

# MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

March 2019

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

It is very exciting to have another newsletter issued just a few months since the previous one. I hope everyone has been enjoying the winter weather and hopefully have been out and about town despite the cold and wind.

This is the time of year when we ask our members to renew their membership in our society; renewal e-mails have been sent out so review your e-mail or go to our website and return your form. Be sure to include your email address, as we are working on sending out more information electronically, especially on upcoming programs and events.

The museum board continues to be committed to keeping our valued members informed and educated about the history of the village of Medina and the towns of Shelby and Ridgeway.

Our board meets at 7pm the first Monday of each month at the Library or at the museum in the warmer months. Everyone is welcome to attend. If you cannot attend but would like to contribute some information, please email me at [rrogowski@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rrogowski@rochester.rr.com).

Wishing you the best and looking forward to seeing you at the many upcoming events and programs that we have planned for the Spring.

Warm regards,

*Reinhard Rogowski*

*President, Medina Historical Society*

### **An Irish Blessing for you as you celebrate St. Patrick's Day**

May the blessing of Light be on your light without and light within.

May the blessed sunlight shine on you and warm your heart till it glows like a great peat fire,  
And may the light shine out of the two eyes of you like a candle set in two windows of a house,

Bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm...

And may the blessing of the Rain be on you... the soft, sweet rain.

May it fall upon your spirit so that all the little flowers may spring up,

And shed their sweetness on the air...

And may the blessing of the Great Rain be on you.

May they beat upon your spirit and wash it fair and clean,

And leave there many a shining pool

Where the blue of heaven shines reflected and sometimes a star.

And may the blessing of the Earth be on you ...the great and round earth.

May you ever have a kindly greeting for them you pass, as you're going along the roads.

May the earth be soft under you when you lie upon it, tired at the end of the day...

And may it rest easy over you, when, at the last, you lie under it...

May it rest so lightly over you, that your soul may be quickly through it

*And up, and off, and on its way to God.*

## **MEDINA BRIDGES SCENES OF FUN PROVOKING INCIDENTS**

**By Russell J. Waldo**

**Originally Published on January 22, 1941**

*Contributed by Craig Lacy*

Medina today, has three bridges yet the bridge history of the past is a subject which is somewhat forgotten by many. Several bridge facts have been gathered that will surely prove interesting.

Medina had a suspension bridge several years before the suspension bridge was built at Niagara Falls. The main portion of the Medina structure was built by a tinsmith by the name of Daniel Ford. This bridge spanned the canal from the Chase and Turner's warehouse on the dock to a barn upon the north side of the canal. It was three feet wide and there was a light railing upon either side which was lightly stayed with wires. Although the bridge was pronounced perfectly safe by the builders, and the others who knew bridges, it had a most uncomfortable way of vibrating up and down when one walked across it. It could sway sidewise in a most trying matter when one would endeavor to cross it and seemed most hazardous if the wind was blowing and few were willing to try it.

If one, even though mildly timid, attempted to cross the bridge there was certain to be a culprit nearby waiting to add to his trip across the canal. There were so many things he could do to tantalize the man above the water. The most common was to start the bridge in swaying motion that would require the man on the bridge to throw himself flat and seize the bridge frantically. This often proved better than a show to all except the victim. The bridge too, was at the proper height from the water to allow even passengers from packets to add to his misery.

Business on the canal rapidly increased. Chase and Turner needed more room in their warehouses. The only means of doing this was to extend the upper floor out to the edge of the canal and the bridge would have to be shortened to fit the new addition. A Mr. Parsons took the job of taking the bridge down and shortening it and again setting it in place when the warehouse was enlarged. After the braces and stays were removed from the building, he went out on the bridge and started removing the floor boards. He was near the middle when a brawny Scotchman approached the end of the bridge and asked if he could cross. He was told that it would be unwise and Mr. Parson returned to loosening the boards of the floor without straightening up to know if the Scotchman had taken his advice or not.

No man ever knew a Scotchman to turn back once he had started. This one didn't either. He went along rapidly until he reached to the middle of the canal when the weight of the two men on a bridge without stays and braces was too much. The floor gave way. Parsons took a header into the canal. Nichols, the Scotchman, seized the light railing upon one side frantically as he called for help in a voice that could be heard around the business section. For a few minutes he did nothing but then he realized that he should take some action to get back to the dock and he worked his way back cautiously with his heart in his mouth most of the way.

At that early date, before much was known locally concerning Scotchmen, this one gave a light wire performance which exceeded anything since according to witnesses. By that time a goodly gathering, or audience, had assembled on the dock and were enjoying the event much more than the Scotchman. To him it was anything but fun and the breaking of the side wires near the railing left many stubs of short wire to aggravate him still further.

He declared that he never repeated any of his famous Scotch expressions but these were often repeated to him afterwards by those who had not known him before this.

Some years later a "float" bridge was built across the feeder to the foot of Church Street. This peculiar bridge was the scene of more than one amusing incident. More than one intoxicated person missed his footing on this unsteady bridge and took a free bath.

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At one time there was a high bridge over the race on Center Street. Canal boats passed underneath this going to and from Gwinn's mill. This bridge needed considerable repairs and the builders decided to build a swing bridge in its place that would be at the level of the street. The bridge was to be evenly balanced and would be operated by a man on each end with a sweep or lever and thus turned so as to allow the boats to pass on their way. It was heralded by those living east of the bridge as marvelous and a decided improvement for those passing that way daily.

The plans were good but when the first boat approached the two men took their places on either end and lo and behold the bridge didn't budge. After exerting themselves to their limit others were sought to assist in the bridge swinging – yet no move. At last a team of oxen was secured and hitched to one end; then the whip and lung power applied before the obstinate thing moved and the boat proceeded on its way.

## MEDINA'S FIRST LADY

*Contributed by Georgia Thomas*

Most towns can't claim to have had a "First Lady" having lived there but Medina can! On North Main St. there is a marker that tells that Frances Folsom Cleveland lived in that house with her mother and maternal grandmother Ruth Harmon.



Grover Cleveland and Frances' father were law partners in Buffalo. He became her guardian when Oscar Folsom died when Frances was 11. Frances and her Mother came to live in Medina for a few years. Grover came many times to Medina to visit with Frances and her Mother and many people thought that perhaps he was "courting" the mother, he was 28 years Frances senior.



Time moved on, Frances went to college and upon graduation she and her mother went on a tour of Europe at Grover's request. An interesting fact was that upon her graduation from Wells College she received a beautiful floral tribute from the White House where Grover Cleveland was at the time president.

There was no public announcement of their (Grover and Frances') engagement but upon her and her mother's return from Europe they went to Washington DC and on June 2, 1886 they were married. It was/is the only marriage of a president in the White House. She wore an ivory satin gown so stiff that it could stand up on its own! It had orange blossom decoration including the headpiece of the veil. She carried no flowers and wore no jewelry except her engagement ring that had sapphires and two diamonds. She was the youngest "First Lady" and was nicknamed "Frankie" by the press, a name she disliked. She had the only child born in the White House. The Cleveland's had three daughters. A story made up by the press said that she didn't like bustles; because she was so popular women by the thousands abandoned the bustle. She did however cause a stir because she liked gowns that showed her neck and shoulders. The WCTU issued a petition for her to stop wearing these types of gowns, she ignored it. Many photos were used in advertisements against her permission. There was even a bill before congress to stop such advertisements using the first family for commercial gain but it didn't pass.

When Grover lost the election Frances told the staff at the White House that they would be back and just four years later they were back for a second term as President!

# IMPORTANCE OF THE ERIE CANAL

By Russell J. Waldo

Originally Published On July 24, 1941

*Contributed by Craig Lacy*

Except for "Clinton's Big Ditch" there might have been no Medina, but a Shelby Center. The beginning of Medina was due entirely to the building of the canal where it is today. The importance of the canal in Medina's history is sufficiently interesting to induce us to look backward to December 18, 1768 when Governor Sir Henry Moore recommended improvement of the Mohawk River, the beginning of the present Erie Canal system. Sir Henry Moore, uncle of Eli Moore, builder of the first tavern in Ridgeway and Medina, looked far beyond the Hudson River to understand lands in the western portion of the State.

An appropriation of \$125 was made on April 5, 1785 for the removal of obstructions in the Mohawk thereby allowing boats to pass farther inland. Western canals had been opened from Schenectady to Seneca Falls by 1795 to boats carrying sixteen tons.

The legislature in 1810 named a committee including Peter B. Porter, Gouverneur Morris, Stephen Van Rensselaer, DeWitte Clinton, Simeon DeWitte, William North and Thomas Eddy. This committee was instructed to explore the region to be traversed by the proposed ditch. Messrs Morris and Rensselaer traversed the section using the Ridge Road as far as Ridgeway where they remained at Moore's Tavern for two days while they looked over the section about Barnegat (Shelby Center).

James Geddes disproved the plan in many respects and finding a friend in this surveyor, Andrew Ellicott sought to influence him to plot the canal farther north to its present location. He succeeded in securing the promise of his brother, Joseph Ellicott, who supervised the final surveying in charge of William Peacock. The canal plot was changed north to its present course.

It was Independence Day 1817 when Governor DeWitte Clinton turned the first dirt at Rome and the work of building the canal started in earnest. James Geddes was in charge of the Western section from Lake Erie to the Seneca River. Contracts for short sections of canal were let out and men, teams and equipment were brought up the Mohawk River and Western Canals then overland.

The Batavia Trail was used from Ridgeway and Uri Moore sensing the importance of the canal had secured land upon the canal lands and erected a log tavern. Sylvanus Coon came with the first vanguard of workmen and set up a store from his wagon until his log structure could be completed. Then John Ryan came who was to help build the aqueduct over the Oak Orchard Creek. The Holland Land Company had already contributed land for the canal.

Bringing in supplies was greatly facilitated after the waterway had been completed to Rochester. Cargoes were transferred at Rochester for their journey along the Ridge Road to points along the canal work. The trip from Rochester by wagon required the better part of two days although the completion of the canal to Rochester shortened the trip from Albany by at least two weeks.

Work on the Tonawanda feeder was started about the same time the canal was started in order that the extra supply of water might be available for the canal needs. Work up to Lockport went ahead of schedule and both feeder and canal were completed in 1824, both sides of Lockport.

The section of the canal through Medina east being filled with water from the Tonawanda feeder was usable for the small craft. Uri Moore and several of his friends engaged in building a boat which they used between Medina and Knowlesville. Upon the day the canal was to officially open the builders decided to go up and meet the flotilla of boats coming from Lake Erie.

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That trip was the first to be made upon the filled canal and Uri discovered that he did not possess nearly as much sea going knowledge as he had anticipated. The canal was not nearly wide enough. In addition, it required vastly more strength to pull against the current than he had expected. They managed to turn about at Middleport after the fleet had passed and arrived in Medina about an hour after the fleets' arrival.

It was October 26, 1825 that the fleet composed of Seneca Chief, Superior, Commodore Perry, Buffalo, Young Lion of the West and Niagara started on this historical trip. The fleet carried a keg of water from Lake Erie to be dumped into the harbor in New York City. Another boat, Noah's Ark, carried a bear, two eagles, two fawn and several species of fish and two Indian boys.

The cannon firing announcing the opening of the canal required one hour and thirty-five minutes to go from Buffalo to New York City and return. John Ryan managed the cannon at Medina both times. It was a festive week, a week of celebrating and speech making. When the fleet arrived, everybody was waiting to greet the notables. Boats followed them as far as Albion before they started back.

The original canal reduced traveling time from New York to Buffalo from twenty to six days. Freight cost dropped from \$100 to \$5.00 per ton. The first May of operation of the canal, 836 boats left Albany for points along the canal. These cargoes paid \$22,000 in tolls and carried 4,122 tons of freight.

Medina had its share of this freight and the area grew by leaps and bounds. The docks were alive with newcomers who were all about to carve their homes out of the forest. The year 1847 found 1,514 new boats on the canal. This brought the total to around 4,000. Almost a thousand more were added during the next year. Steam was first used in 1874.

There were 92 boats moved by steam by 1883. The canal was deepened to seven feet in 1886 and to nine feet in 1896. It was in 1882 that the cable system was in use. This was short lived as it was impractical. After this was discarded horses again returned.

The rear of the barge was often given over to stables for resting horses. Other owners had their stables along the canal where horses were changed for fresh horses.

Many old dairies recall how passengers sat out upon the packet roofs as they moved along the canal. The late Dr. Emily Swett had in her possession a pair of sox [sic] which a passenger had left upon her grandfather's packet. This was contained in a very elaborate hand made case.

The canal was open 245 days in 1835, one of the longest years on record. In November 1871 over 800 boats were frozen in by a sudden cold snap.

In the early canal days there were two bridges in Medina. One believed to have been about where Acer and Whedon's plant is and the other off from State Street near Samuel Plummer's home. The Church Street Bridge was built in 1849 and the towpath was widely used by those going to and from Laurel Hill. The iron bridge at Prospect Street was built in 1882.

*The building of the Erie Canal required the removal of forests almost the entire length. At best no more than twenty trees could be removed by teams and equipment a day.*

*Huge embankments had to be built in many places.*

*Little rock was removed digging the first canal.*

*This work required strong men and those strong men who came to build the canal remained to build homes for their families later on.*

## **Excerpts from Canal Water and Whiskey**

**By Marvin A. Rapp**

### **MURDER A DAY**

It is an exaggeration to say that there was a murder a day on the Buffalo waterfront during its hey-day. Probably there was not more than a murder every other day. Some statistics show that seventy to eighty percent of the major crimes in the United States occurred along the Erie Canal in Buffalo and Rochester during the years 1830-1836.

### **MAN IN A MULE**

**Earnst O. Burkin (Stratford, NY) in a letter to Martha Brooks (Schenectady, NY)**

Perhaps the strangest murder on the Erie Canal happened near the Eastern lock at the Little Falls line lock. Up and down the canal, the Little Falls lock had a saloon as unsavory as any of them.

At one time a man disappeared, a not unusual occurrence along the canal. People assumed correctly that the man had been murdered. Careful search for days, however, failed to find the body until one day a mule was found floating in the canal near the saloon. Upon checking the mule, it was found that the mule had not drowned, but had died on shore. Close examination revealed that the mule's belly had been sliced open, disemboweled, the body of the man pushed inside and the belly sewn up.

### **“ODE TO A DRUNKARD”**

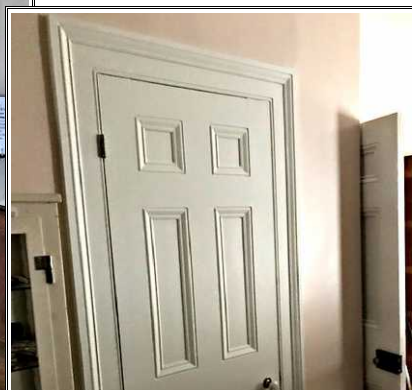
How well do I remember, 'twas in the late November,  
I was walking down the street quite full of pride.  
My heart was all a-flutter as I slipped down in the gutter,  
And a pig came there and laid down by my side;  
And as I lay there in the gutter, all too soused to even mutter,  
A lady passing by was heard to say:  
“One may tell a brute that boozes by the company he chooses.”  
Hearing this the pig got up and walked away.

**Author Unknown.**



### **Museum Interior Renovation and Redecoration**

Over the past half year several of the interior rooms at our museum have been repaired, repainted and redecorated.



## Rudyard Kipling wrote after WWI:

*“For God and the soldier we adore,  
In time of danger,  
Not before!  
The danger is passed,  
And all things righted,  
God is forgotten and the soldier is slighted.”*

WWI was over November 11, 1918 but its effects were felt for a long time after. One of the after effects was the Great Pandemic of 1918 to 1920's. There were many theories of where it started, in France, Austria, East Asia, Kansas USA, Spain (it was called the Spanish Flu), but wherever it started it caused worldwide death; with estimates of 50 to 100 million people dead.



Some of the reasons for the pandemic were close living conditions of the day and unsanitary practices of people. There were no antibiotics to combat the often secondary infections. They only had isolation, quarantine, personal hygiene, disinfectants and limited public gatherings. The medical world was just beginning to understand germs. Boiling water was one way to disinfect things. On a personal note: my Mother and her family got the disease (they all survived) and the doctor told her Mother to scald the dishes. She did from that time on and we never washed a dish by hand that we didn't put the kettle on first to pour boiling water over the washed dishes.

Researchers have said that the “flu” was from the H1N1 virus, and spread from animals to humans.

The first report of the disease was in 1917 at a military hospital in Etaples, France. When it appeared in Kansas local Dr. Lorning Miner warned the US Public Health Department of the disease and its deadliness. At Ft. Riley in January 1918 a soldier Albert Gitchell reported in sick and was the first recorded death of the disease in the U.S. By March 1918 the disease was in Queens, NY.

*The “Spanish Flu” was known as the “Greatest medical holocaust in history” even greater than the Plague that swept Europe in the Middle Ages.  
Did you get your flu shot yet?*

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY (\$20.00/YR)  
INDIVIDUAL (\$15.00/YR)

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION AND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ATTN: MEMBERSHIP CHAIR  
406 WEST AVENUE  
MEDINA, NY 14103



### MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### Officers 2019

President: Reinhard Rogowski  
Vice President/Treasurer: Craig Lacy  
Secretary: Shane Sia  
Membership: Gail Miller  
Newsletter: Georgia Thomas

#### Other Board Members

Catherine Cooper  
Barb Filipiak  
Cindy Robinson  
Kay VanNostrand

### UPCOMING EVENTS

March 25, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

#### **Strings and Things – Homemade Home Entertainment**

The group Balticeltic will present and play folk music on a variety of string and percussion instruments.

Monday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m

#### **D-Day: the planning, the build-up, the action**

Presenter: Greg Kinal

*Historical Society website*  
**www.HistoricMedina.org**