**http://whitehall.bloatedtoe.com/jtbuel.html**

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| **Whitehall History: J.T. Buel** |
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| Julio Thompson Buel |
| **Julio Thompson BuelSource: Skenesborough Museum** |

Julio Thompson Buel, the "Baitmaker of Whitehall," was born in East Poultney, VT in 1806, and grew up in Castleton. Julio's father was a furrier, and taught his son to trap and prepare skins. When not learning these trades or doing farm chores, Julio, like many of his neighbors and relatives, loved to fish. Julio often fished on Lake Bomoseen, where his father kept a shanty and boat. On one of these outings, Julio ate his lunch while his boat drifted. The boat bumped against a rock, causing Julio to drop the spoon he was using into the water. As he watched it spiral down toward the bottom, he was surprised to see a large fish swoop down, grab the spoon, and swim off with it.Ad for Buel Trolling SpoonsAd for Buel Trolling Baits**Ads for Buel's Trolling Baits Displayed in the Skenesborough Museum, Whitehall, NY.**Of course, Julio, who had longed to catch one of the large trout he'd been told existed in the lake, hurried home and snatched another spoon. He sawed off the handle, soldered a hook to the concave side, and drilled a hole in the handle stump. As soon as he had a chance, he took off to the lake in the early morning and hopped in his boat. He tied a line to his creation and put it in the water, rowing back and forth across a stretch of the lake until he felt a strong pull on his fishing pole. Sure enough, he'd caught a large trout with his new trolling spoon lure. He even managed to catch a second big one and proceeded to stroll down the main street of Castleton to show off his catch of the day.Once folks found out how Julio had accomplished this, everyone wanted to try out his new creation, and Julio was soon making spoon lures for other fishermen. He crafted spoon-shaped blades out of nickel silver, painted the convex side red, and attached treble hooks and feathers.In 1827, Julio and his father headed for the bustling town of Whitehall. They built a shop at Broad and Canal Streets (now Main Street) in 1829 and operated a furrier and taxidermy business. He did continue to craft his lures and improve them, but he only sold a few.This changed when Julio sent some of his lures to sports writer Frank Forester, who had written several articles in the weekly publication "Spirit of the Times." Mr. Forester thought so highly of the spoon lures that he wrote about them in his book *Warwick Woodlands*. The result was an overwhelming interest in Julio's invention. In 1848, Julio transformed his furrier business into that of manufacturing fishing lures, and he obtained his first patent in 1852.Julio insisted on producing quality lures and appointed his half-brother, jeweler Charles Pike, as quality controller. He used only the finest materials in the manufacture of his products - polished nickel silver for the blades, nickel-plated hooks, piano wire, and real waterfowl feathers. Because of the high quality and effectiveness of Julio's lures, word spread quickly without the need to advertise and Julio's business was a success. He even earned a medal for his contribution to the sport of fishing, which was presented to him at the Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia in 1876.In 1885, ill health forced Julio to sell his business and patents to Charles Pike, who sold the business in 1927 to E. Hammond. The company then moved to Saratoga Springs, where it operated until World War II. After the war, Frank T. Dunn purchased the business and moved it to Canton, NY. The company was purchased by Eppinger Manufacturing of Dearborn, Michigan in 1967.JT Buel Display, Skenesborough Museum, Whitehall, NYJT Buel Display, Skenesborough Museum, Whitehall, NYJT Buel Display, Skenesborough Museum, Whitehall, NY**Displays of Buel spoons and other items at the Skenesborough Museum, Whitehall, NY**The Buel spoons continued to be sold in Whitehall until 1974. Nelson Fagan had worked for Charles Pike and later established his own company, the Northern Specialty Fishing Tackle Company, where he carried the Buel line. When Fagan retired in 1958, he sold the business to William and Ruth Jackson, who continued to carry the Buel spoons. In 1974, this company was also purchased by Eppinger. The [Eppinger](http://www.dardevle.net/dardevlecgi/index.pl?init=1" \o "Visit Eppinger Website" \t "_blank) company continues to sell the "Buel spinner" line today.J.T. Buel was not only a successful fisherman, inventor, and businessman, but engaged in many other activities as well. He married Sarah Barney of Hatch Hill, and together they had six children. He also held several public offices, including deputy collector of customes from 1861 to 1873, and supervisor.Mr. Buel also held the "Court of Conciliation," a locally famous court held in Buel's shop in Whitehall, where Buel and a Mr. Eddy served as judges. Although the court had no real authority, many disputes were settled there rather than in the village court, which saved taxpayers' money.J.T. Buel died in May, 1886, just one year after selling his business to Charles Pike. However, he is still remembered today as the inventor of the Buel spoon and for his contribution to the fishing tackle industry. The Skenesborough Museum has several J.T. Buel-related items, including many of his spoon lures, on display for all to see and enjoy.References: Various articles by Doris Begor Morton; Skenesborough Museum |