

MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

October 2019

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Since the Historical Society moved into the building at 406 West Ave in 1971, our collections of various form of "history" have built up and we are overflowing. That's a good thing in a way, but since our space is so limited, we struggle with displays and archiving the articles. We want all members to know that you do not have to have a degree in library sciences to help with the organizing, filing and general work here. We welcome any member to come and work with us.

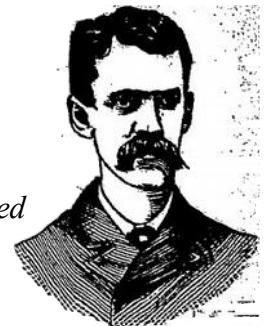
We've watched our collection of history and artifacts expand to fill our quarters. A week doesn't go by without more treasures being donated. We have thousands of photographs, written history, family trees and artifacts; truly a collection worth preserving.

We meet at 7 p.m. on the last Monday of each month. The meetings are open to all members and we invite and encourage you to attend. Also please invite someone who may not be a member to join us and especially bring your children or grandkids as they are our future.

Enjoy the crisp clear air of fall and the beauty it brings to our wonderful community. Hope to see you soon at one of our meetings or one of our events.

Reinhard Rogowski
President, Medina Historical Society

The article on page 2 describes the novel Beecher railroad. Captain Lina Beecher (1841-1915), was one of Medina's most renowned citizens. He engaged in various enterprises, promoted all sorts of schemes and became active in inventions, lotteries and athletics! Below is a small part of his story – see our website for even more.



{Batavia Daily News, 6 Oct 1915}

Captain Beecher served in the Civil War as a cavalryman... captured twice, wounded 14 times ...In his early manhood Captain Beecher was an athlete of some note, once being the half-mile world champion runner... He was for some time manager of Bent's Hall in Medina...He was the first to exploit the telephone in Medina...and afterward he invented a portable telephone designed for army use...A single-rail electric road was invented by Captain Beecher, to be operated by storage batteries, and he built a short line for testing... Captain Beecher was the originator of the loop-the-loop or "flip-flap" car and the pioneer exhibitor for that sensational form of entertainment, having his outfit just outside the grounds of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901... It was considered so dangerous a device that it was not allowed on the exposition grounds, but it attracted many daring people.... Later on Captain Beecher engaged in a railroad enterprise in Tennessee and subsequently in the orange-growing industry in Florida. He made and lost several large fortunes in the course of these business dealings. ■

60 Years Before Walt Disney Unveiled His Mono-Rail At Disneyland, Orleans County Had One Running.

**THE MEDINA REGISTER
THURSDAY, MAY 9TH. 1895
THE BEECHER RAILROAD**

On Friday a company of businessmen from Medina and Batavia and a party of newspaper men visited the village of Waterport to witness a practical test of the much-talked Beecher single rail electric railroad. About 800 feet of track has been erected and a station built. The road tested is to be the starting section of the first division of the road which will run from the Waterport station to Lakeside, a distance of four miles and later on along the lake to Oak Orchard-on-the-Lake. It is intended to construct the road in sections of which from Waterport to Medina is the second, from Medina to Oakfield the third and from Oakfield to Batavia the last, the Medina section running by way of Albion.

The car is only three feet wide, two passengers sitting on each of the seats which run crosswise. The present car carries twenty-four passengers. On a single row of posts of wood or iron runs a single ordinary "T" rail, fastened at each post to a steel tie eighteen inches wide. Along the outer edges of these ties run two other light steel rails called guide or guard rails. The car is mounted on two large, double flanged wheels under the center of the car and near each end which run on the center rail. Two smaller wheels on each side, set horizontally, run on the side rails with a flange which runs under the rail. These wheels, it is claimed, when the car is running at ordinary speed, will not touch the guide rails at all except a long intervals, the car balancing itself on the center wheels on the bicycle principle. The present track is only from four to ten feet above the ground, but the trestle may be built at any height that the conformation of the land may demand. The motive power is a storage battery which is placed in cases along the side which overhang the side of the track. The car sets down close to the track, the large wheels being boxed under the seats. The present car complete without its load of twenty-four passengers weighs about three tons.

At Friday's test the car was run at a speed of from ten to fifteen miles an hour and except on some especially rough bit of track or when starting, the guide wheels did not seem to touch the track at all, the car hustling along on the center rail only. The advantages claimed for a road of this design are that running almost entirely on two wheels there is very little friction and a high rate of speed is possible with perfect safety. The track being so narrow the building of a trestle to support it will be much cheaper than for an ordinary elevated road and the advantages of elevated roads in the way of grade crossings and freedom from snow are added. As eventually constructed the road in crossings a field will be simply a row of posts so far as the ground is concerned and on these posts, when desired a wire fence will be stretched.

After the inspection of the road the offices and electrical plant were visited and if the road when completed is as well equipped it will be second to none in the county. The construction company then invited the party to the Johnson House where an elaborate dinner was served fully in keeping with everything done by the company.

UNDER "LOCAL BREVITES"

Beecher Single Rail Railway meeting at Bent's Opera House,
Friday eve, May 10th. Hon. E. L. Pitts, Irving L'Hommedieu and other
speakers will address the meeting.

Ladies especially invited. The 29th. Separate Co. Band will furnish music.

Quotes from Arch Merrill's book "The Towpath"

Old books can be a wonderful look on the past and Arch Merrill's book "The Towpath" is one of them. It's history of our canal is enlightening. In 1945 he published The Towpath after traveling the canal towns and learning their history. I like what he wrote about Medina. So here are some quotes:

"Once the Ripley caption read: "A road runs under the Erie Canal at Medina, N.Y."

and another time: "A church stands in the middle of the street at Medina, N.Y."

"I found also at Medina the most picturesque scenery encountered on my Towpath ramble."

"But in the very heart of Medina, the frothing waters of the Oak Orchard Creek tumble over 15-foot fall, set in a rugged chasm that is a miniature Genesee Gorge."

"Medina's history is unusual – in that it goes back some 40 million years, quite a spell in any reckoning."

"...in the Silurian period, the waters of the great ocean covered all this region..."

"deposited sand grains in the watery depths...merged and solidified through the centuries until, when at last the salt waters receded..."

"in the form of the enduring rock that geologists and builders the world over know as the Medina sandstone."

"Because in Orleans County, the ancient sea was shallow, the sandstone was nearest the surface there and most easily brought out. That is why an almost continuous line of quarries sprang up along the Clinton ditch from Medina to Holley, to maintain for 80 years an industry that made the name on Medina famous in many lands."

"In 1837, John Ryan, who came to Orleans County on foot from Williamsport, Pa., opened the first quarry in the Medina area."

"For many years Attorney Leroy J. Skinner was associated with the quarrying interest in the area. None knows better the history of that industry's rise and fall."

"Leroy Skinner told how early religious exhorters used to call the town "a city founded on a rock."

I will end here ... thinking how nice to know Medina – "Founded on a rock!"



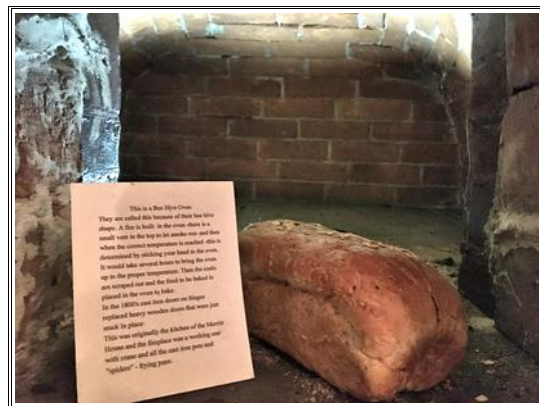
The Author as a Tugboat Traveler

You can read the book online at <http://mcnygenealogy.com/book/towpath-1.htm#tugboat>

Our Museum's Beehive Oven

Former Medina Historical Society and Museum President Jack Wasnock reminded me of the beehive oven in our museum. So I thought I would tell you about it.

It is beside the fireplace in the dining room that used to be the kitchen of the Merritt home. The door is open and a loaf of bread is displayed now so you can tell what that strange opening is. First the beehive oven is built of brick and in the rounded shape of a beehive, hence the name. If you go out of the now kitchen and into the room off the kitchen you can see the beehive shape. It is connected to the flue of the fireplace in our museum. To use a beehive oven you built a fire in it and then rake the coals out when the desired temperature is reached. Now, there is the real problem because judging the temperature is by putting your arm in and counting seconds before the heat gets you and you quickly remove your arm before getting burned; about 3 seconds makes the oven about 350



degrees, 2 seconds about 400 for bread. The food is put in the door is closed and baking begins. Bread is baked first and then biscuits and scones, then pies and cookies. The remaining heat was used for slow one pot meals like beans that often baked overnight. The steel door of the beehive oven at our museum was a real update because most beehive ovens have wooden doors; the Merritt's had a real luxury oven!

Beehive ovens have been used for hundreds of years and locally you can see one at Old Fort Niagara – if lucky you can see it in use at times. I have baked in it - a rather fun process and what I baked came out a lot better than I expected!

While at Plimoth Plantation recently I got to see their large communal oven; often communal ovens in towns was the norm for baking bread.

I hope the next time you are at our museum you take a good look at our beehive oven!

From the recipe box at the museum:

Fruit Cookies

1 ½ cups brown sugar

¾ cup shortening

1 teas. Vanilla

1 teas. Baking soda mixed in 2 teas. Milk

1 cup chopped nuts – your choice

1 cup raisins (the recipe called for the cook to seed the raisins – we don't think of that today –but back then raisins came with seeds in them and for a cup of raisins the cook had to spend a bit of time cutting them open and removing the seeds.)

2 ¾ cups flour – make sure you take a bit of the flour and toss the raisins in the flour so they are well coated and won't sink in the batter.

Drop by spoonful (I use a cookie scoop) on greased and floured cookie sheet.

Modern note: I use parchment paper lined cookie sheets.

*There were no oven temperatures given or baking time but most cookies
bake at 350 degrees and these bake at 10 to 12 minutes,
test with toothpick to come out clean.*

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

Thanks to Craig Lacy
and Georgia Thomas
for their articles in this issue!

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 28, 2019

Time Capsule in Your Backyard

Peter Jablonski of the Greater Buffalo Bottle
Collectors will elaborate on items excavated
from privies and outhouses

November 25, 2019

Lincoln at Gettysburg

Presented by James McGrath,
Civil War historian and collector

November 30, 2019 10-4

Museum Open House

"NOT A STUFFY MUSEUM, but a "Stuffed
Museum" with over 250 stuffed animals on display

Historical Society website
www.HistoricMedina.org