

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

2019 Vol. 3 - Summer kanestiohs@gmail.com Gail Davis, Editor

35 YEARS AGO

DREAMS DO COME TRUE



In August of 1984 a public meeting was held to discuss the formation of a Historical Society - a dream of the Town Historian, Virginia Dickey. With the help of the former mayor, Betty Dennis, and a former Canistean, Marjorie Burd VanHying, plans for such an organization began to take shape. Robert Oakes was named President; Kay Bancroft acted as Vice President. The major goal of the Society, to quote Betty Dennis in 1985, "is to secure a home where we can store and display memorabilia we collect."

For years meetings were held in the Civic Club's Galeazzo Building at 10 Maple Street in the Village. The Town of Canisteo gave the Society the use of rooms over the Town Hall for a work room and storage.

In 1985 the gift of a priceless quilt made by the women of the Methodist Church in 1881 was a real incentive to obtain a permanent home for our collections. To celebrate our first anniversary a

quilt show was held with over one hundred quilts displayed.

Two grants were obtained from the New York State Council of Arts to help finance the production of two slide programs. "Castles in the Wilderness," the story of the early settlement of Canisteo and "Canisteo in the 1890's," a slide program portraying the growth of the Town.

In 1989 we published the book "Older Homes of Kanestio" researched by Margaret Hartman with the help of Society Members. In 1995 a sequel "From Past to Present" was published. Post cards portraying early Canisteo Life were also printed for sale.

In 1992 we were offered the use of a vacant building at 29 Main Street. Here the public finally saw us at work. We were open two afternoons each week and the interest generated brought the Kanestio Historical Society many donations. Then like a bolt out of the blue we lost our lease.

What to do now? We decided to purchase a vacant lot at 23 Main Street with the dream in mind that some day we would be able to put up a building that would satisfy our needs. We certainly had not contemplated the community interest and generosity this idea would spark.

John Halloran challenged us to raise \$5,000 and he would match it. And we were off and running. Fund drives began. The sale of special edition postcards, cookie and pie sales, quilt and afghan raffles and donations from private and corporate quarters allowed us to raise the building from the foundation to a two story structure within four months.

John Halloran continued to give encouragement and financial assistance. Jim Dineen, who had just retired, expressed a desire to construct the building. We should literally call this "Jim's Building." He has been involved in every aspect. Many others with special talents volunteered, including the electricians, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers... and Tom Roffe, Don Brown and Tom Caple, co-chairmen of the building project, were always available.

The actual building of a home for the Kanestio Historical Society started in late June of 1994. We were able to hold our first meeting in the building on March 21, 1995.

Today our building project is almost complete, thanks to the vision of faithful society members and to the community's unbounded interest and support. As we place these papers in the cornerstone of our new building, to be sealed for perhaps one hundred years, our message to those who follow is clear. Look happily to the future but be always a guardian of the past.

October 27, 1995

Virginia Dickey
Kay Bancroft
Carolyn Kerr

Sadly these ladies have passed, as have many of the original members who worked so hard to collect and preserve our history and worked tirelessly to raise the money to build our building on Main Street. In the early days the rooms would be overflowing with volunteers sorting, filing and cataloging our collection. Today we have a core group of under ten people that keep the day to day operations going. In January of 2014 our dream almost went up in smoke when the furnace malfunctioned and the building caught fire. Thanks to the quick work of our local volunteer fire department most of our valuable artifacts were saved but the interior of the building had to be gutted and rebuilt. The contents had to be removed, stored, painstakingly cleaned, sorted, inventoried, cataloged and then brought back and organized. We opened our doors again in October of 2014 welcoming the public back to share in our rich collection of local history.

Steamboat on the River

by Shell I. Wilkins

The following article comes from an old edition of "The Canisteo Times." The exact date is not know. I found this going thru the files of former historian and one of the original founders of the society, Virginia Dickey. Shell Wilkins was 19 years old in 1880.

The historical articles now being printed in "The Times" have aroused my interest and stimulated my memory hence I am minded to offer an item or two of my own.

I have heard it said that the original meaning of the name Canisteo was "head of navigation". We all know that the Indians used to travel the river in their canoes, and later the white settlers used flatboats of some size to transport their household goods from the older settlements to this locality. But how many, I wonder, know that at one time the Canisteo river actually was navigated by a steamboat?

Let's go back a little. As a lad of fourteen I came to Canisteo from Hornellsville on April 1, 1875, having been born in Nunda, NY. At first I worked for Hiram C. Whitwood who was a gardener. He paid me \$8.00 a month, which worked out at the rate of about 26 cents per day and I was required to rise at 4:30 in the morning. Later I got a job in the Taylor Brother's chair factory. The engineer for this plant was Scott Brasted. Glenn Burrell clerked in the office.

Along in the late eighties Brasted and Burrell got it into their heads that they could make some extra money by running a steamboat on the river for pleasure excursions. Somewhere in the vicinity of Rochester they found a boat to their liking, purchased it, brought it to Canisteo and launched it in the river. This craft was perhaps 30 feet long by 8 or 10 feet wide and could accommodate about 1 dozen passengers. A dock or landing was built about half way between the river bridge and the spot later occupied by the N.Y. and Penn., R.R. bridge. (Approximately the site my generation remembers as the Agway location at the end of Depot Street). The crew was composed of Scott Brasted and myself. Brasted was both captain and

engineer, while I was the pilot. In those days I knew the river pretty well-where all the logs, snags and sandbars were. For my services I averaged about 50 cents per night. Brasted and Burrell split the balance of the "take".

The boat was operated nearly every evening during the summer, and on Sunday and holiday afternoons. The fare was 25 cents per round trip. It proved very popular and we always had a long waiting list of passengers. We didn't allow drunks to come on board and we never had any trouble. Usually two or three trips would be made during the evening.

After filling the firebox with coal and getting up a good head of steam, the skipper would sound the whistle and pull out into midstream. Passing the Weed sawmill, we had clear sailing until we came to the bend where the state road now cuts close to the river. At this place navigations was rather difficult, for the channel was impeded by a lot of piles which had been driven for the original location of the Erie R.R. This bend we called the "Stone Bridge," for a culvert here led under the highway and entered the stream. This culvert had a trap to prevent high water from backing up and flooding the farm land.

Once past the Stone Bridge we steamed right along until we came to the Mulhollen place (*Belle Haven*). Here we contrived to turn our boat around and start on the return trip. When the weather grew cold in the fall these excursions were discontinued and I presume few residents of Canisteo now know that they ever happened.

After two or three seasons on the Canisteo River, Brasted decided to take his steamboat to Goodhue Lake. I presume he bought out Burrell's interest in the craft, for he did take the boat to Goodhue, launched it there and continued it in service for some time. On occasions of farmer's picnics and Fourth of July Celebrations it proved extremely popular and earned considerable money for its owner. And so ended the era of steam boating on the Canisteo River

Reflections on the Settlement of Canisteo from "The Mosaic" - July 3, 1897

("The Mosaic" was the 1st, and apparently only issue, published by the Ladies Aid Society of the Methodist Church in 1897. Price was 5 cents)

.... The reception accorded us at the end of our drive, at the home of the pioneer settler of Canisteo, Mr. Joshua C. Stephens, was the pleasantest part of our journey. Mr. Stephens confessed to the novelty of being interviewed by women for a woman's paper; but being modern in spirit, though having seen eighty-one years in life, he bore the ordeal with serenity and without any appearance of rebellions at the progress of the age that has brought women into so many departments of activity - even that of editorial work.

In any easy manner, and in choicely selected language, Mr. Stephens gave a recital of much of the history of early life in Canisteo. Omitting most of such, as has already appeared in print, we will relate in the fewest words possible as much as our space will permit, of what we gathered.

Joshua Stephens' father, Nathan Stephens, came to Canisteo with his father, Jedidiah Stephens in 1790 and settled upon the farm yet occupied by Mr. Joshua C. Stephens where the latter was born in a log house across the road from the present residence in 1816. (*Corner of Stephens Gulch and Rt. 119.*) Mr. Stephens told us that when his grandparents reached here, Kanestio Castle, the large log house built on the flats between the bridge and the river by the Jesuit Missionary as a place of worship for the Indians and spared by Col. William Johnson in 1762 while the rest of the village was burned, was in decay. (*Some today believe this is in the area of Willow Bend*)

He also stated "that this village is said to have been given its present name by N.C. Taylor, which was taken from the Indian name for the point of land at the junction of Col. Bill's and Bennett's Creek -

(continued on page 5)

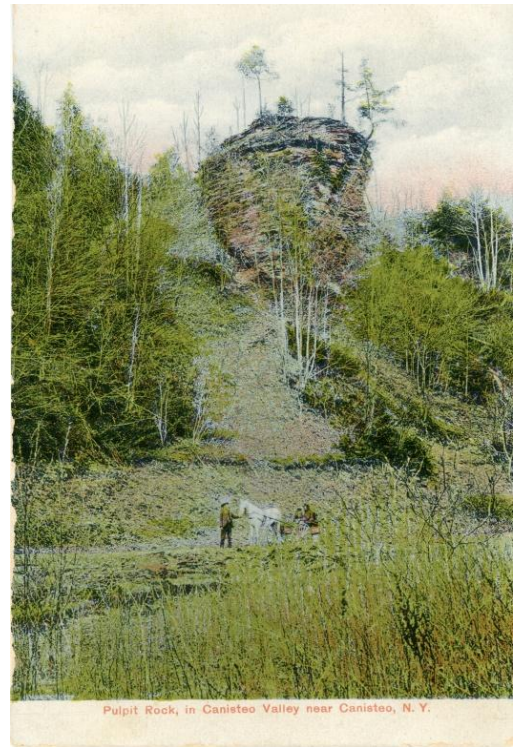
Pulpit Rock

By Steve Cotton

Stephens Gulch Road was named by the first white settlers for the land where the gulch opens into the Canisteo River. Both sides of the gulch are high cliffs of rocks that are a mixture of sandstone and shale, a sedimentary rock. Millions of years ago the sandstone and shale were left from the shallow seas thousands of years old. The layers of stone that make up Pulpit Rock rise another hundred feet high from its base and its top is nearly thirty feet in diameter. As you leave the Canisteo River road (Steuben County Route 119) and travel two point two miles north, at about 100 feet up the bank, you'll see Pulpit Rock protrude above the county highway (Steuben County Route 27). In local folklore, it was referred to as "Gy-Ant-Wa-Chia's Head". "Gy-Ant-Wa-Chia the Corn Planter" was the last war chief of the Senecas and Iroquois.

Pulpit Rock is today hidden from view by the thick forestry that's grown up around it and is on private property. It was first photographed by Canisteo's Photographer, A.B. Stebbins, and the image appeared in a book titled, Steuben County Ark Work, in Part 7 on Page 1. Irish immigrant Elizabeth Gulliver sits atop the buggy while her son Tom holds the horse still for the photograph.

Russell Dunn, author, will have a new book published late this summer titled Boulders & Natural Rock formations of Western & Central New York. Canisteo area Pulpit Rock will be featured in the book.



Photo's: Top right Post Card 1892 Stebbins photo.
Above left: postcard of "Gy-Ant-Wa-Chia's Head"
Above right: 2019 photo by Steve Cotton

Early Reflections (continued from page 3)

"Kanestio" or "Long Point;" and that settlement here antedates the revolution belonging to the early colonial period - even the Indians themselves being unable to tell when the valley was cleared.

The early history of Canisteo is closely associated with Methodism through Mr. Stephens ancestor, Jedediah Stephens, who was a local preacher and entertained the early pioneer preachers in his hospitable home, among whom were Revs. Henry Hudson, John Deerbin and Asa Able. He told of the horseback ride of Col. Bill Stephens to Syracuse for a bag of salt; of his own 32 trips, during 16 years, down the Canisteo River on rafts with wheat and lumber; of the seventy rattlesnakes killed in a den by his father, of the nine killed by himself; of the burning of the woods to destroy them; of the two bears caught by his father in the wolf trap; of the howling and yelling of wolves of the average of from twenty to thirty and an hundred deer a year and the exchange of venison in Syracuse for salt; of the hunting matches with the two captains choosing sides, the side shooting the fewest crows and squirrels, which were so destructive to crops, buying the dinner for all; of the journeys to Tioga Point, now Athens, and to Bath for grist; of the first spring carriage brought to town in 1828 by the sons of Uriah Stephens Jr.; of how his parents borrowed it for a little drive to Niagara Falls; of the drove of hogs that "Providence sent" to follow Reuben Crosby through the woods to a deer lick where they had never been before and saved his life from a panther, which dropped from a tree above him, among them, and prevented it from touching him until he shot it, then gathered around him and followed him home again; of the time when Wm. Thomas, who was the only strictly temperate man in town, was held down by some comrades and liquor poured into his mouth but, having held his throat, denied drinking it.

In reply to the question, "What have you to say of your life as a whole, Mr. Stephens? he said: "It has been uneventful."

The pony was soon at the gate. Mr. and Mrs. Stephens with true courtesy and country

hospitality invited us to "Come again and make a visit," then with the picture of the old couple watching us as we drove away we returned home in the gloaming, filled with the spirit of by-gone days; yet scarcely believing that the trail the Indian had lain along our route or that the wolves had held high revelry all through the valley and among the hills; but we are grateful for the privilege of having heard this quaint story from the lips of one of the few yet remaining, who can give a personal account of the primitive lives of our heroic ancestors.

Long may "Kanisteo" enjoy the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Joshua C. Stephens and continue the moral advancement begun so long ago in the Castle."

Local Poet - Jo Manley

We have many talented people in our Canisteo Community - many of whom go unrecognized. We lost one of those people recently with the passing of Jo Manley.

Those who knew her were well aware of her poetry which wove the names and events of Canisteo throughout her prose. Below is a poem she shared shortly before her passing. It is one many of us can identify with.

We have a binder of her poems at the Historical Society if you would like to read more .

Signs of Aging

*My hair has turned gray, my bones are bent
My get up and go just got up and went.
My eyes and my ears don't perform as they should
and sometimes by body feels like it's made out of wood.
I can't reach up high or bend very low,
these once hasty steps are beginning to slow.
I can't open bottles marked child resistant,
a task I once accomplished with ease in an instant.
I put things in places so I know where they are
then can't find them, though I know they're not far.
I often forget what was just in my head
so may the good Lord help me keep track of my meds.*

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

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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