

Born Theresa Bowe and later married to Louis Wizeman, I lived for a short time on the Marion Road, then to Johnson Road where the Barton Dahneke family live now, later moving to Macedon for four years where the fine large Marvin family grew up, across from today's Chase Pitkin store on Route 31. When I was about eleven years old, after the farm was sold, my father held a huge auction.. As people bought things and paid them, we had to have on hand a lot of change. When the auction was over, there was about \$1000 which my father, in spite of my tender age, had me take to our new home on Vienna Street in Palmyra. I was pretty excited and a little scared at that age that my father had the faith in my ability to get what seemed like an awful lot of money home safely by the trolley. But I did it.

We came to Palmyra to live in the house where Cady, Mate, Sinclair Funeral Home now stands on the east end of Vienna Street. We finally moved next door on the west into the present house which has been home since 1915, *where my husband Louis and I brought up our five children, ably assisted by my parents, Edward Bowe who grew up in Pumpkin Hook and my mother whose maiden name was Margaret Mahoney, born on a farm in the township of Macedon. All four grandparents were born in Ireland.

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I walked to school from the east end of Vienna Street, up to Canandaigua Street to the school known then as the Palmyra Classical Union School which was on the site of the present elementary school's playground. It was the second brick school to have been on that land. I was graduated in 1922. While in school, I was on the girls' basketball team for 5 years, one year being in Junior High. I treasure the picture I have of the high school team, complete with our white middie blouses and black ties, and the huge bloomers that were required then. We had to make our own uniforms, the bloomers alone taking five yards of material. The girl's names were: Eleanor Smith, Betty McGonigal, Helen Baker, Hazel Shimmin, Belle Jordan, Pauline Bareham, Gerry Greenwood, Miss Rupp the coach and me. A few of them are still in the vicinity. We went by trolley to Newark or wherever the game was being played, were guests of the opposing team for supper. They boys' team came in the evening to play. Those were the days!

The trolley that ran from Rochester to Syracuse from 1904 to 1931 played a big part in my family's life. My father often rode the trolley to Rochester on Wednesday afternoons to the horse auctions and sometimes went to the Employment Officer to hire farm help. In the fall of 1922 I went to the Rochester Business Institute, commuting each day. I had to walk from our house up to Kent Street where a bridge used to go over the Erie Canal, and Harold Gilman who lived on the corner of Vienna and Kent streets, joined me to ride to Rochester. If either of us did not happen to be at the stop when the trolley came the accommodating conductor waited for us. We had books of 25 tickets good for 30 days.

After going to RBI, I worked for Hines and McCabe, contractors, who worked all over, wherever business took them. Sometimes I was alone in the office all week. I worked for them until they went out of business, still commuting by trolley. The company paid their employees by cash, so I had to figure each employee's hours and wages, go to the bank and get the correct exact amount of each person's wages. Once I had to carry over \$5000 from the bank back to the office and get all the money in the proper envelopes. When I finished the job, it was late. No one else was there. I didn't like to leave all that money in the office overnight, so I carried it home on the trolley. I knew my father wouldn't approve of what I had done, so I hid the money in the clothes hamper until next morning at 5 o'clock, took the trolley to Rochester, transferred to a train going to Letchworth Park where the men were working. I was met by the foreman who took the money. It had been a nerve wracking experience, one I didn't want to repeat.

I had been working for the State Bank of Palmyra when James H. L. Gallagher became President of Wayne County Trust Company when the State Bank of Palmyra and the First National Bank of Palmyra merged in December of 1929, having worked for them about a year and a half.

My husband to be, Louis Wizeman, was not a Palmyra boy. He originated from Pennsylvania where he worked in a bakery, but came to visit his brother Paul who lived on Vienna Street and had a garage there. Before he came to Palmyra to stay, Louis worked his way across the country to California. When he finally came back to Palmyra, he became a partner with Paul. Later on he went to work at Garlock and became a machinist making gaskets. When he got an order from a good customer that he thought would be ordering again in a few weeks, he'd make enough gaskets for two orders and have them ready when the second order came, thus keeping ahead of his work.

Louis and I went together for four years before deciding to marry in 1926. I asked him where he would like to live. He was very fond of my parents and they were of him, so he elected to live with them and help them. They loved him very much.

We had five children: Kathleen, married to Mervin Lewis lives in Brookville, Ohio, in charge of a laboratory; Joe married to Nancy Rabbitt, live on a farm on the Faas Road in Palmyra; Patricia, married twice, has a son and a daughter, is a lawyer in San Francisco; Margaret teaches in Niagara Falls, head of libraries of eight schools; Joan, was married to Robert Poulson, has forty-five people under her in the State of Ohio where she handles the welfare office in Newark, Ohio. This is a family of whom I am proud.

Over the years I have been involved with church work and Palmyra organizations. At one time I was chairman of a card party at St Anne's, but my father needed help on the farm, planting beans. I, while driving a truck with phosphate, was anxious to get home to get ready for the card party, setting up tables and arranging prizes, but had to finish helping my father first.

For eighteen years I washed and ironed the delicate altar linens, and I hand-hemstitched some of the long linens for the big altar. When Kathleen was a little baby, I took her along in a clothes basket. My mother was an untiring worker at church too, both in altar care and social events like the strawberry festivals held on the church lawn where the parking lot now is. Now church picnics are held in the lovely County parks where there is room to spread out and have games and fireplaces to cook the hot dogs, hamburgers and chicken. Everyone loves these outings, especially the young.

My mother and I helped out at the Fair when St. Anne's had our turn with the other churches to serve dinners to make money for things the church needed. One time there wasn't enough silver for the dinner, so I took the trolley to Rochester to buy more. The Fair dinners were good money makers for the churches, probably because the fair-goers were in a spending mood.

As my children grew up, I became active in the Palmyra Parent and Teacher Association, being President and on the New York State Board, and attending three or four day conferences at Cornell University. With five children in school, it was very satisfying work.

I was also an active member of King's Daughters, Inc., acting as President for two terms. It was during that time that Charles C. Condon willed \$100,000 (amount verified by the office of Paul Rubery who handles the account) to King's Daughters, with the interest to be paid annually for philanthropic work. The interest then (1963) amounted to about \$5000 a year but with good investments and higher interest rates, has since increased and greatly enhanced the opportunities for the society to help the needy. Palmyra has a great debt of gratitude owed to this generous man.

Louis and I celebrated our 50th anniversary in 1976. To make a lasting memory of the day, our children sent out squares of white cotton to our many friends, asking them to embroider their own designs on them to signify the date. We received the lovely squares back, and our girls made them into a precious, artistic, colorful quilt. I shall cherish it as long as I live for all the personal work done on it. The girls had prepared a lovely buffet that everyone enjoyed. Rose Lagana who had sung at our wedding, again favored us with her beautiful voice at the mass said in thanksgiving for our 50 wonderful years, making the day complete.

After Louis retired we did a lot of travelling, driving across the United States twice, including going into Canada, and down into Mexico by bus. Louis died April 15, 1978 just two days after we got back from Phoenix, Arizona. We had had 57 good years together. We have 17 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. It has been a full rich life.

*In 1973, three brothers, Isaac, Jonah and Gilbert Howell came to Palmyra. They built a log cabin in which he lived a few years, and then built the large frame house in which Theresa still lives. It must be one of the oldest houses existing in Palmyra today.

