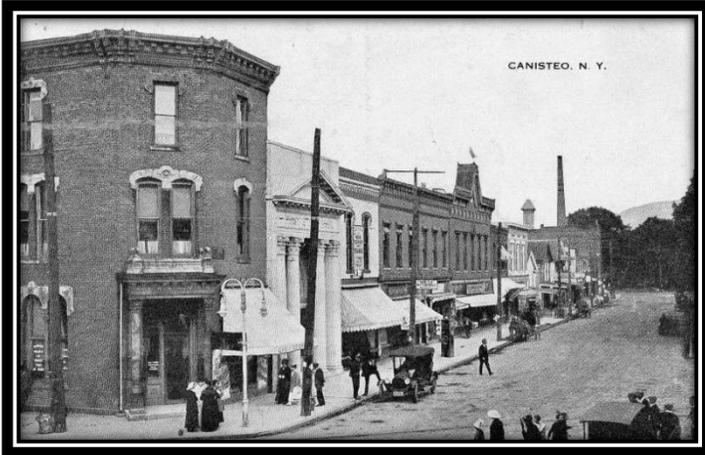


# Kanestio Historical Society Times

23 Main St - P.O. Box 35 - Canisteo, NY 14823  
(607) 698-2086 Wed - Fri 1-3 PM Monthly Meetings - 3rd Tuesday 7:00 PM  
[www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com)

Fall 2018 [kanestiohs@gmail.com](mailto:kanestiohs@gmail.com) Gail Davis, Editor



## Canisteo: Its Prosperity at the Turn of the Century

July 1967 College Term Paper by Diane Scott Miller

### Part II

Main Street Canisteo was a hub of activity at the turn of the century. After a quick glance at the advertisements in an early paper, one can see that the village featured a variety of well-stocked stores. Mrs. Pauline Boughner, who grew up in Canisteo, was kind enough to tell me about her parents' businesses that were located on the site of the present Canisteo Appliance Company. Her father, Mr. James Stewart, purchased the building in 1881 in hopes of starting a music store. The building was so large that he knew it would be impossible to fill it with music supplies. Thus his wife decided that she would have some type of business in part of the store. She soon decided on a millinery shop. Since she knew nothing about the trade, a professional trimmer spent several seasons with her. This person taught her to make frames for the hats, how to cover them with various fabrics, and

finally how to decorate them with different ribbons, bows, and flowers. A long counter was used as a display area and the hats were often stacked three or four deep. Mrs. Boughner remembers several cabinets of drawers which were full of different colors and types of fabric, various velvet and silk ribbons, and an assortment of artificial flowers. Her mother would go to New York City every fall and spring for the latest in frames and trimmings. According to Mrs. Boughner, who learned the trade herself when growing up, the biggest problem of all was fitting the hats over the big hairdos of the ladies. There were also six other high school girls in the the shop learning the trade while she was there. Many of these girls lived in the country and this was a means of earning enough board money to live in the village so they could attend high school there. Returning to the music store, this was originally stocked with organs and small instruments. It later carried a line of sewing machines and player pianos. Mr. Stewart often took oats, hay, horses, or lumber in exchange for his goods.

Back in these days grocery stores carried very little meat. If a person didn't have his own supply of pork and beef he would probably obtain it from a meat market. The Carter Market was located near the present Reitnauer's Antique Shop. People weren't greeted with the appetizing displays of meat that we find today. According to Mr. Crane, the majority of the meat was stored in a cooling room. This was similar to a modern cooler, with its thickwalls and door, but it was cooled with chunks of ice rather than a refrigerant. Much of the ice that was used in Canisteo came from a pond behind the present Newark Milk and Cream Company. In late winter the ice on the pond was chopped into squares and stored in sawdust in an ice house. This supply would last until the next winter. Crane

recalled that Carters killed and dressed a lot of turkeys which were shipped out of town in big barrels. Much of the meat in the store was from a slaughter house on the Purdy Creek Road. Chickens were killed and prepared in the back of the store. Meat wagons, similar to the milk trucks of today, delivered house to house.

Davis, Miller, and Crozier was a large dry goods and grocery store located where the Smith Furniture Manor now stands. It was typical of the general store at the turn of the century. A store like this carried clothing, shoes, small hardware items, and a line of groceries. Since people butchered their own meat or purchased it at a meat market plus grew and canned that own fruits and vegetables, the groceries would have been quite limited. Such things as crackers, flour, and sugar were in barrels and a clerk weighed up the designated amount. A pound of coffee was measured from another container and the beans were placed in a grinder with a hand crank. Ciscoes (A type of fish), sardines, and salt pork were in a brine in barrels. There was little variety in canned goods although salmon was usually available. All grocery stores had the old pot-bellied stove where the men sat around and discussed the latest news which probably included some gossip!! Mrs. Boughner recalled a friend who always went into the store when she got mad at her husband. She would buy and charge any and all items that took her fancy. I'm sure that the store owners didn't mind these family quarrels.

The Beehive Department Store which was run by M.N. Same and Bros. featured a weekly advertisement in the 1901 Times Republican. It boasted of a stock of \$35,000 including dry goods; men's, boy's, and children's clothing; millinery; cloaks; suits; and overcoats. Prices of this day are shocking compared with the inflated ones of today. Sale items for the week of January 3, 1901 included the following:

\$ .10 outing flannel — —\$.08  
Best calicos in the world — —\$.04  
Muslin by the piece — —\$.05  
\$5.00 men's overcoats — —\$3.38  
Children's suits — —\$.69

Boy's good school suits — —\$1.00 (24)

The Crandall and Stephen's Park Store ran an ad in the same issue of the newspaper which read as follows:

Blanket Sale

Reg. \$.85, sale price for \$.68

Reg. \$1.10, sale price for \$.85

Reg. \$3.50 wool blankets for \$2.98

Also on special: Horse blankets and lap robes, reg. \$4.00, now for only \$3.48

Tacked on the bottom of the ad was this note, "Farmers! When in town drive your team under our sheds at the side of the store.

Probably no business tells more about life at the turn of the century than a hardware store. The O.O. Laine Hardware Company was located on the site of the present Holland's Hardware. Mr. Laine, while he ran the hardware, also did all the repairs to the village water system. The water works was at that time privately owned by Mr. Ray Page of Hornell. Page also owned and operated the Hornell-Canisteo trolley line. Mr. Hollands who took over the Laine business in the early 1920s, told about the stock of an early store. Any "modern" housewife would have owned a bread mixer which came in sizes 4 or 8 denoting the number of loaves. The mixer clamped onto a table similar to a present day meat grinder. A crooked rod with a crank on the end, extended down through the machine. The crank was turned to mix the ingredients of the bread. The hardware also sold big round covered pans that the bread was put in to rise and then bake. Wash boards, galvanized wash tubs, and copper wash boilers (wash water was heated in these on top of the stove) were also standard items.

A housewife would also have needed a carpet beater if she had any rugs. These were first made from a single loop of reed but later of wire. A stock of oil lamps, lanterns, and buggy lamps was carried, plus buggy whips, horse and cattle blankets. The majority of people kept a few chickens so a quantity of chicken netting was sold. Anyone with a cow needed milk pails while the people who went to a farmer for their milk brought

along a milk kettle. These kettles had a narrow neck and a tight fitting cover. Shoes for horses which included the nails, came in sizes 5, 6, 7, 8 and were good sellers. The nails in these days were "cut nails" which meant that they had a square instead of a round head. Corn planters were an aid to farmers. This device which had a container on the side to hold the corn, was stuck in the ground and tipped forward to drop the kernels. (26) This is a mere sampling of the items in a hardware store at this time.

Another prosperous business was the photography studio of A.B. Stebbins which was located in the present Wilson Barber Shop on the corner of W. Main and Orchard Streets. This building, which has several large windows and a skylight, was specifically built for a photography studio. Mr. Crane showed me several family portraits that Mr. Stebbins had taken.

Probably no business at the turn of the century remained in existence as long as the Mitchell Drug Company. This store was located on the present site of the Canisteo Savings and Loan Company. Mrs. Evelyn VanSickle relays that her parents ran the store for sixty years, from 1881 until 1941. The business began as a partnership between her dad, Mr. J.W. Mitchell, and his brother-in-law, Dr. M.D. Ellison. In his autobiography Mitchell states:

Father bought me a new suit of clothes, and I then began the drug business on April 1, 1881 under the title of J.W. Mitchell and Company. I was 19 years old and had never had any business experience but with rigid economy on my part I made my way and something besides from the first.

In a few years Mr. Mitchell purchased Dr. Ellison's share of the business. As a side line Mitchell decided to start another venture of pedaling soda bicarbonate and flavoring extracts. I bought a team of horses and a wagon and hired a man to sell these goods on the road. It seemed for a time a good adventure, but it took large amount of money and I met with many discouragements, and this with my attention to the drug business, was more than I could handle.

He soon gave up this line and devoted himself full time to the drug store. Mr. Fred Crane recalled working at Mitchell's when he was in school. Early each morning he went in and chopped up a big pail of ice. He then climbed a ladder and filled the soda fountain with it. After school Crane made all the ice cream in an old hand freezer.

## Canisteo's Major Leaguer by Chuck Agonito

Many future major league baseball players passed through the Southern Tier playing for minor league clubs in Hornell, Wellsville, Olean, and Elmira, but at one time a professional baseball player lived in Canisteo.

His name was Howard Elmer Armstrong, a right-handed pitcher called Bob or Army by his friends. As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, a time before the minor league farm system we know today, he was a respected pitcher for many ball clubs we would consider semi-pro.

He made his major league debut on Sept. 30, 1911, pitching three innings in relief for the Philadelphia Athletics at Shibe Park. The visiting Cleveland Indians lost the first game of a double-header to Chief Bender, and now Armstrong, a schoolteacher and native of East Claridon, Ohio, was put to work against his former hometown favorites.

What happened this day was far less important than the people involved. The A's had already clinched the American League pennant by a wide margin. They had already won the 1910 World Series title against the Cubs, and would win their second series title a few weeks later against the N.Y. Giants.

Armstrong knew he was playing with baseball's best players of the day. He could not have known that he was now playing with some of the best ever to play the game.

Manager Connie Mack would lead the Athletics until 1950 and then be inducted into Baseball's Hall of Fame. Pitchers Eddie Plan, Chief Bender, third baseman Frank "home Run" Baker and second basemen Eddie Collins would be all inducted into the baseball shrine at Cooperstown. Pitcher Jack Coombs would finish with 28 wins against 12 losses, posting the league's best record just as he had done the year before, and Cy Morgan would notch 15 wins. Outfielders Danny Murphy, Rube Oldring, and Bris Lord were solid .300 hitters.

Cleveland also had a few notables. Player-Manager Napoleon Lajoie would hit .365 this year on his way to the Hall of Fame. Another guy called Shoeless Joe Jackson would finish the season with a .408 batting average and be well remembered, but not in Cooperstown.

It would be nice to report that the 22 year old Armstrong won the game and went on to a long career. Actually, Cleveland won 4-3 due to errors by the A's and Howard Armstrong was credited with the loss. The Sporting Life reported, "he made a good showing". This would be his final major league game.

In 1916 Armstrong would be recruited by Canisteo's Up-to-Date Advertising Co. Local baseball was a matter of pride, so the new shop foreman was really hired to win ball games. He moved here with his new bride Lucy Douglas.

Armstrong was successful at his trade and well liked. The Hornell Tribune's article about Babe Ruth's visit to that city cites Bob Armstrong playing in that game in 1916. He died in early 1926, leaving a wife and three young sons. The family moved back to Ohio, but the story doesn't end there.

Later that year the citizens of Canisteo raised money for a grave marker, and invited the Armstrong Family back for the dedication, even paying their fares. The widow and her three boys came back for the event. Realizing they were among friends, they stayed for the rest of the years in the Canisteo Valley.

*At the end of Chuck's submission was a hand written note - "perhaps you knew his three sons - Tom Caple,*

*Bob Armstrong and Jim Cline." The different last names puzzled me so I wrote back to Chuck for clarification.*

The family came back when the local citizens placed the monument. Tom was 2, Jim 4 and Bob 6. Widow Lucy Armstrong decided to stay. The two youngest boys were taken in by the Caple and Cline families of Hartsville. They were farmers, but Wil Caple owned the store in "downtown" Hartsville last known as "Carnes".

Tom Caple was a tank commander and Staff Sergeant during WWII. He was a very good pitcher and was offered a minor league contract with the Wellsville team. He told them he would only play in home games due to his family, so that didn't work out. Tom was a former officer of the Historical Society and instrumental in the construction of our building.

## Running the River

George Dickey, Historian

Part 2 – Arks

Once the Canisteo River was cleared for navigation and lumber rafts were going down the river, settlers began to look for a means of sending other products to markets down river. Arks had been used on the Susquehanna River for some time and it was only a matter of time before arks were tried on the upper river (Canisteo, Chemung & Cohocton).

The first Arks on the Canisteo were built by Christopher Hurlburt at Arkport in 1800. He built a saw mill and large warehouse on the river bank and began buying up wheat from farmers around Dansville and Geneseo and hauling it to Arkport. He shipped it to Baltimore on his Ark and sold it at a good profit.

Soon Arks loaded with wheat, oats, corn, potatoes, whiskey, shingles and finished lumber, and barrels of salted pork and beef were being sent down the river each year on the spring flood. In 1804 William Wadsworth of Geneseo began shipping live cattle from Arkport. Soon Ark loads of cattle, sheep and hogs were going down the river.

Irving Near in his book a History of Steuben County describes the process of building an ark.

" A suitable dry hard bank of the river was selected, a few feet above the high-water mark.

First, the bottom or "arkbed" was framed, planked and well caulked with flax or wool well saturated with pitch or tar and thoroughly driven in with wedges or caulking irons. The seams were then carefully smeared over with tar or pitch. This bottom was built of pine planks two inches in thickness, not more than sixteen feet long, and varying two to three feet in width. The bottom of the ark was from sixty to one hundred feet long and sixteen feet wide - the length of a beam. The bottoms were narrower and pointed at each end. The building was all done on the river bank adjoining the water's edge. Then the frame was turned on to the ways; it was moved to some convenient bank of the yard. Stem posts, three feet high, were set at the points of each end of the bottom, and post of the same height and size were placed along the sides. Then the outside of two-inch planks of the best quality were fastened to the sides and ends with oak pins. No nails were used. The stern posts were fitted to receive the oar-sweeps, which were about thirty feet long, made from small straight white pine fitted and provided with oar blades like those used on rafts as described before. In the center was a cabin or shanty for the crew, usually of four men, and conveniences for cooking their meals. Sometimes the whole craft was covered with a low roof, so that it looked like the pictures of Noah's ark, which it was sometimes called".

A ledger from a Canisteo store for 1837-38, has a number of references to running the river and arks. While the store is not named it is probably that of Ira Davenport considering the size of the operation. The river men are given credit at the store which they then draw on for goods or cash.

During the period that the ledger covers (April 1837 to July 24, 1838) the store purchases nine arks, four from Hawley Wilson, one from Edmond Cook and four from John Robinson. The store pays fifty dollars for each ark. Other entries seem to indicate that the store may supply some or all of the material for their construction so the price may be just the cost of building them. One ark is sent to Addison, the rest are loaded at Canisteo. The ledger shows 14 man days spent loading arks in March and May. Unfortunately it doesn't show what they were loaded with. By this time cargos were only going as far as Middletown, located in

Pennsylvania 20 miles south of Harrisburg on the east bank of the river. At that time it was a commercial center connected to Lancaster and points east by canal. The trip to Middletown took 7½ days when the river was high and crews were allowed 4½ days to return.

**Part 1 of this article can be found in the Fall 2017 issue of our newsletter available on our website at [www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com).**

## Old Christmas Ornaments



I know most of us don't want to start thinking about Christmas yet, but it will be here before we know it. Our ornaments for

our Historical Society Christmas Tree are a sad collection, most of which have been taken from our Yesterday's Treasures Sale. Do any of you have the beautiful old ornaments tucked away in your attic that you no longer use and you know your children won't want, that you would consider donating to the Society? Or, do you have a special ornament that reminds you of a loved one that you would like to donate in that person's name. We would gladly attach a tag saying the ornament was donated in someone's memory and hang it on our tree. We are looking for items for sale as well as ornaments for our tree. Christmas items go fast at the sale and are a big part of our fund raising. We start collecting for our sale after Halloween. Items go on sale Nov. 6th at the pie sale and continue until Christmas. Please keep us in mind.

## Coming Events - Save the Dates

**Oct. 16 - Ronald Putnam - Early Medical Devices-7PM**  
**Nov. 6 - Election Day Pie & Treasure's Sale - 9AM**  
**Nov. 20 - Harvest Dinner & Election of Officers 6:PM**  
**Nov. 24 - Xmas in the Village 5 PM**  
**Dec. 15 - Cookie Sale - 9AM**  
**Dec. 17 -Christmas Program- 7PM**

Kanestio Historical Society  
23 Main St., P.O. Box 35  
Canistota, 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 2018

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dues: \$10.00 Individual \*\*    \$15.00 Family\*\*  
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### *Donations gratefully accepted toward operating expenses.*

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