

Memories of Canastota--1911

A Walk Through the Village a Half Century Ago

by Harold L. Briggs, 1949, 1965

Harold Briggs grew up in Canastota and worked as a grocery store clerk and delivery boy in the village around 1911. He recorded his memories when he was older (1949), and the *Canastota Bee Journal* published them as a series of columns in 1965.

The series is posted here in its entirety.
It has been edited.
Images have been added.

This is the story about Canastota, a thriving, thrashing, and progressive small town located between the cities of Utica and Syracuse.

Back in the years when the Erie Canal was a source of freight service from New York City to Buffalo, the canal boats were hauled along by mule teams that traveled on what was called the tow-path. The teams were hitched to ends of large ropes fastened to the boats. The Erie Canal is a constant and historic background of our small town, its flow running directly through the center of the village.

Many of the residents of the town owned boats and that was the way they made their living. Living on the boats, they hauled cargos from one place to another. In the winter months they would reside at their homes in town until the next boating season opened. During these winter months, they would gather in the stores and tell tales of their trips to a group of attentive listeners, young and old.

Industries of 1911

The industries of this busy progressive town were numerous. The town was divided into the south side and the north side, as a result of the New York Central Railroad cutting through the middle of it. On the south side was the **Sherwood Brothers Factory**, operated by two brothers. Bill Sherwood was the inventor, the fellow that thought up the ideas. The other brother, John, was the manager and salesman. The well known children's coaster wagon, sleds and roller skates were all made here.. The company employed a large number of townspeople. This plant was located on James Street.

Across the street was a **milk plant** where the farmers brought their milk. There was also the **Middle-State Creamery** on Rasbach Street. This was a manufacturing plant where the milk was made into condensed milk. About a block from there on Main Street was the **Tabor Canning Factory**, that, in canning season, employed a large number of townpeople and also had a row of living quarters where outside help was housed. These were mostly Italian people, having just come to this country.

Roantree's Feed Store

On the edge of town on what is now Route 5 at the head of Peterboro Street was Roantree's Feed Store, a long large building owned and operated by Mr. Roantree, one of our leading businessmen and a leader in civic affairs. Guy Lewis was employed there as book-keeper and general manager. Mrs. Lewis was a kindly soul of whom I knew very well, as I was always sent by Guy to go and get his lunch. Roantree's Feed Store is now the site of Guy Clark's gas station, whose father in earlier years owned and operated the old **Monarchal Stock Farm** and ran the business of a large milk route from it. (I also worked on this milk route when I was about 23 years old.)



Petrie Farm

Directly up the road was the Petrie Farm. Mr. Petrie also had a large slaughterhouse situated on the rear of his barn where he did a large business. He was well known for his ability as a butcher. His children, Merrill, Edith, and Harold, were his family. In later years, Edith married Harlow Near. Merrill still resides on the old farm with his family.

In these days cards were put in cigarettes containing pictures of indians, ballplayers, and other individuals. The boys of the town would pitch cards, which was a frequent and lasting pastime at the old Petrie homestead. Many are the happy hours Merrill and I spent pitching cards at the walls in this house when the weather was bad. The one closer to the wall was the winner, or when outdoors, the one with the card that went the farthest.

South Side School

The south side of town also held its own in educational value. The South Side School, situated on the corner of Rasbach and Prospect Streets, was a large brick structure that had four spacious rooms. The first floor had the first and second grade in one room, and in the other room was the third grade; the second floor was one(?) room, fourth grade and the other fifth grade. Miss Florence Phoenix was school principal, a very fair and just lady. (She was a sister-in-law of W. Fred Dew.) Other teachers at this time were Miss Seeley, Miss K. Horan, and Miss Skelton.

Truant Officer Burton

We can't forget our truant officer, a fellow that really took his business seriously. Many of us at that time had reason to know Mr. Burton, who lived on the south side on West Hickory St. He could be seen pedaling his bike to and from calls around Canastota and sometimes chasing kids that failed to show up at school. Mr. Burton passed on, but his son Robert lives in the old home with his family. Many times Mr. Burton came after me, as I'd rather clerk in the store than go to school. Then I'd catch it from my parents too!

Behind the school was (and is) a large lot where a ball-ground and playground were available to the children. Situated on the corner at Peterboro Street was (and is) a Trinity Church. Next to this was the residence of one of our leading doctors, **Doc Taylor**, living there with his family. His son could often be seen driving him around in the buggy to and from house calls.

Across, on the other corner, was the home of Mr. Alfred Dew who had a large lumber yard in town. Associated in the business with him was his son, Fred Dew, now deceased. On the other corner of Peterboro Street was the large and beautiful **Milton DeLano residence**, one of the show places of the town, now converted into the **Legion Home**.

Farther north on the street was the brick structure of the **Baptist Church**, where on Sunday, the people gathered to give some time to the Lord. It was always filled in those days. Rev. Mr. Horsman was the minister, a wonderful personality and sincere in his teachings of the Bible. He and his wife were an excellent influence on the people of the Canastota Baptist Church.

The Trolley Line

We go down Peterboro Street now and come in contact with the old West Shore tracks, which was the electric trolley line. Trolley cars, connecting the outlying towns and cities, were our quickest and best mode of travel at this time. Trolley cars were available for transportation every hour, either "locals" and "limiteds". They were a very satisfactory means of travel in those days. Today these tracks are still here but trolley services were discontinued many years ago.

Let your mind wander back over the years and picture the times, people, and places of years gone by, and you may assure yourselves that this town and what it stood for was, and still is, a wonderful place. Give me the days of long ago when I was a boy here. Progress is not to be retarded, but there are spots in the old days that I think we would rather have.

Old Railroad Depot

The old depot still stands in the same place between the West Shore and New York Central tracks, but it was remodeled many years ago. In earlier days, it served both the Central and Third Rail Trolley lines, as well as the Lehigh Valley, as a waiting place, although you may remember the trolley had small sheltered buildings along the electric tracks. The electric gates

were controlled from the little shanties on Peterboro Street and Main Street. Charlie Harrington was for many years a gate tender on Peterboro Street, and Mr. Phillips was on the Main Street gates. He was an uncle of Floyd Phillips. You all remember Floyd, who was afflicted with a sickness, and later people helped establish him in a small business of selling papers, tobacco, and candy near the canal.

Across the tracks stood the large and spacious **Weaver Hotel**, owned and operated by J.B. Weaver and his family. This hotel had large rooms and catered to travelers from the New York Central trains, serving meals and providing an excellent place to stay. J.B.'s daughter, Leona, a popular and attractive young lady in the social whirl of Canastota life, married Wilbur Crisp, a physical instructor at the school.



On the other side of the street was our post office, a fairly good sized one. I well remember Claude Jackson, a postal employee. Later, a new site was selected as the proper place, and a new post office was erected where it now stands across from the Avon Theater, a monument to the progress of this lively town.

On the same side of the street, next to the post office, was a place where youngsters and oldsters alike gathered to get refreshments in the line of ice cream, candy, and sodas. The place was known in these days as the **Sugar Bowl**, owned and operated by Spero Conomikes, a Greek, who was well liked by everyone and was known as a fair and just merchant.

Then came the **State Bank**, operated by Milton and Kirk DeLano. After the bank was a **shoe store** that was owned by **Charlie Brown** and his brother. At this time, Charlie also served as Justice of the Peace. Next was the **show store of A. H. Anderson**. His son, Harold, was also in business with him at one time.

Of course, we had to have our meat markets, and next came **Ed Grem's & O'Hara's Meat Market** serving the public the choice cuts of meats for their tables.

Across the corner, on Center and Peterboro Streets, was the **cigar store of Deverne Lewis**, a rather famous man for his powers on the baseball field. He was a prominent man in civic affairs of Canastota and very well liked. His cigar store was the meeting place of old timers; champion checker players, such as Mr. Chapman and Albert Palmer, played there frequently.

John Cronk was next in line, operating a large **dry goods** store, with clothing and nearly everything a person needed in wearing apparel. This whole block of business places, that is the buildings themselves, were owned by John and Clifford Cronk, I believe.

In this same block was an amusement parlor, and many pool players gathered here at **Harry the Greek's**. A good many exhibition pool contests were put on in this place. The leading contender, I recall, was one Pickard from the rural section around Clockville. Other expert pool players were Kenneth LaVancher, Harold Ayres, and Powell and Clayton Haywood.

Now we come to the bargain store of Canastota, a place where service was given with a smile and a good word for the day, Abe and Max **Landman's Clothing Store**. Abe was a great, serious-minded chap, with an eye for a better and bigger business. He later moved to Oneida, opening the same type of store with added attractions, and did a good business there.

Of course, people have to have candy stores and big soda fountains. Next to Landman's was the **Morrow Block**, owned by Fred Morrow, who conducted a fine store here. It was a large building made of cement blocks built the year before by contractors Ralph Humphrey and Albert Palmer. (In later life, I married Albert Palmer's daughter, Margery, who is still my wife. We have two grown girls and a boy, Wanda Shirly, Winoa Maysie, and Harold Lester, Jr.)

Farther down the street was a car dealer, Lisle **Tabor**, who sold **Chevrolet** cars. At this time, they were one of the new things in life. Then came the **Bemiss Hardware Store** where anything in that line could be bought. Howard Bemiss, son of the owner at that store, still owns the old block, but he himself is an insurance man.

Next door was another good hardware store, **Farr Brothers**. Edward and Levi Farr owned and conducted this business. These many years, it has kept pace with the times, and at this writing, is still a fine hardware store owned and operated by Clarence Farr. This store is one of the very few that is still in business under the family name and still conducting its original business of years ago.

However, while I'm on the subject, I will add another place that is still plying the same business it was in 35 years ago or more. **C. G. Fowler**, who has a **jewelry** store on Center Street, is still an active business man.

Cox's Five & Dime

A vintage newspaper advertisement for Landman Bros. The ad is titled "GREAT CLOSING OUT SALE" in large, bold letters. Below the title, it lists the items for sale: "Of our Entire Stock of men's Suits, Overcoats, Trousers, Neckties, Collars and Cuffs, Hats and Caps, Underwear, Rubbers, Boots and Shoes." The sale starts on Saturday, March 11, at 10 o'clock a.m. and lasts for 10 days only. The ad explains that the season is advancing and they must sell their winter goods to make room for spring goods. It emphasizes that this is a great sale where customers can save dollars on their merchandise. The store is located at 138 South Peterboro St. in Canastota, and has a branch store at 25 Phelps St. in Oneida, N.Y. The ad also mentions "Open Evenings" and "See large bills for prices."

As I sit here writing these lines, the funeral procession of Bill Cox, one time 5 and 10 cent store owner, and a prominent figure in local politics, is moving around the corner to carry him to his last resting place. His residence was just around from where I live now, on this day of March 17, 1949. When I was a boy, Mr. Cox ran a five and dime store on Center Street across from George Jennings's blacksmith shop.

Erie Canal Hoist Bridge

Going down Peterboro Street on the south side of the Erie Canal itself, a hoist bridge was installed at this point. This bridge was a huge piece of complicated gears and was operated by levers and controls that were concealed in a small shanty, or building. When a boat was seen approaching the bridge, the operator would put the gears in motion, and the big flat surface would rise into the air. Paul Greiner, Sr., was operating the controls at that time. It was a majestic sight to see this huge slab move from the level of the street to a height permissible for boats to pass under. On each end was an iron stairway leading down off the bridge when it was in a raised position. These steps permitted anyone caught on the bridge when it was being raised the opportunity to get down, and it also afforded people a chance to come and watch as the boats passed along. Sometimes the bridge would be raised for a long period when a fleet of barges would be passing down the Erie.

In all the time it was in operation, I remember only one casualty, and that was when a boy named Tony Balducci had his leg caught in the edge of the bridge as it was being leveled back to the street. His leg was lost.

Newspaper Office Near Canal

Near the canal was the building where the ***Bee Journal*** newspapers were edited and printed. These local papers carried news of our town and its rural sections, as well as news from outlying towns such as Clockville, Peterboro, Wampsville, South Bay, and Lakeport. The papers were owned and published by Patrick F. **Milmoe**. Mr. Milmoe was a tall, large-framed person, and a very good man. He had his humorous side, too. He lived in a large house just on the outskirts of town on Seneca Turnpike, which is now known as route 5. Mr. Milmoe raised a large family of six boys and two girls. He did a good business on his paper besides doing other printing.

In later years, following Mr. Milmoe's death, his family took over. Mrs. Milmoe and sons Wheeler and Laddie conducted the business. Not too many years ago, Laddie took over the *Oneida Union* in Oneida.

Turning around and walking along the west side of Peterboro Street, next to the "Bee Office", we come to **Richardson's Market**. Frank Richardson was a large and portly gentleman, a figure who was well known in Canastota. This store was the third largest in town. Old Jake Smay was a meat cutter here, and his sausage making was famous in the grocery business. Mr.

Richardson was also a cattle dealer.



Next to this store was the **Ingaham Sisters dry goods** store. Then came **J.W. Wilson's Drug Store**, something that a town can hardly get along without. The next place in the **Sherwood Block** was the **Avon Theater Movie Show**, then showing silent pictures, and also occasionally old-time vaudeville acts. Beyond this was a furniture store and **undertaking place** operated by **Preston and Hough**. Kenneth Stannard, son of Stannard the painter, worked in there for some time.

John Skaden's clothing store came next with the added items of school supplies. This store is another that is in its original place and is now run by a son, Jack Skaden, Jr. Next to this was E.J. **Clark's Bazaar**, a dry goods store. This store is also in its location at this writing, in 1949, being operated and owned by Howard Gleason, a former clerk in Mr. Clark's shop. In later years, he went into business for himself and is now the owner and operator of an ice cream parlor and candy store here in Canastota.

Next to Clark's Bazaar was **Burt Mark's Store and Soda Fountain**, another popular place for the young people. After this came **Fred Johnson's** (father of Skeet Johnson) grocery store. On the corner of Peterboro and Center Streets was another **drugstore**, owned by **C.F. McConnell**, an energetic and magnetic personality. He was keenly interested in sports and was also a horse racing fan, himself owning nice horses.

Across the street, going south, was the **First National Bank**, J.C. Rasbach and LeGrand Colton being the leading figures of this concern. Next to the bank was **Fred Kiles's saloon** where you could get a glass of beer and hospitality. The next business place was the large **bakery and restaurant of F.M. Olds** that supplied our towns with cakes, cookies, and restaurant service. It was a combined bakery and eating place. The **saloon of Ike Steel** was the next one, where beverages of all kinds were served over the bar. After this came another **eating place and saloon operated by Frank Gillette**. He and his wife took care of the business.

Old Time Barber Shops

Now, we are at the end of the street back near the Weaver Hotel, on this side of the tracks. When I mentioned the hotel earlier, I forgot to mention the barber shop connected to it. In the basement at this end was **E.A. Cooper's Barber Shop**, one of the best barbers in town. Other barbers at this time were Eber Wood, who ran his shop on Center Street. and Charles Schlernitzauer. If I remember correctly, they were in business together. The barber shop of

Mr. Woods is still doing business in the same place, next to **Fowler's Jewelry Store**, with the same interior, never having been remodeled. It is now under the management of Norman Marsh, son of another of Canastota's early settlers. Another of our first class barbers at the time was Jack Brophy, with a shop situated on the other side of the canal on Peterboro Street next to Frank Coon's small grocery store. We also had a good colored barber in town, who had a shop on Canal Street, but I cannot recall his name. Perhaps some of you who read this story will remember him.

Painters and Plumbers

Sign painters are essential in a town, too, and a mighty good one was Fred Austerman doing the lettering and making signs for the people of town. His son Harold in later years became a policeman and was well known about town. Harold is now living in Weedsport and is a guard in Auburn Prison. Other regular house painters in town were Mr. Hopseeker, Ollie Jones, Sach Reed, Mr. Stunnard, and Hall Robinson. Skip Teller, who lives just up the street from where I live now, and is still pretty active, had to quit painting for a while because of ill health. Rube Holliday was a plumber and tinsmith, still employed by **Farr Bros.** after many years. Other old time tinsmiths were Guy Henry, Henry Cleveland, and Mr. Montros, who also worked for Farr Bros. I ate many a meal in Mr. Cleveland's home when I was going to school with his children, Bernie and Marie. After leaving school, Bernie enlisted in the army and has now reached the rank of major.

Modes of Transportation

Before I leave the subject of the main business section of our town, I will add a few remarks. This section of Peterboro Street has always been the busiest part of town, ever since I was a boy. It was a busy thoroughfare, teams and wagons and single horse drawn carriages and light democrat wagons going to and fro on their many businesses. In the winter, this street was an inspiring sight, as the snow in those days seemed to pile higher. Many bobsleds and cutters standing along the street in front of business places was really something to see. These horse drawn bobs and cutters provided an ever delightful pastime for the youngsters, myself included, of catching onto them sometimes with our sleds hooked on for quite a ride. Oh boy! For those days again . . .

Jim Betsinger's Mules

Mrs. Schroeder (formerly Mrs. Stillman Betsinger, but Mr. Betsinger died many years ago) lives across the street from where I live now. Her family was one of the earliest families in the region. When she was just a girl, her father ran a hotel on Barlow Street. She first married to Stillman Betsinger; they were well known as farmers throughout this section. They raised a large family, among them Jim Betsinger, a tall well made fellow that in his teen years was known to have the best and fastest pair of mules in Canastota, in fact in this section of the country. This team could be seen around Canastota always on the run. It was one of the topics of the day. They were also known to be the best pulling team in these parts, single or double, real fast, and I mean fast. Jim was the only boy in the family, though he had a few sisters.

Skating on the Erie Canal

The Erie Canal in the winter also provided another means of sports. Skating was a very popular pastime in those days on the canal. Some of the best skaters were Kenneth Stannard, Pip Lee, Sod Lee, Jack Skaden, and M.E. Davis's son, Harry. I did quite a bit of skating, as did many others. Today, the canal is lower, but some children still skate on it.

East Center Street

It is important to remember the cross streets of a town also, and the one I'm going to tell you about now is Center Street, cutting through the business section halfway between the canal and the railroad. This street extended east to **Farmham's Coal Yard** and west to the **Watson Wagon Works**. It was a busy street, too, having a great many business places located here.

Starting from the **Farnham Coal Company** on the north side of the street, we come to the large and imposing brick structure of the three stories, the furniture factory. This factory, if I recall right, was run at that time by **Ellis, Joyce, and Hildreth**. It made modern furniture of that day and employed a large number of workers skilled in cabinet making and various other phases of the furniture business, such as hand carving and varnishing, and polishers, all skilled craftsmen in these lines.

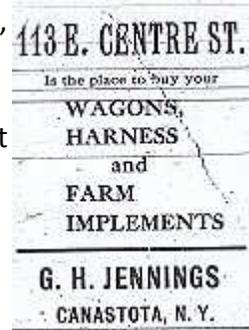
George Fien was superintendent at this time, I think. Edward Schirmer became superintendent of this same furniture factory years later, under the name of **Lenox Shops**. This large building is still here, but it shut down as a furniture factory some years ago. It is now used as a storage warehouse.

Produce Dealers

Up the street was the Bridge and Souter Office Building, dealers in celery, lettuce, and general produce at this time. They were owners of a large section of mucklands. Other owners of the mucklands in these days were William Ludlow, who had a celery warehouse across the canal on Spencer Street, next to one of our public schools. **Ludlow's warehouse** was where celery and lettuce were taken in from the mucklands, cut, washed, tied into saleable bunches, packed in crates, and then shipped to market. Mr. Ludlow also had another warehouse on the other side of town, west of Hickory Street, situated along the Lehigh Valley railroad tracks.

At this point on Center Street, we turn south toward the canal on a short street where was located the large **Hubbard Canning Factory**. A very busy place in the canning season, this factory at that time was owned and operated by F.F. Hubbard, who lived on the south side on the corner of James and Main streets. Doris Hubbard, a daughter, married Donald Dew, son of Alfred Dew, in later years. At this time, Donald Dew is the owner of one of our largest industries, the **Diemolding Company**, erected some few years ago on Rasbach Street.

Now we travel back to Center Street, going west toward the center of town, and we come to the old **Cronk Dance Hall** where dances were held several nights a week where gathering crowds strutted their stuff. Next came another block on the corner of Peterboro and Center owned by Cronk's that I mentioned some time back.



On the other side of Center Street, back towards the the coal yard, just a little way down on this side, was **George Jennings' Harness Repair Shop**, something a town needed very much in those days. It was also a **blacksmith** shop. Mr. Jennings had a very large business and could always be found sewing and cutting leather to make horse bridles, britchings, and other harnesses for farmer's work horses. He lived on the south side of town with his family, two girls who looked much alike. Beyond this was a large brick building, **Benjamin's Feed Store**, a very thriving and profitable business in the days of horse and buggies. Mr. Benjamin is still in town but is inactive, having sold his block and retired. Miss Edith Austin of Canastota was his secretary for many years; Kimball was a driver.

Of course, each town must have fire protection, and next down the street, we had our fire house and fire fighting equipment. At this time, this equipment ran on man power rather than motor power. We had a volunteer fireman that manned the hose carts and ladder wagon. The **Patten Hook and Ladder Company** was named after one of our leading citizens, as was the **Forbes Hose Company** and **DeLano Hose Company**. These were our protection against fire, and believe me, they were an efficient firefighting crew.

I can recall some of them. Biddy Lilly, Sr. was an active fireman, Jimmy Moyer, Sr. was one of the ablest and active firemen. Mr. Moyer was also in the business of moving and building anywhere, anytime. In later years, he was killed when he was caught under a building he was moving. Felix Tondeur was another prominent fireman. A good many others you'll recall.



Crossing back up Peterboro Street to continue down Center Street. On the corner stood **McConnell's Drug Store**, previously mentioned. Next, on the north side of Center Street, came the **Twogood Block**. This featured the **Twogood Hotel**, catering to dining room service and rooms. It was a very modern and popular hotel in its day. Sports followers, including many horse racing fans, gathered here. Canastota had many sulky racing fans, and the village was noted for its many citizens who followed the races. Many noted drivers also congregated here, and many a good horse came into fame

from Canastota.

Below the town to the north, about two miles towards Oneida Lake, was the **Twogood Farm**, where a **race track** was laid out. Many a race was run on this track with the attendance of crowds of people from town and the surrounding county. In fact, people came from far places to race their horses on this track. In the winter months, Oneida Lake was a race track on ice. It was a great sight in those days to see the sulkys and drivers trotting their horses up and around the streets for exercise and for a warm up before race time.

Farther down Center Street, we come to another pleasure place, the old **Frank Lilly Music Hall** that offered movies and the occasional vaudeville act. Behind this was a long covered shed where the farmers would put their rigs sometimes.

We also had two livery stables just off of Center Street, on Commerce Street. **Hanky Lewis' Livery** and **Stimson's Livery** both had a great many horses and rigs. These rigs and horses could be rented for an hour a day, or for as long as you wanted them. Rube Stimson lived with his parents next to **Costie's Bakery**. He was also associated with the county sheriff's office. Hanky was a small, grey-haired man who was very energetic and full of fun. Both men enjoyed horse racing.

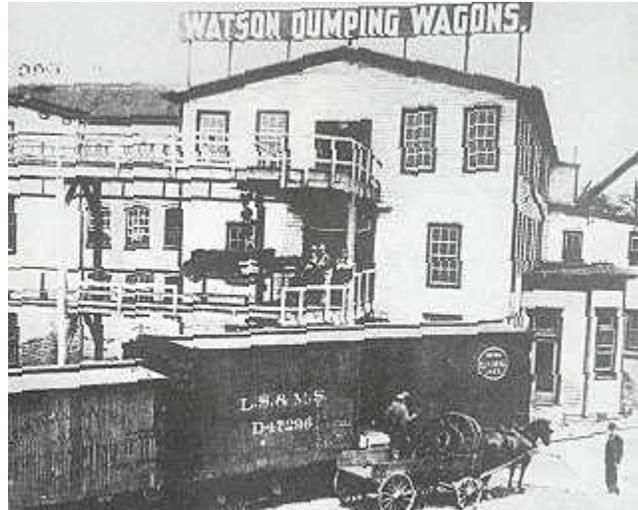


Taking care of the animals and the equipment for Hanky was Bill Smith, a colored man. Bill was handicapped with a bum leg and always carried a cane to help bear some of his weight. He was a good man with horses and was also surprisingly agile on the baseball diamond. He played on ball teams that they organized here in those days. Mrs. Smith, his wife, was a very nice woman, and when a little white homeless boy was left in their care, they cared for him until he grew up. The boy's name was George Riley, whom some of you may remember.

Beyond the stables came the **Presbyterian Church**, a large church made of stone blocks and brick. A fair number of people attended this church in those days. A few houses down the street stood a large, imposing house on the corner of Center and Main Streets. This was the residence of a town medical man, **Dr. J. W. Knapp**. He was a good doctor, although a rather severe and gruff old cuss. However, his medical practice was large and satisfactory.

Across the street, another well known physician, **Dr. S. T. Barton**, kept his practice.

On the opposite corner stands our large yellow brick **public library**, one of the public places of which Canastota is proud. It is a large, two story building. The lower floor houses the library itself, while the top floor is used for different meetings and social activities. The library part consists of one great room where the desk of the librarian is used for checking the books in and out as people come to get reading. A hall took up some space; branching off this hall are two smaller rooms. Facing Main Street are two large rooms. The librarians in 1911 were Mrs. Perkins and Miss Fernald.



Leaving the library and continuing west on Center Street, we run smack into the old **Watson Wagon Company**. This was the largest industry in Canastota at this time. Its buildings spread over quite a good sized area. Here is where they made the famous Watson Dump Wagon; these were used all over the country. This business also required a great deal of skilled labor, including balcksmiths for the iron work on the wagons, skilled body workers and painters. A good number of workers from town worked in this plant. The factory was located along the bank of the canal. From the canal side, the old lettering, "The Watson Wagon Company, Canastota, N.Y.", is clearly legible still today.

Lon Humphrey was one of the head men of this company in later years. Others I can't recall, but you may as you read these lines.

From the other side of the factory running parallel with the N.Y.C. Railroad is Barlow Street. This leads back into Main Street. On Barlow Street, going east and way out, winding in its course until it comes along the bank of the canal, stands the **Old Cider Mill**. This is a fairly good sized brick building where apples were taken in and pressed into cider. Some of this cider was aged and allowed to turn to cider vinegar. This was obviously an active business in apple season. LaVern Russell was connected to the mill at one time, as was Eddie Harris. Today, the building has been converted into a cold storage plant.



We've All Heard Enough

about the tariff on lumber, but the tariff that you will pay on your purchases at A. E. Dew & Son's will be as light as you can get it anywhere, and then just look at the quality in all kinds of building lumber, shingles, plaster and Portland cement that you get for your money when you buy here.

A. E. DEW & SON'S

Heading back to the west on Barlow Street, we come to the **Barrett Lumber Company**. Fred Plank and Frank Skelton were connected with this business in the old days. **Doc Snyder**, an animal doctor, could be found helping out now and then about the yard. He was well known in Canastota. His son, "Dutch", also helped out on occasion; he's still in town after coming back

from World War One. He's a foreman in one of the local shops.

Right on the banks of the canal, in this central section, is **A.E. Dew's** large **lumber** and **coal** business, as well as **Bowman's Feed Store**. The feed store is a large and impressive building situated right at the foot of the **Main Street Bridge** that spanned the Erie Canal at this point.

The bridge started from the level of the street from both sides of the canal and raised itself in a high arch over the canal, allowing clearance for the boats to pass under.

The bridge was a great source of pleasure. Children enjoyed sledding down its slopes in the winter, while swimming races were common in the summer. Across the street at the foot of the bridge was the **Lindley Boat Factory**, a good sized building where small boats and yachts were made. This factory also required skilled men, mostly from this town. On the opposite side, a retired Erie Canal boatman, Mr. Britt, ran a small grocery store. James Conley, another boat owner, lived next door. He fathered Clarence Conley.

Continuing down Main Street, we encounter the large and beautiful **Methodist Church**, made of stone blocks situated on the corner of Main and New Boston Streets. Many of the townspeople attended this church. It is still here, with the added installation of a set of chimes in its belfry tolling out the time of day and beckoning them to Sunday service.

Across from the church was one of the old time **watering troughs** for horses, a large, long trough which was there for many years but was torn down not too many years ago. The rest of this section of town was residential, except for **Campbell's Store** on the corner of Main and Lewis Streets, a small place. Farther down, on the corners of Main and Maple Streets, John Wilson owned a large house. He ran a feed store from his barn at one time. A great church man, and one of the pioneers of the village, John was a large landowner and muckland grower. After John's death a few years ago, his son, Clark, took over ownership of his father's lands and now resides in the old home. Clark is known as "Honey" Wilson because of his many bees and his honey business. Clark is also recognized as an authority on civic affairs, and as an humanitarian as well for his generous medical assistance to many people throughout the village.

Before I forget it, on the north side of town located on Main St., was **Dr. Germer**. He was one

of the best doctors in town in the old days, well known for his specialty of bringing babies into this world. Dr. Germer attended the birth of my brother Gifford Germer Briggs, his middle name chosen in honor of the doctor. In later years, he attended the births of three of my children. Dr. Germer passed on a few years ago but will be remembered for a great many years to come.

Traveling west on Maple Street and getting back on to Peterboro Street, the old **Tabor Farm** encompasses several acres on the east side. Here was situated the old ice pond and ice house. This pond was an active place in the winter. Many men were hired to assist in the ice harvest. Blocks of ice were cut from the pond, placed on a conveyer belt, and carried into the ice house. Carried along different levels of chutes, the ice was finally packed in sawdust for summer use. There were many other ice houses in town but only ice pond.

Heading south on Peterboro Street, the large Catholic Church was situated on the corner of Peterboro Street and Wilson Avenue. Many attended this large church too. Halfway down Wilson Avenue toward Main Street stood the large cement block of Mr. Ferrara. He later moved to Oneida and started a business making furniture and cabinets for Victrolas.

Getting back onto Peterboro Street and heading back into town, a detour onto Roberts Street would take us by the biograph factory. Here were made various articles by **Marvin and Casler**.

Continuing along Roberts Street, we come to the **Lehigh Valley Railroad** trestle. This was another railroad with a branch extending into Canastota. The northbound Lehigh went over to **Sylvan Beach**, then known as the "playground of central New York", and the southbound headed to parts south. Beyond the trestle was what was called Dutch Settlement.

We leave here and come back to Peterboro Street heading toward the canal. The **old town pump** stood at the intersection of Peterboro and Chapel Streets. Beyond this was **Charlie Farr's Garage**. Fred Moore was the mechanic there back then.

Milk Peddlers

Below the garage was where Frank Eaton conducted his milk route business. He was a well known figure in the early days of Canastota dipped milk. I peddled milk for him many times as a boy, in addition to my job as a clerk. In later years, he was a foreman in **Dobson's Tool Factory**, a small shop on the north side of Spencer Street that made molder's tools. Frank is still in town, owning a residence on the southside of town and now working at Diemolding.

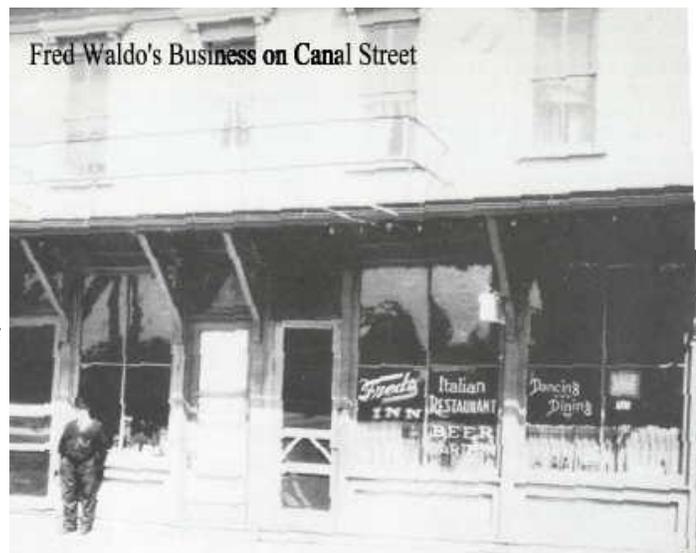
Other milk peddlers of that time were Louis Lockhart and Bill Walters. Bill now has a farm north of Canastota. Frank Lawyer also had a milk route. Herbert Briggs, my father, also ran a large milk route here from the old **New Farm** on top of the hill out of Canastota. He was a stock farm man and an authority on farm problems. He later went into construction, building many places in this town. He was well known. He has since moved to Florida.

Up the street from **Farr's Garage** we encounter **Coon's Grocery**, a small store. Opposite the grocery was "**Banana**" **Joe's** store, where area housewives bought their fruit and other produce. Joe had a two wheeled cart for delivery. As you might guess, bananas were his specialty. He was a familiar figure for many years around the streets of Canastota, pushing his cart from house to house selling fruits. He is still alive but has moved out of town to live with his sister.

There was another hotel on this side of the street, too, but I don't recall the name of it. Over the hotel, in the same block, Alber Palmer kept an office. He was a local contractor who made different articles in the winter months when regular construction wasn't very lively. **Clark Roberts' Store** was also not too far from here. Another small grocery store, Arlo Prosser and Reginald Palmer were its delivery boys.

Canal Street

Canal Street was a street that followed the north side of canal bank. Going west along Canal Street, one of the earliest Italian businesses in town was **Waldo's Saloon**. Today, Mr. Waldo is dead, but most of his sons still live in town. Tom Waldo is operating a saloon on Peterboro Street, and Joe Waldo is an inspector of milk production and head of the local school board. Tony Waldo, one of the leading attorneys in town and a real leader in civic and social affairs, was mayor here for several years.



Another Italian family operated **Spadafora's Pool Room** was just down the street. The rest of the street was occupied by tenement buildings at this time, where many Italian families lived, beginning their new lives in this country.

Going from Peterboro Street east along the canal bank, the **old gas house** could be found where the other trestle of the Lehigh Valley Railroad crossed over the canal and Canal Street. Here, gas was manufactured, and coke was sold for fuel.

Passing a few more houses up this way, was the **old glass factory**. Cut glass was then the rage, and this factory had many wheels for cutting designs on the glass articles. Of course, this required skilled glass cutters, and many men, as well as a few girls, were employed here. Jack Maloney was foreman for many years and still follows the glass trade at his work in Corning, New York. Louis Rew was also employed there as an expert glass cutter. Henry Golden was

supervisor at this time. The old building is still there, but today, it's used for storage.

Now comes another block owned by **A. B. Nichols** that had apartments in it, and then came the **W. H. Guest Grocery Store**. This store did a high volume of business, ranking among the top three in town. Mr. Guest employed two clerks besides himself and his wife. John Siler, a first class meat cutter, lived with the couple. The other two clerks and delivery boys were Mason Perry and myself, Harold Briggs. Foote. On Saturday nights, **Guest's Grocery** was always busy and filled with a crowd. A lot of business came from the rural dwellers. A great number of farmers came in, and they would sit around and talk of things in general. Many past and present day boat owners also frequented this store, talking the language of the **Erie Canal**. They would often recall their trips and cargos. Bill Dolloff, a brother-in-law of Mrs. Guest, spent a great deal of time in the store in the winter months talking over boating, as did his son, Mort. In later years, Mort Dolloff owned many barges on the Barge Canal and married my sister, Maysie Briggs.

In this area was the village's electric light office. A few people worked here, including Mr. and Mrs. Ross Woodworth, and Zoe Greiner (daughter of Paul Greiner) Good electrical men in those days were Gil Gokey along with Matt Greiner. Frank Brown, Frank Woodworth, and Earl Foote were employed as service men.

In this same block, adjoined to the grocery and with a direct opening between them, was a bakery. The **bakery** was owned and managed by **Bill Costie**. Bill was a Scotchman and a good baker, furnishing a full line of baked goods to the public, including breads, cakes, and cookies. Bill had a wonderful business. Mrs. Costie helped on the bakery counter, in addition to being a mother. They lived in a house right back of the block. Bill died many years ago, but two of his sons still live in town today. David Costie has a good business as a sign painter, and Bill Jr. runs a garage on the corner of Peterboro and James Streets.

Dr. Frederick Rommell's office was located across from Guest's Grocery. He was one of our most able medical men as a doctor, and incomparable as a surgeon. One of the best in the county, Dr. Rommell has since moved his home and practice to Oneida. His twin sons have grown to become noted doctors in their own right.

Located in between Dr. Rommell's office and **Hollinger's Rooming House** was **Dr. Deuel's dental** office. Here, Dr. Deuel yanked out teeth and attended the miseries of toothaches. He also made new teeth. He was a reliable and good dentist.

Sidewalks at this time were made from boards, and there is still one board left on Peterboro Street leading up to the terrace along a large high bank. Several houses were situated along this boardwalk, including the old O'Hara Building, offering furnished apartments. All of these houses were large. At the top of this hill, known as **the terrace**, was a large monument. It is still there, but the cannon that was with it has since been taken away.

The large lot adjoining the terrace was used as a ball diamond in those days. Canastota had a great ball team. Many teams from other places played our team on this diamond, it was also used as grounds for carnivals and circuses those days. Today, there is not much left of the old lot as many houses have been built along there. Beyond this was what was called "**Red Rock**", so-called because the land was hard red clay below the shallow surface of dirt. This was all residential section.

On the terrace in those days winter months were really harsh, as the snow for some reason seemed to be all piled in one place-- on the terrace. Many times milk and grocery deliveries had a hard time getting around. Often have I seen the snow as high as a horse's back in this section. I recall the birth of my daughter, Winoa, seventeen years ago today (March 22, 1932). We lived way up on the top of Tuttle Avenue (Red Rock section), and the snow was piled so high in the streets that Doctor Germer, who attended her birth, was forced to leave his rig down several streets and walk up to our house. Today the wind is blowing a bit, but it is a nice warm breeze, and the ground is bare of snow except in a few sheltered spots.

Away up about a mile beyond was a small settlement where the colored folks had settled with their families in the self-made Ravine area.

Old Time Band Concerts

In the old days here, we also had our band concerts many times a year. Field days in Canastota in those days were a stirring sight with parades, foot races, swimming races, and demonstrations from the firemen. Something was always going on around town, and everybody had a good time. Bill Parsons, a wee bit of a kid in those days, was the boy who could be seen driving the best carts and riding on the back of the best ponies in town. It was a sight everybody liked to watch because his fancy harnesses on the ponies delighted the other kids of town. On Peterboro St. was A.A. Keesler's residence, now the home of M. E. Newberry, owner of a furniture store here. Mr. Keesler had a son, Don, and a daughter, Lorna. These two were popular with all the younger group.

Conclusion

Remembering way back when I was a bit of a boy, it was my pleasure in those days to have been in nearly every home in Canastota as a grocery boy delivering milk. Also, in later years, I had the pleasure of visiting these homes again and meeting some of the people I knew as a boy. In these later years, I was selling them baked goods as I became associated with the business of **Ed Costell's bakery**, and still later with Guy Clark's milk route.

If any of this story is of interest to people reading this, I'm glad I wrote it.