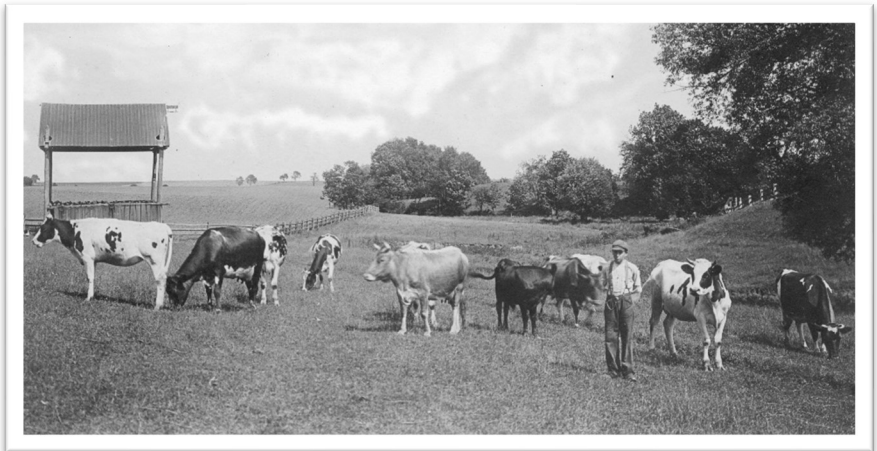


The Legend of the Griggstown Cow

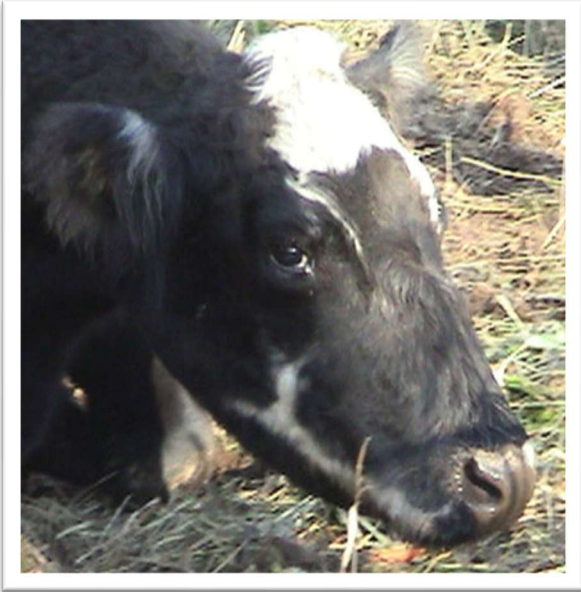
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The Griggstown Cow is beloved folklore among those who live, work and play in the Franklin and Montgomery township area surrounding the D&R Canal State Park. The story of a wandering, ownerless cow who resided in the Millstone River floodplain and who made an appearance along the historic canal towpath was often told to doubting newcomers. Like an alien craft, some claimed to have seen the mysterious animal but little evidence of its true existence was ever produced - save a questionable blurry photograph here and there. As the story went, the farm animal strayed from the herd or broke loose from its pasture and ever since had wandered freely in the floodplain foraging for meals and avoiding human contact. There was some historical truth to the story as it was common practice for area farmers to herd their cows to pasture areas sometimes crossing the Millstone River and/or the D&R Canal as needed to access alternate grazing fields and properties. It was not so far-fetched an idea that one or several animals went missing over the years and were never located. Be it true or not, occasionally a stray cow would be spotted by a motorist, park employee, passerby or hunter. The sighting would be reported and without physical evidence, viewed with some suspicion. And thus, the legend of the Griggstown Cow was born.



Cows grazing in the fields was a common sight in the rural Millstone Valley around Griggstown and the surrounding areas well into the 20th century. *Franklin Township Public Library, c. 1910*

On the morning of November 23, 2002, a call from a NJ Water Authority employee came into the D&R Canal State Park Office in Somerset reporting that the elusive cow had not only been spotted but was lying helpless in a ravine not far from the Griggstown lock area of the park. The caller reported that the animal was possibly injured and in need of assistance. Within the hour members from the Franklin Township Police Department, Griggstown Fire Department, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife, D&R Canal State Park, local farm and dairy community and concerned park patrons gathered on the scene to assist the situation and lend a hand. There before their eyes lay a living legend - the infamous Griggstown Cow. Most had only heard of him, some claimed to have seen him while others had always dismissed his very existence. But on that rainy November day he could no longer be denied. The hefty, weather-beaten, old black and white bull lay horizontal on the ground for all to see. He was in a precarious situation unable to right himself and climb the muddy embankment into



which he had fallen. After a quick examination it was determined that the animal was not injured but instead simply exhausted. The gathering of onlookers was determined to pull the old bull up the hill, get him back on his feet and send him on his way. All hoped the Griggstown Cow would survive this mishap and that the beloved local legend would live on to amuse a future generation of skeptics. With that hope in mind, a rope was attached to the animal and like some comedic tug-of-war an army of volunteers heaved the hapless, massive victim up the soaked embankment onto level ground. Their heroic efforts paid-off; after some struggle the bovine was pulled onto dry ground. Drained, confused and no-doubt in some pain, the Griggstown Cow heaved a heavy sigh, hung his massive graying head and remained motionless as if to say *"I'm tired, old and my days of*

carefree roaming are numbered." Video was shot, photographs were taken and the mysterious cow legend of Griggstown was properly verified and documented.

The existence of the famous/infamous Griggstown Cow was at last verified, documented, and finally – sadly – could now be laid to rest! Despite the valiant and combined efforts of all, the beloved cow was simply too old and weak to go on. After passing some 48+ hours in the very spot where his rescuers had left him, the independent bull was too tired and arthritic to budge. It was apparent that the old guy was suffering and so a veterinarian was called to properly assess the bull's state of health. A doctor arrived on the scene and confirmed that the animal was quite advanced in years, suffering, and on his very last legs. With a heavy heart it was agreed that euthanizing him was the proper and most humane course of action to follow. An injection was administered and slowly the "wild cow of Griggstown" peacefully closed his eyes for the last time. He was laid to rest in the area he wandered not far from the Griggstown lock in the floodplain where he called home – some say for over 30 years!

The elusive black and white bull was believed to be the last of a small group of feral cows who lived and free-ranged in the area around Griggstown. Now only his spirit and legend will continue to roam the floodplain between the Millstone River and the Delaware and Raritan Canal – his story will forever be a part of the area's history and folklore.

And so, if you hear a tale of a lone cow roaming the D&R Canal's historic towpath, don't be so quick to dismiss... it just may be the free-ranging spirit of the Griggstown Cow! Long may his legend live!