



# Orleans County Historical Association

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# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Miss Dorothy LaMont  
133 West Park Street  
Albion, New York

This interview is conducted by J. Howard Pratt of Gaines, N.Y.

La LaMont

P Pratt



Dorothy LaMont (1943)

Orleans County Historical Association ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This project is being conducted by the Orleans County Historical Association. Its purpose 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 for possible future use as an educational resource and for possible purpose of publication.

Dorothy Lamont

Signed

3-8-'79

Date

J. Howard Pratt

Interviewer

3-8-'79

Date

This is an interview with Miss Dorothy LaMont of 133 West Park Street, Albion, New York. Miss LaMont was born and grew up on the LaMont Homestead. Her knowledge of the farm and ancestors was gathered from the everyday conversations of the family, and studying the family history.

I am Howard Pratt, recording this on the 14th day of November 1979.

P When did your ancestors come to Orleans County?

L The first was Josias LaMont who came in 1815 from Schoharie County.

P Who did he buy the land from?

L The Holland Land Company.

P And how large a farm did he take up?

L ... He bought this in pieces you know... He started with 140, and then later, in 1835 he bought 100 more.

P Well, they<sup>re</sup> was another LaMont that bought land a little bit later. Who was he?

L That was his son, Platt LaMont. He bought it in 1834 from the Holland Land Company.

P So most of the land they bought right di from the Holland Land Company.

L Then of course, my great, great Grandfather King also bought land from the Holland Land Company in 1835.

P That was the place where they all got land then?

L Yes. The Kings bought the property where the Homestead is now.

P Did both families remain on the same land?

L Yes they did.

P Was this land that they bought and lived on for so long, was this land passed on to their sons?

L Yes it was.

- P And the farms have still been in your own family; no one else?
- L That's right.
- P Have you all the land that was first bought from the Holland Land Company ?
- L Yes.
- P Has it been the plan of the family to add on other farms during the last hundred years?
- L Definitely!
- P And can you tell us some of these farms?
- L Well, there's the Eldredge Farm which is part of the family that was added to it; and the Densmore Farm; the Tanner Farm, the one in Lyndonville with that name. Anyway, that was a pretty good sized farm. Then there are various plots here and there. I don't know who owned them or from whom they bought them, but they owned plots all over the county, and a few in Niagara County.
- P That is sort of the plan of how they got their farms.

Now we'll come down closer to the present time.

Tell us who your father was, and the name of your brothers. What was your own immediate family?

- L My father was George B. LaMont. My brothers were George D. LaMont, and Thomas Eldredge LaMont.
- P Are either of your brothers living now?
- L My brother George D. is living. My brother Thomas, who had the farm, died in 1970.
- P At the death of Thomas LaMont, did he have a son or someone to take over the business?
- L He had two sons who were already in the business: George F. and Roger E.
- P Are they now managing the LaMont Farms?
- L Yes.
- P Do they manage them all?
- L Yes.

P Now I want the growth of the farms. How much land did Josias LaMont and Platt LaMont obtain from the Land Company altogether?

L Platt's lands were separate of course, but Josias' went on to Major Tyler LaMont, my great-grandfather, and then to my grandfather, and father. That was 240 acres that came from the Holland Land Company. The rest of it was other farms which somebody else bought from Holland Land Company and handed down.

P Now let's get back to your father's crops. In about 1900, can you tell us something about which crops he raised?

L Well from my list of 1898, I would say that he had sheep, cows, cattle, pigs, hothouse lambs, some fruit: apples, pears and peaches. At that time, they planted peaches and pears between the apple trees, which had a long space between them, so that they could get their money's worth from the other trees while the apple trees were growing. They also had wheat, oats and hay.

P Well, let's take up the wheat. Tell me something of the threshing of the wheat.

L The threshing was done by threshers who were professionals, of course. They had this threshing machine, and this great big steam coal burning engine which they would come and set up. Then we had all the neighbors there to help. The mid-day meal would be a great big table with a lot of food because there were a lot of hungry men to eat.

P How long did it take to thresh? All day?

L Oh yes! It might take two. I suppose that depends on the crop. Then, as I remember, they exchanged labor. A neighbor gave father a man for two days, and then my father "owed him" a man for two days.

P Now besides that, when did your father start to raising canning crops, like tomatoes, or things like that?

L I'm not sure just when he did start growing tomatoes, but it probably was when they had the first canning factory in Albion.

- P Did he raise tomatoes for quite a number of years?
- L Oh yes! He raised tomatoes until, I think, about the 1950s and '60s. That would be a matter of record somewhere.
- P Your father must have been a pretty good, careful, thrifty farmer?
- L Oh, he tried to be.
- P What award did he get, about this time, for farm work?
- L In 1929 he was made a Master Farmer. That was a New York State award that was given to several farmers each year, to encourage farming.
- P What addition in management began in 1938?
- L That was when my brother came home from Ithaca, He had stayed on at Cornell University (in Ithaca, N.Y.) doing land classification of New York State, because they believed they should reforest poor land and develop erosion, utilities and other things in the good land that was going to be used continually for farming.
- P And then he stayed on until he died?
- L Yes.
- P Tell something about your first fruit stand because you were one of the first ones to have a fruit stand in these parts.
- L (additional note by LaMont: "not the first, but one which did a thriving business"). My Mother developed that. Mother would bring fruit in to different people in Albion who asked if she was coming in would she bring them some peaches? So, she started doing that. She had quite a few customers that wanted her to bring fruit to them. Then when my brother came onto the farm, he decided that that would be a good business to develop. And they started advertizing ripe peaches, which you couldn't buy in the market because they were too fragile. You have got to sell directly to people if the peaches are ripe.

P How did George F. LaMont enter the business and what changes did he make?

L He came home after he graduated from Cornell University and he joined his father in operating the farms. My father sold his interest to him.

P What new branches, or what new additions did you make in machinery or something?

L Well, he added the storage where they control the atmosphere, put the apples to sleep so that they can take them out in the spring or anytime later and they will be in the same condition as they were when they sealed the storage.

P You fill that up every year with apples?

L I think they do.

P What additional farm did you buy in 1962 ?

L ... I think that's when they added Densmore.

P What new improvements did you use in 1962 ?

L That's when my father harvested the beans mechanically. I believe it was 1963 that they started shaking the cherries so they didn't have to be picked by hand.

P Now, those were ideas that Tom brought into the business?

L You would have to ask George whether he did it, or his father.

P In 1964 did they have another son coming in ?

L Yes. Roger came home after graduating from Cornell.

P What part of the operation does he handle now?

L He handles the Ridge Equipment, the farm machinery business.

P And is that more than for your own farm?

L Oh that is a big operation! Selling equipment (to everyone). He is a dealer for Massey-Ferguson.

P There was another noteworthy event that happened in 1965. You got an award for that.

L Oh yes! That was from Governor Rockefeller, when they were made a Century Farm. That's people who've been on the farm over 100 years. Of course mine had been on there over one hundred and fifty years!



P Changes were made about 1966 and again in 1971.

L You should check all of this with George to be sure it is right. This (paper used for reference) says that they were out of tomatoes, and into snap beans and cabbage, and out of peaches ...

P What other notable facts can you give me about the farm, or the farm life?

L I don't know of any that we haven't covered. All of my ancestors came here a long time ago. Of course, the Kings and the LaMonts came first. Then the Jewells came in 1818. The Clarks came in 1846. All of them on the LaMont side came, you see, in the early days. Then the Eldredges came in 1879, and the Hakes in 1867. So they have all been here over 100 years.

P And they was mixing these new names. Did they inter-marry, or some of their land come into the LaMont name and the LaMont control from some of these other old-time families?

L Yes. You see, my Grandfather Eldredge married a Hakes. That's where the Hakes come in. And then it's my Grandfather Eldredge's farm that is part of the farm today. The Jewells lived in Murray, which was then Sandy Creek. But she married my grandfather, so I don't think we own any land that ever belonged to any of the Jewells. William King married Miranda Butts and we happen to live on their land.

P Is there anything you learned from your grandmother? Any of those stories about the farm life or anything?

L I don't think so. I think they all lived rather quietly. Life was pretty rugged I would say. They had to keep busy from morning to night to keep living. All of these things took so much time then that we can do by machinery today. Of course we can travel around where they couldn't. If they came to town, that would be a long trip with a horse and buggy, and the horses were probably busy working most of the time anyway I would imagine. So, I think they lived pretty quiet lives and just kept busy right at home.

P Now there is another thought we want to weave in here.  
When did your family start going to Cornell and getting  
further education in the farm life?

L Well, my father went.

P Your father started going to Cornell?

L Yes, he went to Cornell and then he kept going back to the  
Farmer's Week, every year. I think he probably was one of  
the oldest travelers for that Farm Week because he wouldn't  
miss it for anything! He wanted to learn all the new tricks!

P Did he want his sons to go to Cornell?

L Oh yes!

P And you have continued going there, for how many generations?

L Well, that would be: my Father, my brother and sons. That  
would be three generations.

P Three generations you have been going. Cornell must have  
helped you then in the farming business?

L Oh, I think it did! And while I was not in the Ag College,  
I feel that the University did a great deal for me too. ...  
I have a great respect for the University.

P Yes, it is a great university.

(end of taped interview)

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This interview was conducted by J. Howard Pratt, Gaines, N.Y.  
The original transcription was done by Luther Burroughs, Albion.  
Several changes and additions were made by Dorothy and Mary  
LaMont.

Final editing and typing was done by Helen McAllister, Medina.

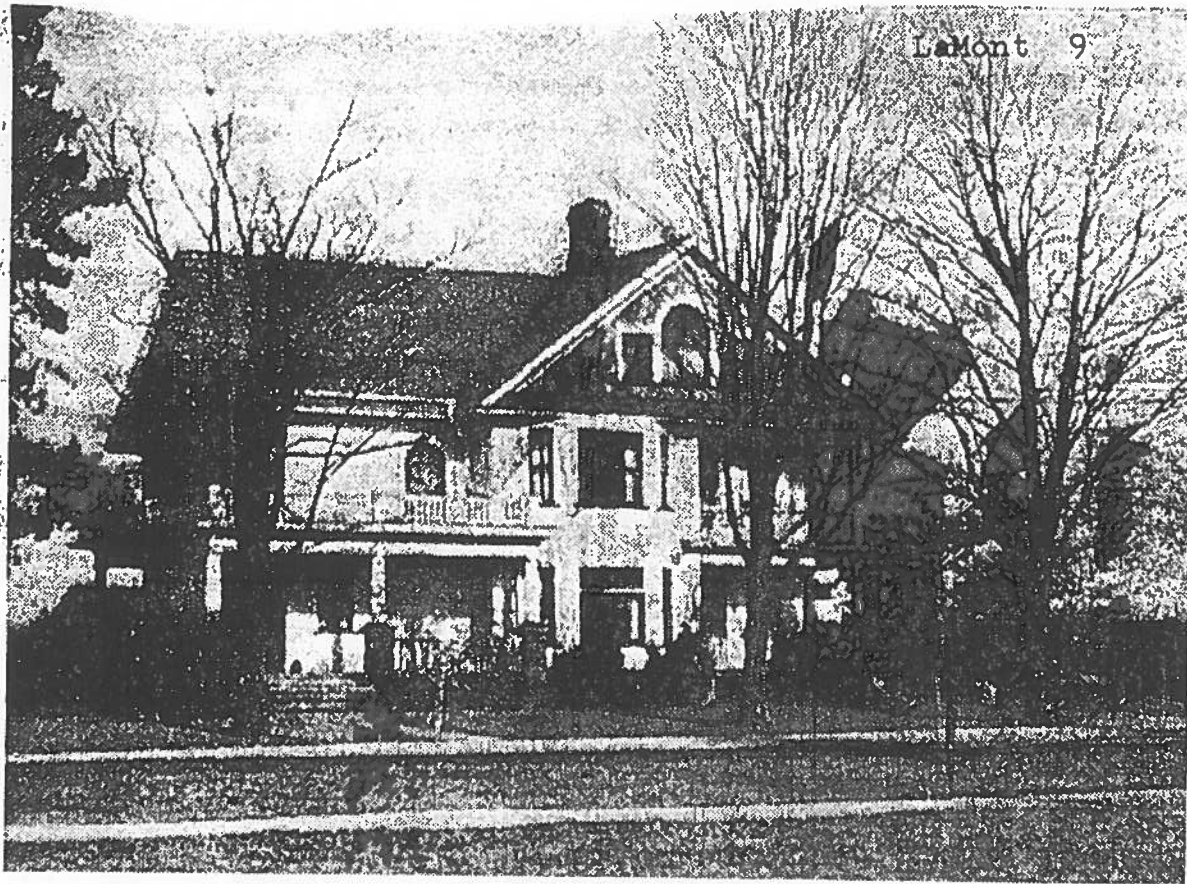
Mrs McAllister,

George B. Lamont started keeping a diary in 1908. I would say he and Belle spent much time with relatives and neighbors. Church and Grange were attended regularly. Rotary

When trolley came they would go to Rochester shopping and visiting a favorite aunt.

When they got a car, they visited relatives in Chenango County and in Ohio.

Mary Lamont



## Agricultural Landmarks Of Orleans County . . . By Janis Bannister

Josias LaMont, whose descendants operate the LaMont Fruit Farms east of Albion, came to this area in 1815. Bringing his wife, Anna Tyler LaMont and several children, he "articled" and bought a 140-acre tract of land from the Holland Land Company.

Where Josias cut the Lattin Road through and built his log cabin, the sixth and seventh generations of his descendants, George F. and Jackeline LaMont and daughter Rebecca Sue, now live.

In the 146 years following Josias' arrival, each LaMont generation has expanded the operation. In addition to the original land Josias cleared, his descendants own or rent land which originally was from eight farms.

After Josias' death, his son Major Tyler LaMont took over the farm. Platt LaMont, Josias' grandson, was the next owner. Platt's son George B., now 87, operated the farm until his retirement two years ago. George B. LaMont, first chairman of the

Agricultural Extension Service executive committee, recalls making his own spray material in the early 1900's. He changed lime and sulphur from a solid form to a liquid compound by boiling it in a kettle over a fire. He diluted this mixture with water for spraying his fruit. In 1930 Mr. LaMont was awarded the title of Master Farmer by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

George B. LaMont's son Thomas, who holds a Ph.D. from Cornell, and grandson Geo. F., also a Cornell graduate, now operate the 660-acre farm as a partnership. Thomas and Mary LaMont's other children include Marjorie LaMont Murdock, who lives at Ames, Iowa; Roger, a Sophomore at Cornell, and Marcia, a student at Albion Grammar School.

Thomas, who served on the Cornell University Staff for eleven years, is secretary of the New York State Horticultural Society and Director of the Buffalo Branch of the New York Federal Reserve Bank.

The LaMonts began planting fruit in the early 1900's. In the nineteenth century every rural family had its own small orchard. The "specialization spiral" brought on by transportation and machinery improvements greatly decreased the number of self-sufficient farms. Because their soil was suitable for it, the LaMonts began specializing in fruit. In 1905 they planted an apple orchard interplanted with peaches. They have steadily added to that until their fruit orchards now cover over 300 acres.

In 1960 George F. LaMont built a cold storage which holds 34,000 bushels. Of this, 24,000 is controlled atmosphere, a new method of storing apples to keep them crisp and juicy until the spring of the year. This is the only such storage in Orleans County.

Besides apples, the LaMont farms produce a quantity of tomatoes, snap beans and wheat. Much of their peach and cherry crop is sold retail on the farm.



GEORGE B. LA MONT HOME (1932)



Thomas Eldredge LaMont

\*\* GENEALOGY OF THE LA MONT FAMILY \*\*

Dorothy Elizabeth Lamont ; George Darwin Lamont ; Thomas Eldredge Lamont  
.....  
\* Parents

.....  
\* George B. Lamont, father and Belle Eldredge Lamont, mother  
.....

Grandparents

\* Platt Tyler Lamont & Ada Jewell AND Frederick Thompson Eldredge & Mary Elizabeth Hakes  
.....

Great-Grandparents

\* Major Lamont & Tamma King AND Richard Jewell & Sarah Ann Clark  
.....

Frederick Freeman Eldredge & Sabrina Thompson AND Perez Hakes & Lucy Ann Baldwin  
.....

Great-Great-Grandparents

\* Josias Lamont & Anna Tyler AND William King & Miranda Butts  
.....

Jonathan Jewell & Fannie Stroud AND William Clark & Sarah Ann McDonald  
.....

Ephriam Perry Eldredge & Martha Freeman AND Charles Thompson & Ruby  
.....

Perez Hakes & Deborah Starkweather AND Elisha Baldwin & Martha ("Patty") Spaulding  
.....