

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

2020 Vol. 3 - Summer kanestiohs@gmail.com Gail Davis, Editor

Canisteo Theatre

More memories from the 1950's



I was a young lad, probably between 6 and 8 years old, when I would walk from my Russell Street home, through the Turkey Path to stand in line outside the theater. I hoped the line would be short enough that I could make the first showing at 1:00. If not, I'd have to come back for the 4:00 show.

It cost a dime to get in. There was a candy vending machine where you could get a candy bar, pack of gum (Double Mint, Juicy Fruit or Beechnut), or a roll of Life Savers for a nickel.

If you wanted popcorn you took a small paper sack out of the side of the machine, put it under the popcorn dispenser, put a dime in the machine and it would fill your bag. No butter, salt or napkins - you had to wipe your hands on your pants.

There was one cartoon, usually Tom and Jerry, and part of a serial, Flash Gordon or Sky Commando. The main feature followed, usually a western or Tarzan.

There was an elderly lady (at least to me) and her daughter who ran the ticket booth but I can't remember her name. From scanning of yearbooks our young writer believes the daughter might have been Judy Clark(Pierce).

Do any of our readers remember the name of the theater lady or have memories of the theatre or any other memories from the 50's you'd like to share with us?

Monarch, Roe's Peerless, Plaza, Palace, Canisteo Cinema and Canisteo Theatre

After writing the article on the Canisteo Theatre I started researching to find out when the theatre was opened and when it actually closed. I was very surprised to find that the theater we remember was not the only theatre in Canisteo. From issues of the Canisteo Times and Times Republican I gleaned the following history of theatres in Canisteo. (Researched on Fultonhistory.com)

The oldest reference to theatres brought up articles of theatre excursion trains that ran from Shinglehouse, PA to Canisteo where passengers transferred to the trolley for the final leg of the journey to the Shattuck Theatre in Hornell for live performances.

Nov. 22, 1900 - Hereafter, the special theatre excursions of the NY&P which proved so popular last winter...will run direct to Hornell, trackage rights having been secured from the Erie. Last winter passengers were obliged to transfer at Canisteo to the Electric railroad. The street car service was so poor and unsatisfactory that hereafter the passengers will be taken direct to Hornell without charge.

1907 - The Monarch Theatre in Main Street Canisteo is doing a large business. The moving pictures are the best to be had and the entertainment is well worth the admission price.

Jan 29, 1908 - The Monarch Theatre, which removed from the Linderman building in Main Street on account of being leased into the laundry building in Depot Street nearly opposite the Times Republican building, opened for business Friday. Its new quarters are commodious and well arranged. Depot Street is now the entertainment boulevard of Canisteo. Mr. Herman E. Buck has rented the Linderman building where he will open a shoe store.

Our historian is puzzled as to the exact location. Buck's shoe store was located at the site of Beaver's Pharmacy while the Linderman Building was thought to be in the Manwell block on West Main.

May 10, 1911 - Canisteo is to have another moving picture show. I.R. Mason and H.H. Chapman of Hornell have leased the Roe building next to the Monarch theatre and will open a 5 cent show in a few days, Saturday night of this week, if their apparatus arrives in time. They propose to put on a fine show in every particular.

Pianists and even a violin player were hired at different times to provide music so one can assume these were silent films.

Ads for the Monarch theatre continue through 1913. Roe's Peerless Theatre continues through 1919. New updated equipment is constantly being installed.

August 16, 1916 - Due to the polio outbreak children under 16 are not permitted in movie theatres, Sunday School or any meetings or gatherings. *(Sounds eerily familiar as I'm researching this article under stay at home orders from the Covid-19 pandemic!)*

April 14, 1920 - Picture show soon to open doors. Work of remodeling the building in Greenwood St., which Kellogg brothers of Hornell purchased from G.W. Vincent, is going on rapidly. The outfit used at Canaseraga by a syndicate which did not succeed in making it pay has been purchased and is now being installed. The floor has been put on a

slope of 3 ft. and the seats and other apparatus will soon be in place. The theatre has a capacity of 200.

Aug. 18, 1920 - E. L. Laine remodeling the old theatre on Depot St. taking out the raised floor, circular seats and other fixtures making it a store again.

Mr. Kellogg continues to run the **New Theatre in Greenwood St.** for the next two years buying the building next door and expanding the size. He held fund raisers at the theatre to buy music and instruments for the town band because " There is nothing that does more to put a town on the map than a good brass band. "



Band in the Park 1916

The Canisteo Band was well known in the area and was in demand for events in Hornell, Jasper and Shinglehouse Pa. from the 1880's through the late 1940's.

Mr. Kellogg sells the theatre to A. L. Boller in January of 1922 and buys the New York State rights to the picture film "Uncle Tom's Cabin" which he expects to start traveling with about March 15. The film will be one of great magnitude.

April 12, 1922 - Contractors began work this morning making improvements and increasing the capacity of the motion picture theatre on Greenwood St. which A. L. Boller recently bought. The improvements will comprise moving ticket booth to the outside of the building with entrance and exit doors on either side which will open direct into the theatre. This will increase the seating capacity by 30. The stage will also be moved back and ventilating windows will be put in both front and rear to allow circulation of air through the building which is much needed. Also the interior

will be redecorated in light colors and more electric lights will be put in to add to the lighting.

The theatre is referred to as **Haven Theatre** and **Bollers Theater** in ads during Mr. Boller's ownership.

October 23, 1924 - Talking pictures come to Canisteo. Charles Trabox from Buffalo, new leasee of Bollers Theatre, will install a Vitaphone apparatus in the **Canisteo Cinema**.

Nov 6, 1930 - J. Glenn Freeland of Hornell purchases Boller theatre. Mr. Freeland installs a movietone sound system where the sound is recorded on the film and in synchronism with it. He paints the front of the theatre in blue & white with bronze railing.

Jan 3, 1935 - Will swap admission to Canisteo Theatre for fire wood, milk, eggs, chunk meat or whatever you have? Management Canisteo Theatre. (This ad is still running in March)

1935 Display ads - Canisteo Theatre - Wide Range (high fidelity) Sound System. A sound pitched low or a sound pitched high, a whisper or a lion's roar, it's all before you. At its natural level you ear will tell you it sounds better. (movie listings followed)

March - April 1939 - Controversy rises over Sunday showings and threatens to close theatre. Hornell theatres are becoming more popular and Canisteo Theatre is losing money.

I found no articles on the theatre from 1940-43 and assume it might have temporarily closed.

June 1, 1944 - New Plaza Theatre grand opening under ownership of W. E. Anderson.

Sept 7, 1944 - Infantile paralysis epidemic reduced number who attended theatre. Children under 16 were barred and many adults were afraid to go to movies. Showings were cut to Friday and Saturday only.

April 1945 - Large display ad for Technicolor

June, 1949 - Gerald Freeland and son take over theatre and make many improvements. The theatre continues to run weekly ads in the "Canisteo Times" up until December 1957. The

Times stops printing at this date and I have not been able to find any other evidence of the theatre running after that date although some I've talked to believe it ran into the early 60's.



April 27, 1994 - The Old Theatre on Greenwood St. collapses. Following the theatres closing the building was sold and converted to apartments and then deteriorated steadily. Heavy snow in the winter of 1994 was too much for the old building. The inside of the building began crumbling about 1 PM and the rear of the building followed. A contractor was hired to take down the remainder of the building and the rubble was an eyesore for some time until the Village agreed to underwrite some of the disposal of the debris.

Editor's Note: I have tried to pick the highlights of the history of the theatre for this article. A full transcript with pictures is available for you to read at the Historical Society.

Another memory of the theatre comes from a teenage boy

The movie theatre was located on Greenwood Street next to the Turkey Path. This theatre was operated by the Freeland family. Movies were 12 cents for the Saturday matinee. This was the cowboy and Indian and Three Stooges era and right at the time when Roy Rogers married Dale Evans. Also the era when Gabby Hayes and Smiley Burnett made personal appearances in one of the movie theatres in Hornell.

The bathroom was located upstairs. You had to go out the door, duck under the metal hand rail and go up the long flight of stairs and then more than likely have to wait for your turn, all the while missing your movie. This is crude but apparently I wasn't the only one who didn't want to miss parts of the movie as I remember looking down by my feet and seeing a stream flowing down towards the next row of seats!

Canisteo Times on Fulton History.com

The "Canisteo Times" was one of Canisteo's early newspapers published from 1880-1957. We are very fortunate to have many of the original papers at the Historical Society but they are much too old and fragile to be handled. We do have microfilm copies that were made in the mid 60's through a grant which involved the Historical Society, The Southern Tier Library System and Cornell University. These were in our safe and survived the fire but these too are getting old and brittle. Our microfilm machine for viewing these is truly a dinosaur. But thanks to the efforts of Thomas Tryniski of Fulton, NY, who in his home at his own expense has scanned and posted over 48 million issues of New York State newspapers. Anyone can search and view the "Canisteo Times."

My experience with searching the newspaper was not always favorable. In fact, it was mostly frustrating. I'm not a patient person and had I bothered to read the hints on using the website my time could have been much more productive. I have still not read through all the hints but have picked up a few pointers to help our readers.

The website for the newspapers is www.fultonhistory.com. My first suggestion is once you successfully find the site save it to your favorites. For some unknown reason, if I search the website through my browser I'm often sent to other websites. I'm positive I've typed the address in correctly but there have been days, no matter how many times I tried, I never got the correct site.

How do you know you have the right site? You will hear delightful music and a big fish will swim across your screen. On the right side of the screen chose the No. 1 option to search my archives.

On the left hand side of the screen are search options. I will address the first box later. The second item is a drop down box for the number of items. I've selected 500. In the next dropdown box choose "Boolean" for your search. I've left the rest at default settings.

In the top search box, you can just type in the name or place you are searching for. The text box below will populate with all the newspapers that contain your search. The name of the paper, date, and a short section that contains your search will appear. Before I got smarter, I had to scroll through hundreds of papers to get to the Canisteo Times. If you enter your search in the following format (bolded text below) you can restrict your search to the newspaper and dates you want to search.

theatre AND (Filename contains (Canisteo)) AND (Filename contains (1920))

My search was for theatre. Had I searched Canisteo Theatre I would never have found the other theatres or name changes. You should check out the hints on the website to expand your search criteria. I kept this simple for those of you with little patience - like me. The Times were scanned in 2 year periods and I had the best results by putting in the even numbered years.

Once you click on the issue you want, the right hand side of the screen populates with the page of the newspaper that contains your search. The word or phrase in your search is highlighted but, whether it is my eye sight or computer, I have a

difficult time spotting these highlights. I have a touch screen computer, and if I take my fingers, expand the screen and then scroll I can usually spot what I'm looking for.

The next obstacle is how to save or print the material. You can print the whole page from the icon or save it but the print will be too small to read. I have not been able to copy and paste. I know some people take pictures with their phones. I found myself making notes in a notebook and writing my story from those. Another hint: Don't forget to note the date of the newspaper article especially if you're taking a picture with your phone or trying a print screen.

Hopefully if you're not familiar with the Fulton History site you will take time to explore it. These papers were written before there was any political correctness, headlines were sensationalized, and you could hardly go to the grocery store without your name making the paper. If you or your ancestors lived in Canisteo search their name and you will be amazed at the results.

If you have hints for using the Fulton website, please e-mail them to me and we will publish them in future newsletters. This is such a fabulous resource and we all owe our thanks to Mr. Tryniski for making this available to us.

Is this your last newsletter?

If you receive your newsletter through the mail, please check the date on the upper left hand side of your mailing label. Unless the date is 2020 or Life this will be your last issue of our newsletter. Due to the Covid-19 Virus we have had to cancel our spring and summer fundraisers and fall activities are still up in the air. Dues cover the cost of mailing newsletters so they must be current for us to continue these mailings.

Dues Schedule

Individuals - \$10
Family - \$15
Lifetime - \$150

All programs and activities cancelled until further notice.

However, you have continued access to the Historical Society through face book and our webpage.

Even though the museum doors have been locked, our web page and face book page are available to everyone. Our face book page has many postings giving you a look at what's available at the museum and testing your knowledge of items from the past. Many of you have discovered our webpage and the older issues of our newsletters that are posted and books that we have available for sale. Just a reminder that you do have to be a member to get the most recent issues of our newsletter.

The bad news is our fundraising efforts for the year have come to a standstill. Even when the economy opens up again we are going to have to take a serious look at how we do our fundraising as the majority of our active members are in that 70 plus age group and are we asking too much of them to continue the bake sales and tag sales that bring in the majority of our funds. We receive no outside funding. Our operating budget comes solely from dues, donations and our fund raisers. There are no paid positions at the Society. Volunteers keep our doors open and maintain the displays and building and your donations and support keep us funded.

Thanks to all for your generosity and continued support. We hope everyone is staying safe and finding ways to stay connected to family and friends. We miss the camaraderie of our weekly volunteer hours and our monthly programs and hope we will be able to resume activities in the fall.



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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

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
Canistota, NY 14823

Donations gratefully accepted toward operating expenses.

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