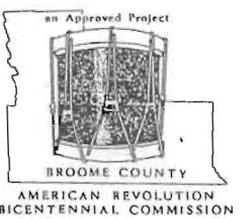


PROPERTY OF SUNRISE TERRACE ASSOCIATION  
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# TOWN OF DICKINSON

BROOME COUNTY, NEW YORK 1976



History of the Town of Dickinson  
by  
Bertha S. Blair, Town Historian

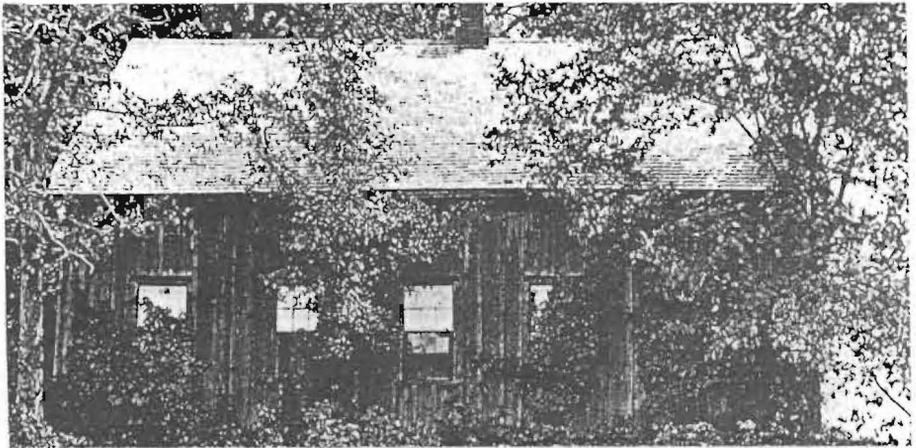
Although this history was written to commemorate the Bicentennial, 200 years ago all of Broome County was Indian country. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix was signed by Sir William Johnson with the Iroquois in 1768. All land east of about the middle of present New York State was for the white man. Broome County was in the western and Indian side.

There is evidence of Indians living or hunting here from as early as 3000 B.C. There was an Otsiningo Village where the Comfort Station is now on Route 81, opposite Broome Community College. The Triple Cities Chapter of the New York State Archaeological Association and the Anthropology Department of Suny did a limited amount of excavating when the state was landscaping the ground. They found a village of the Castle Creek period, in the 1300's, and a later one in the historic period, the 1700's. As one of the Broome County Bicentennial projects, conducted by the Triple Cities Chapter and the Anthropology Department of Suny, there is an Indian Exhibit, and Indian garden by the Naturalist Club and other Indian activities at the Otsiningo Village Site this summer.

When the Clinton and Sullivan Expedition camped at the junction of the Chenango and Susquehanna rivers, a soldier wrote in his diary "Major Parr and 100 men went up the Chinengo to destroy the Chinengo town, but when we came

there we found the town already destroyed. It seems when the Indians evacuated it last winter they destroyed it." The soldier mentions 'a fine rich country' and 'beautiful pieces of land'. Chinengo and Otsiningo are two of the many ways Chenango was written.

The Town of Dickinson is the youngest town in the county but it had the first village, which was along the western side of the river. According to the Annals of Binghamton-1840, the first families to settle here in 1787 were Captain William Leonard, Colonel William Rose, Joshua



Captain Leonard's House, Date 1799 On Chimney

Whitney, his son Joshua, William Whitney and Ebenezer Greene. Other people followed and settled near them.

W. F. Seward states in his book Broome County History "Thus came about the very informal founding of the Chenango village, a straggling thin line of houses along the river bank. There was no set plan or purpose in its being there except that it was the key position in the old Indian trails. The village tavern was at the fork of the Iroquois highway. With its meeting houses, log schoolhouse, newspaper, distillery, four doctors, general stores and tavern it was the beginning of the City of Binghamton. There is a New York State marker north of the Sunrise Terrace entrance which tells of the first court held in the area under the elms, in 1791, near the Whitney farmhouse. Captain Leonard's house, with the date 1799 on the chimney, was opposite the college. This house was inherited by Mrs. John McNitt. There is a story in her family of the first occupants coming downstairs on cold winter mornings and finding Indians sleeping around their fireplace.

A man living in Philadelphia, William Bingham, owned land in this area. Joshua Whitney, Jr. became his land agent but he found the Bingham land did not go beyond present Prospect Street. He cleared the land on Court Street near the Chenango river and persuaded the people to move down there, even moving some of their houses for them. In any

case, it is doubtful that a city could have developed in our narrow valley.

At 825 Front Street is a lovely spacious farmhouse built by John Ward Cutler in 1850, with a small smokehouse in the rear. This is where the Cutler Ice Company started, with the ice cut from Cutler's pond, now Boland's pond. His son, Philander, built the house across the street in 1875, where Miss Frances Cutler lived until her death in 1954. In her will she left this house and 23 acres of land to the Broome County Farm and Home Center and the 4-H Club Association, with the understanding that a bronze tablet honoring her parents and grandparents be put on the house. She told friends that her grandfather said when he heard horses coming down Front Street after dark, he would light a lantern and go out to meet them, as no one would be out at night unless for sickness or trouble of some sort.

Broome County bought 95 acres of the Whitney estate in 1831 on both sides of Front Street. They built an almshouse with a farm, insane asylum and jail. Before this each town farmed out the indigent to the lowest bidder. It wasn't until 1860 that all of the towns took part in the program. Only the dog warden, jail and an office for children's services are there now.

Old State Road, an Indian Trail, was the best route into the valley. Sawtelle's Tavern, which faced State Road, was a favorite over-night stopping place. The French statesman,



Sawtelle's Tavern

Talleyrand, spent some time there on his journey to visit French exiles in this region in 1794-5, as recorded in the Annals of Binghamton-1840. It was demolished in 1964. Another tavern built in 1804 and run by a Mr. Tyler is still standing, at 761 Chenango Street. It is own now by Mr. Ralph Perkins, who has a fruit stand in front.

The Chenango Canal from Utica to Binghamton opened in 1837 and this area became a port on the canal. Many mills and factories were built there. Pickle Hill is still called that from the time Silas Carman had a pickle factory on Chenango Street. The village was first called Carmans-

ville in honor of an early settler. The first postmaster was J. Carman. It isn't clear if this is the same person. When the village was incorporated in 1876 the name was changed to the Village of Port Dickinson. The village is celebrating their Centennial this year.

The canal boats were given names such as Meteor, The Whirlwind and Lightning, although the speed limit was set at four miles an hour to protect the canal walls. The captains often raced each other to go through the locks first. If it was a tie, fists might decide the winner. There are two houses of the same design at 801 and 803 Chenango Street. It is said that a barge captain lived in one and the other, slightly smaller, was for the mate. The faster railroads doomed the canal and it closed in 1878. The factories and mills closed or moved away. The village became a pleasant, tree shaded residential area. It expanded beyond the eastern border, with houses on State Road and vicinity.

The village and town were named in honor of Daniel S. Dickinson. He came to this area as a lawyer in 1831. He was a State Senator, Lieutenant Governor and United States Senator. The 1894 Biographical Review of Leading Citizens of Broome County states that but for his loyalty to a friend he could have been the 14th president of the United States. The Democratic Convention was dead-locked and many of the delegates wanted to nominate him. But he was a delegate committed to General Lewis Cass, who did not release him. Franklin Pierce, a dark horse, was nominated and elected. He was very active during the Civil War and the 89th New York State Regiment was often called the Dickinson Guard. There is a statue of him erected in 1924 on the Courthouse Square.



Port Dickinson Village Board

Seated, John Thomas, Attorney; Joseph Kelleher, Mayor; Walter Welch, Clerk; Hadsell Perkins, Treasurer. Standing, Joseph Bigart, Robert Blakeslee, Joseph Peters, Burton Kellogg, Trustees.

At first, we were a part of the Town of Chenango. When Chenango was divided we became part of the new Town of Binghamton. In 1867 the village of Binghamton became a city, separate from the town. As the city spread outside its' borders, it annexed more of the town, cutting the town in two parts. So in 1890 the northern part became the Town of Dickinson. There were 525 inhabitants including the people at the County Farm. The present population is 5,687.

In 1890 a post office was established at the cross-roads of Prospect Street and Downs Avenue. It was necessary to decide on a name different than any other in the state. The story goes that Henry Butman, a store owner and the first postmaster, suggested his daughter's name, Stella. It was discontinued in 1902 when the post offices were consolidated.

Around 1912 Mrs. Ann MacNamara built many homes on farm land she owned on the north side of Prospect Street. Many of the homes were bought by E. J. workers. The district was called Prospect Terrace. Other houses were built going up on the south side of Mt. Prospect, resulting in some rather steep roads but some magnificent views of the city. The Prospect Terrace Volunteer Fire Company was formed in 1954.

Albert C. Adams, the original developer, started Sunrise Terrace on land that had been part of the Whitney farm. In a history written by his daughter, she said that when they were grading Terrace Drive, they uncovered five bodies over 100 years old. She doesn't say if they could tell if the bodies were buried in coffins or in Indian fashion with the knees drawn up. It has winding streets that go up the north side of Mt. Prospect, facing the morning sun, hence the name. The Sunrise Terrace Association was started in the late 1930's and has been active ever since solving community problems. Their largest project was the Community House which was dedicated in 1956.

The last suburban area, Forrest Hills and Chenango Shores, north of the college, was started in 1950. They are mostly ranch and split-level homes which are popular now. One of the principal builders was Francis (Zip) Boland, who was our assemblyman in the New York Legislature for many years. They started a Chenango Shores Association about 1955 which is still active.

In the same neighborhood is Elizabeth Church Manor, 863 Front Street. It is licensed by the New York State Health Department, under the auspices of the United Methodist Church of the Wyoming Conference, as a 29 bed skilled nursing home and 76 bed health related facility. It began in 1963 in the old Boland home, Whispering Elms, and one additional building. Two additions, a wing in 1967 and an apartment building in 1971 have been added. It is a non-profit home to serve the elderly of all creeds and races. The Reverend Russell J. Hawke is the first Executive Director.



Chenango Valley from Mt. Prospect

The Broome-Tioga Chapter, New York State Association for Retarded Children, Inc. started in a small way in 1952. A large new center in the rear of the college was completed in 1974. The Adult Training Center offers a sheltered work environment for vocational training. The Pre-school offers training in daily living activities and prepares children for future enrollment in BOCES and the local school district special education. The Executive Director is Mr. W. Fowler Wilson.

On Glenwood Road there are two similar facilities. The first is the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, known as BOCES. They offer services in Occupational Education, Special Education, Continuing (Adult) Education, Data Processing and Educational Communications. It is an extension of the public schools and BOCES services 15 school systems. The current president is Mr. Edward Kemp.

The other is the Broome Development Services, part of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene. They had their new buildings on Glenwood Road in 1974. They were established to effect comprehensive services for children of development disorders and for the mentally retarded of all ages. The director is Dr. Mamlock.

The Community Baptist Church, 1 Church Street, started as a non-denominational group, meeting in a two-room schoolhouse. Various Protestant ministers came from Binghamton to hold services. When they became incorporated in 1884 they had to choose one denomination, so they chose Baptist. A small church was built on the same site as the present church. The people in the neighborhood would bring hot water for the baptisms on Easter morning, and they had hanging oil lamps, which gave a lovely soft glow, for the evening services. Later, a new church was built and more improvements and new facilities were gradually added. On

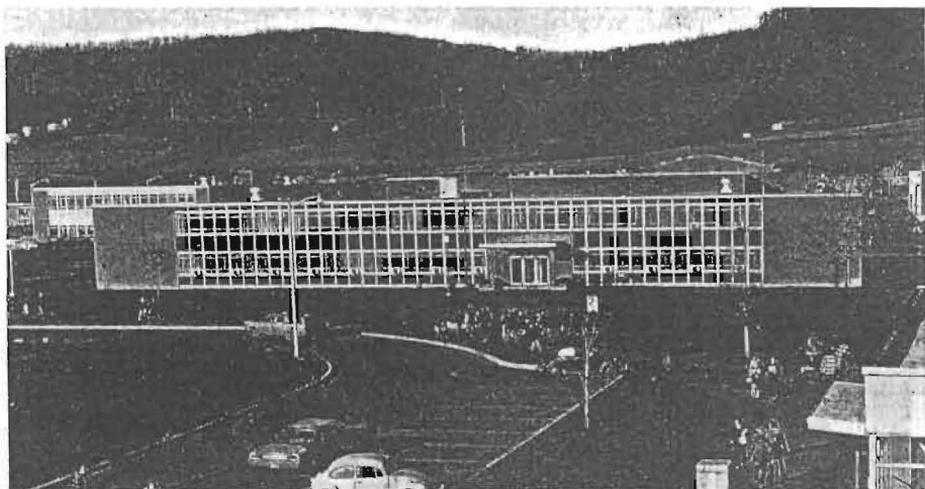
their 90th Anniversary a pipe organ was installed in memory of the early members. They encourage sports for all ages and have a scholarship for the young members. The Reverend Ellwood E. Schaumberg has been the pastor since 1967.

There are two churches on Prospect Street. The first one is St. Stanislaus Kosta Church, 368 Prospect Street. When the Polish people began to settle in the First Ward and the adjacent Town of Dickinson they sorely missed their own church. Twenty-five families formed the Holy Trinity Society and the men built a platform on rented property on Sowden Street, where they held outdoor dances to raise money. The Reverend Michael Dzialik was appointed the first pastor in 1914. The men added sides and a roof to the platform and this was their first church. When sufficient money was raised they purchased land at the present site. The men, and even some of the women, dug the cellar for a brick church. It was dedicated in 1916. When there were one hundred families a parochial school was started. In 1954 a beautiful new church, combining Gothic and Modern architecture was dedicated by Bishop Walter A. Foery. The present pastor is the Reverend Albin Majdanik.

A Polish Community Home was built at 347 Prospect Street, where they have social, civic and athletic events. In 1974 the Polish people financed and built the Kopernik Observatory, on Underwood Road in Vestal. This was to celebrate the birth 500 years ago, in 1473, of the famous Polish astronomer, Nicholas Kopernik, also known as Copernicus. The Polish people turned the operation of the observatory over to Roberson Center.

The other church is St. Anns at 346 Prospect Street. The Slovak people first attended S. S. Cyril and Methodist Church but by 1920 this church had become overcrowded. The people in the neighborhood of Prospect Street wanted a church closer to home. By 1925 they had their first service in a temporary church with the Franciscan Fathers from St. Cyrils conducting the services. Their first pastor, Monsignor Josiph M. Osip, came in 1934 and in October 1935 they were worshipping in the basement of the present church, which was completed in 1940. It is a white brick in Byzantine-Romanesque style. The bell tower is surmounted by a cross-crowned cupola 120 feet above the ground. Monsignor Osip was the pastor for thirty years until his death in 1964. Father Alfred J. Bebel is the present pastor. They celebrated their 50th Anniversary in 1975.

Our two-year Broome Community College began as the New York State Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences in the old State Armory in the city in 1947 with 215 students. In 1953 it became the Broome County Technical Insitute. In 1956 it moved to the campus on Upper Front Street as the Broome Technical Community College. This was changed in 1971 as many non-technical programs were added, which



Broome Community College

allows students to transfer to four-year schools. They also have evening schools, non-credit courses and mini-courses. The present enrollment is over 6000 students.

It is an interesting fact that the valuation of the tax-exempt religious, health and educational properties exceed the valuation of the taxable properties. There are no taxable factories or industries, but, nevertheless, town taxes are reasonably low.

All in all, it is a nice town to live in. At least, I hope you think so.



Dickinson Town Board

Seated, Frank Thomas, Town Justice; Ruth De Silva, Clerk; J. Kent Blair, Supervisor; Bertha Blair, Historian; Philip Johnson, Councilman. Standing, John Rennell, Attorney; Donald Kumpon, Councilman; Victor Vaccaro, Highway Supt. Willard Bowers, Town Justice.