

"I WAS NEVER AFRAID OF WORK ANYTIME"
WOMEN AND WAGED AND UNWAGED LABOR IN
RURAL NEW YORK STATE -
ALLEGANY COUNTY 1915-1945

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ALLEGANY COUNTY 1915 - 1945

by
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I. INTRODUCTION

Women have always worked and in the United States in the twentieth century women have increasingly engaged in waged labor and money making activities. Studies analyzing women's experiences in the labor force have tended to focus on the activities of women living in large urbanized or highly industrialized areas.¹ Studies examining women's work in a rural context have tended to concentrate on their experiences as agricultural laborers, usually unpaid, and are generally confined to specific geographic locations such as the South, the mid-West and the West where agriculture continues to dominate.² The focus on women's work in urban areas and the conflating of agricultural and rural categories has obscured the diversity of the life and work experiences of women who live in rural areas.

As a woman born and raised in a rural area in southwestern New York State, the undertaking of this thesis was, in a large way, an attempt to recover the history of the women in my community, particularly their work history. I was primarily interested in how they thought and felt as working women. How did they perceive historically the

experience of work in a rural area? What types of jobs were available to them? What did working mean to them as women? What did they like or dislike about the work they did? What did they perceive the rural community's attitude toward working women to be and what effect did it have upon them? How did women themselves feel about the expectations placed upon them as daughters, working women, wives and mothers? How did they feel about issues such as married women working and women's unwaged work in the home? Through the examination of women's perceptions and attitudes toward their work class, ethnic, religious issues and the dynamics of familial relationships also emerged. These other themes provided a glimpse of a more total life experience for women in this particular rural area.

The location of this study, Allegany County, is in the southwestern tier of New York State. The county has been consistently defined as rural since its founding in 1806. The primary industry has been, and still is, agriculture, mainly dairy farming.³

The time period focused on is between 1915-1945, enabling women's work experiences in the rural area to be examined within the context of World War I, the Great Depression and World War II. The various ways in which women perceived these events and the impact they felt they had on their lives is also explored.

Eight women ranging in age from 60-83 were interviewed for this study. An oral history methodology was used because the focus of the thesis is on the attitudes and perceptions of the women themselves toward their waged and unwaged labor. Interviews focused on work histories but also included the women's perceptions and interpretation of the world in which they lived and the choices they felt they had as women in the first half of the twentieth century.

All of the narrators worked for wages at some point in their lives and all performed unwaged work in the home. They differed by class, ethnic and religious background, marital status and education. Their employment histories and life experiences were as diverse as the women themselves.

A major difficulty that arose in the undertaking of this study was developing a workable definition of the concept of rural, specifically as it related to women's experiences. Stereotypes and myths about rural life and work abound. Generally, when one mentions rural one of two predominant images come to mind. The first is the idyllic Courier & Ives theme, a romanticization of life in the country. Cows graze peacefully in the fields. Families work the land together and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Everyone is suntanned and healthy. Children play barefoot in green meadows and wade in crystal clear streams. Family

and community values are simple, stable and solid. Life is harmonious and mellow. The second image conjured up of rural life is a much harsher one. Backwardness and boredom characterize a way of life that time has passed by. Hard work, poverty, limited education, limited opportunity, limited interest, limited vision and naiveté are the characteristics of the rural person. The only hope for salvation that the "country hick" has is to get out of the country and to the city as rapidly as possible.

Myths and stereotypes about urban life also exist. Urban and/or rural chauvinism and the extremes in the perceptions, interpretation and examination of rural and urban life have highlighted a dichotomy between the two and fueled debate that often focuses on which is "better." The emphasis on differences has had a divisive effect that has lent itself to a neglect of experiential commonalities that occur in spite of different structural frameworks.

At the present time only 2.7% of the population lives on farms and there are only 6 million farmers nationwide. However, non-metropolitan communities, many of which remain culturally rural, contain one-third of the total U.S. population and 90% of the land area.⁴ The definitions of rural and urban are dependent on each other and have changed considerably in the twentieth century particularly in the way the two categories have been defined by the U.S. Census

Bureau. In the course of the history of the Census Bureau several definitions of urban have been employed. The ever expanding definitions of urban have in turn altered and narrowed the definitions of rural. Thus, the official statistical definitions of urban and rural have added to the complexity of sorting out what is a rural experience and what is an urban one.

The Census definition of urban which existed between 1910-1950 was adopted in 1910 and slightly modified in 1920 and 1930.⁵ The 1910 Census limited the urban population to all persons living in incorporated places of 2500 or more inhabitants.⁶ By 1930, the definition of urban had expanded to include unincorporated political subdivisions with a total population of 10,000 or more inhabitants and a population density of 1000 per square mile.⁷ The remainder of the population was classified as rural and further subdivided into rural farm and rural non-farm. The rural farm population comprised all rural residents living on farms without regard to their occupation. The rural non-farm population is the part of the population which is not urban and does not live on farms. In general, it consisted of persons living in a wide variety of locations ranging from isolated non-farm homes in the open country to small unincorporated areas adjacent to large cities.⁸

The effect of the definition changes by the Census Bureau has been to transfer people from the rural farm category to the rural non-farm category and from both rural categories to urban. Thus, the number of people classified as urban and as rural non-farm has increased between 1920-1960. The definition of urban adopted by the Census Bureau in 1950, cut heavily into the previously rural population, particularly in many New York State counties. It added to the urban classification the persons in unincorporated places of 2500 inhabitants or more outside of any urban fringe and in the densely settled urban fringe around cities of 50,000 or more population.⁹

Thus, for the Census Bureau the definitions of urban and rural are based primarily on the number of inhabitants in a specifically defined area. Based solely on the Census Bureau's definitions it is possible that a person born in 1910 in an area defined as rural, could by 1930 be classified as rural non-farm and by 1950 as urban without ever changing their place of residence, or without a significant increase in the population in that area.

However, the Census Bureau, after 1920, did recognize and differentiate between a rural farm and a rural non-farm population. As early as 1923 an investigation under the auspices of the Institute of Social and Religious Research studied towns of less than 2,500 and showed that rural

America was becoming increasingly centered in villages and towns. A subsequent study published in 1937, defined the agricultural village as an incorporated center of more than 250 and less than 2,500 population situated in the midst of a farming area for whose inhabitants it supplies the usual commercial and social services.¹⁰ So, although there was growing governmental recognition that rural and farm were not necessarily synonymous there was also a contradiction in the recognition that continued to link rural and farm with the use of terms like "agricultural village."

The Census Bureau classifications and definitions of rural, of rural farm and rural non-farm do not adequately capture how people conceive the concept of rural historically or currently. In fact these classifications add to the complexity of a study of women in a rural area because it is not clear when you discuss rural whether you are talking about farm, village/town or both. The arbitrary numerical definitions employed by the Census Bureau also ignore how people themselves conceive of and define the area in which they live.

Even the eight narrators for this study, all of whom were women who had spent the majority of their lives in a rural area, expressed different concepts and perceptions of what rural meant to them. Some saw the rural area as distinctly different from the "city" but not all agreed that

the differences were positive. Others did not see any major differences between rural and urban. However, all of the narrators felt that they had made choices in their lives based on the distinction between rural and urban.

One narrator, Dorothy W., who was born, raised and lived all of her life in Allegany County, clearly conceived the rural area as being close, friendly and safe, which was in marked contrast to her conception of the "city."

"I wouldn't like the city. I've enjoyed it here. I like to be where people are friends and with people you know. My cousin just returned from New York City. How'd she ever live down there all that while? My Lawse. She wasn't afraid. Boy I would have been scared to death of my life. I just wouldn't be happy in the city anywhere."

Another lifelong resident of the county, Lucy B. also saw the city as different but in a more positive way; work and wage opportunities were better. However, the difference was not attractive enough for her seriously to consider migration even though she was locked into a low paying job as a laundress and a domestic.

"I imagine you could have gotten better jobs and wages in the city, but it never entered my head to move. I don't like cities. I'm just used to Belmont I guess. I always say I was born here. I'll probably die here. I believe it."

While other factors, which will be discussed later, also influenced these two women's decision to remain in Allegany County it is apparent that their perception of the differences between life in a rural area and life in an urban area also came into play.

Two other narrators also saw a vast difference between an urban and a rural environment but they emphasized the negative characteristics of rural life particularly as it pertained to women. They felt the rural community was constricting in terms of personal growth and development and the realization of personal potential. They saw women's roles as rigidly defined and job opportunities scarce.

Rosie P., the youngest of the narrators, is the only one to experience living and working in a large metropolitan area, Buffalo, NY. She had no choice in her family's decision to relocate in Allegany County. Although for the majority of her life she lived in rural areas she is highly critical of these communities focusing on their narrow-mindedness and hostility to outsiders and the lack of employment opportunities for women. She recalls her feelings about moving with her parents from Buffalo to Belmont in 1945 at the age of 21.

"I didn't want to come down here. We came down on the bus and I thought 'Oh my God. This place. Bah.' The young girls around here thought my sister and I were crazy. We'd

go out walking all dressed up and they thought we were stuck up. Everybody knew we were from Buffalo and they didn't want us around here. I thought this was the most boring place. I hated it. You really had to be lucky to get a job. There wasn't too many. I don't especially care too much about small towns. Everybody knows your business."

Hazel S. is the oldest of the narrators and a lifelong resident of the county yet her views on the rural area are very similar to Rosie's so age does not appear to be a factor in how these particular women viewed urban and rural. As a writer, a musician and a historian Hazel saw the rural area as constricting to the growth of women's creative talents. As an adolescent in the 1910's she felt her attempts to develop her skills were thwarted by rural attitudes and values that were inhibiting. Interestingly Hazel makes a distinction between people who live on farms and village/town people. While much attention has been given to differences between rural and urban, the dichotomy between rural farm and rural non-farm has generally not been analyzed. While it was beyond the scope of this study to do so Hazel's comments highlight another whole area of study: that of intrarural differences and commonalities.

"People who live on farms are scared to death of people who play music. They think they are a lower class of people. When I published an article in the paper, everybody

always had an awful time about that. What was I trying to do? I should stay up on the farm and work with those potatoes. I did enough of that."

Helena C. and Gen S. were both life long residents of Allegany County and both were involved in clerical work for all of their work history. They articulated a somewhat different perspective on the urban/rural issue. They did not focus on differences in employment opportunities for women but felt that they were pretty much the same in either environment. However, both implied that some intangible difference did exist. It is interesting to note that both of these women lived the majority of their lives in Wellsville which was the only community in the County large enough to be classified urban by the Census Bureau from 1920 on.¹¹ Yet, nowhere in their comments does one get a sense that they identify themselves as urban. Although, according to the Census Bureau they live in a city they speak of the "city" as something distinct from their life experiences. The perceptions of these two narrators serve as an excellent example of the complexity of definitions in terms of people's lives and of the contradictions that occur when attempts are made to categorize people using abstract and objective criteria. To say that the experiences of these two women were urban-specific because they live in a census bureau defined "city" when they clearly do not identify

themselves in the same way would at best ignore and at worst distort their perceptions about themselves.

Gen S. cannot see any reason for migrating to find work:

"I never felt I wanted to live in the city. I suppose I was use to being around here and I didn't mind. I never felt employment opportunities would be any better in the city. There were plenty of jobs for women here. I didn't feel any need to leave."

Helena emphasized the family as her reasons for staying and that is certainly a significant factor in many of the narrators' decisions to remain or move into Allegany County. Yet Helena too draws a distinction between the "urban" place in which she lives and the "city."

"I never gave moving to the city a thought. I just never didn't want to. My sisters and I got along so well and we were pretty close. I liked living in Wellsville. Self-satisfied I guess."

All of the narrators interviewed for this study had spent the majority of their lives in areas they defined as rural and a very different set of perceptions and attitudes would have undoubtedly emerged if interviews were done with women who had migrated out of the rural area. However, these women exemplify the inherent complexity of attempting to categorize women's specific experiences and attitudes as

rural or urban.

I initially undertook this project expecting to find distinct differences between the life and work experiences of women in rural areas and their urban counterparts;. My own rural bias found me searching for a very positive view of women's experiences in rural areas. I expected to discover attitudes and experiences that could definitely be labeled "rural." However, as the research progressed and the data unfolded it became more and more evident that women most often share the same roles and experiences regardless of whether they live in a rural or urban area. Categories like rural farm, rural non-farm and urban may hold some significance for the study of men's social, political and economic experiences but they do not necessarily do the same for women.

During the time period of this study, 1915-1945, the women interviewed who worked for wages in Allegany County were segregated into female specific occupations such as clerical work and domestic work. They earned lower wages than men. There was resistance to and sanctions against married women working for pay particularly during the Great Depression. Women were subject to clear familial and societal expectations of their roles. They were expected to do unwaged work in the home. There were economic, social and family barriers to them achieving financial and social

independence as single working women. Class and ethnic factors had an impact on their lives. They were not isolated from the effects of World War I, the Great Depression and World War II or from employment trends for women.

While many experiential commonalities were evident between women in this particular rural area and women in general, some apparent differences also emerged.

The narrators were children and adolescents during an era when protective child labor legislation was a major reform movement in New York State yet the majority of them were employed or engaged in money making activities when young. What the rural area offered that the city did not was agricultural employment to children. Although highly exploitative, agricultural labor was not viewed as such by the general public and efforts to end child labor in agriculture were made more difficult not only because of a myth - the joys of farm life and the superior morality of the rural environment - but also because of a powerful economic interest augmented by a legislature proportioned in favor of agriculture.¹² In 1948 the New York State Labor Department specifically excluded agriculture because of the prevalent belief that farm work was beneficial for children.¹³ In addition enforcement of child labor legislation not pertaining to agriculture in rural areas was often lax

and consequently children often worked long hours at low pay unprotected by the laws meant to protect them. So in some respects the rural area offered more opportunities for children to earn money and this in turn affected the expectations and demands on young women.

All women are expected to, and do, unwaged work in the home. For women in rural areas, regardless if they live in a village or on a farm, unwaged work takes on added dimensions which include care of animals, growing and preserving of food and the selling or trading of goods such as butter and eggs.

Ethnic and religious differences and tensions exist in both the city and the country. However, religious differences appear to be much more intense in the rural community particularly in the 1920's precipitated by the strident activities of the Klu Klux Klan in the area. Some women perceived that these religious tensions had a direct impact on their lives and were a threat to their employment.

Ethnic groups in Allegany County were less diverse than in metropolitan communities but ethnicity still played an important role in women's lives. Ethnic differences and tensions often affected the type of work available to women.

It has been argued that behavior in rural areas has differed over time from that in urban centers and has its own unique mind set and value system. Rural life styles and

activities have involved physical and often social isolation, large family networks with their demands and benefits, family labor relationships, seasonal work patterns and other features.¹⁴ While this position is valid it is also evident from this study that for women many experiential commonalities also exist not only between farm and non-farm but also rural and urban. Thus, one cannot isolate what is specifically rural in these particular women's experiences until one asks the same questions of ordinary women living in an urban area in the same time period and a comparative study is done.

This research then becomes a beginning step in examining and analyzing the perceptions and attitudes of ordinary women toward their work and lives in a particular time period and how they define who they are and what they do within the context in which they live.

The first section of this paper will describe Allegany County in the context of state and national trends for women's employment. In spite of its rural character the County contained business and industry that provided employment for women beyond the confines of agriculture. The second section examines and analyzes the narrators' waged and unwaged work experiences as children and as adolescents. The third section follows the narrators' work histories into adulthood and full time employment or marriage and probes

theirs and the community's attitudes around such issues as married women working and the expectations and obligations of unmarried daughters to their families.

The variety and diversity in the life and work experiences of these eight women exhibits a broad range of historical experience. The diversity of their lives is perhaps surprising given the time period studied when the general popular conception was that women married and stayed home and men worked.

Although this study is confined to a small sample of women in a particular rural area the differences in their lives define the range of working women's experiences in the time period. Their thoughts on who they are and what they have done have important implications beyond the parameters of this study in as much as it presents a portrait of women in a rural area as they themselves define it.

II. ALLEGANY COUNTY

Allegany County is located on the southern tier of western New York State. It is bordered by Cattaraugus County on the west, Wyoming and Livingston Counties on the north, Steuben County on the east and portions of the Pennsylvania counties of McKean and Potter on the south. It is the sixteenth largest county in New York State by land area consisting of 1,033 square miles.¹⁵ Since the turn of the century, the county has had twenty-nine townships and thirteen incorporated villages. In 1920, 82.7% of the total population of New York State was classified as urban.¹⁶ In the same year, 13.6% of Allegany County's total population of 36,842 was classified urban and 86.4% was classified rural. In 1950, the county's total population was 43,784, of which 14.6% were classified urban and 85.4% rural.¹⁷ Between 1920 and 1950, Wellsville was the only village in the county, populous enough to be considered urban by the Census Bureau with a population range of 6,171 in 1920 and 6,402 in 1950.¹⁸ Although technically classified urban, Wellsville would in no way be comparable socially or economically to other cities in the state such as Buffalo,

Syracuse, Rochester or New York City.

Since its inception, Allegany County has experienced slow but consistent growth in its population.¹⁹ Between 1920-1945, the county saw a decline in its rural farm population but an increase in its rural non-farm population, which mirrors state and national trends, although there is a significant difference in the percent of decline in the rural farm population as it occurred more rapidly in Allegany County as compared to the state and national percentages.²⁰ In spite of the decline in the rural farm population, the county's main industry continued to be agriculture. While national and state figures indicate proportionately more people in urban areas, it does not mean that conversely there are less people in rural areas. It is significant that declines in the rural farm population do not mean declines in the total rural population.

New York State has consistently had a higher proportion of females to males and this has been particularly the case in the state's urban areas.²¹

The higher portion of females in the state's urban areas is attributable undoubtedly to many factors but a common reason given is that the greatest economic opportunities are available to women in the city. Rural occupations, especially farming, cannot absorb numerically or relatively nearly as many women as can the urban populations,

especially the clerical and industrial activities.²² The conversely high ratio of males to females in the total rural population appears to support that thesis and implies that women migrate from the rural area to the city to seek employment.²³

However, I think one has to look more closely at the male/female ratio in the rural category and to consider the ratio in the breakdown of rural farm and rural non-farm to broaden the interpretation of women's migration and role in the rural area. In 1930, for example, in Allegany County, there were 103.4 males per 100 females. For the rural farm population, there were 115.1 males per 100 females. The rural non-farm population contained 95.9 males per 100 females and the urban population was 99.2 males per 100 females.²⁴ Thus, it is the rural non-farm population that contains the highest ratio of females to males, not the urban one. While there is no question that women left the rural areas, and that the seeking of employment was a contributing factor, the rural farm and non-farm figures suggest that while women may have left the farm per se, they did not unequivocally go to large metropolitan areas. Rather, they may have tended to migrate to local small towns and villages and sought employment there. The experiences of the eight narrators demonstrates the movement of women from farm to non-farm categories. Five of the women

interviewed were born, raised and worked all of their lives in Allegany County. Three of those five, however, left the farm seeking and finding employment in county villages.

The ratio of males to females affects all aspects of women's lives, including marital status and employment. From 1910-1940, New York State consistently had a higher percentage of single women than the nation as a whole.²⁵ In Allegany County, in 1930, there were 13,690 females, age 15 and over, and of that number, 22% were single. For the County's rural farm population, the total female population, 15 years of age and over, was 4,660 with 21% being single. For the rural non-farm population, the total number of females, 15 years of age and older, was 6,805 of which 20% were single.²⁶ In Allegany County, there was a lower percentage of single women than in the nation or state as a whole.

New York State, since the turn of the Century, has received large numbers of immigrants. In 1910, 29.9% of the state's total population was foreign born. In 1920, 26.8% of the state's population was foreign born and in 1930, it was 25.4%.²⁷ Allegany County, however, did not experience a large influx of immigrants in these years. In 1910, only 5.3% of the County's population was foreign born and in 1920 and 1930, it was 4.0%. In 1920, Allegany, Delaware and Schoharie were the only counties in New York State with less

than 5% foreign born.²⁸ The low percentage of immigrant groups does not necessarily mean an absence of ethnic tensions in the rural community. John Shover has argued that while rural townships were never as multi-ethnic as city wards, there have been definite ethnic patterns and the conventional urban wisdom that categorizes all rural communities as homogeneous enclaves is wrong. "Surprisingly few studies of American farms and villages have given attention to their ethnic make up. This lack has produced a myopic view of rural politics overlooking often intense and deep seated ethnic and religious rivalries. Most importantly, it has left out a dimension of American Ethnic History."²⁹

The experiences of some of the narrators for this study provide a glimpse of ethnic relationships and raises the question of what role ethnicity plays in women's life experiences in a rural community. Two of the narrators are Italian. Lucy B. was born in Belmont, Allegany County in 1913. Her parents migrated from Sicily in 1903. She recalled the attitudes toward her as a child. "American kids didn't like us. They'd call you wop and all those names. They were fighting words for my older brother. He'd beat the hell out of 'em. We'd fight with kids who called us names. They didn't like Italians. Don't know why. We were born right here in Belmont." During World War II, Lucy was

employed as a cleaning lady at the Telephone Company in Belmont and talked about an experience that appeared to be directly related to her ethnicity. "Security was real tight at the phone company. They took everything but your footprints. You had to give them your birth certificate and answer a lot of questions and they took finger prints. There were a lot of papers you had to sign. Just for cleaning. Can you imagine that, just for cleaning three hours a week for 35 cents an hour. Some governmental official came to my house after my birth certificate and of course the name on my birth certificate is Annunciata. He come to the door and says 'You're not Lucy. You're Annunciata.' I say, 'I know that.' I think he was just kidding with me. I asked the lawyer I cleaned for if it made any difference about my name. He said no."³⁰

Philomena J. was born in Montedoro, Sicily in 1915 and in 1920 migrated to the United States with her widowed mother, older brother and younger sister. They lived in Buffalo until 1925 when her mother remarried and they moved to LeRoy in Genesee County, New York.³¹ Philomena recalled that ethnic tensions in LeRoy ran high between the Irish and the Italians and that each group had their own church, community, places to work, etc.

Lucy and Philomena's experiences raises the question whether the immigrant experience is the same in the rural

area as it is in the urban. Are inter-ethnic relationships divisive? Is there competition for jobs in the rural community between native born whites and different groups of foreign born and their children? Does the rural community isolate ethnic groups from one another and do attitudes towards these groups relegate women, especially, to certain jobs at the exclusion of others? Although this study did not explore inter-ethnic relationships in depth these narrators experiences suggest that although numerically the rural community does not contain large numbers of ethnic groups, ethnic relationships are still a significant factor in the life and patterns of the community.

The issue of religion in a rural community also needs to be explored in much greater depth than this study allows. I was unable to obtain statistics that gave a breakdown of peoples religious affiliation in this time period. However, from my own familiarity with Allegany County and it's history, I know that Protestant denominations are most prominent and that Catholics are in decided minority. It was the perception of some of the narrators that particularly in the 1920's, religion was an issue that very much affected women's lives and threatened their employment.

Gen S. was born on her family's farm three miles from the Village of Wellsville in 1901. Her paternal and maternal grandparents migrated from Ireland in the 1850's.

She attended the Catholic grade school and graduated from the public high school in Wellsville. In 1924, she was employed as a secretary for two attorneys in the Village of Friendship. Gen recalled vividly, and with a great deal of animation, the activities directed against Catholics by the Klu Klux Klan in Allegany County during the 1920's.

"When I was in Friendship, Alfred Smith was running for President and at that time, the Klan people were very against Catholics. When I was working in the law office, there were people who didn't like it because I was Catholic. Sometimes it was a little scary. They used to march, burn crosses and dress up in those white sheets. Of course, Catholics were opposed to them but a lot of other people...I don't know if they were so much. If you were a Catholic they didn't want you working anywhere. I'd heard at Davie's Store in Wellsville, there were Catholic women working and the Klan wanted to try to get them out. They'd talk to the manager and say he shouldn't have Catholics working for him. I think it was mostly lower class people who belonged to the Klan. I don't think business people belonged. The Klan had a paper called the Menace that they distributed around. I saw copies of it. It was very terrible against the Catholics."

Other narrators also recalled the activities of the Klan in this time period. Inez M., born in Eldred, PA in

1912 and residing in Dukes Center, PA from 1918-1929, remembered the activities of the Klan directed toward the three to four Catholic families residing in the area. Lucy B. recalled a cross burning incident that occurred near her family's home in the 1920's. Dorothy W. recalled the Klan being active. Hazel S., who was born in Wellsville in 1900, also recalled that the Klan primarily directed their activities against Catholics and that prejudice also existed against various ethnic groups as well.³²

How great an impact religious antagonism had on women's lives and their employment opportunities is difficult to ascertain. However, even the scant information culled from this study suggests that religious differences might be a disharmonious factor in rural communities. Relationships between various religious denominations, as well as intraprotestant relationships, and how they are played out, might be a significant factor in women's life experiences.

Although Allegany County's primary industry has been agricultural, the county has also hosted other industrial and manufacturing concerns that have provided employment for male and female county residents. In addition to agriculture, lumbering was a major industry until the early 1900's.³³ However, with the advent of better means of transportation, particularly the Railroad, small industries

sprung up in the many county towns.³⁴ Although Wellsville could claim the majority of manufacturing concerns, other villages, smaller in size, also attracted industry. The slow rate of growth that Wellsville experienced between 1915-1945, also indicates that while county residents may have sought and found employment in Wellsville, they did not necessarily choose to reside there.

For nearly a Century, from the 1860's to the 1950's, much of Wellsville's industry was linked to oil production, although a variety of other manufacturing concerns also made the town their home.³⁵ The Wellsville Burial Case Company, operated from 1907 into the 1940's, provided continuous employment for county residents. McEwan Brothers Company, founded in 1861 and still in operation, has been mostly engaged in the sale of oil well supplies and in repair business with the oil industry. The Air Preheater Corporation, founded in 1903 and still in operation, has provided consistent employment. The Kerr-Turbine Company, founded in 1902, employed several hundred men until the Company moved to Jeanette, Pennsylvania in 1928. The Moore Steam Turbine Corporation, organized in 1916, continues to operate today as Turbodyne and was, and is, one of the largest employers in the county. Between 1916-1940, the plant consistently employed 200 to 250 men, in the plant as well as a large office staff that included women. Between 1915-1932, the

Victor Aluminum Plant provided employment for 70 to 100 people. Scoville, Brown & Company, one of the oldest and largest wholesale grocery firms in Western New York, operated from 1886 until the 1960's, employing upwards of seventy people. The Sinclair Refinery began as the Wellsville Refining Company in 1901. The Refinery underwent a large expansion program in 1927 and until it closed in 1958, employed approximately 500 people.³⁶

During the late 1920's, Wellsville did experience an industrial recession. The Victor Aluminum Company and the Wellsville Upholstering Company went out of business. The Pure Carbon Company and the Ellicott Turbine Company moved out of Wellsville. However, the effect of these businesses closing or moving was greatly offset by the Sinclair Refining Company's multi-million dollar expansion program, and the expansion of the Moore Steam Turbine Company and the Air Preheater Corporation.³⁷ In addition, a natural gas boom in the county in 1928 resulted in three new businesses establishing themselves in Wellsville; Godfrey L. Cabot, Inc., The Belmont Quadrangle Drilling Corporation and the Otis Eastern Service Inc.³⁸ As a result of the oil industry, the natural gas industry and the expansion of industry the Depression failed to strike serious blow to Wellsville. "Merchant and industries experienced problems of reduced income, greater taxes, increasing costs and other effects of

the New Deal. But these factors, when compared with losses in other sections, appear almost trivial."³⁹

Manufacturing concerns and industries located in other county towns and villages, also revealed a pattern of diversity. The Empire Sash & Door Company of Friendship was found in 1890 and employed over 150 men until it closed in 1917. The Phelps & Sibley Company, located in Cuba, was the county's largest flour and feed mill. Founded in 1879, it was employing over 50 men in the 1930's. Cuba has also held the distinction of being one of the leading cheese makers in the Eastern United States, and the Cuba Cheese Company has been in business since the late 1880's. The Drake Manufacturing Company, founded in Friendship in 1897, employed approximately 40 people until the 1930's. The principal industrial plant in Angelica was a railroad shop. Built in 1881, the Pittsburgh, Shawmut and Northern Railroad, took it over in 1899. The shop employed between 130 and 140 men until just after World War I when the work force was reduced. The Acme Electric Company, located in Cuba in 1937, offered employment to approximately 200 people. The Guenther Hosiery Company, located in Friendship in 1921, employed 60 to 70 people thru the late 1930's. In 1903, a silk mill was established in Andover by the Rochambeau Silk Company. The plant was closed in 1933 but during the time of it's operation, had branches in Wellsville, Depew, New

York and Canada. The Andover plant employed 125 people. The silk mill reopened in 1937 and in 1938, was purchased by the Allegany Print Works Inc. The county government, located in Belmont, has also consistently provided employment for county residents.⁴⁰

An economic history of Allegany County in the twentieth century has never been compiled. Thus, it has been difficult to compose a total statistical picture of women's employment activities within the county between 1915-1945. However, what has been culled from the available data presents a beginning, look, at women's employment experiences.

In 1900, 18% of the labor force in the United States was women. By 1950, the percentage had risen to 29%.⁴¹ In New York State in 1900, the proportion of females, age 14 years and older, in the labor force was 25.0% and in 1940, it was 30.8%. Thus, New York State has had a consistently higher proportion of females in the labor force than the country as a whole.⁴² Women in New York State have consistently worked in a variety of occupational categories and the same is true for women in Allegany County.

In 1930 in Allegany County, for example, professional and semi-professional, domestic and personal service, wholesale and retail trade, motel, restaurant and boarding house, textile and clothing industries, agriculture and telephone

and telegraph were the major employment categories for women. Of a total female labor force of 2,436, 26.6% were professional and semi-professional, 24.3% were in domestic and personal service, 11.7% wholesale or retail trade, 7.9% hotels, restaurants and boarding houses, 4.6% textile and clothing industries, 3.9% in agriculture and 3.1% in telephone and telegraph. The remaining 17.9% were scattered among the other occupational categories.⁴³ For the same categories in New York State in 1930, of a total female labor force of 1,418, 716, 14.7% were in the professional and semi-professional category, 19.4% were in domestic and personal service, 11.3% were in wholesale or retail trade, 5.2% hotels, restaurants and boarding houses, 12.3% in textile and clothing industries, 0.5% in agriculture and 4.1% in telephone and telegraph. Of the remaining 32.5%, most were engaged in manufacturing other than textile and clothing.⁴⁴

A comparison between Allegany County and New York State for this particular year, shows a significant difference in the percentage of women employed in the major categories for Allegany County. The two major categories, professional and semi-professional and domestic and personal service, contain a significantly higher percentage of women in Allegany County than in the state as a whole. And, the highest percentage of employed women in Allegany County are

in the professional and semi-professional category while for New York State the highest percentage is in domestic and personal services. The reasons for this are open to speculation. It is possible that in a rural county the largest number of jobs are available to women in this particular category and if women desire to work, this is where they are most likely to find it. Employment in this category also implies possessing some skill, training or education beyond grade school (teaching, nursing, social work, etc.) which may suggest that women in rural areas are willing to, and have the means, to seek the training necessary to secure these types of jobs.

The second largest employment category for women in Allegany County is domestic and personal service and the percentage of women in this category is significantly higher than in the state as a whole. It appears then that for women in this particular rural area, that their best chance of finding employment lay at two ends of a spectrum; professional work or domestic work which was apparently readily available and required no skills or additional education beyond what women had already been trained to do from an early age.

Of the remaining major employment categories for women in Allegany County, significant differences appear in two when compared with the state as a whole. Although only 4.6%

of the women in the country are engaged in textile and clothing, as compared to 12.3% for New York State, it is still the fifth largest employment category for county women. As would be expected, in a rural county in a highly industrial state, 3.9% of the employed women in Allegany County were engaged in agriculture as compared to only 0.5% of the employed women in the state as a whole. However, it is important to note that agriculture is the sixth largest employment category for women in the county and is not significantly higher than the last major category, telephone and telegraph with 3.1%.

By 1940, the total labor force in Allegany County had dropped to 14,295, of which females comprised 18.2% or approximately 2,601 women. So, although the total number of the county's labor force had declined by approximately 328, the number of women had risen in the ten years of the Depression by approximately 125.⁴⁵ This could possibly be linked to the fact that women were segregated into female specific jobs that men did not want in spite of the economic hard times. Statistics available for New York State in 1940 indicate that relatively more rural non-farm women are professional, domestic and service workers than is true for women of the state as a whole. Fewer rural non-farm women hold clerical and sales jobs or work as operatives as compared with women of the state as a whole. For rural farm

women, a larger portion who worked were in domestic service or professional work than women of the state as a whole and have fewer clerical, sales or factory jobs. The major occupational activities of urban women in New York State in 1940 were clerical and operative work. For rural non-farm women they were professional, domestic and clerical work and for rural farm women they were domestic and professional work.⁴⁶ Thus, the professional and domestic trend of employment for women in Allegany County probably also continued thru 1940. Although the professional and domestic occupations are the largest employers of women in Allegany County and might suggest limited employment options for rural women, it is important to remember that they are also employed in other categories in this time period including trade, textiles, telephone and telegraph, etc.

In 1947, the largest employers in the county were those industries involved in Petroleum and Coal products and electrical machinery. Food and kindred product industries were next. Printing and publishing were third, lumber was fourth, fabricated metal products, and stone, clay and glass products fifth, and textile mill products sixth.⁴⁷ Although a breakdown in employment by gender in these industries is not available, the interviews with the narrators connected women's employment to the majority of these industries.

Allegany County is also home to two colleges and a university which have experienced consistent growth and expansion. Alfred University, founded in 1836, the New York State School of Agriculture, founded in Alfred in 1908 and Houghton College, founded in 1884, have employed faculty and auxiliary staff, often drawn from county residents throughout their history.⁴⁸ The possibility exists that there is a connection between the location of these institutions of higher learning located in the county and the high percentage of women engaged in professional and semi-professional work.

The consistent conflating of rural with agricultural has tended to focus all analysis of rural life on the farm. This myopic view has overlooked the rural non-farm dweller and neglected the roles, relationships, contributions and experiences of a large portion of the rural population. The emphasis of analysis on the agriculture/farm component of rural life has particularly obscured the experiences of women who live in rural areas. Although women have always engaged in agricultural labor, they have been viewed primarily as playing a secondary role in the agricultural history of the country. They are the seasonal workers or they are the help mate of a husband or father who is the owner of the land, the primary worker on it and who controls what it produces.

The reality is, however, that not all women who live in rural areas live on farms, nor is agricultural labor, paid and unpaid, the only employment available to them. Rather, as this study shows employment opportunities beyond agricultural are available to women living in rural areas and they take advantage of them. The trend in Allegany County, between 1915-1945, seems to be one of several small manufacturing concerns and businesses that offer employment to small numbers of people rather than large concerns offering employment to large numbers of people. The experiences of the narrators indicate that women tended to leave farms in the county and to seek employment in the towns and villages. The mobility patterns of these eight narrators offers some challenge to the hypothesis that women migrate from rural areas to urban ones to seek employment and that employment for women is primarily available only in urban areas.

Although Allegany County's population was, and is, predominately native born white, and statistically the county did not experience a large influx of foreign immigration in the time period studied, the experiences of the narrators call into question the general assumption that rural areas are homogeneous communities free from ethnic conflicts and tensions. Likewise, religious conflicts, evidenced particularly by the activities of the Klu Klux Klan

in the 1920's, also suggests that rural communities experience divisiveness that impacts on women's, as well as men's, total life experiences.

The employment trends of women living in rural areas between 1915-1945, differs from the trend in New York State as a whole inasmuch as professional/semi-professional and domestic service are the two largest categories rural women are employed in. Statewide, in this time period, clerical services was the major category. Women in Allegany County and particularly the narrators in this study, did not deviate significantly from these trends. However, the enormous amount of employment diversity experienced by these women takes the picture of women's lives in this time period well beyond what the statistics show.

It is significant that a major portion of these women's work experiences occur pre World War II and during the Great Depression. The majority of the women interviewed were engaged in occupations that were clearly gender linked and defined, thus lending credence to the theory that women's work was so rigidly sex-typed that they enjoyed a measure of protection from unemployment during the Depression. The female unemployment rate was lower in the 1930's than the male unemployment rate because occupations in which women were concentrated were sex-typed and contracted less than those in which men were concentrated.⁴⁹

III. PART TIME EMPLOYMENT

New York's prominence as a major industrial state between 1915 - 1945 was supported by women and children as laborers in the state's factories and fields. In 1910, 65,094 children between the ages of 10 to 15 were employed for wages in New York State and 5.5% of them were female. In 1920, the figure dipped to 49,846 with 3.9% being girls and by 1930, 20,464 children were employed for wages of which 1.3% were girls.⁵⁰ The issue of child labor in New York State had been addressed by various reform groups in the last decade of the nineteenth century. However, it wasn't until the forming of the New York Child Labor Committee in 1902 that legislation regulating child labor was passed. This organization worked vigorously until 1942 to formulate, enact and enforce protective child labor legislation in the state.⁵¹

It is not the purpose of this study to explore in any depth the activity surrounding child labor legislation in New York State between 1915 - 1945. What is pertinent to this study is the discourse that occurred on child labor and how female children and those living in rural areas, viewed

and responded to the attempts to restrict their ability to seek employment.

The assumption made by the general public, and the one that reformers consistently came up against, was that rural children engaged primarily in agricultural labor which was at best healthier than the labor urban children engaged in, and at worst, less detrimental. Thus reformers generally focused their crusade on the factories and street trades in the state's highly urbanized and industrialized areas. This provided children in rural areas, who were frequently employed at young ages in jobs that were not agriculturally related and that were in clear violation of the existing laws, with some immunity from protective child labor legislation.

Rural children's employment, like urban children's, was more often than not supported by employers who could pay lower wages, by parents who were dependent in varying degrees on the money their children could earn and by the children themselves for a variety of reasons that will be explored later. In addition, the unlikelihood of frequent or even regular state inspections of employers in rural areas for violations may have created an indifferent or even an invulnerable attitude toward the laws. The majority of narrators who worked part-time as children claimed not to have been aware of state laws that required them to have

working papers, etc. thus suggesting perhaps that the rural community preferred to adopt an attitude of "what you don't know won't hurt you" when it came to protective labor legislation for children.

The raising of the school-leaving age for children in New York State went hand in hand with protective child labor legislation. As more attempts were made to regulate child labor, the school leaving age crept up to sixteen by 1935. Rural areas were very much opposed to the sixteen year old age limit, using the argument that it was too expensive to send children to consolidated schools in rural districts.⁵² However, New York's rural dominated legislature did not mind passing child labor legislation as long as the urban areas demanding it were the only ones regulated. Legislation, that might have placed restrictions on industries in rural areas such as canneries or commercial farms, were generally opposed vigorously or if passed, ignored.⁵³

The labyrinth of legislation, governing child labor in New York State in the first half of the 20th Century, did not end children working either within the laws or outside of them. In spite of increasingly restrictive labor laws, regarding children's employment and the emphasis on compulsory school attendance, the young women living in rural areas continued to work for wages on at least a part-time basis and often in defiance of the State labor laws.

Six of the eight women interviewed for this study were employed part-time as young children or adolescents prior to or during the Great Depression. Often they held several part-time jobs simultaneously. They worked as agricultural laborers, babysitters, dishwashers, musicians and telephone operators. Their wages were low and they most often had restrictions placed on the ways in which the money they earned could be spent.

Hazel, Lucy, Inez, Philomena and Rosie began earning money at young ages and the money they earned either eased their family's financial situation or was necessary for the family's survival. Inez and Rosie both spoke about the financial hardships their families experienced and described them as "hard-up." Rosie's part-time employment also occurred in the context of the Great Depression. However, they were, for the most part, allowed to keep the money they earned although there were certain expectations regarding what it could be spent for (i.e. clothing, school books, etc.). On the other hand, whatever wage Lucy and Philomena earned was their family's and they had no control over their earnings. Whether this was due solely to ethnic values (both are daughters of Sicilian immigrant families) is difficult to ascertain. The experience for the male siblings in their families is significantly different. All of the wages Philomena's siblings earned, regardless of their

gender, belong to the family. In Lucy's family, the male siblings do not contribute their earnings to the family. While it could be argued that what her brothers earned offset the family's financial burden, there does not seem to be any question that the money was theirs and they had control of it. Thus, even in the same ethnic context while there is diversity for male family members, the expectation of the responsibility young single daughters have toward their family is the same.

For the women who had some amount of control over the money they earned as adolescents, the work experience had a different meaning than it did for the women who viewed their work as necessary for their family's survival. For Hazel, the money she earned with the dance bands was a recognition of her talent and who she was beyond the confines of her work within the home. For Helena, although the expectation in her family was that daughters work, her part-time employment served as a vehicle for her to decide and chose her full-time occupation. For Inez, her work was a way to help her family but it was also fun. For Rosie, the money she earned, even at a young age, gave her a sense of independence and a need to work for herself, beyond the money she earned.

In addition to attending school full-time, and working for wages part-time, all of the narrators expended a great

deal of time and energy engaging in unwaged labor in their parents home. Their unwaged work was often as necessary to the family's survival as the wages they may have, or did earn. The narrators unwaged tasks included cleaning, cooking, laundry, sewing, food preservation and care of siblings. For the women who lived on farms as young children or adolescents, unwaged labor expanded to include tending fowl, assisting with planting and harvesting, making butter, etc.

The part-time money making activities of the narrators as children and adolescents, coupled with their unwaged work in the home and their full-time school attendance, broadens our understanding of the female life experience in a rural area. Their early experiences challenge the myth that agriculture is the only employer in a rural area and that it is an occupation that generally excludes women. While much has been made of the fact that married women who work for wages in fact have two full-time jobs, their waged job and their unwaged work in the home, the experiences of these narrators suggest that even at a young age, women often experience a double or even triple burden of full-time school, unwaged work in the home and part-time or even full-time waged work.

As children and adolescents, all of the eight narrators attended school full-time and engaged in unwaged

labor in their parents' homes to varying degrees. Six of the narrators also worked part-time for wages or were engaged in some money making activity. By the time they were fifteen years old, five of the narrators had been engaged in part-time waged labor for several years.

Hazel S. is the oldest of the eight narrators. She was born in Wellsville, New York in 1900 and was 83 years old at the time of the interview. Hazel's family had been residents of Allegany County since the 1850's. Hazel was orphaned at the age of eight. In 1908, she and her younger brothers and sisters, were split up and sent to live with various families in the area. Hazel's foster father was a cheesemaker and in 1909, when she was nine years old, he moved his family from Wellsville to Jobs Corners, Pennsylvania. Her maternal foster grandparents remained in Wellsville and Hazel spent the remainder of her childhood and adolescence with them during the school year and with her foster parents in Jobs Corners during the summer.

As a very young child, Hazel had learned to play the piano and in 1905, at the age of five, began giving recitals in Wellsville. At the age of twelve, in 1912, she began playing piano and singing with local dance bands. For this activity, she received financial reimbursement. Hazel continued to play with various local bands until she graduated from the Wellsville High School in 1918. While in high

school, she also attended the Wellsville Music Conservatory where she studied piano, pipe organ and voice. She graduated from the Conservatory in 1918. Hazel also composed music that the bands she worked with frequently played. As an adolescent, she also began writing poetry and short stories which she occasionally submitted for publication and developed an interest in history that would become a life long avocation.

It was Hazel's dream to be a concert pianist but family obligations, attitudes and values mediated against the pursuit of that dream. While Hazel did earn some money from her creative talent as an adolescent, the majority of her work during this time was confined to her foster grandparents home and was unwaged.

A small, frail woman who lives alone in a large ramshackle house in the Village of Wellsville, Hazel has a twinkle in her eye, a sharp sense of humor and strong opinions on the course of her life.

"When I was younger, in the early 1900's, no one worked in those days. Never did any babysitting. No one did. I studied piano and I was pretty good at it. In fact I was offered jobs to teach but I never could take them because my foster parents said nope I gotta stay right here in the house and work, work, work. Housework, cooking and cleaning and my foster grandmother had a lot of company. I

wanted to be a concert pianist and I had lots of opportunities but they said no. I owed the family to stay here and take care of the old people. I've always felt bad about it because I thought I shouldn't have done it. And my piano teacher just said... 'You're not going to go down there and do housework for that old lady.' But that's what I had to do most of the time.

When I was twelve, I started playing and singing with some local dance bands. My foster father didn't like it. He said girls and women who played for those things had a bad reputation. I think the most I ever got paid was \$11.00 and that was a lot for then. The money was always split evenly between the band members. I bought what few clothes I had with my money and I didn't have many."

Hazel obtained employment with the dance bands primarily through her skills, talents and reputation as a musician. She derived a great deal of personal satisfaction as well as some money from this activity. However, her employment as a musician was circumscribed by her family's attitudes towards women's proper place. They perceived that Hazel's obligation to them as a young single daughter should be met not through monetary contribution nor financial independence but through unwaged domestic work in their home. Hazel was very much aware that she was "working" for her family and while a sense of duty seems to have

overridden her personal ambitions, it was not without some chafing at what they considered her proper role.

Hazel's recollection of women not working in the early 1900's lends itself to various interpretations. In 1900, 18.4% of the females ten years old and older in the United States were employed. By 1910, the figure had risen to 21.7% and by 1920, to 21.8%.⁵⁴ While local statistics for Allegany County are not available, it is possible that women were engaged in wage labor in the County at this time but their activities were invisible to someone in Hazel's position who was growing up in a middle class home where attitudes concerning women's roles were strongly expressed and enforced and whose women were least likely to engage in wage labor. In addition, up to 1920, middle class women were generally not expected to work and refrained from taking factory and other available jobs.⁵⁵ The perceptions of women working in Allegany County expressed by Hazel, differ from those of some of the other narrators growing up in roughly the same time period but under different circumstances.

Geneivieve S. was born in 1901 on her family's farm three miles south of the Village of Wellsville. Her paternal grandparents were Irish immigrants to the county in the 1850's and her maternal grandparents had migrated from Ireland to Iowa in the same decade. Gen's father engaged

primarily in dairy farming on his 150 acre farm. Gen attended the Catholic grade school in Wellsville through the tenth grade and then attended the Wellsville Public High School where she took primarily business courses that included shorthand, typing and bookkeeping. Between 1901 - 1919, when Gen was a child and an adolescent, she helped at home with both household and farm tasks. She did not, at this point, engage in any wage labor but was engaged in money making activities. Her twin brother, who was her only other sibling, provided the majority of extra labor on the farm. However, Gen helped to care for and feed the chickens and also assisted with the planting and harvesting of potatoes. Her work in the house consisted of assisting her mother with the laundry, the cleaning, food preservation and the making of butter. She also regularly accompanied her mother to Wellsville where they bartered and sold eggs and butter in exchange for bread and certain kinds of meat. Gen was 82 years old at the time of the interview. She has been widowed for thirteen years and lives alone in Belmont, New York. White haired, stooped and slow of step, she speaks in a whisper but is eager to share the memories of her life.

"I just helped at home. When I was going to school, we would do the laundry on Saturday so I could do a good share of it. On laundry days, my mother and I would haul the water from the well in the cellar. We did some of the

laundry by hand but we got a washing machine around 1916 that worked by hand. We didn't have electricity on the farm until the 1930's."

While Gen herself did not work for a wage in the teens, she was aware of women working, including some of her peers and was cognizant of the type of employment available for women in at least Wellsville. As a high school student in 1915, she knew women her age or slightly older who were employed in the Silk Mill in Wellsville, she had friends who did babysitting and felt women at that time could always get a job cleaning house. Like Hazel, her obligation to her family as a young single daughter was accomplished via her unwaged work in both the home and on the farm. It is possible that any wage Gen might have earned, either babysitting or house cleaning, would not have equaled the value of the unpaid work that she performed. Her choice of curriculum in high school indicates that factory work or domestic work did not appeal to Gen but how much that choice was influenced by familial and societal attitudes towards the type of work proper for women in this time period, is difficult to ascertain. However, compared to other women's jobs during this time period, office jobs gave women higher status, steadier work and more money. In the hierarchy of women's options, the office position assumed a middle position between physically taxing blue collar work and

prestigious professional positions.⁵⁶ It is significant to note that business courses were being offered in rural schools prior to 1920. This serves as further proof that rural areas were not isolated from urban trends. It is also evidence that non-agricultural jobs were available in the rural areas and that some young women were afforded the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to obtain them. Gen's ability to use her skills to secure full-time employment will be discussed later.

Dorothy W. was born on her family's farm in the township of Amity in 1903.⁵⁷ Both of her parents' families were long time residents of Allegany County. Her father was a successful dairy farmer who owned a 1,000 acre farm and at one point, owned seven farms in the area that he rented to tenants. Dorothy is an only child. She attended a local district grade school, located near the farm, and then graduated from the Belmont High School in 1923. As a child and adolescent, Dorothy would help her mother with the canning of vegetables from the garden but she did not do any farm work per se. Her mother, however, helped with the running of the farm, including the milking of the cows.

Dorothy did some minimal babysitting as an adolescent but did not remember that any of her friends were employed. Although Dorothy and Genevieve were both raised on farms, it seems that the prosperity of Dorothy's father made it

unnecessary for her to participate in either the running of the farm or the house to any great extent. Both Dorothy and Hazel's middle class perspective may mask the work that women were engaging in in the early 1900's. Living on a farm, Dorothy may have been somewhat isolated from the activities women were engaged in in the villages of the county although this was not the case with Genevieve because she appears to have had more contact in the village through her attendance at grade school in Wellsville and her participation with her mother in village related money making activities.

Helena C., the youngest of six daughters, was born in the Irish Settlement in the Township of Amity in 1905.⁵⁸ Both of her parents were born and had lived all their lives in the Settlement. Prior to her marriage in 1890, Helena's mother was employed as a domestic in the Village of Belmont. Helena's father owned a large dairy farm and also raised potatoes. Although her father employed hired hands, her mother also worked on the farm milking cows, haying and tending the fowl which included chickens, geese and turkeys. Her mother also sold eggs and produce in Belmont. A paternal aunt lived with the family and was responsible for the housework and cooking. Although Helena did minimal farm work as a young child, she did help with the household chores, primarily the cleaning.

In 1915, when Helena was ten, her father's poor health made him give up farming. He secured a job as a night watchman at Kerr Turbine in Wellsville and the family relocated there.⁵⁹ Helena's oldest sister, who was seventeen year older than she, was employed at the Wellsville Silk Mill and two other older sisters were employed by the Allegany County Telephone Company in Wellsville prior to the time that the family relocated there. These three sisters shared an apartment and when the family moved to Wellsville, they moved back in with them. After the family moved, Helena's mother began doing dressmaking at home.

Helena attended the Catholic grade school in Wellsville after the move and upon completing tenth grade, attended the Wellsville High School. In 1922, at the age of seventeen, Helena secured a part-time job waiting on tables in a Wellsville restaurant. Helena got the job because she knew the woman who owned the restaurant and was aware that she was in need of part-time employees. Helena worked as a waitress for approximately one year. She was not particularly satisfied with the job and her family's response to her dissatisfaction eventually made her quit. The part-time work experience though did help to convince her that employment in an office setting was more to her liking than an unskilled job such as waitressing.

Unlike the previous narrators, Helena's family had a tradition of women working outside the home for wages and there did not appear to be any sanctions against daughters seeking employment. Rather, it was encouraged because of the family's financial situation, both on the farm and in Wellsville. Because of her older sister's employment activities, Helena was more cognizant of work opportunities for women in Allegany County in the early 1900's. By the time Helena secured part-time employment, four of her five sisters were employed full-time and contributing to the family through the payment of room and board. (A fifth sister had married by this time and was not living at home.)

Having lost the family home in the flood of 1972 and with all of her sisters deceased, Helena now lives alone in an apartment in Wellsville. She is a short, energetic woman who does not look her 77 years. In her comfortable living room, surrounded by her favorite heirlooms, Helena remembers her first job.

"When I was seventeen, Murray's Tea Room was in Wellsville and I used to wait on tables Saturdays, Sundays and maybe after school. I worked two, three, sometimes four hours depending on the situation. There were three to four women my age working there. I wasn't paid very much. I don't even know if it was 50 cents an hour and I do know this, if we ever had to stay and eat a meal, we had to pay.

We worked hard for what we got. I think they were rather mercenary because we were young. My family wasn't too happy about me working in the Tea Room because sometimes I got a little bit irritated at people because sometimes they weren't so nice to you. I just didn't like the public atmosphere I guess. So my father said I guess you'd better not work no more. It was hard work too. I didn't mind working, but I'd rather have done something else. WHAT WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE DONE? What I did all my life, work in an office."

Helena's ability to leave a job that she was dissatisfied with and her family's support and encouragement of that decision, is an indication that her wage at this point was not vital to her family's survival. As the youngest sibling with four older working sisters living at home, Helena was probably afforded the opportunity to remain in school and pursue her career goal. In addition, the money that Helena earned, she either saved or used to purchase personal items for herself. Thus, while her income was not contributed directly to the family, it undoubtedly did offset some of their expenses. In addition to attending school full-time, and working part-time, Helena's work in the home continued to be of primary importance and she remained responsible for the majority of the cleaning tasks. Thus, as a single daughter, Helena's obligations to her family were

accomplished partially through wage labor but mostly thru her unwaged work in the home.

The experiences of Helena's older sisters who left the farm in the early 1900's and migrated to Wellsville to secure employment, are an example of women living in rural areas migrating from farm to nearby town or village rather than a large urban area. They also suggest evidence that women were employed in various occupations in the county in the first two decades of the 20th Century.

Inez M. was born in Eldred, Pennsylvania in 1912. She was the second oldest child and daughter in a family of four girls and one boy. The family moved to Duke Center, Pennsylvania in 1918 when Inez was six.⁶⁰ Her father was a native of Pennsylvania and her mother was born in Allegany County. Inez's father and uncles were teamsters in the oil fields and the men they employed received free room and board with Inez's family as part of their wage. Inez attended the local grade school in Duke Center and the Bradford High School in Bradford, Pennsylvania. At the age of twelve, in 1924, Inez began babysitting for families in Duke Center and at the age of thirteen, began working part-time at the switchboard in the Duke Center Telephone Office.

Inez received 25 cents an hour for her babysitting. The implications of women first receiving a wage for caring for children, what young women's attitudes were toward the

job of babysitting and the relationship between employer and employee, especially in the transmission of values and attitudes around child rearing, merits further research. An analysis of the phenomenon of babysitting as wage labor may broaden the historical perspectives on adolescent women's labor force participation. Of the eight narrators, three of them remembered their first job as babysitting and in informal discussions with other women, the babysitting experience has been vividly recalled including who, what, where, when and how much. In addition to paid babysitting, many women's primary responsibility in the home was the care of younger siblings which was another major unwaged contribution to the family. Babysitting also frequently involved much more than child caring and included housework and laundry service, thus blurring the lines between what could be considered babysitting and what could correctly be called domestic service.

Inez acquired her part-time work at the Duke Center Telephone Office through her family's acquaintance with the couple who were full-time employees.

In the 1920's, the Pennsylvania Child Labor Law prohibited any child under the age of fourteen from working and regulated conditions of work for all employed fourteen and fifteen year old children.⁶¹ Children performing agricultural work, domestic service and personal service, either

in or out of their own home, were not regulated by the Child Labor Law. However, children employed in public utilities, which may have included telephone operators, were regulated by the Pennsylvania Child Labor Law.⁶² Inez's employment in the Duke Center Telephone Office, at the age of thirteen, seems to be in violation of the existing Pennsylvania Child Labor Law. Whether Inez or her employer were aware of this is not known but there did not seem to be any sense on Inez's part that her employment was illegal or underhanded. Rather, she viewed it as work that helped someone and also earned money. In Pennsylvania, as in New York State, the majority of studies of employed children were concentrated in the 1920's in the larger metropolitan areas. Thus, children working legally or in violation of child labor laws in predominantly rural areas, were unlikely to be discovered. Inez's experience, as well as those of some of the other narrators yet to be discussed, indicates the knowledge of child labor laws in the rural areas may have been limited and/or adherence to them not of major importance to either the adult or the child when children sought employment. Inez's wages at the Phone Company were low, her hours were not regulated and she worked at the whim of the regular employees. While Inez herself did not view this work as exploitative it appears to have been and because she lived in a rural area she was not afforded the protection of the

laws that she might have been if she was in an urban area. In fact, it would seem that in a large urban area she would not have obtained this type of employment at age 13.

Along with her part-time jobs, Inez was attending school full-time and also was responsible for specific tasks in the home as were her other siblings. Inez primarily did the house cleaning.

Now 71 years old, Inez and her husband live just outside the Village of Belmont. An attractive woman who walks with a slight limp, Inez's face frequently lights up with a radiant smile as she talks about her early life in the Pennsylvania oil fields.

"Thirteen years old, if you can believe it, I went to work in the Telephone Office in Duke Center and I worked there about three years. When the man and his wife would want a break, he'd ring up, could I come down and work and I did. It wasn't everyday of the week. Quite often on Saturday and Sunday they'd like to be gone and I'd work both days. It was fun.

I started babysitting at age twelve. Even while I was working at the Telephone Office, which would only be days, as a general thing I'd babysit evenings. There was just about three families I babysat for quite regularly. I wasn't required to do a thing except put the children to bed. This group I babysat for were interested in opera and

they'd go clear to Buffalo to the opera so sometimes it would be three or four o'clock in the morning before they'd ever get back. And I'd have to walk home all alone. I don't suppose it was an eighth of a mile but it used to be pretty scary.

I suppose the money I earned helped with clothing because we were very hard up and oil field work didn't pay that much. I can't remember if mom would say 'buy a loaf of bread.' She might have. I can't remember that my brother worked because there wasn't that much for boys to do. But I know the girls babysat. I know there was more opportunity for women to pick up a part-time job. My brother didn't go out to work until he quit school in the eighth grade and then he went to work in the oil field. Fifteen to sixteen year olds could go right into the fields in those days as a pumper. There was just nothing in Duke Center for boys."

The wages that Inez earned through her part-time employment augmented the family's income and she was aware that the money she contributed was a necessity. In addition to the financial contribution, Inez also continued her responsibility of helping in the house. Her perception that part-time employment was more readily available to girls than to boys, raises the question of gender specificity of employment in rural areas and challenges the assumption that agricultural labor, which is more readily available to men

than to women, provides the majority of employment. There does not seem to be any sanctions against young women working in Inez's family and in fact, it may have been encouraged because of the family's financial situation. It is significant to note though that Inez is employed within female specific occupations.

Lucy B. was born in Belmont, New York (Allegany County) in 1913. She was the fourth child and third daughter of Italian parents who migrated from Sicily to the county in 1903. Her father was employed at Clark Brothers in Belmont.⁶³ The family lived briefly in Olean (Cattaraugus County) when Clark Brothers relocated there but returned to Belmont when her father's poor health prohibited his working. He died in 1917 when Lucy was four years old. After her husband's death, Lucy's mother was employed as a laundress at the Belmont Hotel for approximately ten years. The family also received some form of public assistance. The family income during this time was also supplemented by the seasonal sale of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and dandelions which Lucy's mother would pick wild. As young children, Lucy and her sisters would help to clean the produce and also go door-to-door selling it for 10 cents a quart and 25 cents a basket, respectively. Her older and younger brothers did not help with this activity.

Around 1928, when Lucy was fifteen, she began to work part-time in the kitchen at the Belmont Hotel whenever they had large dinner parties. The work was sporadic, depending on the amount of business and paid 20 cents an hour. She would wash dishes, prepare salad and cut bread. Whatever money Lucy earned, she gave to her mother. Her oldest brother began working on the Railroad in 1919 at the age of sixteen and her youngest brother began working at the age of twelve around 1928 as a delivery boy for a local Italian grocer and as a hired hand after school on a local farm. Lucy's two older sisters left home in their teens during the 1920's and worked in Hornell (Stueben County) and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Lucy does not remember her brothers contributing their wages to the family nor her sisters sending money home.

During the time of her early adolescence, Lucy was also attending school full-time. In addition, she was responsible for cleaning in the home, helping to prepare meals, although her mother maintained primary responsibility for this task, and assisting her mother with the canning of vegetables each year from the family's garden.

In essence, Lucy grew up in a single parent household where for most of her childhood, her mother was the primary wage earner. Although Lucy could not remember the amount of money her mother earned as a laundress, the fact that the

family was dependent on some sort of public assistance and that all of the children were engaged in money making activities at a young age, indicate that it was not a living wage. Unlike the previous narrators, whatever money Lucy was able to earn was given directly to the family and they were dependent on that money for their survival. Thus, as a very young single daughter, Lucy's obligation to her family took the form of not only a considerable amount of unwaged labor in the home but also of what money she was able to earn through part-time and seasonal work. Lucy's ethnicity and the family's economic status in the community may also have been a significant factor in the type of money making activities she and other members of the family could engage in and consequently the amount of money she was capable of earning.

Philomena J. was born in Montedoro, Sicily in 1915. Her father had come alone to the United States and worked in the coal mines around Piston and Scranton, Pennsylvania. He had planned to relocate the family in the United States but he contracted Black Lung Disease and died during a return visit to Sicily. In 1920, when Philomena was five, she migrated with her widowed mother, her eleven year old brother and two year old sister to the United States. The family lived briefly in Piston, Pennsylvania with a maternal uncle and then moved to Buffalo, New York's "Little Italy"

community and lived near a maternal aunt. While living in Buffalo, Philomena's mother supported the family through her employment in a neighborhood laundry. In 1925, when Philomena was 10, her mother remarried and they moved to LeRoy (Genesee County), New York where her step-father and his four children lived. Philomena's step-father was employed as a gardener. At the age of 10, Philomena, her mother, brother, sister and step-siblings began picking crops at various farms in the LeRoy area. All of the wages earned were contributed directly to the family. For the next four to five years, Philomena continued to do seasonal agricultural work.

Early child labor legislation in New York State specifically excluded agriculture because of a prevalent belief that farm work was beneficial for children.⁶⁴ Therefore, Philomena's work in the fields was not in violation of any child labor laws, although she was only 10 years old and the number of hours and the conditions under which she worked were not regulated.

Thus, in the second half of the 1920's when children's and young adolescents' opportunities to earn money was constricting in urban areas, agricultural work in the rural areas continued unregulated and unrestricted and provided rural youth the opportunity to earn a wage. Philomena's consistent participation in agricultural work, and the

experiences of the next narrator, challenges the assumption that because it is agricultural the rural community cannot provide employment for women. Had Philomena's family remained in Buffalo, she and her siblings may not have been able to contribute to the support of the family to the extent that they did in Genesee County. While there is little doubt that seasonal agricultural work was exploitative, the hours were long and the wage very low, the fact still remains that for adolescent women it provided an opportunity to earn a wage part-time that was not available in the urban area. In addition, the engagement in agricultural labor was sanctioned and encouraged by the rural community and seen as socially acceptable, at least for women of certain ethnic and class groups.

Philomena is an attractive, energetic woman of 69. She and her husband, who is retired, live in a comfortable home in Wellsville. She continues to work four days a week in her Beauty Parlor in her home but she remembers well her first job at the age of 10.

"When we were kids, we always had to work. There was no getting away from it. My mother was remarried and we were two families combined. We had to do what we did otherwise you couldn't make it. That was survival. You contributed to your family. You really started work at a tender age. During the summer, from the time I was 10, we

used to go picking fruits and vegetables. I have picked every fruit and vegetable there is to be picked. We probably worked ten hours a day for maybe \$.50 or a \$1.00 a day. It was a family affair. Some crops were paid by weight so your mother and you kids filled these bags and it all went the same place. Other things you were paid by the day. I can remember working all day long for a \$1.00. We used to leave for the farms at 5:00 o'clock in the morning and would get back home at 7:00 o'clock at night."

Virginia Yans-McLoughlin, in her study of Italian immigrants in Buffalo, New York, pointed out that Italian women often engaged in seasonal migrant labor⁶⁵ and it would thus be tempting to explain Philomena's early work experiences in the context of her ethnicity. However, the experiences of the next narrator, who was not Italian but of long standing native born descent requires a much broader analysis of adolescent women's early work experiences and how they are related to the family obligations and the role young single women were expected to assume.

Rosamond P. was born in Bath (Steuben County), New York in 1924. She was the fourth child and oldest daughter of six. The family lived in Tolesville, approximately thirty miles from Bath on her paternal grandparent's 300 acre farm. Her father was an independent trucker who hauled milk and produce for area farmers. Due to the unstableness

of his business, her father gave up the trucking concern and secured more reliable employment with the Steuben County Highway Department. Later he was employed by the U.S. Soil Conservation Department where he was a supervisor at a Civilian Conservation Corps Camp in Kanona, New York. When the Civilian Conservation Corps camps closed around 1940, he secured employment in a war production plant in Buffalo, New York. Because of her father's various jobs, Rosie's family moved frequently within Steuben County and they also lived in Wyoming County as well as Buffalo. In 1945, her father was re-employed by the Soil Conservation Department and the family relocated to Belmont (Allegany County), New York. Rosie began working part-time in 1936 at the age of 12. She held a variety of jobs including babysitting, agricultural laborer, dishwasher and dietary aid in a hospital kitchen.

Rosie, at the age of 12 and 13 in actuality worked several part-time jobs simultaneously. She did babysitting on a regular basis and worked seasonally as an agricultural laborer, picking various crops in different locations in Steuben County. Rosie's father was acquainted with most of the area farmers, was aware of when they needed seasonal help and would secure the job for her. Although Rosie began doing agricultural work a full ten years later than Philomena, this type of employment was still available for women in rural areas, working hours and wages had changed little,

and this type of child labor remained unregulated in New York State.⁶⁶ In the Fall, Rosie would pick potatoes on Saturdays for 10 to 15 cents a bushel and did this for three to four years. For two summers, when she was 14 and 15, she picked raspberries on a farm in a neighboring township. This job entailed her living at the farm for two weeks. Room and board were included in her wage. She was paid a flat rate for a day which consisted of nine hours regardless of the amount of produce picked, but it was expected that a certain amount be picked daily. Rosie could not remember the amount of pay she received but did remember that day pickers at the farm received 10 cents a quart and that adult pickers earned more than children.

If Rosie's family was typical of native born whites her experiences indicate that seasonal agricultural labor for children may have been more of a class experience than an ethnic one. It also strengthens the hypothesis that waged agricultural labor is not exclusively a male domain and that the availability of this type of employment in the rural area broadened the ways in which young women could earn money. Thus rather than the rural area limiting women's employment opportunities, it in actuality, expanded them, although the experiences of Philomena and Rosie clearly show the exploitative nature of agricultural work.

Rosie also began babysitting at the age of twelve and her babysitting experiences, unlike those of Inez, included much more than child care. "I didn't only babysit, I did the dishes, I did the laundry, I did the housework." Rosie received no set wage for this work but rather was dependent on what people were willing to pay her. She recalled that she generally earned 50 cents a night.

Also, around the age of thirteen, Rosie began working in the Greyhound Bus Station in Kanona, New York. Rosie's two older brothers were employed in the restaurant as short order cooks and when the owner of the restaurant wanted someone to wash dishes, they got Rosie the job. During the school year, she would work weekends and in the summer, she worked during the week. Her hours were from 6:30 AM to 3:30 PM and she was paid approximately 55 cents an hour. By 1928, the employment of any minor under fourteen in New York State in any occupation carried on for pecuniary gain was forbidden.⁶⁷ Rosie, as well as her employer, were aware that she was working in violation of the State's child labor laws. Rosie expressed some apprehension at being caught working illegally but generally felt that she needed to work for economic and psychological reasons and that her employer was actually doing her a favor, even though she was paid less than the adult dishwasher he also employed. Her employer too was complicit in the violation of the law, and

undoubtedly so were her parents as they not only made no attempt to prohibit her working but actively encouraged it. Rosie worked at this job for two or three years, as well as continuing to babysit and do seasonal agricultural work. She never applied for working papers and in fact, did not think that she needed them.

"I was washing dishes even before I was supposed to. I was only twelve or thirteen. I was under age but my employer was doing me a favor. It was something that I could earn my own money and that meant so much to me. I could buy my own school books and buy a little bit of clothes. I bought my first bike with my money from there. I was so proud of that bike. It was the only one I ever had until I got one in 1980. Whenever the inspectors would come to the bus station the boss would tell me to go upstairs with his wife. Or he'd tell them I was just a friend. I'd get sort of nervous because I thought he'd get in trouble. I didn't care about me. But we got by. He never got in any trouble."

Rosie's experience as a dishwasher suggests that even when jobs in the rural area were effected by the child labor laws in the State, they were not rigidly adhered to and were in fact circumvented and ignored. It was, of course, beneficial for adult employers to hire underaged workers if, for no other reason, than they could pay them less. But it

is significant that the children being employed also strongly felt that they had a need and a right to work and that legalities should not stand in the way of that. There is an implication though that further comparative research needs to be done to determine if the attitude that children should work is a rural phenomenon, or a class phenomenon that cuts across rural and urban experiences.

Rosie did not contribute the money she earned from her part-time employment to her family. Rather, she used it to buy school books and personal items for herself, thus offsetting the cost of her care. At the time she began working, Rosie's father was employed full-time and her oldest brother was not living with the family. Of the remaining five children, Rosie, and her two older brothers were employed, and attending school. Only her two sisters, who were too young to work, and her mother were totally dependent on her father's wage.

From the experiences of the narrators, it is apparent that, regardless of class or ethnic background, adolescent women living in rural areas in the early part of the 20th Century, were expected to work. All of the narrators were expected to assume full or partial responsibility for specific household tasks. Although daughters were expected to attend school, that was not their only role. Unwaged work in the home and on the farm also occupied a good

portion of their time and energy.

All of the narrators, regardless of their class and ethnic background, were expected to work in the home and the responsibility of this unwaged work was as demanding as any waged labor they might have engaged in. For those who did engage in part-time money making activities as children and adolescents these activities in no way diminished their responsibilities in their parents homes. The narrators all verbalized that the tasks they performed at home were indeed work, were expected of them without exception, contributed to the family's well being in a significant way and were a significant factor in defining what their roles as women and daughters were. Because of the expectation of work in the home some of the narrators viewed money-making activities as a way to gain some rewards and enhanced self-worth. Hazel S. describes her feelings about wanting to seek paid employment after her graduation from high school. "I had a lot of jobs offered to me to teach and play piano but my family wouldn't let me do it. I couldn't take a one. They'd get furious. My goodness they'd say. I didn't have to do anything like that. Oh yes. I wanted to work. It was a lot more nice than doing housework here." And Rosie P. shared how she felt as an adolescent working part-time. "I figured I might as well be working and getting some money as home working for nothing. That's what I thought. That's

the way I always thought."

In a time span that covered from 1912 - 1939, the experiences of these narrators indicate that, in Allegany County, regardless of class status or ethnicity, women as children and adolescents were expected to attend school and work in the home at a multitude of tasks. Additionally some of these women were expected to engage in part-time money making activities which either directly or indirectly aided their families. This occurred during a time when protective child labor legislation was increasingly restricting the participation of children in the labor force in New York State. Agricultural work for children, however, was not restricted and enforcement was lax in the regulated jobs that children engaged in outside of agriculture in the rural community. This study indicates that young girls in the rural areas participated in labor both inside and outside of agriculture.

In spite of the exploitative nature of the work they engaged in the narrators felt that they needed to work for economic and personal reasons and that they had a right to work. This continued to be an important characteristic of the narrators experiences as they moved into the labor force full-time as young adults.

IV. FULL TIME EMPLOYMENT

The narrators entrance into full time employment, which included wage labor and self employment or marriage was influenced by as many factors as their experiences as children and adolescents had been.

World War I, The Great Depression and World War II all impacted on women's employment trends and on attitudes towards women seeking employment outside of the home. The narrators work experiences occur within the context of these events and their perceptions of the effect of them on their lives provide a basis for examining women's choices in this time period.

Family circumstances, changing attitudes towards women's waged labor, job availability, ethnic factors and social and family expectations of women all contributed to the diversity of the narrators work histories and their perceptions and attitudes regarding their own work and other significant issues such as married women working. The act of earning money as women also affected the narrator's lives in different ways. For some their full time employment empowered them within their parental families and they

assumed more and more financial responsibility for their family. For others the role of full time worker did not significantly alter their status as unmarried, dependent daughter.

Class status and/or ethnic origin for some narrators limited their choice of employment. Narrators who worked for a wage as an adolescent and who's family was somewhat dependent on those part time earnings were less likely to complete high school and this, in turn, was a factor in the type of full time employment they could secure.

Hazel graduated from the Wellsville H.S. and the Wellsville Music Conservatory in 1918. She then attended Elmira College for a brief time. She wanted to be a concert pianist or a music teacher but strong familial and class attitudes dictated that women did not work outside the home. So although Hazel received the education necessary to procure employment she was unable to utilize it in the way she would have liked. Hazel married in 1921, at the age of 21, and although she did not work for wages as an adult she did work on her husband's farm and continued to work at her interests as a musician, a writer and an historian.

Both Gen and Helena wanted to do office work. They studied specific courses in high school (bookkeeping, typing, shorthand) towards that end. Their family circumstances were such that they were able to complete high

school and upon doing so both secured immediate employment as secretaries: Gen in 1919; Helena in 1926.

Inez too intended to be a secretary and was taking commercial courses in high school. However, her decision to marry in 1929 at the age of 17 meant that she had to quit high school. She then did unwaged work in the home until 1954 when at the age of 42 she began working in a hotel laundry and doing domestic work.

Dorothy graduated from the Belmont High School in 1923 and began working as an operator for the Allegany County Phone Company the same year.⁶⁸ Although financially Dorothy did not need to work, both her father and husband were successful farmers, it was a necessity for her on a personal level and she continued with the phone company until her retirement in 1963.

Lucy, Philomena and Rosie, all of whom started working at a very young age, did not complete high school. They were all engaged in full time money making activities by their mid-teens. Although Rosie has the most diversified work history of all the narrators she did not experience any upward job mobility. Although Lucy and Philomena are from similar ethnic backgrounds their work histories exhibit sharp contrasts.

Most of the narrators, with the exception of Dorothy, worked for a significant period prior to marriage.⁶⁹

Between 1900 - 1940 the median age of working women rose to over thirty, and the proportion of females twenty-five to forty-four who were employed grew from 18.1% to 30.6%.⁷⁰ Since the narrators were employed full time during this time period, which included the Great Depression, and through World War II, the ages at which they married appear consistent with national trends. Lucy and Helena never married, and Hazel and Inez married at a young age. Gen married in 1945 at the age of 44 after having worked 26 years. Philomena worked for 24 years before her marriage in 1949 at the age of 34. When Rosie married in 1950 at the age of 26 she had already been employed 14 years. The young age at which these women began working accounts somewhat for the long number of years worked prior to marriage but the impact of the Great Depression and World War II on marriage rates also needs to be considered.⁷¹

Little is known about women's employment in Allegany County prior to the 1920's when some of the narrators themselves began working for wages full time. However, the work histories of several of the narrators' mothers and older sisters establish that women in Allegany County were engaged in money making activities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thus, suggesting that women's entry into the labor force was a phenomenon that occurred throughout urban and rural society. Helena's older sisters

were employed as factory operatives and telephone operators prior to 1915 and her mother worked as a domestic in the County in the 1890's. Lucy's mother was a laundress.

What was the rural community's reaction to women entering the labor force in the early decades of the twentieth century and did those attitudes undergo any change? Hazel's recollections of the pre-1920 era provides a glimpse of the attitudes prevalent among a segment of the rural population.

"Most people thought it was an awful disgrace if a girl had to go out and work. My goodness must be they're not getting along as well as we thought they were or they wouldn't let that girl go out and work. Some of them even objected to the girls working in stores. I think the first we ever knew of women going to work was in the Silk Mills. They made cloth and I think they made scarfs and various small things. They had a glove factory, too, in Wellsville. The women who worked in the Silk Mills could have nice clothes and it impressed the rest of us. They could buy things ready made. That was a big thing. A lot of people objected to the girls going to work in the Silk Mills. Oh they were just being ruined. They were going to have awful lives. Everything terrible was going to happen to those girls, but I didn't hear of anything that did.

"People used to say, 'Well that girl, you know about her. She works in a Silk Factory.' What's wrong with that? 'Well, she isn't a lady.'

"Now they thought it was all right if you could afford to go to college. You went, you got a degree and came back and taught school. But ladies couldn't work in silk mills. Or in stores. That was almost as bad. You could go out and work all day on a farm if you owned one. Half kill yourself. That was all right. But not to go out and work for pay any place. Whether they were afraid of women getting a paycheck...I think that had something to do with it. I would have liked to work anywhere. Anywhere. I wasn't even allowed to think about. My work was right here in the house."

Hazel's recollections of the discourse surrounding the Silk Mill's hiring of women in the pre-1920 period mirrors middle-class attitudes towards the issue of women working for wages. The other two narrators, Gen and Helena, who worked in this time period, not only did not recall community displeasure towards women who worked in these industries, but, in fact, knew either friends or family who were employed in them. In Hazel's discussion there is an implication that while certain jobs may have been considered suitable for women, if there was an absolute necessity that they work, other employment such as in the Silk Mill was an

absolute taboo for certain classes of women vaguely defined as "ladies."⁷²

Gen S. graduated from high school in 1918 and through an ad in a local newspaper secured a job doing general office work at the Friendship Furniture Co. in the town of Friendship. She earned approximately \$17.50 a week, \$10.00 of which went for her room and board at a local boarding house. Gen also sent money home to her family and most weekends commuted back to Wellsville by train to visit and help at home. Gen perceived that when she began working in 1918 jobs were plentiful.

"When I took that job it was after World War I and there was a lot of work. Women got a chance to work. I think most women my age did work at the time. I don't think many women went to College in those days unless you were wealthy. You see during the first World War, I think women started to go out to work more. Before that they didn't. They really didn't have any place to go. I think by the time I started working people were used to it."

Hazel S. also felt that World War I had a significant impact on the attitudes towards women working. "There was an awful break about 1920. I didn't hear much complaint about women working after that because the war had been along and it had changed the attitude of people quite a lot whether they ever admitted it or not. It was from that time

on that I heard them think it wasn't anything criminal if a woman went out and got work."

Some historians have argued that World War I had little impact on altering the basic economic position of women or no long term effect on their economic emancipation or participation in the labor force. Kessler-Harris has also argued that a structural perspective obscures what the work experience meant for women and the perception of these two narrators that World War I not only had an impact on employment opportunities available to women in Allegany County but also in the general attitudes towards women going out to work for wages is in agreement with this argument.⁷³ Whether or not World War I did in fact open up more jobs for women or impacted on the prevailing attitudes towards women working it is significant that these narrators thought it did. And this perception may have broadened what women saw as their choices in the early 1920's.

Gen continued to work at the Friendship Furniture Company until it closed in 1924. She then enrolled in the Westbook Commercial College in Olean, Cattaraugus County for the purpose of increasing her employment opportunities. While in Olean she lived with a relative and exchanged babysitting services for room and board. Before completing her course of study she secured a job as a stenographer and general office worker in an attorney's office in Friendship.

She earned \$20 a week and once again resided in a local boarding house. The relative ease with which Gen obtained clerical work throughout the 1920's indicates that there was a demand for women in this field in this particular rural area.

As single adults employed full time some of the narrators continued to have responsibilities in the home. The expectation that as unmarried daughters they would continue to meet obligations to family through unwaged work did not seem to change significantly for Gen, Helena, Lucy, Philomena or Rosie once they become full time money earners. This was of course in sharp contrast to unmarried male members of the household who were wage earners. While earning money generally afforded sons status and independence it rarely did the same for daughters.

Although Gen was employed full time, self-supporting and living independently from her family as an unmarried daughter her obligations to her family did not lessen but in fact increased. As an adolescent Gen had contributed to her family through her unwaged work in the home and on the farm. As an adult, in addition to this she contributed part of her wages. And, when her mother became ill in 1929, Gen gave up her job in Friendship and secured work in Wellsville so that she could care for her mother and the rest of the family in addition to working.

"Back at that time in the 1920's you see it was different. I gave my wages to my family. Probably half of what I made. They spent it on living expenses. We lived on a farm so you had a hard time back at that time to get along. By the time I took care of my expenses I'd only have enough money to buy some clothes. I think my family was quite satisfied about my working because people had a hard time making ends meet and it helped to be working. I started working at Worthington in Wellsville in 1929. My mother was sick so I could work there and help at home. My mother died in 1930 so it was quite necessary for me to be at home. I tried to keep everything going. When I got home I'd get dinner and on Saturday I could get a lot of work done. My father and brother didn't help much. They weren't used to doing anything like that. It was one of those cases where you felt it was necessary. You had to. I felt like they needed me."

After her mother's death Gen continued to work full time as well as continuing full housekeeping responsibilities for her father and brother. When her father died in the mid-1930's Gen and her brother sold the farm and moved into the village of Wellsville. An elderly aunt came to live with them and Gen also assumed responsibility for her care. Gen continued to work at Worthington until her marriage in 1945 at which time she quit her job and she and

her aunt, moved to Belmont with her husband who was a tailor. Thus for this narrator, entry into the labor force increased rather than diminished her responsibilities and obligations to her family. An experience that many of the other narrators shared especially during the Great Depression.

Helena graduated from the Wellsville High School in 1926 and began working at the Air Preheater Corp. doing general secretarial work.⁷⁴ She worked there approximately two years and was laid off when the man she worked for retired. In 1929 Helena went to work in the Payroll Dept. at the Sinclair Oil Refinery.⁷⁵ She earned \$16 a week. She continued to work for Sinclair until the plant closed in 1958.

Helena and three of her five sisters never married. Helena, her three single sisters and her one married sister and her husband lived with their mother. Her other married sister lived in the neighborhood. All five of the daughters living with the mother were employed full time and paying room and board. "I never lived anywhere but home. I always gave room and board. I don't remember how much but I always gave plenty. I know that. My father died in 1930 and my mother wasn't working then. So my sisters and I took care of expenses. We had to. We were still paying for the house."

This narrator too found an increase in familial obligations once she began full time employment. As an adolescent money she earned from a part-time waitressing job was hers but as an adult she paid room and board. Helena also continued to provide unwaged labor in the home and was responsible for housecleaning.

Like Gen, Helena did not seem to have any problems securing full-time employment in 1929 even though it was the beginning of the Great Depression. Both narrators were employed in a very female-specific occupation, clerical/secretarial work, and both were employed in companies (Worthington & Sinclair) that were experiencing expansion and growth. Sinclair's role as savior for Allegany County is almost legendary in the minds of the county's residents. "Wellsville's greatest industry is the Sinclair Refinery Co's Wellsville plant, one of the most modern institutions of its kind and the largest refinery in the world devoted exclusively to the refining of Pennsylvania Grade Crude Oil."⁷⁶ And Helena recalled that "There were a lot of job. By 1930 the refinery was going real good. I'd say they employed about 400 men and 14 girls doing office work. Only men worked in the plant even during World War II because it was very dangerous. There were lots of fires."

The actual role of the Sinclair Oil Refinery in the economy of Allegany Co. bears further research to determine

whether or not it did in fact have the monumental impact on the economy that people perceived it did. Did the Refinery serve as a catalyst for the economy of the county as a whole or just for Wellsville? Did it encourage migration into the county? Was it a highly skilled labor force? The employment of only 14 women out of a work force of over 400 would indicate that Sinclair did not significantly expand employment opportunities for women in the way that other industries, like the Silk Mills did.

Dorothy W. was employed as an operator for the Allegany County Telephone Co. in Belmont following her graduation from high school in 1923. Prior to her marriage in 1928 she continued to reside with her family. Dorothy's starting wage in 1923 was \$7.00 a week which was considerably less than Gen S. made in 1919 doing general office work or that women were earning even earlier in the silk mills. However, one did not need clerical or secretarial skills to be a telephone operator and in fact a high school diploma was not even a prerequisite. In addition the Phone Company offered advantages that other jobs did not. Hours and days worked could be arranged on an individual basis. This flexibility became an important advantage for this narrator after her marriage and the birth of her sons.

Unlike the other narrators who were in the labor force Dorothy had minimal obligations at home as both an

adolescent and an unmarried working adult. As the only daughter of a prosperous farmer she was not expected to contribute either unwaged work or a portion of her wages to her family nor did she pay room and board. She had the latitude to spend her money as she wished and had complete control of it.

As will shown be later Dorothy's responsibilities in the home actually increased after her marriage but she continued to maintain control of the wages she earned. The financial status of Dorothy's father and later of her husband may have been significant factors in her ability to accept employment at the phone company for a relatively low wage.

"It wasn't hard to get a job then. You asked for it and then you went right into it. You didn't even need a high school diploma. There were seven or eight women working in the phone co. when I started. There were linemen too, but operators were all girls. I lived right to home. My folks didn't want anything for room and board so what I earned was gravy to me. I had a little bill at Pike's clothing store and I used to pay on that but I don't remember what else I did with it. I didn't need very much money then. Oh, if I saw something I wanted I probably did buy it but my folks always took care of me. That was the beauty of being the only child you know."

Lucy B. had been involved in money making activities for several years as a child and an adolescent. After her husband's death in 1917 Lucy's mother, who was born in Sicily, supported her five children through her wages as a laundress and from other money making activities that also involved the children.

At the age of 17 in 1930 Lucy quit school and began doing laundry in her home for various village residents. In 1931 at the age of 18 she began doing house cleaning in belmont during the day and continued to do laundry in the evenings. Around this time Lucy's two older sisters left home. One went to Milwaukee, Wis. and one to Homell, NY (Steuben Co.). Although both were employed Lucy did not remember them sending money home nor could she recall her brothers, who were both working, contributing to the household. Around the time Lucy began doing full time domestic and laundress work her mother's two nieces, who were approximately 10 years younger than Lucy, came to live with the family, and they helped Lucy pick-up and deliver laundry as well as doing household chores. Lucy's mother was no longer working due to poor health.

Around 1935 Lucy began cleaning at the Telephone Co. a few hours a week in addition to the house cleaning and laundry. She eventually added other businesses to her schedule including the drug store, the dentist's office and

the lawyer's office. She preferred cleaning business establishments because they paid her minimum wage something that private home owners were not required to do. In fact, when Lucy cleaned private homes she had no control over her wages but had to accept what people were willing to pay her. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's Lucy cleaned house for a variety of people in Belmont. Two of her employees were the village's wealthiest and most prominent residents, and she also worked for several school teachers. It was Lucy's sense that the money she received for housework in private homes was exploitative and that employers took advantage of her. While she felt her employment choices were limited primarily because of her lack of education and she had little recourse, ethnic and class factors undoubtedly played a significant role in the availability of employment to her. Lucy's discussion of her house cleaning experiences in the 1930's and 1940's sheds some light on class relationships in a rural community.

"I started going out to work by the hour when I was 18. I didn't get very much. I think the highest was 35 cents an hour at the phone co. but there was more money in the housework than in the laundry but I did both. I didn't set the wage for housecleaning. They decided. They told you what you'd get. So much a hour. It was always the same whether you did heavy cleaning or light house work. I

thought they could have given me more especially school teachers. They had the money. They were too tight it's true. What were you going to do? You had to take what you could get. I ironed for one school teacher one afternoon a week and I used to have to do it in the cellar. When I did housecleaning I could set my own hours. Work one place in the morning and one place in the afternoon. Up until I was 59 years old (1972) I got a \$1.00 an hour. Boy that burns me up when you see what these young squirts get now."

The other employment that Lucy felt she might have secured was at the telephone company. She was aware a high school diploma was not required and felt that from watching the women who worked there when she was cleaning that it was not a difficult job to master. However, she never applied there for work. Whether the hiring policies of the Allegany County Telephone Co. did in fact exclude the hiring of ethnic women and women without high school educations is not known, but the possibility exists that certain types of jobs were closed to certain women because of ethnic and/or class discrimination.

Lucy continued to do domestic work and laundry until her retirement due to poor health in the mid-1970's. She never married and until her mother's death in the late 1950's lived at home and was her mother's sole support. All of Lucy's wages were given directly to her mother. In

addition to cleaning during the day and doing laundry at night Lucy continued to assume a major portion of the household responsibilities including cleaning and food preservation. Lucy's obligations to her family as the youngest unmarried daughter included financial support as well as unwaged work within the home. She lived up to these expectations. "When I was 17, my mother and oldest brother took me to relatives in Wilkes-Barrie, PA. I was supposed to stay there and help them take care of their baby. I got so home sick I had to come home. I never wanted to leave home. I guess that's why I didn't the marry the guy I wanted to marry. I always did support my mother. If my younger brother ever gave her any money she was supposed to give it to me to pay bills but she never did. I never saw any of it. She didn't care that I was working out as long as I was bringing in the money and paying the bills."

Domestic and personal service is the second largest occupational category for women in Allegany County during the 1930's and 1940's but it is not known if Lucy is typical of the majority of women employed as domestics in the county. However, as an unmarried daughter Lucy's entry into full time wage labor and money making activities meant the assumption of more responsibility to her family. And, although she was the primary wage earner, her financial support of the family did little to alter her status within

it.

Philomena J. began work as a seasonal agricultural worker in the fields of Genesee County at the age of 10 in 1925. At the age of 14, in 1929, she quit school to work full time, picking in the fields in the summer and working in the dry bean shop in LeRoy, NY, during the winter.⁷⁷ She continued in this job for approximately 6 years. Then in 1935 at the age of 20 she decided to become a hairdresser. Her choice of this career was greatly influenced by a woman whom she admired who was a hairdresser. It was not Philomena's choice to quit school and work full time and she found conditions in the bean shop oppressive and exploitative. Philomena felt that because of ethnic divisions in LeRoy only certain jobs were available to Italian men and women and that ethnic discrimination relegated Italian women to low skill, low paying jobs. All of Philomena's wages were given to her family. Philomena's recounting of her work in the Bean Shop and her subsequent decision to leave provide some insight into the work experience of a young, unmarried Italian immigrant woman in a rural community.

"I had to quit school to go to work. Oh I cried when I quit school. If things were rough that's what happened. During those days they believed men should get as much education as possible and my step-father would have sold the little house we had if his son wanted to go to school but he

didn't want to go. But the women they didn't think it was important for them to have an education so they got out and worked. I worked in the bean shop in LeRoy. It was dry beans. This little conveyor belt comes and all day you're doing this...picking out the bad ones. This was a winter job and I must have gone in when I was about 14 and I worked 5, 6 years. Oh. Isn't that awful to work that long in a place like that. It's a wonder you don't go crazy. The monotony of it bugs you. Very monotonous. Very monotonous. It was all women in the bean shop. I betcha we had 50-60 people working in the whole place but women did all the sorting. There was a male foreman but they had an Italian floor lady and if something used to upset the foreman she would take care of it for him. She kept things in good shape. You went in at eight in the morning and came out at five or six. You had one-half hour off for lunch but there no such thing as a coffee break. The place was awfully dusty. Awfully dusty but they never complained. I suppose we were grateful to have a job. They were mostly Italian women in the bean shop and picking crops.

The girl that sat next to me in the bean shop looked at me one day and said 'Are you going to spend the rest of your life in here?' See that was good because nobody had challenged me that way. But she did. Even in school we didn't get the direction we could have gotten. It's too bad

that we didn't because there were a lot of things I could have done but I didn't know they were available to us. You could have gone right into nursing from the eighth grade at that time and I would have been delighted to do that but nobody directed me that way. My mother didn't know too much about the English language and she never did much reading so she didn't know. I just made up my mind I was going to do something and that's when I took up hairdressing. I took inventory and said 'Dear God, I can't spend the rest of my life in here. I gotta do something.' There was this gal in town that did hairdressing that I liked and she liked me. So I went and talked with her and she encouraged me to do it. She helped me an awful lot and that's what started my life."

After deciding to become a hairdresser Philomena attended Beauty School in Buffalo for a short time and then did a year's "apprenticeship" with her friend back in LeRoy. She then secured a job in a beauty shop on Buffalo's West Side, where she earned \$10 a week. She lived with a maternal aunt paying \$3 a week room and board. During this time Philomena achieved some independence from her family and did not contribute any of her wages to them. It was Philomena's intention to secure a job on a ship as a hairdresser and to travel. But in 1938 her step-father's illness necessitated her returning home to support and care

for her family. Like Lucy, as an unmarried daughter, it was a responsibility both she and her family assumed she'd accept. Unlike Lucy, though Philomena had a job skill that afforded her the choice of geographic mobility and being the family's sole wage earner at this point empowered her within the family to make decision that affected all of them.

Philomena decided to move the family, her mother, step-father and younger sister, to Wellsville where they rented a house and she opened her own beauty shop in their home. Philomena's parents continued to live with her and she was their primary support thru her work as a hairdresser until their deaths in the 1950's. "In 1938 my father had a stroke and I knew we had to get back together as a family. Everyone else was married. My younger sister and I were not married so it was our duty to take care of our parents. I didn't want to start in LeRoy. I wanted to go somewhere else where I didn't have all those relatives who wanted their hair done for nothing. If you want to support a family you can't do that. I was more or less bringing up my parents and I knew they would be better in a small town than in a city."

While Lucy and Philomena met their obligations to their families in significantly different ways, it is clear that both, as unmarried daughters, were expected to support and care for their parents, an obligation from which married

daughters and single and married sons appeared to be exempt. While this sense of duty and obligation to parents and the expectation that daughters quit school to work might be attributable to the ethnic factor the experience of the next narrator clearly shows that the expectation that daughters work and contribute to the family cuts across ethnic lines.

Rosie's heritage is native born white. Her mother was of Irish and English decent and her father was Pennsylvania Dutch. Both Rosie's maternal and paternal grandparents owned small farms in Steuben County. Rosie had been working part time as a seasonal agricultural worker, a babysitter, and a dishwasher when at the age of 16 in 1940 she moved with her family to Warsaw, New York (Wyoming County). She was employed part time as an assistant in the dietary kitchen at the Warsaw hospital, where she earned a \$1.25 an hour. Shortly after securing this job Rosie quit school and began working at the hospital full time. Although she obscures who actually made the decision that she quit school it is clear that she was not entirely comfortable with this decision. Although her father was employed by the Soil Conservation Department at the time she quit school, the family felt that they need Rosie's wages and that as an unmarried daughter she had an obligation "to pay her own way." While Rosie was primarily expected to pay room and board she often contributed much more than that. As she

obtained jobs that paid higher wages her parents raised her room and board accordingly.

"I thought I would just quit school at the time because we were hard up and books and everything were so expensive. The money seemed good and I couldn't keep up with school and buying my books and trying to work. So between my Mother, my Dad and I we decided that I would quit. So I quit school and worked steady for about a year before we went to Buffalo. I got about \$1.75 an hour. Things were getting bad money-wise so I started paying \$7.00 a week room and board. My parents probably paid it on bills and groceries. I always wanted to go back to school and I never did. One of the doctors at the Warsaw Hospital said he would lend me the money to go to school in Rochester to be a dietician but my father said 'no way.' I'd had to get my high school diploma and I don't know if he didn't think I was capable. I don't know. Maybe he wanted the money coming in. Besides my board I was always supporting, trying to help out. I don't know how many times I paid the rent. It wasn't as much as it is now but back then it meant a lot. Oh that board always had to come out no matter what. So I didn't go back to school. I'm very disappointed that I never did it because I enjoyed that work in the dietary kitchen. My loss. My mother felt bad that I quit school but Dad didn't. He just says 'You gotta have a job because

you can't live off of me'."

Around 1942 Rosie's father secured a job in war production at the Chevrolet plant in Buffalo, NY and the family relocated. Rosie also worked at Chevrolet and her mother worked as an inspector at Ford. The family lived in a newly built Federal Government Housing Project for war workers. Rosie started out doing piece work in the plant and later assembled airplane engines. She earned \$2.00 an hour plus time and a half and double time for overtime work. She began paying her family \$15 a week room and board.

Rosie enjoyed her work at Chevrolet. The wages were the best she had ever earned and she had an opportunity to work with women of various ages, races and ethnic groups - something she had not experienced before. She continued to work at the Chevrolet plant until late 1944 when she, like millions of other women across the country began to feel the effects of World War II's impending end. She was laid off. Under the Selective Service Act veterans took priority over war time workers in competition for their old jobs and during the conversion from war to peace time production women, who were last hired were the first fired. Overall females comprised 60% of all workers released from employment in the early months after the war and were laid off at a rate 75% higher than men. But, in spite of the demobilization that occurred an appreciable number of women

remained in the labor force.⁷⁸

Although Rosie was hired only shortly after her father at Chevrolet she was laid off a full eight months before he was. Rosie remembered well the demobilization of the Chevrolet plant and the response of the women she worked with:

"It was mostly all women in the department I worked in and there was only one man who oversaw what we did. I don't think there were three women supervisors in that big plant. You probably could have worked your way up to supervisor but the war was over and we lost our jobs.

The union didn't make any attempt to help us keep our jobs. They said that was in the rights. The men had the right to work longer than the women. We were laid off before the men were. I think they gave us about a week's notice. I don't think too many women tried to do anything about it. It wouldn't have done you any good. The union said this is the way it's supposed to be. It didn't matter if you were married or single or what, it was just how long you worked there. But the women got it before any of the men. I still think we women got a rooking on all of it. I think we did back then. They used us as guinea pigs to do all of the work. But, I figured I was glad I had the job because some people didn't have jobs, I figured I had to put up with it."⁷⁹

Following her lay-off from Chevrolet Rosie received

unemployment checks of approximately \$23.00 a week for three to four weeks. The Unemployment Office then found her a job at DuPont. She recalled that if you refused the employment found for you you were no longer entitled to receive unemployment. Rosie loathed the job at DuPont and was convinced that the Unemployment Office purposely placed women there knowing they would quit and thus not be eligible for further unemployment benefits. Her suspicion raises some interesting questions regarding the treatment of laid off women war workers, the efforts made to find them employment and the types of jobs made available to them. It is clear from Rosie's recollection of DuPont that this job neither paid as well as Chevrolet nor was it as attractive.

"It was so terrible. Oh just something. Tires you had to lug. Throw those tires around. Great big mammoth tires I had never seen before. I helped wrap the tires and inspect them. There was men there on the machines putting the liquid stuff in to make the tires but it seemed like mostly women working and we women were doing the dirty work. This one gal that worked with me boy she was big and she could throw them tires and she couldn't understand why I couldn't. I said no I can't. It was too much for me. I had to quit and I couldn't collect my unemployment. The wage wasn't as much as it was at Chevy. I think it was \$1.25 an hour. It wasn't much at all. It was a dark, dingy

place, and I was just black when I came outta there. And you could smell that darn old burnt rubber. I lasted 3 weeks. The unemployment office knew that they put those girls there and they wouldn't last and then they'd quit and be off unemployment. I know there was two or three of them quit the same time I did. I think the Unemployment Office did it on purpose. I always thought that and nobody can tell me any different. Everybody knew when we went there. Even the boss said 'Well I wonder how long you're going to last.' There were quite a few who went to DuPont when I did and some of them quit before I did. I think really that's the only job I can say I didn't like. I wouldn't go back to even look at it. I hated it."

After leaving DuPont Rosie worked for eight months in a dry cleaners in Buffalo. She earned \$1.50 an hour for sorting, tagging and weighing clothes to be dry cleaned. While she worked at DuPont and the Dry Cleaners Rosie continued to live at home with her parents and to pay weekly room and board. She also continued to help in the home by doing laundry and house cleaning. When Rose's father was rehired by the Soil Conservation Department in late 1945 he was assigned work in Belmont, NY and the family moved there. Rosie wanted to remain in Buffalo and had made arrangements to share an apartment with a female friend. Although Rosie was 21 years old and employed full time her family refused

to let her entertain the notion of living independently from them. In fact her father found employment for both Rosie and her younger sister before they relocated to Belmont. He got Rosie a job as a waitress at the Belmont Hotel where she earned \$1.00 an hour plus tips. While her sister, who was under age, worked as a chamber maid. In addition arrangements were made for Rosie and her sister to receive free room and board at the hotel as housing was limited in Belmont following the war and her parents were able to rent only a small one bedroom apartment.⁸⁰

Thus for this narrator the earning of a full time wage increased her responsibility to her family since in addition to her unwaged work in the home and responsibility for clothing and personal items Rosie's financial contribution often went beyond the amount determined by her parents for the room and board. As a result, her full time wages did not afford her the means to establish herself independently from her family. Unlike Philomena and Lucy this narrator was not the primary wage earner in her family and unlike Philomena and Gen she did not have the opportunity to live independently from her family. Like Hazel, who contributed her unwaged work in her parents home, Rosie's sense of obligation to her family is tinged with a sense of being taken advantage of.

As a contributor to the family Rosie did not appear to

have a role in the decision making process that some of the other women did. Her high rate of geographical mobility was inseparable from her family's. In many instances jobs were not of her choosing but were acquired through parental effort with little input from her. This phenomenon could be attributed to the effect of residing in a strong patriarchal family. This is not the case for some of the other narrators: Philomena's father was disabled, while Lucy and Helena's fathers were deceased.

The diversity of these narrators experiences shows the complexity of the relationships between unmarried working daughters and their families of origin. While these women assumed more responsibility for their families as working women that did not automatically empower them or alter their status. Some remained dependent daughters with little or no input or control in major decisions that affected their lives. For others the earning and contributing of money to the family did affect and alter the parent-daughter relationship. These patterns could not be categorized along class or ethnic lines.

For these narrators, with the possible exception of Rosie, the financial responsibility and care of parents was not perceived as inpinging on their work and life choices. Although family obligations did impact on the narrators lives--Philomena did not pursue her goal of being a hair-

dresser on a ship, Gen gave up a job she enjoyed to move back to Wellsville - they viewed them as choices they had made and while they may have been burdensome at times they did not regret them.

The narrators differed on the issue of whether women, married & single, competed with men for jobs, especially during the Great Depression. Some felt the issue of competition was a false one that was merely a way to keep women at home. Some narrators felt that the actual competition was between married and single women and that married women did not need employment as much as single women did. Although some narrators felt all women had the right to work, their experiences after their own marriages, for whatever reasons, contradicted their beliefs.

Hazel married in 1920, at the age of 20 and she and her husband lived in various places in Central New York State for approximately a year. They returned to Allegany County in 1921 and purchased a 300 acre farm from her husband's family in the Town of Willing. He eventually became involved in local politics serving as a Supervisor for the Town of Willing and later as Allegany County Highway Superintendent, a position he held for many years. Her two children were born in 1926 and 1933. Hazel provided unwaged labor on the farm and also was involved in some money making activities such as picking potatoes. In addition she main-

tained her interest in local history, her music and her writing although she received little support for these activities. Hazel recalled the reaction when the Silk Mill hired married women.

"The Silk Mill eventually hired some married women. People thought that was terrible. Especially if they had any children. Those children were just going to go to the dogs right then. Oh yes, he'll be getting a divorce or he ought to be. But I thought it was wonderful. If they could get away from being like they had always been, hurrah."

Hazel's recollection reflects middle-class attitudes toward married women working but on a personal level she applauded it as did the next narrator who is from a similar background.

Dorothy W. is the only narrator who was married and working outside the home during the period covered by this study. Dorothy was married in 1928 at the age of 25. Her husband, like her father, was a prosperous dairy farmer and later became head of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service in Belmont. At the time of her marriage Dorothy had been employed at the Allegany County Phone Co. for 5 years.

Dorothy did not feel any conflict existed between her roles as wife/mother and working women. Nor did she remember any criticism or censure of married women working.

The money Dorothy earned as a telephone operator was hers and she had control over the ways in which it was spent. Dorothy also took in borders especially during the deer hunting season. Dorothy's ability to work full time as the mother of two sons, born in 1933 and 1936, was aided by the use of hired girls in the home. In addition, the flexibility of scheduling hours and days worked at the phone company enabled her to have free time during the days at home. This factor plus Dorothy's family's financial status made work at the phone company highly attractive for her in spite of the relatively low wage she was earning. In fact, Dorothy's hired women actually made more money a week than she did. Dorothy exhibited a very modern attitude towards work and she defined herself through her work.

Although Dorothy was the most reticent of all the narrators her recollections provide a glimpse of the attitudes of a middle-class married working wife and mother.

"I worked six to eight hours a day at the Phone Company. Some of the time I worked two days and three nights. That gave me time home on the farm and I'd bake and cook and do things I had to do for the family. I could fix my hours the way I'd want to. I'd arrange it with the chief operator and she'd help me do it. The chief operator may have earned more money than the other operators but I didn't wish to be anything but an operator. You had a lot of

things to learn and you did get some long distance calls. I was capable of doing between three to four hundred local calls in an hour and at least forty toll tickets all over the U.S. And they'd take you out and talk to you and say 'do a little bit better if you can.' Yea they kept track of those calls. And of course there was someone behind the board plugging in and checking on you. They didn't pay any more if you were efficient. You were supposed to work, period. We worked hard there.

My husband never said anything against my working in any way. He always made room for me to go. Of course, he worked too. I had my own money, what I earned. I don't think I ever heard anything against married women working. I don't think that had anything to do with me. They understood I had always worked and I was still at it. I wasn't aware of any restrictions at the phone company. Most of the operators were married. They just wanted you to work and plug.⁸¹ My sons were born in '33 and '36 and I had hired help at home. I didn't never leave the kids without something to eat. The help lived right there on the farm. They got room and board and oh \$10.00 a week.

I had boarders and deer hunters too. I had a big house with 14 rooms and I had 14 hunters one year. I always liked to take boarders. They paid good wages. When they built the bridge just below our place the workers boarded

with me from September to December. They were Protestant Italians. My husband said 'I wish you hadn't taken them in. They're awful looking people. They get down in that dirt and grime and mess.' But they'd come in at night and put their white broadcloth shirts on and be as nice as could be."

While it would be tempting to dismiss Dorothy as the stereotypical middle-class woman who works for "pin money" her experiences must be viewed in the larger context of the time period to obtain a more complete picture of women's activities and her experiences underscore the diversity of women's lives.

Although the other five narrators either remained single until 1945 or did not marry at all, they were aware of and experienced the controversy over married women working in the 1930's and the changes that occurred in both practice and attitude with the advent of World War II. The Depression especially sharpened disapproval of married women working and employers increasingly denied married women the right to work.⁸² Although most married women were not taking jobs away from men because women were concentrated in clerical and service occupations or in sex segregated factory jobs where few men were employed most people believed that in a period of economic hardship men should be given the first opportunity for employment. Implicit in

this was the assumption that women did not deserve the same treatment as men.⁸³

The issue of married women working in the 1930's and the issue of competition for jobs was viewed differently by the narrators. Their unique perspectives, based on their experiences, enable us to see how women themselves viewed the debates that surrounded their lives.

Gen was working as a secretary at Worthington in Wellsville during the 1930's. She was part of the controversy that existed around women working and the feelings that women were competing with men for jobs. Gen had a strong sense of the sexual division of labor and saw that women were segregated into specific job categories. She did not feel that this was a natural division but rather a socially imposed one with women engaged in jobs that men did not want. Thus, the argument that women were competing with men for jobs seemed false to her. She felt she was not depriving any man of his job, and she felt that women, married and single, had a need and a right to work. However, once Gen married in 1945 she quit her employment and did not work outside the home again. Although she could not articulate how her responsibilities in the home changed after her marriage she implied that somehow as a married woman she was needed more at home.

"You know, back in the 1930's, when they had the

Depression you would hear criticisms about women working taking the job from the men. But in my case I don't think people would think it because they took it for granted that women worked in an office, and they didn't think you were taking a job away from men. I didn't think I was. As a rule don't you think young men wouldn't care for that kind of office work? They criticized married women working quite a lot because they didn't think it was just right where there was both a man and a woman working. At Worthington a lot of the ladies who worked there were married and during the 1930's there was criticism that the man and woman were both working. I don't think they lost their jobs though. I think some people felt women should be staying home. You know doing the work at home. I didn't care if married women were working. It seemed to me it was all right. I think in a lot of cases they really needed to be working. DID YOU DECIDE WHEN YOU GOT MARRIED THAT YOU WOULD QUIT WORK? Yes. At that time my aunt wasn't very well and I didn't like to have her alone very much. I did work for about two weeks for the lawyer in Friendship when his regular secretary went in the hospital. But I wasn't keen about doing it because I had too much responsibility at home. I don't know how my husband felt about married women working. I never heard him say anything about it. I guess he didn't care. I guess it'd been all right if I had kept working, but I think you

feel like you need...so there's many more things to do at home that you feel like you should be there."

The seeming contradiction in Gen's attitude regarding married women's need and right to work and her own decision not to work after marriage is a reality in women's life experience. There is an implication that a married woman's roles, expectations and responsibilities are different from a single woman's but as the narrators experiences indicate there seems to be in actuality little difference except perhaps in the area of child rearing.

Helena C. who was employed in the Pay Roll Dept. at the Sinclair Oil Refinery in 1929, remembered how the issue of married women working affected Sinclair. However, unlike Gen it was this narrator's perception that the competition for jobs was not between men and women but rather between single and married women. As a single woman she applauded Sinclair's capitulation to community pressure to not hire married women. Helena's recollection of the hiring of married women from Sinclair brings into question the relationship between industry and the community particularly if it is a small rural community. It is not known if the same type of community pressure was applied to other local industries not to hire married women but Gen's recollections of the Worthington Corp. in the 1930's would imply that it was not. Why Sinclair was singled out may never be known

but what is important is that married women found their employment opportunities constricted and women were pitted against each other in a debate the outcome of which they had virtually no control over.

"In the early 1930's they were mostly all single women working at Sinclair and I'll tell you why if you're interested. Back then the Wellsville High School made a complaint because Sinclair was hiring some married women and when the girls got out of high school there was no place for them to work. I suppose people were complaining and that's probably why the high school did do that. So Sinclair laid off - I think there were only two married women at the time - and they would not hire anybody that was married. So nobody who was married got in the office which I thought was a very good idea. I certainly did agree with that. They had husbands so why should they be taking jobs away from young people getting out of school and they did. Sinclair didn't make the distinction 'til they had a complaint then they let them go. The only criticism I ever heard about women working were married people taking jobs away from single people, but I still think it's the wrong thing to do. I'll buy that myself. No, I've always said that. If you've got a husband let them...in other words they don't have to have quite as much."

Helena's adamant reaction to the issue of married

women working may stem from the fact that she and three of her six sisters remained single all their lives and were responsible for their own financial support. Or it may indicate that although Helena and Gen had no difficulty securing secretarial jobs in 1929 there were more women being trained by the high school and seeking jobs than businesses could provide.

Philomena, who was a self-employed hairdresser moved to Wellsville in 1938 with her parents and younger sister. She married in 1949 at the age of 34 and within three years had three children. In her views on working women Philomena expressed the thought that married women should not work until their children are older, at least school age. While this is essentially what she did it is significant to note that it was not until her second child was born and she was expecting her third that she herself quit working.

"I think if married women have little, tiny children they should take care of them until they are old enough to at least go to school. Now I was older when I had my children. This might make a difference. When you are 30 you think a lot differently then when you are 20. I was married when I was 34 and my daughter was born when I was 35 so I married late and I wanted those kids and I wanted to take care of those babies. Some women work because they are bored. They don't work because they need the money. But

gee, if you have to support yourself why shouldn't you be working. I don't see anything wrong in women working. I am for it. I would have felt bad if they said women couldn't do it. So really I'm all for women working if they want to work and if they're doing the same job as a man I can't see why they shouldn't be getting the same money as a man really."

Philomena's statement on married women working is ambiguous and contradictory. She articulated and lived the contradiction that women experience between obligation to children and the utility of work to women's mental and physical health. She also expresses a partial recognition of the importance of work in women's lives for their family and for themselves.

Rosie entered the labor force full time as a teenager twenty-two years later than Gen, yet their perceptions of the issue of married women working were very similar. Rosie too saw the argument that women were competing with men for jobs as rhetoric and recognized that women had low status jobs that men did not want. Rosie's recollections of her parents' attitudes toward married women working and her mother's actual experiences highlights the difference between what women were supposed to do and what they did.

"During the 1930's married women weren't supposed to be working. You're taking it away from the men. You shouldn't be there. You should be home taking care of your children. I thought it was all right if women worked. I always thought so. There weren't that many jobs in the 1930's.

Women were office girls and there wasn't male office workers then doing the secretarial work and that. I don't think they were taking away jobs because I don't think a man would do the things that a woman did. Waiting on tables. They wouldn't have done that. That was lower, lowering themselves. Back then you never saw a waiter. It was always a waitress. I knew a lot of married women who lost their jobs. If a woman teacher got married that was it. If a male teacher came along he should have the job instead of her. Right in Warsaw that happened. Mostly men thought it was OK. I don't think it was fair at all. My dad always said that a woman's place was in the home. No place outside of the house working. But if you're not married then you should be working. But my mother worked on Election Boards and she did laundry for the boys at the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. And during the war she worked at Ford. My mother always thought a woman's place was at home until the war and then everybody was working."

In the 1930's women were told to stay home but with the coming of the war and heavy demand for labor it became both natural and patriotic for women, including married women to work. By 1942 71% of Americans thought that more married women could and should be employed.⁸⁴ As a war worker in Buffalo, Rosie witnessed first hand the influx of married women into the labor force. Her recollection of a conversation between herself and a married co-worker hints at an underlying feeling of competition, at least in attitude between single and married women in the war years. Interestingly enough the debate ignores the financial contribution and responsibility to parents made by unmarried daughters.

"I never even thought too much about single and married women competing for jobs only they were getting their money from their husbands in service. I remember this one girl said 'Yea you're single. You have more money than I do.' I said are you kidding? Gosh, I don't have a husband sending money home. Well she said that's not much. That just goes in the bank. I'm just living off mine. I said yea, but you have that extra money there. But I never won the argument."

While there has been a gradual recognition that married women who work outside the home in fact bear the burden of two full time jobs the very similar experience for

unmarried daughters who live at home has been virtually invisible.

Hazel, Dorothy and Inez were the three narrators who were married between 1915 - 1945. Although Hazel and Inez were not employed outside the home they engaged in money-making activities, and provided an enormous amount of unwaged labor on their husband's farms in addition to caring for their families. In addition to working full time Dorothy also cared for her family and helped on the farm. The recollections of these narrators' experiences in the 1930's and 1940's broadens our knowledge of the diversity of women's lives in the rural community and the various ways in which women met the challenges of those times.

Although Hazel's family of origin felt women should not work outside the home and had strong ideas about women's proper role she knew that her labor was essential if her husband's farm was to succeed at all. Her husband's disinterest in the farm and the shortage of labor during the Great Depression and World War II placed additional responsibility on Hazel to keep the farm operational.

"My husband had too much education to be content with farming so he got into politics. He wanted me to stay back in the corner. He wanted me to be there. I was not to do anything. During the Depression we were existing on the farm. Lot of farmers quit entirely. Lost their farms or

whatever they had on them. We sold our cows. Oh I hated to sell those cows. My husband was county highway superintendent then and the dairy wasn't paying at all and he couldn't be there to do the work and he said he wouldn't if he could. I said to him I'll milk them and he said 'Ha, Ha. I can see you milking those cows.' Well we had forty-five of them at the time and I got up to where I could milk twenty but I was not much of a success and that's when he sold the dairy. I had the biggest garden of any man around and I canned lots of stuff. I planted the garden and I harvested it. I wasn't supposed to do that. My foster father used to have a fit because I worked so hard. But I had to. I wouldn't have had a garden if I didn't. We had twenty-five to thirty acres of potatoes and when the war was on you couldn't get people to come and help. And when they did they'd stand and chew tobacco and they didn't get very much done. I told my husband I could boss those people and he said I bet you couldn't do anything. I said well I'll try and I went up there and got those men going. Richard, the man who bought our potato crop, said I was the best he ever had to sort potatoes and I worked for him for two years. I got paid by the truckload. He was determined I was going to follow the crops down to Maryland and work for him but I couldn't."

Although the values of Hazel's family mediated against her working outside the home as both an unmarried and a married woman she did work both in the home and on the farm. While she never received wages, she was also never a lady of leisure.

Dorothy was employed full time and had the benefit of hired women to provide care for her two sons and to help with household chores but she too provided valuable unwaged labor on the farm.

"Oh yea, I always helped on the farm too. I hauled the milk and the feed and the fertilizer. All kinds of stuff. In fact I hauled milk to town for a neighbor and us. I'd put it right on the tailgate of the truck. See I worked at the Phone Company nights so I could be home days."

The financial condition of both Hazel and Dorothy's families would seem to preclude the expectation of work. Nonetheless both women did indeed work all of their lives.

Inez, who was born and raised in the oil fields of Pennsylvania, married at the age of 17 in 1929. Prior to her marriage she attended the Bradford H.S. in Bradford, PA where she took commercial courses with the intention of becoming a secretary. However once she married she was no longer allowed to attend high school. Her husband was a driller in the oil fields and they lived an itinerant life while he worked for various oil companies in Pennsylvania

and New York. The family frequently lived in housing provided by the oil companies. In the mid-1930's her husband's family gave them a farm in Duffy Hollow in Wellsville, NY. Her husband then did part time farming when work in the oil fields was slack. Inez had six children within ten years. Unlike Hazel and Dorothy, Inez's husband did subsistence rather than commercial farming and this may account for Inez's greater involvement in home production and the sharper sexual divisions of labor that appears in her experiences. Inez's husband planted and harvested the crops and cared for the animals. Inez cared for the children, the house and did food preservation. She also engaged in money making activities, making and selling butter. Inez's recollections contain a keen awareness of class differences and her experiences, when compared to those of Hazel and Dorothy, give a clearer focus to the class experience of the farming population in a small rural area.

"I was married in 1929 and I hadn't finished high school. I wished I had. I was in commercial. I have certificates in our shadowbox out there and I have a pin I earned in the commercial club. I intended to be a secretary but then my husband came along. Back in those days a girl who had gotten married wasn't allowed to go to high school. You had to quit. I fully intended to be a secretary.

Sometimes the high school would line up jobs for girls who graduated with good marks. Bradford was an oil city and there were many offices. Many, many wealthy people too. Of course those kids were in high school with me and you could feel the uppers and the lowers. They were friendly enough but you knew the difference. We kids from Duke Center...Well you knew the difference. There were many oil people in Duke Center too. They were upper crust and we were lower crust. Even back in those days there was that real division of people.

My husband was a driller in the oil fields and he worked for various oil companies. His father had given us this home in Duffy Hollow because the oil fields had slacked off and he was out of work. Jobs were very tight. We'd come back to Wellsville then my husband would get somebody call and give him a job in the oil fields again and away we'd go back to Pennsylvania. When he was out of work between times he'd just work for the farmers in the area of Duffy Hollow and he did part time farming. He built a large barn. At one time we had twelve to fifteen cows and one year he raised hogs. Of course we always had chickens. The farm was twenty-five acres mostly hilly. Good pastureland and we rented other land to plant oats and hay. I never even learned to milk a cow. I certainly didn't. We had a very large garden and did an awful lot of canning. Dear I

can remember one year in particular my husband had the use of the extra lot at the Wellsville Cemetery and he had his own tractor and plow and he raised all his corn, potatoes and tomatoes down on this beautiful ground. And I had seven hundred quarts of corn, pickles, tomatoes and relish of all kinds and jellies and peaches. It was just a summer project.

I think back on the Depression and actually there in Duke Center, even though it was right in the pit of the Depression, my Dad had work. We were poor. We were poor people but I don't even remember knowing there was a Depression. We didn't have that much anyway. We had food on the table and clothing on our backs and shelter. When my husband was out of work and he'd work for the farmers, he earned a \$1.00 a day and his dinner. But it kept us going. We sold a lot of butter too. I made all the butter. Six-eight pounds a week. It was just a chore that had to be done. We had regular customers and it was \$.50 a pound."

Of all the narrators Inez is the one who you would assume might seek wage work outside of the home especially during the Great Depression. Yet she is the one who remains home and contributes to the family survival through her unwaged labor in the home.

The experiences of these three married women differed greatly especially concerning the ways in which the Great

Depression affected their lives. Hazel, although her husband had full time employment, assumed more responsibility in an attempt to keep the farm operational. Dorothy and her husband were both employed. Their farm was successful and they were able to help maintain it. For Inez, who identified herself as poor, the Great Depression did little to alter the life style and labor to which she was accustomed. In spite of the differences in these women's experiences and the different financial conditions of their families they were all expected to work to some degree in the home and on the farm.

V. CONCLUSION

Allegany County was and still is a rural county that has experienced slow but consistent growth throughout its 176 year history. While its primary industry has been agriculture this study has shown that the words rural and agricultural are not synonymous or interchangeable. Rural is a more inclusive term which can include, but is not confined to, the agricultural experience. The work histories of the eight narrators challenge some basic assumptions about rural life and make visible the experiences of women living in rural areas.

The variety of work that these women engaged in between 1915 - 1945 questions the assumption that rural areas did not provide employment beyond agriculture and that agriculture is primarily a male occupation that cannot absorb women. These narrators engaged in work not directly related to agriculture which indicates that the rural area did provide other types of employment for women. And, as this study has shown, even a predominantly rural area like Allegany County hosted a variety of business and industrial concerns. In addition, some of the narrators were also

employed as seasonal agricultural laborers as children and adolescents suggesting that agriculture provided some opportunity for women's employment.

The experiences of the narrators also challenge the myth of rural communities as homogenized enclaves free from ethnic class and religious tensions. Allegany County experienced foreign immigration in the 1910's and 1920's. Although it was not as extensive as in urban areas it none the less created conflictual relationships that impacted on women's lives and employment opportunities. Religious tensions too, particularly in the 1920's, affected women's opportunities to work. Class differences and divisions were evident in the narrators perceptions of community and family attitudes toward women working, the types of jobs to which some narrators were limited and the worker-boss relationship between women and their employers.

The women interviewed for this study were expected to work regardless of their place of residence (farm & non-farm), their ethnicity, their religion or class status. For all of the women that meant unwaged labor in the home as children, as adolescents and as unmarried adults. While the amount of work expected from each one might have varied it included a range of tasks such as housework, laundry, care of siblings, food preservation and tending animals. For some of the narrators, Helena, Inez, Lucy, Philomena, Rosie,

the expectation of work took on the added dimension of part time money making activities or waged labor as children.

The money that these narrators earned as children and adolescents was either given directly to parents or was used by the narrators to purchase essential items for themselves, clothing, school books, which offset the cost of their care for the family.

Often the labor that the narrators engaged in was exploitative and in violation of State Child Labor Laws. However, child labor laws were not enforced in rural areas, the issue of child agricultural labor was not dealt with until the late 1940's, and those laws that were applicable were most often ignored by adults and children. The lack of scrutiny in the rural area plus the acceptance of children working may have been a significant factor in some of the narrators' abilities to obtain jobs as children and young adolescents. It is clear that from a young age daughters were seen as having an obligation to their family that must be met through both unwaged and waged labor. The narrators themselves recognized and accepted this obligation as part of their role and only two narrators, Hazel and Rosie, expressed any dissatisfaction or resentment towards it.

As the narrators moved into late adolescence and young adulthood, their responsibilities to their family increased if they remained single. As unmarried daughters they were

expected to earn a full time wage. For some of the narrators the entire wage was given to parents as was the case with Lucy and Philomena. For other narrators, Gen, Helena, Rosie, the money they earned was used for their upkeep and a portion was given to parents in the form of room and board payments. Thus earning a full time wage did not automatically lead to social or financial independence for the narrators. And earning and contributing money did not always mean a change in the parent-daughter relationship or in the narrators' status within the family.

When parents became ill or aged it was the unmarried daughter who was expected to assume the responsibility of care for them in addition to working full time even if this necessitated changing jobs and moving as in Gen's experience, or in giving up their plans as in Philomena's experience, or downward job mobility as in Rosie's situation. Some of the narrators, Helena and Lucy, chose not to leave their families of origin, and Rosie because of strong familial influences and attitudes could not. But even for Gen and Philomena who did live independently from their families, it was a temporary phenomenon and family illness or family need could summon them home permanently.

The cycle of full time work and responsibility to and for parents is broken only by marriage and the assumption of an entirely different set of expectations and responsibili-

ties, or by the death of parents.

This writer did not expect to find evidence of such diversity of work opportunities for women in this rural area so early in the twentieth century but these women engaged in a variety of jobs such as secretary, domestic, telephone operator, beautician, waitress, factory worker, laundress, musician, babysitter, etc. Like their urban sisters they were segregated into female specific job categories and the labor force in the rural area was segmented in the same way as the urban labor force in this time period. Although the narrators were employed during the Great Depression none of them had difficulty in securing and/or maintaining employment. There is also evidence that Wellsville was totally unaffected by the depression a factor which may or may not have affected women's employment opportunities. Only one narrator, Rosie, experienced the new opportunities World War II created for female employment. The rest of the narrators remained in their jobs and did not seek employment in the war industries. The sample is much too small to make generalizations regarding women in rural areas and the effect of World War II on their employment opportunities but the narrators experiences raise interesting questions. How was war work viewed by women in rural areas? What was the effect of war production on mobility patterns and employment patterns in a rural county like Allegany? Were there

aspects of war work that were unattractive to women or were there other factors involved in their decision to not change employment.

Two of the narrators, Hazel and Inez were married and were not employed outside the home but their histories added to the total picture of women's experiences in the rural area. They highlighted the amount of work that married women perform for the upkeep of their family. Dorothy's experiences as a working wife and mother also evidenced the diversity in the rural area.

While most of the narrators viewed waged work as a necessity for survival its meaning in their lives went far beyond the money they received. Some enjoyed the social aspects of working, some saw it as a way of maintaining a sense of independence and self worth, some saw it as a way of helping their families. But regardless of how they viewed the work experience, for all of the narrators it was a significant life experience.

Gen's work history spans two and a half decades in the field of clerical work in Allegany County. In thinking back over her years as a working women she commented "For me it was pretty much a case of necessity to be working especially during the 1930's. People had a hard time. There was no social services or much to help people. They just had to depend on relatives to see them through. I felt it was

quite important for me to be earning something. That's the way I felt. It was important. It was kind of nice I think to work."

Dorothy did not need to work. Yet, her employment as a telephone operator for forty years was a necessity to her as a person and a great source of pride and satisfaction. "I was thankful to have a job and be busy and do something that was worthwhile. I didn't have to work but I liked it and I enjoyed it. I liked my own money. Yea. I wouldn't want to keep begging for money all the time."

Helena did office work in three different plants in Wellsville for almost fifty years. While work was a necessity for Helena as a single woman there were other aspects that were equally as important to her. "I always enjoyed the work I was doing. I took shorthand, typing, business English, and all in school 'cause I always wanted to be in an office. No, I like working. I liked the people and I enjoyed the work and the sociability of it. We had lots of good times and I had a lot of good friends. 'Course you worked because you had to because back in those days you didn't have anything so you had to work to survive."

Lucy was employed for over forty years as a laundress and day domestic in Belmont. As a single woman responsible for her own support as well as her mother's for many years, work was essential for Lucy's survival. Lucy's comment

regarding her work focuses on work as a necessity because of the type of work she did and the reality that it was a way to survive. "I always wanted to work. We needed the money. I guess that's what I was used to and that's what I did. Wash and iron and housework. That's about it."

While the money Philomena earned as a hairdresser supported herself, her parents and her younger sister she emphasized what working had meant to her. "I am glad that I worked because I have met so many wonderful people. I have enjoyed them. If I had it to do over again I'd work as hard as I've worked. I feel better for it."

Rosie too viewed her waged work as something that kept her from being dependent on others and give her a sense of control over her own life. "I always wanted to work. To keep myself occupied. Time goes by faster. Earn your own keep. I never wanted anybody to think they had to take care of me. I never did. I was never afraid of work anytime."

Although the sample for this study is small, the diversity these eight narrators exhibit in their work and life experiences add to our understanding of the period. From the early twentieth century thru 1945 their memories and recollections provide a view of life for women in a small rural county in Southwestern New York State and challenge some basic assumptions about the experiences of women in rural areas. In sharing their stories they tell us

how women perceived major events such as World War I, the Great Depression and World War II in relation to their own lives. They show us the contradictions between the ideologies and realities of women lives in this era. They make us aware of their attitudes and perceptions regarding their own lives and work as well as such issues such as married women working and women's proper roles. Their recollections show us how class, ethnic factors and religion impacted on and affected their lives. And they challenge us to place their lives in the larger context of women's experiences so that we may better know and understand our history.

Women have always worked and it is evident from this study that women are expected to work from a very young age. As Rosie said, the women of Allegany County were never afraid of work any time.

FOOTNOTES

¹William Chafe. The American Woman. Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) and Maurine Greenwald, Women, War and Work. The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States (West Port, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980) are just two examples of this focus.

²Joan Jensen, With These Hands Women Working on the Land (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1980) is an example of this type of study.

³William J. Doty, Ed., The Historic Annals of Southwestern New York (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co. Inc, 1940), 836.

⁴Robert P. Swierenga, "Agriculture and Rural Life: The New Rural History," Ordinary People and Everyday Life. Perspectives on the New Social History, Ed. James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams (Nashville, Tenn: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 93.

⁵U.S., Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1944-1945. 2.

⁶Otis D. Duncan and Albert Reiss, Jr., Social Characteristics of Urban and Rural Communities 1950 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1956), 371.

⁷U.S., Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1935. 6.

⁸U.S., Bureau of the Census, County Data Book. A Statistical Supplement to the Statistical Abstract of the United States. 10. The Census Bureau does not define what a "nonfarm" home is.

⁹Ali A. Paydarfar and Olaf H. Larson, The People of Allegany County, New York. Trends in Human Resources and Their Characteristics 1900-1960, Bulletin 60-2 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1963). 5.

¹⁰Edmund deS. Brunner and Irving Lorge, Rural Trends in Depression Years. A Survey of Village-Centered Agricultural Communities 1930-1936 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), V & VI.

¹¹Paydarfar and Larson, 8.

¹²Jeremy P. Felt, Hostages of Fortune. Child Labor Reform in New York State (Syracuse University Press, 1965), 169.

¹³Ibid. 169.

¹⁴Swierenga, 94. Peter Argersinger, "The People's Past: Teaching American Rural History," History Teacher 10 (1977): 407.

¹⁵New York State, Manual For the Use of the Legislature. 1915, 222.

¹⁶New York State, Redbook, 1923, 597.

¹⁷As late as 1960 Allegany County ranked sixth in the percent of rural population in New York State, ninth in the percent of rural farm population and sixth in percent of rural nonfarm population. In 1960 the county ranked fifty-second in the percentage of urban population in New York State. Paydarfar and Larson, 4.

¹⁸Ibid. 8. In addition to the Village of Wellsville, three of the County's twenty-nine townships in 1950 had a population that exceeded 2500. However, towns are not considered incorporated places in New York State since they are minor civil divisions.

¹⁹Between 1920 and 1950 the total population of Allegany County increased from 36,842 to 43,787. Of the fifty-seven counties in New York State (the State has 62 counties, but the five counties that comprise the City of New York are excluded here). Allegany County ranked forty-ninth in the rate of population increase between 1900-1960. Ibid. 1, 4.

²⁰Between 1920-1930 the urban population of the United States increased 27.3%, in New York State the increase was 22.5% and in Allegany County 13.6%. For the same years the rural population of the U.S. increased by 4.4%, in New York State by 15.0% and in Allegany County by 1.6%. Broken down into rural farm and rural nonfarm, the United States saw a decline of 3.9% in the rural farm population, New York State saw a decline of 9.8% and Allegany County saw a decline of 19.3%. The rural nonfarm population increased in the United States by 17.4%, in New York State by 34.3% and in Allegany County by 29.31%. Between 1930-1940 the urban population of the United States increased 7.9%, in New York State it increased by 6.1% and in Allegany County by 4.3%. The rural farm population showed a slight increase of 0.2% in the United States, 1.3% in New York State but declined in Allegany County by 9.6%. The rural nonfarm population in the United States increased 14.2%, in New York State by 17.5% and in Allegany County by 15.7%. Ibid. 4. W.A. Anderson, 28.

²¹In 1910 there were 101.2 males per 100 females in New York State. In 1930 the ration was 100.6 males per 100 females and in 1940 98.5 males per 100 females. Nationally, in 1940, males outnumbered females 101.1 to 100. W.A. Anderson, 19.

²²Ibid. 20.

²³For example, in New York State in 1940 in the total rural population, there were 107.5 males per 100 females. Ibid. 20.

²⁴Ibid. 23.

²⁵In 1910, 33.8% of New York State's total female population was single as compared to 29.8% of the nation's total female population. In 1920, 31.0% of the total female population was single in New York State and 27.4% in the country as a whole. In 1930, 30.1% of the total female population in New York State were single as compared to 26.4% in the nation as a whole, and in 1940 it was 29.5% of NYS total female population was single as compared to 25.8% in the nation. Ibid. 52.

²⁶U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930. Vol. 3, Part 2. 280, 284.

²⁷U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States taken in the year 1920. Vol. 3. 679. Ibid. 280.

²⁸Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920. 679, 728. Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930. 280.

²⁹John L. Shover, First Majority-Last Minority. The Transforming of Rural Life in America (DeKalb: No. University Press, 1976), 33, 48.

³⁰Another narrator, Dorothy Watson, was employed as an operator at the Phone Company in Belmont from 1923-1949. She could not recall any security precautions during World War II.

³¹In 1925, the Village of LeRoy had a population of 4,384 and sizable Italian and Irish communities. Of Genesee County's 43,420 residents, 3,039 were listed as aliens in the 1925 New York State Census. The only city in the County was Batavia. Florence E.S. Knapp, Secretary of State, Population Figures For the Cities, Incorporated Villages, Towns and Counties of New York State according to the Census of June, 1925 (Albany: 1925). 20.

³²A series of interviews were done in 1976 and 1978 with elderly men and women in Allegany County as part of an oral history project sponsored by the Allegany County Historian. One of the issues addressed in the interviews was the activities of the Klu Klux Klan in the County during the 1920's. Of the approximately thirty tapes in the collection, none are transcribed. I listened to approximately fifteen tapes and all of the people interviewed recalled the activities of the Klan and that Catholics were the primary target. The tapes are on deposit in the Allegany County Historians Office, Belmont, New York.

³³Doty, 957.

³⁴For a complete history on the development of railroads in Allegany County see Paul Pietrak, The B&S. The New Way (Published Privately by the Author: 1967) and History of Allegany County, New York (New York: F.W. Beers and Co., 1879) and John Minard, A Centennial Memorial History of Allegany County, New York (Alfred, New York: W.A. Fergusson & co., 1896).

³⁵Two other towns in Allegany County, Bolivar and Richburg, were economically dependent on the oil industry. For a complete history of the oil industry in the County from the 1800's-1939, see Doty, pp. 991-1010.

³⁶Doty, pp. 956-973.

³⁷Moore Turbine expanded its operations in 1920, 1930, 1935, 1936 and 1939. Ibid. 968, 867.

³⁸Ibid. 969, 982. For a complete history of the natural gas boom and its effect on Allegany County, see Doty, 975-990.

³⁹Ibid. 867.

⁴⁰Ibid. 957-968.

⁴¹Richard Bourne and Jack Levin, Social Problems: Causes, Consequences, Interventions (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1983), 40.

⁴²Between 1900-1940, the proportion of females in the labor force in New York State and the United States was: 1900-NYS 25.0/US 20.4; 1910-NYS 29.2/US 25.2; 1920-NYS 29.5/US 23.3; 1930-NYS 29.3/US 24.3; 1940-NYS 30.8/US 25.4 Anderson, 70.

⁴³Raw number figures for these categories in Allegany County are: Professional and semi-professional 648; Domestic and Personal Service 691; Wholesale/Retail Trade 285; Hotel, boarding house operators, etc. 193, Textile & Clothing industries 112; agriculture 94; Telephone and Telegraph 76. The total labor force in Allegany County in 1930 was 14,623. U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the U.S. 1930. 305.

⁴⁴Raw number figures for these categories in New York State are: Professional & semi-professional 209, 017; domestic & personal service 275,312; Wholesale & retail trade 160,853; Hotel, boarding house, etc. 73,157; textile and clothing industries 175, 080; Agriculture 7,457 and Telephone and Telegraph 58,430. Ibid. 305.

⁴⁵The percentage of women in the labor force in Allegany County in 1940 is significantly lower than the State percentage of 30.8%. The figure is also lower than the percentages for surrounding counties. 21.5% of the labor force in Cattaraugus County was female; 22.5% in Livingston County; 21.8% in Steuben County; and 25.9% in Wyoming County. Only two counties in New York State, Schoharie (16.5%) and Scuyler (16.8%) had a smaller percentage of women in the labor force. County Data Book, 272.

⁴⁶MAJOR OCCUPATIONS OF FEMALES 14 years old and over for NYS, urban and rural, 1940

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	URBAN	PERCENT	
		RURAL FARM	RURAL NONFARM
Professional Workers	11.3	15.4	16.2
Semi-professional	1.3	1.0	1.5
Farmers & Farm Managers	--	9.7	0.1
Proprietors, Managers, Officials-except farms	3.3	2.0	4.6
Clerical, Sales & Kindred Workers	35.2	13.7	23.3
Craftsman, Foremen & Kindred Workers	1.3	0.8	0.9
Operatives & Kindred Workers	22.1	12.2	15.8
Domestic Service Worker	13.6	26.8	21.6
Service Workers-except domestics	10.3	8.7	12.7
Farm Laborers-unpaid family workers	--	3.5	--
Farm Laborers-waged	--	1.6	0.4
Laborers-except farm	0.5	1.6	1.0

W.A. Anderson, The Population Characteristics of New York State, Bulletin 389 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, 1947), 73.

⁴⁷U.S., Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufactures: 1947. 444.

⁴⁸For the complete history of these educational institutions and their impact on and relationship with Allegany County see Doty, pp. 890-905 and 915-924.

⁴⁹Ruth Milkman, "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis. Some Lessons from the Great Depression," A Heritage of Our Own. Toward A New Social History of Women, Ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth Pleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 511.

⁵⁰U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Vol. IV., 177.

⁵¹Felt, 45.

⁵²Ibid. 123.

⁵³Ibid. 55, 170.

⁵⁴U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the U.S. Vol. IV, 1083.

⁵⁵William Chafe, The American Woman. Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 56, 89.

⁵⁶Maurine Greenwald, Women, War and Work. Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 56, 89.

⁵⁷The Township of Amity includes the Village of Belmont.

⁵⁸The Irish Settlement is a farming community located approximately six miles northeast of the Village of Belmont. This writer has been unable to uncover any written documentation regarding the early history of the Settlement. Helena Cline recalled that between 1905 and 1915 the Settlement contained approximately six large farms that engaged primarily in sheep and dairy farming. Potatoes were the major crop raised. She recalled that all of the people in the Settlement were Irish and were related to one another. The Settlement had it's own grade school but there were no stores or churches.

⁵⁹The Kerr Turbine Company began business in Wells-ville in 1902. After the beginning of World War I in 1914, the plant was commandeered by the US Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corp. and was engaged in the building of marine turbines to drive ships. The plant employed some six hundred men and was Wellsville's largest industry during that time. Doty, 967.

⁶⁰Eldred and Duke Center are in McKean County, PA. Duke Center is approximately 40 miles southwest of Wells-ville.

⁶¹Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Bureau of Women and Children, Fourteen and Fifteen Year Old Children in Industry. Special Bulletin No. 21, 4.

⁶²In 1926, of the 14-15 year old employed children studied, only 571 were employed in public utilities of which .1% were girls, Ibid. 10-11.

⁶³Clark Brothers Co. was established in Belmont, New York Allegany County in 1866 as the Belmont Manufacturing Co. In 1879, William P. and Charles E. Clark purchased the plant and manufactured agricultural implements, saw mill machinery and electric light plant equipment. The plant burned in 1889 and the business was moved to Hornell, Steuben County, New York. Fearing that the plant might not be rebuilt, the citizens of Belmont pledged \$10,000 to insure it's return to that community. The Company did return and engaged in the manufacture of saw mill machinery, Corless engines and gas engines. Clark Brothers was the largest shop in Allegany County at the time and employed 250 men. In 1912, a fire completely destroyed the large plant. This dealt a serious blow to the thriving Village of Belmont as the firm moved to Olean, Cattaraugus County, where it continues to operate today. Doty, 964.

⁶⁴State of New York, Department of Labor, "Child Labor on New York State Farms, 1948." Special Bulletin No. 277, 8. For a complete discussion of the dilemma that agriculture presented to child labor reformers, see Felt, 169-194.

⁶⁵Virginia Yans-McLoughlin, Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo 1880-1930 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 53.

⁶⁶Throughout the 1920's & 1930's, the problem of children picking in the fields of New York State remained almost untouched. Technically the law required Labor Department inspection of child labor in the fields and by 1928, the employment of any minor under age 14 in New York State in "any occupation carried on for pecuniary gain" was forbidden. This restriction could have been used to end child labor in commercial agriculture. Far from prosecuting commercial truck farmers who used children, the Labor Department did not even inspect the fields. It was not until 1948 that the NYS Labor Department made its first serious effort to inspect farms and until 1955, it was still inspecting less than 1/5 of the seasonal farm workers in the State. Felt, 179, 186, 187.

⁶⁷Ibid. 179.

⁶⁸Phone service started in Allegany County in 1879 and independently owned phone companies serviced the county. In 1910 the Allegany County Phone Company was incorporated and soon owned all of the independent phone companies in the County except Short Tract, Fillmore and the Alfred Telephone Co. The NY Telephone Co. took over the Allegany County Telephone Co. on Feb. 17, 1932. Doty, 879, 1021.

⁶⁹Dorothy worked as a single woman for 5 years before her marriage in 1928.

⁷⁰Chafe, 56.

⁷¹Milkman has argued that marriages were postponed, many of them permanently, during the Great Depression because of intergenerational dependency. Ruth Milkman, "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis. Some Lessons from the Great Depression." in A Heritage of Her Own. Towards a New Social History of American Women. Nancy Colt & Elizabeth Peck, ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 523. This will be explored in greater depth later in this paper.

⁷²To this writer's knowledge there is no known documentation regarding the Silk Mills in Allegany County.

⁷³Chafe. 52-54. See also Maurine Weiner Greenwald. Women, War & Work. Westport Ct. Greenwood Press, 1980. Kessler-Harris agrees that from a structural perspective job shifts during the immediate prewar and postwar years appear insignificant. However, she also points out that what women as a group failed to gain in manufacturing they more than made up for in white collar areas that encompassed office staff at all but the highest levels. In 1920, in a process accelerated by the war but not caused by it, a larger percentage of employed women worked in these jobs (25.6%) than in manufacturing (23.8%), domestic service (18.2%), or agriculture (12.9%). Kessler-Harris has also argued that a structural perspective obscured what the experience of work meant for women. Alice Kessler-Harris Out to Work (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 219, 224.

⁷⁴The Air Preheater Corp and its connection to Wellsville dates back to 1903 when it was known as the Clark and Norton Co. In 1925 they began to manufacture the Ljungstrom type of regenerative air preheater. At that time the primary stockholders were Swedish and Scottish. Doty, 965-66.

⁷⁵The Wellsville Refinery Co. was incorporated in 1901. By 1918 the Union Petroleum Co. of Philadelphia owned all of the Company's stock. In 1919 the refinery was acquired by the Sinclair Refining Co. An expansion program began in 1920. When Sinclair executives were convinced there would be adequate crude supplies for at least 30-35 years. Ibid. 972-73.

⁷⁶Doty, 972.

⁷⁷The narrator could not recall the name of the place she worked or what their exact operations were.

⁷⁸Chafe, 179-181.

⁷⁹For a more thorough discussion of the role of unions in the demobilization of women war workers see The Women's Work Project. Separated and Unequal. Discrimination Against Women Workers After World War II (The U.A.W. 1944-54). New York, 1976.

⁸⁰When Rosie's parents were able to rent a house a few months later both she and her sister returned home to live. Rosie could not remember if the room and board she received was considered part of her wages but indicated that her \$1.00 an hour wage did not increase when she moved out of the hotel.

⁸¹During an informal conversation with a male acquaintance of Hazel he related the following story: "My father died in 1925 when I was five and my mother got a job as a telephone operator with the Allegany County Telephone Company in Rushford. The switchboard was right in our home. My mother remarried in 1931 and kept it a secret until my sister and I finished high school because had they known she was married they would have fired her. If you got married you had to leave. If she was a widow she could work." This is in marked contrast with Dorothy's recollections. Although the reasons for the discrepancy are not known one could speculate about the possibility that the phone company employed different standards for different communities.

⁸²Chafe, 108.

⁸³Ibid. 109.

⁸⁴Barbara Deckard. The Women's Movement (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 320. See also Chafe, 144-146.

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