

MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

April 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

Spring is such a wonderful time of year. It is exciting to get out and about and explore after Winter has passed

As always, I continue to be overjoyed by the people who have embraced Medina Historical Society and support us in our dedicated efforts preserving and sharing the Village of Medina and the towns of Ridgeway and Shelby Heritage- your heritage.

Our society works continues to promote and practice its mission through tours, special events, school group visits, outreach efforts, collections and archives management, research, and more. We appreciate your support and hope that you will help spread the word about Medina Historical Society and all that we have to offer!

Have you renewed your membership for 2023? Are you considering joining the society as a new member? Please look for the 2023 membership form on our website. Download/print the form and renew/join today! Also please consider adding \$5.00 or \$10.00 which so many have with your membership renewal as this helps significantly.

Hope to see many of you at our monthly meetings, events and our annual June picnic.

Stay well and Happy Spring!

Reinhard Rogowski

President, Medina Historical Society

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ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INTERVIEWS

Helen McAllister recorded interviews with older area residents in the late 1970's as part of a project spearheaded by the Orleans County Historical Association to document local history. These interviews provide a view into life in Orleans County in the 1900's. Transcripts of the interviews are available at Orleans County libraries.

The Bugle proposes to present a series of summaries of interviews conducted with residents of Ridgeway and Shelby.

Catherine Cooper



Reevalyn Staring Ackerson (1896 – 1981)

Reevalyn was born on September 18, 1896 “in the house across from the present Medina Library” (211 North Ave. 1903 Directory)

Her parents were Charles Staring and Jennie (Pratt). She did not have any siblings. Her father ran the Charles E. Staring Insurance Agency from 1905 – 1935 (at 507 Main St.)

He was also “Poormaster”. This was a position run by the village or town. Poormasters would arrange for clothing and shoes to be provided for children of families in need. She remembers accompanying him on his home visits.

Reevalyn attended Medina High School. High School Gym classes were held at the third floor of City Hall, they did exercises there and played basketball.

She graduated on June 27, 1916, there were 50-60 in the graduating class. Their graduation ceremony was held at the old Cook Theater on Park Ave. This was the first or second year that graduates wore caps and gowns, they had been introduced because “there were so many of the girls that couldn't afford a nice dress”. The caps and gowns were provided by the school and returned afterwards. They did not have graduation parties.

The National Guard left for Mexico on the night of her graduation.

Reevalyn had taken a business arithmetic course at the High School and she went to work with her father on July 1, 1916, just after her graduation. She worked with him until 1939, when he died. R. Lewis Walters, her father's cousin took over the business and she worked with him until July 1, 1946, for a total of 40 years in the insurance business.

She was the tax-collector for the Town of Shelby from 1946 to 1974. At that time it was a part-time position, from Jan. – April. She worked from her home, residents came to her house to pay their taxes. She was succeeded by Jane Brigham.

Reevalyn also worked for the Automobile Club in the 1940's, this was the pre-cursor of AAA. She would prepare “Trip Ticks” for people's road trips – many drove to Florida, and to Yellowstone Park.

Reevalyn married LaVern Ackerson in 1923. The marriage was conducted by Dr. L.L. Rogers at the former Methodist parsonage (513 Prospect). She wore a grey suit, a chiffon hat and high-topped lace shoes. They rented several farms and then bought a home in Millville in 1954. (house next to the United Methodist Church).

LaVern was a farmer, he recalled hard times when prices were so low that farmers could barely survive: 6 cents a pound for pork, and potatoes 19 cents per bushel.

He bought a Model-T Ford in 1916. It had no windshield wipers, you would just drive with one hand and use the wiper with the other.

Reevalyn remembered when Main Street and Park Ave. were first paved, when the raceway was filled in and the swing bridge across the canal at Eagle Street, and hobos looking for food.

She went to see movies at the Scenic Theater on East Center St. and attended "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and other shows on the third floor of Bent's Opera House.

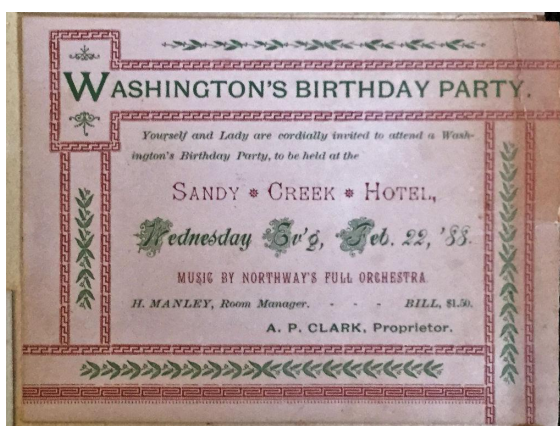
Train and trolley transportation was readily available, all of the trains stopped in Medina. There used to be a water tank in Medina, east of the depot where the engines would be filled up. She would take the trolley to Holley to visit a friend, to Rochester to shop, to Olcott in the summer, or the train to Niagara Falls.

She had seen many changes in 82 years. She appreciated the introduction of Medicare and had taken advantage of it. ♦

LaVern died on Dec. 11, 1981,
Reevalyn died on Sept. 9, 1982,
they are buried at Millville Cemetery.

New Website Photo Scrapbook

Old fashioned social invitations at <https://historicmedina.org/photos/>



MEDINA BUILDING, ORIGINALLY A COLD STORAGE BUILT IN 1901, SAW MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF OWNER IN 1904

Medina's Main Street buildings have been photographed at different times and from every possible angle, with the glaring exception it turns out, of 613-615 Main Street, the former cold storage building damaged by fire on April 7.



Photo courtesy David Miller

While the red trim of recent years accented the rounded entrance and ground floor windows, this functional monochromatic building just could not compete visually with adjacent structures. The recent fire has made us more aware of the building, how its heft anchors Main Street, how its bulk now seems reassuring and what a gaping hole it would leave if demolished, as the loss of the buildings at the “Four Corners” did in 1971.

Cold storage buildings, like barns, are visual records of our agricultural heritage. Built of fieldstone and architecturally unremarkable, these large warehouse-type structures were built around the turn of the century in every village or hamlet that had a railroad depot. The ability to extend the shelf life of produce and to have more control over market fluctuations contributed significantly to the agricultural economy.

The Main Street Cold Storage was built in 1901 by Frank Austin and Charles Dye. The three-story structure and basement comprised 24,000 square feet, and it was the first fully mechanized cold storage in the area. Apples, pears and peaches were the principal fruits stored.

But a tragedy occurred there soon after construction. Frank Austin was killed on September 23, 1904, when he fell through the elevator shaft. The Medina Daily Journal reported the story in detail:

“About a quarter after eight last night, the night watch, Bill James, left the building and went to the Opera House to attend the show. He claims to have left everything all right, even going over the entire building to see that the temperatures in the various rooms would hold till the play was over, and that things in general were safe to leave for the three hours that the entertainment would likely last.

“Upon returning, James, and Mr. Austin’s son, Floyd, who had also been at the play, found the outside door of the storage open and no lights burning. They at once started to investigate and finally found Mr. Austin at the bottom of the elevator shaft, lying against the side of the wall. His coat was over his head and a bicycle, which belongs to his daughter, which stood outside of the building where his son had left it when he went to the show, was lying on top of him.

“A physician was at once sent for and the police notified. It was found that there were still signs of life, but he never regained consciousness. A few hours later, he was moved to his home on West Ave., where he was attended to by Drs. Turner, Rogan, and Whiting, who found that the back of his head was crushed in.

“Mr. Austin was one of Medina’s most enterprising businessmen, having moved here from Shelby a few years ago.

“His keen business instincts assured success from the start, and the farmers of this section have lost a business friend who they are sure to miss.

“Mr. Austin was forty-six years old and left a wife, two daughters, Misses Fern and Onieta, and one son, Floyd.”

As an aside, the press presentation of this story is interesting. The Medina Daily Journal of September 24, 1904, ran this sensational headline:

**WAS IT MURDER OR SUICIDE?
Frank Austin Found in Elevator Shaft of the Cold Storage
Building
The Back of His Head Crushed In**

However, the article clearly states that these dramatic suppositions were unfounded:

“An examination revealed the fact that he had fifty dollars in his hip pocket and a number of valuable papers in his inside vest pocket. There was nothing to show that there had been any attempt whatever at robbery. Throughout the whole building there was not the least sign of any struggle, and the conclusions point to accident.”

Continued on next page

The Medina Tribune headline was less sensational:

FELL TO HIS DEATH

It includes an account of the inquest. Coroner Munson concluded that the death was the result of an accident “however mysterious it may seem.” He concluded that the unfortunate man, finding his son’s bicycle outside as he started to leave, carried it in, and fell down the elevator shaft, while groping about in the darkness.

Following Mr. Austin’s death, the company was re-organized in 1907 as the Austin & Rowley Cold Storage, with Irving G. Rowley, President; F.W. Floyd Austin, Vice-President; and Frank A. Rowley, Secretary/Treasurer.

In addition to cold storage, the business acted as an agent for the International Harvester Company, selling and servicing agricultural machinery such as hay balers, manure spreaders and mowers.

They also sold cars. In 1910, they promoted the Studebaker wagon and in 1916, Maxwell, “The Wonder Car”, which cost \$655. The Austin & Rowley enterprise prospered and expanded to include two other buildings. However, in the late 1920’s, lighter apple crop yields reduced revenue and a foreclosure sale was eventually necessary to satisfy three mortgages totaling \$92,000, which were held by Charles Dye and the Central Bank of Medina.

On August 1, 1928, Claude W. Grinnell and J.C. Posson, principal stockholders of the Medina Cold Storage Company, purchased the Austin Rowley Cold Storage plants for \$100,000 (currently \$1.8 million approx.). This was not the most auspicious timing for such an investment, but the Medina Cold Storage weathered the Depression and even expanded in the 1940s.

The building’s long connection with cold storage ended in 1973 when it was sold to Jeff and Hugh Fuller who moved Nu Floor, a floor covering business there from 410 Main St. ◆

COLD STORAGE USED FIRST LOCAL REFRIGERATION

In 1901 the cold storage building described above was the first in Medina to use the newly invented mechanical refrigeration process. Ed Grinnell described this in his *MEDINA - Here's to our Heritage* book.

“In the late 1800's mechanical refrigeration was developed which replaced the old method of cutting ice in the winter time, then storing it in sheds where food items were held. The ice was usually covered with sawdust to slow the melting process, thus keeping the shed cold as long as possible.

Cold storages were being built in this time period in nearly every village on both the NY Central RR and the 'Hojack' line through Lyndonville. The large acreage of fruit, especially apples, provided a steady, yet seasonal business for these warehouses.” ◆

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 2023

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

Held at the Lee-Whedon Library (620 West Ave.)
All programs begin at 7:00 pm

**April 24 Orleans County
Genealogy website and
Medina Sandstone book
by Jim Friday**

**May 30 Gettysburg with Greg
(TUESDAY) Kinal**

**June Members Tea – TBD
Picnic - TBD**

Thanks to Catherine Cooper for the articles in this
issue!

Historical Society website
www.HistoricMedina.org