

# Denison family left its mark on Corning and Twin Tiers

The name "Denison" is a well-known one in Corning.

Today people drive along Denison Parkway and in the summer enjoy the facilities of Denison Park. However, there's not a "Denison" name in the telephone book or the city directory. Although the original Denisons have faded into history, the mark they left on this community remains.

The Denison family's role in the community's business and growth started in 1848 when **Charles G. Denison**, a native of Susquehanna County, Pa., came to Corning to work as a clerk in the store of his uncle, G. D. Williams. That was the same year the community was incorporated as a village.

After his marriage in 1855, he and his bride, the former Martha Land, moved to Tioga, Pa. where for two years he was a merchant. But they had liked Corning when here, so they moved back in 1857. A son, **C.L. Denison**, was born to them in 1859. The blood of a businessman ran



**Dick  
Peer**

through the elder Denison's veins and he founded a respected business which continued until his death in 1892, selling coal, wood, farm supplies, flour and feed. In the canal days he conducted a warehouse and shipping business. His warehouse was located on the north side of Tioga Avenue just off Pine Street Square, now Centerway Square. He was a proud member of his adopted community, serving several terms as village president and trustee and for more than 20 years was a member of the Board of Education.

After his death the business, C. G. Denison & Son, wholesale and retail dealers in coal and masons supplies, was passed to his son, C. L. Denison.

Like his father, C. L. was an astute businessman. He had graduated from Corning Free Academy and then gone on to Rochester to attend business school. Afterward he returned to Corning to work with his father.

But he had his eyes on bigger things and bigger cities. As a young man he went to Buffalo as a wholesaler of coal and stayed there four years. When mine owners discontinued having shippers and instead sold directly to the wholesalers, C.L. moved on, this time to New York City. About the same time he purchased some coal mines near Morris Run, Pa. and continued as a

wholesaler through his ownership of mines.

By now he was becoming wealthy enough so that he could go on hunting trips into Canada. On one of those trips he learned of an apparently worthless abandoned silver mine. He wasn't averse to taking risks in business so he purchased it. He believed there might be more silver in it which could be extracted using newer methods. He was correct. Operations started in 1906 and the mine continued to produce silver from a new depth until the mid-1920s. During that time more than \$1 million worth of silver was mined.

In the early 1920s he took another gamble which paid off. He purchased a gold mine at Kirkland Lake, Canada which was considered a failure. He formed a company to finance the project and set to work, using more modern methods. Rich deposits were found and the company stock went from less than a dollar to over \$12. Eventually the mine had an annual output of approximately \$1,750,000.

The name "Denison" became well known along Wall Street and he was called "The Chief" by his associates. He built an impressive home on Park Avenue, had a summer home at Saddle River, N.J. and a winter home in Pasadena, Calif.

However, C.L.'s roots were still in Corning, although he only infrequently

returned here. He continued to generously support local projects, including donation of about half the cost of \$40,000 to develop the park which is now called Denison Park. His contributions were in memory of his father, C. G. Later he added another \$14,000 for completion of the park lake.

C. L., was a life member of Painted Post Masonic Lodge 117 and it was through his generosity that the first seats in the Blue Lodge room of the Frank B. Hower Scottish Rite Cathedral were provided.

During World War I when a typhoid fever epidemic hit the city, the water department was making frantic efforts to locate a new water supply and was planning on installing a violet ray system to purify the water at a cost of \$6,000 with an upkeep of \$18 a day. C. L. heard of the problem and using his connections along Wall Street suggested instead that a new-type chlorine gas apparatus be installed instead. He gave liberally for its installation. The cost to the city was \$400 and the daily upkeep was only 15 cents.

Yes, C.L. Denison was a hometown boy who went off into the bigger world of business and became a millionaire, but one who never forgot his roots and all that he had learned growing up in Corning.

## PEER'S PEOPLE ... AND THINGS

**Joe Maloney**, now of St. Louis, who bemoaned the fact that he hadn't found any former Corningites living there, can now have a Crystal City Reunion. Local friends and relatives point out that the **Rev. Bill Findlay**, former pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Corning, is there. **Frank Faulisi** lives nearby in St. Peter's, Mo. and works for Moog Industries in St. Louis. He's a 1962 graduate of Northside High School, the last class to graduate there.

Speaking of NHS, the Class of 1950 is seeking some addresses of former members to notify them of the 40th reunion this summer. They are **Burton Beebe, Paul Brokaw, Alma Copp Leonard, Floyd Damoth, Georgia Dodge Parsons, Betty DuBois, Dora Dunning Keeney, Ann Farncomb, Charles Griffen, Ernest Hackett, Eve (Pat) Hultzman, Doris LaFever Appl, Donald Moore, Norma Patterson, Bob Pitts, Gert Smith Henkle, Valeda Squires Shaffer, Barb Thompson and Madeline Watson King**. Those with info called **Carmine Darcangelo** at 936-6258 or **Dominic Ferreira** at 962-8831.

**LAUGHLINES:** Man to neighbor: "Of course my auto mechanic is good. If he wasn't, would I keep going back to him every week?"