

CANISTEO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER, ARKPORT, NY
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NAME CHANGE

Larry Jones and I recently signed and notarized the application for the name change to our historical society and mailed it to Albany. We are requesting a name change to "Arkport Historical Society, Inc.". All of the surrounding towns have their own historical societies and with Arkport's Society being called "Canisteo Valley Historical Society," people did not realize that it was the Arkport. It also created confusion with Canisteo's historical society even though theirs is spelled with a "K". The request for the name change could take up to two months to process.

WHAT HAS THE CANISTEO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BEEN UP TO FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS? (Part 2) - *By Dorothy Jones Dunham*

The volume II newsletter, dated January/February/March 2008, began Part I of the recent 30 year history of the society. Activities of the group were described. Continuing with activities, a quarterly newsletter was shared. Deceased members' names were etched on a plaque. The society entered a prize-winning float in Hornell's Fourth of July parade. Bicentennials of the County, Town, and the Village of Arkport were supported and observed. In 1976, in honor of our country's Bicentennial, the group was instrumental in organizing citizens to donate oak trees, which were planted by volunteers on the Avenue of the Oaks, with appropriate signage. About 15 years later, half of the trees and both signs were gone, reportedly from neglect and carelessness. The society tried valiantly to restore the original intent. With the cooperation of the Town of Hornellsville, the signs and at least four trees were replaced. As late as the late 1990's, the group was still trying to add more oak trees to the Avenue.

Steuben County Hall of Fame nominations from our valley were: Christopher Hurlbut, Nathan Cary, William Stuart, Dr. John Lily, F. Howard Hurlbut, and Eugene Jacobs.

At the intersection of SR 36 and CR 70A, where Big Creek joins the Canisteo River, the Tories and the Native American Indians met to build canoes, and the society worked toward the placement of a New York State Historical marker at the site. There is no evidence that this effort was successful. Other activities have been: a booth at the Steuben County Fair, a scholarship for a graduating senior, an Early American Folk Fair, historical open houses, and the support of the Schwartzenbach monument. The society sponsored the monument, located in front of the Medical Arts Building in North Hornell, honoring the former Bethesda Hospital.

Of other importance were decisions about fundraising: stationery, note cards, railroad spikes, wooden nickels, mugs, and paperweights. There has been a recurring discussion of reprinting the three editions of the Arkport history.

After the mid-1990's, attendance was dwindling to 3-5 people at meetings. There was minimal turnover in officers; previous leaders became ill or were deceased. There were about 8 dues-paying members. There were no minutes of meetings for about three years. Then in 2004-05, a social group began to meet to share old pictures, maps, and stories. By the fall of 2007, the group decided to revive the Canisteo Valley Historical Society, but concentrate on Arkport roots.

In addition to scrutinizing the minutes for this overview, three members and officers were recently interviewed.

Onalee Helmer Faulkner, who will be 90 years old later this year, grew up on Miller Hill, Town of Fremont. Her grandparents lived on Dutch Street and Cream Hill, and were farm families from the early 1800's.

She taught at a rural school (\$22.50 per week) in the Town of Fremont. The old school house and original road to Fremont are both gone. Her uncle, Bert Helmer, who was a Town Justice, volunteered his young niece for the job of Town of Fremont Historian for \$50 per year. She recorded three full scrapbooks, worked on the Town of Fremont Centennial, and Old Home Days, among other duties. Her most personal recordings were of the renowned Fremont Band. She has fascinating first-hand histories (from her father and uncle) of the band's accomplishments. There were five young men from the Town of Fremont lost in World War II, and written accounts are preserved by Onalee. She talked of the oxen driven in the Centennial parade. Her father and uncle also had a role in the Mill, for which Stephens Mills is named. After she began raising her family and returned to teaching, she had less time to devote to the job, and eventually, another person took on the duty. Onalee was invited to a Canisteo Valley Historical Society meeting by Madge Rutski, and her longtime interest in the historical roots of our hills and valleys led her to leadership roles in the society (President and Treasurer) until she was in her 80's. Onalee revealed that her interest and loyalty to the Canisteo Valley Historical Society is part of her identity. She said, "It's who you are; you just can't help it." It appeared that her pride in her own rich family history led to a natural extension to local history. However, on a practical note, she acknowledged a pattern familiar to most of us: "It doesn't interest you until you get past the age of 45...what are you going to do about it." (I sensed that it was a declaration, not a question!) She treasures a fabulous personal copy of an 1891 Historical Gazetteer of Steuben County, purchased in Springwater. Her copy is a single volume, but she has seen a reprint of two volumes.

When she spoke of Arkport, her eyes danced when she recalled the square dances at Odeon Hall; she loved going there. She recalled taking shifts at the society's booth at the Steuben County Fair, and, like many, referred fondly to the monthly Sunday afternoon meetings as "tea parties". She wondered how Helen Karr could ever write up the minutes, when not much business had transpired. Her favorite field trip was the trek to Bishopville to find the headwaters of the Canisteo River.

When asked why she would think it important for a historical group to carry on, the firm teacher in Onalee came to the surface immediately: "They must, they must!" she exclaimed.

The second and third people interviewed are **Jim and Edith Piatt**. Neither grew up in Arkport, and are two of the many who relocated in Arkport, becoming an integral part of the community's fabric. Jim's father was involved in the Allegany County establishment of Rowe and Kennedy, a dealer in beans. The family lived in Angelica. Donovan Piatt was transferred to Arkport to develop an extension of the business at the milling facility on Hurlbut Street (eventually becoming Kilbury Feed, before the fire). The family, however, was required to relocate in Arkport (29 West Avenue) in 1940, when Jim was a pre-teen. Donovan Piatt not only developed a business important to Arkport, but served as Mayor and President of the Board of Education, as well.

Edith grew up in a Borough of New York City, Queens Village, but remembers being very interested in traveling to the outskirts nearby where there was a more rural and agricultural existence. She ended up in our rural small village after meeting Jim during his military service years. They returned "home" and raised their family.

Jim has served as Vice-President and Edith has served as Treasurer of the Canisteo Valley Historical Society. Both admitted that attending meetings with 3-6 people in the group was discouraging at times, but they didn't give up. Now, they are glad that they persevered. Both said, "It's the right thing to do," when asked what prompted their loyalty to the society. Though they do not say so, the minutes reveal that Jim and Edith have kept a pulse on local developments that could potentially impact the preservation of local history. They brought issues to the attention of the society and were instrumental in efforts to bring resolution.

They shared that it is important to set an example for the youth, so that the tradition of preservation is nurtured and maintained for successive generations. They said, "To lose an appreciation of local history would be a big mistake". They spoke seriously of their dream that a facility for the archives could be realized.

Jim and Edith shared many recollections of the group's activities: many cemetery trips, the visit to the Shawmut station in Garwoods, and the arts and crafts demonstrations at the Town Hall. The New York State historical designation sign at the Hurlbut House was a very pleasurable event to them. They particularly enjoyed visiting the homes of members who had treasures to share, such as old printing presses and railroad



Jim Piatt takes his shift at the Society's booth at the Steuben County Fair at Bath in 1973.

memorabilia.

The big blue notebook has revealed this two-part overview of the society. Despite the welcome changes, such as the name change, new leadership, and the growing membership, we remain true to the original notion of 1875: to collect, preserve, and appreciate our heritage.

As the society investigates the possibilities of reprinting the three Arkport historical books, a critical issue is pictures. We cannot make copies of the copies printed in the books. We need originals. If any readers can share original snapshots or photographs of old Arkport houses or buildings, please contact Nancy Glover. (607-295-7418) or email glover39@verizon.net. Please put historical society in the subject line.

A TRIBUTE

Editor's note: Rex McGraw, class of 1948, sent the following tribute of three Arkport women. I know that many of you will know these ladies and thought you would appreciate hearing how they influenced Rex's life.



The Bethesda monument is now located at Dr. Robbins of fice across from the old Bethesda Hospital. The monument has to be relocated to make way for the new Lowe's store.

After reading the list of people mentioned in the "In Memoriam" section of the Arkport Alumni newsletter, it struck me that three of the women listed had brought music into my life. The first, Marjorie Eason Strick, who had a lovely lyrical soprano voice, encouraged me to sing. I never felt I had much of a voice, but I could carry a tune and could read music. Eventually we joined the Presbyterian Church choir and under the leadership of Jan Collins, we both spent several years enjoying the Thursday night practices and the Sunday morning services.

About the same time I came under the influence of Onnolee Dungan in school. She encouraged me to play an instrument. After trying a few, I settled on the clarinet and played in the band through junior/senior high school. Onnolee also played an opera, "AIDA" in class one day and I have enjoyed all kinds of opera ever since. I even directed one later in life.

The third person influenced me in a different way. We were young teenagers. World War II was being waged and the jitterbug was all the rage. Nancy Fuller Pryor bought a record of Benny Goodman and, along with Muriel Crooks, she taught me how to dance, which lead to an appreciation of all kinds of contemporary music.

So, these three ladies in three different ways brought music into my life and made it much richer and pleasurable. Now I hope they are surrounded by the music of the heavens.

ARKPORT'S HOME BUREAU - *By Dorothy Jones Dunham*

Early in the 20th century, the Home Bureau was a meaningful development for the ladies of Arkport. The principal function was to educate and inform the ladies of proper, efficient, and more modern ways to run a household. Some skills were very functional and utilitarian; others were aesthetic and decorative. Equally important, the groups were a significant social network in village life. The umbrella authority over Home Bureau was the New York State Extension Service.

There was more than one group, and the groups seemed to be organized by age. However, if someone was interested in the activity of another group, they could transfer attendance temporarily. Women who were willing to be an instructor would be trained by the Steuben County Home Bureau or Cooperative Extension, and would

then return to the village to teach others. **Edith Piatt** taught leatherworking and chair caning, **Alma Dunham** taught furniture painting, Babe Sherner taught soil mixtures for plants, and **Blanche Robords** taught drape construction and coat making. The groups met once a month and, dictated by the activity, met either in a public facility such as the upper floor of the Old Post Office, or in a member's home. The groups averaged about 15 members. If there was a membership fee, it was so modest that everyone has forgotten about it.

Joyce Howe and **Peg Baker**, two busy young mothers, were approached by one of the older women, Elizabeth ("Libby") Jones, who helped the young women form their group. The young group called themselves "The Wise Wives." Joyce Howe has a leather purse she made in her group, as well as an aluminum tray which she learned to etch with acid. Alma Dunham and Blanche Robords still have the etched aluminum trays, and **Ruth Anna Smith** remembers making etched aluminum coasters. Alma Dunham has a foot stool she worked on; Edith Piatt used a wallet for years that she had made in her class. Many other skills and activities were remembered:



This snapshot, circa 1924, is of a gathering of nattily dressed Arkport ladies who are, most likely, a Home Bureau group. The fate of the four hens is up for speculation, but it would be an educated guess that a chicken dinner may have been the end result.

sewing, quilting, chair caning, rush seats, candle making, basket making, apron making, copper etching, furniture refinishing, gardening, and culinary specialties, such as Baked Alaska, lobster tails, and holiday treats. Both Ruth Anna Smith and Ida Amidon made and used sewing cabinets made in the classes. The cabinets were a wooden framed construction (by Bernard Smith), faced with fabric, swinging open to reveal space for threads, storage for mending, and shelves and pockets for sewing implements and tools. Ruth Anna Smith made a boudoir chair by padding a cushion for the seat of a wooden chair and adding a fabric skirt. She used it for many years. **Nancy Glover** recalls that her mother, Ida Amidon, made and used a similar piece for many years: a dressing table and bench covered with fabric and a skirt. She also recalls her mother's brightly decorated plaster of Paris fruits mounted on the kitchen wall with hooks for potholders or keys. **Shirley Burdett** recalls making leather gloves which she used for many years. Coming to Arkport as a young bride in 1961 and knowing no one outside the Timmerman family, **Julie Timmerman** quickly joined "The Wise Wives". Along with joining church associations, her membership in Home Bureau introduced her to people with whom she has maintained strong friendships for almost fifty years. She especially remembers the cooking and baking experiences (her first Baked Alaska!) and recalls going to the Bath Methodist Church for a cooking demonstration. She made Christmas stockings for her children at class, and remembers that unfinished business could be carried on to the next month.

There were always refreshments of light fare and dessert. Sometimes they went out to eat. All of the spoke enthusiastically of what they learned, and spoke fondly of the friendships and alliances strengthened through the Home Bureau groups.

ARKPORT TIMES

Ernie Dungan brought a copy of the "Arkport Times" dated March 25, 1978 to our historical meeting. No one remembers who was responsible for publishing this newspaper. The phone number "to call to report news leads" is 295-7965 but apparently it is not in service now. Can anyone tell us who might have been the editor?

Some headlines: "Parents and Teachers Vote Yes on State & National PTA" [Arkport]; Atomics to Hold Carnival [Atomics was the track club run by Mr. & Mrs. James Lusk]. [Ken Brooks] "Seeks election to School Board". "Pack 16 Scouts Take to Water" [a story about Arkport Webelos swimming at the indoor pool at Hornell's Middle School. Pack Master was Joe Kilbury; Webelos leaders Don Eagle and Ron Roosa.] "Mary High Scorer on College Court" [a story about Mary Loree playing in her first season of women's basketball at Genesee CC in Batavia]. "Bishopville Women Planning Cookbook" [Bishopville's United Methodist women are asking for recipes to be sent to Luna Munson].

SLATS' STONE – By Dorothy Jones Dunham

There were two blocks of cement, which townspeople called stones; one was in front of the Old Post Office, and the other stone was in front of the Arkport State Bank. Iron rings or hooks were imbedded in the stones, because the original purpose was for hitching. After awhile, the rings/hooks weren't there anymore, and the stones took on other purposes.

Shirley Burdett remembers when she was 16-17 years old, receiving mail from soldiers in World War II. Townspeople would correspond with young local men who were homesick for word from home. She said that the town girls would pick up their mail from the Old Post Office, then gather at the Stone to see who had received the most letters, and then share the news from the war.

Art Olds remembers, as a boy, playing “King of the Mountain” with his pals, and whoever could stay on without getting shoved off was the King. He also recalled that travelers waited on the stone for the Greyhound bus.

Francis Amidon remembers that when young men were serving in the War (1945), there was a shortage of workers at harvest time. He and other boys would be released from school at noon and would walk to the Stone. They would be picked up and taken to harvest crops at various farms. This went on for 5-6 weeks. Francis, only 7 years old at the time, remembers working at Ted Flanders' farm on Big Creek, and the Auckland Farm on the muck, where he cleaned celery.

Larry Kame remembers that he, Larry Glover, Francis Amidon, David Porter, Charles Roff, and Roger Hurlbut would gather at the Stone and wait to be picked up by Charles Williams, who trucked them to William Brown's farm to pick potatoes. They would be returned to the Stone at mid-day to find lunch, and then would be picked up again to finish the day at the farm.



This is a snapshot of Bing Howe sitting on Slats' Stone, which was located on East Avenue next to the Old Post Office.

From age 12 to 16, **Rex McGraw** remembers being picked up to work for Winfield Taylor. He recalls hot summer work-days, 10 hours in length.

It was Slats, however, who claimed the Stone in village lore. His given name was Floyd Hotchkiss. According to Larry Kame, twice a day Slats' mission began at the depot, where he picked up the bag of incoming Arkport mail thrown from the train. He put the mailbag in the wooden bed of his 1932 Chevy coupe and drove to the old post office. After he delivered the mailbag, he would sit on the Stone (chewing and spitting Red Man chewing tobacco), watching the village activity, while the post office workers sorted incoming mail and filled the bag with outgoing mail. Then Slats would take the outgoing mail back to the depot for the next train. Art Olds recalls that there was a hanger at the depot and that Slats would hang the outgoing mailbag between two hooks on the hanger. When the train approached, a mechanical arm, which extended out from the mail car, hooked the mailbag and retrieved it into the mail car. At the same time, a mail car attendant would throw the incoming mailbag from the train. Art always hoped that there was nothing breakable. **Norman Kennell** recalls that Slats was the only person in the village who was issued a pistol by the U.S. government. While he was in charge of the U.S. mail, he had the responsibility to protect government property. As Slats was observed occupying the Stone for stretches of time during a day, it became known as Slats' Stone.

Slats was a loyal follower of Arkport's baseball town team. He was the official scorekeeper, passed the hat to collect donations from the spectators, and it was said that he never missed a game. Art Olds remembers pitching on a very hot Sunday afternoon, and was distracted by a dry mouth. Slats offered some tobacco, which remedied the affliction. However, Art recalls that the chew didn't agree with his system; time out was called as Art went behind the stands to “upchuck.”

One August Sunday afternoon in 1954, at a Town Team ballgame, Slats passed away at the age of 69.

Eventually, the Stones were removed, but the stories live on.

If anyone recalls the origin of Slat's nickname, please contact Nancy Glover.

If anyone has memories of Cal's Ice Cream Parlor or Ann's Blue & White, please contact Nancy Glover

ARKPORT'S FIREMEN'S CONVENTION – By Nancy A. Glover



Caption under the Evening Tribune picture reads: Members of the Arkport Volunteer Fire Department put the finishing touches on a fence that will surround carnival grounds just south of the village [held where "The Oaks" is now]. From left are Jim Gentile, vice president; Wayne Pfaff; Fran Amidon, president; and Bill Bridge, fire chief. The carnival is part of the five-day Steuben County Firemen's Association Convention in Arkport from August 13-17, 1963.

Editor's note: Does anyone remember when Arkport hosted the Steuben County Firemen's Convention in 1963? I do, because I sold tickets (recruited by my brother, Fran Amidon) for the rides at the carnival, my one and only experience as a "Carney."

The article goes on to tell about the convention. These are some of the highlights from the article. "A county fire queen contest, a country and western music jamboree, and a giant firemen's parade will highlight the Steuben County Firemen's Association Convention Aug. 13-17. All 43 firemen's units in the county will be participating in the annual five day event. Arkport Hose Co. No. 1 will be host to the firemen.

A carnival will be on the convention grounds Wednesday through Saturday featuring 10 carnival rides, plus food, drinks, and game booths.

The Steuben County Fire Queen contest will highlight Friday's activities. Ten companies so far have registered their queen in the contest. The contestants will be judged on poise, their answers to questions and general appearance.

The parade will begin near the Arkport School, proceed down East Ave. to Main St. where the marching units will be

judged, and then onto the highway south to the carnival grounds. On Sunday afternoon the firematics competition will begin at the carnival site."

ARKPORT'S TOWN TEAM – 1950

Phil Harvey's memories: "Edgar Karns was our manager but he also played when needed. I was the catcher and I had an old worn out glove that I used. Frank Rose [Arkport's school coach] had the fastest pitch of anyone and my hand would be so red and sore afterwards that I could barely move it. I remember the team as a great group of guys but I did not play long as I went into the service the year after this picture was taken."

Art Olds, now living in West Virginia, has the following memories: "I played mostly first base and pitched; a "lefty". We played most of the same towns we played in high school plus several in other counties including Andover, Wellsville, and Hornell. We always delighted in beating Hornell and we usually did! Bob White was an outstanding athlete and could play any position. He was a very good pitcher. Edgar Karns was our manager and would occasionally serve as a pinch hitter. Wally Shroyer was also an outstanding athlete and catcher; Frank Rose, the high school coach, played second base; Ted Flanders played third base or in the outfield. I don't remember what positions the others played. There were several others who played on the team; it just depended on who was available. I was working in Buffalo in 1950 so I made that drive every weekend. Arkport had only one team. This was a good team but some of the teams dating back to the 30's were outstand-



ing. There were the three Karns brothers, Edgar, Earl and Jimmy, Claude Isaman, Ron Timmerman, and Ed Shroyer (Wally's dad). Jack Howe sent me a snapshot of that team. I was 14 years old in that shot – we played anyone! There were several traveling teams from all over the state during that era. I remember one team from Rochester called “Bucks Bears,” an all Black team, and they beat us. I should mention I believe that most of the players in the front row of the picture were in high school except for Ted Flanders and Huey Jones”.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Phil Harvey & Art Olds for their memories. If anyone has other pictures and memories of Arkport I would be glad to publish them.

This 1950 picture of Arkport's Town Team recently appeared in the “Old Photo Album” of the Evening Tribune. It was provided by Phil Harvey, a 1950 graduate of Arkport Central School, now living in Hornell. Front row left: Charlie Barnes, Ted Flanders, Phil Harvey, Hugh Jones, Al Benning & Russ White. Back row left: Edgar Karns, Bob White, Wally Shroyer, Leon White, Art Olds, Ward Davis & Frank Rose.

FUNDRAISERS

The Historical Society is in the process of doing fundraising projects for the reprinting of the three Arkport “history” books. A calendar

with pictures of Arkport and Hornell is now being printed. Linda Burdett, Dorothy Jones Dunham and I have been to several surrounding towns to their village/town halls and libraries plus people's homes to scan old pictures of the area for a DVD. We have pictures of Arkport, Hornell, Stephens Mills, Canaseraga, Almond, and South Dansville (formerly called Rogersville). We are also considering having postcards of Arkport printed. We will have the calendar, DVD and postcards for sale at the alumni banquet (July 11th at the K of C in Hornell), at a booth at Summerfest, July 12 & 13, and by mail.

THANK YOU

I have “promoted” Dorothy Jones Dunham to Assistant Editor of the newsletter. Her help has been invaluable in researching and writing stories. Thank you Dorothy; I could not have done it alone! Also, I wish to again thank Mr. William Locke at Arkport Central School for allowing us to have the newsletter printed at the school. Mr. Ross Munson and his design students have done a wonderful job in editing and printing the newsletter. A big thank you goes to Mrs. Linda Burdett for her expertise with newsletter suggestions and for producing the DVD.

MEMBERSHIP

If you would like to join the Canisteo Valley Historical Society, Inc. the dues are \$10 per year for individuals and \$15 for couples. Please make your check **payable to the Canisteo Valley Historical Society, Inc.** and mail to Larry Jones at P.O. Box 96, Arkport, NY 14807. All members will receive the quarterly newsletter. Meetings are held at the Arkport Village Community Room usually the first Tuesday of the month, but you don't need to live in Arkport to join.

Canistoto Valley Historical Society Inc.
is proud to present
Photo Memories of the Canistoto Valley

This DVD is a 30 minute video collection of pictures from
Arkport, Hornell, and area communities. Pre-orders will be taken by
calling (607)-295-7418 or emailing: gllover39@verizon.net

DVD Cost - \$15.00
2009 Calendar - \$8.00
DVD & Calendar - \$20.00

Orders may be picked up at the Summerfest Historical Booth.