

a year or so until they built this one. But I think the library had been there. It was a smaller one.

Int.: Mrs. Ponafidine, after the tape ran out, showed me her mother-in-law's books and she also mentioned that she can remember during the Revolution when soldiers came into her father's library of magnificently bound books and used the pages to light their cigarettes.

### JUVENELIA RAGAN

Transcribed interview of Juvenelia Ragan, Tape #92. Int. is Lee Lambert. Transcribed by Christine B. Kroschel.

Int.: You don't have to talk especially loud or anything.

Ragan: I was Elbert Hubbard's office girl, I was his errand girl.

Int.: When was this?

Ragan: Way back in, what would it have been? I was 14. I was born in 1893; 10 years would have been 1903,

Int.: You were born in 1893? In 1907 you would have been 14.

Ragan: In 1907, I would have been 14.

Int.: Of course, I have to say who I'm talking to. I'm talking to Juvenelia Ragan, one of, how many children did your parent's have?

Ragan: They had five girls.

Int.: You weren't the oldest?

Ragan: No, I was the third youngest, I was the middle one.

Int.: And you worked for Elbert Hubbard then when you were only 13, 14 years old?

Ragan: Yes.

Int.: Oh gosh, what kinds of things did you do?

Ragan: As I say, I was his errand girl.

Int.: Did you like run from building to building?

Ragan: No, mail and papers and messages and so forth.

Int.: Oh that's great, it must have been very exciting.

Ragan: Well, I wasn't too excited about it then, but it's a memory that is unusual.

Int.: Can you tell us anything about the kinds of work that they did then or people that you might have met?

Ragan: Well, they were a book publishing company. The manuscripts kept coming from Elbert Hubbard himself. They had two magazines, *The Fra* and *The Philistine*. They had a copper shop, a furniture manufacturing shop, and the Inn of course, what else did they do?

Int.: Did they employ a lot of girls for things like that?

Ragan: Oh yes. That was the main source of employment in the village of East Aurora then.

Int.: But did they employ a lot of women for that kind of job, you would think like for errands, they would have used boys?

Ragan: Of course, there was a lot of clerical work entailed with their magazines and their books and so forth. I can't remember when I left there. I went into Buffalo and worked here and there and finally ended up with the J.W. Clement Company who were printing concerns and are now Arcadia Graphics out there in Cheektowaga. Do you know them?

Int.: Yes.

Ragan: I was secretary to the sales manager when I went to work there. When I

Int.: Did Catherine, your sister Catherine work at the Roycroft?

Ragan: No. But my two older sisters, Sister Benedict and Eva worked at the Roycroft in the bindery, the book bindery. No, now wait a minute, Benedict didn't, she worked in the shipping department, she was a clerk in the Roycroft shipping department. Eva worked in the bindery. Catherine worked in the bindery for a few months, I guess, too now that I think of it. But no, I went to work in the office and my first job was addressing envelopes for circulation by hand. We sat all day and wrote, addressed envelopes.

Int.: They say he had some pretty advanced ideas, you know, for businesses. Elbert Hubbard, he was supposed to be a man ahead of his time.

Ragan: He was a man ahead of his times.

Int.: Did you know him personally at all?

Ragan: Yes, as I say, I did his errands. As a matter of fact, when my parents were first married they lived in a double house down here near where the big building that stands back from the street is, and Elbert Hubbard and his wife, his first wife, lived in the other side of this double house. So he and Father were pals. I remember one time shortly after I went to work in his office, in Elbert's office, he said to me one day, "Are you Jim Ragan's daughter?" and I said, "Yes, I am," and he said, "Well, for heaven's sakes, he and I were pals once." And of course, they took their meals in the dining room at the Inn and he said, "Let me take you over to the Inn for lunch today." And I said "oh no." I was scared to death to go to lunch, I didn't know

whether that was moral or not. And I said, "Oh, I couldn't today because Mother's expecting me to be there in time for lunch and she'd be worried if I didn't appear." Well, he said, "One of these days, I'm going to take you over." He never did,

but much to my delight. But we knew the Hubbards so long as they lived here.

Int.: Well, I guess he was quite a salesman too, they say?

Ragan: He was a soap salesman. My father knew him first when he lived over in this house together. He was selling soap for the Larkin Company.

Int.: We were speculating the other day what

would have happened to the Roycroft in the Depression if Elbert had been alive, you know?

Ragan: He would have found some way out of it, I'm sure. He was a man of tremendous ability in forecasting what could, how to channel your abilities.

Int.: He seemed to just be able to look into, grab on to the future trends, and look into the future a little bit and plan

ahead.

Ragan: He had a great ability. He was really a very delightful person to know.

Int.: He's such a controversial figure, it's strange. Some people really don't like him at all and others that just idolize

him.

Ragan: No, I don't agree with that at all.

Int.: Because most people that know him close seemed to think that he really was a deeply religious man, even though he never really supported anything.

Ragan: In his way he was, that's true, that's true.

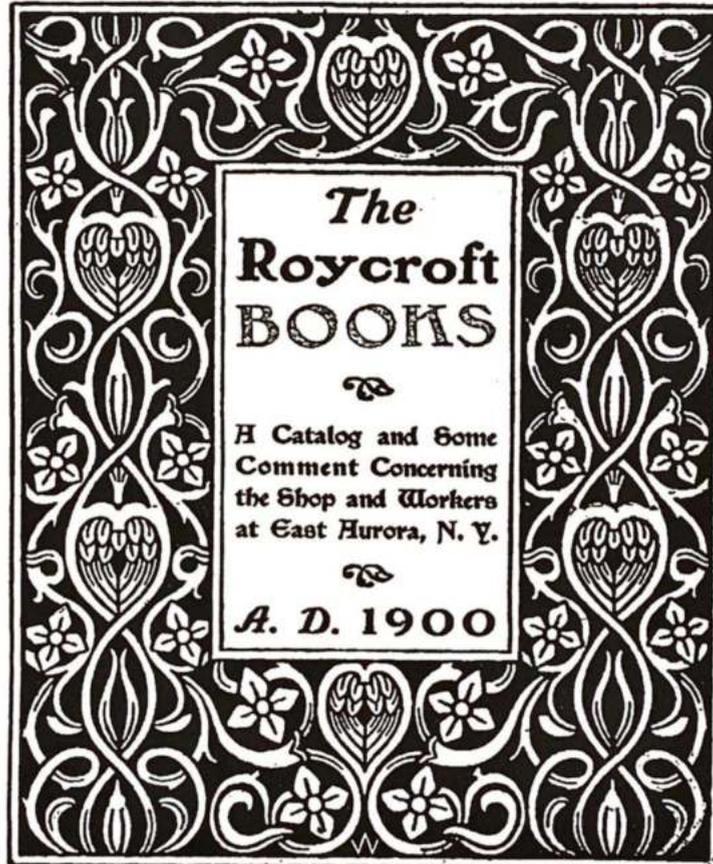
Int.: He actu-

ally wanted to do a lot for youth, which is why, part of the reason why he started the Roycroft, I understand is for employment for the young people.

Ragan: Just as a side issue, it was he who brought Beulah Hood to East Aurora.

Int.: Beulah Hood?

Ragan: She was a schoolteacher in Denver and this was after he was divorced and married to the second Mrs. Hubbard



and she and Mrs. Hubbard had been friends in Denver. He brought her here, she was a wizard at business planning. After he died and the buildings and the business went over to his son, she conceived the bright idea of starting a little department store in East Aurora. She had brought another girl from Denver with her, a Miss Seaman, and a third girl who came from Holland, New York, Miss Morey worked in the, the Roycroft had a bank, and Betty worked in the bank. And they decided to band together to form a company to start a little department store in town and that's Seaman, Hood, and Morey's downtown here on Main Street. That's where those gals came from.

Int.: That was started by women, that organization?

Ragan: Yes. That's all part of the Roycroft history.

Int.: Would you have any idea what year that would have been?

Ragan: No, I don't remember, but it was shortly after they went down on the *Lusitania*, you know when the Hubbard's did. It was shortly after that.

Int.: She must have been quite a sharp character herself then, right?

Ragan: He was a very good judge of people and he brought out all of their abilities and all of their promise. He was quite a man.

Int.: It was interesting that he placed so much faith in women.

Ragan: He did that and that was another thing that was new and startling to mankind. He gave women, there was no need for women's lib in his organization; he gave them credit. He was quite a man.

Int.: I was surprised I know when I heard that Martha Schwartz had worked in advertising because even in those days, you would think that a man would pick a

man for that kind of job. You wouldn't even dream of having a woman for a career like that. Do you have any other stories to relate to us about what life was like say in the early 1900s?

Ragan: It was simple compared to today.

There were no automobiles; where you went, you went with a horse and buggy. It

took hours to get where it now takes 10 minutes. Therefore the pace was cut down to that point. It was much more relaxed, I can tell you that.

Int.: Without the telephone jingling and the radio going.

Ragan: People worked for a dollar and were glad to get it. They worked from 7:00 in the morning to 7:00 at night, 7 days a week. And there was no government handouts or anything of that sort, you were on your own, you took care of your own people. Outside of neighborliness in time of difficulty, you were totally



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responsible for your own well being and I think that's fine.

Int.: You think it worked out in general well enough?

Ragan: I'm sure it did, I certainly do. I can remember very well when potatoes were \$1.00 a bushel and every fall we got so and so many bushels of potatoes and that was a big bill, so you had to save a long time before that in order to have the money ready for the farmer. And people got their own meat and processed it, and salted it or did whatever they needed to do to secure its safety. And when the first snow fell, you had food enough in the house for the winter.

Int.: Oh, my gosh, that must have been tough without the refrigerators and, you know, everything that we're so used to now.

Ragan: They managed, they processed their food to the point where it was safe. Yes I can remember very well Father ordering a quarter of beef, a quarter of a cow for the winter and half a pig. Of course, we had chickens and they took care of everything.

Int.: What would they do, have soured beef or something, how would you keep the beef?

Ragan: I don't remember what the process was but it was...

TAPE ENDS.

### FRED RALYEA

Transcribed interview of Fred Ralyea, Tapes #101 and #100. Interview begins with Tape #101. Int. is J. Hameister. Transcribed by Christine B. Kroschel. Int.: ..Aurora Historical Society Tape

#101. Today, May 10, 1979. I am talking with Mr. Fred Ralyea at the home of his niece in Springville, New York. Mr. Ralyea is a long time resident of East Aurora. This is so interesting, I'm just going to start the tape, keep on talking, okay. Go ahead, just keep on talking.

Ralyea: Oh, you got that on?

Int.: Now we do. You were talking about your dad teaching at Bryant and Stratton.

Ralyea: I went home with an aunt who lived on Boise Road. My mother was sick so long, I stayed there and made it my home there. So, I was brought up on Boise Road.

Int.: Was it a farm or...

Ralyea: Farm, yes.

Int.: And then what, did you move back to Buffalo or did you just stay right out there on Boise road?

Ralyea: No, I lived there. My mother finally gave her consent so that if after she got better, I could just stay with the understanding that I would come home at least once a month, which I did. But I made my home there the rest of my life, went to school in District #11.

Int.: Did you then, when you married and raised a family, and all that stuff, did you stay right in East Aurora then?

Ralyea: Right on the same road. I built a new home in 1917.

Int.: 1917? Where was that?

Ralyea: On Boise Road.

Int.: Okay. What year was it that you moved out with your aunt then? Do you know what year you moved out with your aunt?

Ralyea: When I moved out to the country? 1897.