Strange Stories Of Chautauqua Lake

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INTRODUCTION

Chautauqua Lake may be the favorite subject of the majority of past and present historians. In addition to the major general historians who have dealt with it, a number of specialists have concentrated on it. The ones who come to mind most prominently are the Victor Nortons, senior and junior, Jean Lawson, of L-S Aero Marine and the late Martin Arend and Dan Lincoln. Malcolm Nichols is apparently responsible for much of the obscure material about the lake in the Fenton Historical collection as is Clayburn Sampson for that in our society's archives. Homer Danielson included lake stories in his highly personalized writings. I tip my hat to these and others, living and dead, as I venture into their cherished territory.

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CHAUTAUQUA LAKE FOR DRINKING WATER

If you look in local history books and collections, you find very little about the history of community water supplies. This is part of the general neglect of technological history.

Through most of the 19th century rural drinking water came from springs and later dug wells, sometimes driven wells. Even in cities, Jamestown for example, the same situation prevailed. In that period the concern for public water systems arose from the need for fire protection. Domestic water use was an afterthought.

Around the early 1870's, a private system, windmill powered, began to provide parts of Jamestown with spring and driven well water. About 1874 this was supplemented, particularly when needed for fire fighting, by water drawn from the outlet by Holley pumps driven by two water turbines, six and four feet in size, locally cast.

The history books begin with the July, 1882 advent of the Jamestown Water Supply company headed by *A.F. Kent*. This was intended as a city wide system. It drew at Clifton Springs and the Marvin Tract, now Chadakoin Park. But the company also drew water via steam pump (first coal powered, later gas powered) from the outlet in emergencies as had been done before.

Customers complained that their water had a bad taste and was murky, especially when it had to be drawn from the outlet. Some drew considerable mud and algae. One even got a dead lizard. The *Jamestown Sun* thought harassing the Water Company was a splendid way to increase circulation and it set about it with puckish zeal. It pointed out, among other things, that the outlet contained the sewage from all the resorts around the lake. In the winter of 1885 the *Sun* reminded Jamestowners that the body of fisherman Jack Wilcox who vanished from the lake in early November had never been recovered. Indeed, it remained lost in the lake until May. In march of 1885 the *Sun* even suggested, boldly and falsely, by means of a special flyer, that "a dead colored baby" had been found floating in the reservoir, which was then on Price Street.

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By this time thoughts had turned to tapping the lake directly as a superior water source. It was considered to be exceptionally pure and better than other city's sources. At the start of 1885 the Water company decided to build a crib in Chautauqua Lake and draw water from that. This crib, 30 feet square and covered, built in late March, served as a gravel and sand filtration device, on the same idea as the one used in the outlet. The company buried a ten inch pipe of peculiar coiled cast iron design. It intended to use pumps at its building above the boatlanding to suck the water down.

That building was, by the way, one of the most beautiful in Jamestown at the time and much photographed. The grounds were carefully landscaped. They boasted 100 varieties of roses.

The suction immediately collapsed the pipe and further embarrassed the company. In 1886 the company employed between 40 and 50 men to replace the damaged pipe sections with a wooden conduit of matched two inch Norway pine planks, two feet by three feet. The company then apparently did use water from Chautauqua Lake when necessary, but in August, 1887 it leased 75 acres at Levant for drilling, and by 1889 it was already scouting the Cassadaga aquifer.

By the time the development of Celoron Park began in 1893, the crib was abandoned. In 1894 the Park built a 200 foot bridge out to the crib and constructed a boathouse for rentals and an electric lighthouse there. This was in use for at least 11 years.

As a footnote to this chapter on Chautauqua Lake as a drinking water source, I'll mention that way back in 1875 the water commissioners of Buffalo tried to buy the water in Chautauqua Lake and were rebuffed.

It is interesting that in all the discussion of Chautauqua Lake drinking water in the 1880's, including the yellow journalism and the technical test reports, no mention or awareness was evident of bacteria. The first chlorine treatment of city drinking water in the nation waited until 1908.

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I'm amused by a newspaper clipping from April, 1891. "It is estimated that 5,000 barrels of sewage are emptied into the lake daily during the height of the season from the various resorts on the lake. This ought to be stopped and must be some day."

ISLANDS IN CHAUTAUQUA LAKE

The lower half of Chautauqua Lake is shallow. It averages 11 feet and the steamboats were confined to a narrow channel of sufficient depth. In the center of the lower lake are two particularly shallow spots now known as Grass Island and Whitney's Crib. They are frequently confused. Grass Island is between the west end of Burtis Bay and Sunnyside. Whitney's Crib is about 2,600 feet up the center line of the lake from it. Both are in Town of Ellery waters.

Holland Land Company and other very early maps which show islands in the Outlet where Jamestown now is to not indicate or suggest any islands in the lake proper.

The earliest direct reference I have found to Grass Island is in 1875 in a remarkable little book, Lake Chautauqua, written and published by a 25 tear old Jamestown Union School music teacher, Miss Emma C. Dewhurst. "(H)ere at the head of the outlet, if you will look over on the left side you will see that the water is quite shallow and the rushes are growing above it; this is 'Grass Island," and used to be above water, and it is said that it was once inhabited. Such as it is, it is the only island in the lake."

In 1931 Henry Strunk's small Gideon Sherman genealogy mentions that Gideon and Aurilla Sherman frequently took their children out to Grass Island to swim. Aurilla died in 1859 when her youngest child was three.

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At this point I bring in a fantastic legend attributed to a man who died in 1894, but which I derive from a May, 1923 newspaper article quoting William W. Conic of Jamestown, and later Falconer. "What an interesting history has been related in the past years about the so-called Grass Island, later known as Whitney's Island" *(Note the confusion here even on the part of the redoubtable Arend),* which lays about midway between Greenhurst and Lakewood."

"The first forgotten bit of history about this island was told by Squire Fenton, who was born near Fluvanna in the year 1800....and died at the age of 95 years old and had a wealth of tales which he told relative to the early days of this county."

Conic apparently means William Fenton who was born in New Haven, Conn., not Fluvanna, in 1796; not 1800, and died at age 98, not 95.

Continuing to quote Conic "One of his stories was that when he was a boy of 10 or 12, a stone fortress stood on the spot and before Warner Dam was built (That would be 1918.) appeared above the surface during low water. Mr. Fenton says he had seen the building many times as a boy. He describes it as being circular in shape, and all around it, directly beneath the eaves of the rook was a row of small holes such as used in old time fortresses, and single story and quite large. He also told how someone who settled in Jamestown in the early years took a flat boat up the lake and tore the building down using the stones for a foundation of a house he was building. He also related it was quite probable that some early expedition which came through these parts erected the fortress as a means of protection, but what expedition it was will never be known."

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I would take this story with a considerable *grain of salt.* As I said, no early map indicates any island in Chautauqua Lake. The 1749 journals of Celoron and Bonnecamps verify that expedition camped on the lake shore, but they mention no island nor the construction or existence of any fort. The detailed de Clery journal of 1754 is also silent on the subject as is every other known 18th and 19th century account.

Also, Young's History of Chautauqua County relates that Silas Tiffany built the first stone cellar foundation in Jamestown in 1819 in his downtown store when Fenton would have been 22. Remember he claimed to have been 10 or 12 when the fort was removed. Elial T. Foote put in the first stone cellar and foundation in a private home in 1823 when Fenton would have been 26. Foote and Tiffany obtained their stone from creek beds.

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The story is however, too luscious for oral tradition to drop. I was told by developer Paul Johnson that the home at 43 Fairmount is the one with a "foundation built from stones of the French fort on Grass Island." The location and apparent insufficient age of the house on inspection add to the improbability of the story.

On August 14, 1887 the *Jamestown Sun* quoted Charles Henry Brown, Jamestown correspondent for the Buffalo Express: "I heard this week a plan, devised many years since, but which seems practical today. Near Prendergast Point, at the head of the outlet is Grass Island, so called because the surface is generally below water and the tops of the grass can be seen waving above the surface."

I need to point out that for some years there were two *Prendergast Points* on the lake. This one since 1891 has been known as Celoron.

Continuing in the 1887 quote, "It was proposed to erect here a hotel entirely surrounded by water. A gentleman who experienced great relief from hay fever while stopping at Prendergast Point thought that in such a building as this sufferers would find relief from the discomforts of this disease. A ferry could be established between the island and Prendergast Point, and thus another world be added to the attractions of Chautauqua."

The next bizarre chapter began August 24, 1892 when a severe storm tore loose at least two acres of land from Mary Jane Stoneman's farm at Ashville Bay and created numerous floating islands, some complete with trees.

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To make a long story short, the largest floating island, about an acre in size, ended up near Driftwood in front of the farm of Charles D. Gifford. Accounts of subsequent events are confusing and contradictory. As I piece it together, the night following the storm, Lakewood's Mayor, Milford Stevens, a rough and ready, "land on his feet" businessman, took one or more small steamers and some men and tried to tow the largest island away to rest on Greenhurst Island, thus making it habitable. I was told by someone, possibly Homer Danielson, that Greenhurst Island was a third shoal, not the same as Grass Island or Whitney's Crib. The Buffalo Express reviewing the incident in 1895 identified the intended resting place of the floater as Grass Island. I suspect it was the upper shoal which later became Whitney's Crib.

Perhaps even more prompt were the responses of John H. Prather and C.A. Niedhart who paid Mrs. Stoneman $5 for the land the storm has deprived her of – and the response of Charles had presented to him. Wicks even built a fence out to the island in an effort, comical to me because I have experience with fences and nature, to anchor the island and proof it against any tricks like the one so promptly

attempted by Stevens. In any event, the efforts to anchor the island and to move it both proved futile. High water and high winds in the spring of 1893 first relocated the island at Fred Bentley's farm in Lakewood, and then dispersed it.

The 1895 Buffalo Express asked in a headline, "Is Chautauqua Drying Up?" A drought and low water that year, it said, lowered the lake five feet and exposed many gravel bars and islands including Grass Island which it described as "high and dry above the surface....." "(T)he alluring possibilities it offers as a site for a summer report have induced land speculators to stake it out, unfurl and American flag over the center and began fixing a foundation for a building. The work was started several weeks ago and the present low water has encouraged them to proceed." This is obviously the same operation described in a June 21, 1895 clipping in the Fenton Historical Society files. "A syndicate with a deed of Grass Island, a spot in the center of the lake midway between Greenhurst, Lakewood and Celoron, made the first move toward filling in the island this week. It is the intention to raise a portion of the two acres staked out and make it suitable for building purposes. From a foot or two feet of water now cover it. When the work is complete the syndicate will build a summer house on the island, and an effort will be made to make the place as beautiful as it will be a novel.

"A sail boat 20 feet long and 200 feet of sail is being used to haul boulders for filling in the island. The work will be pushed while the good weather lasts and the water is low.

"It is not expected that the work will be finished this summer. John H. Prather of the Chautauqua Building and Loan Association acting as trustee of the deed is at the head of the movement."

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I have found no record of deed for Grass Island, but the miscellaneous records in the courthouse contain a map of a "survey of Grass Island In Chautauqua Lake For John H. Prather" dated July 22, 1895. Prather, you remember, was one of those who tried to purchase the floating island three years earlier.

As if this were not all fantastic enough, in the same year, 1895, a woman named Susan Blodgett Pulver wrote a book Legends of Chautauqua. It is the same sort of book as the much better known Portage Trail by Mabel Powers in 1924. When you look at this fanciful, romantic etching that is the frontispiece, you get the idea of what sort of book it is. It is full of Victorian pseudo-Indian legends sometimes transformed into Medieval quests for love and such. I've tried to find out something about this woman, but I can't One chapter in here was inspired by the floating islands. It is a poem, a long free verse poem. It tells about *Norwegian Brownies* crossing the seas on shells and starfish and walking inland to Chautauqua Lake where they establish an *Acadian village* at the site of Chautauqua Institution. She describes their little houses, and their clothes, and has them riding around on butterflies and dancing on the backs of turtles, and playing with flowers. But just as they were feasting on barley mush and honey, along came giants talking loudly of mechanical graders and plans to change the land. The Brownies with the cooperation of nature worked to break the Arcadian village free as a floating island. Unfortunately, this parted a pair of lovers. The brave Oswald, the scout, was left behind and his turtle taxi was unable to overtake the island. The island floated past the fabulous castle like Sterlingworth and Moorish Kent House at Lakewood. A minnow's attempt to convey Oswald to the island was unsuccessful. After it came to rest at Shadyside, Oswald was able to cross the water on a sunfish and they all lived happily ever after.

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The Berry's have reprinted this book, so if you live to the east, you can actually buy it at their bookshop on your way home.

Whitney's Crib is considerably smaller than Grass Island. The structure was said to be 16 feet square. The deed specifies 100 feet square. This story has been more often and more fully told, most recently and probably best by Helen Ebersole in the October 6, 1990 Post-Journal Tempo magazine. I can add little.

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Willis Whitney, Jamestown native and 31 year old PhD and engineer with General Electric constructed this crib in the summer of 1899 and developed it as far as building and using a crude fishing shack there. One part of the story never reported is the nature of the deed, made November 6, 1899. It is probably the only deliberate joke in official county records of the 19th century. In legal and surveyor's jargon, it describes the plot at the intersection of lines referenced to the south sash of the first upper window from the north end of the house belonging to J.S. Weeks, the peak of the second highest tower on the Waldamere Hotel, the center of the first window from the east end of T.H. Smith's cottage, the north side of Cheney's big barn (????????0 the east end of J.T. Wilson's cottage, the peak of the west portion of the Chadakoin Club House, and the north tower of the auditorium at Celeron. This deed is made out to Willis R. Whitney and Frederick E. Armitage, his friend and summer companion on the lake. It is for one dollar and is from George and Francis Patterson. The Pattersons were legal owners of all lands never sold by the Holland Land Company or its successors, the Chautauqua Land Company.

There is a photograph supposed to be of Whitney's Crib. It is in the Fenton Historical Society Lake Room and it is published in Mrs. Ebersole's article. I suspect it is actually a photo of the 1895 Grass Island development and not Whitney's Crib.

As the 19th century ends, so abruptly ends the colorful history of lake islands. However, in 1952 the Report of the Lake Improvement Committee of the Jamestown Chamber of Commerce considered the perennial question of dredging. It mentioned two possibilities for dumping areas for the dredged silt. One was the swampy shore areas. The other was a proposed crib "in the middle cubic yards and costing anywhere upwards of three million dollars.

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THE GOLD TREASURE

Anyone who has been around Chautauqua County history for any length of time has run across the legend of the Chautauqua Portage lost French gold. Now I treat local history *legends* the same way a lot of people treat pornography. I'm sophisticated enough to handle it, but I'm not so sure about you.

Here is how the story goes as related in the July 13, 1968 Post Journal:

"Tradition has it that three French soldiers were going over the Old French Road (now a part of the Portage Road) when they were attacked by Indians near the Hogs Back. It is said they hid in a cave and as the mouth was not large enough for the horses they were unsaddled and turned loose.

"The saddles and saddle bags full of French gold were hid in the cave. The soldiers made their way to Button's Inn, but a story handed down through the years, claims that when they went back after their gold, they couldn't find the cave and it remains lost to this day.

Continuing to quote, "Years ago Mrs. Lottie Raynor of Westfield provided the Post-Journal with news of the famed Watershed, Hogs Back and The Lost Cave in reply to questions asked by countless tourists to the area."

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Lost Treasure magazine printed another short version in its January, 1985 issue. In it the soldiers become voyageurs or explorers. The time is narrowed to 1730 to 1749. The saddle bags numbered two and the gold was to pay the expedition to which they were attached. The Frenchmen fought off the Indians, specified as Senecas, for a day and then made their way to a place "which later became known as Buttons." Button's Inn, of course, was built in the following century. This account says that Celeron's men in 1749 also unsuccessfully searched for the gold.

The magazine neither lists nor suggests its sources.

No credible 19th century or modern historian reports anything to support this story. Buried treasure seemed to obsess many 19th century minds. Joseph Smith, discoverer of the Gold Bible, as it was called, and founder of the Mormon Religion, was far from alone when it came to digging in the ground of western New York for treasure. Panama Rocks attracted several stories of stolen and counterfeit gold. Indian mounds throughout the region also attracted the greedy. An old Canadian came annually to dig on French Creek for buried French gold into the 1880's. A modern man motivated by such stories which

exist all down the Allegheny drainage, bulldozed an archaeological site at Waterford. In 1882 a chest of gold coins was actually found in Franklin, Pa., site of Fort Machault. The discoverer was allegedly guided in a dream by a French soldier.

What does all this have to do with Chautauqua Lake? Well, I was told by a Ripley resident, Dorr Town, on July 20, 1988, a treasure was actually lost on the outlet between Jamestown and Falconer when the French expedition broke through the ice. One claimed it was hidden on a ledge along the river and is now under water; all rather unlikely considering the nature of the shallow Chadakoin.

There was curiously a sort of real iron echo of this golden myth. Glen W. Bergland's published reminiscences tell of his boyhood friendship with Asel Smiley, a member of the ancient Fluvanna Smiley family. Smiley had told him that his grandfather (that would be William) worked on the barges and towboats used to haul freight on the lake in the steamboating days. One year, just after the ice was out, according to Smiley, a barge was sent to Mayville to pick up a load of pig iron or cast iron bars which had come over from Lake Erie. At the first bend of the outlet, below Celoron, the barge began taking on water. A crewman took an axe and cut the 1-1/4 inch tow rope to protect the steamboat. The barge and iron went to the bottom forever.

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SEA SERPENTS

I don't have anything about sea serpents in Chautauqua Lake other than the vaguest uncertain mumbles. If I said I was going to talk about sea serpents I must have been trying to impress Michelle to get this job.

On the 4th of July 1817, partyers on Lake Erie off Dunkirk spotted a sea serpent. A similar spotting was reported about five years ago. In the of 1883 there were several reports of a sea serpent in Findley Lake. But I can't site any claims for Chautauqua Lake.

HERMITS AND ECCENTRICS

Chautauqua Lake has an unusually rich history of hermits and eccentrics. I covered these pretty well in the February and August issues of the Chautauqua Genealogist. Briefly, the usually credited first settler of the Lake, Alexander McIntyre, was among the most colorful. He had ears mutilated, he claimed, when he lived among the Indians where he also claimed to have acquired immense medical knowledge.

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He built a stockade around his cabin to protect himself from the Indians, he claimed, or his common law wife from her Meadville relatives as the cynical suspected. He hired a teenaged boy to venture out of the stockade each morning. The boy banged a frying pan and called out "all is well" three times if the coast was clear. Then McIntyre would emerge wearing a large hunting knife and carrying a spear. McIntyre was a man ahead of his time. About 1814 he built half a dozen cabins around a sulphur spring near Westfield and there established a sort of primitive spa.

Jonathan Smith, considered Chautauqua Lake's second settler, had land right where the Institution is now. He was considered a hermit and even his gravestone so identifies him, but his chief eccentricity was bachelorhood.

Truman Downs who died in the poorhouse in 1881 had lived on the lake 30 or 50 years according to different sources. HE WAS AN EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT, SELF-EDUCATED MAN FROM THE State of Maine. His fiancé ran off with a sea captain and he became a recluse and an alcoholic,

living first at the later location of Chautauqua Institution. He claimed to have tipped off the Methodists to that location when they were establishing their camp meeting grounds before the Sunday School Assembly idea was born. Thus he felt he ultimately determined the location of Chautauqua Institution.

He claimed variously to have been born on Venus, Mars, and Jupiter, and to have slid to earth on a rainbow. He said he nearly starved at first for want of his native diet of ethereal air and electric fluid. Fortunately, he finally discovered that common whiskey was an acceptable substitute.

A similar character, a bit later, was Charles Cowden. He fished in summer and lived off hospitality, fiddling, wood carving, and story telling in winter. He appeared on a post card in fake Indian garb in front of his shack.

Even the very respected and otherwise normal early settler, William Bemus had one eccentricity. He was certain he would live forever. He didn't.

STRANGE TRANSPORTATION

The first commercial craft of Chautauqua Lake was supposed to be a giant dugout canoe launched at Crescent Creek, Lakewood in the spring of 1806. It was carved from a giant pine in Busti of Pennsylvania found by some Sugar Grove people when they cut a road to the lake in 1805. It was five feet across and at least 70 feet long. It was large enough to carry a settler's entire family and possessions, such as Uriah Bentley's wife and eight children in 1810. Better, it could carry 25 men. In 1816 the pilot and oarsman was said to be Jolly Tinkham and the fee 50 cents and a "junk bottle of whiskey".

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Starting at the time of settlement; if not before, the lake supported a hearty freight traffic via keelboats. These were a craft made to be pushed up river by crews of polemen who positioned long poles between the river bottom and their shoulders then walked aft along the cleated running boards on each side of the boats. These were the toughest characters to ever cross our history. In their frequent fights biting off ears and thumbs was acceptable as was gouging out one eye, but not two. Things came to a head in 1810 in Mayville at the largest ever fight of boatmen against locals.

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The lake had two horse powered boats, Elisha Allen's in 1824 and George Stoneman, Sr.'s in 1849. Both were slow and uneconomical and powered by four horses with four resting. I'm not certain if Allen's was a giant squirrel cage or a cleat disc tread power. Stonemen's was probably a sweep unit.

In 1822 a 35 foot keelboat passed on down Oneida Lake and the Oswego River to Lake Ontario. From there it came up the Niagara River to five miles from the falls where it was placed on wheels. Then it went up Lake Erie to Barcelona where it was placed on wheels again and pulled over the portage to Chautauqua Lake. From there it floated down to Pittsburgh. It had several families on board.

CHAUTAUQUA LAKE DIVIDED IN TWO

In January 1885 a letter from E.W. Keyes to the New York Tribune commented on their earlier interview of former State Senator Loren Sessions of Panama.

"Sir: I noticed in the Tribune of January 25th, a talk with ex-senator Loren B. Sessions, in which he said half a century ago, Chautauqua Lake was divided into two parts, which was separated by a narrow channel so overgrown with bushes that passage through it was difficult."

Keyes goes on to point out this is absurd. He was himself a passenger on a steamboat going through the narrows July 4, 1834 and that it had not differed materially in his memory of well over 50 years.

Sessions was a flamboyant and resourceful politician and he probably had been unable to resist the temptation to tell an attention getting tall tale.

DID CELERON EXIST?

A little book published in 1908 contained a letter written to the Oil City Derrick, Feb. 18 of that year.

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"The writers of local history are apt to believe and their statements are often tinged with unintentional sophistry as they pen their obtrusive facts to the people."

I make this statement, 'Celoron De Bienville, or De Celoron' is a myth and such a person never existed.'

The people of Chautauqua County look upon this man as the discoverer of the shores of the magnificent lake. A noted biographer of Buffalo stepped into the office of the Journal and in due course the discussion of Celoron came forth.He said the people of Jamestown were deceived and honored a man who never existed and could prove his allegation, stating he had made a thorough search in the Buffalo library and such a name could not be found. The editor was inclined to think he must be mistaken and together we spent an afternoon in the Prendergast library and, with the skillful co-operation of the librarian, we were unsuccessful after a diligent search in the standard histories to find any trace of the alleged explorer, Celoron De Bienville.

"Therefore, I can state without any degree of hesitancy, Chautauqua County and the oil region together cherish the name of a man who never traversed the verdure of the hills and valleys we love so well. E. George Lindstrom."

Part of the gentlemen's problem was a chronic one for Chautauqua County historians. They can't get Celoron's name right. He was Pierre Joseph Celoron and his title was Sieur de Blainville. Thus he could be called Celoron de Blainville. Bother De Celoron and De Bienville are wrong. The latter reflects and leads to confusion with another man. Many historians have made these errors, notoriously Obed Edson and Dolores Thompson in their books. Helen McMahan and Jamestown Marker Booklet got it right.

Celoron, more by implication than by overt statement, has often been given credit for discovering Chautauqua Lake in 1`794. He, did not. On the night of July 22 he and about 250 others camped on Chautauqua Lake. We don't know where. Almost certainly not at Celoron. The history books suggest Fluvanna on grossly inadequate evidence.

A number of people, including Susan Blodgett Pulver, have stated that Celoron buried one of his lead plates at Celoron or somewhere on the lake. He did not.

I wrote a creditable short biography of the man in the Post-Journal Tempo March 19, 1983 issue.

FISH STORIES

What is a lake without a few fish stories? What was the largest fish ever taken from Chautauqua Lake? In 1884 a carcass was picked up. In 1897 an estimated 65 pound live fish was netted at the hatchery.

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The largest live fish ever caught was a 50 pounder 53 inches long in 1903 by A.A.Walker of Jamestown. Partly ingested by this muskellunge was another muskellunge 16 pounds and 19-1/2 inches long.

On July 9, 1872 a gigantic fish was spotted thrashing around in apparent agony in the middle of the lake. It had to be towed in and was found to be six feet long and weighed 120 pounds. It's surface was tough as armor and no one could identify what species it was.

WHISKEY BOAT

In 1896 two Celoron men, B. Tobias and West Frank, purchased a 90 foot steamboat that has been built 21 years earlier, burned and rebuilt twice. It had gone under the names of Mary Griffith, Winona, and Erie. The new owners based it at Celoron and fitted it with a bar to serve customers who were dissatisfied with the dry laws at Celoron and other lake resorts. The boat was renamed John Raines as a sarcastic honor to State Senator John Raines, Republican from Canandaigua, who had been the author of the local option dry laws the customers blamed for their inconvenience. The venture ran one season and ended in financial failure.

CANALS

Chautauqua Lake has been the site of several canal projects of varying nature. First was a projected transport canal. Before the birth of railroads and even before the settlement of our area, there was interest in linking the Ohio and Great Lakes drainages. Canals, included with stream clearance projects as "internal improvements" were that era's golden pass to economic growth. George Washington, himself, wrote to William Irvine to ask about possible routes in this region. Irvine recommended the Chautauqua Portage.

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The very year the Erie Canal opened, we got action. That was 1825 and the Erie Canal was the first big canal project and the most successful ever. Southern tier legislators had been equivocal about the canal but went along with the promise we would get something once it was completed. So that very year there were canal as well as road surveys all over the southern tier. Dr. Whippo surveyed a Conewango route and a Chautauqua Lake route. The Chautauqua Portage canal would have been ten and a quarter miles long with a rise of 724 feet and a cost of $898,685.

Orsino E. Jones, the Jones of Jones and Gifford Avenue, was the first to seriously try to exploit the swamp land along the west side of the outlet as was Richard P. Marvin on the east side. He probably worked throughout the mid 19th century with stump pullers, drainage and fill. He cut a ditch about 15 feet wide by seven or eight deep from the lake to about the second bend of the outlet. This was an attempt to divert flood waters through and quickly away from his lands, but it was an exercise in futility.

Projects similar to this and many other ideas arose after severe floods of 1986, 1942 and 1943. Next the Army Engineers were called in. Their preferred recommendation was a diversion canal, no so different from the one proposed in the 1820's that would send flood waters into Lake Erie via the Little Inlet and Little Chautauqua Creek. They proposed to cut through the divide which rises only 58 feet above normal lake level, but the cut would have to be up to 75 feet deep and 16,740 feet long for an1850 cost, with the rest of the project of $4,348,000.

CLOSE

Chautauqua Lake has been home to many other strange and colorful events such as the 1897 international rowing and friendship race which the Hop Bitters company turned into a (???????)

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gambling (?????) . Somebody turned it into the biggest (?????????) and sports scandal in our history. Margaret K> Look discussed it (???) completely in a chapter of one of her books.

In the early 1890's some of the early Mormon's at the start of their epic continental trek, stopped for about a year in Jamestown. One was provoked to demonstrate that he could walk on water at Fluvanna as Christ had done on the Sea of Galilee. Phillip Sherman removed one of the boards he had rigged somehow just below the surface and the demonstration was a failure.

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The stories never end, but I must before the lake freezes over, so thank you and good day.

CLOSE

Chautauqua Lake has been home to many other strange and colorful events such as the 1879 international rowing colorful events such as the 1879 international rowing championship race which the Hop Bitters company turned into a media and gambling circus. Somebody turned it into the biggest anti-climax and sports scandal in our history. Margaret K. Look discussed it most completely in a chapter of one of her books.

In the early 1830's some of the early Mormon's at the start of their epic continental trek, stopped for about a year in Jamestown. One was provoked to demonstrate that he could walk on water at Fluvanna as Christ had done on the Sea of Galilee. Philip Sherman removed one of the boards he had rigged somehow just below the surface and the demonstration was a failure.

The stories never end, but I must before the lake freezes over, so thank you and a good day.

Norman P. Carlson