

The Lancaster Legend

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Newsletter of the Lancaster Historical Society

Winter 2003

The Winter of 1945

Text, Terry Wolfe; Photos, Gladys Baker



*VIEW ALONG CENTRAL AVENUE
LOOKING NORTH. A LONE PEDESTRIAN
MAKES HER WAY PAST THE ENDICOTT
JOHNSON SHOE STORE. THE SIGNS
"DRUGS" AND "WESTERN UNION"
MARK THE FRONT OF CUSHING'S DRUG
STORE. TO THE LEFT OF THE LAMP
POST, THE MARQUEE OF THE
LANCASTER THEATRE IS JUST VISIBLE
ABOVE THE SNOW.*

Christmas of 1945 promised to be the best holiday in years. The Depression was over, and the four long years of World War II were behind us. Some of our loved ones were still overseas in military service, but we knew they were safe and on the way home. Preparations were under way all over town. Just three years before, Irving Berlin wrote the song that would define ideal Christmas weather for all time. All we needed for a perfect "White Christmas" was a little snow. We never suspected what Mother Nature had in store for us.

On December 15 a freak snowstorm hit Western New York. Bernard Wiggin of the U.S. Weather Service had fore-



VIEW OF BACKYARDS ALONG CENTRAL AVENUE.

Lancaster New York Historical Society

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<http://lancasterpast.org/society>

Museum Hours: Sunday 2-5 PM
Town Historian: Special Arrangements
Little Red Schoolhouse (Bowen at William):
Hours by Appointment

Sunday Program Series: As Posted

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The Lancaster Legend:

Editor/Design: Bill Harnack

cast intermittent snow or snow flurries and very cold. The snow hit in a band across Lackawanna, Buffalo and Lancaster. When it was over, drifts in the Village of Lancaster were 6 to 8 feet deep while the Town reported drifts of 7 to 8 feet. Roads were impassable. Transit and Genesee were rough and narrow while Bullis, Clinton, and Town Line Roads were all closed. The community of Town Line was virtually snowed in. Farmers could get to their barns and poultry houses, but couldn't get to town with milk and produce. Broadway from Lancaster to Buffalo was open to two-way traffic, but east of Lancaster, only one-way travel was possible. Town officials advised motorists to stay off that route.

Mayor Walter F. Braun was informed that state plows would be sent from Hornell to help, and Town Highway Superintendent Arthur Stutzman asked Erie County Highway Department for aid and rented private equipment as well. Dr. C. H. Mackey, Lancaster Health Officer, said physicians were making house calls on foot. Special efforts had to be made to open the roads to the homes of three servicemen who

were due back at camp after furloughs. Industries closed, including Curtiss Wright and Symington Gould. The Buffalo Transit buses were not running. It took Clint Buehlman a whole hour to read the list of closings on WBEN radio.

When it was over, it was declared the worst storm in Buffalo history. The snow measured 56 inches deep in Lancaster. The schools in Lancaster and Depew would remain closed until January 2. Even garbage and ash collections were canceled.

That December, Gladys Baker and her cousin were renting the apartment over Dalton's store at 27 Central Avenue. Gladys was working in Braun's Department Store. She recalled that Mr. Braun had a fit because customers couldn't get in to shop. Taking along her Brownie camera, she took a walk around and made a record of the storm. Her pictures show more than snow. They are a record of the central business area all dressed up for Christmas and frozen in time.



SNOWBOUND STORES ALONG CENTRAL AVENUE.



TAKEN FROM THE REAR KITCHEN WINDOW, 27 CENTRAL, DECEMBER 16, 1945



MR. AND MRS. PAUL WELKER ARE THE WINNERS OF THE LANCASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUILT RAFFLE FOR 2002. THE MARINER'S COMPASS QUILT WAS MADE BY THE SOCIETY'S QUILTERS GUILD AND AWARDED ON THE FOURTH OF JULY.



The next issue in the Lancaster Landmark series of collectible buildings is the Trinity Episcopal Church at 5448 Broadway. Construction began on this elegant brick building in 1880 and was completed in 1883. Dimensions of the model are 3 1/4 inches by 3 1/4 inches by 5 inches. The workmanship on this issue is exceptionally fine. It is made and shipped to us from North Carolina. Price will be \$30.00. For advance orders phone 683-4165. You will be notified when the buildings are available.



1945 STORM: THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF CENTRAL AVENUE SHOWING BRAUN'S DEPARTMENT STORE AT CENTER. TO THE RIGHT ARE THE NEW YORK STORE (NOW CARSON'S JEWELERS) AND MURPHY'S 5 AND 10 CENT STORE. THE BUILDINGS AT LEFT WERE DEMOLISHED TO MAKE ROOM FOR A PARKING LOT. THE SIGN AT RIGHT "CANDIES-LUNCHES" MARKS THE FRONT OF THE SUGAR BOWL.



Lancaster, New York
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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