

Marshall Historical Society

Newsletter

Looking to the Past to Inspire Our Future

Marshall Historical Society
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October, 2022

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Janet Dangler

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OPEN – ANY TAKERS?

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Website:
www.marshallhistsoc.org

Next Meeting
October 20, 2022 – 6:30
Matthew Urtz – stories of soldiers killed during WWI and WWII.

Join!
Provide your name and address (and email, if applicable) to the secretary and pay the membership fee:

Individual: \$10:00
Family: \$15.00

Donate!
Your donations to the Marshall Historical Society are tax deductible.

Dear Members and Friends:

I hope everyone is enjoying the cooler weather and gearing up for the winter.

We had a wonderful presentation in September, when Susan Murray-Miller of Cherry Valley talked about her experiences Dowsing. She has been asked several times to locate bodies and graves that have been inadvertently or deliberately buried by debris and/or dug up and placed elsewhere. Some people who attended held a dowsing pendulum charm similar to the one she uses to find these bodies, and to ask it to “find their yes” and “find their no.” The movement of the pendulum helps when Dowsing for people or for anything. She says that anyone can be a Dowser; it takes a lot of focus and concentration but it is doable. Indeed, some who took a charm to ask those questions could feel a definite movement. It’s all about intention, and asking the right questions. For example, if she comes across some disturbed grounds where there might be a body, she asks permission to proceed and waits for the dowsing pendulum charm to give her a yes or no answer. Below are some examples of tools Susan uses in her craft. Mostly, though, she uses the dowsing pendulum charm.



Left: Susan Miller at the Brothertown Road Indian Cemetery, determining the position, sex and age of the person buried there. She is extraordinarily focused on the task at hand. Note the charm.

It was a great program, and Susan answered many questions from a rapt audience.

She is a member of the American Society of Dowsters and was trained by nationally recognized Dowser Fred Hayes in 1973.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 20 at 6:30 at the Marshall Town Hall. The presenter will be Matthew Urtz, Madison County Historical. He will talk about his book "**Honoring World War Casualties of Madison County, NY.**" He will focus on stories of soldiers who were killed in the line of service in World War I and World War II. His book will be for sale as well for \$24.00.

Recently, the Brothertown Association in Deansboro was reorganized. The goal of the organization is to renovate and restore the historic O&W Depot on Route 315, with the help of the architectural firm Crawford & Stearns of Syracuse, for use as a museum showing memorabilia from the time a passenger and freight train through the hamlet. The depot is slated also to become the new home of the Marshall Historical Society and the Town of Marshall Historian, which is very exciting news! Yvonne and I are involved in the preparations for renovation, and will keep you up-to-date on the progress.

History of the O&W Railroad and Depot

*For really enjoyable reading about the complete history of the O&W Railroad, read John Taibi's book **Rails Along the Oriskany**. It is available at the Deansboro Library and Reading Center*

The Deansboro Depot, built in 1868, was the first and only depot built by the Utica, Clinton & Chenango Valley Railroad. It is the oldest surviving depot along the line of the O&W Railway, and quite possibly the oldest surviving Depot in Oneida County. Once the route of new railway was decided (roughly along the Chenango canal route), a Depot was built on the west side of the road leading to Waterville, hoping for some interest from the residents of Waterville to ride to Clinton. It was the first traditional railroad board-and-batten depot built along the line of the Utica, Clinton & Binghamton Railroad (later the O&W). It is a unique structure, at 24' x 72'. The first station agent was James J. Hanchett, a prominent member of the community. The first conductor was Jack Excell, who formerly ran a stagecoach from Utica to Binghamton. Other station agents at Deansville/Deansboro were Marquis D. Olds (1888-1912), Clarence F. Ingersoll (1912-1932) J. Whalen (1932-1933), J.P. Sheridan (1933-1934), Ellis H. "Harmie" Roberts (3/1934-8/29/1934). The Depot closed on August 29, 1934, once passenger service was discontinued.



To get a better understanding of the railroad's various adaptations and alterations, we'll start at the beginning. The history of the trains going through the Town of Marshall begins, really, with the Erie Canal. Many communities along the route saw increased businesses, more opportunities for employment, and soaring property values; and other villages and towns that weren't on the Erie Canal route wanted their own canal. The Chenango Canal was opened in 1837, "from Binghamton up the valley of the Chenango River and then to the Erie Canal, via Oriskany Valley."

The Canal transformed the little settlements along its path, and they flourished. However, although the cost of building the Canal was approved by the New York State Legislature, the tolls which were charged didn't make up for what the canal was costing the State. In 1876, the state announced the closing of the Chenango Canal.

Meanwhile, in 1836, the year before navigation began on the canal, the Utica & Schenectady Railroad had started operation between those two cities, and the Syracuse & Utica Railroad had begun construction as well. Even though the canal had proved to be a boon for the communities along the trail, it was obvious to a lot of

people that railroads were the wave of the future: more freight could be carried, sometimes hours and days faster than the Canal. Also, the railroad wouldn't freeze in the winter months, as the canal did, so freight and passengers could be on their way no matter the weather. The trouble was the railroad didn't run along the Chenango Valley pathway. The New York Central Railroad was formed in 1853 from the U&S railroad and the S&U railroad along the course of the Erie Canal, and the New York & Erie Railroad ran trains to Binghamton, bypassing the communities along the Chenango Canal altogether.

In 1853, the demand from towns from the Oriskany, Chenango and Sauquoit Valleys became so loud that it was resolved a railroad connecting the New York Central line with the New York & Erie line was necessary for the continued prosperity of these communities. The Utica & Binghamton Railroad was formed. They proposed to construct a railroad between Utica and Binghamton along the Chenango Valley. Now the problem was to choose a route for the new railroad.

There were three routes proposed, but the one chosen - the canal route (Sherburne-Earlville-Hamilton-Bouckville- Solsville-Oriskany Falls-Deansville-Franklin Springs-Clinton) - was deemed to be the most economical to operate because the path ran through settled areas, which presented the greatest potential for passenger and freight business.

However, once the route was determined, there was bitter disagreement between those towns and villages which were on the selected route and those that weren't. Delaying tactics were tried which were mostly unsuccessful; but, even so, construction was put off on the Utica & Binghamton railroad. Then the New York State Legislature came out with more laws which made implementing the U&B railroad impossible. So that idea came to an end, but the desire to have a railroad along the Chenango Valley corridor didn't.

Two men reignited interest in a railroad: John Butterfield of Utica; and Othniel Williams of Clinton (he once lived in Waterville). In 1862, the Utica City Railroad Company was incorporated. That was only intended initially to be a streetcar system from Utica to New Hartford, but Butterfield petitioned the New York State Legislature to change the name of the Utica City Railroad to the Utica & Waterville Railroad, the first sign that the railroad would extend further south and up the Chenango Valley.

In 1866, work began on the extension from Utica to Clinton. Efforts were made to extend the line beyond Clinton. Residents of the Town of Marshall were particularly anxious the railroad be extended along the canal route. The question of bonding came up to pay for the extension: in other words, through personal subscription or higher taxes. The first train arrived in Clinton on September 3, 1866.

In the meantime, two other railroads were organized to serve the communities south of Clinton: The New York & Oswego Midland Railroad and the Utica, Chenango & Susquehanna Valley Railroad. The routes proposed were to go along the Chenango Valley to Norwich, as was the Utica & Waterville, although through different towns and villages. This led to a battle of finding bonding for the construction of these railroads, leaving some communities conflicted over which would best suit their needs.

Most communities pinned their hopes on the Utica & Waterville Railroad. Despite its name, Waterville was never on the proposed route of the railroad, so the name was unofficially changed to Utica, Clinton & Chenango Valley railroad and ran roughly along the canal route, which was deemed "the shortest and most feasible route, the easiest to grade, the cheapest to build, and the best route for business and travel." The Utica, Clinton & Chenango Valley railroad later extended a line into Waterville. On March 25, 1868 the name was officially changed to Utica, Clinton & Binghamton Railroad. In 1872, the New York & Oswego Midland railroad took it over, and it was later operated by the Ontario and Western railroad.

On July 30, 1867, work began to extend the Utica & Waterville railroad, or the more aptly titled Utica, Clinton & Binghamton railroad, from Clinton to Deansville. 300-350 men worked on the railroad. A "turntable" was built so the locomotive could get back to Utica. Embankments were cut back and the roadbed was stabilized, and on January 6, 1868, regular service commenced. A year later, the track was enlarged to Oriskany Falls, and in later years, beyond. A trestle 1,950 feet long (called the "mile-long trestle"), going into Oriskany Falls was

built, and the dirt for this came from Deansville. The fill was brought on flat cars and unloaded by having a sort of an iron plow (like a village snow plow) drawn by the engine over the cars filling in the sides; then it was leveled off by workmen. The prefabricated bents needed to support the trestle were delivered by nine boatloads down the Chenango Canal. Regular train service between Utica and Oriskany Falls began on February 4, 1869. Regular train service between Utica and Smith's Valley (later Randallsville) started on September 26, 1870. At Smith's Valley, the Utica, Clinton & Binghamton railroad connected with the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad, later to become the New York, Ontario & Western Railway.

The railroad was a windfall for Deansville (later Deansboro) for many reasons, most particularly due to shipping hops and grain, and receiving the all-important coal. Its importance was highlighted when land was purchased for the new condensery, called the United States Condensed Milk Company and later the Mohawk Condensed Milk Company, near the railroad in 1902. Instead of many local farmers having to take their milk to Waterville or Clinton or other places, they were able to come right to Deansboro to have it processed and shipped via railroad to New York City. The condensery also received coal to fuel its operations.

But the railroad was also a boon to passengers, who wished quick, convenient, and comfortable travel to Clinton, Utica and all places which, before the railroad, would have taken days of difficulty to reach. The cars were clean, checked baggage service was offered, and business people and shoppers could leave and return home on the same day! Commuters who took the train from Deansboro north, including students who went to Clinton High School, paid for the sidewalk from the Depot to Route 12B, and put their initials in the cement of each slab. Most of the slabs have been replaced over the years.

On June 17, 1917, heavy rains caused the Oriskany Creek and all its tributaries to rise. Dams between Solsville and Deansboro were washed out. The worst trouble of all was a half mile south of Deansboro, where the flood took out a cut of the railroad about 24 feet high and nearly two miles long. Passengers rode the train to the point of the washout, got out, and walked around the washout to get on the train to take them north or south, as was the case. Milk trains and freight trains used the lines of the Lackawanna rail road until they reached their own rails. These situations were only temporary, however; in only seven days - an amazing feat - the O&W engineers had rebuilt the railroad starting from Solsville to Deansboro, and the railroad resumed its regular service. Little by little things returned to normal.

In 1922, according to the Deansboro Holler, published once in 1922, the O&W trains left Deansboro for Utica four times a day going north and three times a day going south. Trains passed the station as follows: Going north 7:45 a.m., 11:23 a.m., 8:25 pm, 5:57 p.m.; Going south 8:56 a.m., 1:53 p.m., 6:16 p.m.

However, as with the canal, the advent of another means of transporting people and freight - automobiles and trucks - caused the O&W to lose revenue, as fewer people were traveling or shipping their products by train. In 1931, passenger service from the Deansboro Depot ceased to exist, and in 1957, so did the freight service. The O&W had gone bankrupt, and in the summer of 1958, the tracks were taken up to be sold as scrap metal. But the rail bed and the depot still retained their usefulness.

Through a grant acquired in 1995, the abandoned trail bed about a mile or two south of the depot is now a popular hike and bike trail, with snowmobiles and cross-country skiers in the winter, and runners and horses all year round. Add to that a newly-renovated Depot, containing a railroad museum, which sponsors an annual Christmas Party. Its sad to remember things that have gone and will not be coming back - for example, the railroad - but also exciting to think of the days to come.

Many people in Deansboro miss the mournful sound of the train whistle as it passed through Deansboro. However, we can't lose sight of the fact we now have a hike and bike trail which is visited by local residents and people from out of town who want to enjoy nature and the out-of-doors. And, of course, Deansboro is fortunate to have the Depot which is over 150 years old and will someday be a place where people greet their neighbors and enjoy fellowship, thanks to the far-sightedness of early members of the Brothertown Association. The Depot and the trail are truly the jewels of our community. So whether it's called the Old Woman or Old and Weary, the O&W railroad was an important part of our history which lives on today.



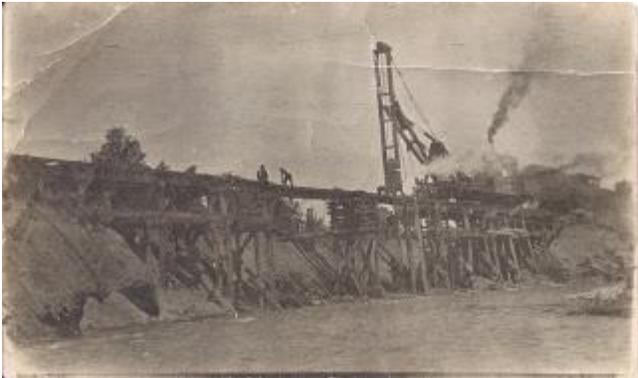
Railroad crossing – VanHyning Road



Abandoned rail bed – looking west



O&W Railbed through the quarry in Oriskany Falls
c. 1910



Re-building the trestle - 1917



Coal sheds behind the Depot – now torn down