

CANISTEO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

ARKPORT, NY

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NAME CHANGE

On August 26, 2008, I received a call from Karen Andersen in Albany about the name change to our historical society. The gist of the conversation was that they found no records of our ever being chartered, only incorporated, which she said is not all bad. For \$100 we may be able to be chartered and have the name changed at the same time. She was going to check with her boss, David Palmquist, at the NY State Education Dept. (We have to go through the Education Dept. because anything historical is considered educational.) We exchanged e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. On Sept. 22, 2008, I received an e-mail from David Palmquist with the procedure to file for the combination name change and application for a provisional charter. It is discouraging after four attempts but, if I persevere long enough, we may get this done.

OUR READERS WRITE US

I heard from **Rex McGraw** in Massachusetts who remembers sitting on “Slats’ Stone”. He writes, “I do remember sitting on the cement slab, whatever it was, waiting to either go work on the muck or go pick up potatoes. I always worked for Winfield Taylor. He was a wonderful gentleman who also taught me in Sunday School at the Presbyterian Church. I remember one Christmas he gave us all (mostly boys as I recall) a brand new pocket watch. Wow! What a gift! I worked for him each summer from the age of 12 to about 15 or 16. Then, of course, I got too sophisticated to work on the muck – ha! But I’ll never forget the hot sun and the black dirt and the ten, count ‘em, ten hour days.”

I received a picture from **Maurice Baker** from Canaseraga showing “Slats” and other local men working on the muck. **Art Olds**, now living in W. Virginia, sent one showing “Slats” at the town team dinner.

Also, Art Olds wrote, “I remember the old Shawmut Railroad that ran thru Arkport and thought it might make a good topic for your historical news. Matt Griffin was the station agent. His youngest son was Don, who graduated from high school in 1937, the first graduating class from the new school. He

would be in his late 80’s now. We used to “borrow” the manually operated sidecars and pump them up and down the railroad sidings. There were several passenger trains every day.”



Photo undated: From Left: Root Dungan, Mert Coburn, Floyd (Slats) Hotchkiss, Ray France, Milton Beebe & Roy Sheffield.



Circa 1950. From left: Hugh Jones, Charles Barnes, Orrin Hartwell, Bob White, ?, ?, Art Olds, ?, Edgar Karns, Leon White, Wally Shroyer, Floyd (Slats) Hotchkiss, ?.

In another e-mail Art updated his story by saying Matt Griffin was the station agent at the Pittsburg Shawmut and Northern Station. “The PS&N or as we kids call it, “Pretty Slow and Noisy,” also another name not so flattering was “PIG**** and Noodles.” I believe there were three Griffin boys; one was killed in a motorcycle wreck near Alfred. Sorry but I don’t remember their names.”

Joyce & Bing Howe added; “Slats” made celery crates for use on the muck, along with Alden Nephew and Ray Wallace. They would have a mouth full of nails and spit them out to hammer in. They were really amazing to watch because they were so fast making the crates.” They’re not positive but think maybe “Slats” got his nickname from using the slats to make the crates.

ARKPORT/RAILROAD MEMORIES – By Lois Dungan

As a child I remember a man named “Griff” going to the Erie depot twice a day, morning and evening. He would pick up the mail from the trains and take it back to the post office in a big push cart. The cart was probably 4 or 5 feet square with long pole handles and really big wheels. He walked between those handles pushing the cart. He always spoke to us kids as we were playing in the yard or on the street somewhere.

The mail bags were handed off the train when it stopped at the station, but at night the mail was placed on a pole near the tracks. The man inside the mail car snagged it inside with a pole. I doubt they threw any mail off the train at night.

I remember eating supper about the time the “flyer” passed through Arkport and you could almost set your clock by it. We often met the train coming from Buffalo at 8:00 pm; we talked to the passengers on the train and found that to be a real source of entertainment.

Since we lived close to the railroad, we saw a lot of accidents and learned to have great respect for trains, which continues to this day. We saw lots of derailments. I particularly remember one that had several carloads of artichokes – a very strange fruit for someone who had never seen one.

In the very early days of our lives, the Shawmut also ran pretty close to our house. One day my mother caught my brother Al putting Janet on the train while they were stopped at the station. I think the conductor brought her home.

My sister Carol and I used to take the 11:00 a.m. passenger train to Hornell to do our shopping and then ride home with Dad when he finished work about 3:00 pm. We ate lunch at Woolworth’s or at Dunn’s Drugstore. Of course, we always had our pictures taken at the 5 & 10 in that little booth.

Life was very free then; no one was kidnapping little children. Our mothers didn’t care where we were because we were always with the Piatts’, the Parsons’, the Johnsons’ or others, playing on the railroad tracks, swimming in the Canisteo River or ice skating in the winter, playing baseball, playing in Piatts’ feed mill, etc. We were required to be home on time for meals and do our chores.

One time Jim and Dean Piatt and the four of us went swimming in the Canisteo River when it was at flood stage. We tied ropes on the trees and took turns swimming out into the raging torrent of the river. I remember losing my grip and ending up on Joe Jones’ fence down river.



1944 train wreck at Hurlbut Street crossing.

DR. WOLFGRUBER – *By Nancy A. Glover*

On a beautiful, sunny day in July 2008, my sister, Martha Rink, and I went to see Dr. Paul Wolfgruber and his wife Jeanne at their lovely home on Loon Lake. Dr. Wolfgruber, who was Arkport's doctor for many years, had agreed to be interviewed by me. It was so enjoyable sitting on their deck visiting and watching the boats go by with the people always waving at us. There is something about water, whether it is a lake or the ocean that is always so soothing and relaxing.

I remember Dr. Wolfgruber as a gentle, soft-spoken man. He never seemed in a hurry, listened quietly to your problem and always seemed to have the answer. Another thing, which always amazed me, he never failed to ask about your children, always calling them by name. How did he remember all those names?!

Whenever I mentioned that I had interviewed Dr. Wolfgruber, everyone has the same reaction. "Oohh. How is he doing? He was my favorite doctor." And they would immediately launch into a story of how he had correctly diagnosed a medical problem for them or a family member, thus easing their pain, curing them and/or saving their lives; how kind, how gentle he always was. I also asked several nurses about Dr. Wolfgruber. The answer was always the same; "He was the best diagnostician around." And who would know better than nurses how a doctor would perform?

Dr. Wolfgruber was born in Buffalo, NY. At age six his family moved to the suburb of Ebenezer, now called West Seneca, where he went to grade school and graduated from high school. I asked him when he decided to become a doctor. He said he was probably nine or ten years old when he decided that's what he wanted to be. He'd always had a "scientific bent" plus the family doctor had a great influence on him.

Dr. Wolfgruber earned a Bachelor's degree from Houghton College in 1940. He then went to Buffalo Medical School; later called the University of Buffalo. The U.S. Army took over the school in 1943, with the students becoming Privates in the Army. In addition to their medical studies, they took all the ROTC courses and later did basic training at Fort Dix. In December 1943, the students were required to do an accelerated program and he became a MD in 3 years and 9 months. Dr. Wolfgruber did a nine month internship at Millard Fillmore Hospital in Buffalo. When his internship was completed, the Army sent him to Carlisle, PA to Medical Field School for three months. He was then commissioned as a Lieutenant.

Dr. Wolfgruber served with the U.S. Army Medical Corp. in the European Theater of Operations during WWII. He was assigned to the 1524th Engineers Construction Group as a medical officer for a 100-man unit of Engineers and Draftsmen. Later in the war he was the medical officer stationed in Germany and France with the truck and construction battalion, which rebuilt bridges. When asked if he tended any wounded soldiers during the war he said he did not. He was stationed in a building in Germany, which was taken from the Germans during the final stages. This was during the final stages of WWII after V-E Day* and there were not many wounded; it was mostly injuries caused by accidents during construction, plus he also did food service inspections. The people in France were very glad to see the Americans; waving and throwing kisses from the windows. The soldiers were offered loaves of bread in exchange for the American candy and cigarettes.

After V-E Day, he was shipped from Marseilles, France to Manila through the Panama Canal. During that time he did medical care on board ship for three to four weeks. From there he was sent to the capital of geographic Batangas in the Philippines to a construction camp site, a unit of 1700 men living in tents, where they did a lot of medical care. Dr. Wolfgruber was one of three medical officers, (he was about 26 – 27 years old) doing regular sick call. The base was called Sub Base R, which was the base set up for the invasion of Japan. The atomic bomb was dropped while they were stationed at Batangas. Dr. Wolfgruber felt the atomic bomb was a terrible weapon but it did prevent a high toll of lost lives, one million men estimated on both sides. Dr. Wolfgruber was stationed there until July 1946. When he returned from the war, he was married in September 1946 to Leona Kumro from Tonawanda, who was a nurse at Millard Fillmore Hospital. They had two sons, Paul (Wink) and Kurt. Wink was killed in an accident when he was a teenager. Kurt is President of Oppenheimer Funds, Inc and lives in Manhattan. He has four children, two boys and two girls; one of the girls is entering medical school this fall.

In 1946 Dr. Wolfgruber heard about a Dr. Persson, a long time doctor who was looking for help. He joined his practice and worked from 1946 – 1949 at Star Lake, NY, located between Watertown and Lake Placid. There



Dr. Paul Wolfgruber in 1949 from the newspaper clipping

was an iron mine in Newton Falls, where low-grade ore was mined by Jones & Loughlin Co.

The Exchange Club in Arkport was looking for a doctor and he accepted the position. Edgar Karns helped arrange for a house and the town welcomed the Wolfgrubers in July 1949. His office was in the basement of his home located on Brush St. He was readily accepted by the community and the Presbyterian Church. Walt Sherner was organist at the time, and Dr. Wolfgruber joined the choir, which he enjoyed. He also joined several organizations and served on many boards while he was a local doctor. Among his favorites, was the Arkport Exchange Club, which he said did many good deeds for the residents of the community. Dr. Wolfgruber said he now considers Arkport his hometown. He practiced in Arkport until he moved his office to the Medical Arts Building in Hornell in 1968. I asked if he did any surgery and he replied, "Not much, mainly I took care of skin lesions but I did assist other doctors in surgery."

He thought Arkport Central School was excellent. He served as school physician from 1949 – 1989. I remember getting immunization shots at the school and wondered who paid for them. He said that every spring the Steuben County Health Dept. held clinics at the schools and he gave several hundreds of shots at that time. They no longer have school physicians. At that time Dr. Wolfgruber also served as health officer for the Town of Arkport, Hornellsville, Town of Fremont and the Town of Dansville. I asked what a Health Officer's duties were and he replied that mostly they gave immunizations at the school, investigated septic tank failures, and handled complaints.

When I asked how many babies he had delivered over the years, he said he really didn't know. I knew he had been honored by the Exchange Club in 1989, and at that time he thought he had delivered about 1200 babies. He said that was probably about right but never really kept track. He stopped delivering babies in 1979.

Dr. Wolfgruber never mentioned it so I brought up the fact that he was responsible for bringing the technique of blood exchange transfusion for Rh babies to the Hornell area. It was one of the many things he was honored for by the Arkport Exchange Club. Jeanne spoke up at that time and said "If you hadn't mentioned it, I would have because Paul would not have mentioned it." I asked him to tell me about it. Dr. Wolfgruber said that he read about the transfusion in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine. He said that hospitals were not as strict then as they are today so he was allowed to perfect the technique. He worked with Dr. McRoberts, a pediatrician in Hornell. They saved quite a few babies at that time. Other women heard about it and came to Hornell from Wayland and Rochester to have their babies. Rh babies came after the second or third babies. With smaller families today it has lessened the chance of Rh babies. There was a family in Wayland who had several babies that needed to be transfused and it was done in Hornell. It was a very slow process with makeshift equipment but it worked. One unit is 500 cc. Dr. Wolfgruber would take out 20 cc at a time from the umbilical cord, then inject them with the same amount back through the umbilical cord until the baby's native blood was "washed out". If the Rh blood was not "washed out", it would cause jaundice, which caused brain damage and anemia, and the baby died. This jaundice is different than the temporary jaundice that babies get. Today women are given an injection which prevents the development of the antibodies of the Rh factor.

I asked about the cases of polio in our area during the 1950's. Dr. Wolfgruber said that Arkport and the Steuben County area had mild cases of polio. He volunteered at a clinic in Steuben County and gave injections of gamma globulin to the children of the whole county, which shortened the epidemic. There were two iron lung cases at St. James in Hornell, one a young woman in her 20's. Today, instead of an iron lung, doctors would perform a tracheotomy on the patient. The doctors were required to keep records of all infectious cases. He donated his volumes of records to the Arkport Village Hall.

I asked what new medicines were developed during his career that he considered the most helpful. He immediately said that the polio vaccine and penicillin probably saved the most lives. Penicillin was especially important in helping cure rheumatic fever, which started with strep throat and joint pain, eventually affecting the heart. The County Heart Penicillin Program was centered in Canisteo.



Dr. Wolfgruber in 2008

Dr. Wolfgruber and Jeanne were married in 1969. Jeanne has 6 daughters and one son (who died in an automobile accident) from a previous marriage. Between them they now have 10 grandchildren. Dr. Wolfgruber retired in 1989 at the age of 70½. For many years his hobby has been woodworking. He especially enjoys making cutouts of different birds and painting them. He has a beautiful display at their home plus he has given many of them as gifts for all the members of the family. He is now 89 years old and has been in good health until the spring of 2008 when he was diagnosed with Bell's Palsy.

Dr. Wolfgruber is still the same gentle, kind and soft-spoken person he always was. He said he always considered Arkport his hometown. From all the people I have spoken to, I realized that the Arkport area people still considered Dr. Wolfgruber "their beloved doctor!"

**V-E Day – May 8, 1945, the date of victory of the United Nations in Europe in World War II.*

*[Editor's note]: There is a clipping dated July 6, 1949 in a scrapbook that **Ruth Jones Woodruff** made during high school about Dr. Wolfgruber's arrival date of July 15 to Arkport to begin his practice. The article gives credit to those who helped bring Dr. Wolfgruber to Arkport. The article states: "Dr. Wolfgruber was obtained through the efforts of the local Exchange Club which had advertised for a doctor in medical association magazines. Local committee members, which have been successful in obtaining a doctor in Arkport, is comprised of Edgar Karns, Murray D. Gates, Lester J. Taylor, Mayor C.E. Hunt, Robert Elsenheimer, Edward C. Haynes of the Village Board; Mrs. Evelyn Fuller and Mrs. Mildred Latimer of the Parents-Teachers Association; Ernest Baker of the Legion Post; Charles Coolidge from the Hose Company, Milo E. Stearns, Ralph M. Greenlee and Kilian Schneider, representing businesses in Arkport."*

*Another addition to Dr. Wolfgruber's story from **Doris Jones**: Shortly after Dr. Wolfgruber had set up his practice he delivered his first Arkport baby. On October 21, 1950, Ronald Joseph Karr was delivered to first-time parents Robert and Helen Karr of Stephens Mills. Over his career, he delivered twins but not until seventeen and one half years later in May of 1968, did he deliver his first set of boy twins, Rodney and Russell Karr to Robert and Helen Karr.*

ANN'S BLUE AND WHITE – By Chuck Wellington

Ann's Blue and White sold the first soft ice cream in the area and they called it custard. "As I worked in the gas station by the old bank, I used to go to Ann's for lunch. I remember Cal [Coolidge] used to like to dip regular ice cream with his right hand and, fling it behind his back and catch it in a cone in his left hand."

At one time Cal had a slot machine or one-armed bandit out in front and he kept it covered with a small throw rug. One day when I was up there for lunch the deputy sheriff came in and visited with Cal for quite some time. When the sheriff got tired of standing he would sit on top of the slot machine. I thought for sure that after awhile he would knock that cover off the slot machine and we would all go to jail.

One time Everett "Rip" Alger did one of his usual sliding stops and when he came in someone said, "Couldn't you get any closer?" He told him yes and went out and drove up the second time but stopped too late and hit the building.

These are some of my fond memories of Ann's Blue and White, which was the local meeting place.



"Rip" Alger in front of ice cream window.

From **Rex McGraw**, his memories of Ann's Blue and White. "I was thinking about all the hours we used to spend in Cal's Ice Cream Parlor. It was the hub of activity during my high school years, 1944-48. Jim Hurlbut, Harold Savey and I used to spend hours talking to Cal till he closed at 11:00. I can't imagine what we had to talk about and I can't imagine that he made a living from the place. It did keep us off the streets."

HOBO MEMORIES: Shirley Burdett wonders if anyone remembers the “Hobo” that her family called “red haired whiskered man.” He came several time to Ma Howe’s house to eat. Does anyone have any memories of any hobos that might have stopped in Arkport?

STEARNS HARDWARE – By John Senka

I’d like to share a young boy’s perspective of Stearns Hardware back in the 1950’s and ‘60’s. As young boys the hardware store was an exciting place to visit. The store had a little bit of everything one could imagine. It was a combination of hardware, variety store, toy shop, sporting goods store, etc. What really made the place interesting were the people that worked there, especially Milo Stearns himself. Milo put on a stern outerwear but was a “teddy bear” at heart. He had an odd sense of humor and enjoyed teasing us young guys. We frequented his store often. Can you guess why 8 and 9 year old boys would shop there a few times a week? We bought fish hooks and sinkers! Milo had them displayed in cupcake tins and they sold for a penny apiece. I can remember Chuck Schwartz, Jay Voorhees and I would often fish at the dam. In preparation for the fishing we’d pick up all the pop bottles we could find on the street and cash them in at Jones Market or McCarthy’s store. Then we’d take the few cents we had and head for Stearns’ Hardware. We’d be met by either Milo or the Number 2 man, John Libby. John was a little more “user friendly” as they say today and was always pleasant and helpful. Since he was an outdoorsman, John could instruct us as to the best bait for our hooks, how many sinkers to use and the type that worked the best.

I remember as scouts, Duffy Elsenheimer, Ronnie Fox and I would buy paint pails from Stearns’ to use as cooking pots. In those days we all had soap box cars we built and would run down Bishopville Hill. Where did we get our spikes and nails? Right. At good ole Stearns’ Hardware.

The upper part of the store was the home of Odeon Hall. We learned about the place in Miss Collins’ American History class. Sometimes we would sneak up the stairs to see the place.

As I got older I did some work for the Stearns family. I believe Milo had passed on by then but his wife Olive and her son Bill ran the store. Olive was a wonderful lady and active in the community. I worked for her and Bill at their homes when I was in high school. I remember when I returned from Vietnam and stopped in the store to say hello. I was admiring the shotguns when Bill said, “Which one do you like?” I said, “The Ithaca Featherlight.” Bill said, “Take it.” “But I don’t have any money”, I replied. “Take it anyway and pay me when you can” was his answer. I took it and eventually paid him back when I started a career but that incident speaks volumes about our little country hardware and the folks that ran it.

THE WAR YEARS IN ARKPORT

WWII in the 1940’s touched the everyday lives of Americans “back home”.

In 1943, **Francis Amidon** remembers that school boys had a duty at home and a way to help the soldiers at war. There were burlap bags left for the boys at the school building. After school the boys went to the farm fields and picked milkweed. The silk from the milkweed pods were put into the burlap bags to be picked up by the Army. American soldiers’ jackets were lined with the silk which had been picked by the Arkport schoolboys.

Two WWII ration books, one each for her mother and father, were donated to the historical society by **Mary Lou Gottschell**. There were still stamps inside for coffee, sugar and “spare” stamps. The front and back covers, plus some of the stamps, are shown. On the back cover under

Important it reads: “When you have used your ration, salvage the TIN CANS and WASTE FATS. They are needed to make munitions for our fighting men. Cooperate with your local Salvage Committee.” We welcome



memories from anyone who remembers how the war impacted daily life in Arkport.

ARKPORT AUTHORS

There are two more former Arkport residents that have published books, bringing our total (so far) to eight people. David E. Libbey just published his book "An American Farm" about his experiences living and working his farm in Alaska. David's book is available at the Arkport Library and also for sale on Amazon.com. According to David, his brother Ken Libbey, who lives in the Atlanta, GA area, has also published several books. David wrote in an e-mail: "Ken has several books in print. Ken took his PhD in political science at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University working for the State Dept. in Sweden studying the communist party. He taught at the University of Cincinnati and on to a high position at the GAO where he did special investigations and appeared in front of numerous congressional committees as an expert. He retired, ran for office in Oregon and almost beat an old timer. He has written books on politics and historical novels, one of which enjoys a medium of success."

As we go to print with this newsletter, we received word that David Libbey passed away in October. Our condolences go out to his family.

HALLOWEEN MEMORIES

We recently enjoyed an evening of trick or treating and remembered having this picture in our file.

In checking out the photo you will see an overturned wagon and some snow fence among other items piled in the middle of Main Street by McCarthy's store. But note on the left side of the picture... someone's outhouse! What a surprise it must have been for someone heading out the back door for a "morning visit" to find just a hole in the ground!

Those were the days!



CALENDARS & DVDs

We have Arkport/Hornell calendars (\$8) and DVDs with over 100 pictures of the surrounding area (\$15) for sale at Cy's or Jenkins. They make great Christmas presents. If you are interested, you may order by mail; check payable to Canisteo Valley Historical Society, P.O. Box 96, Arkport, NY 14807.

NEXT MEETINGS

Our meetings are usually held the first Tuesday of the month from 1:00 – 3:00 at the Arkport Village Community Room behind the fire hall. Our next meetings are Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2008 and Jan. 6, 2009. Please make a note of these dates. I will send a reminder of the meetings by e-mail. If I don't have your e-mail address, please e-mail your address to glover39@verizon.net. Please put Historical Society in the subject line.

MEMBERSHIP

Dues are \$10 per year beginning in January each year. Join now and get over two months free. Even if you live out of town, you are welcome to join. You will receive the quarterly newsletter, which are sure to bring back memories of your years at Arkport. Current members - please pay your dues by January 1, 2009. Send your check made payable to Canisteo Historical Society, P.O. Box 96, Arkport, NY 14807. Any extra donation to help with postage is appreciated.

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PATRON



*Check
these
out!*

*Can you guess what year
these pictures are from?*

*If you guessed 1948 you are
right!*

*Top picture - Faculty
Bottom picture - Class of 1948*

