

# Kanestio Historical Society Times

23 Main St - P.O. Box 35 - Canistota, NY 14823  
(607) 698-2086 Wed - Fri 1-3 PM Monthly Meetings - 3rd Tuesday 7:00 PM

Summer 2017 [kanestiohs@gmail.com](mailto:kanestiohs@gmail.com) Gail Davis, Editor

## IN OUR COLLECTION

### Lena Whitenack Quilt made in 1904



Lena's handmade quilt is made of many different fabrics and embroidered with objects indicative to life at the time - a cow, kerosene lantern, laundry basket, etc. There are dozens of different stitches used to join the pieces that could serve as a textbook of embroidery stitches. Lena embroidered her name and the date in the center of the quilt. Charles and Lena's daughters Reah and Golda's names are also embroidered on the quilt. Son Roy had evidently not been born yet. The quilt has a backing of various larger pieces of fabric hand sewn together.

Lena's quilt has been donated to the Kanestio Historical Society for safe keeping as an important part of Canistota's history. The quilt had suffered damage at the paws of the family cat, which the Society was able to repair, and hopefully the quilt can now be enjoyed for generations to come.

### Current Projects

The Society has a collection of vintage clothing which has been carefully packed away to preserve it. Although we do try to display clothing at times, according to the experts items should not be on display for more than 3 months. Some items are just too fragile to display but are priceless when it comes to studying the clothing of the past, especially the skill and talent that went into many of the fancier dresses.

We have started photographing items to create a catalog so that members and visitors can view and appreciate our collection. We hope to include some of these pages in future newsletters.

Lena Whitenack was a seamstress in Canistota through the 1950's. She lived with her daughter, Golda and son-in-law, Herb Adams on the corner of Buffalo and Fourth Streets in a house that Herb built. Her sewing room was on the second floor of the house, where she spent most of her time, as the stairs were too difficult for her in later years. Her great granddaughter, Shelly and husband Greg Laker, live in the house today.

Golda's son, Fred, married Ann Garwood in August 1949. Herb and Fred built several houses in Canistota and Hornell including the house on Chestnut Street in Canistota where Ann still lives.

## Letter from our readers

I received the following e-mail from member Barbara Crump.

*I just received the Spring Newsletter, and realized how much I've missed coming down there. The newsletter reminded me of my time in school (1947-1955). Still remember most of my teacher's names, and remember a couple of interesting experiences. First was the first day of Kindergarten (Miss Jennings, later Mrs. Whitman). My mother had walked me to school from Union Street so I wouldn't get lost, but I had a problem the first day. She had walked me to the school entrance on Academy Street, which was the closest for me, but when school let out, I went out the front door which was closest to the Kindergarten room Greenwood St, and was totally lost. There was a policeman at the intersection of Academy and Greenwood streets. My parents had always told me that the police were there to help, so I bravely walked up to him and told him I was lost. He asked me where I lived. I told him I lived on Union St, so he kindly got me turned around and told me to go up to the next street, and I'd be fine. Don't remember the name of the street, but it was where the old silk mill still stood. I took his advice, and found my way home with no problem.*

*Another memory that is so clear is first grade with Mrs. Silverman, learning to read. This must have been the addition they added in the late 40's and our classroom was in the new addition, looking out (up) to the playground. I guess there must have been something still going on, because when we looked out the window, we could see big pieces of heavy machinery up on the playground. You can imagine what a treat that was for us at age 5-6. Finally, Mrs. Silverman found a unique way to keep our attention in class. She painted over all the windows with scenes from nursery tales. It was bright and colorful, and helped keep our attention on what was going on in class.*

*Another memory from that class was learning to read. We started out with a big flip board in the front of the room. Each sheet was a page from our earliest books. I'm sure at least some of you remember our favorite Dick and Jane. Anyway she would call on us to read from the flip chart. I guess we must have stayed on that flipchart for quite a while, because I think most of the other first graders were already reading from their first readers. As I remember, we were grouped (heaven forbid), so groups who finished one book were moved on to the next. We had the Red Book, the Blue Book, the Green Book, etc. Even my mother seemed a little*

*worried that we were behind all the other classes BUT in the sixth grade, we were separated into advanced, regular, and a little slower groups. Strangely, most of the kids who were in the advanced group were those who had been in Mrs. Silverman's first grade class. I guess getting a good strong base helped us all.*

EDITORS NOTE: Thank you, Barbara, for taking the time to send this e-mail. I welcome other readers to share memories of Canisteo, send ideas for future articles or comment on the newsletter. Your comments and suggestions will help to provide everyone with a better newsletter.

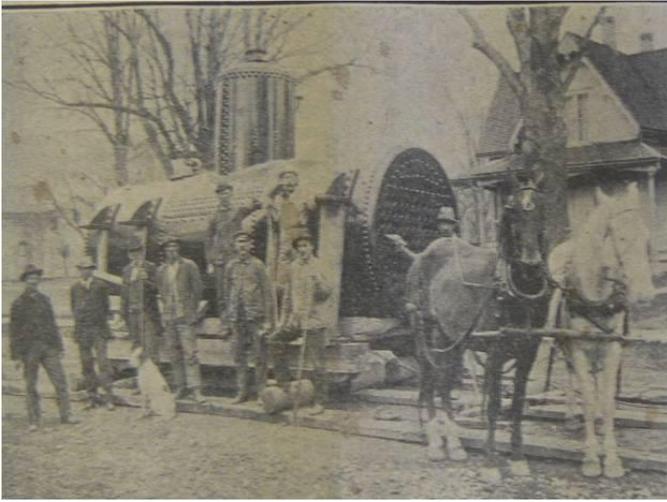
## Silk Mill



Barbara mentions the Silk Mill in her e-mail. My grandfather was a night watchman at the Silk Mill and I remember him walking to work, lunch pail in hand on many occasions but I never knew much about this business. The Historical Society is in possession of the paymaster's desk from the Mill along with the Bulletin Board bearing the required NYS mandated HR Notices at closing. We also have the wooden spools that held thread along with large spools of thread.

In 1904 Jean Rafford came to Canisteo from France to supervise the Silk Mill. Rafford was superintendent for 30 years and succeeded by his son, Alfred Rafford and later Russell Davis and Warren King.

The Silk Mill started operation in its new building on Russell Street on Nov. 9, 1905. In 1913 two large additions and a huge smoke stack were added along with new equipment.



*Moving the 34,700 lb. boiler from the Depot to the Silk Mill. (Photo courtesy of Steve Cotton)*

In the 1920's the company employed 200 people, mostly women for spinning raw silk. The payroll was nearly a quarter of a million dollars. In the late 1930's the government took raw silk off the market, except for parachutes, so the mill worked on nylon and synthetic materials. In the 1940's new modern machinery was installed but business was slow. Materials produced now mainly for industrial use in contrast to the early products which went into silk cloth. The Hugluet Silk Co. or Canisteo Silk Mill was eventually taken over by Stern and Stern Textiles, Inc. and operated by them until it closed in 1982.

**Check out our display of Silk Mill items and pictures in our second floor museum.**

## The Mysterious Disappearance of David Weatherby

Submitted by Jose Huerta

Born in 1826, his family was wealthy and well known in Addison, NY. The incident about him took place in February of 1852 in Canisteo. He was a buyer of lumber for the Harvey Roland Company of Maryland. He came to Canisteo to buy lumber and supervise the making of rafts out of the lumber he had purchased.

While in Canisteo he stayed at the Bennett Hotel. This hotel was also frequently used by men of doubtful reputation. During his stay at the Bennett

Hotel, David Weatherby became friendly with some card players who had meetings at the house of John Lewis in Main Street. That eventful February night, they gathered at Lewis's place for a game of cards. They played for several hours and some men began leaving assuring that no one won more than \$25 dollars that night. But Weatherby had a large sum of money with him. No one knows what happened in the building that night in February. Was there a fight? Did someone murder him for his money? Was he killed by accident in a fight? Did he lose so much money belonging to the company that he decided to leave town and head west? Did he change his name and identity? Positively known, he was never again seen after that night. Sentiments in Canisteo were divided as some believed that Wallace Bennett, owner of the hotel had something to do with Weatherby's disappearance. Some people assured that Weatherby was seen the next morning after his supposed disappearance at the Erie Railroad Station in Canisteo. Others stated that they saw Weatherby leaving the hotel on his way to the station. As a matter of fact, Weatherby did not take the morning train. He was very well known to many people in the Canisteo Valley and neither trainmen nor anybody else saw him in the train at all.

The disappearance of David Weatherby while in Canisteo has remained an unsolved mystery. Some people said that in the morning after the game, Wallace Bennett paid a large amount of money owed, declaring at that time he had won \$300 from Weatherby the night before. Did Weatherby play with money he held in trust or was he killed that night? To this date, this is one of the oldest cases of unsolved mysteries in Canisteo.

## Have you paid your 2017 Dues?

Please check the date above your address label to see if your dues are current. If you are a lifetime member, please consider a donation. Dues are the main funding for our newsletter which is still mailed to over 75 members. If you are able to receive your newsletter via e-mail, please let us know. You will benefit by receiving the newsletters with colored photos and it will save postage and time for our volunteers.

## Textile Collection Raccoon Coat



This coat belonged to Eloise Hollands of Canisteo. These raccoon coats were typically worn at the "Speak Easy" which were illegal bars during prohibition. Canisteo's "Speak Easy" was on 2nd street. The raccoon coats were also popular apparel at football games in the early 1900's. The trim or edge on the pockets seem to be made of raccoon tails.

Gail Higgins (daughter of Canisteo Librarian, Phyllis Higgins) bought the coat from Mrs. Hollands and wore it to college in the late 1960's. Gail relates that the dogs used to follow her across campus. There is a small rip/hole in the hem from that. Barb Arthur bought the coat from Gail when she moved to California. Barb wore the coat to a Christmas Eve service in 1982.

## A Civil War Nurse from Canisteo by George Dickey, Town Historian

On December 28, 1861 a woman named Caroline McNair volunteered as a nurse at the Army Hospital at S Louise, Mo. She was brought to my attention because in her application for a military pension there are several reference to Canisteo.

Information found on Ancestry shows she was born in Canisteo in 1831. In the mid 1850's she is the teacher in the Canisteo Village School. The 1860 Census shows her listed in the Hornellsville Census living with a Wells McNair and several young children. However, her pension application states she was never married so I'm not sure who Wells McNair is.

Caroline served as a nurse in the Army hospitals in St. Louis and Nashville until June of 1865 when the hospitals were closed.

1880 finds her back in Canisteo living with Elizabeth Mullholland, the widow of William Mullholland. She and a Harriet McNair are listed as the nieces of Mrs. Mullholland. She is apparently in poor health as a result of her services in the military hospitals.

In 1891 she is still in Canisteo but by 1896 she is in a nursing facility in Castile, NY when she dies.

*Editors Note: As you read through this article one has to reflect on the amount of time, dedication and love of history it takes to search through old records to trace the history and movements to research our ancestors. The article started when a member came across a name she'd never heard on Ancestry and asked George if he'd heard of her.*

**Know someone who would enjoy receiving our newsletter?** Pass your newsletter on and suggest a membership to the Historical Society. Our annual dues are a modest \$10. The upcoming alumni reunions are a perfect time to let your friends and classmates know about us and the treasure trove of Canisteo history housed at the Historical Society

## Coming Events - Save the Dates

**June 20** - Toni Stevens Oliver - "Searching for one's Ancestry"

**July 18** - 6:00 - Annual Picnic at President Larry Stephens'

**August 4** - 4 PM Steuben Country Historical Society Walk through Canisteo - this is a rain date from last August.

**August 15** - Outing to visit the new Andover/Allegany Historical Society. We will car pool and have lunch at nearby restaurant. Meet at 12:45 - est. arrival home 3:30

**September 19** - 7:00 TBA

**October 17** - 7:00 Craig Braack - Bi-centennial of the Erie Canal

**November 7** - Election Day Pie Sale 9-12. Beginning of Yesterday's Treasures Sale.

**November 21** 6:00 - Harvest Dinner

**November 25** - 5-8:00 Christmas in the Village

**December 9- 9-12** - Cookie Sale

**December 19** - 7:00 Christmas Program

**Looking for a unique gift?** We have a large selection of books filled with pictures and stories of Canisteo history for sale at the Historical Society.

### Annual Dish to Pass Picnic

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### Needle in a Haystack Treasure Hunt



Our annual dish to pass picnic will be July 18th, 6:00 PM at the home of Co-President Larry Stephens, 5296 St. Rt. 248, Canisteo. Bring your

own table service, drinks and dish to pass. (You might want to put a folding chair in your car)

The following information on the "Aber" House comes from the "From Past to Present" book on local houses published by the Historical Society in 1995.

Dorothy Aber and husband Laverne purchased the house originally built for her brother Harold and his wife Eva. In 1957 the Abers began an extensive renovation project on the house. The upright area which once housed the dining room, living room and parlor became one big room. A large addition on the south side became a family room, kitchen, utility room and bath. The kitchen is French Provincial Style. The family room is finished in cherry paneling. A unique feature of this room is the ceiling. It is finished with exposed beams: the space between is covered with rag carpeting. One wall contains a large fireplace with shelves on each side and a large mantle shelf running the full length of the wall. Sliding glass doors open the family room onto a terrace in the rear and the beautiful view of the hills.

The house was badly damaged in the 1972 flood and fell into disrepair in subsequent years. The home was purchased by the Stephens family in 2011 at a Tax Auction. Larry has restored the house bringing back the historic integrity of the home. The kitchen and other projects are still on Larry's to do list but the Abers would be very pleased with the renovated country farmhouse ranch.

### OUR NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK TREASURE HUNT

We have found notes in our files at the Historical Society that the Aber house was featured in the "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine after the remodel in 1957. The Aber's grandchildren have never seen the article. We are hoping that one of our readers might possibly have saved this article in an old scrapbook or have better research capabilities than this writer. If anyone remembers this article or can give us any insight it would be greatly appreciated.

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

## The Back Page

*This newsletter is*

*written in tribute to Virginia Dickey whose dream was a Historical Society to preserve and display local history for future generations.*

### Application for Membership 2017

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

Make check payable to:  
Kanestio Historical Society  
P.O. Box 35

Canisteo, NY 14823

***Donations gratefully accepted toward operating expenses.***

### 2017 Officers

Larry Stephens	Co- President
Sue Babbitt	Co - President
Jeanne Gore	Secretary
Gail Davis	Treasurer
Margaret Stephens-	Corresponding Secretary

### Directors

Sally Florence	2017
Russell Pierce	2018
Sue Babbitt	2019
Stan Arthur	2020
Jose Huerta	2021