

### Directors' Message

Dear Members,

We have been experiencing historic times and events since February 2020. It has been a challenge for all of us to find our way safely through the Covid-19 pandemic. In June the Board of Directors thought it would be safe in September to begin our general program meetings again and had scheduled an Historic Barn Tour and an Open House at the Research and Archive Center for September.

Times have changed since then and the Delta variant of the Covid virus places us once again on alert regarding the safety of our members. Therefore, at the Board's August 23rd meeting, we decided to postpone those events.

We are looking forward to the new season of 2022 for a fresh start to our program year and showcasing all of the work that has gone on behind the scenes during these extraordinary times of isolation, vaccinations, masks, and social distancing.

The Duanesburg Historical Society has been able to move ahead with our mission of discovery, collection, and preservation of our local history because of your continued generous support by paying your dues, making monetary donations, and most important of all by sharing your family history with us.

Leonard M. Van Buren - President  
Shirley Martin - Vice President  
Howard Ohlhous - Treasurer  
Marsha Brown - Secretary  
Directors: Cindy McKeon, Carol Plue, Pat Van Buren, David Vincent, Carl Wiedemann



Directors' Meeting

### From the Archives

By Pat Van Buren

Working in the archives has provided me a chance to learn not just about the history of Duanesburg, but about individuals, families and businesses that have formed the structure of Duanesburg's environs.

Each day is a new adventure as families with deep roots within the town contact us about donating genealogies, photos, diaries, letters, vintage clothing, and memorabilia pertinent to our town. All of these items help enrich the cultural story of Duanesburg.

When I look over the items in our collection, I am so impressed with the amount of written material that has been produced by our residents of the past: W.W. Christman, Lansing Christman, Henry Christman, Clarence Foote, Warren Liddle, and Marjorie Hoag Phillips. For a small town, we have been left a significant amount of historical information within those pages to be studied and to use for research.

What a surprise it was when Shirley Fidler Martin presented us with a delicate pale pink Shirley Temple dress that had belonged to her then 5-year-old sister Frances Fidler Collins (1928-2018). Already in our collection was the 2006 story written by Frances about this memorable dress.

Volunteers Marsha Brown, Carol Plue, Albert Fidler, and Becky Watrous have continued the work of sorting, inventorying, recording and storing items in our collection. Shirley Martin and Carole deForest have taken on the task of bringing our collection into eye-appealing, interesting, informative displays. Since January our volunteers have clocked no less than 535 hours.

We encourage each family to document and preserve their family history, their genealogies and their house and land use histories so that our work of preservation continues with each generation of Duanesburg families.

Always remember – Today is tomorrow's history. Let's honor that history by preserving it today.

# Daylight Savings

On November 7, 2021 daylight savings times ends for the year and clocks will be set back one hour. Will Christman would be pleased.

William "Will" Christman (1865-1937) was a local farmer who lived on what he called the Williams Hollow farm on Schoharie Turnpike. Today we know the farm as the Christman Sanctuary. Christman gained national recognition as a poet and writer and consequently was called the farmer poet. Besides farming and writing, Will had opinions about most subjects and enjoyed sharing them in letters to newspapers. Many of his letters were published and illustrate his wit and wisdom.



One of the issues he tackled was the repeal of daylight savings time in New York State. Congress enacted the program nationwide in 1918 as part of the war effort. Two years later it became optional in each state. The state legislature repealed daylight savings time in 1920 (although it was restored during WW2) Christman subsequently wrote several letters in favor of reinstating daylight savings in New York State.

One of the letters includes a story about a farm worker. It provides some insight into the work day of a farm laborer during that era. Will tells of a young farmer who was hired to work on a neighboring farm. Will calls this young farmer "John Davis", but it seems likely that in fact he was the young farmer because of the way the story is told.

The following excerpt is from a letter published in the Daily Gazette.

March 16, 1922

Editor, Daily Gazette;

The very few who sincerely dislike daylight savings may take a little comfort from the story of Deacon Miller. We will call him Deacon Miller because it is not his real name. The deacon was middle aged, a tireless worker and a shrewd farmer, living let us say, not to be to exact, within a hundred miles of the Helderbergs. His reputation for prudence in business matters was extraordinary. It is said that several souls like his might have danced simultaneously on the point of a cambric needle.

One winter this good old deacon hired a neighbor, whom we will call John Davis, to work for him. Davis was an active young man of 25 years or thereabout and knew his employer's

reputation. The next morning, he rose at 4 o'clock and walked the mile to the deacon's house arriving at 4:30. To his astonishment the deacon was fuming with impatience. "You are late John, late." The deacon said. "Breakfast was over some time ago, and the horses are ready to hitch. Your breakfast is on the table. Hurry up and eat."

Davis bolted his breakfast, helped to hitch the horses to the sleigh, and they started for the deacon's wood lot three miles away. They reached the wood lot at 4 o'clock and for a while it was too dark to work, but during the day they cut and piled two cords of wood and cut a big load beside, which they drew home at night. Davis finished his first day's work for the deacon at 7 o'clock and ate a good hot supper.



The second morning he rose at 3 o'clock and when he arrived at the deacon's, breakfast was steaming on the table. "You're a leetle late John, a leetle late, yet." said the deacon. "The chores are done, and the horses are ready. Set down and eat".

The third morning Davis determined to be on time. He rose, dressed by the light of the moon and stars, and hurried off down the road without looking at his watch. He routed out the deacon and his wife with shouts, and knocks on the kitchen door, helped to do the chores, and then sat down to breakfast.

When they had finished, Davis glanced at the clock. The deacon glanced too and coughed. "This is a leetle early, a leetle early." he admitted. "Let's set down by the fire an hour before we start." Then he added: "Four o'clock is time enough, John, until the spring work begins: then we'll have to git up kinda early."

They will best appreciate this story who have measured the depth of the hypocrisy, of the class that repealed the daylight saving law.

W.W. Christman  
Delanson

# The Mariaville Monster

In April of 1964, Duaneburg residents were surprised to read newspaper reports that an area fisherman pulled a monster from the cold, dark depths of Mariaville Lake.

Charlie Knize, a 55 year old Schenectady resident, was fishing for bullheads in the lake when he felt a strong tug on the line. He knew immediately that whatever was on the other end of the line was no ordinary bullhead. It turned out to be a 44 inch long creature weighing more than fifty pounds.

This fish story was catnip for newspaper writers in the area and appeared in papers as far away as Tonawanda New York. It was dubbed the Mariaville Monster.

The Knickerbocker News reported that Charlie had gone to his spot on Mariaville Lake on Saturday afternoon to catch a few bullheads. After three hours he had nothing but a couple of skinny perch. Then he managed to snag what he thought was a log. Suddenly, he was almost jerked into the water. "This is a pretty big fish I've got on here," thought Charlie. Half an hour later he landed his catch and had to use a sledgehammer to subdue it on the shoreline before bringing it to the Isle View Tavern in Mariaville for viewing.

"It was close to 50 inches long, and man those teeth! It had uppers and lowers and ... little... like hooks all over the roof of its mouth."



**The Monster from Mariaville Lake**

Puzzled brows and peering eyes poured over the creature yesterday at the Isle View Tavern in Mariaville where Charlie's fish was displayed on ice. Young girls "oohed". Young men "aahed". And there were many who just stood and scratched their heads.

The Gloversville Leader Herald reported that the creature, or one like it, was spotted in the lake in 1954. Persons who saw it back then described it as an alligator or



**At Isle View tavern they all want to know; "What is it?"**

crocodile type thing, and it has been seen occasionally in the intervening years.

Chet Griffin, the local Conservation Officer, took one look at the fish and swore off swimming in the peaceful looking lake. "It looks like it's of prehistoric nature," he said, "something you've seen in photos of fish that existed millions of years ago"

A day after Dr. Wilfred Green, NYS Superintendent of Fisheries, identified the Mariaville Monster as a "wolf fish". He went on to say that this species is only found in salt water which deepened the mystery. Dr. Green offered no theory about how a saltwater fish could live in Mariaville Lake.

A few days later the mystery was finally solved. A party boat captain from Rockport Massachusetts called the newspaper. He had seen a picture of the fish in a local paper and recognized it immediately because of a broken fishhook that was imbedded in its jaw. A week earlier he had taken a party of fishermen from Schenectady out fishing. One of them had caught this particular wolffish. A large hook was broken off in the jaw of the wolffish.

Local newspapers were eager to interview Charlie again but now he was no longer available. He was reportedly "up north, on a fishing trip" and could not be contacted. A week later the Times Union reported "Fisherman Charles Knize says almost nobody is speaking to him since he fooled fellow fishermen by telling them an odd looking fish came from a nearby lake."

The paper said; "Actually the 51 pound fish, with turtle like head, was a wolf fish he caught last weekend in the Atlantic Ocean where it is common. But his hoax had people talking about the Monster of Mariaville Lake."

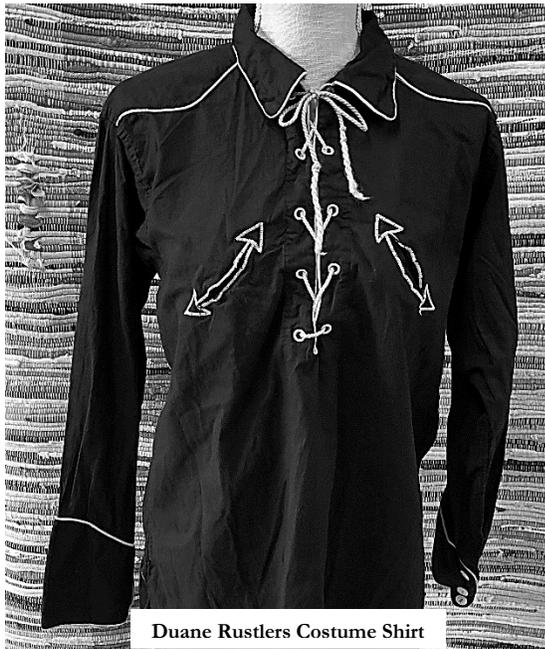
"Even his wife isn't speaking to him he says."

# The Duane Rustlers

A Local History Flashback  
By Carole deForest

The early 1940s was a time in rural America before there was a television in every parlor. For entertainment on a Saturday night, folks gathered around the radio or.... if they were lively and creative, designed their own entertainment which was how it was that the Duane Rustlers came briefly into being.

Patterned after a Saturday night radio show, called the National Barn Dance, our own homegrown "Duane Rustlers" put on an evening of live entertainment featuring "down-home" tunes and country humor. It was largely a family affair: the effort of Nathan and Myron Fidler, foot-stompin', music lovin' brothers, and their extended family, The probable inspiration was a couple from eastern Kentucky, named Everett and Mildred Baker who had moved up from their home in Appalachia to help with farm work on the two adjoining Fidler farms, and who possessed an easy familiarity with front porch home-grown music.



Duane Rustlers Costume Shirt

We know that at least one evening of entertainment was presented, to which the public was invited, because a printed, (mimeographed), program and a script for the 'Emcee' were recently found, as well as a homemade wooden sign featuring the name of the group.

The evening was hosted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church at their first location, off the Duaneburg Churches Road. (That church burned to the ground in 1951.) Built around a cowboy theme, fourteen numbers were performed by a cast of ten singers and instrumentalists with two "Junior Cowboys"; cousins Albert and George Fidler who were about 12 years of age and who joined in some of the vocal numbers and provided "percussion noise" where appropriate. From beyond the family circle, an especially fine fiddler and friend from Rotterdam, a Mr. Bill Sansousa joined the fun, as well as Bill Lane, a neighbor on Weaver Road who played the accordion.

The evening opened with the entire company singing, "Mexicali Rose", with Miss Frances Fidler accompanying on the church pump organ. It closed, (as was also the case always with the National Barn Dance), with a hymn tune, ("The Old Rugged Cross") and a cowboy favorite, in this case "Home On The Range", once again by the entire company.

In addition to the fiddles, the accordion and the pump organ, there were guitars, a trumpet and a musical saw brought to life with a cello bow by Myron Fidler, when he demonstrated its beauty of sound by playing, "When It's Springtime in the Rockies".

The National Barn Dance had originated with Chicago's WLS-AM in 1924 and attained a broader national audience when it was taken over by NBC from 1933-1946. It was a direct precursor of "The Grand Ole Opry".

It is hard to say if there was ever a second performance given by the Rustlers. No other programs were found though it is possible that the first "show" was 'taken on the road' to other locations within the Duaneburg area.

But now, times were changing fast. The war ended. The Bakers went back to Kentucky. Miss Frances Fidler married Norman Collins, the trumpet-playing, funny guy Impersonator of "Duane Rustler" fame.

It's possible, I suppose, that the next big Saturday night entertainment for this family was the surprising, loud and raucous horning that greeted those newly-weds when they returned from their August 1947 honeymoon, to settle in at the Fidler farm at the end of Larson Lane.

The sign, along with various related documents and photos have become part of the Duaneburg Historical Society's permanent collection.



# The Case of the Missing Outhouse

There's nothing too unusual about seeing an outhouse, but when it's on a truck moving along a highway on Halloween night, it's a good idea to check. And that's what trooper R.M. Schaufelberg decided to do while patrolling in the Duaneburg area last night.



Schaufelberg checked the license of the youthful driver and then started asking some questions about the outhouse.

“Does it belong to you?” he inquired.

“Nope” the youth replied.

“Who's it belong to?”

“A neighbor.”

“Anyone inside the outhouse?” Schaufelberg asked as he heard noises from the structure.

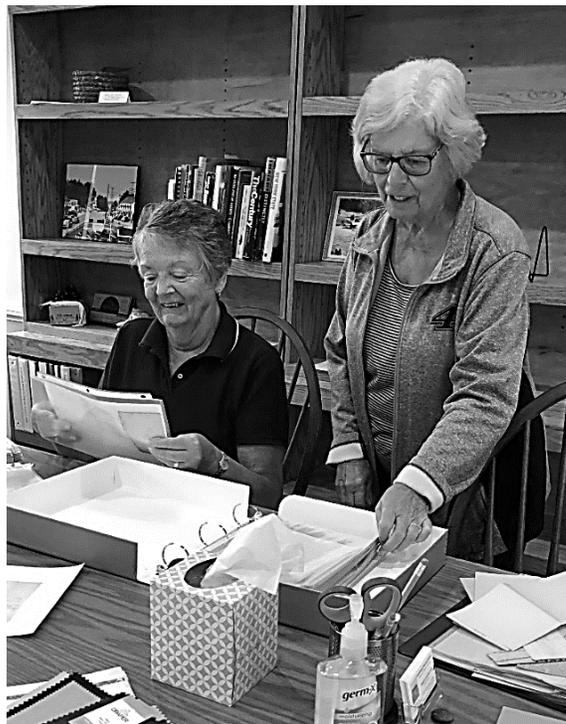
Nope.” was the answer.

“Well in that case,” the trooper said thoughtfully, “drive back to the neighbor's place over this dirt road – it's a short cut – and I'll follow you.”

Enjoying his own Halloween prank, Schaufelberg watched the outhouse sway, bounce and shudder as the truck hit the ruts, holes, and bumps of the dirt road.

At least four somewhat scrambled kids tumbled out of the outhouse to help place it back on its former foundation.

From the news - October 31, 1957



Marsha Brown and Carol Plue Organize Archives

## Membership Application

Choose the membership that is right for you and enjoy the benefits of supporting your Historical Society. If you are not a current member, we hope that you will consider joining.

Dues \$10.00 Adults \$1.00 students

From July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

Lifetime Membership - \$150.00

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Make checks payable to: Duaneburg Historical Society  
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