

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. 4 - Fall kanestiohs@gmail.com Gail Davis, Editor

My memories of Canisteo in 1908 when I was 16

by Mabel Green

About a year ago a Stephen Green came to visit the Historical Society and started talking about his grandmother, Mable Green. Mable was born in 1892, the daughter of Mary Farnham Young who grew up on Colonel Bill's Creek. He said she was a telegraph operator in Canisteo and that he had her hand written notes of businesses in Canisteo in 1908 and asked if we would like a copy. Of course we said yes. I transcribed the notes and added photos of all the business mentioned that I could find. That transcript ended up being too big to publish in the newsletter but you can view it at the Historical Society. We have a binder by several residents sharing their memories of growing up in Canisteo that the public is welcome to read.

Earlier this year, while cleaning out some files, I came across a column by Robert Oakes, dated July 15, 1973. The article was the memories written by Mabel revealing she had jotted down these memories for Mr. Oakes' Column. What an exciting find for me and one of the many rewarding moments that come from volunteering at the Historical Society.

I went to work for the old Federal Telephone Co. It was in a building which still stands on Greenwood Street. Our telephone office was in one side and Walter Brasted's furniture store and undertaking business was in the other side. Laura Brown was chief operator. Day operators were Eva Sherman Deets, Marion Marvin Hunt and Mable Young Green. Night operator was Matie Alden. One of the extras was Mary Young Hilts.



Telegraph Office On Greenwood Street

She and I are all that are left. Our building now is an antique and second hand store. Down the street was the old Mercantile General Store that was the only one of its kind in town. They had most everything from dry goods and food. I guess they even stocked top hats. Miller and Crozier were the owners.

Across the street was Ortie Lane's hardware store. He was also the head of the water department at one time. I went to get a small item, I asked how much that would be and he said that will be one cent. He was a character but a very good man. Next Bundy's Bakery and Claude Totten's grocery store. On the corner was a tobacco, candy & news stand run by the Brasteds, father & son. Next was the Manwell house, a good bed and an excellent

meal any time. My Uncle, John Dee Brown, was the manager. Many a good time I had in there sliding down the banister. The stage left every morning for Jasper. It took 3 hours and cost 35 cents and came back at night. Next was Mell Halsey's Livery Stable where for a small sum you could get a rig for a trip into the country and on one of these trips I got a proposal of marriage that lasted for 58 years. Next door was the Stebbins Photography where you could get your picture taken and darned if you did not look *pretty good*.

At that time Depot Street was the industrial part of town. On the left side Meeks had a hardware store. Next door was C. P. White Furniture and Undertaking Parlor. At that time we had two papers - THE TIMES was run by the Lathams and next door THE CHRONICAL run by Leon Hough. I am not sure but I think they are both gone. Further down the street, was Carters Foundry. Next was Swartout Basket Factory - then a button factory- Next a Planing Mill, Ruler Factory and Table Factory. There was work for any who wanted it.

Streeter's Hotel was a good place to stay, a harness shop next, then Ackers restaurant where you could get a piece of pie for a nickel (7 different kinds), then Obin Tillitison's barber shop, jewelry store run by Dudley.

On the corner was Mitchell's drug store. Next to that T.K. Brownell's Grocery Store and then Barkers Drug Store where for a nickel Steve Hubertus would make you a chocolate soda the likes of which I have never had since. Mr. Serrins ran a clothing store next door. I heard it said if you went in and didn't buy, he wouldn't let you go without it even if he had to give it to you. Next door was a music store and a hat shop run by Jimmie and Jenny Stewart. Somewhere in there was the jail, but not having any use for it I can't say just where. Will Upson Grocery Store was somewhere about there, Flohrs Tannery was to the left and they did a thriving business.

We had two railroads---The good old Erie and NYP Railroad-- R. D. did a lot of passenger business excursions every Sunday to Shinglehouse. We had four lovely churches still active in our community.

I haven't forgotten the Silk Mill or the Feed Mill on Fifth St, nor the Lumber Yard on Sixth Street and Dr. Bertron, our local veterinary. His home is still there but it has a new face.

Now our Park, it was the pride of our town. The beautiful trees, water fountain, benches and nice lawn and in the middle was the bandstand where every Saturday nite was a band concert. Folks came from far and near to shop and take in the concert.

Canisteo was a lovely place to live and work and I am sure that the years when I was young have helped me to get this far today.

Yours,
Mabel Young Green

The Welles Brothers' Sign Factory on Fifth Street, in the 1950s.

Dan Eisenberg CCS '63

A small building on the north side of Fifth Street, between Greenwood and Maple, held the Welles Brothers Sign Company. I went by it frequently on my way to and from Canisteo Central School. I was about 10. There wasn't much to do in Canisteo, so I would drop in on any business that would tolerate me. Some would save the commemorative stamps on their mail for me. I soaked the stamps to separate them from the paper, sorted them, and sold them to dealers to buy stamps for my collection. My father approved of this.

The front door opened into a medium-sized room filled with equipment and machines. Two of them, each about the size of a drill press, I remember well. One punched holes in the signs for screws. The worker would insert a corner of the sign and press a foot pedal, and the punch came down through the metal. Then it was turned 90° and reinserted, and so on, four punches in each sign. Noisy. The small circles of metal fell into a small drawer underneath, which when full would be

removed by the worker and emptied. I asked for and was given a handful of them which I took home, to my mom's displeasure.

A similar machine cut off each corner, so they would be rounded instead of sharp points.

On one side of the room there was a stairs leading to a sort of second floor, two rooms with a low ceiling. One was the office, and the other was a small silk screening workroom. Working on a waist-high table, silk was attached to a wooden frame the size of a sign. A pattern with some impermeable substance was put on the silk, so that when paint was poured into the wooden frame it went through only the free area of the silk, leaving the lettering desired on the metal. It didn't seem capable of keeping up with the machines used below, so there must have been some other part of the process that I didn't see. The two workers in that room were too involved with the paint to talk to me.

Going out the back of the building into what must have been an addition, one came to the huge roller press. It would put the backing color onto large pieces of metal, much larger than the ones having holes punched in them. It was the largest machine I had ever seen. The rollers were about 6' across, and coming from the output end of the press were motor-driven rubber belts that would move the painted sign on top of them away from the rollers. The worker explained that to print a different color, the rollers and related parts had to be washed. On the wall was a calendar and a line saying "It has been ___ days since the last accident", the numbers changed by hand. Outside was a pile with the waste metal.

The last time I was in Canisteo, about 2008, the building was still standing, though with young trees growing out of the roof. I believe it has since been demolished.

Editors Note: Thank you, Dan, for responding to our request for memories of Canisteo in the 1950's. We're still looking for more information and hopefully Dan's article will get the ball rolling. We're still asking you to share your memories of growing up in Canisteo. For once I'm not asking for money - so please take time to jot down a few things and send to us.

I'm not sure if the building Dan is referring to is still standing and is now owned by the Wesleyan Methodist Church and used as a Social Hall or the empty parking lot next door. Perhaps one of our readers can clarify that for us.

Larry Welles was a very active member of our Historical Society and is greatly missed. In our vast library of local history is a binder Larry put together on the complete history of Welles Brothers with many pictures. I encourage everyone to visit the Historical Society and spend some time looking through this and the numerous other references put together by our volunteers.

H.P. Smith & Son - A Canisteo Landmark for over a Century

by John Babbitt



The history of H.P. Smith and Son began in 1870 in the Village of Woodhull, NY by a gentleman known as Cash Cilley who ran the business. His furniture and undertaking business continued until his death in 1890.

At that time Harry Pangburn Smith appeared on the scene and purchased the business from Cash Cilley's widow.

In November of 1890, H. P. Smith together with his wife Jennie (Kenyon) Smith and their son Asa Thomas Smith moved from Sylvania, Bradford County, PA to Woodhull. Together they formed a partnership known as H.P. Smith & Son, the

beginning of a business name that was known throughout the next century.

The business flourished during the early 1900's, and on July 30, 1905, Asa married a young lady from Woodhull named Cassie Wildrick, the daughter of Solomon and Eliza (Hallett) Wildrick, both descendants of well-known Steuben County families.

As the years went by, the horse-drawn hearse gave way to the automobile. In the morning hours of May 1, 1925 a fire broke out and destroyed the entire east side of Main Street in Woodhull that included the two story building of H.P. Smith and Son.

1935 was the year of the big flood throughout the Southern Tier of New York. It was also the year a son was born to Jeffrey and Veronica Smith. The infant boy was Asa Thomas Smith who was called Tom. It was also during this time that Jeffrey Smith became a licensed embalmer and undertaker in the state of New York.

Following graduation in June 1953 Tom began his apprenticeship in the funeral business before going to Syracuse for schooling.

In 1956 Tom's father Jeffrey suffered a cerebral stroke and the two younger Smiths carried on the business. At the same time C. Howard Richardson, owner and manager of the Williams Funeral Home in Canisteo, became ill and was no longer capable of operating his business. Tom was asked to be manager until final arrangements could be made. After Richardson's death in October the Smiths purchased the business in December 1959. Tom moved to Canisteo and a partnership with Jeffrey Smith Jr. and Asa Thomas Smith was formed.

In the spring of 1963 Tom and his wife Margaret purchased a building on the corner of Greenwood Street and South Main Street and opened their furniture store in May 1964. The 60's brought other local personalities into play in the H.P. Smith and Son business. Don Merring became associated with the business and became a licensed Funeral Director as well as a worker in the furniture store.

Tom remembers their first customers were Dana and Donna Lewis. In the late 60's a furniture club

was formed. A ticket was pulled each week for \$25.00 in store credit. The club ended in December 2001. In the Fall of 1963 Totten's Grocery Store across the street burned so Staffy Totten sold groceries out of the furniture store for about a month.

In its fifth generation of Smith's, Tom's children became a vital part of H.P. Smith and Son. Michael P. Smith became a licensed funeral director and Cindy Thompson, Tom's daughter, managed the furniture store.

The high point of Tom's days managing Smith's Furniture was during the 1980's when President Ronald Reagan was in office and the U.S. economy was stable and growing.

Smith's Furniture closed mid December 2001. In early 2003 the building was leased and later purchased by Black Bear Outfitters which was short lived, and as a result of default was returned to Tom. Next owner Valerie Steinman purchased the building and operated Pizzaze which sold miscellaneous gift items. It too failed and foreclosure took place. The building was again purchased by Mike Palmer who currently leases space to Invenergy: Canisteo Wind Energy Center.

From our Facebook Page

[Dave Freeland](#) recommends [Kanestio Historical Society](#).

June 13 at 7:10 AM ·

"The Class of 1969 held our 50th reunion last weekend and the Historical Society did a wonderful job creating a display focusing on our class. Almost every classmate I spoke with had stopped in to view the materials in the display. I'm embarrassed to say that I was not a member of the Society before, but I am now! A huge THANK YOU to the caretakers of our memories!"

Did you know? If you let us know you are planning a class reunion we can make a display of yearbooks, newsletters, programs from plays and concerts, sporting events, scrapbooks, etc. for your class.

Hartsville Celebrated its

175th Anniversary

By Steve Cotton

Hartsville's new museum was opened on August 3rd in their Slate Creek School. The open house was well attended thanks to the many volunteers that made it happen.

Three of the school's former students were in attendance and pulled the rope to ring the school's bell.

With class in session; time was spent viewing displays that had been set up for the occasion in the cloak room and wood shed.

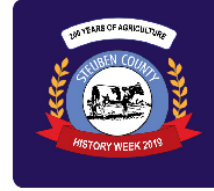


The school was donated to the town by Conrad and Eloise (Mullen) Hilsdorf in 2013. The first school on Slate Creek was built in 1845, which caught fire on February 25, 1885. Seen here is the 1885 building, repurposed now as a museum for the community to enjoy.



*The Steuben County Historical Societies
and the Steuben County Historians announce:
The Second Annual*

STEBEN COUNTY HISTORY AWARENESS WEEK October 1—October 5, 2019



200 YEARS OF AGRICULTURE: Crops, Critters, and Farm Life in Steuben County

Honoring the 200th Anniversary of the Steuben County Fair

Exhibits at the Steuben County Fairgrounds
Horticulture Building (Chestnut St. Entrance)

Tues., Oct. 1—Fri., Oct. 4: 2 PM—6 PM

Sat., Oct. 5: 10-12 PM

School Groups By Appointment

Program Finale:

Howard Community Center

Sat., Oct 5: 1-4 PM

*Find out more information: @steubenhistorweek on Facebook,
or www.steubenhistoricalsociety.org/events.htm*

The following displays from the Canisteo area will be part of this year's History Awareness Week.

Our Town Historian George Dickey is working on a display reflecting early agriculture.

Steve Cotton is working with Ron & Virginia Putnam on the chicken hatchery businesses in Canisteo.

Steve has also put together two additional displays for the event; one is on Hartsville's Cheese Factory businesses while the other is on the Atherton's Ayrshire Dairy and Haying in the Canisteo Valley. Both were shared as our window displays prior to the event.

Mark your calendar to view the agriculture history of Steuben County; as many of the county's historians and historical societies host this annual event.

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

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.

2019 Officers

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Sue Babbitt	Co - President
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Gail Davis	Treasurer
Phyllis Cassidy	- Corresponding Secretary

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