

The Public Execution of John Andrews

The first public execution in Seneca County took place at the Court House in Ovid on Friday, September 6, 1811. John Andrews was hanged for murder. A huge crowd from across the county witnessed this hanging.

At a term of the Circuit Court, held in Ovid during June, Judge Joseph C. Yates presided over the trial of John Andrews. Andrews was convicted of the murder of John Nichols, an employee in the distillery of Andrew Dunlap, one and a half miles southwest of the village. Andrews had hit his victim with a club because Nichols had refused to give him a pint of whiskey for doing a small job. Sheriff Lewis Birdsall and Deputy Sheriff Henry Gulick of Lodi handled the arrangements for this public hanging. One history account described the public hanging as follows:

Surrounded by the usual contingent of Militia and the surging crowd that had assembled from the town and surrounding countryside through the earlier circulation of handbills that had declared the unusual event as a sort of holiday, the noose was adjusted and Andrews quickly jerked into eternity. Some of the spectators had taken to the roof-tops, others were perched in nearby trees, and parents held their children high on their shoulders for a better view. No other event, save the General Trainings of Militia, called together so many people as did a hanging in those early times. Years afterwards, the stumps of the gallows were pointed out, as a spectator recalled the details of that momentous day.¹

¹ Wayne E. Morrison, Sr., *Town & Village of Ovid, Seneca Co., N.Y.: An Early History, Ovid, NY: W. E. Morrison, 1980, p 16.*