

Kanestio Historical Society Times

23 Main St - P.O. Box 35 - Canisteo, NY 14823
(607) 698-2086 - Thursday & Friday 1-3 - Monthly Meetings - 3rd Tuesday 7:00 PM
www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com

2023- Spring kanestiohs@gmail.com Gail Davis, Editor

Happy 150th Birthday, Canisteo



East Main St., Canisteo 1880

2023 marks the **Sesquicentennial** (150 year) anniversary of the formation of the **Village of Canisteo**. Post Covid and working around the NYS Highway and Sidewalk project going through Canisteo, Crazee Daze will return to Canisteo this year with a parade and special activities planned to celebrate our Sesquicentennial. Page 4 & 5 of our newsletter is a letter from Mayor Recktenwald which gives insight into current and future plans for our village. The rest of this newsletter is devoted to the village history.

Excerpts from the Centennial Book
published in 1973.

When the members of the Canisteo Village Board met in the offices of Burrell and Soule May 19, 1873, the United States of America was nearing its 100th birthday. The continent itself had been discovered 381 years before by Columbus, 873 years previously by the Vikings, and countless ages before by the Indians crossing over from Asia by way of the Bering Strait. There had been settlements in the area where they were meeting as long as 200 years before; there had been a permanent community here for nearly 100 years.

The Village of Canisteo was in its infancy - just two days old. The charter election had been held on May seventeenth, and the men who were meeting that day in the Burrell and Soule offices were to be sworn in as the first village officials.

Among those meeting were Lucius A. Waldo, the first elected president of the Village of Canisteo. Joining him at the ceremony were the newly elected trustees of the village, and William E. Stephens, who would be sworn in as the first village clerk; William H. Mead, who was to be appointed as the first village treasurer; Hiram C. Whitwood as Street Commissioner.

The men got down to business as soon as the appropriate oaths of office had been taken. As the first resolution, they declared:

"Resolved: that the treasurer and collector each give a bond in penalty of \$1,500.00 and that the street commissioner and police constable each give a bond in the penalty of \$500 each."

Once these bonds were taken and approved the board moved on to other matters, ordering that a survey of the village be taken. This matter was taken care of by John H. Consalus, who had settled in the Canisteo Valley in 1840 and who was engaged in the lumber, hardware and furnace business.

At their second meeting, they voted to raise \$500 by taxes for the purpose of purchasing a site for the erection of a proposed lock-up.



The lockup (far left) is on the first floor underneath the harness shop and next to the fire department. The chimney of the tannery is on the right.

There was a public election on June 4th that year and the people of the young village voted their approval for the creation of the new facility. The bid was awarded to M. Allison, but the board apparently did not have the money so withdrew the bid. Negotiations continued and on September 1st that year the board voted to pay Allison \$775 for the lockup -"the proper deeds to be made at once and at Allison's expense". Privately the board agreed that they would settle for the construction when it was a little more convenient.

Why form a village?

The first lockup, one of the first bits of business settled by the board, may also have been one of the original reasons for establishing a village government - to bring law, order and respectability to the community.

Carl Carmer, in one of his regional books on New York State, refers to Canisteo as "that wild town beyond the Steuben Mountains." Stagecoach drivers, in the early years of the settlement, reportedly got their vehicles up to top speed for the trip through town.

At the same meeting that the motion was made to create the lockup, the village fathers also created their first set of bylaws and regulations. The original code included 34 sections. The first police constable was named and in later years, as the village grew, the appointment of a "Night Watch" was made.

On September 1, 1873, Harrison W. Vinton was the first to apply for a license to sell "Spirituuous liquors, wines and beer."

Board permissions were also needed for various forms of entertainment. On July first the village was first recorded as granting permission for the discharge of fireworks within village limits.

The board was much less tolerant toward bicycle riders. According to the law of the village, around the turn of the century bicyclists were subject to heavy fines for "scorching" through the village though the record books do not give a definition of the crime. On July 19, 1890, the village board made and carried a motion that riders of bicycles, tricycles and other velocipedes would be required to post a bond of \$100 for the privilege of riding on the sidewalk. Failure to do so would make them liable to a \$5 fine. In December of 1910, they changed the law now requiring cyclists to pay \$2 a year to be allowed on the sidewalk.

The first recorded tax assessment roll was 75 cents per every \$100 of assessed valuation.

On November 8, 1880, the board ushered in the new decade by extending the village limits. It was that same year, on September 6, that they first approved the village seal. The same seal is still in use by the village clerk today.

Who were the men on the First Village Board?

by George Dickey

When researching the first trustees for the Village of Canisteo I found it surprising that only one of these men had been born in Canisteo - William Stephens the newly elected Town Clerk was the son of Elias Stephens, one of the first settlers.

Up until 1850, Canisteo had been a little hamlet called Bennetts' or Bennettsville. At that time the Erie Railroad reached here and a number of changes began. The railroad brought rapid growth and a number of new businesses during the 1850's, but then the Civil War slowed growth and didn't pick up again until the young men returned at the end of the war. By 1870, local leaders decided the village needed more structure than the town government could provide, and the campaign began to form a village.

The first President of the Board of Trustees, Mayor in today's term, was Lucius Waldo. He came to Canisteo from Otsego County in 1849, as clerk in the Taylor Brother's store. By 1870's, he was a partner in the firm of Waldo and Davison, another large store. He had served as Town Clerk in 1857 and '58, Supervisor in 1859 and '60, and would be elected Steuben County Clerk in 1879.

Also on the Board of Trustees was Mortimore Allison. Allison was a member of a prominent lumbering family in Hartsville and had come to Canisteo in 1851 with a contract to build the Presbyterian Church. Also at that time he had entered into a flour milling business with his brother Lawrence in a large mill on Main Street. When the church was finished he joined the Gold Rush to California, where he remained for three years. He must have had some success there as on his return to Canisteo he built a large tannery behind the flour mill. Besides the flour mill and tannery the Allison Brothers also owned or would soon own shoe factories, a silk mill (Surge factory) and a wagon factory on Depot Street. In 1875 he would sell the mill and tannery to the Charles Flohr family and open the Bank of Canisteo.

Another Trustee was Smith Eason. He came to Canisteo in the late 1830's as a teenager when his father purchased a large farm at the south end of Greenwood Street. Much of this farm is now the site of the Grade School and extended across Greenwood Street to Bennetts Creek.

The final Board Member was Lewis Weed. Weed had also come to Canisteo in early 1854 when he purchased a large steam powered saw mill located along the river bank near the Erie Depot. In time he would own additional mills and large acreage of timber land, much of it in the South Canisteo area after he bought out the Bowles property when their mill burned. Weed's mill had also burned in 1872 and was quickly replaced by a more modern mill with a capacity of 8,000 board feet a day and one million barrel staves a year. Besides the saw mill and timber lands, Weed owned a large farm in what today is Belle Haven.

Besides the elected Trustees, there were two appointed officers sworn in at the meeting; William Mead as village treasurer and Hiram Whitwood as Street Commissioner. Both are listed as farmers in the census, although by 1870 Mead is listed as retired. Ironically these two men's farms define the east and west limits of the village. Mead's former farm had been on either side of East Main Street and Whitwood's on West Main stretching from that street north to the river.

Canisteo Anniversary Celebrations

The first celebration I remember was for the **Canisteo Centennial** marking the 100th birthday of the Village of Canisteo. The Centennial Committee was co- chaired by Paul B. McDaniels, Carl A. Lamphier, Walter F. Benedict and Fred V. Schnurle. John Mullen was Mayor and Virginia Dickey was Town Historian. They did a fantastic job of organizing the celebration and published a Centennial Book on the history of Canisteo that I still use as a reference for questions on Canisteo.

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To the Village of Canisteo Residents,



It is an honor to represent the Village as your Mayor. I cannot believe we are celebrating 150 years as a village. I remember the centennial celebration in 1973, where I had just finished sixth grade. Just look at what changes have occurred over these past 50 years, some good and some things gone that we will forever miss.

I grew up in Canisteo, graduated from Canisteo High School in 1978, and received my Nursing degree from Alfred State College in 1984. I worked at St. James Hospital on the 3rd floor medical unit before specializing and working in the dialysis unit. I was one of the nurses that helped move the unit from the main hospital to Elderwood and received training to be able to offer peritoneal dialysis for patients in the Hornell area. In 1994 I joined the Federal Bureau of Prisons as a correctional nurse. I worked in various positions of responsibility, moving to eight different States and positions before becoming the Bureau of Prison's first Registered Nurse to become a Warden. I was Warden and Chief Executive Officer at three different correctional facilities with numerous levels of security until I retired in December 2016.

My father owned and operated Marty's Repair Service in Canisteo while I was growing up, and I always knew I would move back home to Canisteo someday. It didn't matter where I moved my family, how many States I lived in or visited, I always wanted to move back "home".

When I considered running for Mayor, I was looking for something to keep me busy, and wondered how our tax money was spent. My first year as Mayor, the Village faced a budget shortfall due to a lack of consistent accounting oversight and over \$180,000 in outstanding water/sewer bills! We immediately made drastic changes both in processes and practices to reduce costs. We requested an audit by the New York State Comptroller's Office where they assisted us in ensuring we are using taxpayer money effectively and efficiently, and our staff received training and technical assistance to improve our operations at all levels. The Village was fortunate to receive such thorough training as usually resources are limited to newly elected officials and staff. With holding a seat on the Village Board and seeing firsthand the challenges local governments face, I want to thank the Trustees whom aim to address the issues small governments face in being good stewards of taxpayers' money.

Just a few of the other issues we faced in Canisteo is a 110 year old water/sewer system, fire hydrants dating back to the 1800s, village vehicles exceeded their retention, several village buildings in need of major repairs, antiquated forms of communication, village code enforcement lacking, antiquated codes, and employees nearing retirement.

Because of our dedicated employees and elected officials, the Village of Canisteo now has an informative website, on-line bill-pay, updated Code Book and enforcement of Village laws. We no longer are susceptible to fiscal stress because of changes as small as upgrading to LED lighting throughout the village, obtained grant funding to assist with our Water Improvement Project, grants assisted us in replacing our ambulance, Fire Department air tanks, radios, pagers, personal protective equipment and a grant for updating the Police Station emergency generator and HVAC. The Hero Banners line our streets and with the updated State roads, curbs and sidewalks, we look forward to them hanging again.

Future Goals/Plans

We will continue to invest in our water/sewer infrastructure as we've heard many residents express concerns with their quality of water. With construction underway on the \$5.6M water improvement project, we are hopeful to start a regular replacement/upgrade program on mains that aren't addressed in this project. Additionally, we have started planning an upgrade to our Wastewater Treatment Facility due to a State disinfection mandate with an estimated project cost of \$4.1M. The Village has established reserves to be prepared for replacements instead of facing aging infrastructure that requires immediate replacement with limited funds to support the purchase.

Additionally, we will continue to explore grant opportunities for future capital projects. We currently have an application submitted for the NY Forward program that will provide up to \$5M in funding to plan upgrades and investments in our downtown. If we aren't awarded this round, we will continue to collaborate and submit an application to revitalize our downtown.

Most importantly our future needs you! We need our residents to bring ideas and volunteer their time so we can bring more to our Village. I continue to hear comments that there is nothing here and our downtown looks sad. Though we can clearly see the changes in Canisteo over the last 50 years, I do not believe this is the end for us. We are seeing an increase in young families moving into the area and it's encouraging to see we have a future to develop. I am asking for you to attend our board meetings or visit Village Hall to share your ideas and become involved. A Village wasn't built with only a few people, it took a community to create what we had, and I can attest, it will take a community to keep it going. I love Canisteo and see the potential of what we will continue to be, I just ask that you grab a hand and join along!

I do want to take a moment to acknowledge our hard working village staff. It's with their efforts and dedication to our residents that the Village continues to prosper today.

VILLAGE CLERK

Katrina Oliverio, Treasurer/Clerk Letitia Turner, Deputy Clerk

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS Marcus

Norton, Superintendent
Bradley Davis, Motor Equipment Operator Andrew Turner, Motor Equipment Operator Christopher Bertram, Wastewater Operator Jason Cole, Wastewater Operator

CODE ENFORCEMENT

John Foy

JUSTICE

Madeleine Seaman, Judge & Court Clerk

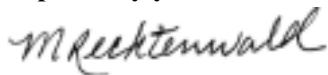
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Kyle Amidon, Chief of Police
James Giglio, Sergeant
Kurt Amidon, PT Officer
Brandon Mills, PT Officer
Scott Richardson, PT Officer
Kate Secondo, School Resource Officer Jamie Harwood, School Resource Officer

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Don Lewis, Fire Chief
Jim Boone, Assistant Chief
Jeff Chase, Assistant Chief
Jackie Lewis, Ambulance Captain Fire Company Volunteers

Respectfully yours,



Monica Recktenwald, Mayor

(continued from page 3)

Many weeks and hours of preparation went into planning this celebration and the whole community was involved in the week long celebration.

Saturday - June 30th, 1973- Sadie Hawkins Day. The day started with the judging of the Little Abner and Daisy Mae costumes. At 10AM the boys (7th - 12th grades) were given a five minute head start before the girls were set loose to find a husband and bring their man back for mock weddings. A dance followed that evening.

Sunday- Special church services were held with a Centennial Hymn Sing at the Rotary Field in the evening.

Monday - Opening ceremonies were held at the Rotary Field and the Coronation of the Centennial Queen. There were youth activities throughout the day including games, relay races and picnics. The elementary school pool was open in the afternoon for the Bathing Suit contest. The carnival began at Rotary Field.

Tuesday was Ladies Day with awards in 10 categories. A summer showcase production of "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" was held in the High School Auditorium. Youth activities at the Rotary Field included a Bubble gum blowing contest, jump rope, softball throw and other games. The pool was open for kids in the afternoon and there was a greased pig contest at the elementary school.

Wednesday was cowboy day. There was a horse show at Will-O-View Farm in the morning; a country jamboree at Reynold's Motors Garage in the afternoon. A Tug-O-War and water fight was held at the Rotary Field for the Brothers of the Brush chapters. The Grange sponsored a Chicken Barbeque that evening.

Thursday was Men's Day. The final Kangaroo Court was held at the Rotary Field followed by the Beard Judging Contest. Youth activities included a treasure hunt with maps and clues followed by ball game. Friday was Youth Day. The Children's parade started at 9 AM on Ordway Lane, continued along Main St., up Greenwood and ended at Rotary

Field where prizes were given for pets, decorated bikes, Centennial costumes, floats, and an open class for baby carriages, sleighs, etc. There was a bike rodeo in the afternoon with events such as figure eight, games on wheels, bike safety, agility test, etc.

The official Centennial Balls were held in **St. Joachim's Parish** with Paul Thurkins and the Four of Us, **The American Legion** featuring music by Starlite Ramblers and the **Fire Hall** with music by Janet Earle and the Definite Difference.

Saturday was the culmination of events with the Parade at 2:30. There were 40 floats, 22 marching units, including bands, color guards, drum and bugle corps, among others in the 138 unit parade. The parade lasted over 2-1/2 hours and it is estimated there were 30,000 in attendance in the village of 2,800. The *Evening Tribune* article says this number might be overstated but there were people everywhere in Canisteo. They crowded Main Street until they spilled over 4 and 5 deep into the street. "They swarmed over Sister City Park until it looked like a football grandstand on home-coming day and they lined the Greenwood Street sidewalks like hungry locusts."

There were sky diving exhibitions before and after the parade at the Rotary Field along with the carnival rides, games and food that had been going on all week.

An "Up With People" concert, along with the Beard Shave-Off and Closing ceremonies were held at 7 PM followed by fireworks at dusk.

Centennial Belles and Brothers of the Brush

There were 30 Chapters of "Centennial Belles" and 32 chapters of "Brothers of the Brush" that operated under the organizing efforts of Gary and Pat Davis.

The bylaws for the Belles and Brothers included such rules as: all women must refrain from wearing makeup unless they purchase a permit. The women must also appear Friday nights in the village in costume and must curtsy to fellow members when meeting on the street.

The men had their own rules foremost which was the growing of a beard, mustache, sideburns or

combination thereof. Their costumes consisted of derby hats, bow ties with the color of their chapter, vests and arm garters.

Friday and Saturday nights the village was patrolled by the Kanestio Keystone Cops. Instructions to the "Koppers" as they headed out were "All right gentlemen, your summons lists five things you can charge people with: failure to wear any visible Centennial wearing apparel; not wearing an official badge; too ugly or too pretty; and one other - Just use your imagination - almost anything will do. No, I take that back, anything will do."

Violators were required to appear before the Kangaroo Court.

The Lockup

Construction of a lockup for Brothers and Belles who violated Centennial Rules proved to be harder than first thought. The "jail" constructed of wood and metal in the village park, was stolen at least once a day during the 7 day celebration. This harkens back to the first action of the newly formed Village in 1873 which was to build a lockup to house the village culprits!

Canisteo's second major celebration was for the **Town of Canisteo Bicentennial Celebration** held in 1989, which is a story for another newsletter.

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Following is the second in a series of articles from students in Mr. Romanchock's 10th grade college level Global History class. Each year around Halloween the students visit the neighboring cemeteries to hone their historical research skills and enjoy the spectacular fall colors.

William Hammer

by Lauren Freeland, Devin McChesney
and Jennie Howard

William Hammer was a military man born in 1845 who died in 1926. He married Mary A. Hammer, five years younger than him who passed in 1915. William's life spanned from the early history of

Canisteo to the early modern: the year William was born, the first school on Slate Creek was built. The year he died, the *Hornell Traction Company* ceased being an electric streetcar company, which it had been since 1892. When the Civil War split America, William volunteered in the 33rd Independent Battery. This unit was a part of the New York Light Artillery, and Hammer joined as a private.

The men in the 33rd Independent Battery were recruited from across Buffalo, Rochester, Lockport and Elmira. The men left New York for Washington D.C on September 4th, 1863. They travelled from Camp Barry to Yorktown, then the south side of the James River. They continued to Petersburg, VA, and served as a garrison until the town's loss on June 18, 1864. The battle was fierce with estimated casualties from Petersburg totaling 7,674. Of those, approximately 2,974 were Union losses and the rest from Confederacy. William's battery had relatively light casualties including one officer killed in combat and another twelve enlisted men laid low by disease. The officer, General James St. Clair Morton, was the chief engineer of the IX Corps, was killed on June 17th. Though the Confederacy won this battle, the 33rd Independent Battery escaped and returned home to western New York on June 25, 1865.

Today, the tombstone of William Hammer is a bit sad. The top of the stone, in the shape of an obelisk, now lies on the ground - perhaps due to natural sinking or vandalism. William's marker still bears a silver-colored circle on his grave, showing that he was a veteran, though given the stone's state it's not much in the way of respect.



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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Sue Babbitt	President
Toni Stevens-Oliver	Vice President
Gail Davis	Secretary/Treasurer

Directors

Jerry Bush	2023
Sue Babbitt	2024
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