

Recent Donation



Bob Tripp of Hornell donates a framed copy of a piece of sheet music from J.H. Stewart's Piano and Organ Store to members Sue Babbitt and George Dickey. The sheet music bottom imprint (logo) reads "Compliments of J.H. Stewart, Music Dealer No. 23 Main St., Canisteo, New York".

Stewart was born in Howard in 1853. He attended Canisteo Academy, taught school and engaged in the building business. In 1879 he became a dealer in Organs, Pianos and Musical Instruments and conducted that business until his death in 1926. The store was located at 23 Main St., the site of our current Historical Society Building. His wife, Rachel had a Millinery Shop on the second floor of the business.



If you look closely in this photo of Main St. in 1887 you can see the store sign " J.H. Stewart, Pianos and Organs". (2nd store from right)

According to the 1887 census, there were 6 grocery stores, 5 dry goods, 1 hardware, a music store, harness shop, drug store, *The Times* newspaper, two attorneys, one cigar store, a single dressmaker, a tannery and gristmill located on Canisteo's central thoroughfare.

*Photo and verbiage from 2002 First State Bank Heritage Calendar

In Our Collection

by George Dickey

It is my hope that this series of articles will acquaint people with the items that are available at the Historical Society. One of my favorites is a small binder entitled "The 1869 Diary of Allison Laine". While diaries of this date are not unusual, most are kept by women. This diary was kept by a teen age boy and is a look at life in Canisteo in the period shortly after the Civil War.

Who was Allison Laine should be your first question. He is the youngest son of Lewis Laine, the Presbyterian minister in Canisteo. When the diary starts on January 1st, 1869 he is 15 years old. The

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family consists of Lewis Laine, his wife Alida, Allison and his older brother Orville or Orton. Living nearby are two step sisters, Clarissa Bartlett and Narcissa Smith. Ed Bartlett has a farm on Bush Hill and the Smiths apparently live near what we call Belhaven today. Lewis Laine is in partnership with his son-in-law, Elias Smith in a General Store. Also living with the family are a Lucy Totten and a Jane Cashdoll who are working for the family to help with housekeeping. The family lives in the Presbyterian parsonage that is now the front portion of Somers Hall.

I won't reproduce the diary here, just look at some of the highlights. The first entry for January 1st sets the format for the rest of the diary.

1/1/1869. I got up at 7 and did chores & etc It snowed hard all day Mrs. Taylor had a new Year's party of the sabbath school (56 there) had a good supper and Santa Claus came around with bag of Candy The boys came for me with the sleigh (sleigh) I went to bed at 11 Clear.

The spelling and punctuation (or lack thereof) is Allison's. Mrs. Taylor is either Mrs. Nathan Taylor or Mrs. William Taylor. The boys based on other entries are probably The Burrell twins, Marshall and Marcello. Allison mentions doing chores almost daily. These probably consist of caring for the horse, a cow and a flock of chickens the family keeps in a small barn behind the parsonage and making sure the wood boxes in the parsonage are full.

On January 14th He writes that he came home from school at recess and isn't going any more. This is not as serious as it would seem today. There were only six grades in the Canisteo Village School at this time and Allison has more than likely completed all of the work and is bored. There is no secondary (High) school in the village although his father and some other business men are in the process of organizing an academy or private high school which will open in 1872. He goes on to state that he sawed some wood and went to work in the family store the rest of the day.

On January 26th He writes that he went to Russell Roberts' on the hill below the center to get a girl and didn't get one. This entry raises questions, but later entries make it clear that he is looking for a girl to go to work for his sister as a housekeeper.

A 15 year old today would consider himself severely abused by the life Allison lives. Most days he works in the store or does chores at home working in the garden or cutting firewood. Sundays he goes to church. He does occasionally go fishing or swimming in the summer and ice skating in the winter. Other than that most of his recreational activities are centered on the church. Once a month there is a party he calls sociable given by one of the families in town for the teenagers, apparently to give them the opportunity to practice their social graces. The Burrell boys, Marshall, Marcello and Fred and a Charles Ashly are the only other teenage boys mentioned in the diary. There are several girls he mentions going to parties with; other than that it appears he has few friends his own age. He does get to go to Portage for a 4th of July Celebration with Marshall Burrell and Charley Ashly but that is the only time he seems to have spent much time with friends. You wonder if this is the way it was for all teenagers then or is it because he is the preacher's kid. He does get to go places with the horse and wagon, which I suppose is the equivalent of being able to drive the family car, but even this is either to take a family member some place or is work related.

This is just a brief look at Allison Laine's diary which is available to read at the Historical Society.