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BOOK TRAILS OF CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

When the urge of a larger opportunity and the eagerness to overcome natural difficulties led our ancestors to open this region of splendid timberland to future development, certain time-honored pilgrim trails were projected by them from New England. These trails have ever been taken up and extended by other later pioneers further toward the setting sun.

The trails we mean are traced upon no map, but rather, in the lives and destinies of our people. So it is that today I am asked to take you with me over one of these old paths,- The Trail of the Printed Book in our county, as it may be followed by us without undue attention to detail along the way; but hoping to reach some point where a comprehensive and pleasant view may prove to us that those who preceded us were not lacking in vision, while they contended with the hardships of frontier life,- that their descendants, in days made easier by that pioneer devotion have also left creditable record and have shown us the way in our turn to carry on this goodly trail.

The research necessary to the preparation of such a paper has led to much delving among old pamphlets and histories, as well as to some interesting correspondence, and has also awakened memories of home conversations relative to early books and reading habits. It is not my intention to develop this subject as a mere book-list, quoting you every author and title; with painstaking record of bibliographic detail. However informing it might be,

this method could only interest a book-collector.

I must be content rather, to show the human interest of these few scattered volumes as they touched the lives dependent upon them almost entirely for mental and spiritual refreshment and guidance. From all accounts of the rigors of pioneer life in this region a hundred and more years ago, it is easy to realize the scant opportunity for book-culture. Our forefathers must have had largely to find their "books in the running brooks," -- their "sermons in stones." The task of subduing the wilderness conditions attracted men and women of hardy, enterprising type prepared to lead laborious lives, with the hope at heart, no doubt, that one day they, or their children would win through to leisure and the things of leisure. There is record of certain pioneers making room for a box of books in the limited packing space of their wagons which were to toil so slowly and painfully through the wild unbroken wilderness. For some of these families from New England and the established places of northern and eastern New York, brought with them traditions of culture and prized their small collections of well selected books. A few of these people were strongly intellectual, had advantages of schooling and in some cases, a college education. Religion and education were traditions too precious to be thrown aside as burdensome impedimenta on this trek to their new home, therefore among early arrivals were the minister and the schoolmaster provided with a few needed books.

It has passed into a proverb that as they moved west, our New England ancestors "carried in one hand a Bible and in the other a spelling-book." Were it possible to look in upon such an early settlement, we might be at a loss to discover "who's who" -- would not guess that the capable miller standing flour-dusted at the

door of his mill was one of the scholarly young men of the New England town from which he came, and a young patriot of the Revolution as well. It was of this man that his fellow-villager, a Scotchman is quoted as saying: "Mr J.-- is a powerful smart man. He knows e'en-a-most as much as the Meenster." High praise in those times.

Again having noticed the smith at his anvil, we would be little prepared to behold him next day addressing his neighbors with impressive reasoning and fervid utterance from the pulpit! Indeed, the eminent early missionary to this region, Father Spencer, said that "A man to make a good pioneer-preacher should first learn blacksmithing -- the best recommend he could carry into the wilderness."

Need of all manner of service was great, and a person of versatile talents had ample chance to exercise them.

It is said "They had no newspaper, few books and a Sermon was a treat" which leads us to mention the "First Sermon preached in Chautauqua County." This was at the close of the Revolutionary War; A missionary to the Six Nations found himself wandering on the shores of Chautauqua Lake. At nightfall he bent his steps toward a light he saw in the woods, the cabin of an Indian chief where he was hospitably sheltered. In the morning after a good breakfast of venison, the chief asked him to sit with him on a log in front of his cabin. No sooner was he seated than he was asked to move along. This was repeated until Kirkland replied he could not move farther without falling off the log. "Well," said the Indian, "That is just the way you white people treat us -- We once owned all this land but we have been driven from place to place until there is no place left."

The next push will drive us into the Lakes, and why are we treated thus?" That, says the Rev. Charles Burgess, is what I call the first sermon preached in Chautauqua County. It was an illustrated sermon, it was a moving and an effective sermon. It had one of the grandest of subjects, - Christian Ethics and the Rights of Man.

He tells another anecdote of Father Spencer, mentioned before. "A visiting minister once said "Mr Spencer, your sermon is very able. I cannot answer it, but I do not believe a word of it! Father Spencer replied: "I am very sorry to hear you say so; very little of it is mine, nearly all of it was taken from the Bible!"

As to the early physician: The only means he had of finding his patients, was to follow the track of the Holland Land Company's surveyors, indicated by the trees they had blazed!

Miss Clara Harrington of the Town of Poland has old medical text-books used by her great-grandfather in his practice in those early times.

But though daily tasks were arduous, most of those early men and women improved their moments of leisure. It was at candle-light that the few books were enjoyed, or maybe at noon rest in the wood or field over his lunch, the studious, or imaginative youth made the most of his precious opportunity to read. The industrious daughter, washing the family dishes, studied her Daybald's Arithmetic, supported open above the sink; (the thought suggests itself that in this divided interest fractions might have been demonstrated in broken bits of crockery; but this is mere conjecture.)

The young schoolmistress read as she road horseback over the corduroy road through the long woods to her school; often hearing the howling of the wolves, I have heard my grandmother say.

Then it is told that at a later day, a boy in love with science lay on the flat top-board of a fence deeply absorbed in a volume of his cherished Humboldt's "Cosmos." Such are the scenes and episodes of a bygone day which are thrown back upon our mind's eye as on the screen at a photo-play, as we drive through our smiling countryside over good State roads, which nearly all follow the early trails, now petrified, we might say, and so perpetuated at the demand of modern travel and commerce.

In regard to the coming of that great institution, the Newspaper, to these western New York settlements, we have a picturesque account by Mr McKinstry. He says: "One difficulty with the publication of a newspaper was the limited mail facilities. The first mail route through the county was between Buffalo and Erie. Once in two weeks mail was carried by a man on foot or horseback. There was intense interest in this first mail-carrier as he came along in the service of the United States, with his hand-bag which easily accommodated all the letters and papers for our people.

Our first post office was established at Canadaway, now Fredonia, eight years before our first newspaper, - The Chautauqua Gazette, in 1817, which publication continued one year. Of the early county papers there are two still published, - the Fredonia Censor, founded 1821, and the Jamestown Journal, in 1826. Mr Edson also contributes to this topic: "Few newspapers reached this then distant frontier and those often weeks after publication. Sometimes a single newspaper was taken in a whole community, for instance, the only one received in the Town of Charlotte, for some time, was the Albany Gazette taken by Maj. Samuel Sinclair; its arrival at the Fredonia post office was watched with interest. It was publicly

read by some young man assigned to that duty. This brought all they knew of what went on outside the wilderness. Events of the last war with England and of Napoleon's campaigns were learned by this means." Judge Foote collected about 100 volumes of early newspapers of the county, few of which can be duplicated. Some of these are in possession of the Prendergast Library. A little later there were many who received the New York Tribune, The Anti-slavery Standard; published by William Lloyd Garrison; the New York World, Ledger and other papers.

It is interesting to know that in colonial times there were all told but 8,000 volumes produced in these colonies including sermons and almanacs. By contract we may state that last year there were published in our country upwards of 9,000 different titles which ran into hundreds of millions of volumes.

Among the exhibits at our County Centennial at Westfield, 1902, were many early books of considerable interest, some of them typical of those to be found in the majority of early homes:- The Bible, perhaps Watts' Hymns, one or two other devotional books, Pilgrim's Progress, and the precious Almanac.

Old singing-books opening the long way, bound sometimes in wooden covers were owned by many who attended singing-school and used them at church, at home and on most occasions when neighbors met for entertainment. It will be convenient to classify these old books in general into, (1) Bibles and other religious books; (2) Literary and other miscellaneous writings; (3) School-books. We must remember that for many years a recognized line was drawn between the books considered strictly religious and those called secular, -- a distinction handed down from Puritan times resulting in

the dictum that only religious and highly moral writings were to be read on Sunday, even by children. Let us read a delightful entry in the diary of a little girl of the Fifties, showing this prejudice still prevailing. "Sunday, March 20, 1853. Mrs Judge Taylor said we ought not to read our Sunday School Books on Sunday. I always do. Mine today was entitled 'Cheap Repository Tracts' by Hannah More, and it did not seem unreligious at all." Another entry reads: "Sunday. Grandmother gave Anna, 'Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul' to read today; Anna says she thinks she will have to rise and progress a good deal before she will be able to appreciate it. 'Baxter's Saint's Rest' would probably suit her better!" Again on Sunday I find this: "Grandma gave us 'The Dairyman's Daughter and Jane the Young Cottager' to read. I don't see how they happened to be so awfully good. Anna says they died of 'early piety.'" Grandma will give me 10 cents if I will learn the verses in the New England Primer that John Rogers left for his wife and nine small children when he was burned at the stake. I learned 'In Adam's fall we sinned all.'
 'My Book and Heart shall never Part.'
 'The Cat doth Play and After Slay.'"

I might record here the full title of "The New England Primer: An easy and pleasant guide to the art of reading; to which is added the Assembly Catechism." These childish references are so typical of the reading of an earlier generation that we can not do better than quote once more: "Miss Clarke reads to us from the Life of Queen Elizabeth. Have just read David Copperfield and could not leave it alone til I finished it." I may say in this connection that in a letter from our good friend and member of this Society, Mrs Newell Cheney, she tells me of her enjoyment as a girl

of a book called "Ollapodiana" and she also speaks of reading Dickens' "Dombey and son" as it appeared in the New York Tribune. I have also heard my elders recount the eagerness with which these instalments were awaited. We had some of the early paper copies of the first editions of Dickens in this country. To return to the diary for one more entry, we read: "I was straightening a room to be cleaned and found a little book 'Child's Pilgrims Progress Illustrated' -- Grandma sent Anna to see what I was doing -- she told her I was so absorbed in Pilgrim's Progress I had made none myself." "Father sent us "Gulliver's Travels" Before I go to school every morning I read three chapters in the Bible, five on Sunday and that takes me through in a year." Of other children's books Mrs Cheney speaks of "Merry's Museum" a magazine she had. Mrs L. B Warner tells me of two books which she was permitted to read on Sunday in her girlhood, - "Aesop's Fables" and "The Universal Traveler." We find record of one copy of "Mother Goose" 200 years old in the Town of Stockton. Names to conjure with were Letitia Barbauld and Maria Edgeworth, writers of moral tales and hymns for children. Miss Edgeworth is still brought out in attractive new editions for children, most entertaining in their quaint delineation of English child life many years ago. The novels of Scott, Mrs Radcliffe, and Mrs Inchbald were favorites at an early day. Of Mrs Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho" one writer says she "could not lay it down, but finished it in two days," her "hair standing on end the whole time."

Jane Porter was one of the best known with her "Thaddeus of Warsaw" which went through 14 editions, and "Scottish Chiefs," 12 editions. So much for Children's reading at different periods earlier

than ours; and some of the sermons and other religious books which were so generally read. Certain of these Sermons were the subject of very general discussion. People felt a real concern as to such matters, and as a rule held simple and definite views of their relations to God and their fellow men, in the constant arguing of which they felt a keener interest than do we in our day.

Examples of these books still existing in our county are:

Many old Bibles, psalm books, and Hymnals
 Yorick's Sermons
 Romain's Sermons
 Sermons on Faith, 1755
 Sermons of Rev. Reuben Tinker pastor of 1st Presbyterian
 Church of Westfield, 1856
 Religion Delineated
 American Preacher
 Evangelical primer
 Devout exercises of the heart
 Imitation of Christ (Early editions)
 Derham's Theology (which is frequently mentioned)
 Harvey's Meditations (another favorite)
 Watt's Hymns
 Baxter's Saint's Rest
 Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress
 Taylor's Holy Living and Dying

Other books of more general character were in some homes, and are keepsakes still. Of such may be mentioned:

Pope's Essay on Man
 Young's Night Thoughts
 The Spectator, of Addison and Steele
 Writings of Tom Paine, 1791 (the cause of much spirited
 controversy)
 Military instructions
 Book of Surveying
 Patriot Manual, 1828
 Poems of Scott and Burns
 Lockhart's Life of Scott
 Pomphret's Poems
 Sky Lark
 Art of speaking
 Taylor's Philip Van Artevelde
 Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, 1812
 Irish rebellion. (which has a familiar sound in our own ears)

An old book of my father's is entitled "Americam Antiquities and discoveries in the West" -- Evidences of an ancient population differing entirely from the present Indians, who peopled America centuries before its discovery by Columbus" and so on down a characteristic title-page of the time.

Thomson's "Seasons" was a favorite book of poetry. In the Prendergast family library is a tiny old copy with microscopic print and curious old engravings. Who has not heard the invocation of its opening verse: "Come, gentle Spring; ethereal mildness, come!"

Of these books, five, viz: "Thomson's Seasons," "Art of Speaking," "Harvey's Meditations," "Pomphret's Poems" and the "Sky Lark" were all advertised in Thomas's Old Farmer's Almanac of the day books published and sold by the remarkable compiler of that important little annual which came to so many homes. A book-rarity in my possession is called "Historical Collections of New York." It is an illustrated and descriptive gazetteer, and has numerous quaint woodcuts of interest, especially those of scenes in Chautauqua County

The vogue of the early Almanac deserves special mention; a collection of 41 of these was exhibited by Frank Lamb at the County Centennial, and the writer has an interesting lot in her collection; among them are: "The Farmer's Calendar or Western Almanac" published at Fredonia, 1826, '27; "Farmer's Calendar or Buffalo Almanac," and "Steele's & Edward Butler's Western Almanac," Buffalo, 1825, '35, '38 '39; also "Poor Richard's Almanac, 1831, Rochester, N. Y.; "Evening Journal Almanac of Albany," 1859, and later.

For your edification I shall quote from "Poor Richard's" a selection entitled "Elegant Extract:" "Behold yon venerable remnant of human life, sinking beneath the weight of time into eternity! His scale of mortality is nearly poised," etc. etc., and I also find

this timely warning: "The most eminent physicians are full in the opinion, that nearly every case reported of death from drinking cold water, is, in fact, a death from drinking rum."

However, I would not have you think the selections all in this vein; there is great variety of matter and manner.

Of course most of the early books were published in England, though the colonial and later presses of our own country put forth many of those quoted here. Chautauqua County has never been, nor is it likely to become a publishing center; however there are precious copies of the few early books published within its borders, to be found now and then. Copies of the following are in the Foote collection of the Prendergast Library. The first is "Contrast between Christianity and Calvinism;" by a Western Clergyman." Judge Foote mentions Rev. David Brown as the author of this book published anonymously, Fredonia, 1824. The author was the first Episcopal Clergyman of Fredonia, and it was he who made the address of welcome on the occasion of Lafayette's visit to Chautauqua County at Fredonia, in 1825. His address was translated into French and sent to France, where it was published. Then, "Todd's Abridgment of English grammar," Fredonia, 1827. Next comes Linus W Miller's "Notes of an Exile to VanDieman's Land," containing incidents of the Canadian Rebellion, Fredonia, 1846, and Warren's little history of Chautauque County, Jamestown, 1846. However, the earliest recorded history of the permanent settlement of our county was the series of articles by Hon. Samuel A Brown an early lawyer of Jamestown, this sketch appearing in the Jamestown Journal in 1834, Twelve years later Hon. E F Warren, county judge, prepared the small history before mentioned, only a few copies of which remain. Thanks to Hon. Obed Edson, the

Prendergast Library possesses a copy of the quaint little volume. Next in chronological order is Dr Elial T Foote who came to Jamestown in 1815, and of whom it is written that "no one has contributed so much in preserving the facts relating to the history of the county." Our later historians of note are Dr. Gilbert W Hazeltine, whose "Early History of Ellicott" is most readable, written in familiar vein. A vivid picture of early residents, their characteristics and the life of the period. There is an interesting History of the Town of Portland, by the late Dr Taylor of Brocton. The latest and most eminent of this group, the well-beloved Obed Edson, has left a numerous and valuable contribution of published works of local history which constitute a worthy monument to his memory. Young's and Edson's histories, and the Centennial History, in two volumes are excellent works of reference.

The archives of the Chautauqua County Historical Society contain contributions to local history, antiquities, biography and scientific research, by members whose special qualifications enable them to speak with authority. These writings attest our county's share in the source-material of history distinctly worthy of record.

I would not omit reference to an enterprise of the Jamestown High School Seniors of 1913 inspired by their history teacher, Professor, now Superintendent Wilton J Fletcher. This was the publication of an historical outline called "Jamestown, past and present." As an accurate and handy little book for ready reference this reflects much credit upon those who produced it, and it should be very generally in our homes and public libraries.

Besides these early Chautauqua County writers and the group of our historians, there is a distinguished list of authors born in this county or residing here at some time; but as their record is the

subject of a separate paper, I shall refrain from paying them further tribute here.

But to return to our record of early days: Let us say, that of English Classics brought by some scholarly pioneers, there was an occasional volume or set of Shakespeare. The writer has the beautiful set of small fat volumes in their tree-calf binding, valued and intimate possessions of the grandfather who from a young man had his Shakespeare at his tongue's end. There were a few Greek and Latin Bibles, testaments and lexicons. Dutch families who settled in Clymer, brought with them books from Holland. Some French people brought their own books; while the Swedes settling principally in Jamestown and vicinity had their Bibles, hymnals and a few other volumes. Just a word as to the old school-books, from Mr Henry Leworthy's collection of old Chautauqua County books, and several from other sources.

Morse's Universal Geography, 1793
 Lindley Murray's English reader, 1823
 Olney's school atlas
 Webster's spelling book
 Columbian spelling book
 Peter Parley Grammar, 1836
 A new guide to the English tongue; by Thomas Dillworth,
 Bost. 1781.
 Mental Arithmetic, 1784.

These were household words of the earlier generations of Chautauqua County youth in quest of an education.

I find mention of the first appearance of book agents in our county as early as 1825. They are said to have introduced for the most part, good, useful books, bought and read by many people.

As the age of more isolated settlement gave way to the better organized community life of towns and villages, there began an epoch of Young Men's Associations for debating, reading, and mutual

improvement. From these in most instances, library enterprises developed. There were also groups of women who were most efficient and untiring in the work of establishing and conducting the early village library centers. Then too, we find some record of encouragement offered library establishment by individual settlers very early; an instance is given by Dr Taylor in his sketch of James Dunn the pioneer settler of Portland, the genial inn-keeper of the place. Of him Dr Taylor says: "Although he and his family lacked the polish of a finished education, they were greatly interested in the dissemination of knowledge among the people and in establishing a public library in 1824, they lent their influence and contributed liberally."

Mr Edson has given us a good idea of the origin and development of our libraries. After mentioning several of the early efforts which lasted but a few years, he speaks of one founded at Charlotte Center, 1832, which existed ten years and had two or three hundred volumes. Then he states a fact of much significance which explains the cause of the discontinuance of the first libraries; this was the establishment by law of school-district libraries in 1838. The Academies of the time partook of this so-called literature fund. "No public appropriation of so little outlay," says Mr Edson, "has been of such mental and moral benefit as these school-district libraries of standard books; they contained over 26,000 volumes. In February, 1870, the Sinclairville Library Association was founded by Rev. E P McElroy who donated his library of 185 volumes, and twenty-five dollars. This is the oldest existing public circulating library in the county. Obed Edson and W W Henderson are among the trustees designated by the donor.

Mr Edson, then a Member of Assembly, in 1875, drew, presented to that body, and procured the passage of the first act in New York

State authorizing the incorporation of county libraries. Under this law many libraries sprung up throughout the state.

From these beginnings we now have at least fifteen registered libraries in Chautauqua County; several of considerable size and activity, occupying handsome buildings especially designed for their accommodation. Brief mention of these locally well known institutions will serve our purpose here. Most prominent, - The Jamestown Prendergast Free Library, Jamestown, founded 1880 by the will of the late Hon. James Prendergast. Building and collection including art gallery dedicated 1891, has now 28,000 volumes, largest annual circulation reaching nearly 96,000 volumes.

Other memorial libraries are the Brooks Memorial, the gift of the H C Brooks property for a permanent home of the Young Men's Association. It is now the Dunkirk Free Library housed in its own fine building opposite. The D R Barker library, Fredonia, began in a free public reading-room opened in 1874, followed by a subscription association. The first books a set of 16 vols. of the works of Mark Twain, given by the author. In 1883 Mr E R Barker presented the family mansion and lot to the village for a library.

The beautiful Patterson Memorial library of Westfield is the gift of the late Hannah W Patterson to the memory of her parents, Lieut. Gov. George W., and Hannah W. (Dickey) Patterson.

The Minerva Free Library of Sherman, in the words of its historian, "in 1906 meant 14 books in a market-basket," In 1908 Mr O W Horton of Chicago proposed to build a \$10,000.00 library completely equipped, provided the town raise \$500.00 annually toward its support. He later added to his gift.

The Mary E Seymour memorial library of Stockton was founded in 1899 by H W Seymour in memory of his only daughter.

The Ahira Hall Free Library of Brockton was given to the Town of Portland in 1904 by Mr Ralph H Hall, Fredonia, son of Ahira Hall who settled in Portland in 1816. The grounds are presented by G E Ryckman, grandson of Elijah Fay who settled there in 1811.

Mayville, Falconer, Bemus Point, Ashville, Sinclairville, Fluvanna, Ripley and Silver Creek are some of our other small but active library centers worthy of praise and liberal support.

No outline of popular culture in Chautauqua County would be complete which failed to mention that great source of inspiration, The Chautauqua Institution; its system of summer classes and public lectures, as well as courses of reading and home-study, bring it within the scope of the present paper. We read that "ALL the detailed plans of the University Extension movement were in use at Chautauqua in 1873, the very year when this movement, unknown to Chautauqua leaders, began in England. About 1870 the thought entered the mind of its founder that a great assemblage could be handled not only for prayer, song and preaching, but for Bible study and for general literary culture. With what large measure of success this idea has been developed, we are all familiar.

After this retrospective view which has left us not without feelings of gratitude and satisfaction for the share of culture attained by our people, we look forward with assurance to a bright future, the symbol of which, we might say, is Chautauqua, the Summer City of the Open Book.