

Interview with Marie Ely Baumgartner
Sunday, November 20, 2011
At the Hector Presbyterian Church

MB – Marie Ely Baumgartner

DB – Dave Beckhorn

DB: I'm Dave Beckhorn. I'm a member of the Backbone Ridge Historic Group and today I'm interviewing Marie Ely Baumgartner, who has historic ties to the Red House Country Inn, in the National Forest. We're speaking just after church service at the Hector Presbyterian Church on November 20th, 2011. So, good morning Marie.

MB: Hey Dave.

DB: Where did you grow up, Marie?

MB: I grew up on State Route 414 along, we used to call it Seneca Blvd, but Route 414 about halfway between Burdett and Hector. When I was born I actually lived with my grandparents in my grandparents' house til I was about a year and a half then my father bought the house and farm next to my grandparents and that's where I grew up. My whole family has. Still lives there. And I now own that.

DB: So, what type of farm was this that you grew up on?

MB: Fruit farm.

DB: So you grew all kinds of fruits.

MB: All kinds. Grapes were a large part of our fruit. But at one time, at the land where my is located I built it after I retired and moved back here. But it's on a northeast corner of a Revolutionary War grant to a Fenton who fought in the Revolutionary War. And it's been in our family, the Fenton family name, or a descendent of the Fentons , well me, since 1803. And at one time there on the land where my house is, there was over 1800 peach trees as well as vineyards, and they were all of course hand-picked and hand harvested and everything was done by hand.

DB: A lot of these were shipped out on the Lehigh Valley Railroad probably.

MB: Yeah, they were actually taken by wagon to the Lehigh Valley train station in Hector. You know on the Hector Logan Road, County Route 4 now. And I remember my grandmother talking about as a young girl, if you want to call it a job I guess, she worked hand-packing a lot of the fruit that was brought to the train station to be shipped out to New York and New York City and various places.

DB: Right. So, this was your grandmother.

MB: My grandmother.

DB: And that's our...brings us to the history of the Red House Country Inn.

MB: Yup.

DB: So you want to talk about the Fenton and...

MB: Well, it's kind of easier to work from now, backwards. So, my grandmother was Ina Grace Fenton and she was born May 15, 1894 and she was born in the Red House Inn. And she was born on the east side, there was a bay window there but when I drove past it this past week—sometimes I just get a hankering to go ride through the forest—and I was over in Trumansburg, so I took the scenic route home and went through the forest and went past the Red House Inn and I noticed now that it's kind of a blocked window, it's not a bay window any more as you'd think of a bay window being curved and beautiful it's more of a squared off bay window. But the bed she was born in was right in front of that window. She was born there. The house was, it was her grandparents' house, George and Elizabeth Auble. George and Elizabeth Auble were married in that house. Prior to their marriage, my great-grandfather Ellsworth Fenton and my grandmother's father, George Auble, cut down the trees to build the house with. My great-grandfather was not yet married to my grandmother's father. So, he was still a young man. I think my grandfather, I think I wrote it down here somewhere, where grandpa...I don't have it right here but, great-grandma Fenton was born in 1874 and her name was Mary Ellen. She and Ellsworth Fenton were married in the Red House, and they were married June 1, 1893. So, prior to 1893, my great-grandfather Ellsworth Fenton and George Auble, his future father-in-law, got to help cut down the trees to build the house with and they hauled them, dragged them, however they hauled trees, somewhere down between—I don't know if it was in Burdett or between Burdett and Watkins Glen, to a saw mill where the trees were cut into boards and then the boards were put on wagons and they brought them back up to Logan.

DB: So they all came off that land where the Red House stands now?

MB: Yes. And I remember my grandmother telling me this story about how her father was kind of a local boy and he actually was sort of orphaned when he was a young boy because his father contracted malaria when he was in the Civil War in Louisiana, and he came home and Ellsworth Fenton was born after John Fenton came home from the Revolutionary War. But he died when my great-grandfather was young, just a young boy. So my great-grandfather actually was raised in the house where eventually my grandmother Ina Ely lived most of their married life. Anyway, so my great-grandfather Ellsworth Fenton was a man known in the community, he was a farmer, very respected farmer as a young man. Been in the vineyard business his whole life and he helped George Auble get the lumber to build the house and he helped build the house. I guess they had like a house-building party or something like that, you know. They were all tea-totalers, so I don't imagine it was much of a party, but they got the house built

anyway. They got it built in time for Ellsworth Fenton to marry George Auble's oldest daughter, who was Mary Ellen. Mary Ellen, their marriage I think I said was June 1, 1893. And then Ellsworth and Mary Ellen, the young married couple actually lived in a house in Logan. Which now I think has been torn down. It was one of the houses on the west side of what's now County Route 4, but it was right inside the village of Logan. I always thought they would have been married in Logan Church because they were quite prominent in the Logan Church, but they were married in the Red House. So, that's where our ties to the Red House starts. I remember my grandmother talking about spending a lot of her days at the Red House. My grandmother didn't get along with her mother too well, but she was very very close to her grandparents at the Red House. So she spent a lot of time with her grandparents at the Red House. And her ties to the Red House and the Logan, it was a Methodist church then, were very strong. I'm not sure where my grandfather and grandmother were married but, I'm not sure whether they were married at the Red House or whether they were married at the Logan Methodist Church. But in any case, the Auble family built the Red House and they were quite prominent, not money-wise, but prominent in doing things with their...

DB: Active in the community.

MB: Active in the community, right. I don't know if you want to...what I remember about the Red House was that my grandmother, the Auble family came on hard times and they lost the Red House, but my grandmother would always talk about the Red House as where she was born and where they were married, as the family home. Going down through the years, my father, Floyd Ely, was rural mail carrier for Burdett and when the two ladies bought the Red House, they refurbished it to a bed and breakfast, and my dad got to know them through his job as a mail carrier, told them that that was where his mother was born and they were just fascinated with some of the stories my father told. They invited us all up, it was right after Christmas because I was living away from here then, but I was home and they invited us all up one evening and took us on a tour of the Red House. My grandmother was just in awe of what the house had become. It was refurbished into, looked like it was from Better Homes and Gardens, basically they didn't at that point, didn't do anything architecturally to the house that my grandmother knew, eventually they did. But one of the things that I specifically remember, other than the bay window on the east side of the house, was a cistern in the kitchen. And there was, looked like a trap door, it's probably like at least 3 foot square. And there was like a ring recessed on it and it was a cistern. And I don't know if my grandfather did this or during the process of refurbishing it over the years, but all the eaves were tied into something, a system, and the cistern was underneath the floor in the kitchen and that's were the...

DB: There was probably a hand pump connected to the cistern. Lots of old farmhouses around here have that kind of a collection system.

MB: Yeah. When the ladies refurbished the house, they tried to, well, they were proud of the cistern thing and I remember them pointing out specifically to me, and I had never seen anything like that before. There wasn't anything like that in our houses.

DB: Yeah. How big was the farm that the Red House was connected with?

MB: Well, when you first talked to me about this, I've gone through the history notes that I have and I also talked with my cousin, Carlton Fenton, who has done extensive research on the Fenton and Auble family, and I haven't found how big the farm is, although it was quite a chunk because everything they owned, all the money they earned came off of that farm, so it was quite a chunk of property. Of course in those days, you know everything had to be done by hand so even 5 acres is a lot to handle when you're doing everything by hand. But I would guess, if they boundary lines are about where I think it is, I think it would probably be 8 to 10 acre farm, maybe a little larger with the woods.

DB: What type of farm? Did they grow?

MB: I imagine it was fruit but I'm not sure. I'm not sure also, like I said they lost the farm because they weren't able to keep it up, pay the taxes on it. So, I'm really not sure how long they kept it either. One thing my dad used to do when we were young, we used to ride through the national forest on like a Sunday afternoon, especially in the spring, and he would take us to—he knew where all the houses used to be, you know he said “you could tell where there was a house if there was a lilac tree, there was a house there.” Because everybody had lilac trees by their house.

DB: You can still see lines of maple trees or whatever kind of tree they used for shade tree to shade the house.

MB: You can, you can. You can almost go through a lot of the forest and you can just picture the house sitting there because you kind of know what style it would be. From the pattern of the trees around the house and where the lilac trees are, you can just about picture a house in there. So, we used to go up there in the Spring, late Spring, and collect a lot of lilacs. My dad didn't let us take a lot of lilacs because he liked them, they really added to the beauty of the forest. We usually got a nice bouquet, one for my grandmother and one for our house, and one for my grandmother in her house where she lived.

DB: Most farms had at least one cow at that time and there was a creamery in Logan, just below that. I was wondering if maybe he sold milk...

MB: Yeah. I'm sure they had a cow and I know they had cows...I know my grandfather Ellsworth, great-grandfather Ellsworth Fenton, in their little house, or smaller house in Logan, I know he had cows out in the barn. A fairly good barn behind their house.

DB: Um hm.

MB: One thing that I remember specifically was every morning of my great-grandparents married life my great-grandmother would fix my great-grandfather pancakes. Every morning, on the old wood stove out in the kitchen. Summer, winter, every day he had pancakes. And whatever meat they had from whatever they had processed in the winter or in the fall, so sausage or bacon, even though it was not a

house that's there any more, it's an interesting house because, of course the kitchen was on the back of the house and there was a long dining room, and then a living room and parlor were across the front, so it's kind of like a T going back. Off the dining room my great-grandmother had a pantry and in the pantry she had two crocks and the crocks had plates over the top of them, but in one crock there was sugar cookies that didn't have a raisin in them, and in the other crock there were sugar cookies with a raisin in them. And we always were invited to go back to this pantry and I always took a cookie with a raisin in it because it looked so beautiful and then I'd sit there and hold the raisin in my hand the whole time we were there because I didn't like raisins. But I'd hold it in my hand in my little fingers and I'd just kind of roll it around my fingers for the duration of our visit til we got outside and I could throw the raisin away.

[Laughing]

MB: But that's getting a little bit away from the Red House but it's still talking about the village of Logan...

DB: Um hmm.

MB: ... and my great-grandmother's family. I never met the Auble family. I'm not sure when they passed. I remember my great-grandparents very very well.

DB: Well, there are still descendants of the Aubles up there.

MB: Yeah, there are.

DB: And I think somebody has already done an oral history with, and I'm not sure who they talked with, but I think one has been done.

MB: Well, there's two genealogists in the family, one is Carlton Fenton, who now lives over Covert Road. And a lot of the Auble history goes over to the town of Covert and Trumansburg. I think that's where George Auble was actually from, was the town of Covert. Carlton and Bill Fenton they are both nephews of my grandmother Ina. Each of them has done a lot of research into...

DB: I remember Carl was in school about the time I was. I can't remember whether he was ahead of me or maybe he was a year ahead of me in school.

MB: I think he graduated about '60 or '61.

DB: I graduated in '60. We were one year away from each other anyway.

MB: Maybe it was before that, I'm not sure.

DB: Well, he might have been behind me.

MB: Well, anyway he's always been interested.

DB: yeah, I know that. Well, that's all interesting, that's the kind of stuff we're really interested in. It's too bad we don't have more people who actually grew up there...

MB: I wish I'd written a lot down, you always say "write it down while they're living because then you won't have it."

DB: Yeah, I know.

MB: Just one other thing I remember, I was really quite impressed with, my great-grandmother had a sister, Mary Ellen Auble, had a sister Jenny and Jenny was the organist, or the pianist, I think organist, for the Methodist Church and my grandmother has really fond memories of when she was a young girl, like 5,6,7 year old, she would sit up in the organ gallery with her Aunt Jenny and she'd turn the pages for Jenny played the organ in the Logan Methodist Church. That's quite a, something my grandmother held very dear to her heart was that memory.

DB: Oh, yeah.

MB: All I can remember from the...but we still look at the—I went past the Red House this week and I always try to take a ride through the national forest once or twice a year, hadn't done it yet this year. I was over in Trumansburg and kind of took the scenic route home, when past the Red House. I always remember it as our house.

DB: Yeah, well I can understand that.

MB: Good ties to it.

DB: Well, good. So, we know something about the history of the beginning of the Red House.

MB: Yeah, there's a big gap in the middle but...Abe Wickham was telling me just a few minutes ago that when I told him that I was going to talk to you about the Red House that at one time it had been a summer home for people. There wasn't any electric to it.

DB: That's right.

MB: The only electric was provided by generator. And then he was telling me one time, before it was a bed and breakfast, it was a ski lodge for cross country skiers. It was bought by the Dowrimples.

DB: Are there power lines to that house now?

MB: Now there are power lines. When the ladies bought it for the bed and breakfast, they couldn't get a building permit or whatever they wanted, because it didn't have electric. So, they paid for underground electricity to be brought up from the pole, the last pole that was closest to them...

DB: Down by the Harby's there probably.

MB: Yeah, probably west of them on that road. They paid to have electric cable buried to bring it up to the Red House.

DB: You know, I was in the Red House when the two ladies were running it as a country inn, and it was impressive.

MB: It's pretty magnificent I thought. I certainly was more style that it's ever been in my family. It was turned into a beauty. I don't know if it's still a bed and breakfast or not. I heard that they were going to continue it as a bed and breakfast but a man and his wife bought it. And the man moved up here but the wife was still working but...well, I don't know. I don't know whether it's an active bed and breakfast. I presume it is, but I'm not sure. So, that's about all I can tell you about that.

DB: OK, maybe some time...do you have history of the Ely family, maybe some time we can talk about that.

MB: Yeah, I do.

DB: Even though that's not...Ely's were mostly down here on...

MB: Well, the Ely's...the house where my grandfather was born was down on Peach Orchard Point where Doctor Peters live and Marie Fitzsimmons lives now. Doris Wright's, the Wright family down in there. But with my grandfather Ely's father was killed in a farming accident when my grandfather was very young. And of course they were farmers, and he only had two older sisters, my mother. So they eventually moved up onto the main road here in Hector and took in boarders. That's how they...

DB: I've seen that Ely name in connection with the early settlers.

MB: they built the church here. If you go over to that framed thing over there on the wall, it's sort of a brief history of the Hector church, Richard Ely was quite prominent. Richard, most of the Ely's were either Richard or William or Edward. My younger son, my older son was named after his dad, my younger son I wanted him to have the Ely name and I really wanted to name him Richard, but at that time my boss was named Richard I didn't want my boss to think that I named my son after him, so I didn't name him Richard. Then I thought I'd want to name him William and I thought I can't name him William because my friends that lived next door to me at that time had a little William in their family, so I didn't want him to have to compete. I knew if I named him William I would never call him Billy, I'd

always call him Will as it turned out, they called their little Billy Will too. So, they didn't get the Ely name. And I already had an Edward, my cousin was Edward so that was the three names.

DB: Okay. Well, we thank you Marie.

MB: Sure.

DB: And I guess that concludes our interview this morning.

MB: Very good.

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