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Interview with William Carter,
61 Leighton Street

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"Billy" Carter worked as Mr. Eastman's driver and chauffeur for about twenty-three years and started in the late 'nineties. At that time Mr. Eastman and his mother lived at 400 East Avenue. Even then he was interested in music for he had a grand piano, and when friends, or his niece Mrs. Dryden, visited him they were requested to play. The Herman Dossenbach Orchestra of eight or ten men played every Sunday for a number of years for Mr. Eastman before the Kilbourn Quartet was organized. A 100-piece orchestra was engaged when the Eastman home at 900 East Avenue was opened.

When Billy started to work for the Eastmans they had five horses. Mrs. Eastman's favorite was "Baby", a beautiful five year bay horse. She took lumps of sugar and trained Baby to put out his paw and shake hands before she gave him the sugar. This horse was nervous and was very afraid of paper. He would shy, if he saw a piece of paper on the sidewalk, but this nervousness did not cause any accidents.

Mrs. Eastman tripped on her gown in the sitting room at "400" and broke her hip. She was past 65 at the time and, as she could not walk afterward, Billy had to carry her to the car for the remaining years of her life. She was always cheerful in spite of her handicap. Her nurse was Miss Louisa Knorr or Knorr Sanitarium, 139 Troup Street. Later, among others, she engaged a Miss Graham.

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When automobiles came, Mr. Eastman sold his horses. Many of his cars were purchased from Joe Mandery, an automobile agent who then had quarters in the Cutler Building on East Avenue. Mandery sold and serviced several makes of cars. One of the earliest Eastman cars was a steam Locomobile, purchased before 1900. He had two Locomobiles, one a runabout seating two persons and having no top, and the other a surrey seating four and having a canvas canopy which could be stretched across the top. Later came a Stanley roadster, also run by steam which had its boiler under the front seat. (It got up 500 pounds of steam in 5 minutes and went up hills lickety-split.) Then came a White steam car, with a rear entrance and a tonneau. The earliest gasoline car was a chain-drive, rear-entrance maroon-colored Wilton, which cranked on the side. This was purchased about 1904. Around 1905, Mr. Eastman had an electric landau which sometimes came back from a trip slower than it started, since its batteries were down. About 1908, came a Columbia, also chain-drive, with canopy top and a back entrance. Packard touring cars and limousines came later and, still later, a Cunningham.

Mr. Eastman usually drove himself to work and Carter took the car home and brought it to the office in the afternoon for him to drive home. He says Mr. Eastman was a good driver and a cautious one. Carter usually took Mr. Eastman and his mother, but not visitors, for a drive on Sunday afternoons when the weather was good. The roads were not good enough to drive in bad weather. Lack of service facilities tended to make trips short, and Pittsford or Fairport was usually as far as they went on early drives. When they had the electric car, Carter took Mrs. Eastman out for rides on weekday afternoons. She never drove horses or cars.

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Sometimes they took two cars on picnics, which Mr. Eastman always enjoyed. Mr. Eastman and Mr. and Mrs. Eastwood went in one car, and Carter drove the second car which carried a tent. They went out, in 1905, between Rochester and Sodus and put up two tents and stayed overnight. On picnics they several times used the tent to keep out a shower. Everyone enjoyed the fun of picnicing in the rain without getting wet.

Mr. Eastman was considerate, Carter says. He might telephone for orders on a Sunday morning, and if Mr. Eastman did not want to use him that day he said so at once and did not keep him waiting. Billy says he never saw Mr. Eastman angry in the twenty-three years he worked for him.

Occasionally, around 1910, Mr. Eastman drove to Avon, N.Y. to see Emmett Jennings, who had some fine blooded horses that Mr. Eastman enjoyed looking at when he called on his friend. He had bought some of his horses from Jennings. He rode horseback with his men friends and with Mrs. Dryden oftentimes for an hour or so before work. He rode a bay mare for about five years, which he bought in Canada.

Mr. Eastman exercised his skill in cooking when on a picnic. He made shortcake and they picked field strawberried, in season, and ate them on it. He broiled the steaks, which usually he liked rare. Twice a week, in the early nineteen-hundreds, after work or on Saturday afternoons, there was a stag party of four or five men-- Mr. Eastman, Mr. Hiram Sibley, Mr. James Watson, Mr. H.G. Brewster, and Mr. George Bonbright. They did not play games but sat and smoked afterwards (Mr. Eastman usually smoked a cigarette.) Mr.

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Walter Hubbell, Dr. Mulligan, and Dr. Rhees ~~also~~ went on these stag picnics occasionally. Sometimes these men and their wives went on drives to Boston or New York. They had breakfast at hotels en route, and later prepared lunch and dinner beside the road, picnic style. Carters job was to find wood for kindlings and Mr. Eastman presided over the pots and kettles.

Mr. Eastman took a trip to Jamaica in 1908, for about two weeks in the summer, with Dr. and Mrs. Mulligan. There were no bridges and they had to ford the streams. The party stopped at Port Antonio in Jamaica and, as there were no good roads then, Carter went with the car to Kingston and drove it back to Port Antonio. As he drove along at night, his headlights were shot at by a native, for they had some superstitious resentment against headlights. The shot went through the windshield and scratched Carter's face. Mr. Eastman, always cautious, decided they should not go out nights in the car.

Mr. Eastman was not stingy. When the beggars cried "Won't you give me something, master?" he, as well as the others gave them a few coins. The best rooms in the hotel were obtained, and Carter had a room and bath as nice as those of the guests.

He carried a Kodak and Dr. Mulligan also had one. The natives were superstitious about having pictures taken, so cunningness had to be used to get their pictures. Mr. Eastman, on one occasion, engaged a large group of them in conversation while he had them face Dr. Mulligan who, unobserved, held his Kodak and snapped the picture.

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One picture Mr. Eastman regretted to lose was of a group of small children, among whom was one little black boy, three or four years old, entirely naked. Mr. Eastman quickly brought his Kodak out as he tried to capture the scene, but the children were shy and rapidly scuttled away and left him, Kodak in hand, standing in amused disappointment.

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