The first settlement in Arkwright was in 1807 on unarticled lots in the north west part of the town near Laona. Settlers came from the New England States and especially from Central N. Y. State in search for lands that had a good water supply, where beech, birch and maple grew well, areas that provided browse for cattle and familiar rolling land.

By 1829 there were many settlers and the township was formed from Pomfret and Villenova under the leadership of Simeon Clinton and others. William Wilcox was the first supervisor.

After log and brush burnings, ashes were converted to Black salts or pearl ash on the premises or sold to asheries. Many paid for their land in this way. Some men were professional choppers. Bela Kingsley could average an acre for logging in four days.

The first sawmill was built in 1818 on the Canadaway. Burnham's mill also operated a shingle mill, then manufactured cheese boxes. Orcutt Bros. later owned by Snows provided much lumber for the Normal School. Cheese boxes and grape baskets were made in subsequent years. There have been numerous sawmills. The 1855 census listed 7, producing a total of 707,000 bd. ft.

Farming was the principal industry. Many sheep were raised, then dairying became prevalent. Butter and dairy cheese were made at home and sold to buyers in the villages. Asahel Burnham and Mr. Tarbox operated the first cooperative cheese factory in the county in 1861. The Canadaway Factory, as it was called, was built the following year. In the flush season, operating a double shift about 60 cheeses weighing 60 lb. each were made daily. There were 5 other cheese factories. The last was owned and operated by Geo. Frost from 1933-1940.

Oil was pressed from flax seed at Houck's mill on Walnut Creek. 3600 gal. of oil and oil cake were produced in 1849.

Other manufacturing included rope from hemp, Markham chairs, butter workers, ladles, bob-sleds from Hiram Clark's shop, barrels, kegs and buckets.
Samuel Davis and others distilled oils from herbs. Yarrow brought $16. an oz. in N. Y. C. Mr. Davis also made violins which sold for 5 or 6 dollars.

Inns or taverns were often operated as part of the household. The first was Simeon Clinton's at the center. There were at least four others but the best known was Chicken Tavern. It was reported in operation in 1822. Aaron Town took it over in 1828 and was owned by his family until 1931. A twenty capacity horse barn was across the road. An underground passage way from the house to the carriage barn was used by the Underground R. R.

The tavern was a site for post office, town meetings, lawsuits, dances on the spring floor and weddings. Except for grandeur it was a Holiday Inn or White Inn in its day. The name, Chicken Tavern, was derived from either the good chicken dinners or the flying pillow feathers that occured during a brawl. One time the proprietress, whose coordination was impaired due to nips from the bar, was advised not to carry a platter of chicken. This salty determined character proceeded to do so. The chicken landed on the floor, was quickly rinsed and served. Many people know the location of Chicken Tavern even though it is obliterated.

The first post office was at the center with Simeon Clinton as postmaster. There were three others which were discontinued before or when R.F.D. was established.

John Spencer held the first religious service in the Aaron Wilcox home. The Christian Church near Cassadaga and the United Brethren Church near Town's Corners were the only edifices. School buildings were used for church at various times. Land was given on which the Abbey School was built with the clause (quote) "should the building ever be closed against religious worship or training, the land and the buildings were to revert to the heirs" (end of quote) A Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in this area in 1830 and church services and Sunday School were held for a period of 125 years. One teacher in another district had reason to dread Monday mornings after Sunday meetings as she had to contend with mud and tobacco juice. However, these religious services had an
influence on the faith and character of many. Two ministers and one missionary had roots in Arkwright.

The first school was kept near the Center in 1811 or 12. There were 9 school districts in 1872. The Clerk's book of Dist. 7, the Briggs district, was probably typical of the times. Three structures were built during the 1800's. Specifications of one were (quote) "that it be done in a good workman like manner". School libraries were important. Explicit rules for use of books were adopted. They were even covered with brown cambric. Those who had children in school were to provide $1/4 c of wood per pupil, later raised to $1/2 c. Due to difficulties, supplying wood was let to the lowest bidder who sometimes under bid his competitor by $1/2 c per cord. Friction was reported three times. Twenty dollars was to be raised to build privies. Next year they weren't finished. The trustee was given authority to give the builder a time to complete the work or he was to remove them and let the job to another. One time the school officer absconded to Canada with some money and the teacher whose salary was $6.25 per week wasn't paid until the next year. One clerk recorded much balloting and then "after more cussing and discussing, the report was accepted". The writing, ciphering and vocabulary that appear in old records speak well for those short term early schools.

Women have had a steadfast place in Arkwright's history. In addition to her usual work the housewife helped or had complete charge of making butter and cheese.

Census record show the sale of stocking yarn, stockings, hats, mittens, rag carpeting and even palm leaf hats. Apples were dried and traded at the store. One lady sold enough dried apples to purchase a horse. A letter told of a grandmother knitting and reading simultaneously. The writer said she was well informed in many subjects.
Imagine the furor caused 50 years ago when a woman ran for supervisor. The vote was a tie and the town board appointed the incumbent who was not a candidate, to continue in office. This resolute lady was ahead of her times.

Arkwright Falls has been a favorite picnic spot in yesteryears. Think of the excitement when Dr. Pickett and others saw the possibility of a hydroelectric plant. Engineers made studies and industrialists made offers for the rights before the plan was abandoned. The falls area is on the planning board of the Chautauqua Parks Committee.

Arthur Black was a pioneer in conservation. He built a dam on a former mill site. The pond was stocked with fish and the surrounding area was a game preserve and picnic spot. Many groups have enjoyed this. Thanks to the Blacks and Woolleys.

In 1931 the county bought acreage in Arkwright and trees were set out. The U. S. Government purchased 1/10 of the town's area of so called submarginal land and reforested much of it. It is now the Canadaway Creek Wildlife Management.

Once a community of dairy farmers, there are 14 today. Many gas wells have been drilled recently. City residents have bought acreage for summer homes and camp sights. Commuters have made homes here. Today there is a sawmill, Johnson's Adult Home and Country Store, a beauty shop that has been in operation for 30 years, the Pioneer Print Shop and two camp sites — The Arkwright Hills and Woodside.

Mark Lis in his paper on Arkwright wrote (quote) "Our history books are full of great men, great empires, and great events. But would Napoleon have become a great man without a half million unnamed French soldiers?"

"Arkwright itself did not form America in particular, but it was the thousands of Arkwrights of different shapes and sizes which together molded our country."

Ruth E. Briscoe
P.O. 2
Cassadaga 12718