

CANISTEO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

ARKPORT, NY

Jan/Feb/March 2011 Vol. 12
Linda Burdett, Publisher

Nancy A. Glover, Editor
Dorothy J. Dunham, Asst. Editor

MISSION STATEMENT

Each new year we start out with our mission statement which was in the original Constitution: "The purpose of this Society shall be the collection and preservation of historical knowledge to the territory known as the Canisteo Valley in the County of Steuben, in the State of New York, and in doing so promote the better understanding and appreciation of our American heritage."

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following officers were elected for 2011 at our December 7, 2010 meeting: President, **Nancy A. Glover**; Vice President, **Ernest Dungan**; Secretary, **Dorothy J. Dunham** and Treasurer, **LuAnn Hartwell**. We want to thank **Larry Jones** for being our Treasurer for three years and for organizing the finances as we revived the historical society.

OUR READERS WRITE US

Freida Steffey wrote: I enjoy the newsletter immensely. Some of it brings back memories of those years Dad tenant farmed the Eveland place on Oak Hill.

Onnolee Faulkner called to comment: I love the newsletter and save every copy to reread. The Historical Society has come a long way from years ago when there were usually about five members attending the meetings. I'm amazed at how many members there are now!

Anna Jones Roach tells of a fairly regular experience that she had in Arkport. Anna wrote: I have enjoyed the articles about the Post Office in issues 6, 7 and most recently, the memoirs of Edgar Karns. As a child, I was sometimes allowed to leave the school building for lunch. I would set out for my Grandfather and Grandmother Hurlbut's house at 48 Main St. On the way, I would stop at the four corners at the Post Office to ask for my grandparents' mail. The mail was handed over to me, no questions asked. Grandfather Hurlbut was the Supervisor of the Town of Hornellsville for over 33 years, and, no doubt, legal mail from the Town of Hornellsville, Steuben County, or the State of New York would be in the pile of mail. No one worried about handing the mail over the counter to a child. I also saw some interesting sights in the Post Office, such as boxes of baby chicks waiting to be delivered to a local farmer. Mr. Livermore would bring the large vented flat boxes to the post office from the railroad station, and the little chicks could be heard peeping from every corner of the post office.

Anne Harvey wrote from Arizona: I love the newsletter and save all the issues. I graduated with Martin Eiband and was amazed to learn of all the things he did while working with NASA. (Issue #10). Also, I never knew that Dr. Wolfgruber was responsible for bringing the technique of blood exchange for Rh babies to the Hornell area. (#4 issue). It's good to have all that history written down so that people know about it.

Gertrude Lonsberry wrote from TX: Love the newsletter! I've decided when I read it that my memory is not as bad I thought it was.

MEMORIES OF THE COUNTRY SCHOOLS

[This story was written by Mabel Beman Leith from Bishopville in April 1990 at the urging of Alice Harrington so that this important part of history would not be forgotten. Mabel writes her story from her perspective of being both a student and a teacher. The booklet was typed by Alice's daughter, Jan Ryan, and printed by the Bishopville United Methodist Church's minister Rev. Frank Maclaughlin. Mabel was an important part of the Bishopville community. She was very active in the church, teaching Sunday School and Bible School. She

belonged to the Home Bureau group and also was a 4-H leader for the young girls of the community. Mabel died at the age of 89 in 1993 and is buried at the Arkport Cemetery.]

The country schools flourished for many, many years and their value cannot be lightly dismissed for they had a tremendous impact on the lives of thousands of boys and girls. For many, it was the only formal schooling they ever had. It gave others a taste for more education and with parents' help, instilled in them values to live by.

Everyone who attended a country school will have different memories, for each school was unique, although their aims were the same. I can only write of what I remember.

Most of these early schools consisted of one large room with an "entry" room across the front. There were hooks on the walls for children's wraps, shelves for lunch pails and a bench for the water pail. Inside, the large room sometimes had a platform for the teacher's desk, and the pupils' desks were in rows below. A wood burning stove provided the heat when the weather was cold. Outside the building was the woodshed to house the piles of wood supplied by one or more of the parents. Also behind the school building two toilets were built, sometimes separated by a wood fence.

The first schools were rather primitive, but gradually improved. Even before the 1900's, all the country schools were under state supervision, directly responsible to a district superintendent, who visited the schools periodically.

Each school had a flag pole in the yard and each morning as the flag was raised, the children all joined in the "salute to the flag".

School started at 9:00 and closed at 4:00. A short recess of 10-15 minutes was called in the forenoon and again in the middle of the afternoon. At noon the lunches were eaten, and from then to 1:00 was playtime. There was no well or spring nearby, so each morning one or two of the older boys went to the nearest neighbor with the water pail. This pail of water was set on the bench in the "entry" with a common dipper for all.

A blackboard was fastened to the wall behind the teacher's desk. A coveted privilege was to take the felt erasers outside to clean them by clapping them together. Seats were fastened to the floor. Some of the early seats were double. By that I mean two pupils for each seat. Either the teacher or one of the older boys started the fire each morning.

The children walked to school. The older boys would break a path through the snow for the younger ones in the winter. Sometimes a child had a lonely walk each day if he was the only child living on a branch road. But any child was safe from harm because all the parents were concerned for the safety of all children. Sometimes if a sudden bad storm came up during the day, a farmer filled the box on the bobsled with straw and blankets, hitched up the horses and drove to the school to take all the children home.

There were no clocks, but the teacher had a watch and a hand bell to call the pupils in from play. The morning exercises started with Bible reading or the Lord's Prayer and a few songs the children had learned.

In early years, slates were used instead of paper and pencils. I remember my slate which I carried on my first day of school. It was perhaps 10 or 11 inches long and about 8 inches wide with a wood frame bound with cord. Also attached to this frame was a cord tied to a slate pencil. The slate pencil was about 6 inches long, round and the size of a regular pencil. We wrote and figured our arithmetic on these slates. The "pencil tablets" and lead pencils came later. The pencil tablets were lined and of a course texture. We used the lead pencils which were round and smooth. An eraser was fastened to the top of some pencils. Later came the "ink" tablets and the older pupils could use pen and ink for written work. These pens were sometimes called "nib" pens. A "nib" with a fine point was fitted on a pencil shape form and dipped in a bottle of ink, far different from our "ballpoint" pens of today.

There were usually maps of the world fastened on the wall and could be rolled up and down like window shades. These were used for geography or history lessons. Each school had a bookcase or shelves for books which the teacher or parents provided. Parents paid for school books and these were well taken care of for they were always passed on to the younger brothers and sisters. Mothers made book covers of heavy brown paper to protect them.

Lunch pails were usually lard pails or Karo syrup pails and in cold weather were never left in the entry

room but brought in and set around the stove or on a bench at the rear of the school room.

Attendance was carefully kept in a register supplied by the state and reports were filed and sent to the district superintendent and the State Education Department.

School started in early September and closed in late June. In early days older boys were kept home in the fall to help harvest the crops before bad weather. Sometimes school would be closed for two weeks or more so all the children could help. Many times an older girl would be kept home to help the mother if sickness of younger children occurred.

One thing some of us enjoyed was the spelling "bees". Sometimes on a Friday afternoon when all work was completed we would have a spelling "bee". Anyone in any grade could take part. We lined up in a row on the platform and the teacher selected words for us to spell. If you missed a word, you sat down and you were "out". One by one the line got shorter as the words became more difficult until only one was left standing. Sometimes the one might be a pupil from one of the younger grades.

The teacher taught all 8 grades. When the pupils completed the 8th grade, that completed their schooling as they were needed on the farm. Also many boys reaching the age of 16 applied for a "work certificate". Sometimes a girl might be allowed to go on to high school.

After completing the 7th or 8th grade, any pupil could go to a town school for Regents exams. These were held in January and June. I remember going to the nearest town school about 3-4 miles away to take the Regents exams. I had never been there before and I was "scared to death". How I got into the right room I don't know. Not a familiar face anywhere and I was too timid to ask the presiding teacher to explain some of the instructions.

The exam was from 9am to 12pm. We handed in our answer sheets. At 1pm we were back for another exam. At 4pm we were finished. My memory seemed to be blank all day and all the answers vanished. I did not pass and had to take these exams again.

When a pupil passed all Regents exams, he or she could go to high school for 4 years. When these 4 years were completed and Regents exams passed, then you had earned a Regent's diploma and could go to teacher training class, normal school or college.

Many of the teachers were young women fresh from training class. Also, some were young men who wanted a few years of teaching before going on to higher education. Or it might be a married woman who lived in the district. Sometimes an older man was hired because of unruly older boys.

In some places the schoolhouse was used for a church service on Sunday. It might be used for "neighborhood" socials or a business meeting for the farmers. Early in May each year a school meeting was held at the school for all taxpayers. This was for the purpose of electing trustees and a tax collector for the coming year and discussion of anything concerning the school.

The Christmas program was one of the highlights of the year. The pupils learned recitations, acted in plays, sang Christmas songs for the entertainment of the parents. The schoolhouse and the tree were decorated with handmade decorations. This program was sometimes held in the evening and all the families came in bobsleds for the snow was deep. The last day of school in June was also important. The mothers were invited to come to the picnic lunch.

Many of the schoolhouses were painted white but in some places, they were painted red. Everyone has heard of the "little red schoolhouse".

In the 1930's and 1940's a great change took place: consolidation. The State Education system urged the small schools to join with town schools for a better education for the children. There were inducements as the country children would have the added attractions of music, art, better libraries and better trained teachers. So larger, better equipped schools were built in town and pupils from the country would be brought in by buses sent out by the town schools. These schools were called "centralized".

The attendance in the country schools had been dwindling as some farmers were giving up farming. Small dairy farms were no longer profitable, besides most of the young men were leaving for jobs in town. This was the end of the country schools. They had flourished for over 100 years and held an important place in the history and development of the state, and in the hearts of all who learned to read, write and do their

“sums” in one of these schools.

It was very difficult for the boys and girls involved. They were used to the small country school and now to be suddenly a part of a big school was overwhelming. Everything seemed so strange; many pupils had feelings of being at a disadvantage because of so many things to learn at once. It was bewildering.

The six country schools around Bishopville were as follows: Klipnocky, North Hill, North Almond Valley, Hiltonville (Maple Grove), Dungan Road and Bishopville (a 2 room schoolhouse).

Local teachers who taught in some of these schools were: Madeline Upson, Bishopville; Rosamond Wyant Meyers, Bishopville, Klipnocky, North Almond, Bishopville and later at Arkport Central; Hazel Marvin Brutsman, Dungan Road, Big Creek and later at Arkport Central; Mabel Leith, Hiltonville and Bishopville.

Bishopville was a hamlet when the 2-room school was built. There was a church, a thriving store, a cheese factory, a blacksmith shop and dairy farms on all the surrounding hills and in the valley.

There were too many children for the usual one-room school. The building had 2 classrooms and a teacher for each room. Also, this school had an unusual feature, a large bell housed in a belfry on top of the building. Later when the cheese factory and blacksmith shop were gone and fewer dairy farms, there were fewer children as many families had moved away. Two classrooms were then not needed, so one room was closed and all the pupils could use one classroom with one teacher.

[My father, Ray Amidon, had these memories of the Bishopville School. It was located over the bridge from the 4-corners. It was the only 2-room schoolhouse in the Bishopville area. First through fourth grade was in one room and fifth through eighth was in the other. Both rooms had wood-burning stoves. Down the hall were 2 inside privies. They were like the outhouses but you didn't have to go outside. Dad was 12 years old when he had his first paying job at that school. He built the fires in both stoves for 10 cents apiece and he saved enough to buy a bicycle with his “fire money”. The job lasted about 2 years until the schoolteacher married and then her husband took over the job. He was not happy to lose that good paying job! Dad also attended North Hill School for a short time.]



Bishopville's 2-room school house. Used from the late 1880's-1940. Picture courtesy of Alice & Dick Harrington. North Hill School students: front left to right: Merton Pryor, Cliff Amidon, Doris Easton & Willis Harvey. Back: E. Raymond Amidon, Dick Cook, Rena Wright, Belldene Eves & Willard Ellis. Picture courtesy of Willis & Anne Harvey.

SCOUTING IN ARKPORT

[In the memoirs of Edgar Karns, he mentions how important his involvement in Scouting was to him. It seems that it was important to others as well, and we would like to hear from people involved in Scouting throughout the decades. Please share; send us your Scouting memories, whether a Scout or a Leader. If there are snapshots, please share those, as well.]

John Hurlbut has shared his memories from the 50's:

The people I remember in the troop were John, Dick, and **Tom Falzoi**, Monroe Prentice, Dick Roosa, Dick Kennell, **Charlie Roff**, the Kilbury boy from Sharps Hill, and I am sure there were many others.

At one point, the Exchange Club could not find a Scout Master in 1958; John Falzoi and I ran the troop. We would arrange for the meeting and took the troop on hikes and camping trips. We helped the members with their different badges. During the time I was in Scouts, we would raise money by helping with spaghetti dinners, pancake suppers, and selling candy.



We would go on Jamborees at Camp Gorton on Lake Waneta for the weekends. We all looked forward to Fritz Falzoi coming over and making spaghetti and meatballs. During the summer I went to Scout camp for a week at Camp Gorton.

I remember the Steuben Boy Scout Council organizing a trip to Philmont Ranch in New Mexico which I attended in 1957. On the trip we went to Boys Town, a meat packing plant in Omaha, and Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. On the way back, we stopped in St. Louis, Missouri. As we were walking down the street, a pigeon flew over and targeted me.

When I got back from the trip, my father said that I could go to the National and World Jamborees if I got my God and Country Badge. No one in Arkport had achieved that badge. I worked with Rev. Luther Cross for one year reading the Bible, learning the Ten Commandments, the names of books of the Bible by heart, and working at the church. I taught Bible School that summer, cleaned the church all year and other projects as assigned.

In 1958, I went to Valley Forge for the National Jamboree and had a great time. It was the best fireworks show that I have ever seen. From there, I went to England for the World Jamboree. I saw the Queen of England and met the family of Batista of Cuba, the man Castro overthrew. I remember the rain we had and it seemed like I was wet all the time.

We all were glad to start our tour of Europe. We went to London, Brussels, Holland, Germany, Switzerland and ended up in Paris, France. In Paris, we met a U.S. Serviceman, and he took us on a trip to the red light district. As a kid, it was fun, but a little scary since this was our first exposure to the ladies of the night. If you ever have seen the film *Irma la Douce*, it was like that, and the serviceman took my buddy and me to a bar with him.

Paris was our last stop. We went to the port of Le Havre to catch the ship back to the U.S. This was in September and it was also the hurricane season, which I never paid any attention to as a kid. The ship was rocking and rolling most of the 5 days it took to return to New York City. The trip over to England was so mild it was surprise to all of the scouts. On the return, most got sea sick, but I was fortunate not to.

The Scoutmasters I remember are Edgar Karns, Ernie Wehling, and **Jim Piatt**. The meetings were either in the Gym or Library at school.

Memories from others:

James Hurlbut has memories from the 1940's. He remembers that in the mid 40's, his group planted pine trees on the property of Cora Puckett in South Dansville; now the trees are full size. He recalled that he was part of a band that formed to play at a winter jamboree at the Hornell Armory. With **Rex McGraw**, James remembers working at Camp Gorton on Lake Waneta to earn Eagle Scout status.

James Robords has shared his Scouting memories, also from the 1940's:

Coach Richard Lambert was the first Scoutmaster that I recall. Upon his death in 1942 or 1943, Lawrence Ball, eighth grade teacher, took over until he left the district at the end of the 1945 school year. I can't remember anyone taking over in 1945-46 and it seems as if we were in a kind of "limbo".

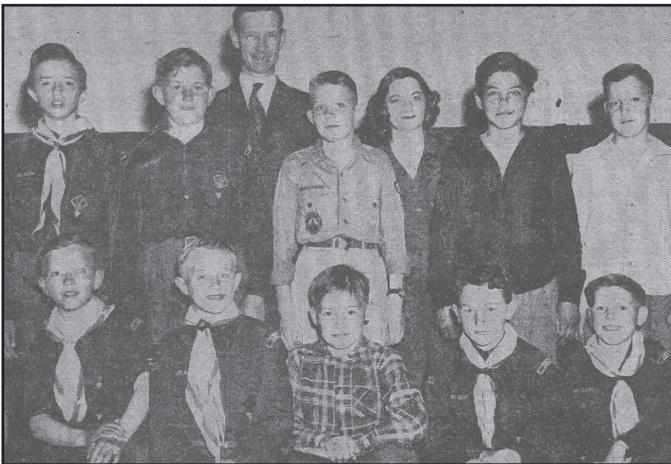
I can't recall anyone holding the position of assistant Scoutmaster. A junior assistant Scoutmaster was chosen from the Scout-aged kids. I think that Martin Eiband, Grey Multer, Clair Sherner, and Louis Predmore held this position at different times.

The membership was divided into about four "patrols" of 4 to 6 members each. I was leader of the Beaver Patrol and the kids I recall being in my patrol were Bill Stearns, Charles Barns, Edson Halbert, and William Flint.

Martin Eiband and Grey Multer attained the highest rank in Scouting: "Eagle". I got to "Life", the next rank below "Eagle".

Because of lack of time (farming duties) and lack of funds, I never attended summer camp at Camp Gorton or any Jamborees. I did a few overnight hikes and one weekend camp at a farm between Canisteo and Greenwood. Probably because of gasoline rationing etc. during the war years, some activities were cancelled.

One sort of humorous event I recall was a winter hike up Reddy Hollow (Lime Kiln Creek). I was working on my fire building merit badge. I did manage to get a fire going and because my feet were extremely cold, I got too close to it and burned a hole in my rubber overshoes. My brother Theodore kidded me about learning to "burn up my overshoes with one match".



From the *Evening Tribune*, early 1940's: Arkport's Cub Scouts, pictured with their leader, Arthur Libbey and den mother, Mrs. John (Marie) King, center, are, back row, left to right: Jerry Wheeler, Donald Karns, Jimmy Fuller, Jimmy Marvin, and Russell White; front row, **Paul King**, Billy Bridge, Phillip Holmes, **Jack McGraw**, and **Norman Kennell**.



Young Scouts and their leader, camping, 1942, possibly at Klipnocky. Left to right: Bill Stearns, Frank Elsenheimer, **Carl Wellington**, and a Van Vleet boy. Picture courtesy of **Charles Wellington**.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank **Nancy Tuttle**, our historian “clipper”, for the wonderful job she has done. Nancy’s job is to clip different items of interest from the local papers. The clippings, which include such items as obituaries, weddings, sports, business advertising, and local stories of interest, are all put in a binder for future reference. Nancy has already filled at least 4 binders. When we get our own building for the historical society, these will be available for the public to peruse for genealogy and historical purposes.

OUR CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES OF MEMBERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY PASSED AWAY



Angela (Angie) Wheeler-Caldwell passed away November 30, 2010. Angie was a 1949 graduate of Arkport Central School. She was very active in Republican politics. She was a member and past president of the Republican Women’s Club, served for many years as Councilwoman for the Town of Hornellsville, served as Headquarter Chairman in Hornell for the George W. Bush Presidential Election Campaign and was a past recipient of the Steuben County Republican of the Year Award.



Marjorie E. Skillman passed away January 1, 2011 at Noyes Hospital in Dansville. She was born in West Sparta and was a graduate of Dansville Central School. She was a life long resident of this area, and a member of the United Presbyterian Church in Hornell. Marge was employed for many years at the former Bethesda Community Hospital.



Bernard F. Smith, Sr. passed away January 18, 2011. Bernard was a veteran of WWII, and was stationed in England. He was a decorated Airman and was honorably discharged October 4, 1945 after the completion of 35 successful missions. Bernard was employed as an auto mechanic for all his life at various area businesses. He eventually purchased Auto Specialized Service, which he owned and operated in partnership with his son Bernard, Jr. (Bernie). The business is now co-owned by Bernie and his son Brad Smith.

DUES & MEMBERSHIP

Because of the membership specials we offer, there has been confusion as to when our yearly membership starts. **To clarify, no matter when you joined, your membership begins in January. The exception this year was if you joined in October 2010, the special included being paid through 2011. All other members’ dues are payable in January 2011. The cost is \$10 per single membership and \$15 for married couples if both want to join. Please make your check payable to the Canisteo Valley Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 123, Arkport, NY 14807.** If you are not sure if you owe, please contact Dorothy Dunham by email at djdunham45@verizon.net or call 607-295-7535 or Nancy Glover by email at glover39@verizon.net or call 607-295-7418.

Our meetings are scheduled for the first Tuesday of March, April, May, June, Sept, Oct, Nov & Dec. The meetings are held from 1:00 – 3:00 in the Arkport Village Community Room located behind the fire station. If there is a change in the schedule, you will be notified. We sometimes have special programs with outside speakers, which could be held afternoons or evenings. If there is one scheduled, there will be signs posted in town, ads in the Evening Tribune plus I will notify you by email.

Our membership count is now at 232 members! If you are interested in joining, please see the information above and remember, membership makes a wonderful gift! Please include name, address, telephone number and email address. Also, check out **Larry Jones’** website, www.arkport.com for Arkport information on community activities and pictures.

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Howard Benning house, 43 West Ave, Arkport. House was built about 1925 by **Lois Benning Dungan's** grandfather, Charles Benning, who is probably the man in the picture. The fence was no longer there when Lois was a child.



Both pictures circa 1950's.
Top: Arkport troop marching up Main St. in Arkport. Courtesy of **Norm Kennell**.
Right: Troop 94 (believed to be an Arkport Troop) marching in a Hornell parade. Picture courtesy of Leon Wellington.



Can anyone identify the boys in either picture?