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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**C37: Mrs. Hillard Proctor  
1975  
ECHO project**

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**Note: Moments where the speakers are unintelligible are labeled with the audio file name and timestamp for listeners' reference (i.e. C37\_01.wav, 03:34)**

Mrs. Hillard Proctor (MHP): -- five sons. One of them died when he was quite young.

The four boys were sent away to college for school to learn business and English, and they married, [C37\_01.wav, 00:15], and their house is over where Warren lives now. They all had money and spent it. Franklin, in one history [C37\_01.wav, 00:27], said to have made a million, but I don't know about that, either. It's not around now. He loaned money to Henry J. Raymond, 5,000 to buy his share in the New York Times in the early 50's. This was done through a friend, and almost repaid, I'll say, and he met Henry Raymond later.

Tom had Elizabeth, Sarah Elizabeth, Anna Laura, Jenny, and Henry Herman, my father. There were twins who died at the age of three months. My grandmother lost her husband, her twin babies, and her father-in-law and father all within about two years. Her aunt, Laura Welch, lived here 'til 1879, and I think my father got most of his love of history from her. He was about 18 when she died, and the others had all gone there's no [C37\_01.wav, 01:27], but she taught at Emma Willard School in Middlebury before they moved to Troy.

The family went abroad three Winters. The girls stayed in France and only studied art and music, language, and what have you. My father didn't like France, so he went to England. He either lived with a tutor or he went to some school. Sometime after 1865, the addition was put on this house up here. There was a dining room and a china closet and a butler's pantry and a kitchen pantry in the kitchen. On the other side, there's a bedroom and a dressing room and bath, and in back of that a laundry. Upstairs there were five bedrooms, a bath, and a tank room. And in the laundry there was a coarse pump that brought the water from cisterns up to the tank room, and they had marble top wash tins in all the bedrooms, so they really had the first bathrooms in the situation. Well, they didn't have them in Graystone until maybe 1900. The Ross house didn't have them until maybe 1917, so maybe it was a discussion. I don't know.

My grandmother always helped with church work and anybody else. One time there was a [C37\_01.wav, 03:31] and three of their children who lived in the brick manse, and I told you, it was a little bit dangerous for them to be in the village. They might get run over, so she built this big brick place. You know where the Essex thing is? For Dr. Wahlder and his children.

Afterwards her daughter lived there, at one time. She also loaned Dr. Wahlder \$1,000 when we went out to Illinois. Later when she needed, well, he wouldn't answer if he was able to pay it, and he said, "[C37\_01.wav, 04:15]." Most of this has come from the Noble genealogy. If you want to read the Essex County history, you'll find the rest of it. I haven't got it in very chronological order. I suppose the Nobles might have been Johnny-came-lately, because they were 35 years later than Gilliland, but there were the Golds and Ross's, and seemed to me they all lived in the same, well, money-ed way. They lived very comfortably in these big houses. . . . owned all of the land from Wardenburg Scape way up to the north side of Lakeview, and he was an early big land owner. They seemed to want land. James Ross owned all of the place where the Alberts were on both sides of the road. The father was [C37\_02.wav 00:34]. The Society of the War of 1812, that was through his efforts. This society gave the Browns tablet in Willsboro in honor of a man active in the Battle of Plattsburgh—I'm sorry, Boquet River, now in Willsboro because the Belgian Noble estate was in litigation for years and the tablet [C37\_02.wav 01:03].

(laughter)

Livingston Hatch built the stone [C37\_02.wav, 01:11]. How many of you know what the-- Have you ever looked at that statue tablet?

(multiple yeses)

And it annoys me because they go all out for the Legion, for the other one, and they never put a wreath on that one, and if the battle had turned out a little bit differently, maybe we wouldn't be here. Might have been the British. Who knows. Father was also responsible for the blockhouse tablet. It was just given by the then-owners living at the farm [C37\_02.wav, 01:48]. That was in 1929, unveiled by my small daughter. She also didn't one in the church for her grandmother and she said 'isn't there anybody else that can do this?'

(laughter)

She got a little bit tired of unveiling.

(laughter)

At the Boquet River battle in May 1814, [C37\_02.wav, 02:23] Henry H. Ross and a Marion from Marion's Forge and the Wattam's from Wattam's Mills and Ezra [C37\_02.wav, 02:32] over here and Ben Morris' ancestor, [C37\_02.wav, 02:39], was in that battle. My brother, I think, unveiled it, at least gave one of the speeches August 1940. I'm getting my 19s and 18s mixed up here.

(laughter)

My father was on the commission appointed by the governor to celebrate the Battle of Plattsburgh. My grandfather and some others took part in that too. General Ross. As far as

possible, they got descendants of these men to take part [C37\_02.wav, 03:22] for his great-grandfather, and my brother, John, for [C37\_02.wav, 03:29], and there was a pageant on the parade ground all of one week. We were all in it. Vincent [C37\_02.wav, 03:39] was asked to take a part of John's [C37\_02.wav, 03:42]. The committee thought he was a little bit snobbish.

(laughter)

Maybe it was his grandfather. Skinned the daylights out [C37\_02.wav, 03:57]

(laughter)

That's what they thought, that Vincent didn't care for it.

These north country people were described as middle class, maybe they were, but they're all of good English and Scotch stock, [C37\_02.wav, 04:15]. Someone else said it was impossible for the village to have had so many people here, 100 years out again counting the houses that were and were not, and at least twelve, and a lot of these French and Irish people had eight children, so there would be ten children in a house. General Ross had eight children. My grandmother had four and she had her aunt Laura Welch. She had her father and her father-in-law and usually some visiting [C37\_02.wav, 04:59] But Eddie Lavar was the last of his family and there were eight in that one, in that little house, and George Alexander lived where the [C37\_03.wav, 00:11] are and Rachel Denair and Joe Shlerch lived where Freckle's is and there were eight kids there, so I don't think [C37\_03.wav, 00:26]. There were any number of stores here, grocery stores, general stores, boarding houses. There was an undertaker and a furniture shop. There was a drugstore. There was a tailor shop, a harness shop, and some of the boarding houses were along up here [C37\_03.wav, 01:02]. They called it the Hobart House. That was before 1900. And even King's family were there, and the McGruders, the Shoemakers.

(sounds like question asked)

[C37\_03.wav, 01:15] The one where John Tyne lives and Mrs. Fairbanks had one in the Ross house. There were loads of people. John Brennan was here before 1900 and he bought the whole Derby farm and started the Crater Club Colony. He only advertised in the Living Church the most before [C37\_03.wav, 01:42], but they helped in the church in the village too. My grandmother owned the D. Ross house which was next to her and her daughter lived there, Mrs. Waite. The Waite's were hotel people. There was an alderman in New York City and said to belong to the famous Tweed ring, but I don't know. That's hearsay. Tweed was the boss of Tammany Hall and it was said that he was up here to hide, but [C37\_03.wav, 02:22].

(comment or question in background)

She always had a house full. Anybody know J.G. Holmes, the author, [C37\_03.wav, 02:31]? Well, he wrote one of the stories in the schoolhouse. There was one called Bittersweet and the other one was Mr. [C37\_03.wav, 02:41]. I don't remember the others.

My father's sister, Anna, married Harry Ross. They eloped. They went up to the Episcopal rectory and were married by Dr. Irish. I don't think there was any objection except that they were young, and Harry had consumption so they went out to Denver for the climate and their son was born the day before his father died and then she came back and lived in [C37\_03.wav, 03:19] or Essex Inn. Also we had in town a Dr. Tanguay of Keeseville. He lived in the house that was torn down about where the Estis garage is. [C37\_03.wav, 03:40] Crane house [C37\_03.wav, 03:41] and he had a daughter Eva and she was a very well-known vaudeville actress in New York. Did you ever here of her?

(comments in background)

She lived here a short time, did you know that?

(No's in background)

The Bells and the Nobles went abroad a lot too. Mrs. Bell [C37\_03.wav, 04:06] came from Peru. She didn't like it very much and as I recall that house was mostly closed except in a few summers, but there is her picture and you can see she is a very stately woman. She always swished and [C37\_03.wav, 04:23]. She had loads of lace and she had beautiful hair, but she was so stately and so-- I guess I was scared of it. They went to Washington in 1870 and I don't think they were back except in the summer. One time my grandmother asked Aunt Etty to bring her two small paintings for abroad. What Aunt Etty said was sent was a copy of the Aurora [C37\_04.wav, 00:11] for \$1000. It hung over the piano for years. Now it's up in [C37\_04.wav, 00:18] camp. It's not exactly a camp picture, but there is no place to put it.

(laughter)

All of my Aunt Lizzie's trousseau, wedding dress and china came from France. The dress was up in the attic in the original box. It was [C37\_04.wav, 00:43] satin, [C37\_04.wav, 00:46] crinoline and lace, and the kids shoes and silk stockings and the gloves, but unfortunately the squirrels got into it and so I guess it went out.

(laughter)

And the wedding china, if you want to see it, up in Mary Thompson's dining room. Between the two front windows is half of that set of French china. Mrs. Waites' things were sold at auction and Anthony Ross bought half of it and my aunt Jean bought the other half, but unfortunately hers was put in storage at some time or other. At least the storage wasn't [C37\_04.wav, 01:38] so that was lost. This house up here had a great big stable, [C37\_04.wav, 01:48] drums and box stools and harness rooms and what have you. At some time early in [C37\_04.wav, 01:58], the

gardener or handyman had too high a fire and he was high and the thing went up in smoke. He escaped, but the two dogs didn't. Most of these houses had everything, and they had [C37\_04.wav, 02:22] had icehouses and they had a meat cooler and a smokehouse and a big garden and horses, and I suppose all of the others did, the [C37\_04.wav, 02:39], the Ross', the W.D. Ross', and I think they did pretty well for themselves, but gradually I think this estate just sort of dwindled. They did own a [C37\_04.wav, 03:05] farm and my father took care of that a year or 2 years, and he raised Percheron horses—the big draft horses. He used to take them down to the Madison Square Garden horseshow. That farm man from south end of [C37\_04.wav, 03:27] way up to north end of [C37\_04.wav, 03:31] James originally and then way back, and the piece where the James' lived, grandfather Sherman bought. [C37\_04.wav, 03:46] built that big house stuck up on the hill. My father was [C37\_04.wav, 03:58] office about 9 or 10 years. He did all of the research work in the library, minutes for the council appointment and the Daniel Thompkins papers. I think those were [C37\_04.wav, 04:17] and they were here at one time, but he went down to the steamboat landing to get the boat and he found all of this pile of stuff, papers, and there was a set that he'd given to the [C37\_04.wav, 04:38]. Belden Noble died in 1897 and his son in 1896. The girls died young, except Mrs. Whiting and they're all buried up here. They seemed to want to come home. But they're all up in the old cemetery. I didn't enjoy any of the wealth because I wasn't here, but I'm glad to have seen the tagging of an era suddenly. I mean, to have known the house and what they did, and I wonder has the town progressed. I thought maybe there was something to be said for the good ole days. I don't know. Now you can't get a bed or a cup of coffee there.

(background noises)

There were two hotels here. Here they have twelve houses, though three burned in the factory fire and there were two here near the library [C37\_05.wav, 00:54] and there was one north of Elvin Cross and the McCormick house was where the Estes garage is, and two Townsend houses up on the left side near Bailey's, Wayne Bailey, the two up there, and Louis LaBarge was up there between [C37\_05.wav, 01:23] ranch. That was a child's house. And there was an Alexander house down near the Schmitt cabins. [C37\_05.wav, 01:40]

(clapping)

We looked at some funny pictures.

AUDIENCE: Tell us about the dress and the other stuff.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, the christening.

MHP: Well, that's the family christening robe for four generations and twice my son asked to have it sent to Germany and I sent it first class registered mail because two of his children were born over there.

AUDIENCE: Do you know when it was made?

MHP: Probably, let's see the first child was born in 1856, so it was sometime after that, but I'm sure that the sleeves were not in it originally because that's the kind of a shirt they had.

(laughter in background)

MHP: Here's the petticoat that's-- If you use this for a small baby, it's more [C37\_05.wav, 02:52] baby, I'll tell you that.

AUDIENCE: Did that go under the gown?

MHP: Yes. And I suppose the flannel petticoat under that.

AUDIENCE: You couldn't find the baby.

MHP: No you couldn't.

AUDIENCE: Did you have all these pictures at home?

MHP: I had them.

AUDIENCE: You did a lot of work.

(laughter and comments in background)

AUDIENCE: And you mentioned [C37\_05.wav, 03:31]

(various comments in background and group of people talking)

MHP: We used to go up in the attic and go through the trunks and then we'd end by putting everything back and shutting the thing down, and this was in there and my sister-in-law said, 'oh, let's throw this out', but I looked in there and it said 'Henry wore this hat when he crossed the Alps in the summer of 18\_\_ [C37\_05.wav, 04:53].

(backtalk)

MHP: [C37\_05.wav, 04:54] said, 'for goodness sake, what was he doing crossing the Alps, he's only 9 years old. I didn't throw it away. (lots of people talking) She looks so sad, but then maybe she [C37\_06.wav, 00:19]

PERSON: Now tell me, who were the Farrells up here? I didn't realize we were up here at that time?

MHP: Harold [C37\_06.wav, 00:25]

PERSON: Was that an old family up here? Must have been.

MHP: [C37\_06.wav, 00:31] yes.

(a lot of talking amongst numerous people, looking at pictures, asking various questions and making various comments)