



The Steadman House

Marcellus Historical Society News

Volume 14 Issue 2

Spring 2009

The Pumpkin Hollow Hole

The Syracuse Post Standard July 25, 1916

To the Editor of The Post Standard

In your daily of to-day, I note that some one desires to know more about the famous sink hole in "Pumpkin Hollow," near Marcellus village. The writer, born here 1833, has spent much time exploring the interesting geological wonders of this picturesque valley.

First, we note the very heavy deposit of Marcellus shale exposed at Slate Hill. These shales were simply sediment deposited in thin level sheets from deep turbid waters. They form the hill tops of this section for many miles at first in one unbroken group. The big gulf that enters the Otisco valley from the west one mile south of this village and also the wide ravine extending from Marcellus to the Onondaga valley were cut through the entire thickness of these shales by a prehistoric river, whose swift waters came from the east glaciers that they extended to the North Pole.

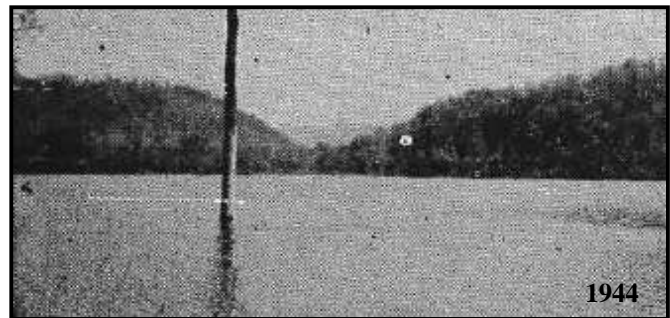
These glaciers prevented all flow northward. There is some evidence that a great fracture of the subjacent Niagara limestone caused a sag in both formations. This depression in the upper shales was naturally followed by great floods from the melting glaciers and at length they cut down to the limestone rock and swept away the shaly debris, thus forming both great cavints.

The famous sink hole was excavated in solid lime rock by a waterfall. Water worn furrows deeply graven in the rock by the swift river are found to terminate at the precipice at the west end of the sink hole. Now it may be asked why does all the water entering the sink hole come from the east and not from the west of us? We find about one-half mile east from the sink hole a deep gorge has been cut through the shales by a side stream from the south; also a second similar gorge a half mile further east. These streams have swept vast quantities of slate debris into the main valley, forming a bar from which waters flow both east and west. These gorges abound with curious concretions, relics of prehistoric life. They terminate in lovely little waterfalls.

Since our inquirer wishes to consider the practicability of changing the sink hole into a lake, I would say that although the fracture of lime rock doubtless extends from the Otisco valley to the Onondaga, yet by carefully cementing the outlet at bottom of the sink hole and of all nearby fissures we may with reason believe that the water can be raised to the level of the high road at the west. The lake thus formed would cover many acres, and would help to make Marcellus a far famed beauty spot.

T. W. Rhoades, Marcellus, July 24, 1916

Submitted by John Curtin ~



"Disappearing Lake" In Marcellus Is Community's Unsolved Mystery

The Marcellus Observer May 12, 1944

Marcellus has one of the wonders of Central New York right under her nose. Ripley has exploited it. Indeed, the famous cartoonist has written this paper personally, asking for information about it, but we had little to give him. So many people have different theories, we just had to give them all and let Ripley pick out the one he liked best.

The famed "Disappearing Lake" is located in Pleasant Valley, just east of Marcellus. In the summertime it is an expanse of choice pasture, skirted by a heavy growth of forest on one side, the highway on the other, and opens into two hazy valleys on the east and on the west. In the spring this natural lake fills with water. It becomes a rippling, glimmering lake almost a mile long. Waves lap the shores, and it has every appearance of one of J. Fennimore Cooper's storied mountain jewels.

(Continued on page 4)

EVENTS SCHEDULE

The tentative schedule of events is as follows:

Sunday, May 17, 2009 at the Library 2 p.m.

John Curtin

“The History of St. Francis Xavier Church”

Saturday, June 6, 2009 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

OPEN HOUSE - OLDE HOME DAYS

Sunday, June 14, 2009 2 p.m.

Patty Weisse

“The Growth of Baltimore Woods”

No Meetings During July and August

If you have a suggestion for a program, please
contact Doug Nightingale

*Meetings are open to anyone and are held at the
Marcellus Fire Station unless indicated otherwise.
A short business meeting will precede each program.*

Historical Society Officers for 2009

President: Peg Nolan 673-1765

E-mail: peganolan1@hotmail.com

Vice President: Doug Nightingale..... 673-2539

E-mail: djn0409@alltel.net

Treasurer: Hollis Abbott..... 673-1753

E-mail: habbott1@twcny.rr.com

Secretary: Carriebeth Pottinger... .. 673-3187

E-mail: cb90009@aol.com

Trustees and Term End

2009 John Curtin..... 673-3660

E-mail: jcurtin2@twcny.rr.com

2009 Bob Wilson 673-2550

E-mail: 89rw@twcny.rr.com

2010 Joy Buffan..... 673-1832

2010 Jamie Johnston 673-1160

2011 Mary Jane Domurat 673-4896

E-mail: mjdomurat@msn.com

2011 Patricia Sanborn 488-3610

Correspondence Secretary: Joyce Murphy..673-2528

The Marcellus Historical Society,
P.O. Box 165, 18 North St., Marcellus, NY 13108,
publishes this newsletter and mails it quarterly to its
members and advertisers.

Please direct comments or questions to Hollis Abbott.

From The President ...

Spring is here and what a beautiful sight with the flowers and bushes in bloom! The Steadman House has been a busy place: greeting visitors and working on projects. The big job of straightening out the files is nearing completion and spring cleaning has also begun. While going through the papers, we found a copy of “The Onondaga Standard” dated Sept. 16, 1829 which contained the obituary of Lewis Smith of Marcellus. The paper is in excellent condition.

Thank you to volunteers **Jean and Doug Nightingale, Pat and Charlie Sanborn, Hollis Abbott and Joy Buffan** for their dedication and time to keep the Steadman House open and to **Tammy Sayre** for helping to sort out the boxes of clothes we have in storage and for the beautiful 1840 era dress she made for volunteers to wear for tours.

On **May 27th**, the **Col. Bigelow Lawrence Chapter of the DAR** will be placing a Revolutionary War Veteran marker on Col. Lawrence’s grave in the Village Cemetery.

Open House will be **June 6th** during **Olde Home Days**. Please encourage your friends and neighbors to join the Society to help us preserve **Marcellus History** and support the **Steadman House**. You can also help by entering the **50/50 raffle** - see tickets on page 5.

Peg Nolan ~

Olde Home Days Special Sale June 6th only

John P. Curtin’s

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Steadman House Wish List

- 1 - Capping the three chimneys (\$700).
- 2 - Complete garage insulation & sheetrock.
- 3 - Repair of front porch railings.
- 4 - Mannequins (\$90).

Steadman House Hours:

Sundays 1 to 3 pm (except meeting Sundays)

Tuesdays 7 to 9 pm Thursdays 1 to 4 pm

Or By Appointment:

Peg Nolan - 673-1765 John Curtin - 673-3660

Joy Buffan - 673-1832 Hollis Abbott - 673-1753

In Remembrance

Helen E. Tierney - April 9, 2009

Steadman House Contributions

We are grateful to the following people for their donations benefiting the Steadman House:

David & Nellie Peatfield for Copying Machine.
Village Highway Department for plowing the driveway and parking lot and delivering the copier.
Tom Reilly for repairing Tefft room chimney.

Recent Acquisitions

We wish to thank the following people for donating items to add to our collection:

Charles Snyder for WW II uniforms & military ribbons; **Richard & Eunice Tabor** for child's pillow made by Emma Spaulding, "CNY Memories" brochure, Ruth Reed Cummings paintings, paperback book titled "Primitive Paintings of Ruth Reed Cummings", 15 slides of churches of Marcellus; **Alan & Phyllis Gammon** for artificial Christmas tree, box of tree ornaments, Mulroy Dairy milk box, 2 Mulroy Dairy quart bottles, Bordens milk bottle, Winnisquam Farms bottle, booklet on Onondaga County Pomona Grange, NYS Grange By-Laws 1956, Pomona Grange manual, Subordinate Grange book; **Helen Hopkins** for 10 booklets on Erie Canal, Historic Central NY, Camillus,/Geddes,/Onondaga, Marcellus, Onondaga Historical Assoc., various clippings from Herald Journal; **Wilson Stevens** for dress & matching skirt worn by Hilda Stevens, driving goggles owned by Hilda Stevens; **MCS Senior HS Athletic Dept.** for 7 Onondaga HS League Championship banners, 5 Section III NY SPHSAA Championship banners, 1 green felt MCS Girls' volleyball banner, 3 color photos of MCS cheerleaders; **Mary McGreal** for books on Otisco Lake, Skaneateles Lake, Redware pottery, MHS 1936-1986 Reunion booklet, Hills of Historic Camillus brochure, copy of K. Heffernan's "Nine Mile Country"; **Joy L. Buffan** for MCS Chi Alpha Mu Service Org. (XAM) pin, MCS Mustang logo pin, National Honor Society pin, boxed MCS Sr. HS Girls' Leader Club charm on gold necklace, 2 page history of Marcellus United Methodist Church, print of line drawing by Rev. Leslie Strader (Marcellus United Methodist minister); **Marion Ossit** for selected Marcellus Observers & Syracuse newspapers; **Methodist Church** for used books; **Dick Calvert** for Ruptured Duck pin from his WW II uniform; **Peg & Joe Nolan** for folding stool, bib overalls, straw hats, Dan Bliss CD; **Tammy Sayre** for 2 piece 1840's style dress; **Jean Nightingale** for Sidney P. Tuthill, Jr. Ins. ink blotters. ~

Our Thanks for Cash Donations from:

Thomas Donovan, Patty Weisse, Guy Swenson, Evelyn M. Currie (to honor Dr. Bruce Widger), Jack Parsons (research), Gary Carlson (research).

Renewed Members

Since our last newsletter with Sustaining members in bold print and New members underlined:

Timothy Aherin, Dave & Sally Bailey, Bruce & Helen Baker, Dave Ball, John & Gerry Bednarski, Eugene Billington, **Russ & Eva Briggs**, Mike Brillbeck, Harold Brinkerhoff, Louis & Phyllis Budell, Kathleen Carroll & Family, Harold Chapman, **Chris Christensen**, Victoria Clark, Phillip & Helen Clarke, Philip & Kathleen Coccia, Nancy Cole, William & Marsha Connor, William T. Cook, Kathy Coyne, Lucille Culotti, **Catherine D'Angelo, Beverly Parsons Dann**, Regina Dillon, Bob & Anne Dingman, Mary Jane L. Domurat, Francis Eibert, **Brian Eisenberg**, Pat Eisenberg, **Peter Eisenberg, Tom Eisenberg, Helen Fenlon**, Bud & Peg Flitcroft, **Jean Forster**, Elizabeth Foster, Alan & Phyllis Gammon, Patricia Gascon, Sharon Gibbons, **Jim & Peg Girard & Family**, James Hamilton, Beverley Haney, Muriel Horning, **Jean S. Hughes**, Sterling & Ruth Jansen, Jamie L. Johnston, Frank & Doris Kelly, Eileen B. Kennedy, Elizabeth Lathrop, Mary E. Lilly, **Richard & Serena Linck**, Janet Linderman, Mary E. Lorusso, Steven Wm. Mack, Jean E. Males, Raymond & Dora Masters, Gene McCarthy, Jim & Peg McNally, James & Arlene Milne, Helen Mohn, Paul Jr. & Hazel Morgan, Edwin & Gladys Nelson, Elizabeth L. Olley, Jerry & Lorraine Orton, Mary Orzesek, Leon & Julie Plochocki, Jim & Cindy Pollard, Carriebeth Pottinger, Florence Pottinger, Richard & Kathleen Powell, Ron & Jackie Ramsden & Family, Frances Randall, Robert, & Manuela & Caroline Reagan, **Rick & Kriston Reagan & Family, Bill & Donna Renner**, Pauline Reynolds, C. Albert & Victoria Sabin, Martin & Dorothy Sennett, James & Edith Seymour & Family, Donald & Betty Sherman, Helen Sherman, Dale & Joyce Sims, Kathy P. Smiley, Raymond & Janet Smith, Jeffrey & Mary Beth Smith & Family, Russell & Dorothy Snell, Charles & Nancy Snyder, Garth Snyder, Patricia Sposato, Russell & Nancy Striffler, Guy Swenson, Clinton & Sara Tallman, Geoffrey P. Teeter, Don & Jan Thornton, Patricia Vile, Bill & Ruth Vinzant, **Harriette Waldburger**, John & Esther Weeks, Patty Weisse, Roberta M. Welsh, Leona Wilcox, **Ben & Sharon Wiles**, Eleanor Winslow, Joan R. Zukowski.
Current membership: 373 ~

(Continued from page 1)

For weeks the lake will mirror the clouds, and for a short season becomes a thing of beauty, with water clear as crystal. Then, overnight, or within a few hours, the water will disappear as if the earth had suddenly opened up and swallowed it, which, say geologists, is exactly what takes place. The grass then turns a verdant green, and farmers put out their cattle to munch the lush and succulent fodder.

Residents of that neighborhood who have seen the lake come and go for years, shake their heads and say they do not know. All speak of a subterranean channel far down in the earth, through which the water flows to some distant lake or river, but no one knows exactly. Familiarity with the phenomena seems to have dulled the interest in this natural wonder.

Arthur Woodford, a resident of Pleasant Valley, brings forth a very plausible explanation of the cause of the lake, and its hasty exit to unknown localities. Mr. Woodford has investigated the phenomena, and has carefully explored the lake bed after the water had disappeared. He says that in one place there is a sort of crater or hole filled with sticks and branches. This place is about as big, Mr. Woodford says, as an automobile. It is his theory that in the summer this hole fills up with mud and sticks. Then in the spring the water rushes down from the hills and fills the lake. For weeks it remains until a little of the water finds its way through the barrier of rubbish in the hole. Then the weight of the water opens the hole wider and wider until finally the lake drains out.

The next mystery, providing Mr. Woodford's theory is correct, is what becomes of the great rush of water after it disappears. The suggestion of a subterranean channel may be entirely correct. It is known that large amounts of colored water and colored balls have been thrown into the crater where the water is supposed to drain through, but no trace of either has been found.

Our picture shows the lake at high tide, although residents say that this year the lake is somewhat below normal depth. The water shown in the picture is about 10 feet up on the pole, but it has several times reached a 15 foot mark and flooded the road. Twelve feet is the normal depth.

Marcellus has a mystery, and until some ambitious group of geologists gets down to business and finds a way to trace the water through the dark cavern that must be under the lake bed, it will remain a mystery.

Submitted by Hollis Abbott ~



**Weekend dive fails to solve
Disappearing Lake mystery**
The Marcellus Observer May 19, 1976

On Saturday morning, May 15, local environmentalists, aided by Forestry School and Aqua-technics of Auburn, tried unsuccessfully to get to the bottom of the Disappearing Lake flooding problem. The lake, which is receding at the negligible rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch a day, is higher than any old-time Pleasant Valley residents can remember, and it continues to make the lives of a good many of these residents quite unpleasant.

An outboard, laden with divers and a Syracuse television crew, was launched in the flooded Jankowski front yard, and proceeded to locate, by means of a depth-finder, the major swallow holes which serve as the lake's drainage system. By releasing a bright-colored dye, divers hoped to determine if the swallow holes are operating effectively. In the event that water was moving through these natural drains, they were prepared to release larger quantities of the dye in an effort to trace where the underground current flowed to. But hopes of confirming a popular theory that Disappearing Lake runs into Nine Mile Creek were frustrated when the divers could detect no significant current whatsoever.

After investigating one of the lake's largest swallow holes, diver Jim Hughes reported, "There isn't enough movement down there – it would take weeks for the dye to show up anywhere."

Residents of Pleasant Valley Road who have been put out of their homes by this spring's flooding, and those who have been put upon to drive the long way through Card's Corners or Navarino to get to their homes are pinning the blame on imprudent dumping at the town of Marcellus landfill site at the northwest end of the lake. Although Mr. Hughes says he saw "nothing to indicate that surface debris had plugged

up the drainage,” locals assert that there is one swallow hole that cannot be accounted for at all. They claim that it has been completely covered up by the encroaching landfill.

James Kundell of the Marcellus Environmental Commission would rather attribute the abnormal flooding to a combination of factors. He concedes that the ever-increasing landfill is a contributing cause – the more area it takes up, the less area there is for the water. But Mr. Kundell is just as quick to point to the precipitation statistic for the first four months of this year which is greater than any other year in this century. This is a factor that not very many people are taking into consideration, he mentions.

Though a successful dye release test, and even the confirmation of the Nine Mile Creek theory, would not have led to the immediate solution of the Disappearing Lake problem, at least positive results would have armed environmentalists with more concrete facts than have ever been gathered in the past. Instead, those who attend the special session of the Marcellus Town Board on Tuesday evening, May 18, will be obliged to stand by their original speculations and pet theories. Scientific theories are as unproven as the common sense explanations that are offered by those who have spent their lives around the lake.

Fred Mathieson, Sr. who has lived on Pleasant Valley Road for 32 years, recalls years when the lake drained overnight, siphoning out with “a whistle so loud it hurt your ears.” Another long-time local remembers measuring the recession of the lake by the distance he could walk his old cow down the bank each day. Anyone measuring today need only put his tape on the waterline stain on the side of the Jankowski house and garage to see that Disappearing Lake is not behaving in its traditional manner. Not even after Hurricane Agnes flooded the lake in 1972 was the water this high or this slow to subside.

Submitted by Hollis Abbott ~



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Drawing June 6, 2009**

Donation: \$1 each or 6 for \$5

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Reminders

*Membership covers the calendar year and the
newsletter is discontinued if dues are not paid by
March 31st. Newsletters are sent via bulk mail and
cannot be forwarded.*

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Marcellus, NY 13108-0165

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NEXT MEETING :
Sunday, May 17th, 2 p.m. at Library

(The date on the label is the
 year your dues are paid through.)

OPEN HOUSE :
Saturday, June 6th, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Please use this form or a copy of it to join the society and to order our historic collectibles.																																													
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Join Our Society Today!</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$5/ Person per year ~ \$9/Couple per year ~ \$12/Family per year (includes children under 18) Sustaining Membership = 5 years (dues x 5). Number Joining? _____ New Members? _____</p>	<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Addr: _____</p> <p>City: _____ Zip: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p>																																												
<p><u>Available Collectibles</u></p> <p>The New Pucker Street, Since 1953 by John Curtin ..\$28 Pucker Street by John Curtin.....\$26 The Town He Loved So Well by James Quinn\$20 Around Marcellus by Leslie Church Kraus.....\$20 Ruth Anne Reagan Prints of Marcellus.....\$20 Ruth Reed Cummings Prints.....\$10 John Drummond "Dried Weeds" Print.....\$10 Official Marcellus Afghans: cranberry,blue,green....\$45 Centennial History of the Town of Marcellus\$15 Otisco Lake Map 1868.....\$10 Marcellus, When Wool Was King, Pictorial\$ 5 Marcellus Through the Years; Chronology, photos...\$ 5 Index to Nine Mile Country; Names and more.....\$ 5 New Colored Postcards of Marcellus.....\$ 1 Postcards(5), 1960's B&W, 4 churches, post office ..\$ 1 Package of 10 note-cards picturing Marcellus.....\$ 5</p> <p><i>Shipping: \$3 per book, \$4 other.</i></p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Qty</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Item Description</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Cost Ea</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Total</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Make Checks Payable to: Total \$ _____ Marcellus Historical Society Shipping \$ _____ PO Box 165 Dues \$ _____ Marcellus, NY 13108 Total Enclosed \$ _____</p>	<u>Qty</u>	<u>Item Description</u>	<u>Cost Ea</u>	<u>Total</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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