

# MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

September 2023

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

It seems like Fall tip-toed in when no one was looking. We go to bed one night and the trees were still green and woke up in the morning to gold and yellow leaves. Where does the time go?

But along with the color we have some wonderful meetings scheduled this fall. Sept 25th "Last Call" a new book on the history of the service industry in Medina. Oct 30th Greg Kinal will discuss "Lincoln's Assassination" and on Nov 27th Greg will discuss your immigrant ancestors and why they came and how they adapted.

Have you renewed your membership for 2023 or need to renew for 2024? Membership is slightly down this year so it would be great to end the year in the black and your membership fee will help us with our ongoing expenses. Of course donations are always accepted and appreciated.

Hope to see you soon at a meeting or one of the many Medina events.

Respectfully,

*Reinhard Rogowski*

*President, Medina Historical Society*

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### Miscellaneous from the Museum

Street grate made by Swett Iron Works in Medina, a piece of trolley track and a chimney cap.

## LIFE ON THE ERIE CANAL 1884-1905

As told to Clifford Wise in 1977 by Mrs. Ross (Hazel) Arnett

The canal on which my father had his boats was seventy feet wide and seven feet deep. When the canal was first built it was only forty-five feet wide and four feet deep. Today it is on hundred and twenty-five feet wide and twelve feet deep.

There were three kinds of boats traveling on the canal. They were known as bullheads, lakers and scows. On the bullheads and lakers, the cabins were flush with the deck but cabins on the scows rose several feet above the deck. On this deck there was an awning supported by poles and between two poles was swung a hammock. This was my playroom on pleasant days. My mother, ever concerned for my safety, tied me with a rope to a ring which was in the center of the deck. When we came to a bridge which was neither swing nor lift, the drivers would call out "Low Bridge". The steersmen and everyone else would duck. Mother would run up the steps, untie me and carry me to safety.

One day mother forgot that I was on the deck. The men called "Low Bridge" and when, several minutes later mother remembered me, she had just time to grab a butcher knife, run up the steps, cut the rope and snatch me to safety as the scow swung under the low bridge.

Father's pair of scows would be loaded with wheat at Buffalo and would proceed down the canal to Troy drawn by a span of mules. In the stern of the boat there was a stable in which were kept two extra teams of mules. The boats traveled twenty-four hours a day. Shift of teamsters and mules was made every six hours.

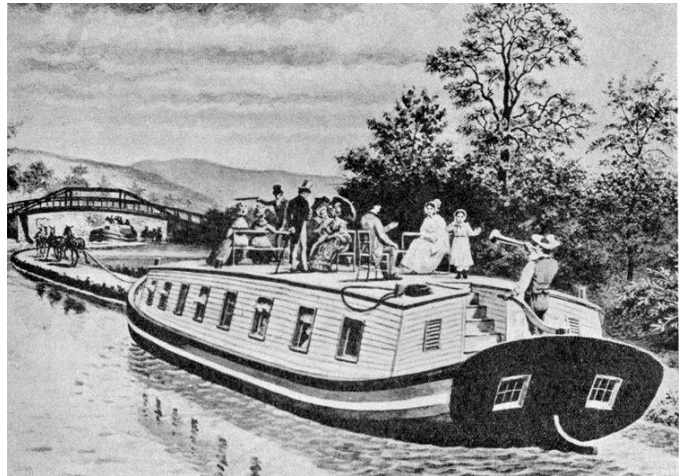
The trip to Troy from Buffalo was about three hundred and forty miles. We covered about three miles an hour. The entire trip took from a week to ten days. Steersmen were at the wheel constantly. The wheel controlled the tiller at the back of the scow which directed its course.

The mules traveled on the north side of the bank. This was known as the towpath. There was another narrower path on the opposite bank. It was called the heel path.

Father's two scows were about one third the size of a present day barge. They were fastened together, one behind the other. It was a temptation to jump from the first on which we lived to the second. Strict discipline and tragic stories of what had happened to little ones who had tried to jump kept my brother and me from such a venture. However, my brother did fall into the water one day. It was during a rainstorm and the deck was quite slippery. In he went, yellow slicker, boots and all. He was followed into the water by one of father's loyal steersman who soon had him safe and mother soon had him dry again.

The bridge which led up from the stable in the hold to the bank was narrow, steep and often slippery. Mules were ordinarily surefooted but sometimes they didn't negotiate the trip. There was no way to save them once they were in the canal. I remember that the sight of dead mules floating in the canal was not too rare a sight.

Of course it was inevitable that two scows going in the opposite directions would meet. In order for these scows to pass, the boat on the side father away from the towpath would have to let down the rope



or hawser slack enough for the near boar to pass over the rope. It was always a tense time for sometimes the passing boat caught the tow rope and tore it loose. This was serious and was bound to bring recriminations from the injured boatmen. Without delay the rope was spliced and the boat was on its way. You can see that knowledge of the method of splicing ropes was important. This was the reason why in the early years of our lives, my brother and I learned to splice ropes. We spent many happy, busy hours at this activity.

Days passed pleasantly and without much excitement for a preschool child. One of the pleasant breaks in routine came when the scows arrived at one of the regular canal stores. Here, mother would stock up on supplies that she needed to serve twelve to fourteen people three meals a day.

Meals were served at two sittings. Steersmen and drivers were at the first table. The family was served at the second table. First table was served at six, noon and six. Mother had quite a reputation as a cook. She enjoyed baking for the men and often served the drivers special pies. The men loved her pies. Father would joke with them, telling them that too much pie would make them have sore feet. The drivers walked miles every day behind the mules. Their feet were always tender and sore so father's teasing didn't bother them.



When we arrived at Albany, we joined other scows to continue the trip down the Hudson. Scows lined up nine boats wide and ten boats long. In this formation two side-wheelers would tow the boats down the Hudson to New York City. This part of the trip stands out as a highlight. It was breathtakingly beautiful. The lovely forest covered palisades seemed to be closing in on either side. There were joyful times when we approached villages or cities and little "bung boats" brought out to the scows candy, ice cream, bread and other staples and luxuries. These were little boat stores and they were fascinating to little boys and girls.

On about the third morning we arrived at the harbor of the city. Tugboats joined us there and towed the scows to slips or piers where great liners waited to take our cargo or grain and reload the scows for the return trip. We were in the harbor about a week before beginning the return trip. Most of that time was spent on shore and we children had happy times. The water in the harbor always churned angrily because of the great activity of the boats. This made mother quite seasick and she was always glad to take us ashore. We shopped, saw shows and went to Coney Island. Many pleasant hours were spent visiting the parks and the great liners.

When father had finished his business transactions and the scows were loaded for the return trip, we were towed back up the Hudson. There the trip began in reverse. We were on the scows from about April first to December first. During the winter the boats were tied in dry dock. Father's boats were named the Jesse Oderkirk and the Joseph Brant.

NOTE: Jesse Oderkirk was the name of Mrs. Arnett's brother who had passed away. Her parents were Fred and Georgiana Oderkirk. Mrs. Arnett was born in 1893 so was 84 years old when she sat down with Clifford Wise in 1977 to recount this history. ◆

## A BIT OF HISTORY

### BOWLING IN MEDINA

*Keith Armstrong (deceased) compiled this interesting information some years ago.*

It would appear that league bowling in Medina started in the early Thirties. The oldest leagues are the Town League (scratch league that has operated continuously for about 60 years) and the Church League (a handicap league started about 1934 and in existence for some 53 years).

In the Thirties there were three bowling establishments: Pete's, Allen's and Reynold's, with a total of 15 lanes.

PETE'S BOWLING, a 3-lane house, owned and operated by Pete Theodorakos. I have been informed by Ed Crinnell that, according to Pete's obituary, Pete purchased the business from the Boots Brothers (Fred and Edward, located somewhere on East Center Street. In the Thirties Pete had located on the second floor of the Bent's Block (commonly known as Bent's Opera House) located on the northwest corner of main and center, the present site of Fleet Bank. In the early Forties Pete moved to East Center Street, occupying the east ground floor of the Maher Bros. Block (116-120 East Center Street) present site of Corky's Bakery. This was a 4-lane house. Pete died in the late Forties and Mrs. Theodorakos operated the lanes for several years, until they were taken over by Ranallo's Bowling (Sam Ranallo). incidentally, Pete was the uncle of Nick Theodorakos, who later opened Oak Orchard Lanes in Albion.

ALLEN'S BOWLING, a 6-lane house, owned and operated by Sid Allen. This was located on the second floor of the Maher Bros. Block (116-120 East Center Street). This had 4 lanes in the west room (over what is now Ashlee's Place) and 2 lanes in the east room (over what is now Corky's Bakery). In the late Thirties or early Forties Sid closed the house and opened an establishment in Lockport.

REYNOLD'S BOWLING, a 6-lane house, owned and operated by Ernie Reynolds, located at 327 N. main Street, the present site of Lockport Savings Bank. In the early Forties this was taken over by John Kelly (Kelly's Bowling) and in 1947 was taken over by Pete Tate and Al Ozzimo (T & O Bowling - commonly called Tate's) This establishment was destroyed by fire in 1962.

MAPLE RIDGE LANES: In 1957 Izzy Bloom formed a corporation that built this 12-lane house at 11249 Maple Ridge Road. It was later enlarged to 20 lanes. In the early Eighties this was taken over by King Pin Enterprises of Buffalo and in 1987 was leased to Ranallo's Medina Lanes.

RANALLO'S BOWLING: In 1950 Sam Ranallo took over Pete's Bowling on East Center Street. In 1960, forming a corporation, an 8-lane house was established in the Butts Building (339 North Main Street, the present site of VCR of Medina). This house was closed in 1987 when Ranallo's Medina Lanes leased Maple Ridge Lanes.

THEN AND NOW

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Almost all the major changes in bowling came in the Fifties.

LANES: Formerly called "alleys". They were shallac finished and necessitated daily cleaning and buffing to remove the black ball-track that had built up from the previous day's bowling. Then came urethane.

PINS: Solid maple, usually weighing 3# 8 oz. to 3# 10 oz. Then came plastic with better weight control.

PIN SETTERS: Peté's and Reynold's were "peg" houses. That is they had foot-operated steel pegs in the pin deck on which the pins were set. The pin-boys were called "pin-stickers". Allen's had hand-operated machines and the pin-boys were called "pin-setters". Then came the automatic pin-spotters. Maple Ridge had them when they built in 1957; Tate's in 1959; and Ranallo's in 1961, a year after they opened on North Main Street.

FOUL LINES: Formerly a foul judge sat at the foul line at the edge of the lanes and blew a whistle whenever a foul occurred. Automatic foul lines came in with automatic pin-spotters.

BALL RETURNS: Formerly ball returns were above floor and the ball racks extended the entire length of the approach. Below floor ball returns came in during the fifties.

BALLS: Hard rubber with standard drilling, usually three holes that were pitched to the center of the ball. A few bowlers still used 2-hole balls (thumb and middle finger). Then came the variations in drilling, such as semi- and full-fingertip; also changes in pitch such as negative and reverse pitch on the thumb hole. Then came the various plastics which gave better control of top- and side-weight. Also, changes in ball surfaces.

BOWLING AIDS: The fifties ushered in various bowling aids, starting with the bowling glove; also, hand, wrist, and arm straps.

PRICES: In the Thirties bowling cost 10¢ a line in the afternoon and 15¢ a line at night. Pin-boys were paid 2½¢ in the afternoon and 3¢ a line at night.

ASSOCIATION: Formerly, Medina was a member of the Batavia Bowling Association, along with Albion, Leroy, and Oakfield. In 1954, under the leadership of Sam Ranallo and Homer Ward, the Medina Bowling Association was formed.

## THE CARLYON CALAMITY

By 8:30 on Friday evening on July 27, 1883, a driving rain storm was at the height of its fury. The little railroad depot at Carlyon (now Ashwood) was deserted and quiet except for the howling wind, the strongest, people around there had ever heard. Intermittent flashes of lightning revealed a solitary freight car creaking in the wind on a siding. Powerful gusts rocked the empty boxcar. Then, like an invisible hand, the wind nudged it ahead a bit and a bit more until it went off dead center and rolled ominously onto the main track and stopped.

Meanwhile the Thousand Island Excursion train was being flagged down at Lyndonville to pick up a passenger, who emerged from his father's buggy and boarded the train. The father, Mr. Bostwick of Carlyon, then headed back home through the storm and train #54 chugged east toward its doom. The train had eight Pullman sleepers, one coach, a baggage car and two locomotives. Engineer, L.J. Boynton in the lead engine, peered ahead along the tracks. Just as he passed the empty Carlyon depot he spotted the derailed boxcar. He had only time enough to pull the reverse lever before the crash at full speed. The box car literally exploded into splinters. Three of the sleeper-cars were crushed. The lead locomotive tipped over and the second one was thrown across the track, killing its engineer and fireman. By the time all momentum had ceased, several persons were already silent in death. Others screamed in terror and groaned in pain.

Soon farmers from miles around came with lanterns to help in the rescue work amidst the twisted mass of wood, steel and humanity. The depot became a morgue. Local homes in Carlyon became hospitals, since there were none in Albion or Medina then. Doctors were summoned from the Lyndonville and Albion areas. As Mr. Bostwick drove into town, he was told of the terrible wreck. Knowing his son was aboard he hurried to the tragic scene, arriving just as Bernie Bostwick was being brought out of the wreckage. The young man was placed in his father's wagon but never made it home.

The rescue work continued all night and the next day. Telegrams to and from loved ones never arrived because of an operators' strike. A Mr. Lefevre of Bay City, Michigan, arrived on Sunday at the home of George Handy in Carlyon, there to find his wife dying, his daughter badly hurt, and, among the dead at the depot, his eight year old son. As Mr. Lefevre identified the little corpse he broke into tears and cried, "Great God. My poor boy. My poor boy." Eighteen people died including an ex-mayor of Chicago. Twenty-three were seriously hurt.

It was indeed an ill wind that ravaged Orleans County on that summer night. But out of all the tears and suffering came some benefits from the "Carlyon Calamity of 1883". The Railroad Commission recommended that henceforth all railcars should have airbrakes, safety switches and more frequent checks of the tracks.

## THE CARLYON CALAMITY PRESS COVERAGE

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THE woman who lost an ear in the Carlyon disaster, and who is staying at present near the scene of the accident, wants the company to pay \$10,000 for it. She protested the next day after the disaster, says an Albion paper, when a Carlyon youth was discovered running around with her lost ear spitted on a sharp pointed stick.

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Albion cor. Post-Express.

Mrs. McMaster was a victim of the Carlyon railroad disaster occurring near here last summer. In the accident she lost both ears. The railroad company settled with her for the injury, but the woman was so frightened that she vowed she would never again enter a train. She abandoned her home in Michigan and is living at the place of the accident. Pending the purchase of a home she entrusted the money received as compensation for injuries to Warner, who gave her a note for \$2,500 signed "Executor of the estate of Roswell S. Burroughs by A. S. Warner, manager." A widow woman, who does not wish her name mentioned, has Warner's individual note for \$1,650. She said, "I earned most of that money

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A CORRESPONDENT of the Lockport Journal says Mrs. McMaster and Miss Alice Jennison are the only injured persons remaining at Carlyon since the accident. Miss Jennison is still being cared for at Carlyon, but will soon be able to be removed to her home in Philadelphia. Mrs. A. L. Briggs, who has remained at R. R. Barry's

—The woman who valued her ear at \$10,000 after she lost it in the Carlyon disaster, has received half the sum for the member. Her other ear is at the service of the company at the same price.

### NOTE:

Mrs. MacMaster was Craig Lacy's Great grandmother. She had just immigrated from Ireland and was pregnant with his grandmother, Saida.



# 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

**September 25 "Last Call" Hotels,  
Restaurants and Bars: a  
history of the service  
industry in Medina, NY  
by Renee Lama**

**October 30 "Lincoln's  
Assassination" by  
Greg Kinal**

**November 27 "Your Immigrant  
Ancestors" and why  
they came and how they  
adapted by Greg Kinal**

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

Thanks to Craig Lacy for the articles in this issue!