



The Inkwell

The newsletter of the Bradford Landmark Society
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Hours of Operation:

Herbig Bakery, 11AM – 2PM,
Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Historic Crook Farm by Appointment
Judith Yorks, Director

Once again, summer is upon us. So far, it looks like a rainy sort of season, but as they say, it's better than snow. This edition of the newsletter is a grab bag collection of summer related articles, including the famous 1879 bull and bear fight that was held in Custer City one very hot summer day; an article of famous visitors that have graced our city (doesn't everyone have visitors in the summer?); events of past Julys, and the usual news of the Landmark Society and the Crook Farm.

Our latest book, "Looking Down from Above", a collection of aerial photographs taken by Don Tanner in the late 1950s and 1960s should arrive at the Herbig Bakery within the next two weeks. We've already sold enough to cover publication costs. It promises to be one our best top selling books so be sure to come into the Landmark and get your copy. We will be arranging a book signing as well. The book has 112 aerial photographs, and each particular photo was chosen for its clarity, interest, and subject. Views of downtown Bradford, Foster Brook before the mall was built, scenes of the Kinzua dam area, oil industry related photographs and more will make this a truly unique view of Bradford history.

The Crook Farm School Program is over again for the year. Under the direction of Judith Yorks, over 800 children from Bradford and McKean County schools, other neighboring counties and New York state participated in candle making, old time chores, learning about the good old days in a one room school house, carpentry, blacksmithing, and the summer kitchen.

The Landmark is looking for glass plate negatives to copy. We are asking anyone who reads this newsletter, and who has ANY glass plate negatives, to come into the bakery at 45 E. Corydon Street and let us scan your photograph. We won't keep it - promise! - but will return it to you safe and sound. Scanning a negative (glass or film) cannot be done on a regular scanner - but we recently purchased a new special scanner that has these capabilities and we are anxious to copy as many of these rare photographs as possible.

And don't forget the Crook Farm Country Fair, to be held this August 23 & 24. Its fun, food, music, crafts, tours of the farmhouse and school house - and helps to support our Society!

The Long Hot Summer - Here's what happened in other Julys from long ago...

As a result of careful and critical enumeration, the population of the city of Bradford is 17,305.	July 2, 1900
Lee Onn, a Chinese laundryman, accused an Italian boy of stealing 26 Chinese bracelets from his laundry on East Main St.	July 2, 1900
A mad dog caused a reign of terror on Main St., biting men and children, horses and dogs. The dog was finally killed in East Bradford.	July 6, 1900
William Hanley was awarded the contract to build the Carnegie Library Building. He was the lowest bidder at \$22,785.	July 7, 1900
The overhanging sidewalk on East Main St., skirting the west side of the hill, has been completed. The walk is laid upon stringers supported by steel brackets. The guard rail is yet to be built.	July 13, 1900
Men at work on the new Kinzua viaduct are out on a strike and all work on the bridge is stopped. The contractors Grattan and Jennings, refuse to advance wages from \$4.40 per day to \$5.50.	July 20, 1900
According to the new Latham Directory, Bradford has 165 streets on which buildings have been erected, 2107 buildings are owned by occupants, population is 17,608.	July 8, 1901
Lightning caused an explosion of gas in a tank of the Emery Pipe Line. Oil in the tank burned fiercely and then overflowed, blazing oil flowed upon the roadbed of the Erie Railway, destroying the track for a considerable distance.	July 28, 1902
A man, divested of his clothing and attempting to eat grass, gave an "open air" performance in Lewis Run before being arrested.	July 19, 1904
The Italian residents of the Fifth Ward have organized a club called the Italian Patriotic Club for social purposes and the development of citizenship.	July 26, 1904
Plans for new men's medical and surgical building and driving shed detailed by Hospital directors	July 16, 1907
DeSantis Brothers of Chicago will open a meat market at 37 Mechanic Street.	July 17, 1907
Baseball game between the Druggists and Lawyers will benefit Beacon Light	July 31, 1907
The Hotel Holley formally opened yesterday; four story, fire proof of brick and stone, 75 sleeping rooms, etc. Constructed by E.N. Unruh, well known local architect and contractor.	July 12, 1910
Lt. Parker Cramer pilots first plane into Bradford. Lands at side of highway on Fred Hooker's Meadow at 4:40 pm. Lt. Harri Emery accompanies him.	July 4, 1919
Bids will be advertised for construction of the bridge across the Allegheny river at Seneca Junction. The bridge will open a much needed artery into New York state.	July 7, 1922
"Yeggs" use nitroglycerine to blow safe at Bradford Ice Cream factory at 44 State street. Noise heard all over 3rd Ward - \$50 in cash taken from safe.	July 5, 1922

Famous Visitors to Bradford

Bradford may be just a little spot on the map of northern Pennsylvania, but we've had more than our share of well known characters come to town. There was no paparazzi back then, but we thought it would be fun to list a few of the truly famous men and women that came to our fair city in years past. We think that you will be surprised!

Presidents

So far, only two US presidents have come to Bradford, and both were out of office at the time. **Ulysses S. Grant** came in the late 1870s, on his way to see the Kinzua Bridge; his train briefly stopped in Bradford and he greeted city officials before traveling on to see the "8th Wonder of the World".

William Howard Taft, the 27th President of the United States (1909-1913), came here in December 1919. Taft gave a speech on the League of Nations at the Bradford Theater (later renamed Shea's Theater) and later dined that night with the Hazelton family, at 8 School Street.



William H. Taft

Socialists and Speakers



Bradford was always ready to hear a good lecture on topics of the day, and many famous speakers came to Bradford. **Carrie Nation**, the well known opponent of drink and sin, came to Bradford at least twice, in 1901 and 1903 - speaking in the Public Square and staying at the Hotel Holley. **Belva Lockwood**, the first woman to run for President came here in October 1888 and spoke at the Methodist Church. **Eugene V. Debs**, the noted Socialist and labor leader lectured at the Bradford Theater in January 1906, and **William Jennings Bryan** spoke on the "World's Greatest Needs", lecturing at the YMCA and the Bradford Theater, and stayed at the Hotel Holley in March 1922. **Evangeline Booth**, daughter of Salvation Army founder William Booth, came to Bradford in June 1931. **Susan B. Anthony** spoke out on

women suffrage at the Wagner Opera House in April 1892.

Belva Lockwood

Actors & Actresses and Entertainers

It should be no surprise that some of the most famous actors and actresses and entertainers of all sorts visited Bradford as well. **Lily Langtry**, the Jersey Lily, reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the world, and the same woman that Judge Roy Bean in Texas renamed his town "Langtry, Texas" although he had never actually met her, came to Bradford with her theatrical company in 1883 and appeared on stage at the Wagner Theater. **Sarah Bernhardt** played "Camille" on stage at the Bradford Theater in 1906; **Annie Oakley** appeared at the Bradford Gun Club in 1929 and shot a cigarette out from between the lips of her husband, Frank. In addition, **Marian Anderson**, a famous black singer who was later banned in 1939 from singing before an integrated audience at Constitution

Hall in Washington, DC (later singing instead on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial), gave a memorable performance here at the Third Ward School auditorium in May of 1938. (The Landmark Society has a program personally autographed by Marian Anderson, of this concert, in our collection). And who could forget **John Phillip Sousa**, noted band leader and composer. He appeared, the *Bradford Era* said, at the Wagner Theater, "with his sable whiskers, white gloves, eyeglasses and medals and filled and thrilled the crowds of the Opera House with soul stirring melody". And speaking of musicians, **Sammy Kaye** (my Dad used to listen to "Swing & Sway with Sammy Kaye" on his little radio in his workshop) - a leader of the "sweet" bands of the Big Band era, came to Bradford (at Shea's) in May 1941. And who could forget **Harry Houdini**, who came to town in 1898 with the Welch Brothers circus, and camped out on Pine Street. Not yet famous, Houdini and Beatrice, his wife would later tour Europe in 1899, and become world famous as "The Handcuff King". **Boris Karloff**, in town while touring with the "Arsenic and Old Lace" play at Shea's theater, donated the first \$50.00 check to the 1943 Red Cross Drive in Bradford, and **Roy Rogers** made a personal appearance at the new theater in the Hooker-Fulton building on May 26, 1939. **Ethel Barrymore** played in "A School for Scandal" in 1932 (and stayed at the Emery Hotel, but refused to give an interview). And who could REALLY forget **Sally Rand**, famous for her "bubble dance", who danced at Shea's theater in April 1937.

Poets

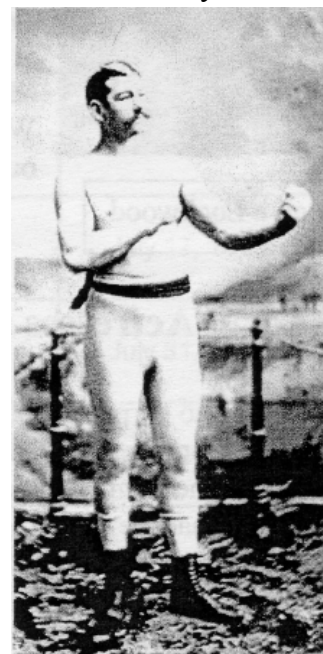
Well known poets also came to Bradford. **Carl Sandburg** spoke at the Woman's Literacy Club in November 1922, and not only read his poetry; he also sang several of his poems while accompanying himself on guitar. **Sinclair Lewis**, also a guest of the Women's Club, spoke at their clubhouse on Chautauqua Place in March 1921. And **Edgar Guest**, a prolific American writer who, in his time, was known as the "People's Poet" spoke at the old high school auditorium in 1921.

Sports

Bradford seems to have a soft spot for athletes, and many famous ones have visited our city over the years. **Rube Waddell**, who was actually born here on Jackson Avenue, became a Baseball Hall of Famer as a left handed strike out pitcher. **John L. Sullivan** appeared in vaudeville in Bradford in 1906, and boasted that he would pay any man \$1000 that he could not stop in four rounds. **Tom Sharkey**, another famous heavyweight boxer, and considered to be one of the "100 Greatest Punchers of All Times" by *Ring* magazine, came to Bradford in 1907, not to fight, but to race his horse at the Bradford Race Track (at the end of Race Street, where Zippo is now located).

Governors and Others

There have been a few Pennsylvania governors who have visited Bradford from time to time, and these include **Samuel Pennypacker**, who was actually running for governor at the time (and made it - he was governor from 1903 to 1907); Governor **Gifford Pinchot** who visited Bradford as a guest of the Board of Trade (now the Chamber of Commerce) and talked in the public square in 1925 and again in 1930; and of course, **Gov. Thomas Ridge**, who visited the Zippo Case Museum opening in 1997.



So, were you surprised?

For years we have heard rumors of a bull and bear fight in Custer City. Newspaper articles would hint at its existence; interviews with old men in the 1920s would mention it; and people would tell us that their great grandfather had been there ...or so they thought. Until recently, however, the exact date had eluded us, but research has turned up this remarkable event in our city's history and we present it to you here in this newsletter. We won't reveal all the details of that terrible match, but suffice to say it was brutal, cruel, and heartless.

The Bradford of 1879 was a very different place than it is today. Bradford was rough - wild - and untamed. Known throughout the state as "Bad Bradford" this bloodthirsty event did little to change our reputation. Newspapers as far away as Philadelphia and Buffalo expressed outrage when learning of the event. An editorial in the *Philadelphia Examiner* stated, "that the people who go into a new oil region are the same class with those whom a mining excitement attracts. A brutal and demoralizing exhibition between a bull and bear has caused the latest sensation in one of the new settlements of McKean County..." The *Buffalo Express* called it "savagery in the oil fields". But Bradford, as you will see, had a very different view of the affair.

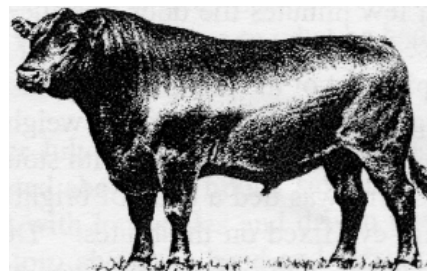
The story opens on a very hot summer of 1879. So hot, that many of the delivery horses had wet sponges slipped under the bridle straps between their ears to keep cool. So hot that fights broke out on Pig Island, an notorious area of saloons, brothels, and bars (located roughly between present day Charlotte Avenue and Mechanic Street) and many men and women that summer were stabbed, shot, or thrown in jail. So hot that one enterprising Custer City man named W. V. Marsh, decided to stage a fight between a massive bull and a large bear.

The Infamous Bull and Bear Fight in Custer City, July 1879

This afternoon, Taurus and bruin will meet in the ring at Custer, there to grapple in deadly combat until one or both of them are stretched out in the arena. Doubtless the novelty of this exhibition will attract a large crowd that will perhaps never have an opportunity of witnessing another such a spectacle. (from the Daily Development column in the Bradford Era, July 2, 1879).

July 2, 1879. The day before the fight. We meet the bull.

In order to ascertain whether this proposed affair was to be a hoax or a sell, an *Era* reporter was dispatched yesterday to Custer to interrogate the proprietor of the menagerie and see if there was a deception in the matter. He found Mr. Marsh, the originator of the show, busily engaged about the barn, which contained his pets. "Want to see the animals, do you?" he said in answer to the inquiries of the scribe. "Well, walk right in and I'll stir him up". In the stall nearest the door was a magnificent bull, of colossal size, munching the hay and casting sharp restless glances at the visitor. "This bull is named Duke" explained Mr. Marsh, "he weighs 1,775 pounds and is seven years old. I bought him for \$75 in Cuba, NY and shipped him here." Duke turned a lowering gaze at the intruders, shook the chain fastened to the ring in his nose and bellowed in a deep baritone. He is a very powerful animal and will doubtless display great strength in the fight. His neck is short and enormously stout, which his physical body served as a simple backing. From his forehead the horns protrude almost horizontally in a semi-lunar curve and are very sharp.

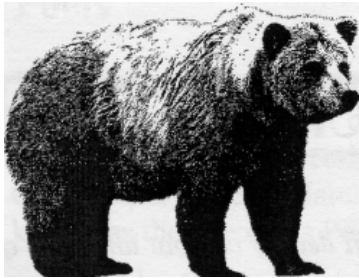


July 3, 1879. The day of the fight. Hundreds arrive in Custer.

About seven hundred persons assembled at the place near Custer City yesterday afternoon to witness what was reported to be a mortal combat between a bull and a bear. At 11 o'clock the Randolph cornet band arrived at

the depot on the Erie train. When the train started for Custer, quite a crowd boarded it for the gory scene. At 1:30PM another train left the city with four coaches well filled with passengers. At the depot in Custer several hundred persons and the cornet band had gathered to welcome the newcomers. Such a throng as was there yesterday Custer City never before witnessed within her borders. Before the train had moved from the depot, the crowd made a rush for the pit where the widely advertised fight was to take place. It lay about fifty rods east of the village in a piece of woodland.

There were eleven rows of seats ranging around the pit, after the fashion of those used in a circus. A portion of the space was shaded by the branches of some young oaks that were allowed to stand when the enclosure was built. At thirty minutes past two o'clock, there were about five hundred persons occupying seats. Among the spectators were a dozen women and eight or ten little girls. Two men in shirtsleeves nestled themselves comfortably in a shady spot. Infants will probably be told in after years that they were spectators at a great bull and bear fight, and the gray-haired sires will shake their heads and sigh that "they don't have Roman sports nowadays."



Bruin was shambling about lazily in the pit, diverting himself with pawing cigar stubs thrown in by the spectators. The impatience of the crowd found vent by stamping the seats and yelling "bring in the bull". The brass band, which was located in the highest seats, played a couple of times, and silenced the crowd. During this time, the bull was brought up and run into the entrance alley. The crowd again called loudly for the bull. Mr. Marsh then announced that a young man would enter the pit and feed the bear. The entrance door was drawn up a short distance as the man's head appeared in the opening. Bruin walked from a corner

toward him. With a long pole he drove the brute back and entered. Spectators sat in suspense, every eye resting on the bear, which stood at a short distance. From a state of solemn silence the young man convulsed the assemblage by announcing with dramatic gravity "Gentlemen, I will now feed the bear!" Suiting the action to the word, he emptied a pan of milk-soaked bread on the ground and darted out quickly through the small opening. The animal approached and devoured every crumb of the food. While the bear was thus engaged, the musicians with grim delight played a heavy dirge. "Bring on your bull" again came from a hundred throats.

The fight begins.

In a few minutes the door into the pit was thrown open, and Taurus sent into the pit with a rush and the door closed quickly. At the corners of the pit above were men with heavy oaken clubs to prevent the bear from leaping out of the pit. On two sides were others with long sharp poles to goad the brutes into action. The bear, a shaggy-coated brown animal, weighing 300 pounds, stood looking toward the top of the pit wistfully for liberty. The bull was trim-limbed, with stout, sharp horns, and weighed 1700 pounds. In his nose was a ring and around the horns was tied a band of bright red ribbon. As the bull jumped into the arena, every voice was hushed and every eye fixed on the brutes. "Duke" (the bull's name), stopped suddenly in the center of the pit and gazed fiercely at "Cuff" the name given by his master to the bruin. Cuff, after a interval of a few moments, turned his head slowly around and glared wildly at his antagonist. (*The Bradford Era*, July 2, 1879).

What followed was a desperate fight between two animals, neither of which wanted to be in the ring but each of which were goaded into action by poles handled by the men running the fight. The bull and bear each took turns clawing, goring, biting, and stomping the other. The crowd cheered them both on. In Round Two, the bear actually escaped momentarily, springing up into the grandstands among the spectators. "A yell of horror arose from the panic-stricken spectators. Women and children screamed. Men's hearts leaped with terror. The crowd rushed from the bear in fright. The animal bounded towards the top seat and sent his sharp claws into the flesh of a woman that was unable to get out of his way quickly enough. The terrified female jumped to the ground below, a distance of fully twenty-five feet. Reaching the top seat, forty feet from the ground, the bear surveyed the distance but would not jump. The bear passed along the seats to the south side. It was here that

BULL AND BEAR FIGHT!

-at-

CUSTER CITY,

Tuesday, July 1st, 1879

THE BEAR ON HAND

Mr. Marsh is at Cuba, and will return through this city, accompanied by a brass band, Tuesday morning, with

THE BULL!

Seats have been put up to accommodate three thousand persons, and all preparations made for a

GOOD SQUARE FIGHT!

In the evening there will be a dance at "Campbell's Billiard Hall". Arrangements have been made with the railroad company to run extra trains to and from Custer City.

the band was seated and they fled with the others in wild dismay. Some persons jumped through the seats and ran for their lives. In several places the boards broke, and the terror-stricken occupants tumbled to the ground. The excitement was intense. The panic lasted for ten minutes. The bear was trying desperately to get away from the crowd, which was also making the finest kind of time in attempting to get away from the bear. During this exciting period, Taurus looked up at the motley and wild throng with apparent amusement. Marsh, the owner of the bear, ran up and tried to capture him, pulling handfuls of hair from the bruin's large coat, but could not check his course. A chain and long rope was fastened around the bear's head, and the end taken to the opposite side. Marsh then asked the trembling spectators "are you satisfied, or will I put the bear back into the pit?" "Put him in" Put him in!" yelled the crowd. "Alright, but he is already licked" said Marsh. The people clamored for the fight to go on. Bruin was pulled down over the seats into the pit, and sent heavily to the bottom of the arena, full fourteen feet below". And the fight went on.

The fight between the bull and the bear continued for an hour and a half, and thirteen rounds. By the end of the afternoon, even the bloodthirsty crowd

had had enough, and urged Marsh to stop the fight. The bear was dragged into his cage, and the bull taken out. Satisfied with the spectacle, the crowd returned to the depot, and at 5 o'clock, four carloads of spectators were landed back in Bradford by a special train on the Erie railroad.

Later that day, two officials from the SPCA of Philadelphia who had learned of the match, charged the men who ran the fight with cruelty to animals. A hearing was held a few days later as the SPCA officials came before Judge Ward of the city. One agent, J. McDonald, who gave a full testimony as to what he had observed, was sworn in and testified as follows:

"I reside in Philadelphia and am an agent of the SPCA, was in Custer July 1, saw the pit dug for the fight and the elevated seats surrounding it; the fight began at 2:30 PM and lasted about two hours; saw tickets sold and taken and men enter the enclosure; saw the animals cruelly punched with long poles and driven towards each other; when they got through both were exhausted and the bull was torn about the head and ears; some got in the ring without tickets; Crocker was gatekeeper; William Marsh owned the animals; I get my authority from the board of managers, SPCA; have no written authority; first heard of the bull fight in the latter part of June; received instructions from SPCA to go to Custer Sunday; was in camp at the time and had to make a very hurried departure; bought a ticket and went in; turned my back on part of the fight because it was too brutal for my feelings; before I entered the ring, I met Marsh and a young man leading the bull; told him who I was and said the fight must not go on. He replied that I hadn't force enough to stop it; afterwards saw the bear in the pit and the crowd clamoring for the bull to come out; after one or two encounters the bear got out but was finally pulled back into the pit by a chain; tried to raise the door of the bear's den, but was unsuccessful; was roughly treated and got a little the worst of it; thought they would overpower me if I stopped the sport; did not dare to interfere lest I should be thrown into the pit... (One man even threatened him at gun point if he tried to stop the fight).

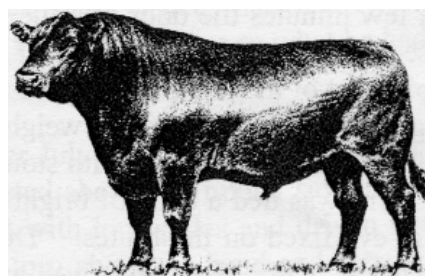
During the hearing, Marsh, the owner of the animals, testified that he had known that McDonald was an SPCA agent before the fight began, but replied that he had too much money at stake to stop the fight when ordered to and had even offered a bribe to McDonald "to settle it all right". McDonald refused the money.

Other testimony followed, but the hearing was short. Most witnesses called to testify claimed that they could not remember any of the people at the fight, and could not identify any of those who participated in the event. Mayor Broder offered every assistance in his power to assure justice was done, but "regretted the matter was outside his jurisdiction". Of the four railroad carloads of spectators that traveled to Custer, none could be found to testify. The *Bradford Era* called it a "strange fatality that came over our fair city, to carry away so many persons and leave no evidence. Although it required four cars to carry people from Custer to Bradford after the bull and bear fight, not a man, woman, or child could be found yesterday that had been there. The question of the hour is when and how were all those people snatched from the earth?"

Those that were fined were ordered to pay \$10 and court costs: The SPCA officials eventually went back to Philadelphia, somewhat disgusted by the attitude of the Bradfordians. Time passed, and the great bull and bear fight was forgotten. But you ask, what happened to the animals?

Surprisingly, both the bull and the bear survived, and it was decided to sell both of them at an auction in the public square. On July 8, one week after the fight, the two SPCA officials and a Bradford officer traveled to Custer City to seize possession of the animals. The following is an excerpt from *The Bradford Era*:

Yesterday morning, Officers Bernard, McDonald, and Ostrander went to Custer to bring up the bull and bear pitted in the late bloody contest, and which were seized last week. They called at Marsh's house and inquired for the gentleman, but his wife answered he was not in. In response to a demand for the keys to unlock the barn in which the animals were confined, the lady said she knew nothing whatever about the matter. The officers again demanded the brutes and said if necessary they would obtain them by force. Finally they found one "Pap" Stoddard, who owned up to keeping the animals and feeding them. When asked to name his compensation, he modestly set the figures at \$10 per day, making a total of \$50. The officers were rather staggered by this unusual specimen of oil region "gall" but recovered and flatly refused to pay any such exorbitant sum. They again demanded the keys to the barn, but "Pap" failed to come in time. In the meantime, a mob of 150 men had collected and were shouting to resist the intruders. McDonald broke the hasp of the door while Bernard and Ostrander kept back the rabble. Then the bull was led out when one Newton appeared and claimed it as his property, as he had bought and paid for it, but refused to show the proofs. Some difficulty was had in getting the bear from the box stall into a box for transportation, and the officers were finally obliged to hire "Pap" Stoddard to enact the role of Van Amburgh and cage the brute. The cage was then loaded on a wagon, a brave man tackled the bull, and the triumphal cavalcade set out for Bradford. The rabble hooted in derision, deeming a rare sport forsooth to have the pride of Custer there exhibited, but there were a few soreheads who uttered large threats against the officers. Marsh, proprietor of the Coliseum and originator of the revival of the sports of ancient Rome, did not appear.



The procession then set out in good order for Bradford, and made a really imposing turnout in the following order:

Small boys.
McDonald Bernard
Chariot with live bear
Boys Boys
Constable Ostrander
The bull.
Guard of Honor.
Citizens of Custer, mounted.
Orator of the Day, "Pap" Stoddard
Reader (of the Riot Act)
Mob 150 strong in various uniforms
Women with babies
Man who fed the bear (with pan)
Representatives of the Press.
All the dogs in Custer.
Man who was bitten by bear.
Tramps.

As this gorgeous pageant filed through the splendid boulevards of Custer, the streets were thronged with a dense mass of humanity who pushed and surged in their efforts to see the whole show. Every window was crowded and many went upon the housetops to see the splendid procession more closely. All acknowledged it beat any circus they had ever seen. All the officers marched with a military step, Constable Ostrander and the bull keeping perfect time, while the bear behaved with becoming dignity. After leaving the outskirts of Custer City, the procession fell off in numbers, but still made a truly moral show. Upon arriving in Bradford, the head of the procession was met by Mr. Marsh, who made an address of welcome. He spoke as follows: "Well, by G-d, I'll make it hot for you!"

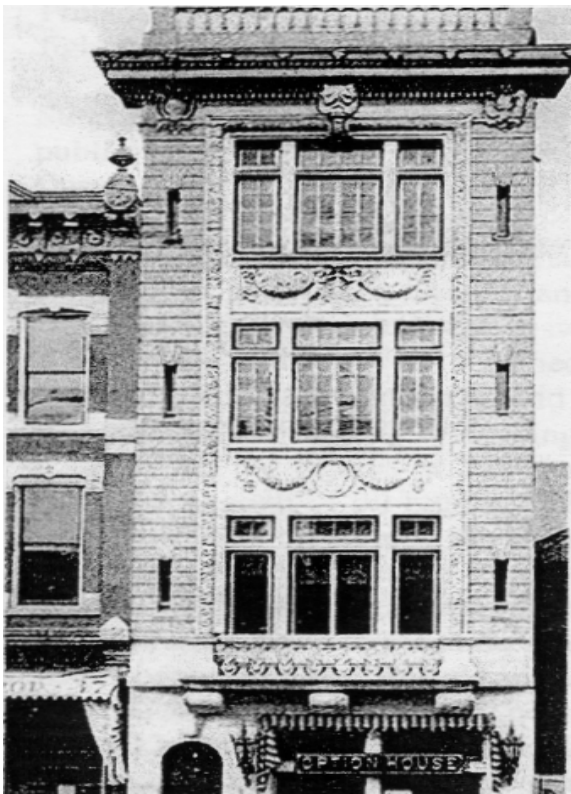
To this salutation, a suitable response was given and the cavalcade marched quietly, but firmly, to Smalley's livery stable on Mechanic Street, where it disbanded, the bull and bear being locked up in separate quarters. Both are in very good condition. The bull will be photographed if he can be persuaded to sit for his picture. He is a fine Durham, four years old. Both will be sold at public sale on the Square next Tuesday and those partial to such pets should be sure and attend. Mr. Marsh says he paid \$75 for the bull, but bears have no quotable market price.

It is unknown if the auction ever did take place. The long hot summer of 1879 stretched on, and while other bull and bear fights were held in other towns and states, Bradford never again pitted bruin against bull. The famous Bull and Bear fight in Custer City became a memory, but what a story, that was told again and again by the people who had been there.

The Option House at 41 Main Street

A true Main Street landmark, the Option House has been a part of Bradford since the early days of oil. Even the name "Option" refers to stock options traded by eager oil producers over a hundred years ago.

Recently, the building was bought by Sam Sylvester, a Bradford native, who has big plans for its future. A recent tour of the building by the staff of the Landmark Society revealed a building that still contains tremendous charm and one that gives a good look at the beautiful woodwork and craftsmanship that built the Option House back in 1903. The Option House is currently undergoing a complete renovation, due, partially, to the fact that it will play a significant role in the new movie being filmed in town, *'Little Chicago'*. The movie producers have agreed to restore the downstairs bar and restaurant area back to the era of Prohibition (the 1920s), and will use the facility as a location shot for the new movie.



The movie, titled *'Little Chicago'*, covers the life and death of Al Ritchie, a small town Bradford booze runner and businessman who was shot down on River Street by his rivals in 1931. Writer Carl Veno, Olean native, who based the movie on a short story he wrote in his book, "Invisible Ink", promises lots of action, romance, and of course, all the intrigue of Prohibition years in Bradford, when liquor was either brought in from Buffalo, or brewed in your own kitchen sink or bathtub.

The original Option House was built of wood in the 1880s; but by the turn of the century with business booming, owner Frank McBride decided to erect a much more substantial building. In 1902 he hired architect Frederick C. French to design a brick building that would be the showcase of Main Street. French was well suited to the job - he also designed the James R. Evans building at 80 Main Street, and the Schonblom building on the corner of Kennedy and Main streets.

The new Option House was a four story brick building erected on the site of the former building.

Demolition of the old wooden building began on July 14, 1902, with completion of the new brick building promised by that October. Using arc lights for illumination, two crews of men worked day and

night to meet that goal. The second floor which overlooked Main Street was designed as a dining room, while the front portion of the third floor was McBride's apartment. The rest of the building served as a hotel, restaurant, and bar. There were 20 rooms available for overnight customers.

McBride sold the Option House in 1925 to James Rich, who expanded the building, adding thirteen rooms with showers to the rear of the structure. In 1935 a two ton Brunswick bar was installed, and a nightclub, called "Peacock Alley" opened up on the second floor dining hall. During the Depression, the hotel nearly closed, but friendly local bankers kept the business going.

Progress on the Option House renovation is moving along swiftly, and soon we will be able to see the "Hollywood" efforts of the movie crew. Personally, the staff of the Landmark can't wait for another visit!

COMING EVENTS

Country Fair

PLANNING MEETING FOR CROOK FARM FAIR

The annual Crook Farm Fair will be held August 23rd and 24th, 2008. We need volunteers to chair projects, to cook, to work at booths, etc. Please **contact us** to find out how you can help. Thank you.

- *Two meetings have been scheduled - Monday, July 14th and Tuesday, August 12th at 5:15 p.m. at the ARG (American Refining Group) R&D Building at 77North Kendall Ave.*

Even if you can't attend meetings, but can volunteer to work please **contact us**.

Bradford Landmark at 362-3906

OAK HILL CEMETERY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, July 16, 2008, 10:00 am

at the Bradford Club on Boylston Street

All those interested in preserving this historic cemetery are invited to attend.

Let's Dance!

EVERY MONDAY & TUESDAY EVENING

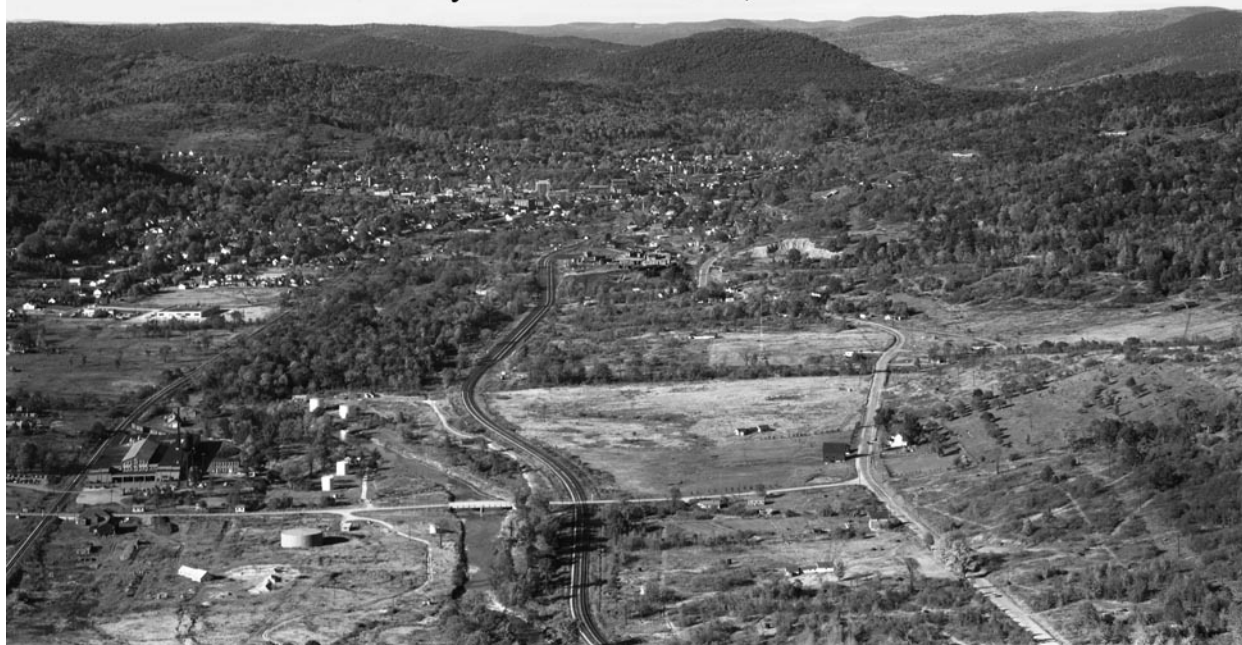
At the Bank Building at the Crook Farm on Seaward Avenue

Join us every Monday night at 6pm for Line Dancing and every Tuesday night at 7pm for traditional Old Time Round & Square Dancing. That's two fun-filled evenings of dancing and music!

Looking Down From Above

The Aerial Photographs of Donald Tanner, 1953-1968

By Michael J. Fuoco, Editor



"Looking Down From Above"

By Michael Fuoco

The new aerial photography book of Donald Tanner's photography of the Bradford area is now available.

Each book contains 112 incredible aerial photographs of the Bradford area, taken between 1953-1968 by one of Bradford's best photographers.

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