

# 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](http://www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com)

[kanestiohs@gmail.com](mailto:kanestiohs@gmail.com)

Volume 28 - Issue 2

Gail Davis, Editor - Suzanne Babbitt, Assistant Editor

## The Debonaires 1964-1965 Canisteo CS Show Choir



**HEADED FOR WORLD'S FAIR**—The Debonaires of Canisteo Central School will make two appearances in the New York State Pavilion of the World's Fair on May 24. The singing group, directed by Don Besig of the school music

of "South Pacific" on May 14-15.

department, has appeared in several area concerts. Many groups have contributed toward the estimated \$900 required for the Debonaires to make the trip to the fair and a large part of this total is expected to be raised from the production

Front Row: Marsha Feeney, Barb Scranton, Sally Ordway, Becky Wood, Susan Young, Martha Seamans, Diana Jones and Cindy Hurd, 2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Steve Jones, Dan Jones, Jim Holden. Back Row: Jerry Fish, Ted Sick, Neil VanWie, Jerry Goodwin, Chuck Yoder, Dana Aultman, Dan Todd

Debbie Zeltwanger recently donated a 1964-65 LP vinyl recorded by Canisteo Central High School's Debonaires. I had no way of playing it at the Historical Society so took it home to listen. It brought back so many memories and I was transported back to my high school days - recognizing many of the voices from the recording.

Don Besig organized and directed the group. We have a copy of an email from Mr. Besig to one of our members after the Society received an inquiry from David Dexter of Neenah, Wis. who found the record. Mr. Dexter was sorting the contents of a house owned by Charles and Louinda Sanford who were ministers of a church in the area when he came across the phonograph and thought we might like to have it.

Don writes " *Surprising that this recording should turn up after so many years! When I taught at Canisteo, I organized the Debonaires as a select ensemble drawn from the CCS Choir. That was long before anyone had ever heard of a "show choir" but that's what it was! We sang on several school concerts, and performed at the NY Sate Pavilion at the World's Fair at Flushing Meadows. Louise McCarty (the HS art teach) and Russ Rau (industrial arts) chaperoned the trip along with me and my former wife. As I recall, the recording was made as a keepsake for the kids and their families, but I believe some copies were sold to the general public.*

*I have lots of happy memories of those days - the musicals, concerts, and festivals that the music department was involved with. First Harold Skinner and then Paul Thurkins were my counter parts in the instrumental music program, and we did our best to provide varied and meaningful experience for our students.*

*Thanks for this little "stroll down memory lane". I was at Canisteo only four years, but they provided lots of pleasant memories.*

Regards... Don

## From our Readers

When I sent out the last newsletter I asked for you to share your memories and give suggestions for future newsletters. Thanks so much to all who responded. We are still researching some of the requests and they will appear in future issues of the newsletter.

Dora Lee (Snyder) Alexander writes:

*Loved the story by Maria MacChesney Drake about the shoebox. Oh my gosh, the memories that brought back! Where do I start? It was probably her Dad's store, our Bennett's Creek School Bus driver, John Mullen, would stop at every year on the last day of school and buy an ice cream cone for every kid on the bus. How kind he was and what a treat that was for most of us "country kids". I only rode Mr. Mullen's bus for three years but I, and a now deceased former classmate, Howard Warriner, both had warm memories of that yearly event.*

*The "downtown" stores were wonderful and exciting. In Wilkinson's "5 & 10 cent" store, I remember that Irene Brown was a clerk and both my two sisters, Franny and Linda Snyder, and I have separate memories of Irene's kindness. My memory is of the time she spent teaching Arlyce Ives and me how to tie a bow on a gift package. Arlyce and I must have been about eighteen or nineteen when that event took place and now at the age of 88 I am still using that lesson. Thank you Irene! Fran (Bloom) said that she and Linda (Norton) were in the store and couldn't afford to purchase the sheet music to the song "Let it Snow, Let it Snow" so Irene stood there with them, helping them memorize the words and the music to that song. The three of them stood there with Lin and Fran singing the words over and over to Irene until they had it down pat. Linda added, "and Dora, when kids would come in the store to buy a gift for someone like their mom, if they didn't have enough money, Irene would finish the payment for the child's gift." How many of us have been so fortunate to have Irene Brown touch our lives?*

*Fran told me that Mr. Wambold had a pair of white shoes in his store with which she just fell in love. Every day after school, she would stop in his store and try those shoes on knowing full well she couldn't afford or ever have them. One day when she stopped in, Mr. Wambold told her "Oh honey, those shoes have been sold". She was heart broken! But when her January birthday rolled around, her present from Mom and Dad, when she opened it up, was those white shoes. Sometimes, dreams do come true!*

*Nothing earth shattering but just some sweet memories of my home town.*



## Jon Roe class of 1971 writes:

*I can't remember where or when I first heard about this, but it might have been in one of the historical books written by someone in Steuben County.*

*This has always fascinated me since I first read it; that people from Canisteo NY migrated to Minnesota and named a town there after Canisteo. And this town is not far from Rochester MN, so I wonder if that was connected in some fashion to these people who went there.*

*One day I made calls and wrote emails to places in MN, but never had any luck chatting with any person or chamber of commerce or historian that knew anything about this saga. There's a couple different places named Canisteo, too; I think a certain mine has the name and then maybe some township, but I was never able to speak to anybody from there.*

*So, I'm just wondering if you and your folks have done a deep dive on this journey of folks from Canisteo NY that ended up in Canisteo MN?*

There is a lot of information on the internet on Canisteo MN and the mines but I didn't see anything on the migration of people from Canisteo NY. However, we do have a newspaper article dated August 1, 2004 by Larry Oakes, Star Tribune Staff Writer. Bovey Minn.

"Local lore has it that almost a century ago, land speculator Chester Congdon suggested an exotic name for the mine on the outskirts of this Iron Range community: Canisteo. Canisteo (rhymes with "Janice Leo") was the name of a town in Congdon's native New York State. It's an Algonquin Indian word that means "head of waters," and to Congdon it probably seemed an apt name for a mother lode of red ore discovered in the Mississippi headwater region, on the western edge of the Mesabi Range. And now the name has become more apt than he probably ever would have guessed."

You can search the internet for more on the mine. If anyone has more information on the migration of people from Canisteo to this region, please share it with us.

## Remembering Margaret

1928-2023



The Historical Society lost one of its most loyal and enthusiastic members in December with the passing of Margaret Stephens. Margaret was a charter member of the Historical Society. She was an active & enthusiastic KHS member from its inception. Her love for this community, its history, but most of all its people made her a "cheerleader" for our society. Margaret served on the Board of Directors, as corresponding secretary, and on the memorial committee. She helped out at probably every activity over the years: in the kitchen, at pie & cookie sales, helping to sort & price sale items. But most of all she has been our unofficial "good will ambassador," welcoming everyone who came through the door. When out & about around town she'd talk up our activities & encourage folks to learn about & get involved in their local history.

Margaret's health had failed in the last couple years and she moved to the Albany area to be closer to her daughter Peggy but her heart remained in Canisteo. She loved receiving our newsletter and cards and notes from her friends in Canisteo.

Rest in peace, Margaret.

You can read more about Margaret and her years as our school dental hygienist in the Spring 2017 issue of our newsletter available on our website.

## Donation Appreciation

Donations are always gratefully accepted whether and extra few dollars with your dues payment or the larger donation checks you send. We want to acknowledge two very generous donations received this past year.

Thank you to **Irma Ficzeri** from Arizona who has donated annually in memory of **Pat Hale** who passed in 2016. Pat grew up in Canisteo and after moving to Arizona came back to the village with Irma to spend the summers.

**Sidney Decker**, a 1959 Canisteo graduate who currently lives in Texas introduced us to a new method of giving when he donated his 2023 IRA RMD (required minimum distribution) to the Society. This was a tax break for him and a bonus for us. Sid, with his wife and daughter stopped at the society this fall where we got to visit.

## The Spotlight Is On...

by Suzanne Babbitt



**George Dickey** is the newly retired Town of Canisteo Historian, and although I have worked with him a good bit over the years, in this interview I learned a lot about him I'd never known. George is the oldest of 4 children of Sidney & Virginia Dickey, growing up on the Swale out of South Canisteo with his siblings Sidney, Jr., Gail & Joyce. He graduated from Canisteo H.S. in 1960, going on to graduate from Syracuse U. School of Forestry in 1964. He was just beginning work on

an advanced degree when Uncle Sam came calling. By 1967 George was in the Army & heading to Missouri for basic training. By 1969 he was in the Army Engineer School in Virginia teaching students remote sensing (maps, satellites, aerial photographs, etc.)

Once George was discharged he was then hired by the Army as assistant manager of the forest land on Fort Lewis near Tacoma, WA, about 86,000 acres. His interest in history centered on the period after the American Revolution until post Civil War. There are active Civil War re-enactor groups in the northwest area and soon George joined up. He also volunteered as a docent in museums in the area focusing on the Hudson Bay Co. History

1991 saw George retiring & returning home in '92 to help run the family farm which he continued to do until turning it over to his nephew Mike to carry on. At that time his mom Virginia was Town of Canisteo Historian, which title she held until she had to retire due to poor health.

In March of 2001 George was given that job which he faithfully carried out through 2023, helping local lovers of history researching various topics. George also volunteered at the Kanestio Historical Society where he helped local history lovers find answers to their questions, organizing & curating genealogy records and assisting visitors who were searching family records. Aside from all this, he pitches in to help with every KHS project & endeavor and encourages us all. One accomplishment that he has worked on tirelessly & has been commended for is researching the burial places of Civil War veterans in Canisteo Cemeteries. We all say, "Thank you, George." You will still find George volunteering at the Society on Thursdays and Fridays from 1-3.

## New Town Historian

Carrying on in the footsteps of George, his mom Virginia & Leora Drake before her is newly appointed town historian Steve Cotton. Steve has long been interested in area history, serving at various times as KHS President, Treasurer, & newsletter editor. Since his retirement Steve has thrown himself into a bunch of area projects, giving

talks, leading the project of restoring the Slate Creek one room school, becoming the Hartsville historian, authoring several books on local people & events. We know that he will do this new role with enthusiasm & creativity. We wish him well. Steve's contact info is 9 E. Main St.; phone # 607-661-3515; email: [scottonhistory@gmail.com](mailto:scottonhistory@gmail.com).

## Students Corner

*This article series is a product of students enrolled in HIST 1040 at Canisteo-Greenwood High School. As part of their course work, students engage in historical research projects that take them from the neighboring Cemetery, to the Kanestio Historical Society and to several College and University libraries. Their research culminates in a project for National History Day, a national competition for high schoolers involved in historical research.*

### John Mapes

by Theo Romanchock and Malachi Stauring



John H. Mapes was born in Livingston County, NY in 1843. He died in 1918 in Coudersport, PA and is buried in Canisteo's Pioneer Cemetery. He was married to Della Mapes, born 1860, and died 1887. He had two children with her, both of whom died young. Charlie died in infancy at age 1 and 6 months and David, died in infancy as well, at the age of 2 months. He had three children after that out of wedlock; however the mother is a mystery. John served in the US Civil War, Company I, 28<sup>th</sup> Michigan Volunteers. The 28<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry was a Union regiment

mustered into combat in October of 1864 created by condensing the 29<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry Corps. The regiment lost a total of 133 casualties, two of which were officers. Only five soldiers were killed in action. The rest died of infection and disease, another officer among them.

John fought in the battle of Nashville and survived Hood's pursuit into Nashville. His regiment was stationed at the battle of Franklin when the Confederate Lt. General Hood brutally annihilated the Union troops there. Many wounded Union troops were abandoned when the Union evacuated to Nashville. Hood marched his 26,000 men to the outskirts of Nashville. Hood was prevented from entering Nashville by the remaining Union troops, including John Mapes. Hood briefly considered retreat but feared this would dissolve his army and pressed into Nashville. The city fell in December of 1864.

After the war, John was arrested by Deputy U. S. Marshall Staring on Wednesday, August 11, 1886 for selling illegal liquor. John was fined \$40 in Buffalo on Thursday, September 30. He testified in Andrew Eveland's 1894 trial for child abuse and murder trial. He moved to Brooklyn sometime in 1908 and began auctioneering later that year, as a member of H C Mapes and Co. He traded part of his land off to a friend, Ruben C. Morgan, earlier in 1908, swapping equally valued land in Canisteo for some in Hornellsville, for a dollar.

His son, Clayton Mapes, born in 1871, worked for J. M. Deutsch Company, in the automobile business. While pushing a car Clayton fractured a bone, causing him to die of pneumonia in 1926 at the age of 55. Clayton spent a week in bed before dying. Clayton's wife had died in 1918, presumably of flu, on the same day as John Mapes.

John's daughter Mrs. Frank Pratt, who died in 1960, lived long enough to call her grandchildren in Texas on a long-distance telephone on Thursday, October 6th, 1955.

His other daughter, Mrs. Harry G. Bowles, died in 1934 from heart disease at the age of 53, making Mrs. Frank Pratt the longest living of his children.



## A Bit about the Residents of the House at 32 Union Street

by Wilma Stewart



*Richard Stewart purchased the house in May 17, 2017. He and his wife, Wilma, made some repairs and have listed the house on the AirBNB web site. Over 200 groups of guests, national and international folks, have enjoyed occupying the house for one or more nights.*

Lucius A. Waldo born in 1865 was listed as a trustee regarding a will of Thomas Briggs (1808-1883) and the property with my house somehow was deeded to Timothy R. Stephens, Williams E. Stephens, Samuel A. Stephens and Mary G. Hitchcox on October 18, 1884 from Lucius Waldo and his wife Jennie for the sum of \$3,400. On March 1, 1895, it appears on records that part of the property was deeded off to Sarah C Rawson and Mary G Hitchcox from Timothy and William Stephens for \$1. It gets a bit confusing for a while as to who owns what without knowing how to determine all the boundaries of different sections of the original property. (Between March 1897 and December 1911 there were several transfers of property. The full listing is available at the Historical Society).

On Dec 11, 1911 Charles Snell and Jennie I. Snell sold to William C. Kellogg and his wife, Millie E. Kellogg. They stayed with the house and property until William died March 16, 1942. The Kellogg estate went to their children, Edna Lewis, Lillian Gibby, Bessie Burns, Mary Brown, Joseph Kellogg, Charles Kellogg and a granddaughter age 10, Doris Jean Kellogg. The property then included 3 parcels: Parcel 1 included 45 acres of farm land, a two story

frame house, a barn and a garage, and a two story frame building used for a grocery store. This all valued at \$2500. Parcel 2 included an 80 acre farm, two barns and a two story frame house. All valued at \$1,100. Parcel 3 included a two family house, a garage and a lot on Taylor St. All valued at \$700. All three parcels were purchased by Harlo L. Porter and wife, Winifred E. on May 9, 1942 for \$3,000.

In the summer of 2023, three of the Porters daughters came to my house to see what changes had been made since they lived there. They told some stories of life there and brought photos. The exterior is very similar and the stairway is the same.



The girls have fond memories of life on the farm and in the house and the store. Neighbors in 1956 included H. Richardson VanWie, Knapp & Glen Foote and a Mehlenbacher.

The Porters sold the property to Herbert L. Cleveland and Elizabeth H. Cleveland on September 23, 1960. Mrs. Cleveland owned and operated a clothing store on Greenwood Street for many years.

She sold the 32 Union Street property to William Glover and his wife, Marlene on January 29, 1988. They soon sold to Richard D. Painter, a realty agent. Mark A. Remchuck and Cheryl E. Remchuck became owners on May 5, 1989. Mark and his father-in-law built a 3 bay auto repair shop. The kitchen in the house was remodeled. John B. Edwards and Diane E. Edwards became owners July 16, 2004. Unfortunately, following a divorce of the Edwards, the property was vacant for a few years and ended up in foreclosure and sold on the Steuben County Court House steps. It was, at that time, two parcels, Parcel A - 1.143 acres in the Town of Canisteo with the house, a barn and an

auto shop and Parcel B -0.381 acres in the Village of Canisteo were purchased by Richard Stewart.

**Judy Porter Ingalls shares photos and memories of the Union Street Home**



The store was a separate building very close to the street. The only thing left is the stoop. In the 1940's and 50's it was a grocery store. My father worked as the butcher and my mother worked the store while also raising 5 kids. It was a mini general store and yes complete with ice cream.

In the mid 50's they changed the business to a toy store closing around 1960 when they sold the property to Mr. And Mrs. Cleveland. As a little kid I loved the toy store. While we lived on Union Street my parents raised sheep, cattle, horses, chickens, etc. It was a great place to grow up.

My family moved to Grand Island NY while my father worked on the Niagara Power Project as a carpenter. He ended up breaking his back while working on the project and we moved back to Canisteo. For a year, we rented on East Main Street from the Maxfields, while my dad rebuilt the house on Gravel Run for us to live in. It was his form of Physical therapy.

**2024 Officers**

Betty Merring	President
Toni Stevens-Oliver	1st VP/Secretary
Sue Babbitt	2nd Vice President
Gail Davis	Treasurer

**Directors**

Sue Babbitt	2024
Betty Merring	2025
Toni Stevens-Oliver	2026
Gail Davis	2027

**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 Membership

Make check payable to:

Kanestio Historical Society  
P.O. Box 35  
Canisteo, NY 14823

or



You can now pay your dues or make donations to the Society with your PayPal Account. There are links on our website at [www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com](http://www.kanestiohistoricalsociety.com)

You can also find past issues of our newsletter on the website as well as more information about the Society, upcoming events and books we have for sale in our book store.

***Donations gratefully accepted toward operating expenses.***



Kanestio Historical Society  
23 Main St., P.O. Box 35  
Canisteo, NY 14823

## The Back Page



Lithograph Corner of Depot and Main from Clayton's History of Steuben County