

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

About

SENECA COUNTY HISTORY

**Compiled by Walter Gable,
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for the
Bicentennial of Seneca County
March 2004**

Note: Some of the information contained in this Miscellaneous Information compilation in March 2004 has been modified, expanded upon, etc. in more recent writings by Walt Gable.

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Geographic Facts About Seneca County

The county is thirty-three miles long north to south and about ten miles wide, some 328 square miles or about 209,920 acres.

The two Finger Lakes bordering the County on the east and west have some important geographic qualities. Cayuga Lake is forty miles long, making it the longest of the Finger Lakes. Seneca Lake is the deepest lake at 633 feet—meaning its lake bottom is 189 feet below sea level. Cayuga Lake is 40 miles long and 435 feet deep.

Seneca Lake is 36 miles long and 632 feet deep.

In terms of elevation, the Cayuga Lake seashore is about 381 feet above sea level. The Seneca Lake seashore is approximately 62 feet higher, largely because of the locks of the Cayuga and Seneca Canal. The highest elevation in Seneca County is 1630 feet—approximately midway between these two lakes on the county's southern border.

The southern part of the county is a plateau region of rolling upland. Much of this upland is dissected by small streams and lakeside gorges. These gorges had been formed by the glaciers that covered the area—the softer rock and soil was worn away. The northern part of the county is a flat plain with numerous drumlins—deposits left behind as the retreating/melting glacier temporarily stopped.

Although Cayuga Lake is the longest of the Finger Lakes, Seneca Lake is considered the largest. Seneca Lake comprises 42,688 acres of surface. Other than Lake Michigan, Seneca Lake is the deepest body of water wholly within the boundaries of the United States. At a depth of 200 feet, the water temperature is 39 degrees the year round.

Written records show that Seneca Lake has frozen completely over a few times. The years are 1855, 1875, 1885, and 1912.¹

Normal Weather Conditions

Temperatures

Summer	43 to 93 degrees
Fall	13 to 90 degrees
Winter	0 to 62 degrees
Spring	20 to 85 degrees

Average Yearly Precipitation

Rainfall	30.2 inches
Snowfall	59.5 inches

- Area of 336 square miles
- Land area of 215,040 acres
- 75 miles of roads
- in size it is the 33rd county in the state²

Start of State Income Tax Collection in Seneca County

1919—the first year that NYS income tax was collected. County received \$26,948.68³

First County Officers in 1804

Cornelius Humphrey, judge
Silas Halsey, clerk
William Smith, sheriff
Jared Sanford, surrogate⁴

Indebtedness of the County

On January 1, 1953, county treasurer Earl Staly announced that since 12/31/1952 there had been no outstanding bonds or notes against the county. For the first time since 8/1/1910 when the first highway bonds were purchased, the county was now debt free.⁵

Interestingly County Manager Keith Ashby told the Board of Supervisors in early 2004 that Seneca County was again debt free.

Potash and Lye

Settlers in early Seneca County had to clear their lands of trees if these lands were to be used for agricultural purposes. Trees were cut down and piled and burned. The resulting ash could be sold to a nearby “ashery.” The ashery was a place where wood ashes were dumped into vats, water was added and lye was leached out from the ashes. The lye solution was placed in large iron kettles and boiled down. The resulting lye was then transported to the Mohawk Valley in barrels where it was sold. This lye was used in making soap, fertilizer, and other chemicals. Our early ancestors called this lye “potash” or “pearlash.” Technically speaking, pearlash was made by adding hydrated lime to potash. Whether it was called potash or pearlash, it was a main source of cash for these settlers. This cash could be used to pay property taxes and to buy “necessities” not grown on the farm.

When the neighborhood asheries closed, it became a common sight for pioneer homes to have a leach barrel near the back door. In this barrel could be dropped the cooled ashes from the fireplace or stove. The leached lye could be retrieved. Fat from butchering and grease from the frying pan could be added to this lye to make soft soap.

The next time you come across an intersection with a name something like “Ashley Corners,” you may want to remember the crucial importance of potash in the economic growth of early Seneca County.⁶

Lake Steamers

For many years, fairly large boats traveled Cayuga Lake. The Enterprise began regular schedules from Ithaca to the Cayuga Bridge (Cayuga village in Cayuga) in 1820.

There were several horse treadmill ferries in the 1820s.

In 1827 a steam ferry boat named Seneca made daily trips from Bailey Town (present-day hamlet of Willard) to Dresden three times per day.

One of the most famous of the Cayuga Lake steamers was the Frontenac. It made its maiden voyage in 1870. It was 135 feet long and 22 feet wide. It had a daily schedule and was also available for charter. On July 27, 1907, the Frontenac left Ithaca with forty passengers. A fire broke out near Aurora and the ship ran aground with seven women and one boy drowned.

Some of the wreck was salvaged in 1908 but the rest remained until the rest was picked up for use scrap iron during World War Two.⁷

Parks in Seneca County

There are many parks of one kind or another within the borders of Seneca County. In terms of NY State Parks, there are Cayuga Lake State Park (established in 1928), Seneca Lake State Park (1960), and Sampson State Park (1960).

The Hector Land Use Area was created in 1933. Today it is known as the Finger Lakes National Forest. It is the only national forest in this state and it is the smallest of all national forests.

The Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1937.

The Willard Wildlife Management Area was created in 1962.

The Women's Rights National Historical Park was authorized in 1980. It includes the visitor's center and the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House in Seneca Falls. It also includes the M'Clintock House in Waterloo.⁸

Slavery in Seneca County

The 1820 census showed 84 slaves still held by their owners. If a slave had become old and infirm, the slave could neither be freed or given away.⁹

Seneca County in 1811

Seneca County had 9 post offices.

Ithaca was the largest village in the county.¹⁰

First Newspaper in Seneca County

1815—*The Seneca Patriot*, published in Ovid. The next year the name of this newspaper would be changed to *The Ovid Gazette*. In 1817 this paper was moved to Waterloo and became *The Waterloo Gazette*.¹¹

The Summer That Never Was – 1816

“Old accounts describe the cold year of 1816. January was very mild, many people allowing their fires to go out. February was also mild. March from the first to the sixth, was windy, but the rest of the month was lamb-like. April came in warm but became colder, and by the first of May, the temperature was like that of winter, with plenty of snow and ice. In May the young buds were frozen dead; ice formed an inch thick on ponds and streams, and it became too late to raise crops. June was a very cold month. Frost and ice were common. Almost every green thing was killed; all fruit destroyed. Snow fell ten inches deep in Vermont, with a three inch fall in the interior of New York State. All summer long the wind blew steadily from the north in blasts laden with ice. July came in with ice and snow. On July Fourth ice as thick as window glass formed throughout New England, New York and some parts of Pennsylvania. August

proved the worst of all. There was great privation, and thousands of persons would have perished in this county, had it not been for the abundance of fish and game.

“In this vicinity provisions could not be bought. Even that which had been intended for seed, was used. Potatoes were peeled so as to leave the eyes in the peeling to save for planting. Many families had no wheat flour for months. Molasses was made from pumpkins, and every known substitute for food was used. People could not get money, and they dared not fall in debt. The person of a debtor at that time, could be taken and confined in jail, according to a law repealed in 1821.”¹²

One of the Advantages of the Erie Canal

In 1824, one of the advantages of the building of the Erie Canal, was that marble headstones were introduced to Seneca County.¹³

First Village Ordinance in Waterloo – 1824

“It shall not be lawful for any person to permit any geese, swine, cattle or horses to run at large in the village. It shall not be lawful for any person to fire any firearms in the village and it shall not be lawful for any person to run or race his horse on any street at a greater speed than a trot or pace.”¹⁴

Marquis de LaFayette Visited Waterloo in 1825

On June 8, the Marquis de Lafayette visited Waterloo. He arrived by carriage over the turnpike road with his son, George Washington LaFayette, his private secretary and two friends. He stayed at the Waterloo Hotel, located at Main Street and Park Place.

To celebrate his arrival, some persons loaded the cannon in the park but were then afraid to light it. Captain Jehiel P. Parsons, who was the only person who escaped injury the year before when the beams of the Presbyterian Church collapsed, saw the loaded cannon. He took a match and lit it. The cannon burst and a fragment struck the captain and killed him. Since this was not a military accident, Capt. Parson’s survivors, his mother and sister, could receive no assistance. General LaFayette was not told of the accident while in Waterloo. Later, a friend in Auburn told him about it. The general sent his condolences and enclosed \$1,000.¹⁵

The Seneca Falls Lyceum – 1839

The Seneca Falls Lyceum was organized in 1839. On November 10, 1839 there was a debate on “Have the Negroes of this country received more injustice from the whites than the Indians?”¹⁶ (A “lyceum” is a hall in which public lectures, concerts, and similar programs are presented.)

Postage Rates in 1843

Postage for a letter was 5 cents. If the letter was sent more than 20 miles the postage was 10 cents; if sent more than 100 miles the postage would be 15 cents to 25 cents.¹⁷

Macadamized Streets in Seneca Falls

The first streets in Seneca Falls were macadamized in 1844.¹⁸

1850 Census Data

Town	Total	White Males	White Females	Blacks
Fayette	3785	1928	1843	14
Waterloo	3795	1823	1907	65
Junius	1516	820	694	2
Tyre	1356	697	658	1
Seneca Falls	4296	2146	2126	24

County Board of Supervisors Met in Seneca Falls – 1852

On November 24, 1852, the Board of Supervisors met for the first time in Seneca Falls. Because of the size of the village and its importance, the board felt it should meet there as well as at Ovid and Waterloo.¹⁹

The Death of Abraham Lincoln

The Seneca County Courier printed one day late (April 20) to bring readers the news of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

On April 20 there were special services for President Lincoln in all of the village churches in Seneca Falls.

Mr. Zalinski caned a man who laughed when he heard of the death of Mr. Lincoln.²⁰

Hangings in Seneca County

The hanging of George Chapman and Charles Johnson were the only occasions when capital punishment was inflicted in Seneca County. Both took place at Waterloo. The hanging of “Indian John” in 1804 for a murder committed in the present limits of this county on December 11, 1803 was over in Aurora. All of this territory was then Cayuga county.

Chapman was hanged by Sheriff James Rorison on the river bank in Waterloo on May 28, 1829, for killing Daniel Wright. It was fine spring day early in the morning that the Fayette Rifles, a local company, escorted the prisoner from the jail across the public square to what is now Locust Street to the gallows, erected near the river. He walked erect up the steps to the platform, although he was infirm. Aaron D. Lane was the minister who gave him spiritual comfort. Finally the sheriff handed Chapman a red bandanna handkerchief and when he dropped it his body shot down through the trap and he was soon dead. Thousands of people came to town in all sorts of vehicles, a procession from the adjacent country which was kept up all night. They thronged the banks of the river and the bridge, and the roofs and windows of nine stores on Main Street were black with people. A big locust tree standing near the gallows was black with people in its branches.

Charles Johnson was hanged November 15, 1888, in the jail at Waterloo for killing the keeper's assistant, John Walters, in that place, while he and other prisoners were trying to escape by rushing by him.²¹

Skoiyase

Skoiyase was the name of the Indian village which stood upon the site of Waterloo. The English and Dutch terms were respectively Skaigee (long falls) and Shaiyus (large falls). Other orthography used are Schoyerre Scawyace, Scauwaga, Schuyers and Skawayes. Skoiyase (place of whotleberries) was the most generally accepted name. It was the great fishing market town of the Cayugas, a cluster of wigwams partly concealed in a large tract of berry bushes, with clearings here and there where corn and vegetables were raised, and on the north orchards of apples and peaches.

During the fishing seasons Indians from neighboring tribes built their fires on the flats south of the river. Councils of the several tribes were frequently held here, where under a group of trees, which were standing when the white settlers first came, the Senecas and Cayugas took council for defense against Samuel Champlain who attacked them in 1615. Traces of fish ponds made in the sand beds of the river channel and the soft mucky shores, by Indians, were seen as late as 1815, and remains of eel weirs used by the Indians were found later. The great numbers of various kinds of fish that were caught here included salmon, catfish, bass and eel. Salt from the springs near the foot of Cayuga Lake was used curing the fish then being strung on poles and hung in the sun, after which they were ready for transportation with the families returning home.²²

Stage Coaches

The first stage coach to lumber along the old Genesee highway from the east—the first enter the land of the Cayuga Indians—and draw up to John Harris' ferry at Cayuga Lake, on the opening of the road in 1797, left Fort Schuyler (Utica) on September 30, 1797 and arrived in Geneva on the afternoon of the third day with four passenger. The stage taverns at which passengers for some time afterwards obtained refreshments were:

- from Fort Schuyler to Lairds (10 miles)
- to Van Epps' near the Oneida reservation (6 miles)
- to Wemps' at Oneida Castle (6 miles)
- to Sill's at Deep Springs (Chittenango) (11 miles)
- to Keeler's (12 miles)
- to Tyler's (Onondaga Hill) (10 miles)
- to Rice's (Nine Mile Creek) (10 miles)
- to Harris' (Cayuga ferry) (20 miles)
- to Powell's (Geneva) (13 miles)

During the winter of 1797-98 two stages, one of them a stage wagon, made weekly trips between Albany and Canandaigua. In 1804, Jason Parker and Levi Stevens secured by NYS legislature action the exclusive right to run stage wagons for seven years on this new turnpike between Utica and Canandaigua. These stages made two trips per week.

In 1809 the stage lines began carrying the United States mail. In 1816 the last line of stages made the run between Canandaigua and Utica in 36 hours.²³

Early Roads and Ferries

The lakes and rivers were used by the Iroquois Indians, as well as footpaths.

The soldiers in Sullivan's Campaign of 1779 cut down trees and created crude paths. The early records of the town of Romulus show that in June 1795 one such crude path was laid out into a highway from the south bounds of Romulus north to the Seneca outlet.

In 1788 a roadway of about one mile was built around the rapids (the so-called falls in what would become Seneca Falls) in the Seneca River.

In 1789 James Bennett started the ferry across Cayuga Lake.

A 1789 Road Township act was passed by the NYS Legislature to provide for a roadway west from Fort Schuyler to Seneca Lake. This roadway would become known as the Genesee Road. Ephraim Blacker got the contract to cut down trees to create a road two rods wide. The work was commenced in the winter and early spring of 1790. In fall 1790 the road was "completed" to Cayuga Ferry. That winter the road was "completed" to Geneva. It was completed in that the timber of the trees was cut off but the stumps were still in the road.

The Lottery Act of November 28, 1797 providing for a lottery of \$45,000 to make major improvements to the Great Genesee Highway and to extend it further west. This one hundred mile long road would be 64 feet wide and paved with logs and gravel in the moist places of the low country which it crossed.

In 1800 the NYS Legislature incorporated the Seneca Road or Turnpike Company. This road was to run basically the same route as the Great Genesee Highway. Toll houses were to be ten miles from each other. No person passing to or from public worship on Sunday, going to their common labor on farms, carrying fire wood, going to or from mill grinding of grain for family use, going to or returning from any funeral, shall pay any toll in the town in which they reside. Coupled with the first Cayuga Lake Bridge (replacing the more time-consuming and ferry), this road opened the western country to a flow of travel that built up a chain of prosperous villages.

In 1808 (the year that the first Cayuga Lake Bridge fell apart) the State road two miles north of the bridge was laid out. Then in 1825 a road was built directly east through the Montezuma marshes, including what became known as the Free Bridge (because it didn't have tolls like the Seneca Turnpike).

The Reservation Road bounding the west side of the West Cayuga reservation was laid out as a public highway and the survey recorded August 25, 1808. This road is that is today the path of Route 414 through the township of Fayette.²⁴

The Reverend Diedrich Willers

He was probably the longest serving preacher in Seneca County. Diedrich Willers was a native of Bremen, Germany. Born February 6, 1798, he participated in the famous battle of Waterloo, Belgium, on June 18, 1815. He arrived in America in 1819 and began preaching in Seneca County in April 1821. For sixty years and eight months he preached in the German

Reformed Church at Bearytown (Fayette). He also preached at various other places, usually traveling on horseback.²⁵

The Pre-Emption Line

The present western boundary of Seneca County from Wayne County nearly to the head of Seneca Lake was called the Pre-Emption Line. This defined the line west of which the state of Massachusetts possessed the right to purchase from the Indians.

Two surveys, known as “the old” and “the new” pre-emption lines, were made from the state of Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario. The first few miles of the southern end the two lines merged, diverging in Chemung County and gradually separating, each keeping a direct course slightly inclined respectively east and west until, reaching Lake Ontario, they were 3.75 miles apart. The first survey, the “old line” rested on the lake west of Sodus village. The other passed through the center of Sodus Bay. At the foot of Seneca Lake, they were 1.25 miles apart.

Before the settlement of western New York, Massachusetts claimed title to all of that section of New York state west of Seneca Lake, comprising more than 6 million acres of land. This claim rested on a charter granted Plymouth colony by the English crown. New York disputed the claim so commissioners were named from both states and their verdict was decisive. Their December 16, 1786 decision made in Hartford, Connecticut gave Massachusetts the pre-emptive right to proprietorship of the land and New York the territorial jurisdiction and sovereignty over the same. Then followed the sale of most of this land to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham. In consequence of the Hartford decision of 1786, a survey was made in 1788-99—the “old line”—which was run west of Seneca Lake on the average of about a mile. This survey was rejected on the ground that it had been made west of the natural line through the intrigues of Indian traders at the foot of Seneca Lake. So the new survey—the “new line”—was run in 1791-92. The new line followed the west shore of Seneca Lake and the present western boundary of Seneca County.²⁶

White Deer at the Depot

The famous pure-white deer were first reported at the depot in the mid-1950s and have been carefully managed ever since. The white deer herd now numbers about 250, according to Steve Absalom, a civilian who is the military’s installation manager at the depot. An additional 300 to 400 “normal” brown deer also live at the depot.

Pure white deer that are not albino occur as a result of a natural gene mutation and have been spotted throughout the northern United States and in six other New York counties, according to a 1984 memo from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). These deer, however, normally occur only as individuals. White deer appear to be less well adapted for survival, perhaps because their greater visibility increases their vulnerability to hunters and predators. Only one other herd has been documented in the United States, on Grand Island, Michigan in the early 1900s. In both cases—at Grand Island and Seneca Army Depot—the white deer flourished because they were in an enclosed area and were actively protected by man.

Eventually as their numbers increased, the hunting of white deer at the depot was allowed. A lottery system, however, limits hunters to taking only 50 of the white deer per year, so that the population can be maintained.

The white deer at the depot do breed with the brown ones, according to Bruce Penrod, a senior wildlife biologist with DEC. Interestingly, the off-spring are either all white or all brown.

During the spring, summer and fall, the white deer stick out prominently. In winter, just the opposite occurs. It is the pure white deer that blend into the snow-covered landscape.

The depot area is no longer actively used by the Army, which was maintaining the buildings until they are transferred over to Seneca County. One proposal for future use of much of the depot land calls for it to be designated as a combined conservation/recreation area. Ultimately the future fate of the white deer will depend upon the decisions people make regarding the future use of the former depot lands.²⁷

Transfer of County Clerk's Records

On January 7, 1899 the records of the county clerk's office went overland to Ovid where they would remain for three years. It took six sleighs, each with a team of horses, to carry them. Two boxes of records that fell overboard were not missed until another team following picked them up.²⁸

Curfew for Youth in Waterloo

On December 6, 1899, the Waterloo Village Board passed a curfew law making it unlawful for any minor under 16 to be on public streets after 8 p.m. unless accompanied by an adult. A factory bell would note the curfew time.²⁹

Striking for Shorter Work Week

Approximately one thousand workers in all factories in Seneca Falls stopped work on May 24, 1901. They were seeking a nine hour work day with pay for ten hours. On July 10 the strikers returned to work. Fifty-four hours would now be a working week.³⁰

Embalming Method

In 1906, Charles A. Genung joined with Howard S. Eckels of Philadelphia in producing a book *The Eckels-Genung Method of Practical Embalming*. This is a method now used throughout the United States. The Waterloo undertaker traveled extensively to introduce the method.³¹

Siltstone Houses of South Seneca County

The siltstone began about 500 million years ago when the Finger Lakes area was a shallow ocean. Two hundred million years ago it is thought that the Finger Lakes area was a great plain. Then it began to snow, and for a long time more snow came than melted away, until snow two miles thick covered central Canada. The northern part of the continent, specifically

most of what is today New York State, was covered with glacial ice over 6,000 feet thick. The glacier moved southward, and as it advanced, it bulldozed material called ground moraine. As the glacier melted, it dropped tons of soil from northern mountains, and compressed rocks into eleven layers of stone in what is today Seneca County. There is an east-west band in Central New York, with definite outcroppings in places such as Silver Thread Falls, on Lodi Mill Creek, and Taughannock Falls.

Ten houses in the southern part of the county are constructed of this siltstone. Siltstone is stone between flagstone and limestone in hardness. These houses were built of this siltstone that was taken from small stone quarries of the stone. The stone was cut using hand methods, then was transported by horse drawn wagon or stoneboat. The ten houses were constructed within a period of 35-40 years, approximately 1830-1875. Most of the houses are Greek Revival in style. They are located in a six mile area between a point south of Lodi, where Upper Lake Road meets Route 414 and the Gilbert Road in the Town of Ovid.³²

This “siltstone” is also known as “flagstone.”

The Geneva-Ithaca Turnpike

In 1810 the Ithaca-Geneva Turnpike was started. It generally followed the present Route 96 from Ithaca to County Road 139 through the Town of Ovid and then Route 96A to Geneva. It was a toll road. This turnpike was not a profitable business and was discontinued in 1823.³³

The Ill-Fated Sodus Bay Railroad

As early as 1851 there was talk of building a railroad which would run from Sodus Bay to Waverly, PA. In 1869 the NYS Legislature passed an act authorizing the towns and corporations to bond themselves. Each township in Wayne, Seneca and Tompkins counties was bonded to finance the building of the railroad. The projected route of the railroad zig-zagged from Sodus Bay on the north to Waterloo, then east to Seneca Falls and on south to Farmer Village (Interlaken). The charter for this railroad was recorded on May 26, 1870, just two weeks before a charter for the building of the Geneva-Ithaca railroad. Although some work took place, the railroad itself was never completed.³⁴

The Black Diamond

The Black Diamond was a famous fast train that operated on the Lehigh Valley Railroad starting in 1896. Passengers could board only in Ithaca and Geneva for many years. It made its last passenger train run on May 11, 1959.³⁵

Cayuga Lake Frozen Over

Naomi Brewer reports that Cayuga Lake completely froze over in 1856, 1885, 1912, and 1936.

The Ovid Bee reports that in 1856 “from Kidders Ferry to Ogden (King Ferry) teams crossed the lake on the ice which had never been heard of before. People walked over and back. The proprietors of the ferry at Kidders Ferry have fitted out small iceboat.”

Naomi's great grandmother, Carrie Coleman of the Coleman Hotel at Kidders, wrote in her diary the following about the 1912 frozen lake:

February 4, 1912—Cayuga Lake has not frozen over since 1885.

Feb. 12—A great many people are skating and walking on the lake.

Feb. 14—At least 200 people were here at Kidders on the ice. Charlie White is out with his iceboat. Two other iceboats and many skaters came over from the other side. Lew Craft and Asa Yarnell of Sheldrake skated over the lake and back.

Feb. 16—Hundreds crossing the lake, skating and walking. .

The 1912 frozen lake conditions attracted people from Auburn who traveled by train to King Ferry and skated or rode on iceboat over the lake. The ice did not break up until St. Patrick's Day.

Carrie Coleman also wrote in her diary about the 1885 freezing of Cayuga Lake. She reports that on Feb. 17 the lake was frozen over and many people skated on the lake, with one getting the mail this way. On March 4, the ice thawed in places but refroze the next day. On March 6 the ice roared and groaned as it froze harder. Iceboats were in use frequently. On March 27 she reported teams crossing on the ice but there was some thawing and water on the ice. Thawing continued so that there were open streaks on April 4.

Naomi Brewer also reports on the complete freeze of Cayuga Lake in 1936. In her diary, Thelma King Steele reported the freezing of Cayuga Lake on February 23, 1936. Several people skated across the lake and back. Charlie and Harry Blew sailed to Union Sopprings and brought a horse back on the iceboat, tying the horse's legs together and tying the horse to the mast of the boat.³⁶

Seneca Lake Frozen Over

The first time in white man's history that Seneca Lake was frozen over was on February 24 and 25, 1855. The second time was February 9 and 10, 1875. The third time was February 23 and 24, 1885.

The fourth time was Sunday, February 11, 1912. That last freeze came after the coldest winter experienced in central New York with more than ten days of temperature at or below zero. On February 10, when the ice began to close in the last stretches of open Water, the thermometer registered 12 below zero. John Corbett wrote in *The Watkins Express*:

The Seneca Lake surface slowly covered o'er with ice during the hours of Sunday (February 11). The wind had been in the north on Saturday, but was very light from the south on Sunday, otherwise the rolling waves would have broken up the ice formations at the extreme head.

Like a life that was passing out, quietly succumbed the Seneca to the fetters of Old Winter. All day Saturday the mists had risen from the surface, but on Sunday it lay a placid expanse without even this evidence of animation. Viewed from the heights near nightfall, a white waste met the vision, where but a few hours before the whitecaps had tumbled into view.

Ice covered most of the lake for five days giving everyone an opportunity to skate. The best skating was about a mile and a half from shore, according to Mrs. Mildred Vincent, who remembers the ice was very rough near shore. On February 14, Ben Birge and Nelson Longstreet

of Hector skated the length of the lake, took a passenger train to Watkins Glen from Geneva, and then skated back to Hector.

John Corbett, who made an exhaustive research of Seneca Lake freezings in 1885, recorded that the lake also skimmed over with ice six times for a few hours in the late spring: May 1, 1829 or 19830; May 4, 1856; May 5, 1861; May 15, 1872; May 6, 1873; and April 26, 1884.³⁷

How Children Were Named in “Olden Days”

One very common naming pattern was as follows:

The sons:

The first son was named after the father’s father.

The second son was named after the mother’s father.

The third son was named after the father.

The fourth son was named after the father’s eldest brother.

The daughters:

The first daughter was named after the mother’s mother.

The second daughter was named after the father’s mother.

The third daughter named after the mother.

The fourth daughter was named after the mother’s eldest sister.

As “large families” were common at that time, this naming pattern would often be depleted, leaving many other factors to help explain the names of sons and daughters after the fourth ones.³⁸

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- ¹ Hilda B. Watrous, The County Between the Lakes: A History of Seneca County, New York 1876-1982. Waterloo, N.Y.: K-Mar Press, 1983. p xi.
- ² “Seneca County, New York: In the ‘Heart’ of the Finger Lakes”
- ³ Betty Auten’s disk of history of Seneca County
- ⁴ Betty Auten’s disk of history of Seneca County
- ⁵ Betty Auten’s disk of history of Seneca County
- ⁶ Maurice L. Patterson, Between the Lakes: The Settlement and Growth of South Seneca County, the Town of Covert, the Village of Interlaken. Interlaken, NY: Interlaken Historical Society, 1976, p. 51.
- ⁷ Patterson, pp 114-115.
- ⁸ Watrous, introduction
- ⁹ Roberta Halden’s compilation of Seneca Falls history. These notebooks are found in the Seneca Falls Library.
- ¹⁰ Betty Auten’s year by year events listed on index cards in the county historian’s office
- ¹¹ Auten index cards
- ¹² John E. Becker, *A History of the Village of Waterloo, New York and Thesaurus of Related Facts*, p 72)
- ¹³ Auten index cards
- ¹⁴ Becker, p 94.
- ¹⁵ Becker, pp 98-99.
- ¹⁶ Auten index cards
- ¹⁷ Auten index cards
- ¹⁸ Auten index cards
- ¹⁹ Auten index cards
- ²⁰ Auten index cards
- ²¹ “*Grip’s*” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls, NY*, Seneca Falls Historical Society reprint in 1991, p 32.
- ²² *Grip*, p. 33.
- ²³ *Grip*, p. 39.
- ²⁴ *Grip*, pp 41-42.
- ²⁵ *Grip*, p. 47.
- ²⁶ *Grip*, pp 63-64.
- ²⁷ Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*, November 29, 2003.
- ²⁸ Auten index cards
- ²⁹ Auten index cards
- ³⁰ Auten index cards
- ³¹ Auten index cards
- ³² *Bits and Pieces of 200 Years*, The Ovid Historical Society, p 100.
- ³³ *Bits and Pieces*, p 98.
- ³⁴ *Bits and Pieces*, p 99.
- ³⁵ *Bits and Pieces*, p 100.
- ³⁶ *Bits and Pieces*, pp 102-104.
- ³⁷ *Bits and Pieces*, pp 112-113.
- ³⁸ Interview with Alta Boyer, March 8, 2004.