

Marshall Historical Society

Looking to the Past to Inspire Our Future

September, 2024

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Website:

www.marshallhistsoc.org

Next Meeting

October 17, 2024 – 6:30

**The Dean Homestead –
Brian and Erin Brewer**

Join!

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

Individual: \$10:00

Family: \$15.00

**HAVE YOU PAID
YOUR YEARLY DUES?
GET YOURS IN
TODAY!**

Donate!

Your donations to the Marshall Historical Society are tax deductible.

Greetings Friends:

On September 19, we were treated to a documentary prepared and produced by the Chenango Canal Association, with help from musicians from Colgate University. The documentary, which was extremely well-done, was written by our presenter, Diane VanSlyke, a member of the Chenango Canal Association and was narrated by various members of the Association.

The Chenango Canal, which started in Hamilton and Bouckville, (part of which ran through Deansboro - Deansville at the time), was built in two years – from 1834-1836. It was 97 miles long "from Binghamton up the valley of the Chenango River and then to the Erie Canal, via Oriskany Valley." Many communities along the Erie Canal saw increased business and property values, and those who did not live along the Canal petitioned the Albany legislature for a canal which would connect their communities to the Erie Canal. That was in 1824, and it wasn't until 1833 that the petition was approved.

The documentary was divided into four sections: the first detailing the lobbying which took place in Albany; the second showing the creative engineering and methods which were used to make one of the best constructed canals in New York State; the third section told of life on the canal; and the fourth section, titled "Gone But Not Forgotten" tells the sad story of the eventual abandonment of the canal due to a new mode of travel: the railroad.

VanSlyke showed a short video telling about the development of the Towpath Trail along 5 miles of the former canal, and how they worked with many volunteers and other organizations to make a public hiking trail.

Next month, Erin and Brian Brewer will tell the history of their home, the former Dean Homestead in the middle of Deansboro. It will be a very informative and entertaining program, one you won't want to miss! Bring a friend and let's end the Historical Society year on a high note!



Thanks to the Chenango Canal Association and Barry K. Byer for the map.

JULIUS WATERMAN AND THE AMERICAN BUFFALO

They said it couldn't be done, but during the 1940s until 1962, Julius Waterman, on the Deansboro-Waterville Road - State Route 315 (now apartments) - was able to train two American buffalo, named Ned and Ted. With infinite patience and hard work, over time Waterman taught them to do simple tricks, such as counting; but perhaps his biggest accomplishment was in calming them down, so that they would lick his face, shake hands and not lunge at visitors. A man of many talents, he was also proprietor of a popular dance hall, a dealer in pork and purebred beef, and provider of ice for Waterville patrons. Prior to training the buffalo, he trained and traveled during the 1930s with a pair of oxen.



Captain Julius Waterman was born in 1879, the son of George and Lydia Waterman. In 1896, he served in the Spanish-American war, in Company E, 1st regiment of New York volunteers. The company was mustered out in February, 1899. In 1901, he married Mae Byaska of Brookfield. They had three sons: Earl, Leon, and Harold. For a while, the family lived in Brookfield, then bought the property in Dicksville, as it was then called, on the Deansboro-Waterville Road, from William Brooks. At one time there was a sawmill and a cider mill on the property, which the Watermans operated until it was destroyed by fire in 1920.

In 1922, Waterman built what was called Willona Hall, a dance hall named for the stream running south-east which we now refer to as Big Creek. The dance hall was 90'x30', and there was plenty of room for parking. Refreshments featured were those such as ice cream and strawberry shortcake. Dancing was to the music of Gus Detlefsen's orchestra; the "popular jazz music" of the Kelly orchestra; Masters of Harmony, a 10-piece orchestra; Nick Hawk's Orchestra; The Albro Orchestra; even the Waterville Band under the direction of A.W. Mallory. Both round and square dancing were offered, and assurances were made to dancers that they would be instructed on the finer points of the popular fox trots of the day. Private dancing parties were also given: the Home Bureau held a dance there in 1935; and in 1936, a party by "some Swiss families" was held, featuring what was reported as very fine yodeling. Prizes were offered, and through the 1930s, Willona Hall dances went merrily on, the last mention of them being in 1936.

Captain Waterman must have been a restless man, because in 1940, recognizing the public's hunger for showmanship, he set out to train a pair of buffalo. He had trained oxen, as mentioned above, and showed them - with a 100-year-old ox cart! - at several centennial celebrations around the country. However, the centennial business fell off little by little, and Mr. Waterman turned to a more glamorous substitute: bison, or American buffalo.

What we commonly call "buffalo" are actually bison. Both buffalo and bison are from the same family (Bovidae) but are different genus. The bison, found in cooler climates, have thick fur, short horns, a big head, and a distinctly large hump. Buffalo have longer horns and no hump, and can be found primarily in Asia and Africa. Bison were misidentified by early European settlers as buffalo, but although the difference was later clarified, today the terms are used interchangeably by most people. Habitat loss and unregulated shooting led to the near-extinction of the American buffalo, or bison, which once roamed the country in the millions.

Permission was granted to Captain Waterman by the United States government to capture two bison calves, with the caveat he'd have to catch them himself, attached with the warning that he'd risk being gored by the calves' outraged mother. But he was determined.

First, he engaged the services of a few cowboys in North Dakota to catch a couple of calves, but when the cowboys' truck was smashed during the process, the transaction was called off. Undeterred, Captain Waterman contacted the government of Canada, requesting permission to capture the calves. Canada agreed but again cautioned that bison were wild animals and the mother bison would be enraged at anyone who tried to take her young. The Watermans were charged \$50.00 per bison.

In 1940, Julius Waterman and two of his sons set off for Canada, arriving in Saskatoon, in the province of Saskatchewan. They cut brush and created a kind of "duck blind," behind which they hid, waiting to lasso the first pair of calves which passed by. Two 8-month old, 900-pound bison calves were captured, and, with great difficulty, they managed to get them into the large truck.



Consequently, Captain Waterman left them in the truck for four weeks once they got back to Deansboro, hoping they would be so hungry, they'd be easier to handle.

After four weeks, with the help of his neighbor, Virgil Eastman, he led the bison from the truck in which they had traveled from Canada. At first the bison pawed the ground and lunged toward him. Over time, with infinite patience and kindness, he was able to train them to the point that they would lick their master's face, got used to halters and could be led around with a rope. How they got to be so docile is what Waterman called a "trade secret," one even the Ringling Brothers didn't know, he said; but it had a lot to do with time, hard work and perseverance, until the wild bison became gentle pets. According to research, bison are very aggressive animals and very difficult, if not impossible, to domesticate. But Captain Waterman did it.



The bison were named Ned and Ted, and Captain Waterman never divulged how he was able to train them. The pair learned to dive from a ten-foot-high platform into the waters of Willona Creek - Big Creek - just behind the house, which was a relief during the hot summer weather. They could be seen on Route 315 on the front lawn of the Waterman farm, where they were tethered with 50-foot ropes attached to iron stakes.

Captain Waterman exhibited his bison several times at the Madison County Fair in Brookfield. Ned and Ted, with Captain Waterman, traveled with the James M. Cole Circus for 24 weeks. They were a hit: no one had ever before seen bison led into a circus ring to perform. They then joined the Wallace Brothers Circus, and traveled all over the country. They were briefly with the J.C Harlecker Circus, but Captain Waterman mostly enjoyed showing Ned and Ted at fairs and rodeos, letting people



experience them up close. Fascinated visitors shook hands with them, watched them roll a barrel and do their diving trick, and let them lick their faces. The bison were also featured on television, on the Arthur Godfrey Show, and with Gerry Moore.

Perhaps the most important lesson Captain Waterman, with the help of Ned and Ted, taught the public was of the near-extinction of these noble beasts, and how they came to be protected by the government. At one time in

the bison's history, 40 to 60 million of them roamed the United States; they were the principal food source of the Native Americans. When the 20th century began, there were fewer than 1,000 remaining. However, due to successful breeding and the regulation of hunting these beasts, they are no longer endangered and almost 500,000 can be found across North America.

In April of 1962, after more than two decades of a very varied, unusual and triumphant career, Captain Julius Waterman retired. He sold Ned and Ted to Freedomland USA, an American history museum in the Bronx, where they continued to bring awe and admiration to the public, thanks to the perseverance of their master. Captain Waterman died May 17, 1962, just a few days short of his 83rd birthday. He leaves a legacy that few can match: he showed the world how love, kindness, and patience can tame even the wildest of beasts; and brought joy to millions of men, women, and children.

FROM THE UTICA OBSERVER DISPATCH, SEPTEMBER 7, 1944 BY DAVID BEETLE:

“We're fresh back from Deansboro, where the buffalo roam. Specifically, there are two of them and they roam in a 50-foot circle around a couple of iron stakes on the Julius Waterman farm. Professionally they roamed 6,000 miles with Cole Bros. Circus last year. Unprofessionally, when the rope breaks, they roam most anywhere in the Town, of Marshall.

Waterman came out of the house one Fall afternoon just in time to see 1,000-odd pounds of buffalo butts into a stack of oats across the road and throw five separate sheaves into the air. He set out for the buffalo with a length of rope, while three or four motorists drew to a stop, anticipating a rodeo. He calmly hitched the rope on the buffalo and led it back to the barn chewing its cud as docilely as though it were a cow. The motorists stepped on their starters and drove off disappointed.”



FROM THE SEPTEMBER 28, 1933, WATERVILLE TIMES:

Over 50,000 people watched Waterville's contingent pass down Genesee Street, Utica, yesterday in the greatest peace time celebration ever witnessed in Central New York. The Waterville delegation contained over 350 people and comprised one of the largest contingents in the parade. Their approach was heralded by continuous applause the whole length of the two-and-a-half-mile route from the Parkway down to Oriskany Street.

The Waterville entries consisted of the Waterville Band of 20 pieces, the Waterville Fire Department with 20 men in line under Deputy Chief Marlan Kellmurray, eight of the large Waterville Central School buses carrying over 300 Junior and Senior High School students, **Julius Waterman's great ox team and cart** entered by Roger W. Huntington, and a large float entered by the Waterville Textile Mills.

The giant ox-team belonging to Julius Waterman was roundly applauded as they plodded slowly down the street in the wake of the Waterville contingent. The oxen, which weigh a ton apiece, drew a large wheeled ox-cart filled with farm produce. The entry was sponsored by Huntington's Real Estate Agency. The Waterville Band and the local firemen carrying a large American flag made an excellent appearance and were each accorded a round of applause as they passed the reviewing stand.

DEANSBORO NEWS NOTES – CLINTON COURIER MAY 14, 1962

Barbara and Bette Cornett, twin daughters of Mrs. Winslow Cornett, West Hill road, were inducted into the National Honor Society yesterday at a special assembly at Waterville Central school. The girls are in their Junior year, consistently maintaining high records throughout school. They have attended the seminar at Colgate, and participated in the Manlius Math tournament for the past two- years.

Tomorrow is Home Demonstration Achievement day at the Marshall Town Hall in Deansboro from one to four and seven to nine. There will be exhibits of projects, a bake sale, and refreshments.

The regular monthly Pack meeting of the Deansboro Cub Scouts was held Tuesday evening, May 22. It was also the ninth birthday of Eddie Kennard, son of the George Kennard, Brooks road, who entertained a few friends at supper between the afternoon and evening meetings.

Congratulations to Harry and Rosemary Eisenhut; parents of a boy born on May 16. This is their third son.

One of Deansboro best-known residents passed away last week. **Captain Julius Waterman**, a veteran of the Spanish American War, was the owner of the buffalo (bison) seen peacefully grazing in the field adjoining his Waterville Road home. Sympathy is extended to his family.

