HISTORY OF CANASTOTA'S
MUCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT

Building of Drainage Ditches Made Possible Reclaiming Of Many Fertile Acres

Looking into the past it has been interesting to note the important events in 1887, fifty years ago, all unknown to succeeding generations, planted in future prosperity. When early in that year a gardener from another part of the state visited the muck-land tract north of the village and "destined to be the garden of Central New York," he did not dream that 50 years later a million-dollar onion crop would be a common reference to the production of that area of muckland with the adjoining town of Sullivan tracts and that Canastota would be the second largest onion shipping point in these United States. But such is the aftermath of those early days of the industry.

Only 200 Acres Cleared in 1887

As compared to the approximate 2500 acres now devoted to muck crops, but about 200 acres of the then vast swamp had been cleared north of the village in January 1887 but the limited clearance was proving to be a most fertile land. The state had enlarged now a vast expanse of muck under cultivation, the first house which was of log cabin construction was built by the late Charles Otts on the east side of the highway on what is now the Crouse-Kieck farm where Otts cleared a small plot. The house now covered with clapboards over the original logs, still stands. The next habitation in that area was built by Jason Burchill on the west side of the road a short distance north of the Otts cabin. This house also still stands and the land is under cultivation.

First House Built On The Mucklands

This house was built by Charles Otts, sometime previous to 1890. It is now occupied by Joseph Tlonello and family who appear in the picture.

and deepened the Cowasselon creek making the muck swamp prospectively valuable. The late J. Wesley Foster was then highway commissioner in the old town of Lenox which then included Lincoln and Oneida in addition to the present Lenox area and he made a map drawn of a proposed road from the Twogood farm across the swamp to the Carn crose place. In July 1887 a jury examined the proposed route, approved it and Commissioner Foster began that summer the work of building a road thru the wild cleared the tract and cultivated it for over 20 years. Altho not now owning the property Paterelli can lay claim to being the oldest in the colony to still be active in the industry and makes daily trips to the muck to assist others in cultivation.

Originally composed only of a native citizen enterprise, the muck gardening industry in this section today is conducted by our large colony of Italian-Americans as owners or operators. As the years have advanced onions have matured as a crop and in recent years growers...