

## Canal Boats



Ogden Center was the first settlement in the Town of Ogden, and Daniel Spencer's farm one and a half miles north of it attracted little attention until the Erie Canal was constructed across its lands. Spencer's Basin began as a bustling port community and was well established before the state Legislature recognized its incorporation on April 22, 1867. Village leaders became dismayed by the general use of "the Basin" to refer to the settlement, fearing it was too generic and would rob them of their unique identity. They began to use "Spencerport" as an alternative, and it became the official name. Apples quickly dominated the village's shipments throughout the state and beyond, and over time cabbage and potatoes also became significant crops. Several local produce dealers prospered with the faster travel and cheaper rates offered by the Erie Canal when it was completed in 1825. Shortly after it's opening, the Canal's narrow course and shallow depth (4') proved inadequate to the heavy demand. Between 1835 and 1862, the Canal was enlarged to 7' deep, then to 9' in 1897-98. These boats have the typical flat bottom style of canal boats, and are intended for freight or longer distance travel. The women and children could find privacy and protection from the elements, while the wide flat decks could be loaded and unloaded more easily.

## Canal Cruise



This boat was clearly intended for daily excursions along the Canal. Its decks served passengers, not freight, and it was largely open to the elements, offering little protection to travelers. The William B. Kirk pictured above was the best-known excursion boat in the area, and very popular, as this crowded 1893 cruise demonstrates.

### Canal Break



Although the canal was a boon to the village, it could present problems at times. In 1898, thirteen year old Charles Waters was walking along the banks of the Canal when he noticed water pouring out from a hole near the waste weir (visible in this picture to the right of the rush of canal water). He raced into the village and reported the leak to store owners, who telegraphed Canal officials in Rochester. Meanwhile, the break had grown to the wide torrent seen in this image and the entire business section of the village was beginning to flood. A nearby lumberyard was quickly flooded out, gates were dropped and the waste weirs opened to lower the level of the Canal, and construction of a new culvert began. Stores and homes along Union Street were coated in mud, but total disaster was averted by Waters' quick action, for which the State Engineer rewarded him with a job as water boy paid at laborers' wages.

### Canal Workers



Many of the workers on the construction of the Barge Canal were groups of men brought here from Sicily. Speaking no English, and having no families with them, they built sod covered A-frame shelters. Stovepipes could be seen sticking up from them, and in the evenings, if the weather was good, they would gather with concertinas and sing folk songs. Although there were never any plans for them to stay after construction was completed, a few did remain in Spencerport and brought families here.

### The Walkers



David Walker started out as a woodworker in nearby Churchville after the Civil War (the above photo shows his war regalia). Requests for coffins grew, but fire demolished the business. Walker then relocated to growing Spencerport, and began his undertaking business in 1883. His sons, Frederick and John (who is pictured with his father) inherited the business in 1909 and Walker Brothers Funeral Home has been a Spencerport mainstay ever since.



### Spencerport Post Office



The first village Post Office was next to the Lincoln House, but when F.N. Webster, pictured above, became Postmaster in 1907, he moved it into the Upton Block, on the east side of Union Street, opposite Amity Street. The early mail was brought by stage from Rochester via Parma Corners, but the appearance of the railroad changed the mail route. The Postmaster or mistress had a great deal of power and influence in nineteenth century towns and villages as he or she generally knew all that was going on in the municipality, and in its residents' lives. In addition, much of the business in a community depended on his or her good service and goodwill.

### Antonelli's Munitions Factory Workers



These women worked in the fireworks factory that Amerigo Antonelli built upon his arrival in Spencerport from Italy. He produced displays for carnivals and festivals, but a government war contract proved his undoing. Unable to keep up with the promised production rates for hand grenades and incendiary bombs, production was slipshod, grenades and bombs lacked full charges, and quality control was non-existent. Failures at government test sites led the FBI to investigate, and then prosecute, many top company officers. The scandal became Spencerport's most infamous moment.

### Erie Canal Construction



A steady decrease in the tonnage of produce and products carried on the Canal seemed to indicate the need for a larger and deeper canal. In 1903, plans for the "Thousand Ton Barge Canal," known simply as the Barge Canal, were approved. Work on the lift bridge at Union Street pictured above began in 1912 and brought increased work for farmers with their animal teams, blacksmiths, machine shops, the lumberyard, and all the hotels and stores. The Goff building is on the left, and the store built by Charles Church is on the right. At the time, Leroy Winegard ran a confectionary and ice cream store there. The Independent Order Of Odd Fellows used the top floor for its meetings until 1920. Known also as the Upton Building, the building, with its distinctive cupola and structure, was razed in 1957.



### Cottage Hotel Bar



Although the larger business district developed south of the Canal, the first store opened on the north side. Benjamin Cole kept a hotel there, and then William Kinney ran a store. John Leonard purchased the property from Kinney and opened the Cottage Hotel. Known for its wild Saturday nights, it rarely had any vacancies in its rooms. In 1891, Leonard charged a dollar for a room. Notice the shine on the bar, and the grime on the floor, indicating what Leonard's customers considered important. Leonard was a member of the fire department and would urge the firefighters on with promises of free drinks after the fire was put out.

### North Union Street



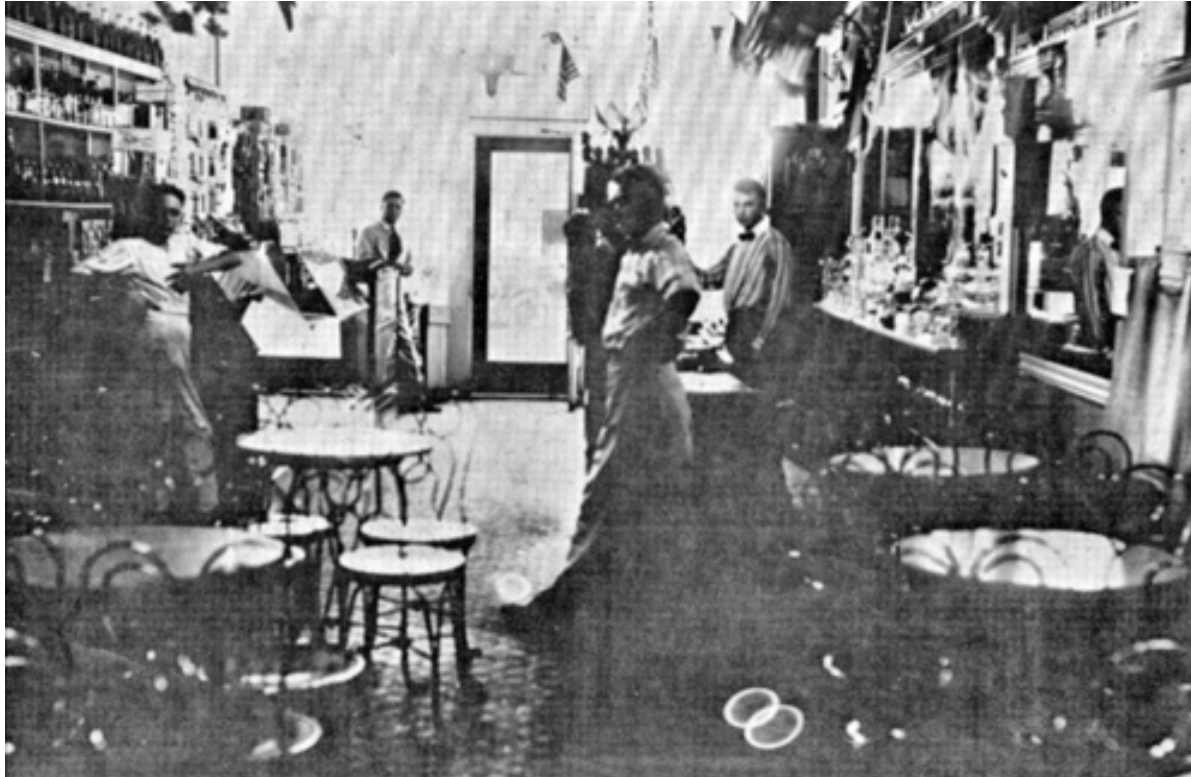
This image evidences the relative lack of commercial development north of the canal, however the sign on the pole marks a prosperous business. William H. Beaney appeared in the 1875 New York State Census as a young butcher with a growing family. Both continued to grow throughout the ensuing decades, and by 1925, three of his sons had joined in with their father at the meat market. They also became involved in civic activities, especially the fire department.

### Lincoln House



Philander Kam built the first store on the south side of the Canal, and owned the site of the Lincoln House. He sold the Kam Hotel to Charles Church, who had built a store just north of the hotel, and Lincoln then acquired the property from its third owner, Mr. Ball. The hotel burned and was rebuilt, changing hands, but always returning to Mr. Lincoln until he sold it to the Ackleys. Generally full with canal travelers and frequented by workers as well, it was also known for its iron water pump that was used by village residents as well as hotel personnel, all the while squeaking loudly. The hotel ran its own stage up to Ridge Road where it connected with that road's stage to Buffalo and other destinations. The small building immediately to the left was the first village post office with Sarah Lincoln, daughter of the hotelkeeper, as postmistress. It then became the barbershop of Augustus Johnson, who was known as a "tonsorialist." Johnson was apparently successful as he earned the title "Professor" among residents and his business continued into the next century.

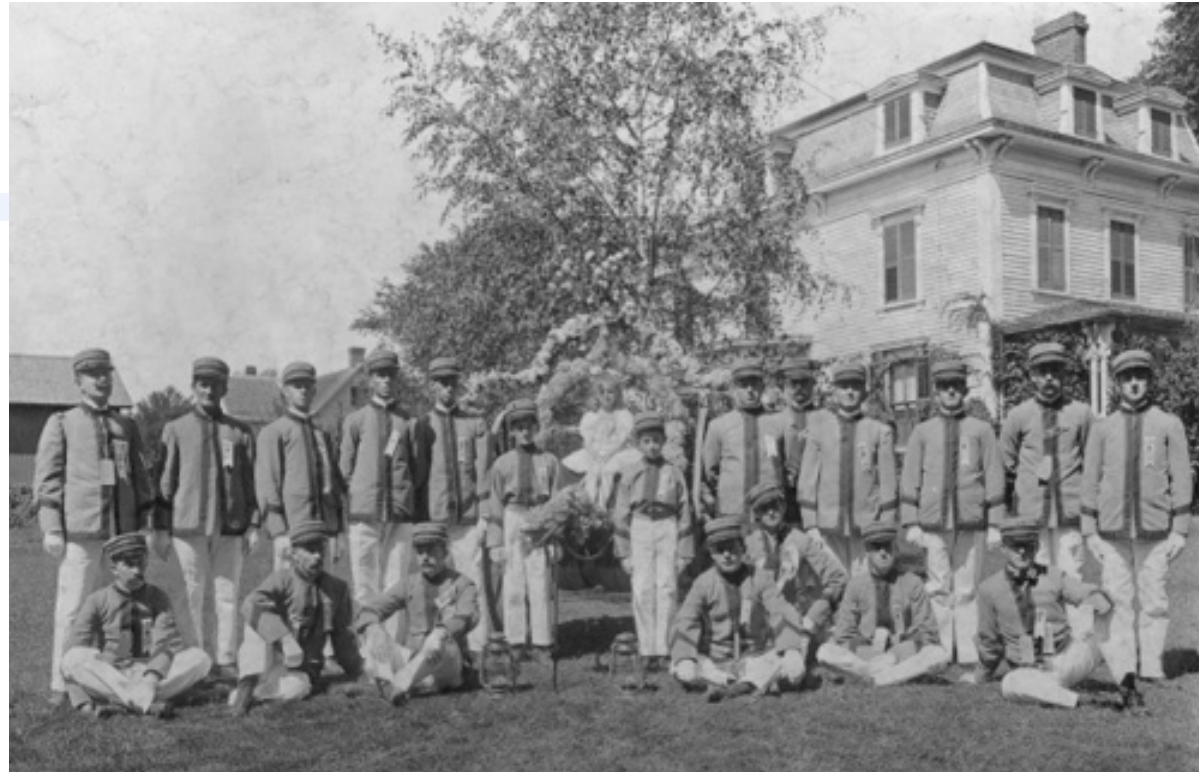
### Matheos Ice Cream Parlor



James Matheos, a Turkish immigrant, bought Peter Mirras' confectionary business, next to the Lincoln House, and with his wife began his own ice cream business. His brother Chris arrived in 1917 and in 1926 the two brothers tore down the existing building and built a new candy store and soda fountain, with manufacturing capabilities in the rear. The enterprise was so successful that the brothers formed a corporation in 1932 and purchased the Lincoln House property to expand their production capabilities. "Matheos Velvet Ice Cream" was known throughout western New York, as was their trademark "OO-La-Las," chocolate covered ice cream bars on sticks. In the 1950s, the company moved to 377 South Union to acquire even more production space. Note the traditional parlor chairs, the variety of syrups on the shelves, and the proliferation of American flags, perhaps proclaiming newly acquired citizenship or the Fourth of July holiday.



## Fire Department



The Upton Hose Company, organized in 1891 as part of the newly established (1890) Spencerport Fire Department, included several Union Street businessmen. Seen here, in the front row are (left to right) Harry Brainard (son of local historian Chauncey and owner of insurance business), Will Ireland (of Ireland and Helfrich Manufacturing), Leslie Curtis, Mr. Gundy, D. Shaw, Harry Freeman, George Stone (Banking). In the back row are Will Wolfram (decorator), Henry Rogers (florist), Joe Helfrich (Ireland and Helfrich), C. Fowler (coal, cabbage, shipping), Nathaniel Loomis, Homer Rogers, Spencer Barker, the next man is unknown, Chris Amish, Gordon St. John (barber), Joseph Chadwick, John Talbot, Arthur Holmes (the girl is his daughter, Madeline). The house was the residence of Dr. Slayton, which later became the Wedgewood Nursing Home. The image speaks to the close association of business, civic, and personal lives in late nineteenth and early twentieth century towns and villages throughout America. Common backgrounds and status determined much of an individual's life, including this volunteer service to the community.

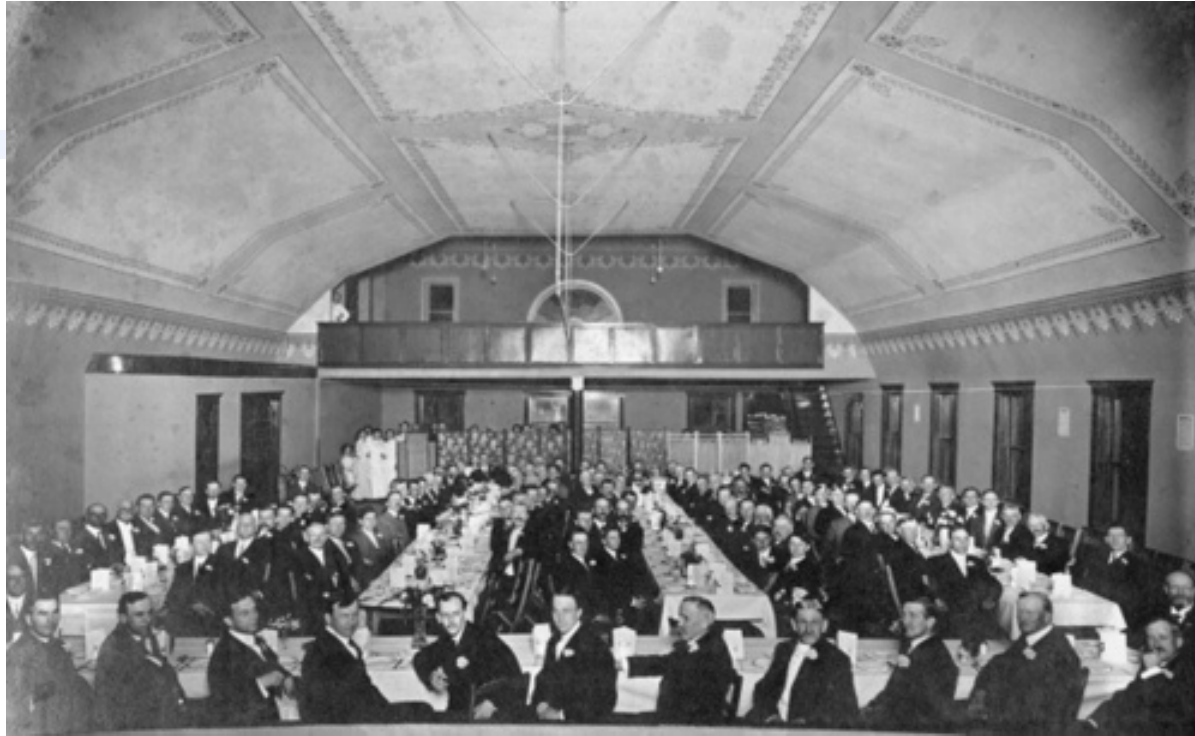


### Millener's Drug Store



Colonel William S. Millener, M.D., U.S. Union Army opened his apothecary on Union Street in 1867. Pictured here behind his counter, Millener was well known for serving up free ice cream sodas to the children who marched in the Memorial Day Parade. The druggist used the array of bottles behind him to make up curative compounds, while the smaller bottles on the left were most likely some of the patent medicines very popular in the day. The attire of the customers in top hats and the presence of the veteran suggest that this photo may have been taken on a parade day. Austin's Drugs was the successor to Millener's, and their slogan was, "Your Grandfather Told Your Father About Us," reinforcing their long-standing connections to the village.

### Chamber of Commerce Dinner



This majestic hall hosted minstrel shows, dances, plays, and even movies. Banquets, such as the pictured 1910 Chamber of Commerce dinner, were also popular events here. This dinner had over one hundred town and village businessmen in attendance representing a variety of enterprises. Note the impressive ceiling, and the absence of women as participants, reflecting their general exclusion from such organizations.

### Masonic Temple



Eleven Spencerport men met in 1859 to organize a lodge of Free Masons, chartered as the Etolian Lodge No. 479 in June 1860. Originally, they congregated in the Sons of Temperance Hall, but laid the cornerstone for their own Temple in 1905. The building was completed in 1906 and its hall became the site of many public events. In 1911, an early morning fire began in an outhouse and spread to the drugstore's storage barn. The presence of multiple chemicals hindered the firefighters' efforts to quell the fire, and it spread to a nearby house used as offices of the Ogden Telephone Company, from which it spread to the Temple. The Temple's brick walls led firemen to believe they had contained the fire at the telephone office, until the roof became engulfed in flames. Chief W. J. Ireland was almost knocked off the roof by a powerful burst of water from a hose, and saved himself by hanging on to a cornice. The next day, water still cascaded down the stairwell and the basement had four feet of standing water. The drugstore's storage barn was a total loss, but the Temple was restored.

### Ogden Farmers' Library



The Farmers' Library was organized in 1815; only three free libraries in the state are older. It was originally housed in a private home and then a store, and many of its holdings and all of its records were destroyed in the 1876 village fire. In 1907, old library books were found, spurring interest in re-organizing the institution. Chartered in 1908, the new library was given space on the second floor of the new Village Building (the firehouse was on the first floor). Furnishings purchased with donations and the more than 150 books donated by the state can be seen in this image. Unfortunately, many of the original books were irreparably damaged in the 1948 fire, but a few have survived as historical artifacts of this early institution.



### Village Building



The Village Building, erected in 1907, provided space for the firehouse, library, and meetings. The fountain in front was placed to offer fresh drinking water as a discouragement to the consumption of alcohol. The area had long ties to the temperance movement; the First Congregational Church was organized at the Sons of Temperance Hall on Union Street in 1850 and Frances Willard, founder of the WCTU was the granddaughter of early Ogden residents named Hill. By the time the Volstead Act, creating Prohibition, was passed in 1918, both the town of Ogden and the village of Spencerport were already "dry" by virtue of a public referendum. The three taverns in the village faced ruin, and one owner, John Leonard (owner of the Cottage Hotel) opened a saloon, the "Red Onion" across the town line in Greece.



### Union Street



The east side of Union Street had undergone some changes by 1910 when this photo was taken, but many village residents felt it was dilapidated and in need of repair. These buildings were more likely to have boarders than those across the street, and appeared to be of less substantial construction than the brick structures dotting the western side, perhaps the result of rapid growth fueled by the Erie Canal. By 1925, the expanded and improved Barge Canal had sparked renovations and new construction, and the street in the business district was forty feet wide, with substantial curbing in place. In this photo, gaslights have already given way to electric poles and wires.

### Blacksmith Shop



Richard Maher's blacksmith shop was a busy spot in the early twentieth century, and was one of many such shops in village history. Earlier blacksmiths along Union Street included William Lynn, Abram Vandeventer, Abbott Barker, Frank Russ, known as the "Village Blacksmith," and Mr. Ireland of Ireland and Helfrich, whose later manufacturing business made the Hoy Potato Harvester. Blacksmiths were essential to the maintenance of farm, mill, and manufacturing machinery, and to the numerous horses used to move cargo along the Canal's towpath, to lift buckets of coal from barges, and to provide general labor on farms and in construction. The padlocked blacksmith shop flanked on the right by a gas station depicts the changing times as mechanization and the automobile replaced the horse.

### Hose & Cart Fire Company



Fires plagued every town and village throughout the nineteenth century as there was little more volunteers could do than try to contain the blaze. The hand pumper in this 1900 picture of the Spencerport Fire Department in front of the first firehouse was driven (by Henry Allen, holding the reins above) at breakneck speed to help extinguish a fire in the nearby village of Hilton in 1901. Fire had nearly devastated Spencerport in 1876, beginning the drive for an organized fire department with better equipment. Established as the Charles Stanford Upton Fire Department (financed largely by the resident of the same name) in 1889, it began the village department in 1890, and had three companies by 1891. In 1907, a new firehouse was built across the street that housed all the companies and their equipment, but church bells continued to be the fire alarm until 1922. The pumper above became obsolete when municipal water with hydrants was approved in 1910.

### Spencers Hardware Store



Foster W. Spencer first opened a tin shop over Cy Covert's Hardware Store north of the Canal and then his Tinsmith and Hardware Store in 1882 in a house that was his father's birthplace. His father Joseph Spencer, son of Daniel whose farm was transversed by the Erie Canal and for whom the village was named, had moved the house to Union Street. It was one of two such stores, reflecting the needs of a community involved in building and development spurred by the influx of goods and people from the Canal. Spencer was a charter member of the New York State Hardware Association and his store prospered for forty-two years until his death in 1924. R. Milford Spencer is shown in this picture.



### Dry Goods Store



Construction of the Barge Canal brought engineer and surveyor Harvey A. Shafer to Spencerport, but marriage and community life encouraged him to stay. The packed shelves in his grocery store evidence the changes in home life brought about by the Canal. The wide range of canned goods graphically demonstrates the on-going shift from production to consumption in the home, as housewives no longer had to produce and preserve their families' food. By the time of this photo, circa 1925, Monroe County had an established milk inspection program that ensured that the bottled milk in the case had met all health codes and was safe to use.



## Butcher



By 1900, the growing village population supported two large meat markets and a variety of butchers. In addition to filling local residents' plates, meat merchants supplied the numerous hotels that accommodated canal workers and travelers

### Pool Hall



The diversity in population that the Canal brought is visible in this image. The barbershop seen on the left was one of many that served the needs of commercial travelers and salesmen as well as residents. The pool hall provided entertainment for the numerous men who traveled along the Canal as salesmen, workers, or drifters. The various modes of dress suggest the different backgrounds and employment of the players, while the snow on the ground indicates winter, the season when the Canal was closed and men who habituated or depended on it had more idle time.