In February, when the program committee (Mr. Leet, Miss Crocker, and Mr. Wright) asked me if I would address the Spring Meeting of this society, I checked my calendar to see if it was possible. According to my calendar, I have a very important commitment to keep some 400 miles from here later today. Clearly it would be difficult if not impossible. With this in mind, I did what I had to do -- I phoned Mr. Leet and told him I would accept the invitation. Why? -- because I remember well the warm welcome this same group gave me at the Holiday Inn in Fredonia (1973). -- because I can never resist the temptation to talk about my second love -- Chautauqua County history. -- because psychologically I fall somewhere between an incurable optimist and a masochist. That is, I have been speaking for the last three years on Chautauqua county's place in our national bi-centennial with little result. Mr. Leet's suggestion that I focus on that theme might well have been the clincher. -- and finally -- because I discovered that if I keep my engine running and beat all of you to the door it might yet be possible to catch an afternoon flight from Buffalo and keep an after dinner engagement in the Catskills.

Well, my commitment was made. I agreed to address you today on the topic -- "The Continuing American Revolution in Chautauqua County."

Unfortunately, for more than a month all I had was an inspiration. More than sixty speeches or talks on Chautauqua County history in the past year had long ago sapped my creativity and completely bankrupted my researches or the subject.

Then, in mid-March an amazing sequence of events unfolded. I think it happened on St. Patrick's Day -- when my Irish ancestors from Jamestown - the Mahoneys - conjured up enough leprechauns to inspire even my half-German mind. It happened on the 17th of March, St. Patty's day itself, when
I fortunately or unfortunately consumed a dangerous concoction of works in one sitting. They included:

- Bertrand Russell's essay, "The Theologian's Nightmare"
- Carl Becker's essay, "The Spirit of '76 or Jeremiah Mynkoon"
- a long poem on Clio, the muse of history.

With all this under my belt as it were -- I sat down on the 17th of March to edit a lecture which I had to give on the 19th -- on the "sexual mysticism" of the Rev. Thomas Lake Harris and his Brotherhood of the New Life. (Harris was one of Chautauqua County's more infamous creative -- if not pro-creative -- geniuses of the last century).

Well -- the concoction of readings combined with Harris's mysticism (or whatever) sent me asleep later that evening and into an almost trance-like state. It wasn't long before Clio -- the muse of history -- came along and took me on an incredible odyssey -- through the difficult straits of Chautauqua County.

There I was asleep at 161 West Main Street, Westfield, New York, when I rose to semi-consciousness and felt the presence of someone or something foreign or strange in our bedroom.

Before I could call out -- there I was -- bagged by Clio the Muse of History. Bound and mute, Clio led me off that night on an odyssey that led to Chautauqua Creek -- flying (almost hurdling) up the creek bed for a few miles -- just above a waterfall -- she darted (with me well in tow) into a cave whose opening had for centuries disguised the size of the interior.

When Clio loosed me from her grasp I found myself standing before what appeared to be a panel or tribunal of some sort.

"Here he is," Clio said as she dropped me before the bench.

"Ohhhhh!" the tribunal chorused as they appraised me in my blue and white paisley pajamas.
"He is skinny."

"Didn't know he had all that hair."

"I think he's cute" -- made up the bulk of the initial comments.

Not knowing where to begin I said: "And where am I and who are you?"

"No matter who we are - but - you are before us because we chose to summon you."

"As Clio's Bi-Centennial Committee we chose you as our 'Loser in Need of a New Story Award.' " The speaker was a dark woman with long stringy hair. "We have studied the Bi-Centennial plans of your area and can clearly see that both you -- who have talked about it more than anyone else -- and all the others who have also done little or nothing -- could use a refresher course in what the American Revolution was in Chautauqua County. Child, you of all people should know that a revolution means change and Chautauqua county has been experiencing change -- the most important aspect of the 'Continuing American Revolution' for 200 years now."

Child she called me. "Next thing I know that witch will be calling me little Jackie Ludes." I really wasn't grasping the situation.

At that instant Clio herself boomed out at me, her voice reverberating off the walls of the cave: "We think a case can be made for the unfolding of the Continuing American Revolution in Chautauqua County."

It was apparent that I was in for a long night so I sat down, at Clio's request, before the bench and listened to an unearthly performance.

"First witness," called Clio.

Into the dim candlelit vestibule of the cave came a very old man. I though for a second that I knew him -- a departed uncle perhaps. A slight man with a prominent crop of white hair and an enormous pair of hands. He was obviously a man who knew what hard work was.

"He's here Samuel," Clio said to him.
I wanted to shout "stop -- don't do this just for me. There are others who ought to..." But at the same time I heard a clattering and when I realized that it was my bicuspids ricocheting off my incisors I knew that I couldn't utter a word.

The old man spoke very softly. His voice was strained: almost inaudible. His name, he said, was Samuel Shattuck. He had fought, so he claimed, not only in the American Revolution but also in the war that brought it on. I listened.

"In April, 1753, I (Samuel Shattuck) accompanied an officer and five men under orders of the commanding officer of the English post at Oswego. We left Oswego on foot and headed west toward Lake Erie. When we reached a point near the mouth of Cattaraugus Creek we saw a 'French Flotilla' on its way west. We monitored the French as best we could from shore. We encamped briefly, at Canadaway Creek in what you now call the Town of Dunkirk. Narrowly escaping the Indian allies of the French, we proceeded to the Chautauqua Creek (Barcelona) and watched while the enemy felled trees along the west bank. Very soon, a larger French party arrived, put a stop to the construction, and all moved farther west with our party following close behind. We observed the French building forts at Erie and at French Creek. In order to hide ourselves efficiently we stayed, all the while, in caves, and 'depended upon bows and arrows, traps and snares to secure game for food.'"

"In October we were re-deployed to monitor the French. While in Chautauqua County we followed the high ground south of Lake Erie -- keeping the lake clearly in our view. At Chautauqua Creek we again found the French busily proceeding with the construction of a major road which stretched from Lake Erie to Chautauqua Lake. We stayed several weeks and finally witnessed the French departure for Canada."

"I tell you this," Shattuck continued -- his voice raspy and fading, "because I was a soldier in England's war for empire. In a sense I won that war. We drove the French from Chautauqua County and elsewhere. But having done that -- my English friends could not afford the victory. So, they ordered us to stay out of the newly won land. For some of us that was reason enough to continue the fight -- but this time against the English."

Shattuck's voice seemed to trail off. I had known, from my research, that he had become a pioneer settler of the Town of Portland (dying there in 1827) but I couldn't be sure if his last words dealt with his pioneer experience or not.
He finished, exhausted, and was led back in the direction from which he had appeared.

Clio stared down at me. "Questions!" she asked — looking both at me and then at the bench.

"It is apparent," she screeched, "that the seed of revolution was planted here — within your county."

"Next," she called out.

I had no idea what to expect. The ghost of Samuel Shattuck had been enough to haunt me for the next 200 years.

"Moses," Clio said as feet shuffled in the distance.

I expected to see a man with white flowing robes and beard bearing golden tablets. Instead, Moses appeared as a young man in his mid-forties. He was rather squat — short and thick and not at all biblical.

His name, he said, was Moses Bacon. "I came over the 'Old Portage Road' to Ellery in 1809. I came here from Dutchess County and, like hundreds of others who came at the same time; I helped push the American frontier west. I spent our last dollar securing the title to our land. My boys and I had to pay for our first bushel of potatoes and some flour with our own labor at the Crossroads."

Moses sounded like a man who, in retrospect, was just beginning to appreciate the enormous contribution of a life he had both directed and enjoyed.

"To clear my small portion of what was then a virgin forest," Moses exclaimed, "was a man-killing job. The yoke of oxen I had driven with us, and my boys and I supplied the power. When we first burned our fallow we sold our black salts of lye for a pig, another bushel of potatoes, and a few other items. We took as many loads as we could to the ashery and each trip brought us that much closer to paying up the Holland Land Company."

Moses rambled on nostalgically about the condition of Chautauqua county when he arrived here. He described at length the black bear, wild cats, wild turkey and partridges that were often seen in the forest and on the pioneer's table.
I was still dreaming about the enormous flocks of pigeons and packs of wolves he described when I realized that Moses was raising his voice attempting, ironically, to bring me back to earth.

"Jacob," he was almost shouting. Jacob—I thought. (The last person to call me that was Rod Nixon—and that was two years ago when I asked him to collect for the United Fund."

"Jacob, I died on my land when I was 42 years old. But I left my wife, and my sons, and their children, and their children's children something. Bacon's have been in Chautauqua county ever since it was a frontier—ever since I brought them there. And that's important. I was able to give my children that. It isn't that simple anymore."

Moses seemed to literally fade away. I was struck by his appreciation of his own role in our county's history. But, having championed Chautauqua county as the First Frontier for some years, I wasn't sure what more I could do. I was aware that the endurance of the Bacons and other pioneers was in itself a reason for celebration. Hundreds of Chautauqua's frontier families had given up and moved farther west to the territories open up by the Northwest Ordinance. There was not to be any "hastening of civilization" in the lands offered for sale by the Holland Land Company. As a result Bacon and others would develop an American consciousness much later than other western settlers.

I could sense a lightening of the night and I knew that dawn was fast approaching. Clio and her panel stared down at me as if to see if I could withstand some further testimony.

From the shadows I saw a large figure move forward. A man appeared. I sensed that I should know him. He came forward with a cane and I could tell, somehow, that his thick white hair had at one time been red. He had enormous broad shoulders, now rather stooped.

"When we heard it was you that was sent for..." the old man began. But Clio interrupted as he ambled forward.

"Mr. Ludes," she said. "We thought that your great-grandfather Mahoney could fill you in on a most important chapter
of this country's and America's history."

"My great-grandfather! Thank goodness for Clio."

"When we heard it was you," he repeated, "the family decided that I, as 'the Elder'..."

"I understand," I heard myself say.

"Jake, I came here (to Jamestown) with my brother James in 1853. As soon as we could we sent for Edward, Tom, and Kate. Fortunately, I had a skill, unlike other Irish who came here, I was a bricklayer. I was able to save some and being good at my trade I soon was able to form my own company."

"From my position, Jake, I was able to see what was happening to other immigrants like me. It made no difference, really, whether they were Irish or Swedish or Protestant or Catholic. Each new group had to 'pay its dues.' First, the churches would decide that they could afford to split in two--an immigrant church and the 'mother church' would develop. The immigrants here in Chautauqua county were first segregated, in part by their own choosing. They were also discriminated against. Then gradually, by dint of their own hard work, they were accepted--acclimated and assimilated I think you call it in your work."

"That's correct," I said. I, a third generation immigrant, offered approval of what had happened more than a hundred years ago.

My great-grandfather recalled for me how he and his widowed mother, along with several brothers and sisters made the voyages to America from Tarbert, on the River Shannon, Ireland, at the height of the "potato famine" in 1849. He was reluctant, understandably, to dwell on the hardships of their "Middle Passage" from the Irish coast to the American shore. They arrived in Jamestown in 1851, he recalled, and poor but not lacking in ambition, he soon found employment. After years of hard work, great-grandfather became a builder and contractor of considerable reputation in western New York. He wasn't boasting. He suspected he had been among the fortunate. "Others were not so blessed," he concluded.

I had so many questions to ask my great-grandfather but a sense of urgency was illuminated by a brightening dawn and told me that it could not be.
Even Clio refrained from comment as great-grandfather retreated from the brightening dawn now clearly visible in the vestibule of the cave.

The sense of exigency seemed briefly to diminish as I sat silent and Clio and her panel glared down at me. The silence was uncomfortable.

"Unfortunately the day has overtaken us," Clio shouted down to me. "But there are more who would like to speak to you. Ira Froster would like to tell you about the reform movements that developed in your county. Ira was a conductor of the underground railroad; he was also a member of U. S. Grange number 1 and his wife was a charter member of the NCTU."

"I'm so sorry," I said. And I meant it. I was sorry that for some reason I had to leave and sorry that for some reason I couldn't continue to see what Clio had arranged.

"Well," Clio finally spoke, "what kind of bi-centennial celebration do you plan for your county?"

"I'm really not responsible you see," I stammered. "There is a county chairman and I think he has a committee."

"Think," she shouted. "Bi-centennial plans are in action by now. The time for thinking has passed."

"I know," I said apologetically. But localities are doing their own things. But county-wide--I don't really think there is a plan."

"What you tell me is inexcusable. It is inexcusable for county leaders not to demand an appropriate program. It is inexcusable for someone with the responsibility not to perform his duty--or if he has to inform the public. It is inexcusable for people to sit by and let this happen. I cannot excuse you Ludes--and neither can anyone whom you met this night.

"Your county," Clio said her voice beginning to boom, "was the seedbed of the Revolution. The frontier experience unfolded here and so did the whole reform impulse in America. Immigrants arrived here in waves and created new chapters in American history. What I'm telling you is that the American Revolution has continued in Chautauqua county from 1776 until 1975 and you dare to tell me you have no plans--on a county-wide basis--for celebrating this pageant of history?"
"I'm afraid that's it," I murmured.

"Despicable!" was the last word I heard.

I awakened some moments later, safely deposited in my own bedroom and knowing what I had to say to you today. You are, after all, the protectors of our county's history. I have reported to you my experience—and what I know about the celebration of the Bi-Centennial within the county. I owed that much to Clio.

I ask you to continue the revolution and offer your own leadership.