

CANISTEO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

ARKPORT, NY

Jan/Feb/Mar 2009 Vol. 5

Nancy A. Glover, Editor
Dorothy J. Dunham, Asst. Editor

MISSION STATEMENT

Under the original Constitution it states that "The purpose of this Society shall be the collection and preservation of Historical Knowledge to the territory known as the Canisteo Valley in the County of Steuben, in the State of New York, and in doing so promote the better understanding and appreciation of our American heritage."

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following officers were elected at our January 6, 2009 meeting: President, Nancy A. Glover; Vice President, Ernest Dungan; Secretary, Dorothy J. Dunham and Treasurer, Lawrence P. Jones.

DECEASED MEMBERS

Two of our members passed away within the last year; Elaine Kruze Roudet from Depew and Jean Stanton Barnard from Arkport. Our condolences go out to their families and friends.

OUR READERS WRITE US

Eleanor Karns Hislop of Freeville emailed: "Great job on the newsletter. I really enjoyed reading it. If I could only remember all the details I would add to it. I do remember working on the muck topping lettuce, also grading potatoes at a place near the railroad but have no idea how old I was. I remember "Slats" as everyone called him. I wish I had kept a diary back then. I remember my dad [**Edgar Karns**] was a fireman and every time the fire alarm went off my dad would take off. My mother would bundle us up and we'd go too. I remember a train catching fire and we were standing not far from the railroad cars when a big explosion took place, which was so powerful that it sent us reeling backwards. We never chased to fires after that."

Elaine Karns Hallett of Rochester emailed: "Thank you so much for sending the Canisteo Valley Historical Society Newsletter to me. I enjoyed your article about **Dr. Wolfgruber**. My dad [**Edgar Karns**] would enjoy this newsletter for sure. How he loved Arkport and all that took place there! One of his favorite stories was how he helped get "Doc" to Arkport."

Barbara Karr Dromazos and **Beverly Karr Lyon** - In the last newsletter it was mentioned that **Dr. Wolfgruber** had an association of milestones with the family of **Robert and Helen Karr**: first baby delivered and first male twins delivered. The Doctor also delivered twins to the Karr family in 1954. Barbara and Beverly don't know if it was a milestone but report that it was a difficult delivery for their mother, Helen. Both twins were a breech delivery and were born 57 minutes apart.

Lois Dungan of Arkport emailed: "**Shirley Burdett** asked about the hobo, "Red Whisker Pete." He came to our house every time he was in town and mom always fixed him a plate of food. We would run ahead and warn mom that he was coming."

Elaine Glover Acomb of Painted Post wrote: "I read what **Shirley Burdett** said about "Red Whiskers" the Hobo. I was at my grandmother Howe's one time when he came. He had a long red beard and red hair. He was very polite. There were many hobos back then and everyone always said that they would put a mark someplace on the house so that the other hobos that came to town would know where the best cooks lived. Of course my grandmother was a super cook so the hobos always stopped there. No one was afraid of the hobos; it was just a part of life at the time. After I moved to Painted Post a hobo came to the house one day and said that he was

really hungry. I told him to sit on the porch while I fixed him something. My kids were very afraid and hid under the bed. He looked so bad that I wanted to crawl right under there with them. I wasn't a very good cook at the time so I'm sure he didn't mark the house as he was the last one I ever had. It has been many years since I lived and went to school in Arkport but while reading the newsletters, many names and places came back to me and I enjoyed them very much."

Barbara G. Thomas of Winchester, VA writes: Enclosed is my check for the calendar and DVD of the Arkport area. I am a 1938 graduate of Arkport Central High School and I was a resident of Arkport in 1922. Parents were **Ralph & Maybelle Greenlee**; they owned the feed mill 1922-1925; grocery store at 17 West Ave 1925-1945 and grocery store on Main St. 1945-1951. Then they built the house on West Ave and lived there until 1964 when they moved to Meadville PA to be near me and my family. I have many good memories of Arkport, the people and the activities.

Marjorie Osborn Wagner writes: Again – a great job with the Historical Society's newsletter! I really enjoyed it. I too remember the milkweed. We collected them and we also had the ration books."

ARKPORT ROD AND GUN CLUB INC. – By Norm Kennell

The Club purchased approximately eight acres of land from the **Raymond Marvin** estate on September 18, 1941. The property was located about one half mile north of the village line on what was then State Route 70. It is now State Route 961F.

During the early 1940's and 1950's, the Arkport Rod and Gun Club was a very active organization. They raised thousands of pheasants over the years and released them to improve hunting in the area. During those same years, **Edgar Karns** said they normally had over 1,000 members. Many were from Hornell, Almond, Dansville and Canaseraga. Edgar sent out the membership cards and dues were \$1.00 per year. Members held a large turkey raffle just before Thanksgiving as an annual fund-raiser.

In the early 1950's, television began to get a foothold in our lives and interest in many activities began to decline. Going to the movies declined and many theatres had to close. In 1950 the Hornell Dodgers baseball team would draw three thousand fans for a regular game. If they had a special promotion they would draw nearly four thousand fans. By 1955 the attendance was down to 300 to 400 fans per game. The interest in the Rod and Gun Club also declined during that same period.

The Club continued to raise pheasants into the early 1960's despite the declining membership. Due to a lack of interest, however, The Rod and Gun Club property was offered for sale via a public bid process in 1967.

Dick and Norm Kennell purchased the property and established the Pine Knoll Mobile Home Park.



Membership patch.



Releasing the pheasants from left are: L.S. Blanchard; John Saltzer; Louis Arcieri; Llewelyn Robinson; Carl Clark; Everett Alger; and Bobby Alger Jr.

ELLS' TEXACO – *By Ken Libbey, Decatur, GA*

I enjoyed reading about the Arkport Town Team because I loved going to those games. I remember the 1950 team but I remember better a few years later when **Dean Piatt** pitched and **Russ White** played first base. I think **Grant Barnes** played third and **Tim Timmerman** and **Nick Shaut** played middle infield. We kids had great fun chasing foul balls into Woolever's field and bringing them back to the umpire.

I also associate baseball with **Jim Ells'** Texaco station across from us on West Avenue. We lived upstairs over what had been Greenlee's Grocery store. I was only nine in 1950 so my memory is vague. My dad and I were fans of the Hornell Dodgers of the Class D PONY League. Don Zimmer and Maury Wills were their star players. We only had an AM radio and at dusk, the Hornell AM signal went off the air to clear for the big 50,000-watt stations. **Jim Ells** had a FM radio in a poolroom attached to his station where one could listen to the entire Dodgers game.

I was too young to be in the poolroom alone so I would beg my brother John, who worked at Stearns Hardware, to take me over. I would sit in the corner by the radio while older people played pool. For Christmas that year my dad bought a Silvertone AM/FM radio, which I thought was the best present ever. My friend, **Dick Falzoi** from West Avenue, does not remember this pool room but I am sure I did not imagine it. Does anyone else remember it?

JIMMY ELLS – *By John Senka, Montour Falls*

In the 1950's and early 1960's we had two gas stations, two garages and a third gas station that did complex repairs. There was the Mobil on Main Street, operated by numerous men, **Ted King**, **"Stub" Glover**, **"Nippy" Howe**, **Fran Amidon** and **Gary Luce**. There was a station behind the old state bank owned by **Rush Hartwell**. **George Stever** had a garage adjacent to where **John and Rosalie Jamison's** Harley shop now sits. **George Collier** had a garage across the tracks on West Avenue and **Jimmy Ells** owned the Texaco on West Avenue. Jim was also an excellent mechanic.

I am targeting in on Ells Texaco as I spent much of my youth there. I was of the same generation as **"Fritz"** and **Billy Ells**; **Stan** was still a baby. This was truly a Mom and Pop business. **Jim Ells** did the mechanical work and **Doris** ran the store part of the station, including pumping gas. As the boys grew older, they also took their turn pumping gas, washing windshields and providing the full service that was available back then. The Ells family lived over the station. **Jim Ells** was a handy guy, and if I remember correctly, he did all the carpentry and remodeling. It was a lovely home they had upstairs.

What most folks loved about Ells' gas station was the soda pop. It was stored in a cooler filled with ice cold water and they sold only Fawn soda. Orange was a favorite, as was birch beer, grape and several others. My personal favorite was the cream soda. You'd have to reach into that ice cold water to grab a bottle. Whenever we were picking up empty bottles on the street, we'd relish finding a Fawn bottle because the return on them was three cents rather than the usual two cents on the others.

Being friends with **Fritz** and **Bill** gained me access to all the fun activities around the station. In the winter the Ells' flooded the back lawn and created an ice rink where local boys would skate or play hockey. There was also an old slate pool table in the back of the station where kids would play pool for hours at a time. I was always fond of Mr. Ells, known as "Jimmy" to everyone. He was a short, bald fellow who smoke cigars. He was always nice to us kids and was a real fan of the school's athletic teams. He also drove the school bus in addition to his regular job. I remember in about 1960 Jimmy bought the most beautiful pale green Pontiac convertible. We boys were of the age where we were fascinated by cars and dreamt of getting a license. Here I am almost 45 years later, still drooling over that car! The 50's and 60's were great times to be a kid in Arkport and Ells' Texaco provided great memories.

"BUCK" NEWSOM, A LOCAL LEGEND - *By Dorothy J. Dunham*

"Buck" Newsom was a legend in the Arkport area, and as with a legendary character, stories abound. There are people in the area who remember him and many more who remember hearing the stories told of him. Possibly, the stories could have "grown" a bit, but that's how a legend develops.

"Buck's" given name was **Elba Lloyd Newsom** (Elva in his Evening Tribune obituary notice), and he was

born to J. Franklin and Lillian (“Lillie”) Cridler Newsom on October 30, 1892, according to **Larry Kame**, who consulted his Cridler genealogy. Cridler was also spelled Kreidler and Kridler. “Buck’s” gravestone, amid the Newsom plot in the Arkport Cemetery, reads a birth year of 1893; it is not unusual that dates are inconsistently recorded. His parents, a baby, and his sisters Mary Elizabeth Porter and Hazel Newsom are also buried in the Newsom plot.

There is an early story recalled by **Charles Wellington** of “Buck” as a pre-teen. “Buck” and a neighbor, **George Willey**, also a pre-teen, were home for lunch from the schoolhouse on Oak Hill. As they were walking back to school, they passed the farm of Charles Cridler, great-grandfather of **Charles Wellington**, and great-uncle to “Buck”, who asked the two lads for help lifting something heavy. Mr. Cridler then asked the lads to carry a jug to the barn. They decided to try a sip, and since they both thought it to be quite tasty, continued to sip, until the jug was deposited empty at the barn. When George and “Buck” returned to their desks at the school house, they were unable to function as scholars, and were sent home in an inebriated state.

According to his Evening Tribune obituary notice, “Buck” was connected with Harvard University in the sports field. Both **Bing Howe** and **Charles Wellington** recall that he was also associated with Alfred University.

Newsom married **Genevieve Rose White** on June 5, 1936. According to the Evening Tribune, Miss White, from Almond, married “Buck” Newsom at 8 a.m. on a Wednesday morning at the Oak Hill home of **Rev. Herman Henderson**, who officiated. Several relatives and friends attended and the marriage was witnessed by **Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wellington** and **Hazel Newsom**. Snapshots of the event accompany this article.

An adjective consistently used to describe Newsom was *RUGGED*. **Otto Gates** recalls that people gave him the name “Buck” because he could pick up a log that usually took two men to pick up. Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines “buck” as a term used to connote heavy resistance or charging strength. Growing up in the Oak Hill area, “Buck” had farming and timbering background. Even as a young person, he was said to move great amounts of hay in the haymow with ease.

“Buck’s” extraordinary muscular build and strength led him to the boxing and wrestling ring, where he achieved championship status. His professional name was “Ned McGuire”, according to **George Wellington**. **Bing Howe** possesses a postcard “Buck” sent to his sister Hazel from a New England location where he was appearing. **Robert Alger** recalls that he appeared in Syracuse. The late **Joseph Jones** told his grandson, **Ronald Joseph Karr** that “Buck” was cheated out of prize money by unscrupulous promoters. **Charles Wellington** recalls that Newsom’s wrestling and boxing career was on hold during the potato harvest season, when he and his buddies would put their athletic prowess to work in the potato field. Many interviewees consistently confirmed that the end of “Buck’s” wrestling and boxing career was tragic and probably premature. **Leon Wellington**, among others, recalls that “Buck” Newsom caused a fatal injury to his opponent. That was his last opponent. “Buck” never went into the ring again, and returned to Oak Hill for good.

Upon his return to Oak Hill, he also returned to his roots of farming and timbering. He was involved with several farms on Oak Hill, and, early on, owned a farm at the top of the hill. He wasn’t successful, and the farm was acquired by the **Lawrence family**. **Leon Wellington** noted that running a farm wasn’t “Buck’s” strength, but working on the farms of neighbors brought him success. Others liked to hire him because he could do the work of between one and a half to two men. He worked at the Wellington farm, and **Charles Wellington** remembers that he and his brother worked beside Buck. People in the village, including impressionable young boys like **Larry Kame**, remember “Buck” coming to the village with his horses and wagons of grist, potatoes, and various supplies. He timbered with three horses and helped drop trees for **Bob Roosa** and **Bob Flanders** among others. He dropped and skidded trees from Reddy Hollow for **Robert Alger** and **John Hubric**.

Even as a farmer and timber man, however, the stories of his ruggedness continued. There are variations of a story that he could pick up a corner of a loaded wagon. **Shelton Lawrence** saw him pick up the end of a Model A car; **Leon Wellington** saw him pick up a 55-pound can of kerosene from the back a Model A split rumble while standing behind the back of the vehicle. **Bing Howe** and **Leon Wellington** remember that he could lift a walking hand plow to set the next row. Two great memories are from **Charles Wellington** who first remembers that there was a full loaded wagon mired in the mud on West Avenue. The locals gathered around the dilemma and there was a bet wagered on whether “Buck” could get the wagon out of the mud. “Buck” got on his hands and

knees in the mud underneath the full wagon and pushed it up with his back, and the wagon was freed. “Buck” won the bet. The second memory involved **George Lawrence**, also known as a rugged man, and brother of **Arnold Lawrence**. “Buck” was working on a milk route. Farmers were to have their milk cans at a certain point on the roadside, while Buck came by with his horses and wagon to pick up the cans, which were then taken to Canaseraga. **George Lawrence** didn’t leave the cans in the designated spot, and a dispute arose between the two rugged men. Word got around that on a certain day, the two would confront each other. Locals gathered and watched from a distance as the two approached each other with their respective teams of horses, neither pulling aside to let the other pass. The two men had a conversation in the middle of the road, and then went back to where they had come from. **Charles Wellington** said that people were somewhat let down when the conflict ended peacefully.

A consistent adjective used by interviewees (**Ruth Wellington Stewart, Phyllis Lawrence Hoyt, Shelton Lawrence, and Robert Alger**, among others) was “kind” and “gentle” toward people. This gentleness extended to an extraordinary skill with animals. **Robert Alger** recalls that “Buck” was hired to work at skidding logs out of Reddy Hollow, co-owned by **Everett Alger** and **John Hubric**. “Buck” had a team of two horses and a single horse. The horses were big draft horses, about 1,800 pounds each. The area was steep, and the three horses slid over the bank, landing upended at the bottom of the bank. “Buck” approached the terrified and agitated horses, talking to them, touching them, unhooking their harnesses, and coaxing them to an upright and standing position. He led the horses out of the Hollow without injury to himself or the three horses. **Robert Alger** also recalls that he and **John Hubric** went to visit “Buck” in the wintertime. As they visited, there was a scratch at the door, and “Buck” let into the kitchen a cat that made itself at home on the warmth of “Buck’s” stove. This massive man had a tender heart for a feline. **Llewelyn Robinson** recalls an Airedale dog following “Buck” as he worked.

After years of exertion, “Buck” developed hernias on both sides of his body. **Robert Alger** remembers that “Buck” wore large leather belts to contain the hernias. **Shelton Lawrence** recalls that the hernias protruded. **Charles Nichols, Arnold Lawrence’s** long-time hired man, also had hernias, and Shelton remembers that when he was about seven or eight years old, he was taught by Dr. Tisdale, a family doctor who made house calls, how to pack ice on the men’s hernias. The ice he applied relaxed the men, and he remembers packing ice on the sides of both men to reduce the protrusions.

Many interviewees spoke of “Buck’s” chewing tobacco habit. He had a sense of humor about his hygiene, which reportedly didn’t include many baths. **Charles Wellington** remembers that a young woman, Margaret Weiermiller, was walking up the hill to the store in South Dansville. As she walked, “Buck” caught up to offer a ride in his buggy to South Dansville. When they arrived, the teacher thanked him for his kindness. “Buck” then told her that she might have second thoughts. “I’ve got lice”, he reportedly told her. It’s not known whether it was frankness or self-deprecating teasing. “**Stub**” **Newell** recalls hearing of “Buck’s” hearty appetite. **Bing Howe** remembers that there was a man who lived and worked on the muck during the summer and lived with and helped “Buck” in the winter. When the man prepared pancakes, it was told that “Buck” wouldn’t get serious about sitting down at the table until there were about two dozen pancakes on his plate.

Eventually, “Buck” was on a farm near Reddy Hollow and Newsom Road. **Shelton Lawrence** remembers walking with **Charles Nichols**, the hired man of his father, down the road to Reddy Hollow for visits with “Buck”. After Buck’s death, the farm was bought by **Mark Northrup**, husband of Buck’s niece, and then by **Bing Howe**, who remembers that a small area was set aside for Buck’s sister **Hazel**, who tended a garden.

“Buck” Newsom died at the age of 55 on March 15, 1948. The Evening Tribune listed an obituary and a small news article which stated that he was found dead in his kitchen by a neighbor, **George Young**. The Coroner determined that Newsom had been dead for two or three days, and the death certificate listed natural causes. **Ruth Wellington Stewart** was a little girl at the time but remembers that in the winter, the plowing stopped at the Frank Wellington house. She recalled the sight of vehicles lined up in front of their house as people walked over to the Newsom house to help. The obituary listed two survivors: his sister **Hazel** and his niece, **Mrs. Mark Northrup** (Lillian Mae, daughter of **Mary Elizabeth Newsom Porter**). The funeral was at the Crane Funeral Home and Rev. Luther Cross officiated. Burial was at the Arkport Cemetery.

Many thanks are extended to the people who gave interviews. If anyone ever sees an old poster announcing a “Ned McGuire” event, we’d love to see it.

“Buck” Newsom’s wedding day: June 5, 1936; pictures taken in the yard of the **Frank Wellington** family home. Snapshot photos courtesy of **Ruth Wellington Stewart**.



(tattered snapshot)

left to right: unknown man, Frank Wellington, “Buck” Newsom, Genevieve Rose White Newsom, Geraldine Wellington, Leon Wellington (age 5, in front of mother), Francis Wellington (age 13, sitting on ground)

left to right: unknown man, Leon Wellington, age 5, Frank Wellington, Buck Newsom, Genevieve Rose White Newsom, Hazel Newsom

ARKPORT DAM – Article by the *Binghamton Press* dated Tuesday evening, April 2, 1940

“IT WORKED”

“Today the *Binghamton Press* prints a picture of what happened at the Arkport dam, first of the flood control detention units in the Southern Tier program completed by the United States Army Engineers. It tells an important story – serves as a mile marker in the history of this entire area.

In 1935 and in March, 1936, the Canisteo River, a flashy, unruly type of stream like most of these short ribs in the drainage fan of the Susquehanna River, went on the rampage. Swollen by flood waters it ripped down onto Canisteo and Hornell and did a vast amount of damage.

People from Hornell and Canisteo were among the workers in the Southern Tier Flood Control Council which carried the fight for flood control on the upper Susquehanna to Washington and obtained appropriation and authorization for the big job that Uncle Sam has been doing, and still is to do, in this entire section. Some of them may have had their doubts. But whatever question remained among the resident doubters in Hornell and Canisteo was answered over the weekend by the Arkport dam.

A 37-foot wall of brown flood water piled up behind the Arkport dam and extended back in a quickly-created artificial lake for nearly two miles through the upper Canisteo valley on the flow ground cleared by the Army Engineers. Even then the water was only half way up to the spillway.

The only point at which any of it left the detention dam was through the discharge tunnel, so built as to control the passage of flood water to bank full capacity downstream.

Out of that tunnel into the so called “bucket” below the spillway and shot into the air by “spoon”, a foamy torrent of brown flood water leaped 15 feet into the air, expending its force then and there.

There was a little snow on the spillway even when the flood was all over because the only water that ran down that spillway was from the melting snow. And even though the Army engineers have not completed the channel prism work farther downstream, the Canisteo stayed within its bank. There were no floods at Canisteo, none at Hornell.

It was all very fine, and it is with profound satisfaction that this newspaper records the performance of the Arkport dam, first of the flood control structures to do its stuff in the flood control program pioneered and fathered by the Binghamton Press.”



*1972 flood at the Arkport Dam. Pictures taken by **Dick Kennell** from Arkport.*

EVENING PROGRAM

On Tuesday evening, January 27th, our historical society sponsored a program entitled “Steuben County From A to Z” at the Arkport Village Community Room with over 40 people in attendance. The program was presented by Jane Schryver and Paul Hoffman from Dansville. Jane has an extensive collection of area postcards. She and Paul put together a Power Point presentation of the previous Steuben County businesses, tabernacles, schools, floods, etc. The program was enjoyed by all and generated many questions after the show.

COUNTRY SCHOOLS

I would like to collect stories and pictures from this area of the country schools and town schools before centralization. For example, I know there were about 10 country schools in the Stephens Mills area and six in the Bishopville area. I will print some of the stories in future newsletters. Eventually I want to compile stories of all the area schools in book form to have printed before all these memories are lost forever. If you have any pictures of the schools and students, I would like to borrow them to scan. I will return them to you. Write down your memories if you attended one of them or ask your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles what memories they have of going to these schools. Where was the school located? Is it still standing? (Some were converted into houses). How many rooms did it have? Who was the teacher? How many grades were in the school and how many children attended the school? How did you get to school, what did you study, what did you do for recess, etc? Please mail your memories to Nancy Glover, 8643 State Route 36, Arkport, NY 14807 or email them to glover39@verizon.net. Don't worry about spelling and sentence structure; none of us are pros. The “proofers” help us with changes. It's just important to get the stories written down.

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Norm Kennell is doing some research on the CCC camps in our area. Does anyone have information on them? Please ask everyone you know if they ever worked at one, lived at one and where they were located. Send your information to the address or email address above. We'll put what we learned in a future issue.

MEMBERSHIP & MEETINGS

Our meetings are usually held the first Tuesday of each month. The next meetings are scheduled for **March 3, April 7 and May 5 from 1:00 – 3pm**. They are held in the Arkport Village Community Room located behind the fire station. If you would like to join our historical society, the dues are \$10 per person or \$15 per married couple. Please make the check payable to the Canisteo Valley Historical Society and mail your dues along with your name, address and email address to P.O. Box 96, Arkport, NY 14807.

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PATRON

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