

Network News



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Lake Pivotal to Seneca County's 200 Year History

By Walt Gable, Seneca Historical Society

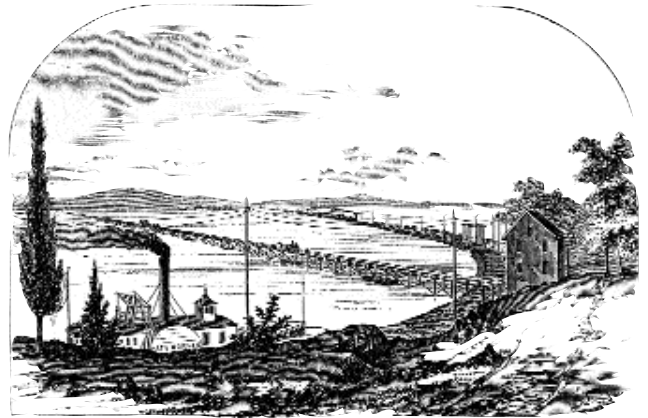
The natural beauty of what is today Seneca County was probably first reported in 1671 by a Jesuit missionary priest named Father Raffeix, who said “[This] is the fairest country I have seen in America. It is a tract between two lakes and not exceeding four leagues in width, consisting of almost uninterrupted plains, the woods bordering it are extremely beautiful.”

Many of the earliest permanent white settlers had been soldiers in the Sullivan Campaign of 1779 and had traveled through this area. After the Revolutionary War, when they were to be given lands in central NY as a reward for their services in the War, these veterans were very willing to accept lands in this area whose beauty they knew so well.

Helping with the influx of settlers from eastern New York was the completion in 1800 of the first wooden bridge across Cayuga Lake. This toll bridge was about 6 miles south of the northern end of the lake and at the time of its completion was the longest bridge in the Western Hemisphere. By 1858, the third such bridge across the lake was abandoned as competition was too great from the Erie Canal, the Free Bridge route, and railroads. Interestingly, however, in both 1929 and 1930 the New York State Legislature passed bills authorizing the construction of a modern highway bridge over the ancient route of the Cayuga Bridge. Opposition from the Finger Lakes Association, however, prompted Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt to veto both bills.

For many years, fairly large boats traveled Cayuga Lake. One of the most

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One of three toll bridges that crossed Cayuga Lake

Neighbors Around Cayuga Lake Conference

Learn about the watershed and let us know your key concerns. Details on back page.

October 23, 1-5pm at NY Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls

Cayuga Lake Watershed Network

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WATERSHED STEWARD'S MESSAGE History and Lake Entwined

By Sharon Anderson, Watershed Steward



Seneca County's celebrates 200 years and as a tribute we feature three different glimpses of its rich history, much of which is tied to the lake. You'll be charmed by the story of a lakeshore home, remember the tragic wreck of the Frontenac, and learn how Farmerville became Interlaken. The latter story is complete with a photo from yesteryear of the site of the Watershed Network office. Our corner building makes a cameo appearance again in the stormwater article that reminds us of how common place events

like storms can threaten our water resources that are the foundation for much of our local economy today as in days past. And lest we forget how short 200 years is geologically, we wander back 400 million years ago to the Devonian Period, the age of the fish. 🐟

Historic Homes A Treasure

By Edith Delavan, Author of Landmarks Of Seneca County

In 1848 Cyrus Garnsey had just graduated from Brown University. His doctor diagnosed him as suffering from a fatal disease but suggested that he might live a few more years if he settled in some quiet rural spot and led a healthy outdoor life. He purchased a house facing Cayuga Lake, on Route 89 in the town of Fayette. There he lived a mere 65 years longer, attesting perhaps to his serene enjoyment of the beautiful setting.



Cyrus Garnsey purchased this federal farmhouse in 1848, seeking a quiet setting to improve his health.

The lakes of Seneca County lend a special beauty to house sites along the shores. Further-more, preserving the watershed gives an economic boost to the area as these properties appeal to more and more buyers. Many such sites are pictured in the recently published Landmarks Of Seneca County, by author and photographer Edith Delavan.

Cyrus Garnsey was the great-grandfather of Nelson Delavan, who wrote the introduction to Landmarks. The book highlights 250 houses in Seneca County, a substantial number of which were built in the nineteenth century. Then numerous styles include: Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne. Each photograph in the book is accompanied by text that combines architectural notes with anecdotes from present or former owners. The book is for sale at the Seneca Museum, 89 Fall Street, Seneca Falls, and at The Bookery, DeWitt Mall, Ithaca. 🐟

Stormwater Solutions Benefit Fish

By Ruthanna Hawkins, Watershed Educator



Bill Shaw shows off a Channel Catfish caught off Frontenac Point

Stormwater runoff can change the landscape, degrade water quality and harm fish and other aquatic life. Natural landscapes such as forests, wetlands and grasslands are porous and allow rain to percolate slowly into the ground. Non-porous surfaces such as streets, driveways, and roofs prevent rain or snowmelt from soaking into the ground. During a storm, in areas where water can't seep into the soil, storm water accumulates on the surface. It quickly flows to nearby streams, increasing the stream's volume and velocity.

The fast-moving water erodes streambanks, rips out streamside vegetation, and widens stream channels. The stream's force scours away the aquatic bugs that feed fish. Cold-water species like trout may later contend with warm water. Ground water feeds the streams between rains. When the water runs off the land quickly it doesn't recharge the ground water resulting in lower water depths between storms. The shallow water warms quickly,

stressing fish that need cool water.

In addition, as water flows over land, it picks up debris, soil, pet wastes, fertilizers and other pollutants. Even rain is channeled into a stormwater system – a ditch or a storm drain. It is not treated before it flows into a lake, stream, river or wetland. Pollutants rush to the waterbodies we depend upon for fishing, boating, swimming and drinking water.

Polluted stormwater can harm fish, plants, animals, and people. When stormwater runoff carries excess nutrients (especially phosphorus) into waterbodies, it boosts the growth of algae. When the algae die and decompose, oxygen in the water is consumed. Fish cannot survive in water with low dissolved oxygen levels. Soil carried to a creek or lake in stormwater can be harmful. The murky water makes it harder for aquatic plants to grow, plants that fish depend on for shelter and waterfowl need for food.

You can ensure that the stormwater moving across your property carries as few pollutants as possible. Even if your house is not close to a stream or river, the runoff probably flows there quickly via a roadside ditch or storm drain. From there it empties into a stream or lake, taking soil and pollutants along with it. Washing one's car in the driveway can send soap and grease into the



Stormwater rushes past the Watershed Network's office picking up road grime

nearby water body. Fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens in excess can wash off and pollute the local stream. Pet waste left on the ground can be a source of harmful bacteria and nutrients that are washed to the lake via storm drains. Septic systems that are poorly maintained can release (bacteria and virus) that are whisked to nearby waterways by stormwater. These sources of pollution can contaminate our drinking water supplies as well as the waterbodies that we enjoy for recreation.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website www.epa.gov offers a free video After The Storm. The half hour program offers simple tips to protect aquatic habitats such as picking up after one's dog and recycling household hazardous wastes. By making wise decisions around your home, you can protect our water quality. Better water quality means safer sources of drinking water and a healthier environment for you and your family. 🐾

Stormwater Pollution SOLUTIONS

Adapted from the EPA website.

AUTO CARE:

- Use commercial car wash that treats or recycles wastewater
- Repair leaks and dispose of auto fluids properly

LAWN CARE:

- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly and in the recommended amounts, or not at all
- Consider a soaker hose instead of a sprinkler
- Compost yard waste

PET WASTE:

- Pick up after your pet

SEPTIC SYSTEMS:

- Inspect and pump septic system every 3 years
- Don't dispose of household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets

Intermunicipal Organization Update

By Darby Kiley, Project Manager, Intermunicipal Organization

Lake Cruises Focus on Learning

The Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom has fall cruising opportunities available for student or community groups interested in learning about the history and ecology of Cayuga Lake. A basic two-hour cruise aboard the M/V Haendel includes an interactive presentation on lake ecology and hands-on monitoring of the lake's water quality. Contact Bill Foster at 272-7256, or see www.tioherotours.com for more information.

Restoration and Protection Plan Implementation Continues

The stream channel of Virgil Creek in Dryden was relocated and the bank was recreated to stabilize a failing slope that threatened Lake Road. Furthering the goals of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration and Protec-

tion Plan, the Intermunicipal Organization (IO), contributed funds for specialized bank stabilization material to control soil erosion and promote seedling growth along the steep slope. Future IO projects will include roadbank stabilization and stormwater improvements in the Towns of Genoa, Ledyard and Ovid.

The IO submitted a grant proposal to the NYS Department of State with three projects that focus on water quality and habitat restoration. The IO plans to continue roadbank stabilization work with a proposed project in the Town of Romulus. Wildlife habitat and shoreline restoration in the Town of Lansing is proposed at Salt Point along the lakeshore and Salmon Creek. At a broader scale, the IO also proposed a data collection effort to assess faulty septic systems and illicit discharges along several streams in Tompkins County and the Cayuga Lake shore itself.

Lake Pivotal to Seneca County's 200 Year History *continued from cover*

famous of the Cayuga Lake steamers was the Frontenac, which made its maiden voyage in 1870. It was 135 feet long and 22 feet wide. On July 27, 1907, the Frontenac left Ithaca with forty passengers. It stopped at Sheldrake and then headed for Aurora. Unfortunately, it ran aground at Dean's Cove where seven women and one boy drowned. Some of the wreck was salvaged in 1908 but the rest remained until it was used as scrap iron during World War II. Many other large steamers had long and successful careers. In the 1820s, there were several horse treadmill ferries. Much of the farm produce of the area was transported on the Lake to Ithaca or out through the Erie Canal.

In the mid 1800s, many small communities along the lake were thriving. By 1850, East Varick (located on the west side of the lake, nearly across from Aurora), was one of them. The Burroughs House was one of the main attrac-

tions along the lake and its food and the dances held there brought young and old from all over to its doors. Farmers brought their grain there for shipment and freight was brought from the Seneca-Cayuga Canal up the lake to Varick residents. Unfortunately, the advent of the railroad from Geneva to Ithaca absorbed the freight transport business in a few years and the warehouses of East Varick lay unused. East Varick, like many lake communities, declined in population and commercial economic prominence.

In the 1890's Cayuga Lake became a popular summer tourist trade location, in large part due to the lake area's natural beauty and summer recreational opportunities. Large summer hotels such as the Sheldrake Hotel, and the Cayuga Lake House were built or expanded to accommodate the large numbers of tourists who would come to Interlaken either by train or to Sheldrake by steamboat between June and October.

Although Cayuga Lake is not used for commercial transportation today, it still contributes much to the economy of the area. Its natural beauty attracts many tourists and avid bass fisherman. It is the source of fine drinking water for much of the population on both sides of the lake. Much of its shoreline has become summer residences, adding significantly to the tax base to support local government and schools. Many small wineries have developed, making use of the moderate climate along the lake. It is hoped that increased commercialization and development will not threaten the natural beauty and health of Cayuga Lake.

Editor's Note: Bill Hecht, who provided the bridge image, preserves and shares historical artifacts of Cayuga Lake. If you have any he could photograph or scan contact him at wshecht@yahoo.com. For more images visit <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~springport/pictures.html>.

The Land Between The Lakes

By Bill Gates, Interlaken Historical Society



In this undated image, two young boys sit in front of the Main Street storefront that is now the Watershed Network office.

This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Seneca County and the 100th anniversary of one of its communities, the Village of Interlaken. As we consider the history of our area, remember that our region gradually progressed from being "wilderness" to being "the frontier", to being a settled area, all within a period of about 50 years, roughly between 1780 and 1830.

This change in settlement status also resulted in many political changes. What is now Seneca County was once part of Albany County, then Montgomery County, then Herkimer County, then Onondaga County and lastly Cayuga County. March 29, 1804 when Seneca County was first created, it was 63 miles long and stretched from Lake Ontario south to Tioga County. In 1823 Seneca County was reduced to the size we know today.

The original 3 townships (Junius, Romulus and Ovid) were subdivided and by 1830 the 10 townships that make up Seneca County today were all in place. These political changes were a direct result of the rapid settlement of the "land between the lakes". As more people moved to the area, business centers developed every few miles, along with post offices, schools and churches. It was not convenient to travel long distances to file papers at county offices.

Why the rush to settle in our

area? The answer is the good land. The men who traveled with Sullivan and Clinton in 1779 to drive the Indians out of here and into the hands of the British saw amazing crops being grown by the Indians, and thus knew it was rich land. By 1790, these same men were being awarded 600 acres, or more as payment for their military service. By then 11 years had passed. Some men returned and settle their land, but most sold it to speculators.

The township of Covert was separated from Ovid Township in April 1817 and made part of Tompkins County until April 1918, when it again became part of Seneca County. Covert was divided in 1826 to create Lodi Township. The borderline of today's Town of Covert was created on January 27, 1826.

In contrast to the boundary changes of the towns and counties, the Village of Interlaken experienced name changes during the first 100 years of its existence. Interlaken has a history dating back to about 1800 when Peter and William Rappleye settled on Lot 42, along what is now Cayuga Street. Apparently and eventually, their parents Jeremiah and Sarah, their 4 brothers and 6 sisters all arrived and settled virtually all of this village including all or part of Lot 51 (south of the Post Office and east of Main Street) and Lot 49 (1 mile west of the village and on the south side of Route 96A).

In 1800 another early settler, Samuel Almy, arrived and married Jane Rappleye (Jeremiah's daughter) on November 1, 1801. He established lots and called the place Farmerville. The village boasted the first post office in what is now Seneca County, located in McCall's Store, probably in 1802. The post office was across Route 96 from today's Usher property (near the corner of County Route 150).

In 1819 the U.S. Post Office changed the name of the McCall's Store post office to Farmer – not Farmerville, since that name existed in Cattaraugus County. Local people continued to call it Farmerville. This created a problem during the Civil War when young men sent letters home addressed to Farmer-ville, letters that never arrived in Farmer, New York.

Because of this problem, the name of the post office and the village were both changed to Farmer Village on November 20, 1865. When the Lehigh Valley Railroad arrived, they said Farmer Village was too long a name for the station sign so the railroad called it Farmer. On July 1, 1892 the post office was officially changed back to Farmer.

As the Farmer Railroad Station became the terminus for a growing summer movement of people from eastern cities coming to the Cayuga Lake hotels, the railroad wanted a more cosmopolitan name. A contest was sponsored to choose a name, and the residents agreed to incorporate the village using the new name for the village, the railroad station and the post office. Thus by March 2, 1904, Interlaken was born.

The land between the lakes has seen many changes: economic, political and social. Yet one fact remains – it is clearly the good land. 🐾

Central New York Plays Role in the Birth of Modern Geology

By Warren D. Allmon, Paleontological Research Institution

When out-of-area guests come to Ithaca, I always suggest we go to see a gorge. When I suggest it, more often than not they think I'm going to take them to "just a waterfall", and almost without exception they are flabbergasted by what they see when they eventually get there. The gorges of the Finger Lakes region are indeed a well-kept secret from most of the world -- that is unless you are a geologist.

If you are a geologist in the United States, you have probably either studied the rocks of central New York directly, or have read about them in text books; and you have definitely studied basic geological concepts that were first developed right here more than 150 years ago. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Central New York is one of the most geologically important areas in the nation, or the world for that matter, because of its role in the history of geological science.

There are two reasons for this situation. The first is obvious as you stand in any of our gorges: there are lots of rocks to look at! To be a bit more technical about it, there is an enormous thickness of flat-lying sedimentary strata beautifully exposed. This is because around 400 million years ago, during the Devonian Period, a mountain range formed to our east due to the collision of what is now North America with what is now western Europe. As this mountain range grew, it also eroded, pouring sand and mud westward into the shallow sea that had flooded much of North America. Today, this sand and mud forms more than 1000 meters (3000 feet) of shale, siltstone, and sandstone – one of the



Ludlowville Falls showers over ancient sedimentary rocks

thickest stacks of rocks from the Devonian in the world.

And thanks to the ice age, it is one of the best exposed. Over the last two million years, glaciers covered New York State dozens of times, the most recent melting away only 20,000 years ago. Each advance of the ice sheets carved the landscape, and after each retreat the water shaped it further, in particular forming our spectacular gorges and revealing hundreds of feet of Devonian rock.

Not only are these rocks magnificent, but they were studied here before they were studied anywhere else in America. James Hall (1811-1898) was New York State's

first State Geologist. Hall explored and described its magnificent geology and fossils. He derived from them concepts, central to all later geological thought, of how sedimentary rocks form.

Thousands of geologists have followed in Hall's footsteps, coming to Central New York to study its rocks and fossils both for what they can teach us about the Devonian, and what they can teach us about all of Earth history. The next time you're looking up at a Finger Lakes gorge, or out across Cayuga Lake, you are part of a long and important legacy of contemplation. 🐦

Learn more about the Earth's history at the Museum of the Earth at the Paleontological Research Institution

It features hands-on exhibits and one of the nation's largest fossil collections including a mastodon skeleton found in Poughkeepsie, NY. The museum is located at 1259 Trumansburg Rd, Route 96, Ithaca, NY.

**www.museumoftheearth.org
607-273-6623**

What the Cayuga Lake Watershed Means to Me

By Violet Goncarovs, Home-schooled, Trumansburg



Summer spreads her warm wings of sunlight over the Finger Lakes region. All the overflowing streams are leveling to their summer capacity and the colossal Cayuga Lake is finally warming its murky depths. There are so many things I love about early summer around Cayuga: the blossoming lilacs, the full canopy of my favorite maple tree, and most of all, swimming in the lake. As long as I can remember, I've always excitedly awaited the first swim of the season. Diving into the frigid water makes me think of how deceivingly inviting and warm it looks. I always swim back towards shore chattering, but I couldn't be happier. I will always remember Cayuga in its first-swim form: chilly, regal, and full of life.

Growing up in this area of bountiful waterfalls, glimmering lakes, and oddly beautiful swamps, I have been spoiled by nature's grace. I can't imagine life any place else. ... I know why so many people before me have settled and lived their lives out on the shores of Cayuga. ...

Behind its beauty, Cayuga holds a vibe of importance. I see and feel that significance every time I walk in a tributary stream or turn on a faucet and let the water run over my hands. Cayuga's role in human life has changed over the centuries. At first it provided food, enjoyment and cleansing properties for the first inhabitants of its shores, the Cayugas. Then as the white man came it provided means for boat transportation and ice for the white man's iceboxes. As humans moved their life away from nature, Cayuga Lake moved into the position of water supply and sewage disposal. Although this may seem like a sorry title, it is the most important "job" Cayuga could have.

I understand that Cayuga Lake doesn't live and breathe on a biological standard, but perhaps through all the life that it supports it lives in its own way. As with any living thing, I try to respect this vital variable in my life. I care for Cayuga's health by picking up litter, educating myself about what I pour down the drain, and learning about the public water systems connected to the lake. I have visited both the Ithaca Sewage Treatment Plant and the Bolton Point Water Plant to further my education on this matter. I want to preserve and restore Cayuga Lake and the surrounding area so that the succeeding generations can have the luxuries that I've had: clean water and an enjoyable environment.

A short walk from my house is an important imaginary line. The line separates Seneca Lake's watershed from the Cayuga Lake's watershed. Two swamps and two streams make this line. One stream flows out of the western swamp and eventually in to Seneca Lake. The other flows east into Taughannock Creek, over the highest falls east of the Mississippi, and into Cayuga Lake. As shown by this example of connection, no matter how I look at my life, I am fully and eternally connected to the water that surrounds me. The Cayuga Lake Watershed is a part of me, and I hope that someday it will be as pure, as ecologically balanced, and pollutant free as Cayuga's potential allows. 🐾

Editors Note: For the full essay visit www.cayugalake.org. Scroll down to "2004 Essay Contest winners announced". Look for the theme for the 2005 Essay Contest in the winter addition of Nework News.

Too Much Of A Good Thing

continued from back cover

Excessive plants that are continually dying and decaying will rob other aquatic life of available oxygen. This can increase the rate of eutrophication, or aging, of a waterbody.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, excess phosphorus was reaching the lakes partly through the widespread use of cleaning products that contained phosphates. New York State banned the sale of phosphorus detergents in 1976. Subsequently, phosphorus levels dropped and water quality improved. In recent years, however, phosphorus levels have begun to creep back up and although the levels are much lower than in 1970, phosphorus is still increasing and creating problems in our lakes.

Water quality in Cayuga and Owasco Lakes is generally very good but surplus phosphorus impairs some uses of the lakes. High phosphorus causes excessive aquatic plant growth and algae blooms that hinder recreation like fishing, boating and swimming. Too many plants also make the lakes look, taste, and smell bad. In addition, it is more difficult for public water systems to operate efficiently.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County has designed a program called "The P-Project" to help residents reduce phosphorus inputs to the lakes. The P-Project is sponsoring a watershed-friendly lawn care seminar at Neighbors Around Cayuga Lake, October 23 in Seneca Falls. The first 35 households who sign up for this workshop will receive a free soil nutrient analysis through Cornell. Zero-phosphorus fertilizer will be available at discount prices to all attendees. 🐾

Neighbors Around Cayuga Lake Conference

The lake and surrounding watershed is a fascinating area. Learn more about the ecology and community at Neighbors Around Cayuga Lake Conference Saturday, October 23, 1:00-5:00pm at NY Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls. Only \$5 for families and individuals that are Watershed Network members. \$10 for non-members. Pre-registration is requested.

During the opening session we want to hear your concerns about the watershed. After that choose up to three sessions at attend:

- Fishing Cayuga Lake
- Seneca Meadows Landfill: an update
- Green Grass, Blue Water: watershed friendly lawn care
- Wet and Wonderful: understanding Cayuga Lake
- Cayuga-Seneca Canal – what’s your vision?
- Let’s Make Boating a Clean Sport: from maintenance to shoreline protection
- Cayuga-Seneca Canal Waterfront Revitalization and Erie Canal Heritage
- Weeds: the good, the bad and the ugly

We’ll wrap up the afternoon by presenting the key concerns identified by participants during a reception. Visit www.cayugalake.org for a description of each session and registration details or call 532-4104 to request a flyer.

Too Much Of A Good Thing

By Kelly Fallone, Cayuga County Cooperative Extension



Algae chokes this Union Springs pond

Two decades ago, Cayuga and Owasco Lakes were choking. Huge algae blooms and excessive plant growth were robbing the water of massive amounts of dissolved oxygen. Dissolved oxygen is necessary for fish and most aquatic life to survive. The growth of aquatic plants and algae was accelerated because phosphorus was being abundantly supplied.

Phosphorus, whose chemical notation is P, is a nutrient that plants need to grow but it can have disastrous effects if too much is present. The addition of surplus phosphorus upsets the natural balance of a lake and allows vegetation and algae to grow unimpeded. As plants die they sink to the bottom and are decomposed by bacteria in a process that requires oxygen.

continued on page 7

The Mission... *The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network seeks to protect and improve the ecological health, economic vitality and overall beauty of the watershed through education, communication and leadership.*



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