



MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

Fall 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

I often reflect on what would happen if the stories of our heritage were lost. What would happen if the 'mirror into the past' vanished? We often forget that there are valuable lessons to be learned from our past. If only we were able to ask the right questions about our past, maybe then and only then, would we be better prepared to live our lives with more patience and rational self-evaluation. What we have learned from the past gives us the ability to navigate all things that are possible in the present. If we were to miss this opportunity, we will be learning from a position of weakness. We will certainly limit our potential for discovery and innovation. To miss this opportunity, we risk losing memories of the heart that bring joy and meaning in our lives. To lose this generational memory, we would lose the memory of those people who have provided the inspiration and guidance to be the best that we can be.

So as we move into the last few months of 2021. I would like to thank you for your continued support. We couldn't do it without you. However I ask one favor with regards to our operating budget that comes almost entirely from dues of our members – the cost of publishing and hosting our website and the acquisition and care of storing and preserving historical artifacts are all expenses paid by your membership dues. However due to Covid and lack of fund raisers we are falling short this year and if possible please consider making a tax deductible gift before the end of the year. With your help we will continue to preserve our great heritage and keep the stories of our past alive.

Sincerely,

Reinhard Rogowski

President, Medina Historical Society

rrogowski@rochester.rr.com – 585-317-7457



The Erie Canal And Medina – Part 1

Medina at Incorporation in 1832

Medina Free Academy - Original School Bell

Remembering Sputnik

THE ERIE CANAL AND MEDINA

Those of us who grew up near the canal pretty much take it for granted. We see it everyday never giving it a second thought as to its past importance. It's just there, kind of a dirty old river flowing through the village and across our county, its concrete walls cracked and worn and surely its best days behind it. Looking at it today, it's hard to imagine that it was probably the greatest engineering feat of the 19th century and that without a doubt had more influence in the westward expansion of our country than any other factor. You all probably know some of what I will talk about tonight, but hopefully, I will leave you with a few tidbits that may be new to you and perhaps a better appreciation of the old canal.

As early as 1768, as we were in a struggle with England, France and Spain for control of North America there was talk of improving inland navigation to aid in westward expansion. At this time, civilization ended west of the upper Hudson and it ended abruptly. Gouverneur Morris, a member of the Continental Congress, was the first to entertain the idea of an inland waterway cutting across NYS. He noted that up to that time we only crawled around the outer shell of our great country. The interior was where our future as a great nation lay. He was not alone in this view and soon, none other than General George Washington undertook a survey of central New York to view the possibilities.

Soon after independence, New England farmers, tired of farming rocks, men tired of living in crowded, dirty cities and of working for someone else with little future, were looking for a new start and they looked to the west. And so it began. By 1796, the Mohawk River had been improved and the Western Inland Lock Canal had been completed from Schenectady to Little Falls and could handle boats loads of 16 tons.

Those few that made the westward journey successfully sent stories back East of a land of unlimited bounty and opportunity. Where crops grew thick and pigs grew fat, where every day the table was set as though it was Sunday. With all this opportunity, why was there not a great flood of westward emigration? Well, there was this small obstacle call the Appalachians.

Running from Canada to Alabama, they presented a wall which effectively divided the West from the East of early America. Trails heading west were no more than a narrow path just big enough for a man and his horse. The trip was long and hard and settlements which did spring up where small and isolated. Eastern manufacturers had no cost effective way to ship their goods over the mountains and Western farmers had no markets in which to sell their harvests.

In the north, the Mohawk Valley offered the easiest way to Western lands but even by this route in 1815, an overland trip across NYS from Albany to Buffalo took at least six weeks in the best of conditions and freight costs were \$100/ ton. The Great Lakes, which held access to all that the West promised, still could not be effectively accessed.

Ten short years later, this same trip would take 6 days and freight costs dropped to \$5/ ton. NYC took over from Philadelphia as the nation's major port and economic hub. Rochester and Buffalo, small, unimportant settlements before the War of 1812 became major cities of commerce. The trading posts of Cleveland and Chicago exploded in populations and commerce. Industries in the East were getting rich providing for an expanding western frontier and western farmers were getting rich shipping their bountiful harvests east.

So what brought about this great change? The Erie Canal. In 1808, talk of an inland waterway became reality as the State legislature appropriated \$600 to survey a water route into Western NY and discovered at last that one was possible but carried an estimated \$5 m. price tag. Still deeply in debt from the rebellion, New York knew it could not afford this project alone so they petitioned the Federal government for financial assistance. President Thomas Jefferson called the Erie Canal Project "little

short of madness". The idea of a 300 mile man-made waterway from Albany to Buffalo, crossing rivers, channeling through solid rock, climbing over hills, passing through swamps and forested valleys was simply preposterous. Maybe in 100 years or so he said, but not now. Thus the President refused Federal funding for the project. The Legislature, not deterred, created the Canal Commission and with the help of then Mayor of NYC Dewitt Clinton, secured funds to start the project. In the end, \$9 million in all would be borrowed. Today, that would equate to some \$117 billion dollars.

The politics involved in getting this project started would be an entire lecture in itself, so just let say that they were formidable. Popular NYC mayor Dewitt Clinton was enlisted and proved the moving force in getting the project started. In our area, it included the donation of 100,000 acres of land to the State by the Holland Land Company. They felt that if the State could sell the land they could use the funds to help the project get started and for the Land Company, they saw the coming of the canal and those who came with it, as increasing the price of the remaining land from \$3 an acre to \$20 or more. It was a great investment.

Built between 1817 and 1825, the Erie would become the most successful canal building project of all time, spawning a national canal building frenzy which by 1848 had produced more than 4000 miles of canals. But by 1850, the canal craze had ended. No new canals were being dug and many then in existence and losing money ceased operation, fell into disrepair and ended up being filled in. This was due to the introduction and success of the iron-horse. While in operation, however, they accomplish their purpose of aiding to settle the West.

The Erie, however, would endure and was so successful that by 1845, 4,000 boats and 25,000 persons worked on the canal. The State, by charging tolls, was not only able to pay back all the borrowed money with interest within ten years but was producing a healthy income. When tolls were abolished in 1882, in an attempt to compete with railroads, the canal had collected over \$42 million dollars.

The original plans for the canal called for an inclined plane waterway from Lake Erie to Albany which would involve no locks. With Lake Erie being 568 feet higher than the Hudson, a gently sloped waterway was considered the best design. The plan was found to need among others things a 150 foot high aqueduct, high embankments through valleys and deep cuts through the hills. This plan showed not only the great lack knowledge of just what exactly lay west of the Hudson but also of how little knowledge of canal building there was.

This plan was soon abandoned in favor of a waterway with locks and aqueducts. It called for a waterway 363 miles long, a channel shaped like a prism, 40 feet wide at the top, 28 feet wide at the bottom. It would be 4 feet deep and need 83 locks. The biggest problem to overcome, however, was not the state's topography but the fact that no one involved had any canal building experience and there was not a single engineer who understood or could foresee the problems that would be encountered. But with typical Yankee enthusiasm, the work was begun.

Digging began on July 4, 1817, in Rome, NY. They chose Rome basically because they thought it would be the easiest digging and it was the furthest point West navigable on the Mohawk which would be needed to bring in men and supplies. Also, because of public sentiment, they thought it important to show quick results. The people wanted a canal and they didn't want to wait very long. Surveyors had already laid out the canal's path by staking out a 60 foot wide path following the lay of the land.

Digging commenced in both directions. Each section was completed by a private contractor who was responsible for supplying the men, equipment, food and shelter. Labor was plentiful with wages being 80 cents a day when most men of the day worked for 80 cents a week. And every hour or so, the "Jiggerboss" would dole out shots or jiggers of whiskey to the workers who working in 12 hours shifts could consume up to a quart of whiskey a day. But the work was hard and men would die in droves

from the elements and disease. The Irish are often associated with digging the canal and 3000 or so would eventually help comprising about 25% of the total labor force.

By 1819, they were able open the Rome to Utica portion and canal opponents remarked that at 15 miles every two years the canal would never be built. By 1820, up to 4000 men and 500 horses worked on digging the ditch. Section by section would be completed with everything east of Lockport opened by 1823. The last section to be completed was that south of Lockport. Here the State finally became the general contractor and this portion became the first state public works project.

In this section, two miles of which were cut through solid rock up to 30 feet deep, anxious citizens devised a plan to move the work along. They would place a keg of whiskey just in sight of the thirsty diggers. When that keg was reached and the contents downed, another keg would be set further ahead. This last section of digging was completed in record time.

Finally, on October 25, 1825, the canal officially opened with now Governor Dewitt Clinton, his wife and other dignitaries boarding the Seneca Chief in Buffalo, pulled by 4 white horses. As the flotilla of 4 boats left, a cannon was fired which was followed by another within earshot further along the canal and another and so on all the way to New York City. The sound traveled from Buffalo to Albany and back again in about 3 hours. John Ryan, who is credited with opening Medina's first commercial sandstone quarry, manned the canon in Medina. As planned, the new canal was 363 miles long, 40 feet wide, 4 feet deep allowing boats of 30 tons to ply its waters. 83 locks were needed to overcome the change in elevations.

The first month the canal was opened, 837 boats left Albany for Buffalo. Soon NYC overtook Philadelphia as the major shipping port and NYS lead the country in population and commercial enterprises. The world was shrinking. Sometimes, however, good things can lead to bad as in the spring of 1832. It began in Asia and spread to Canada through immigrants. Striking first in Quebec and Montreal, the Asian cholera epidemic killed thousands then traveled down the St. Lawrence and Champlain Canal to the Hudson, Albany and NYC. With the aid of the canal, it spread across the State like wildfire, then across the Great Lakes to Ohio and then down to New Orleans where over 10,000 people were dead by August.

Canal towns, including Medina, refused to let canal boats stop. They burned barrels of tar and lime and hung meat from high poles hoping to absorb the "bad vapors" in the air which were supposed to cause the illness. Canal traffic and trade came to a virtual halt that summer of '32. Not until October had the epidemic run its course and did people start to travel again along the canal. Medina was spared and only one case of suspected cholera was noted.

The canal was hugely successful and immediately found to be too small for the volume of traffic so enlargements began. Between 1836 and 1862 the Erie was enlarged from 40 to 70 feet wide and deepen from 4 to 7 feet. Sections were straightened out, locks were lengthened from 90 to 118 feet and many were doubled allowing two way traffic. Gone now, however, were the passenger packets as the canal could no longer compete with the railroads for speed but for freight, it was unsurpassed? Boats of up to 250 tons could now ply the waterway and in 1868, the canal carried over 3 million tons of freight.

*Part II will continue next issue with the expansion of the Barge Canal and
the impact of the canal on the village of Medina*

MEDINA AT INCORPORATION IN 1832

By Russell J. Waldo

Originally Published On April 24, 1941

Medina with its close to 700 people in 1832 presented a vastly different picture from that of today. People buried their dead "Out in the woods"; which was the rear portion of George Kennan's lot opposite the Post Office. This was Medina's first cemetery.

When the parking area was improved adjoining the canal back of Main and Center Street an old foundation wall and some beams were unearthed which were beyond any doubt remnants of one of Medina's first buildings.

If one examines the records far enough back it will be found that Main Street originally was Oak Orchard Road. This extended out through Shelby Center, then Ellicott Mills, later Barnagat. Center Street for a short period was undoubtedly the Canal Street often referred to in the older writings.

The raceway excavated parallel with Main Street to supply water to the canal induced William R. Gwinn to build a mill where the water made a drop near present Radcliff Block on Center Street. This provided power for operating the mill. There were four or five houses south of the mill on Shelby Street in 1832. John Ryan was the mason who built this mill.

Simeon Bathgate was the millwright. His house at the time was located about where the Bancroft House was later; today it is Medina Parts and Machine Co. That was before Medina was laid out as a village. When the town was mapped out, Bathgate's house in the middle of Shelby Street had to be moved. The village gave Mr. Bathgate his choice of a lot and his wife selected the plot very near where the Moose home now stands. She decided that was "far enough back in the woods" for her. Later the house was moved back of the R. S. Castle home, northeast corner of Pearl and West Streets. This was demolished about fifty years ago.

David Evans constructed this raceway from Oak Orchard Creek south of the present Maple Ridge Road to supply water for the Erie Canal slip. This raceway was amply large to allow barges to take wheat to the Evans' mill. The race was parallel with Race Alley back of Main Street. His mill was near the railroad.

William Gwinn sold his mill to LeVan Merritt. Simeon Bathgate next purchased it, then Robert Hill, followed by Wilcox and Alcorn, then John Alcorn alone. He in turn sold to Bryon A. Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert sold to Oscar K. Johnson in 1887 who sold to Robert Roberts later.

Incorporation of Medina included the area starting at the Erie Canal along Oak Orchard Creek, thence south to Mill Street (now Park), and west to Prospect Street. The line then extended north to the Canal. Within Medina there were between forty and fifty dwellings and stores.

This columnist proposes to enumerate the several buildings occupied by merchants and residents with their near approximate locations in the year 1832. S. Coon was a general merchant. This was beyond a doubt the merchant who opened the first merchandising establishment near the canal, Sylvanus Coon, and it is believed that he conducted that store near the canal even after 1832. Turner and Chase were grocers on the dock, this was Otis Turner.

Dr. Thomas, who is considered to be the first druggist of Medina, operated a store in 1832 very near Loblaw's store. Henry Phillips conducted a store near the store vacated by Woolworth's, the line not known. M. P. Hopkins, the merchant tailor, was located near Bronson's. Near Penney's was M. P. Hopkins, line not known. James Cox jeweler adjoined the North.

Clark and Fairman, line not known, was located near the north portion of Woolworth's Store with Alva Barrett, boots and shoes next to the north. Patterson and Griswold grocers were located near the dock back of the monument works location. There were two houses north of the Evan's mill belonging to the mill.

Starting at the canal along the west side of the street was an ashery and dwelling with an open commons adjoining it to the south. There was a small building located near Whittleton's store. This was red. South of this was a small building near Curvin's. Another small building was near Murphy's. Dr. Whaley's residence was near Danahay Faxon's. The house upon Bent's Block location is believed where Dr. Eleaser Savage lived while he preached at the Baptist Church. (He stepped across the road to his home according to an old diary).

South of what is now Center Street there were two small buildings. Where the Presbyterian Church is now was then vacant. The C. F. Brown House was next. Next to that was a small office.

John Parsons came to Medina in 1832 and found the Methodists worshipping God above the Hopkins tailor shop. Mr. Parsons built a tin shop opposite where the Episcopal Church was being built. He provided a meeting place for the Methodists above his shop.

The Catholics held mass in a frame house of William Walsh which is now owned by Timothy Doody. This is the house already referred to as south of the ashery. Later they held mass at the home of William O'Donnell on West Center street.

The Episcopal church was under construction. The basement had been practically completed and a roof placed over it. Services were conducted in the basement at first.

The Presbyterians had just completed their church on Cross street. There were two houses near that. Rev. David Page who had just left the Presbyterian Church had lived in one of the two. There were two houses on West Street. There were seven houses on West Center Street besides the Baptist Church which had been dedicated the previous year. There were fifteen houses on East Center Street.

Trustees of the new village included Justus Ingersoll, Nathan Sawyer, Asahel Woodruff, James C. Evans, and Halsted H. Parker. Henry Yarrington was clerk part of the year and Henry Phillips the remainder.

What Else Happened In 1832

The Cholera Pandemic in New York State

History shows that several pandemics have struck in New York State – one of the less remembered is known as the Second Cholera Pandemic of 1832. New York was among the most thoroughly scourged among the states.

A person may get cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium. Although cholera can be acquired from under-cooked marine life, in an epidemic, the source of the contamination is usually the feces of an infected person. The disease can spread rapidly in areas with inadequate treatment of sewage and drinking water and New York City, Buffalo, and Utica were all hit particularly hard due to the bacterium's water borne mobility.

Thriving towns along the Erie Canal suffered as well as small villages and even isolated farms. The appearance of cholera was the signal for the general exodus of inhabitants of larger communities, who, in their headlong flight, spread the disease throughout the surrounding countryside.

MEDINA FREE ACADEMY ORIGINAL SCHOOL BELL



*Original bell obtained through the generosity of Carl Petronio, Jr. And is the property of the Medina Historical Society, Inc. And is on loan to the Medina Central School District.
Seen here in the high school lobby.*

The Medina Free Academy was incorporated by an amended act of the New York legislature on April 10, 1850. At the time of incorporation there were only two other high schools operating in the State of New York. One located in New York City and the other in Lockport. Medina was the first village in Orleans County and in western New York to adopt this form of education for its children.

Prior to this, secondary education was available only to those who could afford a private tutor or the tuition charged at one of the various academies located throughout Orleans County in Yates, Millville, Gaines, Albion or Holley.

The union school act of 1853 made it possible for voters to create a board of education and an academic department thus making the system trail-blazed by Lockport and Medina the norm for school systems throughout New York State and dealing a deathblow to the private academies in Orleans County.

The Medina sandstone structures seen here were located on Catherine Street at the end of Cross Street, now Pearl, on land donated by the Hon. Silas M. Burroughs and which was then considered near the western limits of the village. This is the present site of the former Medina high school, 1923-1991.

The 1851 school consisted of 6 rooms, employed 6 teachers and consisted of both primary and secondary students numbering between 300 and 600 students.

The 1882 enlargement of the original structure doubled the size of the school allowing for the employment of 19 teachers and vastly improving the conditions inside of the school.

The construction of a separate high school building on the corner of Ann street and South Academy Street in 1896 allowed the academy building to then be used for primary education only. This venerable structure was razed in 1922 to make room for the then new high school.

The Medina school system today operates the longest continuous free education program in Orleans County and the third longest in the State of New York.

REMEMBERING SPUTNIK

by Craig Lacy

It was October 1957, I had just turned 7 years old and there I was standing in my backyard along with my neighbors staring into the dark, cold sky. The sky was filled with a zillion stars as we kids enjoyed a sort of festive atmosphere, while the adults spoke among themselves in hush tones. It was quite evident even to a 7 year old that adults were a bit nervous as they scanned the sky.

“What time did the paper say?” one of them said. “Shouldn’t be much longer” was the reply. “If the Russians can do it, why can’t we” one father blurted out. No one answered. Soon someone shouted, “I see it!” There it was coming out of the western sky. It was like a little lighthouse beacon, blink, blink, blink and moving incredible fast toward the east.

As a fan of Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon and Rocky Jones I couldn’t believe my eyes. A real spaceship. I didn’t know at the time it was only 23” in diameter and it wouldn’t have mattered anyway because all I knew was that a rocket ship had gone into space and when I grew up I was going to go too.

We all stood there speechless, watching. Blink, blink, blink. And when we couldn’t see it anymore we left for our houses without saying a word. Little did I realize that what I saw that night was to change our world forever. The “Red Threat” was real. As I walk back to my house I asked, “What did they call it?” “SPUTNIK” came the reply.

Russian Satellite Covers 2,187,000 Miles in 7 Days

Soviet Scientists Claim It Is Taking Photos and Will Continue Its Flight For Indefinite Period

By Reuters News Service
MOSCOW, Oct. 10 — Moscow's earth satellite this morning neared its 80th time around the world and was still going strong on its seventh day—a week of 18,000-mile-an-hour space travel that has carried it well over 2,000,000 miles.

Moscow newspapers announced that at dawn it had completed its 78th revolution, making a distance of 2,187,000 miles traveled.

The satellite now is said to be taking photographs as it spins around the earth, as well as radioing back information on conditions several hundred miles up.

According to Russian scientists, it is likely to go on girdling the planet 16 times a day for “an undetermined period.”

Scientists Say Space Ships Are Due in Eight to Ten Years

WASHINGTON, Oct. 8 (AP)—Three American scientists said Monday that within six to eight years the U. S. would find it profitable to launch a space ship carrying a crew of two to four which would orbit the earth at a distance of 500 miles and at 10,000 miles an hour.

They said the ship or manned satellite, a three-stage vehicle, would be powered by 27 rocket engines and would cost from \$5,000,000 to \$10,000,000 each, according to the number designed. They referred to it as “Meteor Junior.”

The three scientists were Darrell C. Romick, head of the astronautics group in the Veterans System Department of the Goodover Aircraft Corp., Akron, O., and two associated Goodover aeronauticians, Richard F. Knight and Samuel Albee.

The orbit at 500 miles altitude would be the lowest practical one for surveillance, mapping and similar uses. An earth orbit 1000 miles out in space would be better for communications. Later satellites could orbit as high as 22,000 miles to permit synchronization with the rotation of the earth.

The cylindrical body of the third stage would be fired with other thrusters that are put into an orbit to build a space terminal. This conceivably could be expanded eventually to a length of perhaps 1500 feet and a diameter of 400 feet, to house up to 2000 technicians, observers, visitors and other personnel.

Fitted with a fourth stage, the ship would be capable of still deeper penetrations into the unknown, including flights to and possibly landings on the moon.

The preliminary design study was completed over a period of more than five years.

Russia 5 Years Ahead of U. S. In ICBM Work, Scientist Says

Must Catch Up That Lost Time Quickly ‘Or We’re Dead,’ Rocket Expert Declares

By International News Service
DENVER, Colo., Oct. 3 — A U. S. rocket expert declared today Russia's space satellite shows the Reds are five years ahead of this country in intercontinental ballistic missile development.

Barry Sline, rocket scientist for the Martin Co., ICBM plant near Denver, said: “We lost five years between 1945 and 1950 because nobody would listen to the rocket men.”

We have got to catch up those five years fast, or we're dead.”

Mr. Sline, who spent five years at the White Sands proving ground in New Mexico before joining Martin, wrote the book, “Fourth Stages and the Race for Space Superiority.”

It is engaged in developing the Titan ICBM, second of the U. S. long-range missiles. The Titan is expected to reach flight-testing stage sometime next year.

Airman Dies in Auto Crash

MALDEN, Oct. 8 (U.P.)—An Air Force sergeant was killed today and his young companion was critically injured when their car left Route 11 near here and glanced off several trees, Staff Sgt. James E. Cooley, 27, of Brunswick was driven off the car. Roger Richards, 18, also of Brunswick, suffered a fractured skull.

Red Claim Not Doubted

What they have done, they said in Moscow, will pave the way for space travel — and, last week they had forecast rocket flights to the moon and Mars within a decade.

With a Russian satellite orbiting around the earth every 85 minutes, money here was prepared to say the Russian boast was for naught.

Not does anyone here now doubt the Russians' claim of six weeks ago that they have an ICBM capable of delivering nuclear catastrophic anywhere on earth.

Said Dr. Richard W. Parker, chairman of the technical panel on the U. S. moon program: “The launching of a satellite by the Russians is consistent with their statement they have the ICBM.”

Black line is orbit of Soviet satellite
... Dotted line is planned orbit of U.S. satellite

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 2021

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

Monday, September 27 at 7:00 p.m.

“Abandoned: The Untold Story of the Orphan Trains” is a unique online hybrid presentation presented by local history author, Michael Keene. The program explores the audacious relocation scheme which operated between 1854 and 1929, when an estimated 250,000 orphaned or abandoned children were transported west by train and placed in foster homes. Their stories are incredibly haunting and poignant.

Thanks to Craig Lacy
for providing articles in this issue!

Historical Society website
www.HistoricMedina.org