

Georgiana Palmer (G)

Draft

(Interviewed by Connie Rawa (C))

(C) This is October 16, 2001. Today we are taking an oral history of Georgiana Howes Palmer, whose ancestors have live in Palatine since its beginnings.

Georgiana, would you please just give us a quick rundown of how far back your family is descended?

(G) Well, my name is Georgiana Palmer. I'm married to George Palmer. My maiden name is Howes. My mother' Mae was Brockway. My father was George House. George Howes came from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mae was from Palatine Her parents was Annie Bell? Brockway, whose maiden name was Matthei. Her husband's name was William or Bill, stationmaster

Mae's mother, no, Annie's mother was Emma Sutherland Matthei, who was married to Henry, who had a general store. Her parents was Mason Sutherland and Nancy Boynton. Mason Sutherland was a captain in the Civil War, one of the first Sutherlands in town He was themoney man for Joel Wood, who was the real estate developer of Palatine. Nancy Boynton was one of the first school teachers in the area. She taught in Wauconda and the Cady log cabin, which was a school house and a church first. It was west of town in the area known as Deer Grove. Her, she and her sister and family came to the area in 1838, settled in Wauconda. She moved to Palatine when she married Mason in 1842.

(C) OK. We know you grew up in Palatine. Will you tell us a little bit about what you remember about Palatine as a young child?

(G) Well, I lived a rather protected life, believe it or not. I was the first girl after four boys. I had a mother that believed the boys had a right to do almost anything they wanted, as long as they got themselves out of trouble. Uh, I was restricted, so was my sister, as far as the distance we could go and the various things we could do. Uh, so consequently I knew mainly just in my own neighborhood, on my way to school and downtown. I was not allowed to cross the railroad tracks except for specifics. Uh, the neighborhood didn't change much because it was I was born? during the Depression and nobody had any money to do anything. And then we had the war, and nobody could do anything because you couldn't get the material.

(C) OK. Where did you go to school?

(G) Uh, Wood Street School. All of the first eight years and then high school. Our high school now is the Village Hall.

Wood Street School has been torn down, so most people don't really remember it or know what it was like. Just describe it a little bit.

Uh, it was on Wood Street, between Benton and Hale, facing south, it was a big brick building. Uh, I think children would find it interesting in that it had three entrances to go in, actually four. One, the west side, is where the girls went in. The east side is where the boys went in. The south side is where the teachers went in, and the north side is where the janitors worked.

(C) How many classrooms were in that building?

(G) Uh, well, by the time I started going to school, there was, would have been, eight and uh a library basically.

(C) OK. I believe you went to the old Palatine High School.

(G) Yep

(C) Tell us a little bit about that.

(G) It was interesting. Uh, the only part of it you can still see is Cutting Hall, uh, which is where we had band rehearsals, and had assemblies, and put on plays. The rest of the building formed more or less a "U" shape, and the other end of the "U" was the gymnasium. Uh, I don't know just how many classrooms were there. We did have a lecture room for the science room, which was right opposite the main entrance, which when you came in the main entrance you had the office, and an assembly hall on the one side, on the left, and on the right is where the cafeteria used to be. And straight ahead there was the lecture room, then you had the science room, the science labs, and the band room, which was behind Cutting Hall. Then the other classrooms were upstairs and to the left. The Shop was down in the back of the gymnasium.

(C) Girls weren't allowed to do that, then?

(G) Girls weren't allowed to do that. In fact girls weren't allowed to do a lot of things.

(C) How about Gym classes? What were those like for girls in those days?

(G) Very useful.

(C) Did you have to wear gym uniforms?

(G) Uh, not full uniforms. No, the money wasn't that plentiful. But we did wearwhite tops and slacks, shorts. We weren't allowed to wear slacks to school except special days, we were allowed maybe once a month to wear blue jeans like on Friday. And that held true through grade school. You wore, er in cold weather, you wore a pair of slacks under your skirt. The minute you got to the coat room, that had to come off with the boots.

(C) And what special activities did you participate in high school?

(G) Well, I was in gym, I was in arabesque, part of theI was in a band. I was a baton twirler and drum major. I was in craft clubs, uh Glee Club, Drama Club, and GAA.

(C) Which is...?

(G) The Girls Athletic Association

(C) Um, I believe you were a member of the Methodist Church? Could you tell us a little bit about that?

(G) Well, the Methodist Church is the oldest church in town. It's a rather free thinking church, cause even when I got up into my teens I started going to church. We had a Sunday

School the same time as church. So except Children's Sunday we didn't go to church. Well, the free for all sometimes is the parishioners would actually question the minister And we would sometimes almost turn into a free-for-all. But then, again, I can remember the minister - we had one man who was very notable for falling asleep during the sermons, and he wasn't.....then he was ... back. and the minister would watch him nod off and he would start talking. I don't know if he even knew it, but as soon as he was sound asleep, he used some expression where he would wind up whacking the podium, and in a real loud voice.. And he'd go "huh huh".....And in the meantime you'd see the wife reach across him, pinching and yelling, that doesn't do any good. And it still carried on to some degree when after we were married. My husband was in a choir up there, and he would have times trying to keep from laughing, cause he would see these things going on..... It was a family oriented church, and we did plays at the church and we had family meals. What they'd call a "bring a plate and share", and my mother always used to tease, that maybe you didn't smoke and drink as a Methodist, but she said they always found an excuse to eat.

(C) You had mentioned that your grandfather was the station master for Palatine?

(G) Well, he did a lot of things for the train. I don't know if he was ever station master. The stories come down he was a teletype?? and by reading some of the newspaper articles (for a long time it was named the Palaver), it said that he lost his touch for the telegraph, and my husband, who has been a paramedic says, ah, he had carpal tunnel, which they didn't know at that time what it was. He just had lost the feelings in his hands to do it. But as a child we grew up with this teletype key. Of course, that's gone now. That's why my antiques are worth something.

(C) That's right. I know your Dad was involved in the American Legion and he was also involved in the Republican organization in Palatine. Can you tell us a little bit about your Dad's activities?

(G) Oh, my Dad was one in a million.....

No, he was very active in politics. I did say he came from Wisconsin, but he was born in, near Milwaukee, but he did serve his teens and young adult in Chicago. And he was in what they called the Chicago Dandies. It was the North Side's National Guards. It was the 33rd And they were activated for World War I. Well he became friends, and in that group were many, manypoliticians and judges in the City of Chicago. But he also knew, he lived in the City of Chicago, you were active in the political groups. I don't know if he was a Democrat in Chicago or not. It was never mentioned. Uh, but it did serve him well later on, so when he moved to Palatine, he came out here with a friend I guess - his name is Wills Haren who had a Paraffin Factory from Barrington. But he was engaged to a French lady, that had stayed with my grandparents during the war. So they came out together and went and found my mother??? Bill Brockway, who was never in the service, but he always thought much of the service. He worked very hard, in organizing and bringing people together to join, to start the American Legion, even though he wasn't eligible. But they were to go see Bill Brockway to sign up and start up the American Legion. My father happened to be I don't think he was the original

(C) commandant?

(G) Commandant, yeah. But he was very active. One of the things that I really remember well was in Grandma's barn they used to store the equipment for carnivals, which was their big fundraiser. And that was right across the street from where the Mexican Catholic church

is. And the barn was there. At that time that church was Lutheran. That's where they held their funerals. But we had the different game things in there, big trunks in that garage. And that was always a activity every year, to see that, and to go watch them string it up. Because we could watch these youngsters from Grandma's front porch, as they were doing it. And of course, later we would get a chance to go over there. But we weren't allowed to spend a lot of time. But then again my brothers - that was a different story. Because here I had Grandma, I had both Grandmas living in the same house. I had my parents. And everybody else in town knew who I was. So it was a case of "You better behave or I'll tell your mother, I'll tell your father, I'll tell your brother, I'll tell your grandmother." And one time I had someone say "I'll tell your great-grandmother." I said "No, she died before I was born." That's one of the advantages or disadvantages in a small town. But, I think it was better for us, because we even were told on if we used the wrong language.

(C) You couldn't get away with anything, huh?

(G) No, you got 2,000 people... all.....

(C) Uh, can you tell us a little bit about some of the downtown shops and merchants that you recall from your childhood?

Well we had the regular?... meat market, which is at the corners of Bothwell and Wilson, that we used to go to. Right next to that was a creamer, but it was right next to it. But right next to that was a beauty, a barber shop, who happened to have a girl who was a little younger than I, and we used to go out and play with her. They lived in the back of the shop. Next to that was a bowling alley,

(C) ... Dirty Nellie's?

(G) yeah, the back part. And the front part was a barber shop, and cute? billiard tables. Then to ...south side of that was an ice-cream parlor, Dinsie's I understand it had been a little bitty shack building south of that, that had been newspaper??.... But I don't remember that. Across the street was

(C) ...the tavern... Lamplighters

t(G) hat was the first Masonic Hall. But when I was born I had never seen, known anything about a tavern. Then when you crossed the railroad tracks, which I had to have "special" reasons to go there, my great-grandfather's store was there, it was being owned by my uncle, my great uncle, that was the Matthei Store, and ...a bank across the street. And I vaguely remember that big tall brick building.

(C) the Batterman Building?

(G) Hm?

(C) the Batterman Building?

(G) Yeah, and then the wooden stores that went off to the west, or to the east. i remember when they burned down. Oh that was a big fire.

(C) Do you remember anything about what happened.....just general

I(G) don't know if it was after the big brick building had gone down, because the others were there, but it was before World War II, because it was back ofAcross the street was a women's haberdashery, a post office, an A and P???... and of course Sanitary Market. There was a drug store with a hospital upstairs, then Shoppes across the street from there, and another bank kitty corner. And, I don't remember the stores in particular, but eventually there was a National Tea store, where the Ben Franklin later was, that burned down, then another drug store soda fountain. In fact both drug stores were soda fountains, then Comfort's And everybody knows where Comfort's is

(C) Not those of us who have not been around long enough.

(G) Well, those who have worked in the Historical Society know, because its still back on the other side of the track, where the coffee shop is

(C) Starbucks or the Whistle Stop?

(G) Whistle Stop. That was just kind of like an apartment building. But it originated as an hotel.. Across the street from that which is where Mia Cocina is. That was a foundation that never got built. There had been a big house on the oh here's some pictures of some that had been torn down and sold. A J.C. Penney store was going to be built there and the foundation was..... And the basic walls were there and everything was going up And as kids we used to walk those walls til we got caught. But the boys of course would be up and down the side???. That was built..... Schierding store, or Schierding House. Mrs. Schierding was the sister to Henry Matthei, who had the store. And when they sold that they had built a house, about four blocks north of there..... And they're in the pictures that you see at the museum. You see that little fountain in the front yard. And they moved that... backyard..... they had a fish pond. Some say that it's still there. I don't know. It's got a high fence. You can't see.

(C) I know your mother was involved in many, many civic organizations.

(G) Oh god.

(C) Can you mention some of those and tell us a little bit about her work in those organizations? I know she belonged to the WRC. Want to tell what that is? I know it doesn't exist anymore.

(G) I'm not sure what the WRC stands for. Women's Relief Corp. And it was formed and named after Mason Sutherland. He was a recruiting officer and captain for the 113th. Company of Illinois Volunteers in the Civil War. And I'm not sure if his wife assumed the first presidency, but I know his daughter, granddaughter and great granddaughter all have been Presidents. And I have the Presidential pin. It has a rocket in each corner/????/.....It has a crown of gold with the red, white and blue stones... And if you don't want it, I got it. And it's been with me ever since.

But that unit was disbanded because of something in connection to the GAR, Grand Army of the Republic that when the last veteran died it would disband and was not carried on by the widows or children of those veterans, and it had something to do with that. Plus, they all got old and died out.

My mother was rather maybe to me a little unusual. She never got us kids involved in her organizations, so we never really got started with it and it included the same with the American Legion Auxiliary. I could go on with all of the organizations, because

(C) Can you mention more?

(G) Well some of the current ones that are still going - she was one of the founders of the PTA in the grade school district, she was one of the founders of the VIPs, District 211, the high school district. And she was one of the original founders of the Palatine's Garden Club, and there was the Women's Club. And after she died I had these things in her obituary, and Sue Gould's mothers says "Oh, you forgot to mention" - and I can't tell you now - she named off another half dozen items, that my mother was one of the original founders of

And I said "Oh"

(C) You didn't even know.

(G) I didn't even know, and I can't remember. But she was very active, and she maintained a nice, beautiful garden. I learned to garden from her. And I told the neighbors this, and...my children asked "How come you know so much?" My mother loved her garden. I always wanted to be with her. So she would pick out a big weed. I had to know what that weed was. And my job was to pull only that weed out of the garden. When I got so I could recognize it, she would add another one. So my job, when we were in the garden, was to weed.

(C) It's important..... You have a very nice garden, so your training shows.

(G) This year nobody's got a good garden.

(C) Well that's true. That's not exactly been a good year for gardens, has it?
Um, I think the most favorite picture of yours that I have seen is the one of Nancy and Emma and Annie and your mother as an infant, standing in front of Nancy's house in town.

(G) Not that one.

(C) Not that house?

(G) No that picture - you've got two pictures - that particular picture was a photograph at a studio.

(C) Oh, OK.

(G) And there's also in that collection my mother by herself, of each of them by themselves...And the one of Emma was also made into a pin, a button pin. Our picture of that had been destroyed, had been partially destroyed by water damage. And over the years we got contacted, through the Historical Society, by somebody that had a sword. and on the sword, it was given by the Women of Palatine. So they contacted the Historical Society. I just happened to be here that day. It was a day when I'm not normally here, but I was here as a favor to Marilyn. This call came in.. And I met a man from California, and he has a sword.... He says, well on the sword it says from the women of Palatine. I says "Oh?"

"Yeah" he says "It looks like a Civil War sword. And I says "Do you know what that sword is?" I says "It was one that was given to my great grandfather, Mason Sutherland by the women of Palatine. It's in the history books, but I've never seen his sword."
Well, it turns out instead of coming down to my mother, who was descended through a

daughter, it went down through a son, a son? and he's in California. It turns out that he lent it to us and we had it on display here. And my daughter happened to use it to cut her wedding cake. And And the first time we went to see him, my daughter lived in DeKalb, and we got together. And for some reason my daughter had a pin of Emma. And we got down there, and the man had a lot of photos....friends and the family., but the families had gotten mixed up. And they were doing a guessing game as to who some of the pictures were. They had the picture, just like this we were talking about, and he had it marked the other side of family.....

(C)

that's what my grandmother said

....

the other side. And my daughter says "Look". She had this pin on. He said, "Well that proves it, here, it's yours. And that's the one we got the print upstairs where it's nice and clean. It was kept so well. And I was just so forever grateful for that, the man has since passed away. But he had a, he had a story of his own. He was in World War II and crashed in the Philippines when the U.S. got thrown out. He was captured for three years. He was a volunteer? Pfc.....was overseas, they dropped it to him. He had stories.....

(C) I guess then I was confused with pictures. I was thinking of one where Nancy, at least Nancy, is standing in front of the house.

(G) Nancy, Emma and Ann?..... and Mae wasn't born.

(C) that house was approximately where?

(G) at the corner of, southeast corner of Wood Street and Bothwell Street. It's now a church parking lot. And the Matthei house was kitty corner across the street from us.

(C) Is that house still there?

(G) That house is still there. And it's stables, who has the court children, up next to the Park Stables.

(G) They have, it starts with a "C". There's children that the courts have. They aren't criminals, they have

(C) Camelot?

(G) Yeah, it's one of the Camelot houses.

(C) They moved it up here?

(G) The stables are where they always were, but

(C) The house.

(G) No, no, no the house is still here, but they have, some came uphere, They have some over here..... There's three or four others that are around town.

(C) I see.

(G) And

(C) I didn't realize they were over, in different places.

(G) Yeah, in fact, when they first started that was the first one, then they got this one, the third one was over way over.. So I ...think this was a great idea. As a part of the program used to get children to know other ways of living than what they had where they came from. But you're putting them all in the same school system, and within walking distance of each other. It's kind of defeating the purpose.

They moved there from another
Because they were also bussing kids in from the stables? that's...defeating the purpose. I could see them associating, but not constantly. And so they started spreading the houses....a little bit. Then only time they put any in the same school building, was if there was a little bit of a problem, if they needed the emotional support of somebody with same background

(C) mm hm

(G) I mean, they've come a long way for... and they've only had trouble once or twice with the kids, which was when they first started.....neighbors..... Well one of the first ones was....a garage on fire.....but that was

(C) mm hm

(G) ...He was a pyromaniac anyways. We had some of our own right here. We didn't need to bring any more in.

(C) I know Mason Sutherland's farm was up at Hicks and Dundee. Tell us what's there now.

(G) Ha ha. What isn't there? It's where the Target store is. Some of trees are out in the front that says its from his property, which actually was probably scrub growth, cause I don't think any trees weresaved from 1842 to 19 to 2000

(C)cheaper

It was a nice gesture, but I think it added to the.....they have new plants all over.

(C) ...storm...

(G) I wished we'd of added one square foot when they sold it.

(C) I know your mother took some photos of it, before it, before the house was torn down.

(G) Yeah, well, that's not the original house, that's the one he lived in. And the other one would have been in town. But none of the first houses ever stayed. His brother-in-laws first house still stands on, which is Staples, which was right next to the fire station on Dundee Road near Smith Street. and that's his brother-in-law's, so it's the same style of house. Those old farm houses were built by the same person....on the street, because his

brother's house that was on Rand Road was the same style. That one's gone also. ... He was here, his brother-in-laws here, his brother was here, another brother was there, and his brother was over here. They Homed? quite a few sections, and they paid a dollar and a quarter an acre. But that was in 1840

(C) Did his parents come, too?

(G) Ah, his parents came out here, and I'm not sure just exactly where they first lived, but they wound up with his brother on Rand Road.

(C) and Silas?

(G) And Silas and his wife donated a piece of property that's known as the Sutherland Cemetery, that's the northeast corner of his farm when his father died, when the father died in 1840. He was the first burial. We do have pictures of his headstone, he and his wife. And then also Mason's in-laws were buried there. So, there's a lot of history.

(C) mm hm. Yes your a history...