

Kanestio Historical Society Times

23 Main St - P.O. Box 35 - Canisteo, NY 14823

Open Thursday & Friday 1-3

(607) 698-2086

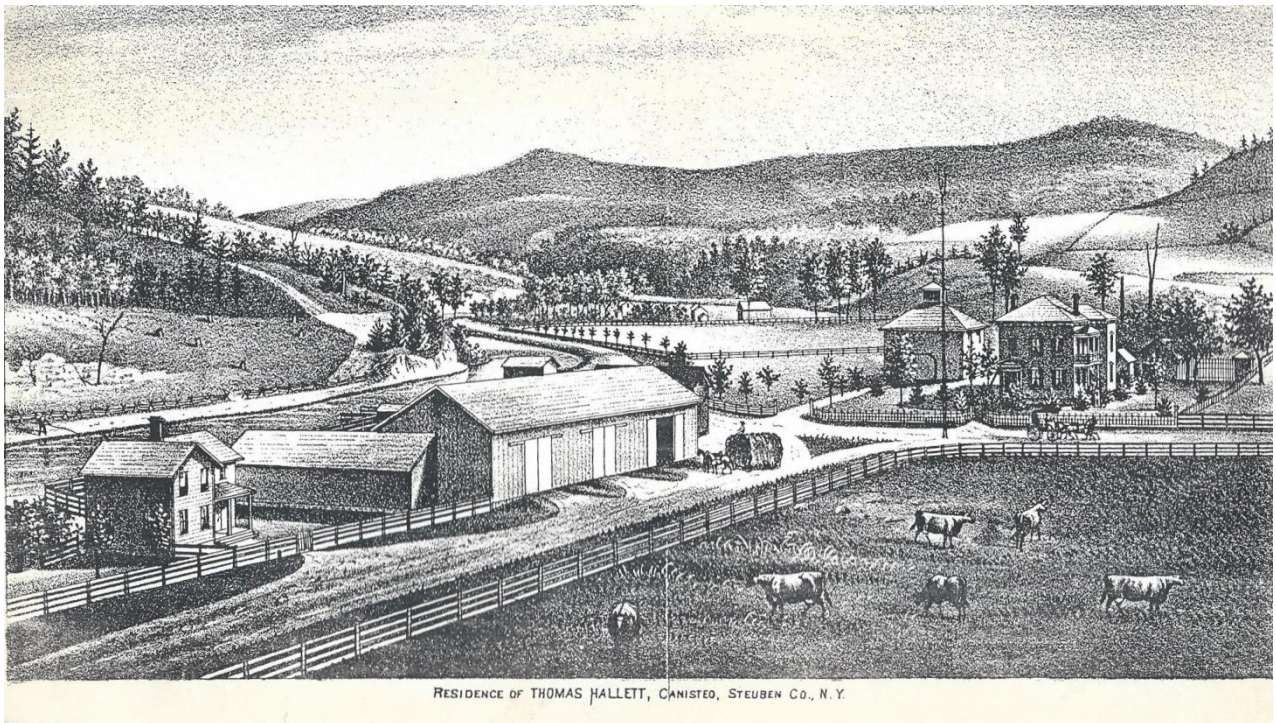
www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com

kanestiohs@gmail.com

Volume 28 - Issue 4 - September 2024

Gail Davis, Editor - Suzanne Babbitt, Assistant Editor

Willow Bend Farm



This lithograph from *Clayton's History of Steuben County*

Willow Bend Farm is a familiar landmark to all Canisteans. This lithograph from the 1879 *History of Steuben County* by Prof. W. w. Clayton is accompanied by the story of Thomas Hallett.

Thomas was the son of Moses and Nancy Hallett, spent his minority at home on the farm, and since, besides farming, has engaged in lumbering, and for some fifteen years rafted lumber down the Susquehanna to southern ports. For two years he resided in Kansas, acting as assistant superintendent of the Union Pacific Railroad. On Nov. 5, 1851, he married Sylvia daughter of

Absalom Travis, of Canisteo. Her grandfather, Amasa Travis, was one of the early settlers of the town, and her Grandmother Travis still survives at the age of ninety-five. In politics Mr. Hallett is a Republican. The result of his industry and self-exertion may be seen above in the lithograph of his residence, showing one of the finest farm locations in the Canisteo Valley.

Most of us today know this as the Royce Kilmer farm. Royce died in 2021 and is buried on the property. One of Canisteo's first cemeteries, The

Old Settlers Cemetery is also on the property, the first burial being Benjamin Stephens, 19-year-old son of Uriah Stephens in 1799. The farm is also thought to be the site of Kanestio Castle, the Indian Village burned in 1764 by Capt. Andrew Montour. The Indian fort was believed to be home to 600 to 800 people and consisted of 60 long houses, each with 3 to 4 fireplaces, with Indian Stockades circling the site. It would be 25 years before Canisteo would rise from the ashes.

Canisteo in the 1870's

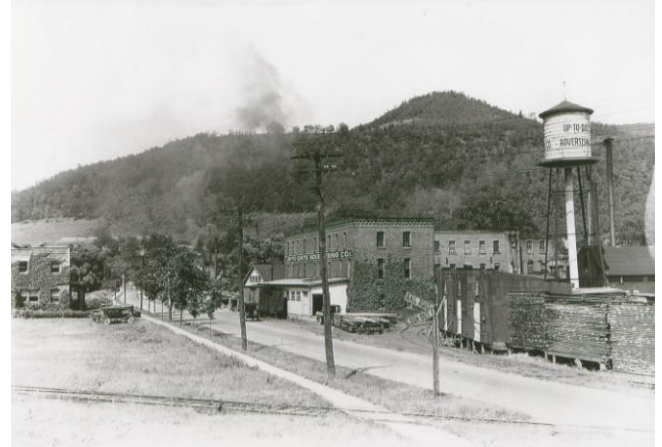
Few people realize what a thriving place Canisteo once was. This newspaper clipping from the 1870's gives us a glimpse into the past.

The business of our town consists of one boot and shoe manufactory, one planing mill with sash blind and door factory combined, one tannery, two grist mills, two general assortment stores, two dry goods, three groceries, four blacksmith's shops, two carriage shops, one harness shop, two saw mills with shingle and stave machinery attached, two cooper shops, two jewelers, two barber shops, two customer boot and shoe shops, two hardware stores and tin shops, two livery stables, one large furniture establishment, one ready-made clothing establishment, one first-class millinery establishment, three hotels, one saloon, two churches and a splendid Academy in full blast, together with five lawyers, five doctors and one brass band.

The Up-to-Date Advertising Company

A new sign business came to Canisteo in 1908. It would be the start of a series of sign businesses that would finally end in 2003 when Welles Brothers would close. Located in the American Basket Co. plant on Depot Street, the officers of the new company were H. W. Kellogg, Theodore Cobb, Frank Baxter and Howard Cobb. In 1910 Frank Brightman came here from Toledo, Ohio to serve as head of the of the art and engraving department.

By 1916 it had 60 traveling salesmen in all parts of the world. Although a depression was being felt around the country, the Up-To-Date Advertising Company was enjoying a large and prosperous business. Several new additions were made to the original plant. Lewis Covell, a machinist, had invented a machine that increased the output of yardsticks and rulers from 4 ½ million to 10 million a year. Some were printed in Spanish.



In 1916 a new office building was erected across the street from the main plant on land purchased from Superior Register Co., on a lot situated between the New York and Pennsylvania railroad tracks and a ditch fronting on Depot Street. In 1917 the company ordered a 150 horse power generator to electrify the plant. It also powered the street lights in Canisteo. It also had four large buildings under construction. It was now one of the largest private plants in western New York with modern machinery installed in all the buildings.

In 1919 James Anderson and Howard Cobb purchased the large Superior Register Company building with over one acre of floor space for expansion. This building was destroyed in a fierce fire in 1921, with a big loss in machinery and sign materials.

In 1910 the company had grossed \$93,000. In 1921 this had increased to \$350,000. In 1910 the payroll was \$20,000; in 1921 it had increased to \$150,000. One year \$350,000 worth of signs were turned out, mostly metal. Other types included wood, paper and paraffin treated cardboard.

Attending School in Steuben County 1914-1924

by Mildred Day Stephens
written in longhand 1973-transcribed by her
granddaughter in March 2022

Part II -High School

In 1920 the up-To-Date and National Sign Company of Dayton, Ohio consolidated and moved their plant here. They made metal signs by a rubber plate process. Signs ranged in size 5" by 10" to 18' by 36'. Later signs were made by a silk screen technique. From 1920 to 1934 things were really humming.

After the 1921 fire a deal was made with the Oriental Furniture Company for the former Canisteo Table Factory building for \$9,000. The Ruler plant was moved there from the two main factory buildings of the main plant. The Ruler Factory was operated for years by Walter S. Tuttle and Thomas Tuttle. Its rulers were shipped all over the world.



On November 21, 1923 the Up-To-Date shipped six car loads of signs to the U. S. Rubber Company. In 1935 the plant received a \$30,000 grant from the R. F. C. for enlargement and improvements. Then came the flood of July 1935 and the sign plant was ruined! In July 1936 they were ordered into bankruptcy. The federal R. F. C. foreclosed on the plant for \$32,000 and took possession, but the ruler plant was able to remain in operation. In 1939 the government sold the Sign Factory to a Rochester junk dealer who demolished the three story brick building.

In 1940 the Ruler Factory, which had been in operation for 25 years, was bought by 25 local businessmen to save the buildings from junk dealers.

After finishing the grades, my parents wanted me to attend high school. We lived about 8 miles from Troupsburg, NY where the nearest high school was located. So, I had to board away from home in order to go to high school. At the age of 13 (1920) I was on my own. My father took me to Troupsburg on Sunday night, and came for me on Friday. By this time, we had a car.

This was an 8-room schoolhouse, four rooms on the first floor for grades and four rooms upstairs for high school. Only three years of high school were available. As a freshman, I took English, Biology, Algebra, Latin and Ancient History.

After one term, my father sold the farm and we moved to Canisteo, NY where I continued high school, completing four years and receiving a Regents Diploma. At that time, everyone was required to have Regents requirements to graduate. High school diplomas were later instigated.

Requirements for a Regents diploma consisted of 4 yrs. of English, 2 yrs. of History, 2 yrs. of language, 1 yr. of science, 2 yrs. of Math, 1 yr. of Art, ½ yr. of English Grammar, ½ yr. of Civics and 1 yr. of physiology, plus electives to make 72 credits.

At Canisteo Academy, there was a good sports program - no football - as a student had been killed playing football about 4 yrs. earlier. We had a good music program with a high school chorus and an orchestra. About two musical productions were staged each year, all the music being taught by one teacher.

There was a Home Economics dept. offering cooking & sewing. Each year the cooking class was required to entertain the members of the school board, their husbands or wives, the principal and his wife at a formal dinner.

There was a 15 min. assembly program each morning, when the whole high school gathered in the auditorium on the top floor of a 3-story building (outside fire escapes) which is unthinkable today. There we saluted the flag, repeated the Lord's Prayer, sang a song or two, then the principal said a few words, making announcements (sans a speaker system) and then dispersed to classes. School hours were from 8:30am - 4:00pm, with 1 hr. for lunch. Everyone went home for lunch as there was no cafeteria.

It was relatively easy to skip school for part of the day. On a nice sunny day, you could arrange to meet several of your friends up by the Purdy Creek bridge at 2 o'clock, and have a nice hike through the woods or just a walk up the country road, marching along singing. We would return to school about 3:30pm, being careful to slip in one by one so no one would notice.

In the spring, each class would have either a "sunrise breakfast" or a wiener roast after school. We would meet at the school and all walk together to a designated place, usually a mile or two out of town, have our party and return. There was very little drinking of alcoholic beverages among high school students. Maybe 2 or 3 of the most daring would bring a bottle, but they never made points with the majority. We had lots of fun without it. Only three boys in the whole school owned cars. (One of those was my boyfriend, and believe me, it was hard work hanging on to him). In Canisteo I lived the second house from the school, about 1 minute walk.

Graduation was different then. There was a baccalaureate service in some church the Sunday preceding graduation, usually some member of the class had a party at their home for the whole class, with food, playing games and dancing to Victrola music. There was a class night program, which was really a fun night, but staged for the parents and townspeople. There was a Senior

banquet put on in one of the churches with speeches etc. and special music. Then there was the graduation ceremony in the afternoon (usually Sat.) and an alumni banquet that evening. I graduated in June 1924.

Thank You

There has been a lot of activity at the Society this summer and we have so many people to thank.

Big thank yous go out to **Irma Ficzeri** for her generous pledge donation in memory of **Pat Hale** and **Sid Decker** for his contribution. Both were designated for operating expenses.

Thank you to **Mack Mullen** for cleaning up the trash heap left by our storage shed. Thanks to **Bob Hammond** for donating a lawn mower and to **Gary Davis and Mike Teribury** for keeping our back lot mowed.

Thanks to **Kathie Boccia and Doug Brown** who are working on digitizing our files and notebooks.

Jerri Darley and Pat Callahan have transformed our book store into a gift shop and helped with our window displays.

Thanks to our President, **Betty Merring**, for spearheading our "window tinting" project. The ultra violet protection on the front windows will cut our heating and cooling bills as well as providing protection for items in our window displays.

Repairs and maintenance to our roof has been completed.

Shelly Florence-Glover and Verna Mullen have been busy sorting our vast collections and getting them properly stored and arranged in archival materials.

Thanks to our newly formed Audit Committee, **Louise Hartman, Valerie Davidsen and Mick Miller** who gave us a thumbs up on our financial records and procedures and have agreed to do an annual audit for us.

Thanks to **Bob and Allen Childs** who arranged and paid for the assessment of having the Bartlett Steam train painting restored. Clara Bartlett was their great grandmother. The front page of our Fall 2016 Newsletter featured the painting and our wish to apply for a grant to have the painting cleaned and restored. (You can view the painting and story on our webpage.) The painting was discovered in a janitor's closet at the school some years ago and suffered smoke damage during our 2014 fire. We will be applying for a grant but there was considerable cost and travel involved to apply for the grant. Again, thanks to the Childs family for the boost we needed to accomplish this goal.

Thank you to **Tim Angell** for donating security cameras and to **Mike Teribury** and **Don Merring** for helping with the installation.

Annual Meeting & Election of Officers

In the last few years our annual meetings have had very poor attendance. We blame some of that on COVID and last year on weather. The first and worst storm of the winter was the night of the meeting resulting in only 9 in attendance.

This year's Annual Meeting and Election of Officers will be held at 2:00 on Sunday, November 17th. Our dish-to-pass Harvest Dinner will follow at 3:00.

Currently the Board of Directors is comprised of officers of the club. This is not a healthy situation for the club or for our officers who are taking on double duties. The Board is made up of 5 members. Currently we have one opening due to a resignation for health reasons and Sue Babbitt will complete her 10th year on the Board and is not eligible to run again this year. Other Board members are Betty Merring, our current President; Toni Stevens-Oliver, 1st Vice-President and Secretary, and Gail Davis, the Treasurer. We hope to correct this situation with future elections but we need members willing to serve in leadership roles.

An agenda for the Annual Meeting along with a ballot for officers and open board positions will be emailed or mailed to members around the 15th of October following the mailing format for your newsletters. If you currently receive a mailed copy of the newsletter please consider supplying us with an email for notification of events. You will still receive your newsletter by mail. Ballots should be printed and mailed back to the society postmarked by November 4th. Ballots must be signed. This is the first time we have reached out to the whole membership for elections. With declining attendance at annual meetings we are exploring ways to involve our out-of-area members and welcome your input.

Exciting things are happening in the Society and we look forward to more member participation to keep the momentum going.

Anna and Mary Baker - Indian Captives

Editors Notes: It is always exciting for us when someone comes into the Society who has been researching their family history for the first time and wants to share their stories. Alan Recktenwald brought the following article to us that had been researched and compiled by a relative, Phyllis Ericson. Even if we've heard the stories before we know many have not and we're delighted to share this story about the circumstances that brought the first settlers to Canisteo.

As we search for our ancestors, we discover that their lives were so different from ours. Sometimes we discover how close a branch of the family tree was almost broken off. And, if it had, we and all their descendants would never have existed. Such is the store I ran across in my family about my 4th and 5th Great Grandmothers, Mary and Anna Baker, and the Wyoming Massacre.

Sometime in the late 1700's, Jeremiah and Anne Baker traveled west from Connecticut and settled in the Wyoming River valley. Like many early Connecticut settlers, Jeremiah served in the local militia. About 1775, he and Anne and their two daughters Mary "Polly" and baby Hannah made their way west and settled in the Susquehanna

River (Wyoming) valley. They settled and built a cabin near the newly built Forty Fort which had been erected to help ensure the safety of the surrounding settlers. It was named to honor the first forty settlers who settled in the valley.

There were two groups of settlers in the valley, those from Connecticut who supported George Washington, and the Pennsylvanians, Tories who supported the British with their Indian allies. There was much tension between the settlers. In the spring of 1778, Jeremiah Baker left the valley with the militia. In July the alarm went out that the British troops were marching towards the valley with many Mohawk and Iroquois warriors. There were 110 Butlers Rangers and 464 Iroquois. The settlers in the valley fled to the fort for protection. Anna, very pregnant with her third child, could not manage to travel with her two young daughters to the fort and so they remained in their cabin. On July 3, 1778 Ann's third daughter was born. Anna named her "Thankful." However, on that very same day, about 200 British Soldiers and 700 of their Indian allies attacked the fort and burned it to the ground with the settlers inside. Upon the official surrender of Fort Forty the next day 4 July 1778, Major Butler justified the actions of the British, stating, "That as Wyoming was a frontier, it was wrong for any part of the inhabitants to leave their own settlements and enter into the Continental army abroad; that such a number having done so, was the cause of the invasion, and that it would never have been attempted if the men had remained at home.

The Indians continued to roam the valley, burning settlers' cabins, and killing settlers. That day a small band of Indians found the Baker cabin with Anna and her three young daughters hiding inside. They took Anna, Mary age 4, Hannah age 2, and the newborn Thankful with them and traveled North.

Hearing about the impending attack, the Wyoming militia including Anna's husband Jeremiah Baker had made a bee-line to the valley, only to arrive a day late to see the devastation. The fort and all the settlers' cabins and buildings were burned to the ground.. All the settlers who

had remained were dead and scalped. Over 360 American men, women, and children lost their lives that day, and many who escaped to the forests died of exposure or starvation in the next weeks.

There was word of possible captives being taken north through the forests of New York and so the militia pursued them. About 40 miles north, near Tioga, New York today, the Indians who had captured Anna Baker with her three daughters and others were discovered. After a squirmish, the Indians were overpowered and the hostages were freed. Jeremiah and Anna returned to live in the Wyoming Valley where two more children were born, Cynthia and William.

In 1780 Jeremiah Baker served in General Sullivan's Expedition. The campaign was ordered by; George Washington, in response to the 1778 British-Iroquois attacks on Wyoming and other valleys in the region, with the aim of "taking the war home to the enemy to break their morale." The Continental Army carried out a scorched-earth campaign, chiefly in the lands of the Iroquois Confederacy in what is now Pennsylvania and western New York State.

In the fall of 1780, the Baker family moved to the Canisteo River Valley in Steuben County in southwestern New York. Here they remained to raise their 12 children who reached adulthood. Their oldest daughter Mary married Isaac Tracy to continue the branch of the family tree to me.

Phyllis Ericson, 2022
Baker Genealogy.

Annual Field Trip By Suzanne Babbitt

On August 20, 8 people traveled from the KHS to Canaseraga to visit the Marjorie Dieter Mastin Historical Society. We were welcomed to 9 Pratt St. by Pres. Debbie Snyder & 4 other volunteers offering us coffee & cookies & interesting tales on the history of this Allegany Co. village.

In the front parlor there were 2 interesting items: first was a set of furniture pieces from the Fawcett

home (remember the great Hornell restaurant The Big Elms?). Opposite was a very tall secretary fashioned out of American chestnut by a local cabinet maker for the Windsor family, a very early prominent settler family. The furniture piece is so tall that the very top decorative piece had to be removed for it to fit into the parlor.



We viewed many items showing the various businesses through the years, one being the impressive red flying horse from the local Mobilgas station. One single picture particularly interested me - of Fred Decker known as the Ossian Giant. So google his name/nickname and read about the "giant's" interesting life. What a great outing we all enjoyed.



2024 Officers

Betty Merring	President
Toni Stevens-Oliver	1st VP/Secretary
Sue Babbitt	2nd Vice President
Gail Davis	Treasurer

Application for Membership

Do you know someone who would like to receive our newsletter - perhaps an old classmate or out of town relative? For the low cost of \$10 (annual dues) you receive 4 issues per year of our newsletter.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Phone: _____

Dues: \$10.00 Individual
 \$15.00 Family
 \$150.00 Life Membership

Make check payable to:

Kanestio Historical Society
 P.O. Box 35
 Canisteo, NY 14823
 or



You can now pay your dues or make donations to the Society with your PayPal Account. There are links on our website at www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com

You can also find past issues of our newsletter on the website as well as more information about the Society, upcoming events and books we have for sale in our book store.

Donations gratefully accepted toward operating expenses.

Directors

Sue Babbitt	2024
Betty Merring	2025
Toni Stevens-Oliver	2026
Gail Davis	2027

Kanestio Historical Society
23 Main St., P.O. Box 35
Canisteo, NY 14823

The Back Page



Willow Bend Barn after August 9, 2024 Flood