

CANISTEO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER ARKPORT, NY

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OUR READERS WRITE US

Jack McGraw emailed to add to the Boy Scout story in the last newsletter. Jack wrote: “During WWII our Scout leaders at times would take us to the Arkport Dam to work in the Aircraft Observers Post. We would try to identify aircraft flying between Buffalo and New York City. Thankfully all aircraft at the time were commercial flights. After the war they gave us a little gold pin for our uniforms which read ‘Aircraft Observer’. Keep up the good work on the newsletters.”

Ellen (Glover) Cappadonia emailed: “I can’t believe you have that many members! That is just great. Those stories do bring back a lot of memories. I used to go to the Post Office and get mail for people when I was little. They would give me a penny, which I would run right over to McCarthy’s store and buy a penny candy. God bless Cecile and LaGrande who would bend down and wait until I made my big decision on which one to buy. I knew the combinations to several of the boxes at the Post Office and Mary Lou [Howe-McHale] and I would always get their mail. It was a great place. How about those little chickens; loved that story. Isn’t it nice that so many of these stories trigger a memory?”

Lucy (Wyant) Harper recently joined the historical society. She now lives in Oklahoma and emailed me. “I received the back issues and sat right down and read every one of them. In one you asked about train wrecks. I don’t know if you remember the one Dad [Harry Wyant] was in. This happened in 1944. He was on his way home [Bishopville] and was waiting for the train to pass at the crossing by the Creamery when he noticed the cars starting to couple up. He knew he was in trouble and tried to back up but the car stalled. He couldn’t get it started so he jumped out and ran towards the Creamery. The train cars picked up Dad’s car and tossed it over to the other side. Naturally the car was totaled. Our school bus was going up the Dam Hill [now called the Bishopville Hill] so thankfully we had missed the wreck. When we got home they had called Mom to tell her what happened. She told us that Dad had wanted her and Marsha (who was a baby) to go with him into town but she told him no, to go on without her. I hate to think what would have happened if they were with him. They probably all would not have gotten out in time. Thanks again for the issues; you are doing a fantastic job!” *Pictures courtesy of the Harry Wyant family.*



Lorraine (Maginley) Smith emailed: “Finally had time to read the latest newsletter – it was great! You guys really outdid yourselves on that one. I’m looking forward to the next one”.

Anne Nye emailed: “Thank you for the newsletters from the historical society. They were very good and it was so nice to hear from people in the past. What an excellent job you all do”.

Suzu Marcus Jamison emailed to say that her mother-in-law Ruth Marcus also taught at the country schools in Bishopville. [Re: A country school story in #12.]

Robert (Mickey) Wyant emailed: "I enjoyed the last issue about the Eagle Scouts. I received my Eagle at a camp out at the **Jack Hendee** farm in the early 1940's. Keep up the good work with the historical society".

John Cornue writes: "I have very much enjoyed reading about the hometown area and find it interesting that there is so much rich history. You and your fellow staff members have done an excellent job in building a first class newsletter".

You never know where a story in our newsletter will lead. Loretta Crossett contacted me after reading what **Freida Steffey** wrote about the Eveland farm in our last newsletter. The Eveland farm is where Loretta and her late husband Louie lived since 1959. Loretta wrote the following: "When Louie got out of the Air Force the farm belonged to the Crossett farm and his Dad helped us fix it up. We moved in with our two youngest and had a 3rd shortly after settling in. The house was owned by Louie's Aunt Gladys [Fidler] and the fields farmed by Louie's father." Loretta contacted **Freida Steffey** and they had a wonderful visit about the farm. Freida was a young girl who lived with her family on Eveland Road near Cemetery Road that goes into South Dansville. She attended a country school nearby. Her father did farming on two farms and one was the farm that Crossett's own today. Freida was never at the Crossett home but she does remember the name Crossett and several others that Loretta knew. The Steffey's bought a farm outside of Canisteo and moved after being in this area for only about 2 – 3 years. Loretta has extended an invitation to Freida and her brother to visit the Crossett farm.

DEL OLDS

One of the good things about growing up in Arkport in the late 1940's and early 50's was you got to meet and work with a lot of men I will call gentlemen or characters of that time. They drove old Chevy or Ford pickups, rode a bicycle or walked to the muck for a day's work. Some of them chewed Red Man or Bag Pipe tobacco and rolled their own cigarettes. They made \$30 or \$40 a week in wages.

The one special person in my life, the one I worked for on the muck in my high school years, was Del Olds. Del would show you how to do the work and at the end of the day would have nice things to say about your work. Del was an honest, hard working person whom I loved to work for. Standing out in a lettuce field at 4:00 in the morning to cut and pack lettuce with Del was an experience all boys of today should have.

Once the lettuce was cut and packed, it was time for the potatoes to be dug and picked up and the onions topped to be stored in the fall. Russell White, a good friend of mine who worked with me on the muck, and I would start working in Del's potato warehouse. Slats [Hotchkiss] and Del graded or sorted the potatoes on the front of the grader. On the back of the grader was Bill Steffens, Bob Olds, Ab Clark, Curtis [Sinkfield], Russell and myself. Most of the time we put up 10 or 15 lb. bags of potatoes but a few times we put up 100 lb. bags. That was when Del would pick up a 100 lb. bag off the floor and stack it in a pile over his head. He would tell us he did that all day years ago. Then he would have a good laugh for he knew we couldn't lift a 100 lb. bag above our waist or belt.

In earlier years before my time, I've heard they had strong men competition in potato warehouses. The competition involved running with five 100 lb. sacks of potatoes from one end of the warehouse to the other. Del could not be beat. This sounds like Del, for anything to do with lifting was Del's game.

Another thing Del always did was whistle while he worked. There were no songs or tunes, just a whistle. The one thing Del loved to do the most was work, from daylight till dark, seven days a week. If he wasn't working on the muck, it would be in and around his house. Nights after supper I would be going up to the Mobil gas station for some fun and I would look down to Del's house. He would be out there mowing his lawn with a push mower by hand.

Del, thanks for the memories till we meet again.

Your friend and neighbor, **Tim Timmerman.**

REMEMBERING ARKPORT *by Lee Ryan*

One of the things I remember about the years I lived in Arkport was in the 50s, five days before Christmas, when I was called down to the office and was told that our house had caught on fire and was totally destroyed. My dad was in the office, waiting for me.

It was very traumatic to go out and see all the Christmas presents and all that we owned completely burned and dropped into the basement. The only thing that was left was the refrigerator, which he had bought new and was making payments on. Dad had no insurance.

It was a Christmas I'll never forget because the Salvation Army came in and gave each of us kids some toys. In my toys was a 32 caliber pistol. They had figured it was a cap gun, but it wasn't – it was a real pistol – which I still have today! It is a non-working, Iver-Johnson 5 shot revolver. Between the Red Cross, Salvation Army and the people of Arkport, it turned out to be a better Christmas than we thought it was going to be! The community came to our aid and the Ryan's will always remember you.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S DISPLAY CASE AND A RELATED FASCINATING STORY

At the Village Hall in Arkport, in the hallway between the Community Room and the Fire Hall, is a set of glass enclosed display cases. The cases were donated by the Arkport Exchange Club for the use of the Canisteo Valley Historical Society. Neil Sliter and David Smith were the craftsmen for the work, and **Richard Smith** has recently worked "fine-tuning" it for our use. The case has been filled with treasures and materials from members. The wide range of some subjects have been: local businesses, church activities, school memorabilia, "giveaways", maps, postal service, fire service, toys and games. The Society's Plaque in memory of deceased members of the Society was also on display.

The current display completed by **Dorothy Jones Dunham**, is called "Early Aeronautical Adventures in the Canisteo Valley". It begins in 1910 with the first licensed female in the U.S., Blanche Stuart Scott, who lived in the area. It continues with pioneer events that occurred before there was an airport, the establishment of the Old Hornell Airport, various exciting events at the Airport, and finishes with a 1952 airplane ride by Arkport boys. Prominent names are Jack Pryor, L.D. "Pete" Wilkins, Robert Rose, and Howard "Skip" Huff (who recently spoke to our group of the early days of the airport). Though the display is dedicated to the Old Hornell Airport, it has brought forth a memory from **Nancy (Amidon) Glover** who remembers her mother talking about her best friend's daughter, **Lucy Wyant Harper** formerly from Bishopville, and her "bare knuckle" experience at the Dansville Airport. Nancy emailed Lucy for her story, which follows.

AN EMERGENCY PLANE RIDE HOME *By Lucy Wyant Harper*

I joined the Air Force in February 1952 and was sent to Lackland Air Force base in Texas. After basic training I was sent to Oklahoma A & M, which is now Oklahoma State University, for six months of Stenography. I had 4 hours of shorthand and 2 of English during the day. I stayed in the dormitory on campus. I graduated with top honors in my flight, which consisted of 18 women so I had a choice of which base I wanted to go to. I chose Langley AFB in Hampton, VA, mainly because it was closer to home.

When I first got to Langley, they put me in Civilian Payroll, from there they sent me to the dietician's office, and from there I went to the Information Office. We were in a building by ourselves with about 6 men. My job was to take a letter from the Captain, answer the phone, and read the newspapers and cut out anything pertaining to Langley.

As you can tell, it wasn't a very hard job. By that time I had forgotten most of my shorthand as I didn't use it in the other jobs. Luckily, my boss didn't write too many letters, and as a rule, he already had it written out. When I got stuck, he'd just hand me that copy and I'd type it up!



My dad, Harry Wyant, who worked at Arkport Central School, had a heart attack in 1954. When the family called me about Dad and said it was very bad, my boss, Capt. Oldenburg, said he would get me a ride home. He found a plane that was headed for Boston, MA and got me a ride on it.

We landed in Dansville, which was real scary, as it is in the valley. They checked the runway and said the runway was long enough for the plane (I think a B-25) to land. I couldn't remember the name of the person who could turn on the landing lights, so we attempted to land without any. First we buzzed the town hoping to get someone out to the airfield but no one showed up.

I was sitting in the tail of the plane along with another airman. I was wearing a parachute which didn't fit. If I'd had to jump I would have slid right out of it (thank heavens that didn't happen!). The pilot made one approach and saw that he wasn't going to make it so we went fairly straight up, then on the second approach he made it with just his landing lights. My family was there in separate cars with their headlights on. They were scared to death watching us trying to land.

We all watched to make sure they made it up okay. I'll always be grateful to that pilot, (my boss was the co-pilot), for landing me there instead of Rochester or Buffalo. To our relief Dad survived that heart attack.

In 1955 the Air Force was moving all the WAF's off base to make the base 95% combat ready. I had married in December 1954 and my husband was already out of the service. I went ahead and got out on December 15, 1954. I was due to be discharged in February 1955 anyway.

[Editor's note: I emailed Lucy's sister **Vivian Wyant Vet** in Florida to ask if she remembered that fateful night. Vivian said. "It was a very scary night and we all stood there praying watching the plane trying to land. It was a relief to visibly see her get out of that plane. I hope the pilots are now out of the service as it probably wasn't an 'authorized charitable' flight."]

GENERATIONAL FARM IN THE TOWN OF FREMONT: THE HENDEE FAMILY - A DAIRY FARM FAMILY *by Dorothy J. Dunham*

There was a wonderful "good 'ole day" when a dairy farmer knew the pet name of each of his milking cows. **Jack Hendee** has bridged those days to the current, when cows now have numbers assigned to their identity and attached to their ears.

The Hendee family farm is approaching a very commendable sixth generation of operation.

It began in 1802, when Samuel Hendee bought a small farm in the Town of Fremont bordering the edge of the hamlet of Stephens Mills. Most likely, the early farm involved crops to support the animals on the farm: milking cows, work horses, and various smaller farm animals necessary to sustain a farm family. The farm continued with Samuel B. Hendee, who around 1900 also built and operated a sawmill. He was a lumberman, a farmer, and a politician.



The Old Homestead, home of Daniel Hendee, brother of Samuel B. Hendee. The house had a wraparound porch on three sides of the dwelling. Jack remembers beautiful flower gardens surrounding the house. It is still a Hendee home and has been modified and renovated. The barn to the left has been replaced with a shop. Photo from the early 1900's.



The Hendee family harvested oats which had been cradled and bound by hand, about 1900. On the wagon, left to right: Samuel B. Hendee, Liz Hendee, Earl Hendee and Daniel Hendee. Standing beside the wagon: Dan White.

The third generation was Earl Hendee, father of **Jack Hendee**. Jack recalls hearing the family's story that his father "courted" a young teacher, Gladys Kilbury, who lived on Cream Hill and walked to Dutch Street Hill to teach at the Country School. But, when Gladys was closer to the hamlet, Earl left messages in a hole in a tree in front of the Hendee property near the road. In turn, Gladys answered with notes, and eventually became the bride of Earl.

As Earl farmed, the old 1800's wooden barn burned in 1935 after being struck by lightning. Only the granary survived. The late summer fire destroyed the newly harvested crop of hay. In 1935, Earl began to rebuild the "Old Red Barn" which still stands close to the road on State Route 21 across from the farmhouses. The family's sawmill was moved to the site of the rebuilding, and Hendee's hemlock was sawed and milled for the rebuilding project. Beams 12" square and 60 feet in length were erected. Men of the area came to help rebuild. Some shared materials for the effort. Some donated labor, a bartering of sorts, "working off" the debt they may have owed for the receipt of milk deliveries from the Hendee farm. It was the age of the Great Depression; debts were incurred and debts were paid, no matter what it took. Jack remembers that when the barn was being rebuilt, trusses were erected. A very strong wind storm knocked the trusses one foot "off plum", and it remains so to this day.

A BARN BURNS IN 1935, A NEW BARN IS RAISED



Men were working on hemlock 12"x 12" beams, 12 feet in length. Five beams were joined by tenons and pegs to make the 60 foot beams. The narrow diagonal poles were set up on both sides of the beam and were used by the men to elevate the beam.



In the foreground, a "bent" was prepared: a tie beam, posts, and braces. Wooden pegs were used as joinery. In the background, a square wooden silo was begun; it was since torn down and replaced.



In the foreground, massive hemlock planks for flooring were stored. Between the planks and the gathering of men was an immense post to be raised.



Men were working on roofing. Rafters and nailing strips were exposed on the left, and metal roofing was installed on the right. The roofing was periodically painted and is still in use.



Construction of the tile silo, by 1949.

The 1935-36 Hendee Barn with milkhouse in foreground, a new International truck, and tile silo. The barn has board and batten siding, gambrel roof, dormer windows, and cupola ventilators. Photo from 1948.



Earl Hendee milked between 25-30 cows, which was the norm for that time. Like his father Sam, Earl milked registered Guernseys.



Jack began farm duties at an early age.



A team of workhorses pulled sap to the sugar shack.



Jack Hendee, born in 1930, became the fourth generation. He recalls the excitement of the barn building days when he was a very small boy. The sugar shack was a vivid memory of Jack's youth; the maple trees were productive for the farm. Jack tells of the sleighs pulled by workhorses to and from the old sugar shack, which was taken apart and moved closer to the buildings on SR 21. He has exciting early memories of skidding the logs with horses. When Jack was a young teenager, he recalls a parade at the Bath Fair. He was leading a young heifer, and she became spooked by the crowd noise. The heifer took off on a tear, and dragged young Jack in front of the large crowd in the Grandstand, an unintended entertainment.

After Jack graduated from Arkport Central School, his father, Earl, wanted him to attend Alfred State Tech. It was close to the time of the Korean Conflict, and the draft was a factor in every young man's life. Earl did not want his son to go in the Army. Jack, who did not want to return to school at Alfred, was talking about the armed services, though he really wanted to work on the farm. Earl wisely let his son quit school at Alfred, and Jack turned to the farm as his life career.

As Jack worked with his father, the barn was enlarged and more stanchions were added, eventually milking 48-50; they began milking Holsteins, in addition to the Gurnseys. The cash crops were potatoes and beans.

During Jack's generation, a larger "free stall" cow barn was built and he installed a milking parlor system purchased from a farmer who was going out of business. Jack also built a larger sawmill with Stub Newell and sawed all of his own lumber.



Jack 1948, Lois 1949

With his two sons, the fifth generation, the operation became Hendee Homestead Farms, Inc. His sons, Sam and Jack, began buying area farms and farmland. Sixteen years ago, Jack turned the business over to the fifth generation. Hendee Homestead Farms is now over 1,000 acres, plus 500 rented acres. The herd is: 350 milking, 50-60 dry cows, and 150 heifers. Calf hutches are used extensively. In 2011, 600 acres of corn will be harvested, 400 acres of alfalfa, some in oats, and some in soy beans. There is an even larger milking parlor with a concrete base and wooden frame.

Jack's wife, **Lois Hendee** was no stranger to the rigors and demands of farm life. She grew up on the successful farm of her father, Albert Young, on Latimer Hill, northwest of Arkport. Like most farm wives, she did whatever was needed for the success of the farm: volumes of bookkeeping, working in the milk house, helping with the milking process, driving tractors, driving trucks, all while bringing up the family of four sons.

Like many farm wives, Lois recalls cooking the legendary "Thresher Dinners", which took place in pre-combine

days. True communal effort was the hallmark of the threshing operation. Gangs of ten or more farmers would move from one farm to another, helping each other with the harvest of grain. An important element of the harvest was the resultant straw, which was needed for the year's supply of bedding for cows, horses, and other farm animals in the old wooden buildings. At mid-day, the workers, filthy from the dust of the straw mow, would "wash up" with the wash tubs set up in the yard before entering the house for a hearty meal. Lois assembled a fine full meal, and the gang could get back to work with energy.

Jack thinks that his sons are doing a good job. He and Lois watch over the operations from a picturesque home on the hill overlooking the fine view of the two homes of their sons and an expanding multitude of outbuildings. He and Lois also watch the bears, fox, turkeys, and deer from their property.

Jack says, "I've been awful lucky" and says he is especially lucky to have asked Lois to marry him. He is watching to see if his grandsons carry on to the sixth generation.

The Hendee generations were diligent to record their farm operations with camera, and even more wise to save the outstanding photo collection. All snapshots accompanying this article are courtesy of the Jack and Lois Hendee family.



The 1970's milking parlor; in the foreground, turkeys pick at the harvested corn field.

FUNDRAISING EFFORT

We continue to work toward raising funds for the publication of the three Arkport books. There will be a set of one dozen note cards and envelopes for sale by our Historical Society. There are four scenes in the set: the Hurlbut House, Arkport Central School in the late 1940's, the Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church. The cost of purchasing locally is \$5. If any members wish a set mailed to them, please send a check for \$7 per set to **Canistee Valley Historical Society, P.O. Box 123, Arkport, NY 14807**.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our next meeting will be a field trip to the Kanistee Historical Society on June 7. Members and guests are welcome. There will be no meetings during July and August. Our next meetings will be September 6, October 4, November 1 and December 2011.

If you would like to join the historical society, the cost is \$10 for a single membership and \$15 for a husband and wife. Please send your check made payable to the **Canistee Valley Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 123, Arkport, NY 14807**. Please include your name, mailing address, phone number and email address. We print a newsletter quarterly and welcome any memories and stories from our readers. A subscription to the historical society would make a wonderful gift for a relative or friend.

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Photo to the Left: Joyce Howe identified some of the scouts. Boy on left holding banner is **Dan Dungan**, right is **Jack Howe**. Boy in the middle is Freddie Kemp. Boy in front left wearing scout hat is David Roosa. *Snapshot courtesy of Leon Wellington*

Photo to the Right: Joyce thought the picture was taken about 1959. Stores behind scouts from left: Bing's Barber Shop, McCarthy's Grocery Store, & Stearns Hardware. *Snapshot courtesy of Norm Kennell.*