

Four-Mile Grocery & Lager Beer Saloon



The Four-Mile Grocery and Saloon was a family-run business and was located east of Spencerport along the canal, possibly at Gillette Road. The young girl standing next to the dog is Eva Noble Kimmel.

There were many small stores like this one strung along the canal, often run by families and catering to the people who traveled back and forth on the Erie. The Four-Mile and other stores would provide fresh food and water to the packet boat crews and passengers, and were also a source for stronger drink and sometimes a bed or barn in which to sleep over night. Canal side stores provided pretty much anything the canal fleet needed in the way of medicines, cooking utensils, candy, food, shoes, clothing, and dry goods. Supplies for the mules and other animals necessary for canal travel were also provided. These items included hay, oats, straw or shavings, harnesses, horse collars, whiffletrees (a crossbar attached to the pack mule and then to the canal boat to aid in pulling the boat), towlines, horse bridges, fenders, pike poles, and hardware. It was also possible to take on drinking and cooking water at these places. Kerosene or coal had to be obtained at supply points like the Four-Mile, since oil lamps were the only type of illumination to be had on canal boats in the 19th century. In addition to providing needed merchandise, the general store also provided services not available elsewhere. These might include serving as a tavern or issuing marriage licenses. These small stores also were the birthplace of buying on credit. Cash was scarce in 19th century western New York, and store owners would often start a "tab" for repeat customers, who would pay their bill when they had the means to do so.

Harvest Festival at Ogden Presbyterian Church, 1909



Reverend John Funnell is pictured surveying the donations for the Harvest Festival in 1909. The Harvest Moon is the full moon which falls in the month of September, at or around the time of the Autumnal Equinox, and traditionally harvest festivals and harvest suppers are held on or near the Sunday of the harvest moon. Churches in the town held an annual Harvest Festival service, during which the members of the congregation brought in gifts and offerings of produce. These were used to decorate the church or hall. Loaves of bread were also baked in the shape of a wheat sheaf and used as decorations. After the harvest thanksgiving service, the congregation moved on to the church hall for the Harvest Supper. The ladies of the community spent the day cooking and baking furiously, using the local fruit and vegetables and roasting local meat, and a good time was had by all. The produce which decorated the church would often be either auctioned to raise funds for the church or distributed to needy families.

Ogden School #11 in Adams Basin



Pupils in the brick school house in Adams Basin pose in their classroom around 1921. The Adams Basin school was built in 1846 at the southeast corner of Canal Road and Washington Street. The land on which the school was built was donated by Marcus Adams, one of the early settlers of the Basin and son of Abner Adams, after whom the settlement was named.

The early settlers of Ogden were a well-educated group of men and women who counted a school, a church and a library among the first three organizations begun in the town. The first school in town was located in George Willey's home on Union Street, where classes were taught by his wife. Later, individual school houses were built throughout the town. By 1875, there were 14 school districts and school houses educating more than 1,000 students, or "scholars," between the ages of 5 and 21. In the 1890s, Spencerport's District #1 had evolved into a fine graded school, and was awarded the status of High School in 1902 by the State University of New York. In the 1940s, the individual

Ben Coyle Returning from Breaking Up Roads



For much of the 19th century, snow removal was not awfully important. In the days of horse-drawn vehicles, keeping snow on the unpaved roads during the cold months was essential. Snow was not a threat but an asset to the average road traveler. A road surface of well-packed snow was a god-send to many farmers who were now able to transport heavy loads like timber and stones on sleds with comparative ease. Sleds and sleighs were the equivalent of the modern pick-up truck or four-wheel drive vehicle. To make winter transportation easier, many northern communities used snow rollers to pack down the snow, making the road smoother and the snow surface last longer. Snow rollers were big, wide-wheeled vehicles with logs or rocks added to give it weight. They were usually pulled or pushed by a team of oxen or powerful horses, and were operated by men employed by the community as snow wardens. Their job was to pack the snow densely on local roads and fill in melted or otherwise bare spots to keep sleds and sleighs moving with ease. The first snow plows were designed and patented in the 1840s, but it would be a long time before such plows were used on a regular basis, and then usually only in cities. In 1862, Milwaukee became the first major municipality to use a snow plow. The plow was attached to a cart pulled by a team of horses through the snow-clogged streets. Over the next several years, such horse-drawn plows gained popularity and came into use in many Northern and Eastern cities.

Rebuilding Ridge Road Over Salmon Creek



The Ridge Road was the main artery of travel for early settlers of western New York. By 1818, stages ran every two days from Rochester to Lewiston through more than 80 miles of dense forest. By 1829, two lines of stages ran daily — the “old” line which primarily transported mail, and the Pioneer Line, which transported passengers and did not run on Sunday. English travelers exploring the region wrote of the quality of the road, purported to be the best in the United States at the time, and of the fine taverns and inns along the way. John Howison of the East India Company wrote of stopping for breakfast at a tavern west of Rochester and being fed an amazing variety of foods including ham, veal, fish, cucumbers, gingerbread, salad and coffee. Ice, a novelty to Europeans in the early 19th century, was plentiful at the inns and taverns along The Ridge. Another English gentleman, traveling around 1822, offered this description of The Ridge: “The road from Rochester to Lewiston...is called “The Ridge Road...A great many settlers [have] lately fixed themselves in this part of the State, log cabins were rising in all directions, and the work of clearing was going on rapidly. Each little open spot was covered with masses of burning timber; and the large trees that had been girdled the year before were in flames, even to the tops, producing at night a very extraordinary and splendid effect.” The road was rebuilt beginning in 1901 as part of the “Good Roads” project, but was not resurfaced its entire length until 1926.

Hubbell Family Log Cabin, Hubbell Road around 1885



William Hubbell, born in Massachusetts in 1806, first appeared in Monroe County living in the Town of Parma in 1850. By 1860, he had moved his family to this log cabin on Hubbell Road in Ogden, where the family resided for many years. Pictured above is the family of Oreb Hubbell, William's oldest son. Oreb is shown with his wife, Clarissa, and their children, Nellie, Sarah, William and Mary. By the late 1800s, many of the original log cabins in the town had been replaced by frame houses, but the Hubbell cabin remained. Life in such a cabin was described in Pioneer Reminiscences by Mrs. C.S. Cole: "My father moved on his own claim, where he had cut down trees and cleared land enough to put up a log house and make a little garden for a starter. As it was no easy matter to get to a saw mill, he was obliged to split logs and put them down for floors and use the adz for a jack plane; and to cover the roof of the house, he rived out what was called 'shakes,' made the same as shingles only larger and coarser, about two and a half feet long, six inches wide, and nearly half an inch thick...I also remember the outside door being hung on wooden hinges; also the wooden catch and latch, and the leather string attached to it and pulled through a hole in the door to raise the latch. Hence the old adage, the latch string was always out for their friends."

Ogden Protective Society



Dallas, Ralph, and Lucille Coyle are pictured here with Elizabeth Coyle's driving horse, Sam around 1926. Sam was a mustang and had two S's branded on his hip. The Coyle's rented and worked the Bowen farm on Union Street. Because a good horse could mean the difference between feeding your family and starving, the community took great pains to protect these animals. In 1877, the Ogden Protective Society was formed to help keep horses and other livestock safe from thieves. The OPA was an organization of individuals whose purpose was to capture thieves in general, but horse thieves in particular. Members were charged a \$2.00 initiation fee and were afforded the protection of the "riders" of the OPA who would assume the task of capturing the thieves who stole property from an OPA member. The sixteen "riders" were expected to take off in pursuit of thieves when property was stolen. All expenses were paid by the OPA, with dues being collected from members when necessary. The Brockport Republic reported this story on August 16, 1877: "On Tuesday night of last week a horse, buggy and harness were stolen from the stable of Mr. William Gillette, who resides a short distance south of the Village of Spencerport. The thief stole also a blanket and some oats from the barn of Mr. Wilcox nearby. Eleven "riders" started off in search of the thief, who it is believed made his way toward Pennsylvania, a portion of which is considered a rendezvous for horse thieves." The OPA continued protecting the property of Ogden residents into the early years of the 20th century.

Halloween Party, around 1905



The ladies shown here were members of the Epworth League at the Elmgrove Methodist Church, which was located at the corner of Route 31 and Elmgrove Road in Gates. Epworth Leagues were essentially youth groups at Methodist churches in the early 20th century. The leagues were begun in 1889 in Cleveland Ohio and were named for John Wesley's birthplace — Epworth, Lincolnshire, England.

Included in this picture are Spencerport residents Billy Hill, Lottie Harper Langton, Effie Fay Hager, Evelyn Smith Gillette, and Lillian Hart Spencer. Although it might seem odd to see members of a church group posing at a Halloween party in 1905, it was around this time that churches began a movement to make the holiday less about spirits and the supernatural and more about community. The celebration of Halloween dates back more than 2000 years to an ancient Celtic festival honoring the god of the dead, Samhain. The Celts, living in what is now western Europe, began their new year on November 1, when this day signified the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of winter. In the early 20th century, adults and children were encouraged to plan and attend parties with food, games, and pranks, and young women perpetuated myths about eliciting the names of their future husbands using yarn, apples, or mirrors.

New York Central Derailment, 1950s



Seventeen railroad cars came off the tracks running above South Union Street in the early 1950s. The cars tumbled down the embankment and fell into the backyard of the Moore homestead at 200 South Union Street, now the Ogden Senior Center. A car fell into the south side of the garage, and a coupling landed at the bottom of the Moore's back wall. The engine came to rest on the west side of the bridge, and one coal car ended up hanging off the south side of the bridge. It was determined that the accident was caused by too many spikes being removed from the tracks.

The first railroad through the Town of Ogden was the Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad and was organized in 1834. The line was extended to Rochester in 1852 and then was consolidated with the New York Central in 1853. After that, the line was known as the "Falls Branch of the New York Central Railroad." Spencerport and Adams Basin both had railroad stations with freight houses from which produce and other local goods were shipped. The Spencerport station was located on Martha Street and is currently home to a daycare facility.

Louisville Dogs



The Monroe County Airport went "to the dogs" when this photo was taken in the early 1940s. Accompanied by the sound of sirens and the roar of airplane motors, two tiny fox terriers were handed over to Fire Chief Walter Miller and other members of the department by American Airlines hostess Helen Vaubel. The dogs were a gift from the Louisville Fire Department to the Spencerport volunteers who took their emergency truck to Louisville for flood service in 1937. The dogs replaced another terrier, Louisville Lou, who was killed in front of the Spencerport fire house several months prior to this picture. When the Louisville firemen heard about the tragedy, they decided to send two pups along as replacements for the beloved fire dog. On hand with Miller were other Spencerport volunteers Charley Ballard, Howard Vroom, and Lloyd French.

Carriage Rides & Excursions



Arthur and Edith Lawson are pictured here at the Gillette farm on Gillette Road, likely in the 1920's. The Lawsons were raised by Elwood Gillette. Buggies and carriages pulled by fine horses such as the one shown here were the standard form of transportation in the 1800's and early 1900's, both for work and for pleasure. Carriage rides were a common form of entertainment of a summer afternoon, and the Brockport Republic regularly reported on excursions from Spencerport and Brockport. One such excursion in September 1877 was described thusly:

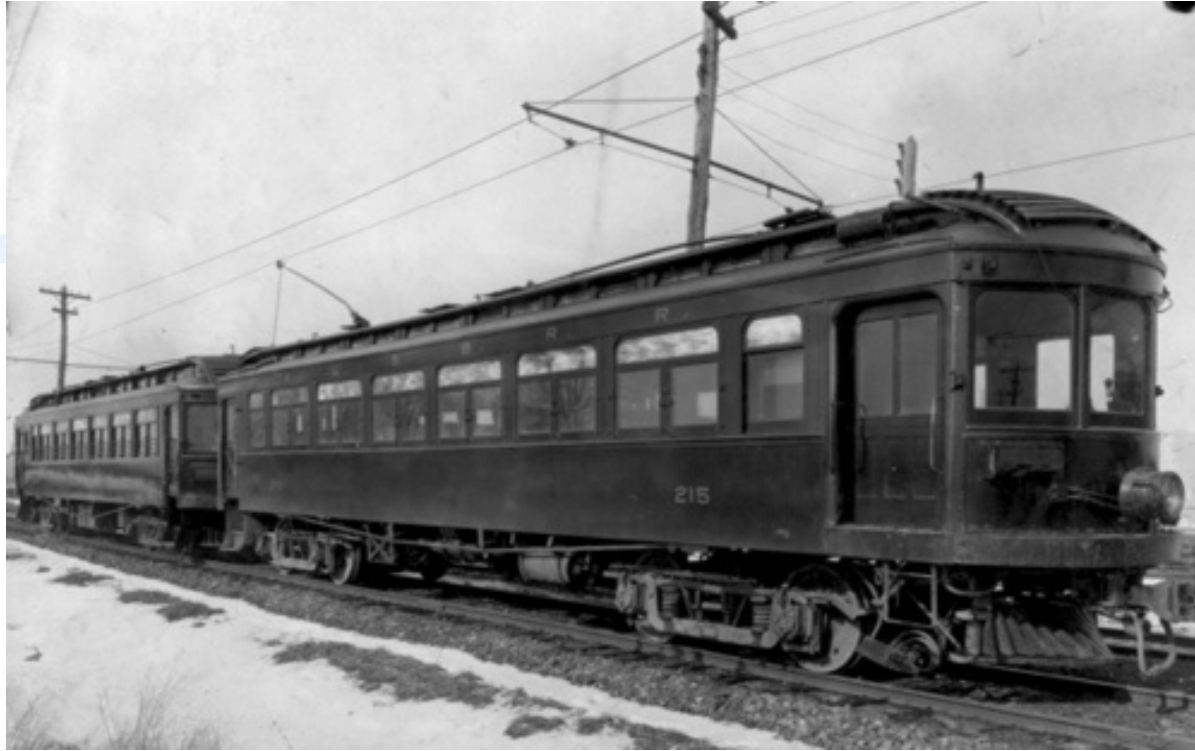
"My last carriage excursion was taken with a friend during the present month of September through Sweden, Chili, Riga, Caledonia, Bergen, and Byron. September the 8th we started and drove south to Churchill's Corners, then turned east and traveling about a mile, we found ourselves in the midst of a picnic with a baseball attachment. The young men and ladies had assembled with cakes, pies, meats, melons, corn, ball clubs and striped stockings; and the boys were engaged in a game of ball and the girls were setting the table in the woods, and building the fire to boil the corn and cook and prepare the substantial refreshments. We did not stop as we had twelve bushels of peaches in our carriage and feared they would get the best of the picnic, and our friends for whom the peaches were destined would be minus the fruit." The writer goes on to describe the rest of the journey in great detail and happily reports that the peaches did indeed make it to their final destination unharmed.

Spencerport High School Class of 1915



The history of the class of 1915, as recorded in their yearbook, *Jours des Seniors*, describes its members as “the brightest, largest, and best class ever known in the history of the school...” Members of this class dominated sports and academics for four years and many of the men and women went on to become prominent citizens in Ogden and Spencerport, one of them being Merton Colby. The class members shown here are posed during a trip to Washington D.C. in the spring of 1915. Eighteen of the twenty class members traveled to Washington by train during Easter vacation, and spent a week exploring the capital. A three page essay in the 1915 school yearbook describes the trip in great detail, including their visits to the Center Market, the Capitol Building, the Smithsonian, the Congressional Library, and Mount Vernon. The class members had a “splendid time with the monkeys and peacocks” at the Zoological Park, and apparently caused an uproar in their hotel when one of the young men, tired of waiting for a porter to operate the lift, decided to do it himself. He had no trouble starting the lift up, but stopping it was another matter. Based on entries in the yearbook, good humor and mischief seemed to be a trademark of this class.

Rochester-Lockport-Buffalo Interurban Trolley



In the time between 1900 and 1910, four interurban trolley lines prospered in Monroe County. The Rochester-Lockport-Buffalo line connected Spencerport with the City of Rochester to the east and Buffalo to the west, providing a larger market for farmers selling their produce and livestock, and a speedy method of transportation for Spencerport residents who wanted to work in the city. The trolley also made Spencerport a destination for city folks wanting an escape to the country for an afternoon. Although the trolleys were a boon for outlying towns and villages, they were not so loved in the city due to the difficulty in navigating the tight turns through crowded city streets. City leaders were under great pressure to ban the trolleys from city streets after a number of derailments caused several deaths. The problem was partially solved with the opening of the Rochester Subway System in the late 1920s. The trolley ran through Spencerport along what is now West Avenue, and provided service into the 1930s. The old rails, covered over by blacktop, used to reappear whenever West Avenue was in need of repair.

In 2003, several local residents formed a committee to restore the old Spencerport Trolley Depot. Work is in progress on the renovation, and the committee hopes to move the building to a spot across the Erie Canal from where you are standing. The move should happen sometime in late 2004 or early 2005, where it will be run as a Community Information Center.

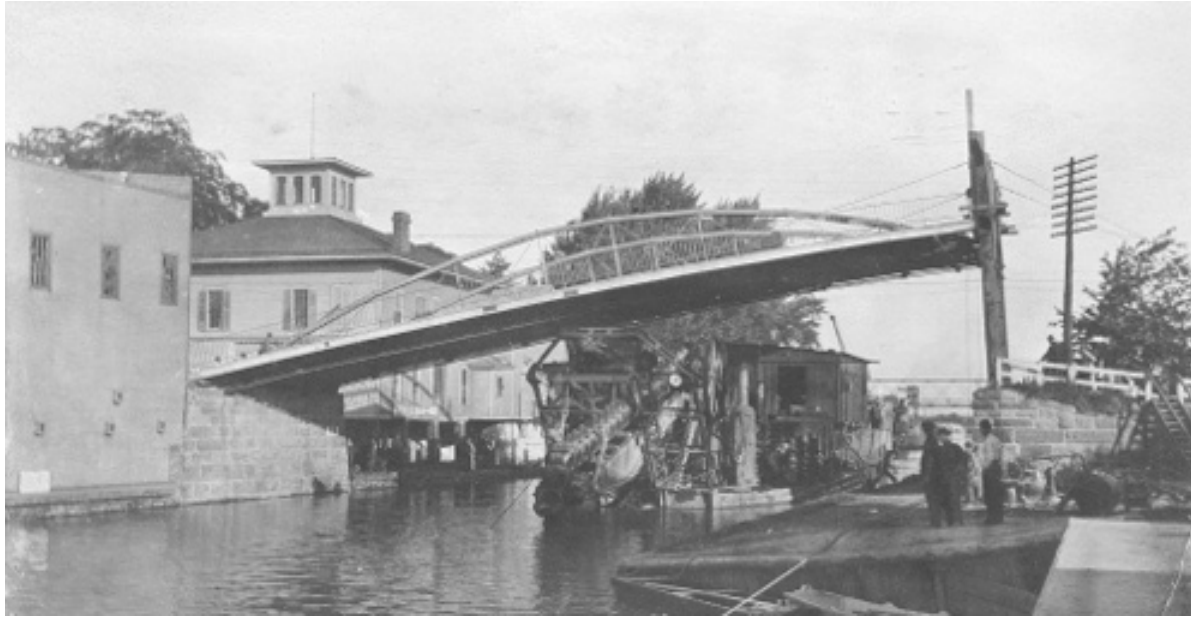
Along the Erie, Approaching Spencerport from the East



New York State Governor Dewitt Clinton proposed the construction of a canal in 1808, its purpose being to open the country west of the Appalachian Mountains to settlers and to offer a cheap and safe way to carry produce to markets. As with any great plan, it took some time for Clinton to convince the people of New York that such a thing as a waterway spanning the entire width of the state was actually achievable. Governor Clinton finally broke ground for the construction of the canal on July 4, 1817. In those early days, it was often sarcastically referred to as "Clinton's Ditch." It was the engineering marvel of its day when it was finally completed in October 1825. It included 18 aqueducts to carry the canal over ravines and rivers, and 83 locks, with a rise of 568 feet from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. It was 4 feet deep and 40 feet wide, and floated boats carrying 30 tons of freight. A ten foot wide towpath was built along the bank of the canal for horses, mules, and oxen led by a driver or "hoggee."

As more people moved west, traffic on the canal increased as did demand for supplies. In order to keep pace with the growing demands of traffic that occurred between 1836 and 1862, the Erie Canal was enlarged to a depth of 7 feet, allowing it to handle boats carrying 240 tons. In 1903, the State again decided to enlarge the canal by the construction of what was termed the "1000 Ton Barge Canal," consisting of the Erie Canal and the three chief branches of the State system -- the Champlain, the Oswego, and the Cayuga and Seneca Canals. The resulting canal was completed in 1918, and is 12 to 14 feet deep, 120 to 200 feet wide, and 363 miles long, from Albany to Buffalo. Fifty-seven locks were built to handle barges carrying up to 3,000 tons of cargo, with lifts of 6 to 40 feet.

Union Street High Bridge, early 1900s



The Union Street Bridge is shown here prior to its reconstruction into a lift bridge in 1910-11. As boats plying the canal became bigger and carried larger loads, it became apparent that they couldn't fit under some of the bridges over the canal. One of those bridges was the Union Street round arch bridge. Canal engineers devised an ingenious but strenuous method for lifting the old bridge. They placed two sets of huge timbers at either side of the west end of the bridge and secured them with heavy cables. These clever men then attached a heavy set of tackles on the top of each set of timbers, with the other end attached to the bridge. When a boat was ready to pass beneath the bridge, a whole gang of men was called on to haul on the tackles and lift the north end of the bridge high enough to let the boat pass. This method worked, but required many strong men to complete the task, and also placed a strain on the old wooden bridge.

The bridge was replaced in 1910-1911 by the current lift bridge, which was a marvel of modern engineering at the time. The old bridge was demolished and a temporary trestle type bridge constructed to the west. Retaining walls of concrete were built on both sides of the canal, and pits for the counterweights were poured. Once the concrete had set up, the steel fabrication began. When the bridge was completed, it was left in an "up" position to allow work boats to pass beneath. While in this position, the counterweights were cast in the pits and the cables were attached. Once the control tower was completed and outfitted with municipal electricity, the bridge was opened for use. Riding up and down on the bridge became a popular pastime for Spencerport's children, and for some adults too!

Spencerport's Championship Team, 1913



Basketball, invented by Dr. James Naismith in the 1890's, was by far the most popular team sport played in early 20th century Spencerport. The sport enjoyed wide popularity in the northeast because it could be played indoors throughout the winter months, an advantage much appreciated by the players and spectators in Ogden. Spencerport had a school team and a town team, and it was reported that the town team played a little rough, with torn shirts and scraped elbows the order of the day. The school team played their games against other Monroe County high schools on Friday evenings; both teams played on the first court in the village, which was located in the Masonic Hall. Pictured here is the 1913 Championship School Team, (Back row L-R) Harold Dunn, Professor George Marble, James Lapp, Homer Rogers; (Front row L-R) Ben Everett, Bus Brown, Lester Welch, and Leo Goodridge. Several of these young men enlisted in the military and left Spencerport to fight in World War I. Leo Goodridge never returned, and the current American Legion Post on Trimmer Road bears his name today.

Railroad Engine



Even though the Erie Canal opened up a path into western New York and beyond, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing and new inventions were bound to supersede the Erie's usefulness. In the 1980s, a letter attributed to New York Governor Martin Van Buren surfaced, made the rounds in academic circles, and finally ended up as an email hoax in the 1990s. The letter, supposedly written on January 31 1829, read:

"Dear President Jackson: The canal system of this country is being threatened by the spread of a new form of transportation known as 'railroads.' The federal government must preserve the canals for the following reasons: One. If canal boats are supplanted by 'railroads,' serious unemployment will result. Captains, cooks, drivers, hostlers, repairmen and lock tenders will be left without means of livelihood, not to mention the numerous farmers now employed in growing hay for the horses. Two. Boat builders would suffer and towline, whip and harness makers would be left destitute. Three. Canal boats are absolutely essential to the defense of the United States. In the event of the expected trouble with England, the Erie Canal would be the only means by which we could ever move the supplies so vital to waging modern war. As you may well know, Mr. President, 'railroad' carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of fifteen miles per hour by 'engines' which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed." This letter has been debunked by folklorists who point out that Andrew Jackson wasn't even the President of the United States on the date the letter was written.

Town Pump



Town Pump, located at the intersection of Washington Street and Whittier Road in south Ogden, was settled between 1814 and 1818 by several families from New England. A community well was dug at the intersection and provided water for residents living in the area, hence the name "Town Pump." The Town Pump community thrived for many years and was home to a busy general store, post office, blacksmith shop, school and library. Former Town Historian Earl White told of how some of the old-timers would gather at the store and make predictions about the weather. Being farmers whose livelihood depended on being able to forecast the weather, they became very proficient at making these predictions. One fact they soon discovered was that a thunderstorm approaching from the southwest rarely, if ever, rained on "The Pump." With this knowledge, they delighted in baiting a "city slicker" into making a wager that an approaching storm would not rain on them. Almost invariably, the local boys won! The pump pictured above has been gone for many years, but Town Pump remains a close-knit community within the Town of Ogden.

Harvesting Ice on Noble's Pond



Noble's Pond was located on Prospect Street where Mr. Noble would cut ice blocks which provided village and town residents with a way to keep perishable food cool in their ice boxes. The ice would be cut in great blocks and stored in saw dust in an ice house located at the edge of the pond. Once electric refrigerators became common, Mr. Noble's son turned the ice pond into a skating rink. The rink became a very popular recreation spot for village and town residents, who would spend enjoyable afternoons skating to music played on an old Victrola. A small building at the edge of the pond housed a stove, which kept skaters warm as they pulled on their skates. The Village paid Mr. and Mrs. Noble to run the skating rink, which was very hard work, according to their daughter, Clara Wilder. Mrs. Wilder, in the book *Pieces in the Attic*, told how the rink covered a couple acres and was the place to be in Spencerport during the winter months. The rink was closed when her father died because no one else knew how to run it. Apparently, Mr. Noble dammed up the creek running from Prospect Street to the Canal in order to make the pond each year. He monitored the level of water in the pond carefully because if the water level dropped too low, the ice would cave in. In the spring, he gradually released the water to avoid flooding the yards below the pond.

Milliner Home in Adams Basin



As a child of 9, Alexander Milliner was enlisted as a drummer in a New York regiment during the American Revolution. Records show that he was present at Yorktown when the British surrendered. Although Milliner told of being drummer boy to George Washington, a 1976 article in National Geographic claimed that this was not supported by Pension Office records. Nevertheless, Milliner was a well-respected member of the Adams Basin community and lived to a ripe old age of 105. The stately home pictured above was purchased by Joel Milliner, Alexander's son, and housed the Milliner family for many years. The property was previously owned by the Pettengill and Adams families. Although the home was torn down many years ago, an historical marker on Canal Road, just west of Washington Street, designates the spot where it stood for so many years.

Ivy Rebekah Lodge #51



In 1869, the Brothers of the Scarlet Degree Lodge #199 met at the Odd Fellows Lodge in Parma Corners for the purpose of organizing the Parma Rebekah Degree Lodge. The men in this lodge held the offices and the women handled the social activities such as debates, cobweb socials, strawberry festivals, and oyster suppers. Debates were often lively and covered topics such as politics and the changing roles of women. Cobweb socials featured a “webbed” ceiling covered with string. The ladies were given an end of string and had to find their way through the web to the gentleman at the end, who would then escort the lady to supper.

The Ivy Rebekah Lodge #51 was established in March 1873 when the ladies of the Parma Rebekah Degree Lodge decided they wanted their own organization. The lodge was active in Spencerport for many years and had about 85 members in 1967. The group shown here is posed in front of the Moore home on Union Street, now the site of the Ogden Senior Center.

Grand Army of the Republic Martindale Post #270



The Grand Army of the Republic was organized in 1866 in Decatur, Illinois by Dr. B.F. Stephenson and 12 other Union war veterans, who recognized the need for an organization devoted to caring for the Union veterans of the Civil War. The objectives of the GAR included fraternity among veterans, charity for needy veterans or their widows and orphaned children, and loyalty to the United States of America. The GAR spread quickly through the country and developed into a highly effective lobbying organization with strong ties to the Republican Party. It was the GAR that was the principal force behind the establishment of the Memorial Day holiday. At its peak around 1890, the GAR boasted a national membership of more than 400,000. The group shown here is

Spencerport's Martindale Post #270. Front row L-R: Unknown, Albert Barker, Unknown, Dr. Towne, Charles Cook, and Pat McDonald. Back row, L-R: Henry Todd, William Lynn, Unknown, Charles Noble, Ira Harroun, and Mr. Shourd. The Martindale Post had 60 members in 1907, but had dwindled to only 20 members in 1917. The Post eventually died out, as did other GAR organizations around the country. The last GAR veteran died in 1956.

Spencerport Broom Brigade, 1883



This group was active in Spencerport in the late 1800s. Although there is little written record of this group specifically, historian Joseph Thatcher writes that the Broom Brigades were originally established by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and performed a drill based upon Emory Upton's US Army drill manual, a copy of which is available in the Ogden Farmers' Library. An illustration of a group of brigade members in Las Vegas in 1882 was published in Military Images Magazine, Jan.-Feb., 1996, and H.A. Ogden did an engraving of the "Sunflower Brigade," drilling at Hulett's Landing, on Lake George in 1883. It was printed in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper in 1883.

There were Broom Brigades in other parts of the country as well, as evidenced in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*: "In the West and South they have a new institution--the Broom Brigade. It is composed of young ladies who dress in a uniform costume, and go through the infantry drill, with broom in place of musket. It is a very pretty sight, on private view. When they perform on the stage of a theater, in the blaze of colored fires, it must be a fine and fascinating spectacle. I saw them go through their complex manual with grace, spirit, and admirable precision. I saw them do everything which a human being can possibly do with a broom, except sweep. I did not see them sweep. But I know they could learn. What they have already learned proves that. And if they ever should learn, and should go on the war-path down Tchoupitoulas or some of those other streets around there, those thoroughfares would bear a greatly improved aspect in a very few minutes."

Spencerport Blacksmiths



The 1000 Ton Barge Canal project could not have been completed without the work of village blacksmiths. Earl White, former Town historian, wrote... "The blacksmith shops in the village worked all day and most of the night and the ringing of the anvils made a realistic Anvil Chorus. Horses had to be shod and pickaxes had to be sharpened at night to be ready for use the next day. Broken equipment had to be repaired, so the blacksmith shops were busy places." Note the pile of pickaxes visible in the background of this photo.

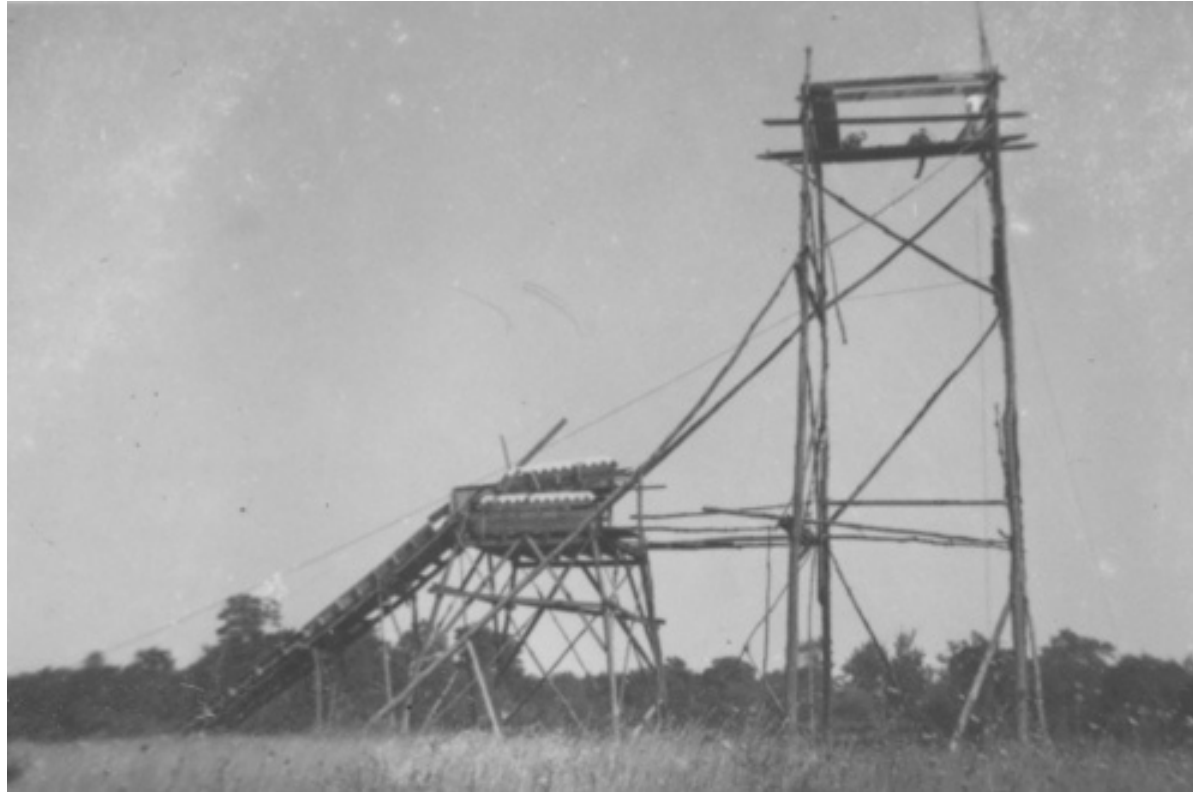
Blacksmiths first appeared in colonial America in the 18th century, and were said to have been the armourers on the colonists' ships. The 19th-century blacksmith worked with the black metals — iron and steel — and used coal and charcoal to fire the forge, which had to be heated to approximately 2000oF to soften the iron and steel. The blacksmith used a leather bellows to feed oxygen into the fire, which created a fire hot enough to prepare the metal for forging into various shapes. Blacksmiths made and repaired metal hinges, household goods such as pots and pans, farm implements such as plows, tools, and locks. Blacksmiths also made items used by other tradesmen, such as wheel frames for use by wheelwrights, and iron bands for use by coopers. There were no temperature sensing tools available for blacksmiths to use to determine the heat of a fire, so they learned to judge the temperature of an item being forged by its color. Iron was worked in a range between red and yellow. When the iron was soft enough to be worked, the object was taken from the fire to an anvil, where it was hammered into shape.

Spencerport Bicycle Club



Bicycles were first seen in Rochester in 1869, and many people believed the strange invention would never catch on because of the high cost (\$100-125) involved in buying and maintaining the vehicle. However, by the late 1890's, bicycles were all the rage, and were seen as a form of exercise as well as a convenient form of transportation. Susan B. Anthony was quoted in the Rochester Union & Advertiser as proclaiming the bicycle a "liberating invention" for women. Bicycle clubs like the one pictured here sprang up all over Monroe County. Bicycles had to be registered, and the fees were used to maintain cycling paths throughout the county. It is also said that the first leash laws for dogs were enacted in Rochester due to an organized effort by bicycle riders who were tired of being chased and bitten by curious dogs. The Spencerport Ladies Bicycle Club shown here rode on Sunday afternoons.

Beaman Toboggan Slide



The Beaman family has lived on Westside Drive in South Ogden since 1906, although the family has been in Ogden since the early 19th century. Sarah Jane “Jennie” McCleery Beaman taught school in several of Ogden’s one-room school houses, and was active in the Temperance movement. Her grandchildren, the Beaman boys shown above in 1942 — Charles, Donald, Kenneth, Larry and John — constructed several of the toboggan slides like the one pictured here. The slides ranged in height from 20 to 60 feet, and many school friends still recall the excitement of a run down one of the slides, and have fond memories of the social gatherings that took place at the Beaman homestead. The rides slowed and finally ended when Larry Beaman fell from the top of the tower shown above and was seriously injured.

Early Baseball Game in Spencerport



Baseball fever swept through Monroe County in the mid-19th century, when many teams were formed throughout the area. Spencerport and Adams Basin both had semi-professional baseball teams as late as 1908, although the sport had enjoyed great popularity in the town for many years. A tremendous rivalry existed between the two teams, which culminated in 1908 with a championship series of three games played at a field located on Washington Street in the Basin. Hundreds of spectators turned out for the series, which was won by the Adams Basin team.

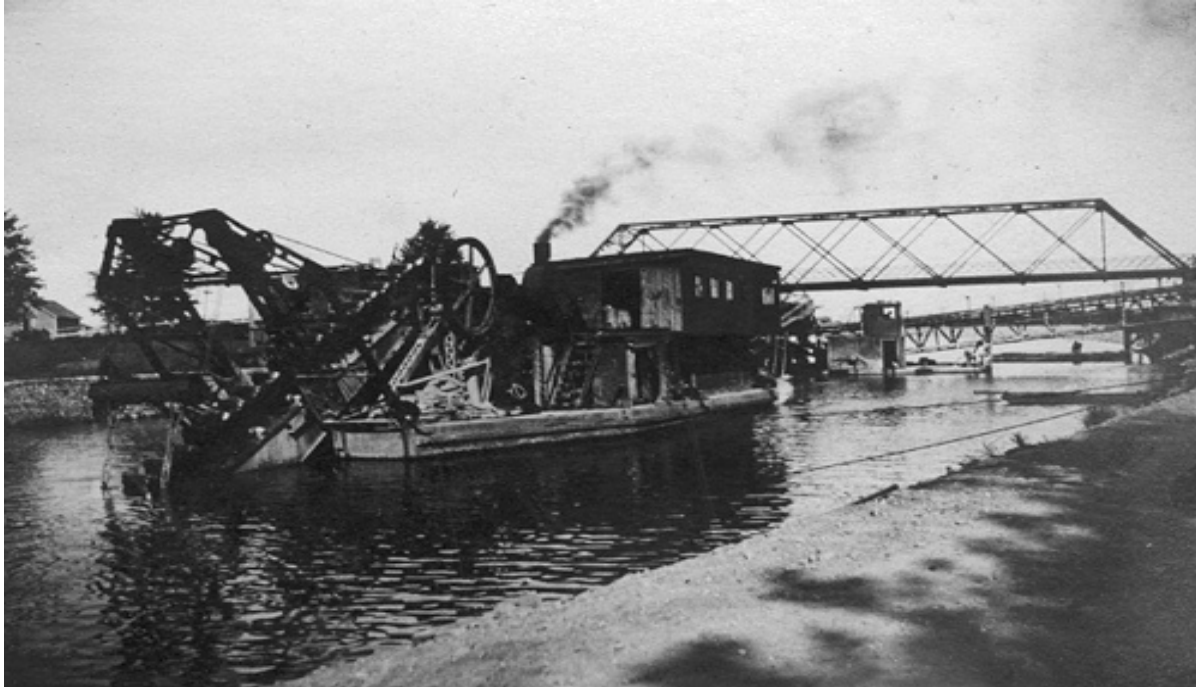
The first baseball teams on record in Monroe County were formed as early as 1855, but the game played at the time bore little resemblance to the baseball we see today. Protective equipment was unheard of and scorned by serious players; as a result, broken hands and fingers, bruised shins and black eyes were common injuries for players. The National Association of Base Ball Players began developing rules for the game in 1858, and continued refining the playing process until it gradually became the game we know today, around 1903. Forms of the game are recorded in print as early as 1744, and it is believed to have evolved from a warm-up activity for the game of cricket. The Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, formed in New York City in 1845, is credited with transforming what had previously been a child's game into a demanding game for adults. The Knickerbockers are also credited with eliminating the practice of "soaking," or putting a player out of the game by throwing the ball at him.

Crissey's Bridge Collapse



When the canal was being dredged for widening in the early 1900's, the dredgers got too close to Crissy's Bridge and weakened the foundation, resulting in the collapse shown here. Some residents of Adams Basin thought this was done on purpose to save the contractor money that would have been spent in demolishing the bridge. According to Dick Elmes' memoirs, "on a bright, sunny day, just a few minutes after a horse and buggy had crossed the bridge, there was a big crash and the Crissy Bridge went to the bottom of the canal." Traffic on the canal was held up for ten days while divers got the tangled mess out of the canal. It was usual for bridges over the canal to bear the name of the landowner through whose property the bridge was cut. A reference to a John Crissy can be found in the publication Excerpts from the Diary of Marcus Adams, who refers to Crissy as a member of the Adams Basin community in the mid-1800s. Later references in the Brockport Republic mention members of the Crissy family visiting "their many friends" in Adams Basin right up until the early 1900s.

Dredger at Work on the Canal



These huge dredgers were employed to dredge out and loosen the bottom of the canal before the water was drained for the major work. Residents in Spencerport and Adams Basin wrote of how the noise generated by the enormous machines made life difficult, particularly since they worked day and night. Historian Earl White wrote of how he was fascinated with the dredges working in Spencerport because they were illuminated and controlled by electricity in a time before the utility was available in Spencerport. White also recounted this story:

"George Ballard was employed on the dredge and was on the deck of the pontoon walking from one end to the other when the operator in the tower started to swing the great boom of the conveyor to the opposite side of the canal. When he threw the lever to start the cable drum, the cable that was lying on the deck snapped up and hit George on the leg, breaking his leg and throwing him overboard into the canal. The operator saw George fall in and without an instant's hesitation, dove out of the window of the control room into the water and grabbed him, holding him up until help came. Needless to say, George was out of work for the rest of the summer."

The canal reconstruction provided well-paying jobs for local residents, some of whom signed on to the work gangs, others who made money by taking in boarders, or serving meals to the workers and engineers, and still others, like blacksmiths, dentists, doctors, and wheelwrights who made money by offering necessary services to the canal crews.

Marcus Adams House in Adams Basin



The Marcus Adams house, pictured here in 1900, was a well-known inn and tavern along the Erie Canal in the once bustling port of Adams Basin. According to his diary, Marcus Adams of Bloomfield, Ontario County, moved to the area in 1827 just after the opening of the Canal. He and his brother Myron ran a store, tavern and boarding house in this building. At the time this picture was taken, it was owned and operated by the Ryan family. Marcus Adams was a creative entrepreneur and started many different business ventures in Adams Basin. He and two other men began a silk business by planting a 5 acre nursery of mulberry trees which they used as nourishment for a load of silk worms. The business was successful for awhile, with the silk worms producing a good quantity of silk. However, an airborne fungus infected the mulberry trees and in turn caused the silk worms to sicken and die just before they spun their cocoons. Adams also tried his hand at developing new methods to build barrels and cut roofing shingles, and invented new machines to clear stumps and extract sugar out of corn. Adams moved his family to Suspension Bridge in the mid-19th century when he became unhappy with the rough-and-tumble reputation the Basin had acquired among the people who traveled the Erie Canal.

The Adams house was purchased and restored by Bud and Elsie Nichols in the 1970s. Bud and Elsie retired a few years ago, and the inn, now known as the Adams Basin Inn, is run by Halya Sobikiw. The inn contains the oldest intact tavern barroom on the Erie Canal today and operates as a bed-and-breakfast. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Canal Travelers



As towns and villages grew up along the Erie, a new transient population took the form of the "canawler." Consisting primarily of people who worked on or along the canal, canawlers were often known for their rowdy behavior and transient lifestyle. Their folklore and culture dominated life along the canal for a good part of the 19th century. As often happens among a group of people with similar interests and lifestyles, canawlers developed their own language, or slang. Examples of the more colorful slang include: hayburner: a mule; feeders: channels to bring water into the canal to maintain a certain level; waste weirs: channels used to dispose of excess water from the canal; mudlarked: grounded due to a shortage of water; shunpike: avoid tolls by detouring around the toll booth; Hoggee: "driver boy" (derived from hogler, a field hand of the lowest class); Trippers: long haul workmen who stayed on the canal from east to west; jigger-boss: A boy who provided whisky to workers at "appropriate intervals"; runners: used to seek out passengers on packet boats; fog-gang: workers who cleaned out the canal annually; foamer: a mug of ale; pritties: boiled or baked potatoes; skimmagig: buttermilk; fip: a coin worth about six cents; rhino: cash on hand; rhino-fat: rich or well-off; canal scrip: an IOU; packet: passenger boats, or a cabin for passengers; line boat: carried mixed freight; bullhead: a boat with a rounded front and no side-deck; shanty: a houseboat; durham: a long, clumsy boat; squeezer: a two sectioned boat or "double barge"; hoodledasher: multiple boats tied together to be pulled by one team of horses or mules.

Blasting on the Canal



This photo from the Archie Shafer collection shows an explosion along the canal bed. Dynamite was used to help deepen and widen the canal. A 500 pound steam drill was used to drill holes about 4 feet apart in the canal bed; the holes were then packed with dynamite, which was blasted to break up the rock. The blasted material was removed from the canal bed by steam shovels and cranes. The “Dynamiter” and his helpers, sometimes known as “Powder Monkeys,” transported 50 pound boxes of dynamite to the blast site. The helpers would open the boxes, make holes in the sticks of dynamite, insert the detonators, and wire them for the blast. Four sticks of dynamite were placed in each hole and were covered over with a mud capping. The Dynamiter would set the blast off with a magneto. The blasts were often tremendous, and Dynamiters told of using 2500 pounds of dynamite for one blast. Such an explosion would send rocks and other debris high into the air and create a dangerous atmosphere for any bystanders. Each blast broke up a large area of solid rock into manageable pieces that could be carted away or used as fill along the banks of the canal. Another piece of machinery used to carve out the canal bed was called a “Channeler.” This machine was similar to a steam drill, but instead of a drill, it used a 4-inch wide cutter to scrape down the walls of the canal. The Channelers traveled along the canal bed on a small railway built just for them, and they chipped away through the solid rock lining the bed until a smooth surface was achieved. The same type of machine has been used to cut through rock along area roadways, and you can still see the channels left by the machines in some of the rock ledges along routes 490, 390 and 590.

Barge Canal Engineers



Engineer Archie Shafer came to Spencerport during his time as a surveyor on the 1000 Ton Barge Canal project in the early 1900s; he liked it so much he stayed, opened a store and raised a family. In 2003, one of Shafer's descendants, Penny Shafer Pero, donated a collection of Shafer's papers and photographs to the Town of Ogden. Shafer, an amateur photographer, kept a photo journal of his work along the Canal and the collection contains many behind-the-scenes shots of the Barge Canal work. This photo is part of that collection.

Engineers played an important role in the building of the Erie Canal in the early 1800s, as well as in its reconstruction 100 years later. Constructing a waterway through some of the most dense wilderness in the northeast required men who were logical but creative thinkers. These men devised a lever and winch system that allowed them to fell up to 40 huge trees a day; if required to use the conventional axe and saw methods, it would have taken decades to remove as many trees. They also constructed another type of winch which they used to yank up stumps. This contraption was said to have had a 30 foot axle and 16 foot wheels — a forerunner to the monster machines of today! Perhaps the most serious setback these early engineers encountered was the lack of waterproof cement available in the United States in the early 1800s. The only waterproof cement available at the time was manufactured in Europe and obtaining it would have delayed the project and driven up the cost substantially. Engineer Canvass White saved the day when he developed his own waterproof material using limestone found along the canal bed.

Canal Reconstruction



The Methodist Church steeple is shown in the left background, with the Wineyard general store in the main foreground. The general store was originally owned by Charles Church. About the year 1830, Mr. Church moved his general store from south of the canal to the location shown here and ran a general mercantile, warehouse and produce business until the fall of 1847, when he moved to Rochester with his family. His main competitors in the mercantile and produce business in Spencerport were Judge Philander Kane and George M. Woodbury. Judge Kane built a store and warehouse in the village, and Mr. Woodbury erected a large stone building. Mr. Church bought the Kane store and warehouse and also bought the Woodbury building and used the warehouses in his produce business after both gentlemen moved west. Church also built the brick house just visible in the right background of the photo above. Mr. Church was an active member of the community and served it in many capacities. He was elected supervisor of the town, although it is not known how long he held that position. He also owned a warehouse at Adams Basin, and conducted a produce business there with Abner & Marcus Adams. He was an active member of Ogden Presbyterian Church and served as one of the church elders. Church was known for his integrity and would not conduct business on Sunday. He was one of the few people trusted by canal captains making deliveries on Sunday, who would leave their shipment on his dock and stop for payment on their return journey.

Surveying for the Barge Canal Reconstruction



Enlarging the Erie Canal into the 1000 Ton Barge Canal required the engineers and surveyors planning the work to have portions of the canal drained as the work progressed westward. Surveyors and workers are shown here west of Spencerport looking over a newly drained and filled stretch of the canal.

The Erie Canal had been drained annually from the early 1800s to allow workers to clean out the debris from the previous year and so allow the packet boats free, unfettered sailing in the New Year. The process was called “bottoming out” and was usually done in late autumn or early winter. Bottoming out required that as much water as possible be drained from the canal until the muddy bottom was visible; however, workers often left enough water in the canal to freeze over and so provided a 365 mile long skating rink for the residents of upstate New York. In the spring, when the ice melted away to reveal a muddy bottom, workers would remove the detritus accumulated along the bottom of the canal. All sorts of things were found at the bottom of the canal, including bottles and jugs, plenty of garbage, dead animals such as mules, cats and horses, frogs, crayfish, and, sometimes, bodies. Canawlers were a rough and tumble crowd of men and women. Some statistics from early Rochester and Buffalo newspapers claim that seventy to eighty percent of the major crimes committed in the United States between 1830 and 1835 occurred along the Erie Canal in western New York.