HISTORY OF THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME

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*The Erie Railroad and the Impact of the Emigrant Paupers on Chautauqua County**

Timeline
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The Erie Railroad and the Economic Impact of Emigrant Paupers in Chautauqua County

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The New York and Erie Railroad was first conceived in 1829, to compete with the Erie Canal by connecting Lake Erie with New York's harbor. The route proposed for the Railroad crossed New York's Southern Tier counties with the terminus at Dunkirk, a natural harbor on Lake Erie in Chautauqua County. When the project was proposed, there was less than 60 miles of railroad in the entire country. William Redfield was the visionary behind the project, believing that railroads would one day be built from the Hudson to the Mississippi Rivers. His contemporaries could barely envision a railroad spanning New York State, and the project faced many hurdles.

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Nineteen years after the New York and Erie Railroad was chartered (1832), the final spikes were driven into the rails, and the first train left New York for Dunkirk. The line was the

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longest in the world at 483 miles, and the original construction estimate of $4 million was surpassed by approximately $20 million. On May 15, 1851, the first train arrived in Dunkirk, carrying the President of the United States and his entire cabinet. Another dignitary, Daniel Webster, strapped a rocking chair onto a flatbed car for the 17 hour journey, so that he could enjoy the countryside. A bottle of whiskey accompanied him. According to newspaper accounts of the time, Dunkirk's population of 2,950 swelled to over 15,000 for the celebration. Land speculators anticipated great growth for Dunkirk and purchased extensive parcels of land surrounding the village.

During the 1840s, the United States experienced an influx of European immigrants, especially from Ireland and Germany. The plight of immigrants is never easy, but in this time period it was made even more difficult by unscrupulous ship captains and booking agents. Emigrants made their way to European ports, often selling family heirlooms to buy food for the trip to America. The passage took from 4 – 16 weeks with constant danger of shipwreck and disease. Living conditions on board were terrible, especially in the steerage, where the majority of immigrants traveled. Many died during the passage of diseases like typhus, cholera and dysentery.

There were several American ports of entry, but New York City was the busiest, especially after the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. When a ship carrying immigrants arrived in New York Harbor in the early 1800s, a doctor rowed out from a quarantine office located on Staten Island to inspect the passengers for contagious diseases. If the ship passed inspection, the immigrants were released on the wharf to start a new life in America.

Prior to 1847 it was possible for the captain of a vessel to sell his cargo of passengers to brokers dealing with hotel-keepers, forwarding agents, and railway and steamboat companies. There were no federal or state regulations administering the flow of immigrants – no passports or visas. Some agents sold fraudulent train and boat tickets. Armed thugs who traveled with these company "representatives," sometimes bullied immigrants into accompanying them and exploited the new arrivals, stealing their possessions.

In 1847, the New York State Legislature passed into law a number of measures to address the growing number of immigrants arriving at New York harbor. A "commutation fee" of $1.50 a head was to be collected for support of persons likely to become a public charge on all persons landing at the port of New York, to be applied for relief of immigrants who should become unable to support themselves within the first five years after landing, by sickness, want of employment or other causes. The same law of 1847 provided for the establishment of a six member Board of Commissioners [of Emigration] to administer aid to and ease the abuses against immigrants. The Board was directed to examine under oath witnesses in respect to complaints of treatment of immigrants on shipboard, quality of provisions, and deaths occurring during the voyage and most importantly, ***to reimburse Offices of the Poor for giving relief.***

In 1848, the State Board of Emigration Commissioners established a hospital and other buildings on Ward's Island, a 255-acre island in the East River. The most important of these buildings were the Verplanck State Emigrant hospital, capable of holding 350 patients; the Refuge building for destitute women and children; and the New Barracks building for destitute male aliens. The Ward's Island Refuge and Hospital provided the Commissioners with necessary detention facilities. The Commissioners also operated a smallpox hospital on Blackwell's Island. By 1855, the Commission opened the Castle Garden Emigrant Landing Depot in abandoned Fort Clinton. Immigrants would now be brought directly to Castle Garden for assistance and direction. Castle Garden was administered by state authorities primarily to land foreigners safely, providing protection and assistance, including a labor exchange bureau, and to relieve the

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city and state from the expense of landing large numbers of immigrants. There was an element of charity in its philosophy. Officials boarded ships entering the harbor and transported steerage passengers to their respective facilities; provided medical inspections and registered aliens; had procedures for uniting relatives and friends; possessed ample facilities for detaining aliens; and allowed missionaries and ethnic societies to aid immigrants.

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A table from the Commissioners of Emigration report in 1861 shows the number of aliens arrived and landed at the Port of New York for whom Commutation and Hospital moneys were paid and the total number of persons treated, cared for, forwarded, classified under different heads along with the total amount of receipts from all sources and the whole amount of expenditures from May 5, 1847 to December 31, 1869. In some years, the total expenditures exceeded the total receipts. Another report also notes the total amount paid to the several counties of the state including the city and county of New York, for care and support of emigrants from the organization of this Commission from May 5, 1947 to December 31, 1869 was $994,279.92.

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Once they left the Eastern cities, immigrants moved westward in a variety of ways. By the 1830s, trails and roads were well established in the East. People traveled by foot, by horse, wagon and stage. Water transportation via the Erie Canal was also a choice. A law was passed

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by the state legislature in April, 1855 compelling all vessels bringing emigrant passengers to this port of New York to land them at one wharf, designated by the Commissioners of Emigration

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and imposing a heavy fine for any deviation from the rule. This was imposed to break up the system of barter and sale of passengers by making it impossible for captains to sell their cargo of passengers to the unscrupulous "runners" employed by hotel-keepers, forwarding agents and railroad and steamboat companies. The only landing place was the Emigrant Landing Depot located at Castle Garden. The directors of the principal railroad and steamboat lines to the West were "asked" by the Commissioners to organize at Castle Garden a central and joint ticket office for the sale – at the regular published prices – of passage tickets for emigrants to several places of destination to the interior and to place the entire business of forwarding persons or property under their supervision. The immigrant then proceeded to his western destination without being exposed to the least danger of loss from imposition. The unscrupulous agents tried to circumvent this system by contracting with emigrants in Europe for their inland passage from New York to their places of destination in the interior of the United States or in Canada. Runners and

forwarding agents went to European ports and established agencies for booking passengers to

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places in the interior before they left European ports, or even their homes, and received part or the whole of the price of the inland tickets in advance. They overcharged the personal tickets from 25 to 50 percent above the established rates of transportation companies. False representation, bordering on coercion, was resorted to in order to induce emigrants to contract for inland passage before leaving Europe. With this contract in hand, the immigrant immediately left the safety and protection of Castle Garden for the city to find the consignee who was to

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fulfill the contract made in Europe. The Commissioners of Emigration cautioned the governments of Europe against accepting the statements of such representatives and protecting their own subjects during "their pilgrimage from an overcrowded home to a region where vacant acres invite and reward the hand of industry.

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Chautauqua County vs. the Commissioners of Emigration

The *Proceedings of the Chautauqua County Board of Supervisors for 1870* contains a history of the Chautauqua County Poorhouse and documents the county's relationship with the State's Commissioners of Emigration. In 1831, New York State passed a law requiring most counties to construct a poor farm. Prior to this, each town appointed an Overseer of the Poor to manage indigents within their municipality. The system was difficult to administer and there was a great deal of inconsistency in the care that was provided. The poor farm system was intended to provide consistent and cost effective aid to the poor, elderly, intemperate, orphaned, abandoned and handicapped. Overseers of the Poor were still appointed in each town and could offer temporary relief to indigents, but the poor farm eliminated the practice of housing indigents in private residences by annual public auctions (*act of vendue*).

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Chautauqua County's poor farm was opened in 1832. The farm was located near the county seat, approximately 25 miles from Dunkirk, uphill. Between 1832 and 1850, the number

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of persons relieved annually in Chautauqua County ranged from 45 to 431. The yearly reports of the Superintendent of the Poor to the County's Board of Supervisors relates the changes that occurred with the opening of the New York and Erie Railroad. The report for 1852 states "During the construction and after the completion of the NY & E Railroad, the county was flooded with foreign paupers. The number of poor relieved in 1850 was 431, in 1851, 510, 877

in 1852, 774 in 1853, 2160 in 1854 and 2952 in 1855 – an increase of nearly seven fold within five years. This increase was nearly all by emigration and for temporary relief."

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First class passage from New York to Dunkirk on the railroad was $8.00 per person. By the fall of 1851, the train schedule included an "Emigrant train" that ran at 6 P.M. every day except Sunday. The emigrant train consisted of rustic train cars with few amenities, and ran at a reduced fare.

The New York State statutes passed in 1847 made the Commissioners of Emigration liable for the poor relief furnished to emigrants at any time within five years after they landed, and Chautauqua County attempted to seek reimbursement for the emigrants arriving at Dunkirk. But, the rules for claiming reimbursement were complicated and required a great deal of additional work by the Overseers of the Poor. Each claim had to include the following information, and had to be sworn to by the emigrant:

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Name

Age

Occupation

Last Place of residence abroad

Name of vessel/commander

Foreign port of embarkation

Date of arrival in New York

Date of relief

Amount of relief

The Overseer also had to make oath stating the necessity for the relief granted and the cause for the pauperism. Additional rules made compliance even more difficult: The rules stated that emigrants must be taken immediately to the Poor Farm and put to labor, and the value of the labor was to be deducted from the actual net cost of the relief. Monthly statements had to be presented within ten days after the close of the month, giving all the information required above.

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In 1852 the County made its first claims to the Commissioners of Emigration. According to the Superintendent's annual report for that year, many of the claims were denied for not securing the necessary vouchers and not reporting promptly. In an attempt to improve compliance, plain and full directions and forms were furnished to the Supervisors of the Poor.

But, problems with the Commissioners of Emigration continued, and the number of emigrants seeking aid in the county continued to increase.

In the 1854 annual report of the County's Board of Supervisors, is the following example: "on the 25th of November last, the ship *Michael Angelo* arrived in New York, and within twelve days thereafter, 67 of her passengers were, at the commencement of winter, without money, means or friends, thrown upon our county for relief. Many of them stated to us that they were poor, and had no money or property in Baden [Germany], their former home; that their passage to American was paid, by whom they did not know, and that when arriving in New York, they were furnished with railroad tickets to Dunkirk by a still mysterious arrangement. Representations were made to them that when they arrived here their every want would be supplied; that Dunkirk was the goodly place where all could find employment, friends, and every needful thing... Many of them had to be sent to the Poor Farm for a winter's support, and some of them remain there still; for others we have obtained employment where they are supporting themselves, and several of the children have been bound out to good places. We report the above facts, as they seem to prove the truth of the statement that the poor houses of Europe were being emptied into our cities and villages."

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The County argued that since the Law of 1847 gave the Overseers of the Poor discretionary authority to expend the sum of ten dollars for one poor person or family who required only temporary relief, that such persons could not legally be sent to the Poor Farm. Dunkirk, being the principal port of entry by emigrant paupers, is 25 miles from the Poor Farm. Many of the paupers arriving by the train had boat tickets for a more western destination but frequently had to wait from two to five days for their boat to leave (due to scheduling or bad weather). With no means to buy food or lodging, these persons were forced to beg from house to house or appeal to the Overseer of the Poor for relief.

The County's Board of Supervisors wrote that it would be "a flagrant wrong" to take these paupers over the hill to the Poor Farm for two or three days, and then hire teams to convey them back to Dunkirk. This was not cost effective, or practical, given that during the winter months the roads were frequently impassable for several days. The County was justified in arguing that the rule of the Commissioners of Emigration requiring that all paupers be transported to the County Poor Farm within two hours was unreasonable. The County requested that the Commissioner's rules be modified or rescinded, at least as it applied to Chautauqua County, but the request was repeatedly denied. Only two other counties in New York State – Kings and Albany, were submitting claims as large as Chautauqua's.

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In 1858, the County's Board of Supervisors passed a resolution authorizing the Superintendents of the Poor to commence legal proceedings against the Commissioners of Emigration to compel them to audit all legal accounts. With this authority, one of the Superintendents went to New York and demanded a settlement of six years' claims. The Commissioners agreed to the demand and agreed to pay the accrued claims which they had for years been repudiating. The agreement was made in writing, but never fulfilled.

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By 1861, the repudiated claims amounted to about $4,000. Requests for action to the Commissioners of Emigration went unanswered. In 1866, the problem was referred to Honorable Walter L. Sessions, a State Senator from the village of Panama in Chautauqua County. Sessions introduced a bill compelling the Commissioners, under penalties, to pay claims for services. The Commissioners sent an emissary to negotiate with Sessions for a stay of legislative proceedings and made a bargain. The Commission agreed to make a special rule in favor of Chautauqua County if the bill was withdrawn. The Commissioners agreed to pay for one deputy of the Superintendents of the Poor, to be stationed at Dunkirk, specifically to relieve the emigrants. They also agreed to pay claims for similar services back to 1865, a claim worth $447.50.

A deputy was appointed and began working in Dunkirk under the supervision of the Superintendents of the Poor. When the bill for his services was presented to the Commissioners, they refused to pay. After two years, the deputy's bill had surpassed $2,300 and the $447 owed

for previous service was still unpaid. In 1868, the Commissioners met, repealed their earlier agreement, and offered the County $1,000 to "call it square."

Legal action was once again threatened, and in 1869, two County Supervisors went to New York and promised to stay until the claims were settled. Their persistence resulted in a settlement for partial payment of $2,150 against over $5,600 in claims. The unpaid balance was assumed by Chautauqua County taxpayers.

Conclusion

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By 1876, the Superintendents of the Poor were no longer keeping separate accounts for emigrant paupers. The County was due over $5,000 from the Commissioners of Emigration, but nothing had been received since 1873. In 1876, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the commutation money for emigrants was unconstitutional and therefore void, thus closing the funding source for the Commissioners of Emigration.

Dunkirk's anticipated economic prosperity from the opening of the railway was short-lived. The New York and Erie Railroad was bankrupt by 1860 and became the Erie Railway; more train service was opened to Buffalo making it the unofficial western terminus for the line by 1862, and the number of emigrant paupers seeking aid in Dunkirk dropped substantially after 1865.

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Between 1838 and 1867, 35,000 immigrants were aided in Chautauqua County. Present day County residents have realized a benefit from the efforts of the County's Superintendents of the Poor for reimbursement from the Commissioners of Emigration because separate ledgers of emigrants who received aid were maintained by the Poor Farm. The ledgers provide us with a wonderfully detailed account of emigrant families and individuals who traveled to and through Chautauqua County. It indicates those who traveled together, deaths and burials that occurred while here, and those who had tickets to continue their journey westward.

The annual reports of the Superintendents of the Poor to the County Supervisors provide detailed information regarding the activities of the Commissioners of Emigration and how they

impacted the County. This documentation is invaluable as it shows the integrity and tenacity of County Supervisors in their quest for reimbursement by the Commissioners of Emigration.

The annual reports of the Commissioners of Emigration were compiled for the New York State Legislature with the thought that this information would be useful and of great value in many respects. These reports, as described by Friedrich Kapp in Immigration and the Commissioner's of Emigration represent "the most remarkable and important, as well as the most numerous emigration to distant lands which is recorded in modern history. These reports show in detail, from May 1847 until December 1869, the remarkable aggregate of two million six hundred and seventy-one thousand eight hundred and nineteen emigrants landed at the port of New York seeking on this side of the Atlantic relief from the wrongs or the misery which they experienced themselves, or dreaded for their children, in their native land." The Commissioners' of Emigration reports reflect the funds generated from the commutation fees which provided for the emigrants as they entered the port of New York. The efforts of the Commissioners of Emigration to provide services to immigrants in New York City frequently surpassed the commutation fees that were collected leaving little to distribute to counties seeking reimbursement. The Commissioners humanitarian efforts far outweighed the funding available to them.

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THE EMIGRANT

BY MICHELLE HENRY AND PAMELA A. BROWN

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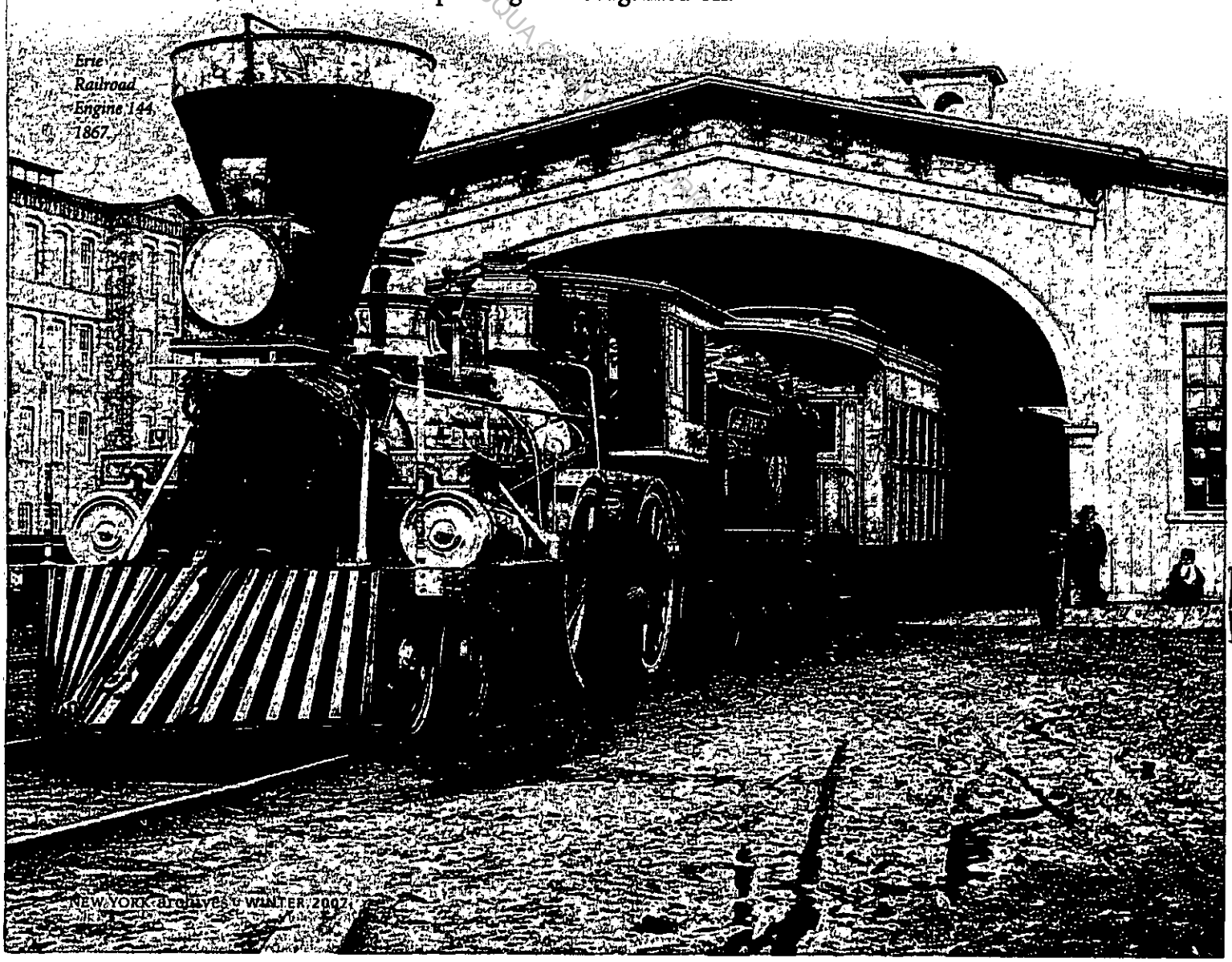
Hopes were high in western New York in the mid-nineteenth century when the New York and Erie Railroad came through. But the train brought what none of its backers—or its passengers—bargained on.



Erie Railroad Engine 144, 1867

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TRAIN

The New York and Erie Railroad was first proposed in 1829, to compete with the Erie Canal (which had opened in 1825) by giving western rail shippers a direct route to the market and port of New York. The route began on the banks of the Hudson River at Piermont, crossed New York's Southern Tier counties, and terminated at Dunkirk, a natural harbor on Lake Erie in Chautauqua County. The 483-mile-long railroad took nineteen years and $24 million to construct. It was the longest in the world at the time, and was considered a marvel of engineering.

On May 15, 1851, the first train arrived in Dunkirk. Aboard were Millard Fillmore, President of the United States, his entire cabinet, and Secretary of State Daniel Webster—who, accompanied by a bottle of whiskey, had strapped a rocking chair onto a flatbed car for the seventeen-hour journey so he could enjoy the countryside.

Residents of western New York and the Great Lakes region anticipated great economic prosperity with the opening of the New York and Erie Railroad, and land speculators snatched up property around Dunkirk harbor. However, instead of bringing prosperity, the railroad began delivering immigrants, many of whom had no means of support or conveyance to a further destination. Between 1838 and 1867, records show that Chautauqua County's poor farm and Superintendent of the Poor provided relief for over 35,000 immigrants; by the fall of 1851, an "Emigrant Train" had been added to the New York and Erie's daily schedule, and a steady stream of immigrant paupers began arriving in Dunkirk.

In Support of Immigrants

Prior to 1847, there were no federal or state regulations administering the flow of immigrants into the United States. But that year, the New York State Legislature passed several measures to address the growing number of immigrants arriving at New York City, the busiest port in the country. A "commutation fee" of $1.50 a head, later raised to $2.50, was to be collected on all persons landing at the port of New York; this fee would be applied for the relief of immigrants unable to support themselves within their first five years of residence because of sickness, unemployment, or other causes. That same law provided for the establishment of a six-member Board of Commissioners (of Emigration) to administer aid to, and ease abuses against, immigrants.

The commissioners were directed to reimburse Overseers (or Superintendents) of the Poor in each of New York's counties for providing relief to immigrants. Overseers were given discretionary authority to expend $10 for one poor person or family requiring

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Sisters Clara and Ireta Schwartz immigrated from Germany to Chautauqua County.

> Secretary of State Daniel Webster, accompanied by a bottle of whiskey, strapped a rocking chair onto a flatbed car for the seventeen-hour journey so he could enjoy the countryside.

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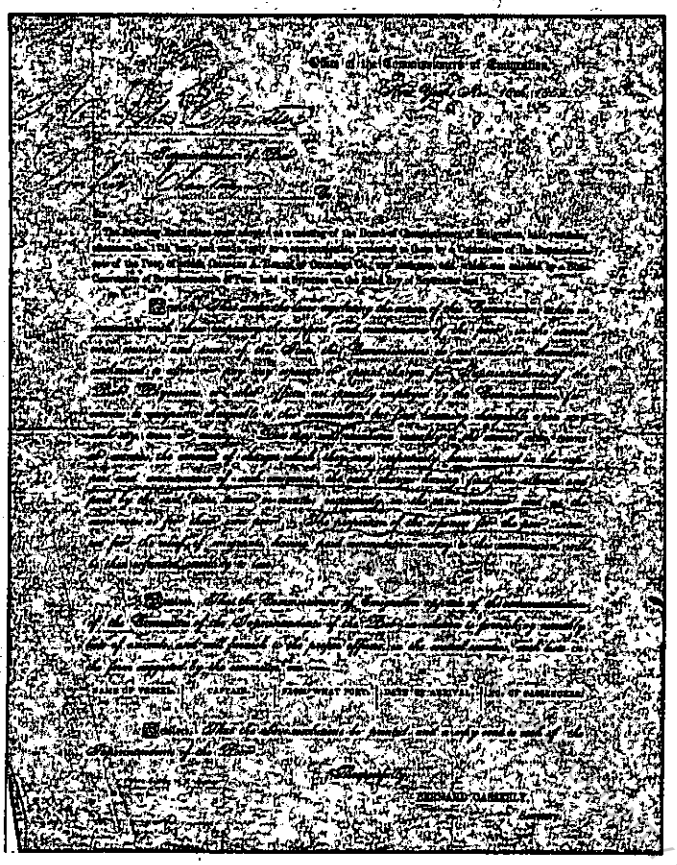

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY ARCHIVES

In this document, the Board of Commissioners agrees to reimburse towns, cities, and counties for expenses incurred for the care of destitute immigrants.

only temporary relief. The law stipulated that immigrants seeking relief would be transported to county poor farms within two hours of their arrival in the U.S. and immediately given labor to perform. The value of the labor would be deducted from the net cost of relief.

The annual reports of Chautauqua County's Superintendent of the Poor to the county's Board of Supervisors relate the changes to the county that occurred with the opening of the New York and Erie Railroad. The report for 1852 states that "[d]uring the construction and after the completion of the NY & E Railroad, the county was flooded with foreign paupers. The number of poor relieved in 1850 was 431 and by 1855 the number had steadily increased to 2,952—an increase of nearly seven fold within five years. This increase was nearly all by emigration and for temporary relief."

1852 was also the first year that Chautauqua County presented claims for reimbursement to the Commissioners of Emigration. Each claim had to be sworn by the immigrant, and included his or her name, age, occupation, last place of residence, foreign port of embarkation, name of vessel and commander, date of arrival in New York, date of relief, and the amount of relief. The Superintendent of the Poor also had to swear to the necessity for the relief and the cause of the recipient's pauperism. Only two other counties in New York State, Kings and Albany, were submitting claims as large as Chautauqua's. But many of Chautauqua's claims were denied, on grounds of missing information or not reporting promptly.

> Prior to 1847, there were no federal or state regulations administering the flow of immigrants into the United States.

"A Flagrant Wrong"

The county argued that since the law of 1847 gave Overseers of the Poor discretionary authority to expend $10 for those requiring temporary relief, such people could not legally be sent to the poor farm. Many of the immigrants arriving in Dunkirk by train had boat tickets for a more western destination but often had to wait two to five days for their boat to leave, due to scheduling or bad weather. If they had no means to obtain food or lodging, these people were forced either to beg or to appeal to the Superintendent of the Poor for relief.

The county's Board of Supervisors wrote that it would be "a flagrant wrong" to take these paupers to the poor farm for two or three days and then hire teams to convey them back to Dunkirk. Chautauqua County's poor farm was located in Dewittville, twenty-five miles uphill from Dunkirk, and such transportation was neither cost effective nor practical, since during the winter months the roads were frequently impassable for several days. Rather, the county requested that the commissioners' rules be modified or rescinded—but the request was repeatedly denied.

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German immigrant Karl Henk

In the 1854 Board of Supervisors' annual report is the following account: "[O]n the 25th of November last, the ship *Michael Angelo* arrived in New York, and within twelve days thereafter, 67 of her passengers were, at the commencement of winter, without money, means or friends,

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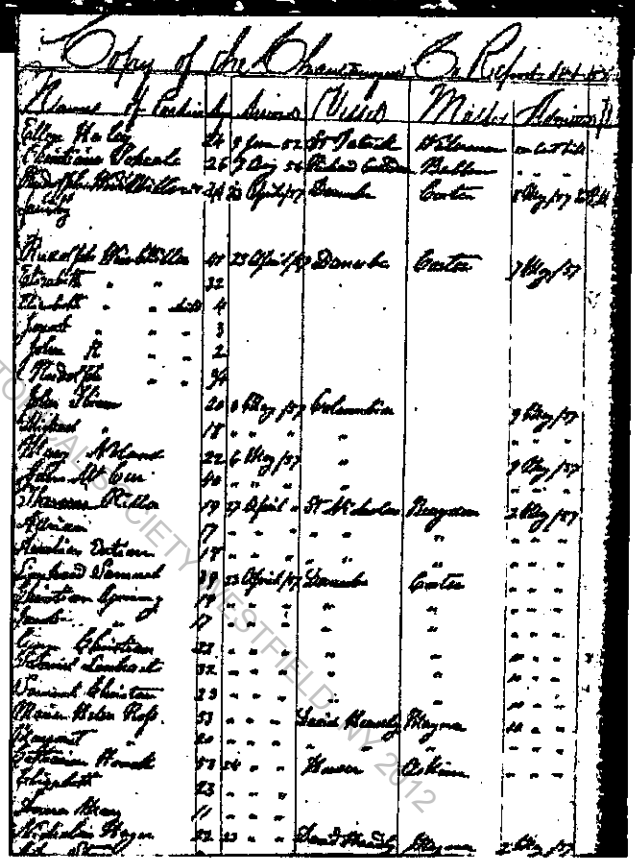
Many immigrants ended up spending time at Chautauqua County's Poor Farm, about twenty-five miles from the train station.

thrown upon our county for relief. Many of them stated to us that they were poor, and had no money or property in Baden [Germany], their former home; that their passage to America was paid, by whom they did not know, and that when arriving in New York, they were furnished with railroad tickets to Dunkirk by a still mysterious arrangement. Representations were made to them that when they arrived here their every want would be supplied; that Dunkirk was the goodly place where all could find employment, friends, and every needful thing. Many of them had to be sent to the Poor Farm for a winter's support, and some of them remain there still; for others we have obtained employment where they are supporting themselves, and several of the children have been bound out to good places. We report the above facts, as they seem to prove the truth of the statement that the poor houses of Europe were being emptied into our cities and villages."

Claims Paid—and Denied

Records from the county's poor farm indicate that many families did indeed arrive in Chautauqua County with an immediate need for relief. The Charles Peters family arrived in New York from Germany on September 6, 1857. Just four days later, the family of eight—Charles, fifty years old and crippled; wife Frederica; and six children aged four to twenty—applied for relief in Chautauqua County. Andreas and John Miswea, ages eleven and eight respectively, arrived at Castle Garden (the first immigrant receiving center in New York) on August 21, 1856 from Poland. On September 24, they were admitted to the Chautauqua County poor farm with the following information: "The family is searching for them through the German Society. The parents are in Milwaukee. The boys' passage was paid from New York through to Milwaukee but in the hurry of starting they got in separate [train] cars which is why the children were put out at Dunkirk." The commissioners instructed the county to pay for the boys' passage to Milwaukee and include it on the next voucher for reimbursement.

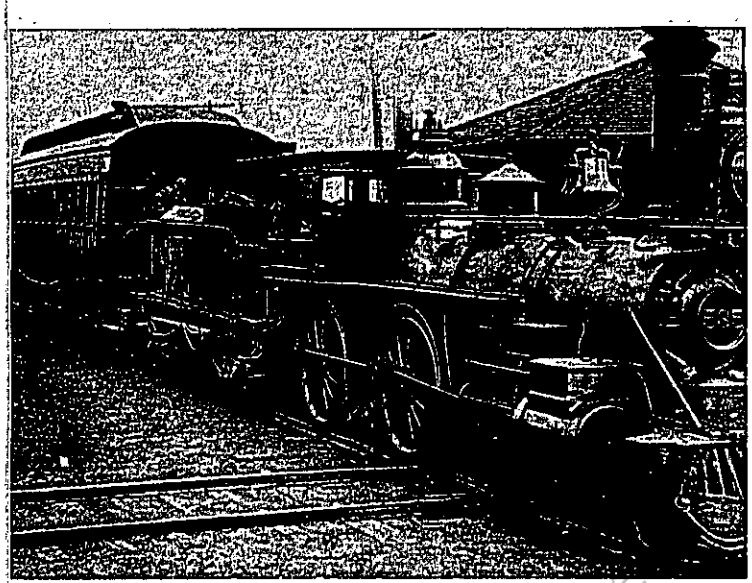
But many of the county's claims submitted to the commissioners continued to be denied because of technicalities. In 1858, Chautauqua County's Board of Supervisors passed a resolution authorizing the Superintendent of the Poor to compel the Commissioners of Emigration to audit all legal accounts. With this authority, a representative of the county went to New York City and demanded a settlement of six years' claims. The commis-



CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY ARCHIVES

This 1857 register lists immigrants who were admitted to the county's poor farm.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WESTFIELD, NY 2012



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The handwriting on the back of this photograph describes this as the first train to travel over the Erie and Central New York Railroad.

sioners agreed to pay the accrued claims they had been repudiating. The agreement was made in writing, but was never fulfilled.

By 1861, these repudiated claims amounted to about $4,000, yet requests for action to the commissioners went unanswered. In 1866, the problem was referred to State Senator Walter L. Sessions from the Village of Panama in Chautauqua County, who introduced a bill compelling the commissioners, under penalties, to pay claims for services. But the commissioners sent an emissary to negotiate with Sessions for a stay of legislative proceedings and to strike a deal: if his legislation were withdrawn, the commissioners would agree to make a special rule in favor of Chautauqua County, pay for one Deputy Superintendent of the Poor to be stationed at Dunkirk specifically for immigrants' relief, and pay claims for services back to 1865, totaling $447.50.

A Permanent Debt

The deputy was appointed and began working in Dunkirk, but when the bill for his services was presented to the commissioners, they refused to pay. After two years, the deputy's bill surpassed $2,300, and the $447 owed for previous services was still unpaid. In 1868, the commissioners met, repealed their earlier agreement, and offered the county $1,000 to "call it square." Once again the county threatened legal action, and in 1869 two county supervisors went to New York City and threatened to stay there until the claims were settled. Their persistence resulted in payment of $2,150 against more than $5,600 in claims. The unpaid balance was assumed by Chautauqua County taxpayers.

By 1876, the Superintendent of the Poor no longer kept separate accounts for immigrant paupers, since the additional paperwork was not cost effective as long as claims continued to be denied. Chautauqua County was due over $5,000 from the Commissioners of Emigration, but nothing had been received since 1873. Later in 1876, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the commutation money for immigrants was unconstitutional and therefore void, thus closing the funding source for the Commissioners of Emigration—and for Chautauqua County. The debt was never paid. Despite its best hopes for prosperity, neither the county nor its immigrants ultimately benefited from the New York and Erie Railroad and its "Emigrant Train." ■

THE ARCHIVES CONNECTION

Administrative and financial records for the Commissioners of Emigration no longer exist. However, their annual reports submitted to the state legislature show in detail the immigration of well over two million Europeans into the port of New York from May 1847 to December 1869. These reports are found in *Immigration and the Commissioners of Emigration of the State of New York* by Friedrich Kapp (The Nation Press, 1870).

The ledgers maintained by Chautauqua County's Superintendent of the Poor provide a wonderfully detailed account of immigrant families and individuals who traveled to and through Chautauqua County. The original ledgers are held by the Chautauqua County Archives. Information from the ledgers was extracted by the Chautauqua County Genealogical Society and published as a three-volume set that is available at most libraries in the county.

Many of the historical documents used the term "emigrant" rather than "immigrant," which is the accepted contemporary spelling and usage. The original spelling has been retained in all quoted material, while the modern "immigrant" is used elsewhere.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, WESTFIELD

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME HISTORY

1824 NEW YORK STATE SECRETARY OF STATE YATES REPORTED TO THE LEGISLATURE THAT THE SYSTEM OF POORHOUSE RELIEF WAS PREFERABLE TO THE THEN-HELD POLICIES OF CONTRACTING OR AUCTIONING THE POOR TO INDIVIDUALS.

NOVEMBER 1830 "COMPLYING WITH A MANDATORY LAW WHICH WAS PUT INTO EFFECT ON JANUARY FIRST OF THAT YEAR, THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE POOR WERE APPOINTED BY THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY SUPERVISORS AND THE JUDGES OF THE COUNTY COURTS".

APRIL 13, 1831 A 90-ACRE FARM IN DEWITTVILLE WAS PURCHASED FOR $900.

DECEMBER 1832 THE "POOR HOUSE" WAS APPROVED AND ACCEPTED, WITH A VALUE OF THE ENTIRE ESTABLISHMENT SET AT $4,450. THE FIRST RESIDENT WAS BROUGHT TO THE HOME. HE REMAINED THERE FOR THIRTY YEARS. WILLIAM GIFFORD WAS APPOINTED AS THE FIRST KEEPER.

1833 ANNUAL REPORT. THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF PAUPERS AT THE POOR HOUSE WAS 31-1/2. WEEKLY EXPENSES PER PERSON WERE ESTIMATED AT 62 CENTS.

1842 PROVISION WAS MADE FOR MONTHLY SUPERVISORY VISITS BY THE SUPERINTENDENTS.

1843 EIGHT INSANE RESIDENTS WERE SENT TO UTICA STATE HOSPITAL.

1846 SEPARATE QUARTERS WERE PROVIDED FOR THE "INSANE AND IDIOTIC".

1848 EIGHTY-ONE ADDITIONAL ACRES OF LAND WERE PURCHASED.

1851 A FLOOD OF IMMIGRANTS BEGINS TO ARRIVE VIA RAIL FROM NEW YORK CITY; ENDING UP IN DEWITTVILLE, DUE TO A LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

1857 A NEW BUILDING PROVIDED A SEGREGATION OF THE SEXES.

1867 A NEW THREE-STORY ASYLUM WAS BUILT "FOR THE MORE COMFORTABLE ACCOMMODATION OF THE INSANE AND MENTALLY HANDICAPPED".

1868 A REPORT WAS SUBMITTED "FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INSANE"--IT BEING NOW A SEPARATE INSTITUTION AND CONDUCTED BY A SEPARATE KEEPER, YET DRAWING ITS SUPPLIES FROM THE COUNTY HOUSE PROPER.

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1869 ADMINISTRATION BUILDING ERECTED CONTAINING AN OFFICE, SUPERINTENDENT'S QUARTERS, THREE RECREATION ROOMS, A CHAPEL, STAFF DINING ROOM, KITCHEN, AND ONE LARGE WARD.

1869 A SALARIED PHYSICIAN VISITED THE PATIENTS DAILY.

1872 FIRE DESTROYED THE BARNS, WHICH WERE LATER REBUILT.

1876 OLD ASYLUM BUILDING REPAIRED AND USED AS A HOSPITAL.

1877 NEW BUILDING FOR THE INSANE IS COMPLETED.

1885 VISITING COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED.

1886 THE VISITING COMMITTEE OF THE STATE CHARITIES AID WAS INFLUENTIAL IN THE INSTALLATION OF BATHING FACILITIES AND BOOKCASES IN THE WARDS.

1887 WOODS ACQUIRED; LAUNDRY AND DAIRY HOUSE BUILT. THE HOME WAS CONSIDERED THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BUILDING IN THE COUNTY.

1890 LAST YEAR THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE POOR REPORTED CHILDREN AT THE POOR HOUSE IN THE YEARLY REPORT.

JULY 2, 1891 EIGHTY-SEVEN PATIENTS REMOVED FROM THE COUNTY ASYLUM TO THE STATE HOSPITAL IN BUFFALO, NY.

1898 BACK PART OF THE ASYLUM REMODELED INTO A HOSPITAL. FIFTEEN PATIENTS TRANSFERRED FROM ALMS HOUSE.

1902 NEW BUILDING CONSTRUCTED ON FRONT OF ASYLUM SITE, WHICH SERVED AS NURSES' QUARTERS. DURING WINTER MONTHS, RESIDENTS SLEPT IN THE WARDS.

1918 THE SECTION ABOVE WAS PUT TO USE AS A HOSPITAL WING--THE INSTITUTION BEING CALLED THE COUNTY ALMS HOUSE AND HOSPITAL. THE RATE WAS 45 CENTS PER DAY.

1923 AN ANNEX WAS ADDED TO THE "HOSPITAL BUILDING".

1924 HOSPITAL POPULATION OVER 50% OF THE TOTAL. INSTALLATION OF ELECTRIC LIGHTS.

1929 THE NAME WAS CHANGED TO THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME AND INFIRMARY, IN AN ATTEMPT TO ERASE THE OLD "POOR HOUSE" STIGMA.

1931 A NEW TWO-STORY DORMITORY WAS JOINED TO THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.

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1944 A REGISTERED NURSE WAS EMPLOYED AS SUPERVISOR.

1947 COUNTY HOME CASES WERE SERVED BY COUNTY CASEWORKERS.

1948 TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR NURSING SERVICE ESTABLISHED.

OCTOBER 8, 1959 GROUND BROKEN IN THE TOWN OF DUNKIRK FOR THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME AND INFIRMARY.

OCTOBER 29, 1961 DEDICATION CEREMONIES HELD IN THE NEW FACILITY.

NOVEMBER 2, 1961 "OPERATION SWITCH"--THE MOVE WAS MADE FROM DEWITTVILLE, VIA PASSENGER CARS AND AMBULANCES. THE RESIDENTS INCLUDED FIFTY-SIX MEN AND FORTY-TWO WOMEN (35 FOR THE HOME AND 63 FOR THE INFIRMARY).

1965 DENTAL UNIT INSTALLED.

OCTOBER 1, 1967 MR. THOMAS MADIGAN WAS HIRED AS SUPERINTENDENT.

FALL 1969 2A SNF OPENED AND ELEVATOR INSTALLED IN "A" WING.

1974 MR. MINER, THE COMMISSIONER, RETIRED.

1975 KADY'S KORNER, THE HOME'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER, BEGUN BY MRS. MARIAN CADY.

JULY 1975 RESIDENTS COUNCIL FORMED. MISS MARY WILLCOX WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION.

DECEMBER 31, 1975 TWO RESIDENTS WERE MARRIED IN THE CCHI CHAPEL, IN A CEREMONY PERFORMED BY ANOTHER RESIDENT, AN ORDAINED MINISTER.

SEPTEMBER 1978 DR. YI YUNG TING WAS NAMED MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

1979 SEVERAL RESIDENTS, AGE 60 AND OVER AND WHO ENJOYED HELPING OTHERS, WERE REGISTERED AS R.S.V.P. VOLUNTEERS.

MAY 1981 MR. MADIGAN RETIRED.

JUNE 1981 MR. CLIFFORD MC DONNELL BECAME ADMINISTRATOR.

OCTOBER 1982 MR. CHARLES FERRARO APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR.

JANUARY 1983 CCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS ESTABLISHED.

MARCH 1983 OPTION FOR 5.1% PRIVATE PAY PATIENTS APPROVED BY THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY LEGISLATURE.

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APRIL 1983 NAME CHANGED FROM CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME AND INFIRMARY TO THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME.

OCTOBER 1984 CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME AUXILIARY FORMED.

JANUARY 1988 MR. CHRISTOPHER CARLSON APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR.

AUGUST 25, 1988 COUNTY EXECUTIVE GLENZER PROPOSES TO SELL THE COUNTY HOME AND ASKED THE LEGISLATURE TO ACTIVELY SEEK A CHANGE IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HOME OWNERSHIP.

FEBRUARY 13, 1989 KENT A. LIEBER, MD, NAMED HOUSE PHYSICIAN.

FEBRUARY 15, 1989 GRANT STEPHENSON, MD, APPOINTED MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

JULY 6, 1989 CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY LEGISLATURE DECIDED CCH WOULD REMAIN A COUNTY FACILITY.

OCTOBER 1989 AD HOC COMMITTEE FORMED TO EXAMINE AND DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO SECURE THE FINANCIAL STABILITY OF CCH.

SEPTEMBER 1991 MR. STEVEN W. GOOLD APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR.

AUGUST 1, 1992 MRS. CONCETTA JARRETT APPOINTED ACTING ADMINISTRATOR.

FEBRUARY 1, 1993 MS. MERLE MALONE APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR.

DECEMBER 1, 1994 AIR CONDITIONING/VENTILATION PROJECT COMPLETED.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1997 MR. TIMOTHY HELLWIG APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR.

OCTOBER 1999 COMPLETION OF RENOVATION OF NURSING UNITS AND BATHING SUITES.

DECEMBER 1, 1999 DR. ALEXANDER SELIOUTSKI APPOINTED AS MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

JUNE 18, 2001 GROUNDBREAKING FOR ADDITION/RENOVATION PROJECT.

DECEMBER 1, 2001 DR. KENT A. LIEBER APPOINTED AS MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

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TimeLines

"... by the good that has been done we will measure the good that will be done."
ELLEN E. ADAMS
Tales of Early Fredonia

Issue No. 76 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Autumn 2007

Mertie Akin photographed the Chautauqua County Home as it appeared in 1954. Some of the barns are shown below

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CCHS Autumn Program: The Erie Railroad and the Impact of Emigrant Paupers on Chautauqua County

Mark your calendars to join us on Saturday, August 25. Our guest speakers will be historians Michelle Henry and Pam Brown, who will discuss the impact that the NY & Erie Railroad had on poverty rates in Chautauqua County during the mid-nineteenth century.

The program will be held in the recently renovated auditorium of the Robert H. Jackson Center, 305 East Fourth Street in Jamestown. A catered meal, which begins at 12:30 p.m., will be held in the banquet hall. The cost is $15 per person. To reserve, please call 326-2977 or email mcclurg@fairpoint.net by Friday, August 17.

Michelle Henry is the Chautauqua County historian. Pam Brown works for the Board of Education and serves as the Panama Town historian. Their original research recently appeared in the distinguished *New York Archives* magazine, published by Archives Partnership Trust. The story they'll tell involves the financial impact that legislation in Albany had on the citizens of Chautauqua County, the effect of that legislation on the destitute and how the NY & Erie Railroad was inadvertently involved in "emptying the poorhouses of Europe." It's a veritable study in unintended consequences. You'll also learn about the magnificent Chautauqua County Home, its use and purpose, and its ultimate fate.

If you love local history, you won't want to miss this program presented by professional historians of the highest caliber.

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