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NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF REGION NO. 11 AT THE
NEW YORK STATE WORLD'S FAIR - 1939.

In order to avoid promising more than I could fulfil I chose the subject that has been announced. "Notes on the History of Region No. 11".

We are accustomed to study the history of Chautauqua County as a separate geographical unit and may be somewhat familiar with the relation of the history of that unit to the history of the State and of the nation. The New York World's Fair, 1939, will, however, present our County in a different setting. The space assigned to it at the Fair will be jointly used by Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties under the uninteresting designation of Region No. 11.

Perhaps it is up to us to make the participation of Chautauqua County so interesting that designation by mere number shall not obscure what we have to present to visitors at the World's Fair.

Even under a numerical designation we may find some interest for ourselves and even for others. It happens that World's Fair Region No. 11 is identical with the 43rd Congressional District of the state, long represented by our Congressman, Daniel A. Reed of Dunkirk. Our state has forty-five members in the House of Representatives, two of whom are elected by the State at large. As there are only twelve regions in the state to be represented at the World's Fair, it is probable that no other congressional district has a space thus devoted exclusively to the presentation of its own history and its own interests. This fact gives to our region and the space assigned to it a unity of interest that ought to arouse our enthusiasm. We are or ought to be interested in the geographical and political unit that has for more than half a

century been the basis of our representation in the Congress of the United States.

It happens that the space assigned to us is distinct from ~~the~~ other regional spaces. It is somewhat smaller in size but is on the opposite side of the Exhibition Hall from other regional exhibits and at one end of the Grand Panorama of the State, as shown in the New York State Building. That building will serve two main purposes: Inside it will house the exhibit of the State; outside - above and at the rear, it will provide the great seating space and auditorium for the water theater - the center of interest for all visitors. We have the opportunity to present to the millions who will pass through this permanent and magnificent building an exhibit worthy of our county and of our district.

To determine and properly present at such a time and place the part played by Chautauqua County in the history and development of the 43rd Congressional District is a new kind of problem in our local history. No history of the district as such has ever before been written. One is now contemplated and will be published in the near future. This association of our three counties in the effort to give proper representation for the district at the World's Fair is sure to bring to light new and interesting historical material and to demonstrate in ways before unknown the community of interest and of history that has so long kept these counties thus associated.

Of course physical geography had something to do with fixing and continuing the boundaries of our congressional district and, unconsciously perhaps with the designation of it as a separate

region to be represented at the Fair. Our three counties include all of the State of New York that occupies the ridge which separates the watershed of the St. Lawrence from the watershed of the Mississippi. A few streams in eastern Allegany County send their waters to the Susquehanna. All others flow either northward to the Great Lakes or southward to the Father of Waters.

"The Genesee Country", a history edited by Lockwood R. Doty and published in 1925, purports to cover all of Western New York, including not only our congressional district but thirteen other counties as well. Its name, however, implies special interest in what is more properly to be regarded as the "Genesee Country" - rather than Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties. It contains an apparently authoritative chapter by Herman LeRoy Fairchild of the University of Rochester on the "Geologic History of the Genesee Country.". That chapter when read in connection with Chautauqua County articles on the same topic discloses that our congressional district has some unity in that respect.

It appears that the geological formation of the entire district is that of the Chautauquan Division of the Upper Devonian Period of the Paleozoic Era. Chemung Shales and sandstones form the rock strata of most of the region. The terminal morain of the Quebec glacier arches northward from the Pennsylvania boundary and other glacial deposits are found in the region. A few hills in the southwestern corner of the State, in Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties are still capped with an unusual rock of white quartz pebbles known as the Olean conglomerate. The famous localities

Rock City in Cattaraugus County and Panama Rocks in Chautauqua County constitute interesting examples of that conglomerate, which is now thought to be of non-marine origin. It once extended over a much larger surface but the action of the glaciers has removed it from the tops of most of our hills. The underlying rocks of the region are too old to contain any substantial deposits of coal, but natural gas is found in paying quantities in the region generally. Petroleum is found nowhere else in the State of New York. There are two separate and distinct oil pools in our region: (1) the Allegany County pool, which extends into the edge of Steuben County, and (2) the Cattaraugus County extension of the Bradford, Pennsylvania development, known as the State Line Pool. What is called a freak well was drilled in the town of Sheridan, Chautauqua County and still produces some oil.

Historically the petroleum industry of our region has played a more interesting and exciting part than is indicated by the facts I have thus far mentioned. "The Seneca Indian Oil spring, now nearly lost in the waste land of the uninhabited square mile of Indian reservation near the outlet of Cuba Lake, Allegany County is a spot of historic interest!" There the first recorded discovery of petroleum on the American Continent was made by Joseph de la Roche d'Aillon, a Franciscan Friar who described in a letter written July 18, 1627, his visit to that spring. He is said to have come down from north of the Lakes on an expedition especially arranged for the purpose. The location of the spring is shown on a French map published by Galinee in 1670. The expedition was important not only in the history of petroleum generally but also in our local history as recording one of the earliest visits made by a white man to what is now our Congressional district.

No immediate commercial use of petroleum resulted from that visit to Seneca Oil Spring, but our region much later became the scene of great activity in the oil industry. The first two tests for oil in the State of New York were made by drilling wells, one at Whitesville, Allegany County and the other at Limestone, Cattaraugus County about seven years after Col. Drake drilled the pioneer well at Titusville, Penna. Neither of these two wells in New York State produced much oil, but the Allegany County pool now includes about 50,000 acres and is thought to have already/ produced and to now contain an aggregate of more than 150,000,000 barrels of what is known as "Pennsylvania" paraffin type of crude oil, claimed to be "the highest grade oil in the world". "It sells at the wells for the highest price paid for any crude petroleum, excepting a freak production of near gasoline from single freak wells encountered now and then in the great western fields." Oil storage at Olean in 1872 was largest in the world and the first commercial pipe line was laid from that city to Saddle Rock River, N. J.

Interesting events in the early history of the production and use of natural gas are also associated with our district. The first use of gas for illuminating purposes occurred at Fredonia in 1821. A spring near the Canadaway Creek was the source of supply. The hotel at that Village was brightly lighted by gas at the time of Lafayette's visit in 1825. Later the first natural gas well was successfully completed at Fredonia and is still flowing. The first use of gas in manufacturing processes occurred at Clean in 1870. Chautauqua County is still regarded as a field in which larger production of gas may be developed.

Besides natural resources awaiting mere extraction from underlying rocks, the soil of our district had, in preceding centuries produced forests that afforded opportunities for tremendous industry if not for the accumulation of great wealth in the early days of our history. From the eastern boundary of the district, near the headwaters of Allegany River, along the southern tier of the State to the shores of Lake Erie, that soil now brings forth agricultural products in quantity and variety, perhaps greater than we have realized.

The culture of the American Grape established by Elijah Fay at Portland in 1824 after failure in two previous attempts has developed until Chautauqua County today produces more American grapes as distinguished from imported varieties, than any other locality in the United States. Its annual production of 35,000 tons is nearly half of the total production of all kinds of grapes in the State of New York. It may not be so well known to most of us that our county is now also the largest producer of eggs in the state and that Allegany county stands eighth among the counties of the state in the production of potatoes.

The entire district produces 100,000,000 eggs per year or more than 1/10 of the production of the entire state. It produces one and one-half million bushels of potatoes or about one-fifteenth of the state production. All of the three counties, with Allegany County leading, produce annually 513 million pounds of milk or about one-twelfth of the production of the state from a population of 114,000 milch cows in the district.

Other industries, products and resources of the district have changed from time to time until the list today is a long and imposing one. Among interesting and unusual items are steel tubes for a tunnel under the Hudson River, towers for lights on the great

Tri-Borough Bridge. We are more familiar with the great variety of wood, metal and textile products of Jamestown and vicinity. Less so with the different kinds of manufactures in Dunkirk and the northern part of our own county and still less with others in Cattaraugus and Allegany counties. Space and time do not permit further enumeration here but every student of local history ought to have some comprehensive knowledge of the creative activities of the people of our region.

Even the events that are to be celebrated by the World's Fair suggest new lines of inquiry about our local history. The Fair is to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the beginning of government under the Constitution of the United States: events that occurred during the period of about one year and four months when the City of New York, with a population of only about 33,000 was capital of both the State and the Nation. The opening day of the Fair will be the Anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as first President of the United States, April 30, 1789.

What was going on in Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties during that period? Of course there weren't any such counties in existence, and no white man had yet made a permanent settlement within the territory from which such counties have since been made. Although occupied only by Indians our Region then formed a part of Ontario County which had been created by an act of the legislature January 27, 1788 but was not actually organized with Canandaigua as its county seat until 1789.

March 30, 1802, the year of the first permanent settlement in what is now Chautauqua County, the County of Genesee was created with Batavia as its county seat. By legislative enactment April 6, 1806 Allegany County was formed. Its organization was completed in 1807. On the 11th of March, 1808, the legislature divided the

County of Genesee into the counties of Genesee, Niagara, Chautauqua and Cattaraugus. Cattaraugus and Chautauqua by the provisions of the act, were prohibited from becoming full fledged political entities until it should be determined by the Board of Supervisors of Niagara County, from the assessment rolls of the counties, that they were possessed of five hundred taxable inhabitants qualified to vote for Member of Assembly. In the meantime they were to constitute for judicial and municipal purposes a part of Niagara County. At the meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Niagara County in the fall of 1810 it was found that Chautauqua County contained the requisite number of taxable inhabitants to entitle it to be organized. Such organization as a separate county was not completed until 1811. Recently an instrument relating to real property has come to light which describes as located in Niagara County a tract of land now within Chautauqua County. Few people know that Chautauqua County was ever included in Niagara County which was in fact created by the very same act of the legislature that created Chautauqua County. Cattaraugus County, also created by that act was less fortunate in obtaining final recognition. Apparently its number of taxable inhabitants was not sufficient until 1817, when its organization was officially recognized.

Even the boundaries of the State of New York had not been completely established when Washington was being inaugurated. The southern boundary, supposed to be on the 42nd parallel of latitude had been surveyed from an island in the Delaware River to Lake Erie in 1787, but the State of Pennsylvania was not satisfied to be cut off from Lake Erie and finally purchased what is known as the Erie Triangle. This made it necessary to survey the line between that Triangle and what is now Chautauqua County. That boundary was not

established until 1790 and the eastern boundary of Chautauqua County not until 1798. Surveys of towns and lots of course had not yet begun. Interest in the future of Western New York was, however, developing rapidly as appears from subsequent events that, within less than twenty years brought into our Region enough people to justify the creation of three separate counties which now constitute the 43rd Congressional District of New York State.

The dispute between Massachusetts and New York had been settled by the famous compromise that gave to Massachusetts "the right of preemption of the soil from the native Indians" i.e. the right to acquire from the Indians title to the land now within our three counties and more, while the sovereignty over all remained with the State of New York. The State of Massachusetts had sold some of these lands and Robert Morris had become interested but he had not yet acquired title from the Seneca Nation of Indians, whom Washington had assisted in maintaining their ownership of the soil. The official map of the Morris purchase is dated 1804 and shows that the land as finally acquired by the great Revolutionary financier included all of Chautauqua and Cattaraugus counties and about one half of Allegany county.

Actual settlement began first in Allegany County. Cattaraugus County was next and Chautauqua last in permanent occupation by the white man. The first settlement in what is now Allegany County was made by Nathaniel Dike in or near the present location of Wellsville, in the spring of 1795. He was a Connecticut yankee and Revolutionary soldier. Other settlers came into that part of the district in 1796 and 1797 ~~and it was in that part of the district in 1796 and 1797~~ and it was in that part of the district that the first road was built in 1801-2.

The first settlement in what is now Cattaraugus County occurred in 1798. Seven years before, the Seneca Chief Cornplanter had written to the Society of Friends at Philadelphia asking that they send teachers to educate the Indian children. Pursuant to that request, three young men, Joel Swayne, Halliday Jackson and Henry Simmons were brought to the Seneca country by Joshua Sharpless who left them there and returned to Philadelphia. These three young men entered upon their duties as teachers and made the first settlement by white men in Cattaraugus County. Their earliest location was in what is now the town of South Valley, but in 1803 they removed to a tract of 692 acres purchased by the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends from the Holland Land Company. This was the beginning of the movement that resulted in the establishment of the Friends' School organized in 1865, now an important influence among the Indians, located near Quaker Bridge on the Allegany River.

As we all know, the first permanent settlement in Chautauqua County was made by Col. James McMahan at the "Crossroads" near Westfield in 1802, about seven years after the beginning of settlement, in Allegany County at the eastern end of the district. Some idea of the rapidity of the growth in population of Chautauqua County is afforded by the record above mentioned that disclosed 500 taxable inhabitants appearing upon the assessment rolls of the County in 1810.

Considered in relation to the history of the 43rd Congressional District and in relation to the events the World's Fair is intended to commemorate, our local history takes on new interest. A Justice of our New York State Supreme Court once expressed to me great surprise that people should have much interest in the history of a county. Probably he would be even more skeptical

about interest in the history of a congressional district - a unit that can be created and changed or abolished by a mere act of Legislation. I think he might change his mind if he undertook to bring about abolition of Chautauqua County or any other political unit that has existed long enough to permit the growth of healthy local pride.

Is it not an almost universal experience that we become attached to the geographical environment in which we are content to live and to the political establishments and civil and social relations with which we are familiar? Perhaps a resident of a great city or a person whose life is spent in moving about forms no such attachments, but I think most of us do.

Self-love expands naturally to members of the family and to intimate friends; more slowly and not quite so completely to neighbors and to the community in which one lives; still more slowly and with greater difficulty to places and people more remote. Always, however, there seems to be an interest in those with whom one comes in personal contact. To some extent such people and such places become parts of our personal experience - parts of ourselves.

Even greater expansion of our self-interest is required for the establishment of larger loyalties that we proudly profess. Few can intimately know the State in which we live or the officials to whom we entrust the conduct of its business. It is our intelligent imagination rather than personal experience that makes us familiar with the affairs and the statesmen of the great nation to which we owe our allegiance. The brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God are noble ideals we seek to realize but they have not yet supplanted the personal interests and selfish desires of our daily lives. Perhaps it is by means of modern miracles of communication

that our personal contacts are to be expanded and the field of our daily experience broadened from smaller to larger units that shall lead us toward true patriotism, toward love of man and love of God.

It is grand and inspiring to gaze upon the great open spaces of the west, the vast expanses of the ocean, the towering heights of great mountains, the infinite extent of the heavens and the beauty of the sun and the moon and the stars but our daily life seems more closely associated with lesser things; with work and business, with home and the family, with friends and neighbors, with the people and the places that are ours, with our hills and valleys, our lakes and streams, the forests and fields and cities and villages that are within our reach. Intimate knowledge of and interest in them is perhaps one of the surest guaranties of loyalty and devotion to larger and nobler causes.

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