

# Kanestio Historical Society Times

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

2023- Fall [kanestiohs@gmail.com](mailto:kanestiohs@gmail.com) Gail Davis, Editor

## USS Canistota

by Chris Romanchock

For several years, I have attended the Seven Years War College offered every spring at Fort Ticonderoga. The menu consists of papers from an international cadre of scholars dealing with various Elba. Part of the pleasure of the college comes from meeting the community of scholars and enthusiasts who come together to talk about the long 18th century. For the past few years, I have sat near a couple of gentlemen whose incisive commentary has been greatly entertaining- this year, I introduced myself and imagine my surprise when I found that one of the fellows, Doug Hancher of Rhode Island, had served as a midshipman on the USS Canistota (AO 99) in the Mediterranean Sea for eight weeks in 1976, early in his 22 year Navy career. During a break, we got to talking about his experiences aboard, and he was gracious enough to agree to allow me to share those with the Kanestio Historical Society.

The Canistota was a Cimarron-class fleet oiler launched in 1945. Like all oilers at the time, she was named after a river: our Canistota. The ship was built for WWII but was commissioned too late to serve in that war. Instead, it supported a wide variety of naval actions in a service life spanning four decades. Hancher explained that oilers carried fuel for fighting naval vessels to allow them to remain closer to the scene of action without long transits to replenish at

bases. Also, as post-WW2 ships were modernized and became increasingly complicated and required ever-larger crews, cruisers and destroyers had some fuel tanks converted into berthing compartments, requiring them to refuel more often, typically every 3-5 days to maintain a high state of readiness.

In 1966 the Canistota was cut in half, and a refrigerated stores and magazine section over 100' long was inserted to allow it to carry food and ammunition in addition to fuel. This conversion into a multi-product ship was called "Jumbo-ization", so Canistota was known as a "Jumbo Oiler."

Refueling at sea was a dicey business. Hancher described the underway replenishment process: "The oiler maintained a steady course and speed at 12-16 knots. The receiving ship would come along side about 100' away and a sailor on the oiler's deck would fire a shotgun loaded with a hollow projectile tied to parachute cord across the gap." Hancher grinned and said he got to perform that task a few times; we would aim for the rig safety officer's helmet on the other ship. "Sailors on the warship would haul the cord over attached to heavier and heavier messenger lines until the two ships were tied together by a steel cable from which the fueling hoses or traveling surfs with cargo pallets were suspended." Hancher explained. Generally there were two refueling stations servicing a ship alongside. Ships could be replenished simultaneously on each side of the oiler.

The steel cable was attached to a hydraulic system, a ram tensioner, aboard the oiler that kept the steel cable under constant tension (current systems are under 40,000 pounds tension) despite the relative motion between the ships' decks from waves and minute deviations in the ships' courses. The rams, with several wraps of cable, move up and down to take in or pay out cable. Hancher said the vessels could 'wander' only twenty to thirty feet before the system would be at the end of its capacity and that ships would have to be separated. Once connected, Hancher said a 10" rigid hose would be slung across the cable on rollers. "Sailors on the warship would haul it across with ropes and would try to build up speed so that hose nozzle slammed right into the receptacle on the ship's superstructure." Hancher described. Once attached, distillate fuel would be pumped across between 60-80psi, refueling the warship quickly, typically 30-45 minutes for a destroyer. The goal was to minimize the amount of time the ships were connected together, restricted in their ability to maneuver, and therefore more tactically vulnerable.

Ammunition and food could be brought across the cable on trolleys amidships, but Hancher said that helicopters were more frequently used. The Canisteo lacked a helicopter deck, so birds from other ships would hover while loads were hitched up and flown to the receiving vessel.

Mr. Hancher went on to bigger vessels in his long career. He retired from the Navy after 22 years of service into a second career as a civil engineer. The Canisteo served from Antarctica to the Mediterranean and ended her career supporting drug interdiction in the Caribbean before being mothballed in 1989, struck from the naval list in 1992, and scrapped in 2010.



The Canisteo as Mr. Hancher served on her, refueling the USS Iowa in 1986. Photo credit Jeff Hilton, viadefenseimagry.mil.



Doug Hancher (left) and the author on the battlements of Fort Ticonderoga in May 2023.

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Ever wonder why Greenwood Street and Depot Street don't line up?

Here, according to Bill Stuart, is the story.

*"When Greenwood and Depot Streets were being surveyed, it was desired to form one street straight to the river. The line separating the properties of William Bennet and William Mead would about coincide with the partition wall between the stores of Gibson and Kitell and E. C. Barker (known to most of us as the Bank and Beavers). It was desired that this property division line should be the middle line of the proposed street, hence Bennett and Mead were*



*each asked to donate one half of the required land for the street. Bennett agreed, but Mead would not. Thereupon Bennett gave all the land for the right of way, but stipulated that the center line thereof be moved to the west four rods. (This resulted in Bennett's hotel, Canisteo House or Manwell Block, being framed at the end of Depot Street). So it became about that the junction of Depot and Greenwood Streets was "cut on the bias," and the possibility of one splendid street a mile long rendered impracticable."*

This article was taken from the second edition of Bill Stuart's "Stories of the Kanestio Valley." For those of you unaware, there were three editions of Stuart's book. While each covers generally the same material, there are differences between the various editions. The Historical Society is fortunate to have copies of each.

### Picnic at Rotary Park

While Canisteo was experiencing a much needed downpour of rain, 14 members and guests of the Historical Society remained dry and enjoyed our annual dish-to-pass picnic at Rotary Park. As usual there was plenty of food and great conversation.



### In Memory.....

It is always sad when we lose a member of our Society but this summer has been tragic for our organization. Since our last newsletter went out at the beginning of summer we have lost ten members. I wish I could write a line or two about each and the many contributions they have made to our group over the years but it would take a whole newsletter. Please take a moment to remember these individuals, their families and the contributions they've made to the Society over the years. Memorial contributions in their name are a wonderful way of paying tribute to these individuals.

Sally Florence, Judy Roach Kaminski,  
Richard LaValle, Barbara Crumb  
Carla Caple Agonito, Betty Caple  
Jean Pratt, Phyllis Cassidy  
Marilyn Fish, LaVonne Crosby

### August Outing



On August 8th we were hosted by volunteers of the Prattsburgh Historical Society. This is an amazing Victorian home filled with authentic Prattsburgh artifacts. Please visit if you have the chance.

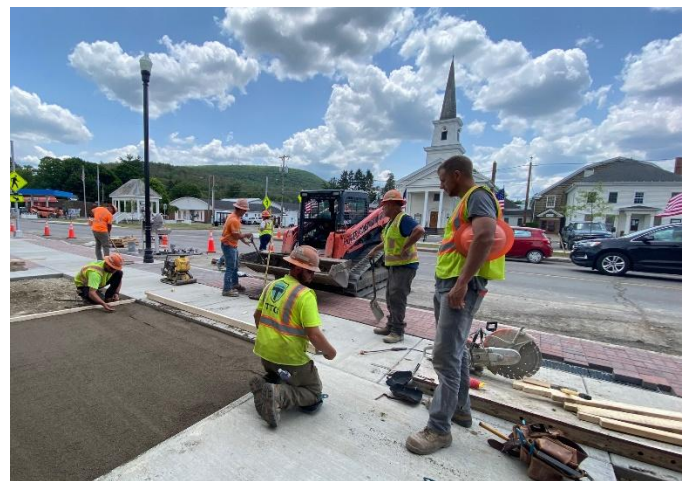


## Sidewalk and Street work is Complete

After two summers of torn up sidewalks and streets the downtown project is complete. Main and Greenwood Streets have new sidewalks and roads. The new gas streetlights and bricks lining both sides of the sidewalks in front of businesses give a truly historic look to the village. We like to think that the brick sidewalk in front of our building was the inspiration for the brick throughout the business district.



Canisteo's own Tim Mayorga leads the crew laying pavers in front of the Historical Society.



Photos by Sue Babbitt & Steve Cotton



Stores are dressed up with flowers showing off their new sidewalks.



The mill stone from our original build was preserved and the old flaking tiles and bricks replaced by new.



The Massage Therapy on Main Street



Timeless Antiques on Main Street



The Brick House

Specialty coffees & sweets, breakfast and lunches on Main Street  
*My generation remembers this as Hall's Closet*



The Living Tree

Ice Cream on the patio or great meals inside  
*Tony's Corner Store to us Baby Boomers*



B.K.'s on Greenwood St.



## IN OUR COLLECTION..

*Cobbler! Cobbler, mend my shoe;  
Get it done by half past 2.  
Stitch it up & stitch it down,  
And I will give you half a crown.*



I'm not sure how many cobblers we had here but we do know that the Shoe Industry was a major business in Canisteo.

### Allison Boot and Shoe Factory 1868 - 1895

The Allison Boot and Shoe Factory was the first large industry to be built in Canisteo after the coming of the Erie Railroad in 1850. (It was situated on the corner of Depot and Main at the site of the Acorn Convenience Store. They were the first boot and shoe manufacturer in Steuben County and the first factory of any kind in Canisteo. They manufactured hand pegged boots and shoes, turning out 500 pair in a day. They employed as many as 120 men. Sales ran as high as \$300,000 a year. This firm also had a factory for manufacturing ladies' and children's shoes in the upper floor of the new brick building on the corner of Main and Depot, a business amounting to \$75,000 a year. (Former site of Steuben Trust & Tom's Barber Shop) They would later build a large brick factory at the lower end of Depot St. A newspaper item in 1881 read "L.M. Allison and Co. seem to utilize every available vacant building in village with their workmen in manufacture of boots and shoes." Their



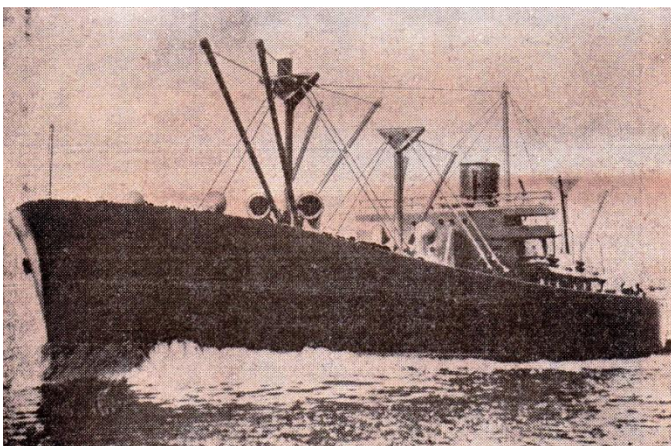


enormous building was still too small for their increasing business so it left the village in May of 1895. This was a terrible loss to the village.

After the Shoe Factory, the building was occupied by an undertaking parlor and later by Meeks and Goff Hardware Store and the "Dish" Cornish Restaurant. In 1934 the 3-story building was torn down and the material was used to build the Wesleyan Church. It contained oak finishing materials used in the church sanctuary. A gas station was built on the site now known as Kwik-Fill/Apple.



## **The Erie Railroad Company - more than just trains.**



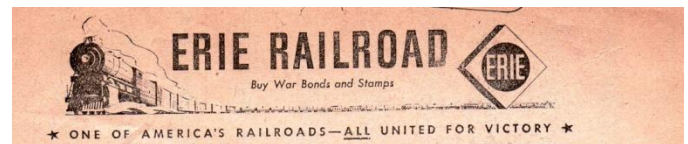
**May 13, 1943 - Victory Ships First Learn to Travel on Land!** You many not recognize them even when you see them, but those

Victory ships, launched with such amazing speed, actually travel first on land.

American railroads are carrying these ships in prefabricated sections across cornfields, over mountains, and through valleys to shipyards for quick assembly.

The high, wide clearances of railroads such as the Erie make practical the assembly of these huge ship sections far inland. And this prefabrication is speeding the construction of Victory ships at a record breaking pace.

America is now producing more ships than all the rest of the world combined! And America's railroads are helping in every way they can to work this production miracle.



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In addition to carrying passengers and cargo, the Erie RR also operated Ferry and Tug Boats between the Hoboken Terminal in New Jersey over the Hudson River into New York City. This picture shows a Tug Boat pulling a barge loaded with freight cars headed to NYC from New Jersey. (Submitted by Jose Huerta)



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# 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.*

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Toni Stevens-Oliver	Vice President
Gail Davis	Secretary/Treasurer

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