Abstract - Marlene Parks

Interviewee: Marlene Parks

Interviewers: Tiana Johnson, Alexander Katavolos, Thomas Keely

Interview Date: September 29, 2017

Location: 1890 House Museum, Cortland, New York

Length: 1 audio file, 00:49:50:00

Marlene Parks was born May 11, 1954 in Cortland Memorial Hospital. She grew up on a small farm in the town of McGraw, New York. In 1972, Marlene graduated from McGraw High School and married her husband the same year. She has four children and nine grandchildren. Her interest in genealogy began shortly after her first grandchild was born, due to a book someone gave her to fill in with all the child’s great grandparents, who she realized she did not know. Through her genealogy research, she found that her husband’s ancestors worked as maids for the Wickwire family for many years and eventually were given a house behind the 1890 Museum from the Wickwires. Marlene worked at the First National Bank in the 1970s. Later on, she was hired by the postal service in Homer as a clerk and carrier, a couple years later she was appointed the Post Master and was there for fifteen years. Finally she went back to McGraw and worked a part time postal job in order to be closer to her grandchildren. She is now retired. After finding out that the land her and her husband live on was once part of the land used by the New York Central College, she was intrigued. After much research, Marlene wrote a two volume book called New York Central College, 1849-1860, McGrawville, New York. In it, she discusses a college that educated African Americans as well as women, along with its impact and all the successful individuals who came out of the school.
Field Notes - Marlene Parks

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Interviewee: Marlene Parks, now historian and author of *New York Central College 1849-1860 Mcgrawville, New York*, has done extensive research on the New York Central College and the genealogy of her own family. She grew up, went to school and currently resides in the town of McGraw, New York. Marlene worked for the First National Bank and a postal service in Homer New York. She later became Post Master in Pitcher, New York and eventually a part time postal job back in her home town of McGraw to be closer to her grandchildren. Now she is retired. Marlene describes her research about New York Central College and her connection to the Wickwire family.

Interviewer(s): Tiana Johnson, Alexander Katavolos, and Thomas Keely are undergraduates at the State University of New York at Cortland. This interview is part of HIS 280 Fall 2017 oral histories about the Wickwire Factory, the employees that worked there, and the Wickwire family. These oral histories will eventually go to the 1890 House Museum.

Description of the interview: The interview took place in the Research Library room in the 1890 House Museum, the home of the Wickwire family and where Marlene Parks ancestors had worked for years. We set up four chairs in a circle all facing each other. There were no interruptions, and we talked for close to fifty minutes.

Note on recording: Recorded on an iPhone.
Transcript- Marlene Parks

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Tiana Johnson: So today is Friday, September 29, 2017. I am Tiana Johnson with Alexander Katavolos, Thomas Keely and we will be interviewing Mrs. Marlene Parks in the 1890 House Museum for our oral history project on the Wickwire family, factory, and Cortland County. So, how are you doing today?

Marlene Parks: Fine, thank you.

TJ: So first can you tell us about your childhood please?

MP: Yes, I was born on May 11, 1954 in the Cortland Memorial Hospital. I grew up on a small farm on Ridge Road in McGraw, which is on the south side. You go up south hill. I graduated from McGraw school in 1972, so it was forty five years ago. I married in 1972 also, shortly after graduation. And my husband and I have four children grown, and they have families. So we have nine grandchildren. And when my grandchildren were born is when I got interested in genealogy. Someone gave me a book for Christmas to fill in for my first grandchild with all his great grandparents, and I didn’t know their names. And that was the beginning of my
search. I now have a family tree on the computer with seventeen thousand people, that’s how big it is. I worked at the First National Bank in the 1970s, and then I was eventually hired by the postal service in Homer as a clerk and a carrier. And then a few years later, I took training and exams and interviews and was appointed the Post Master of a little town near DeRuyter called Pitcher, New York. So I was there fifteen years, and at that point a part time postal job opened up in McGraw, which for me is home. And I had grandchildren there and I wanted more time with them, so I downgraded to a clerk. No one does that, but I did. So we moved back to McGraw in 2000 and have been there since. And we bought a home in the village and it’s on land that was once the farm land owned by New York Central College. The students that I researched farmed…did scientific farming. So I actually live on land that was part of it. My husband is a little bit into metal detecting. And the college was built, started in the fall of 1848-49. And metal detecting, out on the land he found a 1848 penny. It’s about the size of a quarter and I said, “I feel like they are whispering to us any one of them could of dropped a penny!” It’s pretty cool. And my husband and I are both retired now, and we spend our winters in Florida and our summer home is in McGraw.

AK: I have a question, a little off topic, it’s just from before when we were talking about the school downstairs, was there any effort to re-open the school after it closed?

MP: Yes it was reopened as a commercial business school in the 1860s, but it was nothing like the original college. I think it was trained more in getting jobs and like penmanship’s and short hand and stenography. It had nothing to do with abolitionism or human rights and women’s rights. This college stood for all of those things. So once it closed after 1860 it reopened as a school but a different type.

TJ: Could you tell us more about the New York Central College and its importance?
MP: It was actually November of 1847 when members of it… was kind of a branch of the Baptist faith. They separated from the main face faith because so many of the Baptist ministers were preaching about equality but not practicing it. So this was a group that wanted to practice what they preached. So they looked around for a place in central New York which wasn’t in a big city because there were too many vices, smoking, drinking, you know, crime. They wanted it near a big city, but in a safe, secluded area without the students being tempted. So McGraw was chosen and the village was included in the decisions you know because they had to contribute money too. They thought it was four miles from Cortland four miles from a newly proposed railroad that was going to go from Binghamton to Syracuse. And they felt the students would be protected and safe. So McGraw was chosen and on July 4th 1848 is when the cornerstone was laid. And there was a huge celebration. If you could imagine two thousand people came and there aren’t that many people in McGraw even today. And then on September 5, 1849 the following year, New York Central College was officially open with approximately one hundred fifty pupils. Throughout the ten years of its existence basically every article I found estimated that at any time at least 20% of the population was black. The very first gentleman of color to be a professor in the United States of American was Charles Reason. And his duties became effective there in September 1, 1849. He was the professor of languages and belles lettres. He was a teacher, a linguist, poet, writer, political activist and supporter of Underground Railroad. And he came from New York City. He dedicated his life to educating and inspiring and improving the lives of African Americans. When he left he went back to, it may have been Brooklyn, but it was somewhere in New York City, and he taught and was the principle of a school… and he just spent his whole life educating. But due to a lack of sufficient financial support the college was forced to close in the fall of 1860, so it was only in operation for eleven
years. The courses of study were classical, scientific, and university. The scientific classes were farming. They had the latest; I call it the latest greatest and up to datest. So any student, who left there and took up farming and was successful, was respected. Many made a lot of money, but the students who made a lot of money also helped a lot of people. I just saw no greed at all in the students I followed. They used their knowledge and their efforts to help others always. There was one thousand sixty two students based on old college catalogs and old records. 64% males, 35% females and this was at a time when men and females were not educated in the same rooms either. Of the students I have found I believe it was six hundred sixteen of the one thousand sixty two, one hundred twenty four died young before the age of forty. That’s about 21%. Fifty two of the students married other students and one hundred thirty four were known Civil War veterans, with forty of them killed or wounded. One of the students discovered the moons around Mars. His name was Asaph Hall; he became an astronomer in Washington. His wife was also a student from New York Central College. She in fact, after she graduated she taught math there the year he came, she was his teacher. He bypassed her, they moved to Washington, she homeschooled their children, he was an astronomer and also in the Civil War. But one night in his observatory, he had to climb go through a trap door and you were up in a room with open glass or whatever they used with the telescopes. So one night, he spent night after night after night there alone with his wife’s support. And one night there is a rap on the floorboard and he finishes his calculations and he goes over. He pulls up the trap door and on the latter pops up Abraham Lincoln, alone at night, curious, and wanted to ask him questions. He walked through the city of Washington alone with no body guards to talk to a student from McGraw, Asaph Hall. Another student Edmonia Lewis, became the first woman, she was part African American, part Native American. Her mother was an Indian; her father was an African American. She became a world renowned
sculptor, famous! She was inspired by Civil War heroes and abolitionists. She did Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses Grant, and John Brown. There was a movie with Mathew Broderick, *Glory*, where he led black soldiers. Colonel Shaw from Boston, she did his bust. His family was so impressed they had her do it in marble again because it looked so much like him, she was so amazing. Many went into the south after Civil War and created schools and colleges. One of the students from Staybridge New York was named Herman Armour, he and his brother went west and opened a meat packing plant. You’ve heard of Armour hot dogs? The student from McGraw! They employed thousands of people they were the first to learn how to can meat. Those are just some examples; there is a student from Homer, Erastus Cravath. During the war he was a Chaplin and then he helped found Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He helped to create Fisk University Jubilee singers, they were a famous singing group all of them were emancipated slaves. He took them on a singing tour through Europe. Can you imagine being a slave, to singing and I could cry it’s just so touching! I think I brought a picture of them, it’s not really big, but it’s just so impressive, let’s see here…

TJ: Were a majority of the black student’s runaways?

MP: I would say, no, I think most of the runaways they helped along the way to get to Canada. So I believe the majority of known students that were named were from northern states, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts. But they did all try to help on a temporary basis those that pass through, but I believe most of them were free that were allowed to come to school. Here are the Fisk University Singers that were all emancipated slaves.

TJ: Oh wow, that’s so cool!
MP: And he came from Homer, his father had a home that was a part of the Underground Railroad. Another big thing, after the Fugitive Slave Act or during the time it was being passed, there was a big meeting in Cazenovia, New York which was near DeRuyter and it was an anti-slavery convention. And Frederick Douglass hosted the meeting; this was in August of 1850. Garret Smith was the biggest financial support for the college, and on each side of him were sisters. They have the plaid shawls and bonnets; they were emancipated, well freed slaves their freedom was purchased, actually.

AK: Can you tell us a little bit about the effect the college had on the local area?

MP: It did bring a lot of business; a lot of lumber sales, a lot of local farmers were able to sell their produce there. The other unique future of the college was it was a manual labor school, everyone had to work. No one was going to leave there thinking they were better than anyone else that was not going to happen. Everyone worked, either out in the grounds or on vegetable gardens or they helped clean the boarding halls or cafeteria, everyone chipped in. Even the teachers, the professors, everyone worked at least two hours a day. The impact was amazing, I mean it brought a lot of money in and business was thriving in McGraw during that period so it was a great asset to the community.

TJ: So the community was accepting of the college, even with the black students and women?

MP: Yes, yes, yup. I mean I’m sure there was their share of negativity but not much. I’d be proud enough to say it was a unique experiment and acceptance and the village was a big part of it and contributed to it.

AK: And you mentioned earlier that Chester Wickwire and his sister...
MP: Yes, and his sister Mary. She was two years older than Chester, Mary Celestia Wickwire. She and Chester both attended, she for three years, he for just one, and they lived on south hill which is up behind the college. Then later on, while the college was still open, in later years sometime they moved off the hill and bought a farm that was located between Cortland and McGraw. And then from the farm, Chester became of age and came to Cortland and then started his further business, which I don’t go into that because it wasn’t connected to my research

AK: Of course. Do u have any idea the classes they took while attending?

MP: I don’t, but I’m willing to guess for Chester, they had mechanical and scientific, they had scientific farming and any kind of mechanical, they had a workshop. I believe he would have taken both of those because he came from a farm and he was very mechanically inclined when he left. So I would say for him that was probably it. His sister, I don’t know. They had music, instrumental and vocal. They had all the classics, the languages, every language. They had artwork, artist classes so I’m not really sure. But his sister also met her future husband there Edward Stillson. He came from Franklin, New York, Delaware County, after school and I believe married in 1861 and she moved with him to Franklin. Where he was a hardware merchant, which is what Chester was also doing, her brother and her husband. But, her husband had tuberculosis so in 1867 by then they had two little boys he got sick and they moved back to Cortland so she could live with her mother. He died in 1868 at the age of 29, 28 or 29. Mary lived with her mother Elmira with the two little boys, I found a census record, she spent her life with her mother here, never remarried or anything.

TJ: Do you know why the college ended up closing?

MP: Mainly because of financial distress. The professors had all taken huge cuts. Everyone it was bare necessities, the students were asking for donations for library books at this point towards the end. The Civil War was close to breaking out, things were getting really, really bad in the country, and they
just didn’t have enough support for what they were trying to do. They were just a little ahead of their time, I think.

TJ: Let’s see, you were saying before that your family had a connection to the Wickwires?

MP: Yeah, yes.

TJ: Could you tell us a little more about that?

MP: Yes, my husband descends from Irish immigrants John and Mary Connors-Long. They came from Ireland around 1850, and they were married in 1854 and settled in Preble, which is on the northern boundary of Cortland County. They had eight children and the youngest two, their daughters Katherine and Bridgette known as Kate and Bessy Long. And once they came of age in 1894, the first official city directory where I could find where they were living here in the 1890 House, with Chester and Ardelle Wickwire. And they were, hang on I think I jotted down notes about that. Ok, “the earliest record of Kate and Bessy Long working as domestics in the home of Chester Wickwire at 37 Tompkins Street was found in the 1894 Cortland City Directory. They lived and worked here up until the time of Chester’s death in 1910. At this time they moved to a home located behind the 1890 House, which was at 16 Argyle Place and was probably furnished for them by the Wickwire family”. It’s my belief it was. By the 1914 City Directory, which was four years after Chester’s death, they were now working for Charles C. Wickwire, his son. And they were working at his home located at 29 Tompkins Street. But their residence was still being listed as 16 Argyle, so they were actually living out behind here and coming out to work for the son, so the family continued to employ them even after Chester’s death. Their occupations on the census records and in the City Directories listed them as domestics, maids, and cook and housekeeper, various ways of listing them. They continued to work for Charles Wickwire until 1927. They were very prominent members and supporters of the Catholic Church and from 1927 until their retirement they moved to Syracuse to become the cook and housekeeper for Bishop Curly of Syracuse. After retiring they returned to their home at 16 Argyle Place, and this is where Kate passed away in 1943, and Bessy passed away in 1949, and they never married. I believe they were very well treated by the Wickwires and that they were always taken care of and always had a home with the Wickwire family. And I believe the
Wickwires would have supported them if the church needed their help they would have said go. You know, go ahead and help, and come back when you’re ready. And they did.

AK: Was it common practice at this time for families like the Wickwires to take such good care of their maids and housekeepers?

MP: I’m not sure; I believe the Wickwires were extremely generous. From all the articles I’ve read, Chester respected, even people who had questions on how to build their own business he was the first person they’d go to, just he knew how to fix, build, run every machine in his plant. So he was never above getting his hands dirty like many other industry owners would have been. And I believe that was from his training in McGraw. You know that was the thing with these students, some of them were Civil War generals and colonels and they just did not send the privates out to be shot, they led, many of the captains and others stayed behind and sent their men out first, not these guys. They were leading their men and that’s why I think there were so many casualties from McGraw students.

TJ: Why did they come from Ireland in the first place?

MP: I believe it was during the Potato Famine. I believe there was starvation, and it was very sad to think once they got in they never saw their families again. Up in Preble there’s a hillside that overlooks the Atisco Valley called Mount Topin. They lived at the top of Mount Topin and I’ve been there. There are no houses left but there is the stone foundation for their home. And when you look down the hillside in the Atisco Valley one of my cousins said, my husband’s cousin, said it looks just like Ireland, he could see why they chose that spot. And it was up on a hillside; they would have only had a sleigh of horses in the winter it would’ve been very tough to even come into town from where they were living. So they were very secluded up there, but of the eight children, six were married and had families, just Kate and Bessy dedicated their lives to the church and serving the Wickwires in the church.

AK: What drew them up this way in the first place? I assume they came through Ellis Island? And then came up here?

MP: Someone sponsored them I believe. I think John Long was the dad, and I believe his older brother Lawrence came ahead of him, he was quite a few years older actually. And I don’t believe Ellis
Island was open yet, but he found work on a farm eventually up in Preble, and then he found other people willing to sponsor his brothers, actually another brother Daniel also came and a sister Anora. And so there were four siblings in the area eventually of the Long family, but someone had to sponsor you before you could be accepted and allowed to stay.

TJ: I’m sure the Long sisters have been in this room, but how does it make you feel being in the home they lived and cleaned after doing all of the research on them?

MP: I feel a huge connection to them. Everywhere I look I see where they walked, where they touched, where they cleaned. They must have been amazing cooks and housekeepers, they were probably very efficient. They grew up in a large family where they would have probably helped their older siblings when they started having children. You know as teenagers they would have been well trained to cook and clean and um, I’m sure they were honorable, very reliable, very hardworking and appreciated.

TK: Before when you said you first had your grandkids, that’s when you got into genealogy. When you first started did you have a specific goal like how far back you wanted to reach?

MP: No, I just wanted to know my great grandparents names. I didn’t know any of them. And so my husband and I went around to all of our, first to our parents, and then to our oldest living aunts and uncles, and just started asking. And we just scribbled down notes, which is a good thing, because by the time I began to organize it some of them had died. And I never knew my paternal grandparents, they had both died before I was born, I didn’t even know who they were. And um they were French-Canadians, they came from Canada. And, I’ve found fascinating stories, um one my great great grandfathers was a newspaper editor in Oneida, New York, but he was also the Health Department officer for that area and so he had to go to meetings every month or every couple of weeks in Syracuse, New York, and he became connected with a group of medical students who were sneaking out at night and robbing newly buried corpses from their graves to study them. He was not actually involved in that practice but he was sworn to secrecy when he found out what they were doing. And 20 years later he went public with it. So he said what finally made them stop was, they took a train north of Syracuse to check for deaths and go to where the people had been buried, so they went to a ladies grave it was near the train tracks, the cemetery was
near the train tracks, they went at night had their hatchets and axes, shovels. When they were chopping into the wooden casket blood spurted out, the woman hadn’t died and they had killed her. If they had been more careful, and got that open without hitting her, they could have saved her. One of them, the New York Central College students I recall reading, that when he passed away, he said don’t bury me until the following Sunday, he was so afraid of being buried alive.

AK: Wow.

TJ: That was common though?

MP: Yes, it’s amazing.

TJ: I’ve read a lot about that actually.

MP: One of the students was killed in a tornado out West, and another student, his wife was killed in a tornado and his home flew away. So that, there was a couple stories about tornadoes getting them in the book. Interesting little tidbits there.

AK: Was there anything unexpected you found while doing genealogical research?

MP: I was blown away every time I found someone. I wasn’t expecting any of it. I would get excited, one of the family stories that was the most moving and sad way was a family from Homer, had five connections to the college. The man’s name was Samuel Babcock, his first wife died in the 1840’s and he married a second wife. She was teaching over at the college. He sent his oldest son Willabee Babcock to McGraw and one daughter, Marie-Antoinette. Later on, Willabee married a woman from the college so that’s a connection and later on another student came back and married one of Samuel’s daughters. But the sad part is, three of Samuel’s sons fought in the Civil War, the first one Willis was killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, and when that happened Samuel begged the other two to come home, that they had done their part. But by then Willepy was a major I believe. And on September 18, 1864, near the end, he was leading his men into battle near Winchester, Virginia and he got hit in the leg. A few days later they amputated because he was dying and they were trying to save him. But his wife, Nelly, also a student was back here, she was eight months pregnant and couldn’t go out to see him, so his little boy was born three weeks after. He died on October 6, I believe and the little boy was born toward the
end of October. And the third brother Lucius died on September 19, the day after Willapy was hit. He died in the Andersonville Prison. He lost all three of their sons, and I’ve got a letter in my book that Samuel wrote and when I read the letter I was crying I had to get up and walk away from the computer because I was crying it was so heartbreaking. In Homer the town took up a collection and purchased an 18-foot tall monument for Willapy Babcock he was such a hero, such a great hero. So I mean they had a big dedication, hundreds of people came it was on Memorial Day, they had the stone dedicated, the main speaker was the doctor, and this was a few years later. The main speaker was the doctor who amputated his leg back in Virginia. They found him, he came to speak, and he said, “I’m not here to speak to all of you today because I’m a great speaker or blah blah blah, he says, I’m here because I loved him”. Look at me crying now. Sorry, but that’d the type of thing I found over and over and over. Those are just some examples of the greatness that came out of that humanitarian school; anti-slavery abolitionists, women, one of the women was a bloomer girl. Actually, so was the astronomer's wife, that was a teacher, when he first got here off the stage coach, the first person he saw was his future wife in her bloomers, he was just taken. But anyway, a woman became a doctor, her name was Lydia Sayer and she spoke all over the north-east on women’s rights. And her and her husband were publishers too she published a magazine called the Sybille. It was the dress reform magazine. She refused to pay her property taxes because she didn’t have the right to vote, and the tax collector came, she wouldn’t let him in and he stole her pantaloons, bloomers off the clothesline and put them up for public auction to pay her debt. So I mean even the women were extra special often here but there were doctors, surgeons, lawyers, professors and there were so many great people came out of there.

TJ: You said that you lived on some property that the school was on.

MP: Yup. My home now is on land that was part of the original college farmland where they taught the scientific farming, so I feel a connection because of that as well that I live on land where they walked.

TJ: Did you come across any other objects other than the penny?
MP: No, there's only one. The college had a boarding hall with the dining hall in the basement of it, that no longer exists, and they had a farm house, where the teacher for the farming students lived, and also this is where they had a primary school too, for the younger children or ones being prepared taking preparatory courses for the college, and if runaways came through they stayed at the farmhouse. And that house still exists. I'm trying to get in there to see it, but I haven't been able to yet. The 3rd African American man to become a professor, his name was George Vashon. He took all the training to become a lawyer in Pennsylvania, and they shunned him, they wouldn't let him enter the bar because he was black. So he took the test in New York and became the first African American lawyer in New York State, the very first practicing. He was practicing in Syracuse when they approached him to teach, during his first fall, cholera hits Pittsburgh, where he came from and kills his mom and kills his sister, his sister had 4 little children, he's a 30 year old single man in a new job, and he brings those 4 little children to McGraw and raises them. So they stayed in that farm house that still exists, these 4 little Vashon children, and after he was finished here he went back to Pittsburgh and created a school for blacks, he married a teacher and had 7 more children, so he was just super honorable. The second professor that was black was William Allan, he caused such an uproar in New York State, he's lucky he escaped with his life. He fell in love with one of the students, who also become a teacher, Mary King, she was white he was black, her father was an abolitionist minister up in Fulton NY, preaching, you know, anti-slavery, equality for all, when they went home excited to get married and in love, he had a second wife, who was the stepmother of Mary king, she was against it, she turned him against it, he wouldn't perform the ceremony. People in Fulton heard about it, and a mob came to tar and feather him. He had to flee for his life, he and Mary met up in New York City about a month later and were married, and they moved to England. So he spent the rest of his life, he wrote about it, it's called the American Prejudice Against Color, the story of what happened, it's amazing, I bought the book but I donated it to the McGraw History Room, but his accounts of what happened is incredible, so they didn't have it easy by any means, any of them.

TJ: So in your opinion, what effect did the Wickwires have on Cortland and surrounding areas?
MP: They would have helped all of Cortland Country to grow and thrive. People were hired by the Wickwires, hundreds of them, who spent their entire lives working in their factory, they didn't leave.

TJ: Right

MP: They had to have been well treated, I think their impact was amazing, I think Chester Wickwire was amazing.

TJ: Because Chester Wickwire Sr. he like donated a lot right? Helped with the hospital?

MP: He did, he donated all of the money, in fact the day he died, he had been over there, they were near completion, and he checked on things every day, and over and over they'd say, “Oh this is going to cost more than we thought” “Do it” He just kept forking out the money until it was about 100,000, also the first paved streets in Cortland. He donated the materials and the machines and the equipment, he was a founding member of the public works, he helped get the sewer systems going. I mean he was really community oriented and he did so much for Cortland.

TJ: Would you say that New York Central College played a part in that?

MP: I would, I would, I think he was a humanitarian, I really believe that school pumped out humanitarians, and heroes. That's my take on that school, and he would've learned -- I mean he had employees from all over the world actually. He would not have been prejudiced against anyone I'm sure of it, and I believe the college instilled everyone works hard, everyone appreciates what you have, and you help others that need your help, and I think he would've went out into the world and did that in a big big way. I mean even one year there changed people, if they could only go one year, I'm sure they all had big hearts to go there. They were taught how to publicly speak in a peaceful way, how to publically write, how to address the terrible issues that we were dealing with in the country. It was a volatile decade, and the students were taught how to make a difference in a positive way [Fire engine siren in background] I mean they didn't want to be violent, but when the Civil War broke out, they had to do it, they did

AK: Did you ever meet any other Wickwires?

MP: No, only Chester

TJ: So you were saying you wrote a book? What was the name of it?
MP: Yes, it's called New York Central College 1849-1860. I brought a picture of it, and it was just published in July, I actually have a book signing tomorrow, the very week I can't talk very well [All Laugh]

TJ: Where?

MP: It's at the Cortland County Historical Society, yeah, it's -- whoops [paper falls] here it is, there are two volumes, thank you very much

TJ: And it just contains the history of the school?

MP: Yeah yeah, and there are biographical sketches of approximately 600 of the students

TJ: Oh really?

MP: And this is in McGraw, this is the college, this is the boarding hall

TJ: That's still there?

MP: No but the farmhouse is down here so this is the only thing still remaining, I grew up, up this hill, south hill and so did Chester and Mary Wickwire, that was where the hill went up behind the college

TJ: Oh you lived close together

MP: Yep, now this is all full of houses, there are two streets full of houses and I live down on this corner of their land.

AK: Going back to the Long sisters, do you know what their daily activities would be, and how long they'd be working in a day?

MP: I don't but I believe because they lived here, they would've taken care of everything, from breakfast to lunch to dinner. And for many, many years, they were the only cook and housekeeper here. At one point they did have a nurse but they were the only servant -- employees that lived here on the census records. So I believe they would've cared for the children, all the cleaning, all the cooking and it would've been a daylight to dusk job

TJ: Do you think that they would get Sundays off? Because they were Catholic?

MP: I think they probably did, because they were very involved in the church, they were volunteered on committees, so I do believe they were given their Sundays, probably to do as they wished,
I've found little newspaper blurbs here and there, where they went to Preble to see an uncle or cousin, so probably Sunday was their day to travel, and the Wickwires would've been supportive of that.

AK: And correct me if I'm wrong but didn't you say one of their sons or someone's son was a foreman in the factory? Or am I just misremembering that completely?

MP: No, I have no connection to the factory, It may have been the other lady that spoke.

AK: Ah I'm sorry [All laugh]

MP: It's okay, yeah that's the one thing I don't have a connection to, is the factory.

TJ: Do you know anything more about the nurse you mentioned?

MP: I don't. I'm anxious actually to go home and look at census records, to see if it was the lady downstairs grandmother. Her name was Jane Boggs.

AK: I think it was Buggs.

MP: I have the nurse's name but it's home, and I don't recall, I wasn't paying attention to it.

TJ: That'd be cool.

MP: Yes it would.

AK: What was the pay like for the Long sisters?

MP: That I don't know either. With the room and board included, and then furnishing a home, but I know they had money to donate at the church, in the Catholic church up on North Main, there is a big plaque in the entry there, for people that donated for some big thing, and they're both on it. So I think they must've been well taken care of, I really feel they were, or they would've moved on.

TJ: right, how long were they here again for?

MP: Officially, 1894 is the first record I could find, until 1926. So 32 years, and then they left to go to Syracuse for a few years to work with the Catholic bishop, and then they came back to the same home the Wickwires had provided. So I just feel they were always taken care of, you know, they may have had the house given to them, I don't honestly know, I just believe they were always well cared for here, even when they weren't working for the Wickwires.

TJ: Alright before we turn off the recorder, is there anything else you want to tell us?
MP: I can't really think of anything else I'm sorry. I have brought a few odds and ends I talked about if they'll help you later confirm what I said, and if my voice doesn't sound well because of this cold, please feel free to speak for me, I don't care, I just want them remembered -- Oh there is something else I thought of! When I was doing my genealogy, we were searching and searching for the graves of Kate and Bessy Long, and their parents. We had found through the Catholic church that they were at St Mary's, we walked and walked and walked and couldn't find it. Finally the man in the office looked and he said “They didn't have money for a stone, there no stone, but they're here”. So in our genealogy research we met many family members who shared info with us, and we took up a collection and we bought them a stone, and the priest at the Catholic church, father John Fenelon at the time, was also a descendant of John and Mary Long. So he was a like a third cousin to my husband, or 2nd or 3rd. He actually came to the cemetery and came to the stone dedication, [showing picture] Here's me, here's my husband here's father Fenelon, people came from California, Texas, all over. And after we did the dedication -- we did the dedication on October 4th, 2003, because that was the day that Mary Long died, we choose her date of death, and after that we all came here and did a tour, because Kate and Bessy are on that stone, because they worked here, I think -- I meant to bring a picture of their stone, maybe I didn't, but anyway you're welcome to all of this like I said. Here's one of the college, it doesn't have all the students listed, but it tells about the classes and curriculum, in case you wanted to know a little bit more about it. There's pics of the college and a couple of the students in here, and I do have a Facebook page for this book, so if you ever want to go on Facebook , I've been putting every 2 or 3 days a blurb about a students, in case you want to look up -- check it out, I've just been putting little highlights.

TJ: If we have any more questions can we email you?

MP: Absolutely.

AK: You've been so helpful.

MP: I think it's so awesome that you're taking on this huge project, it's just incredible, I'm sure it's going to be wonderful can't wait to see the finished product.