

"Light tomorrow with today." - Elizabeth Barrett Browning

# Chautauqua Sampler

Volume 1 Issue 6

January 1997

## Memory of Charlotte Civil War soldier is resurrected at reunion

By Mark H. Dunkelman

154th New York Volunteer Infantry Historian

**O**n August 28, 1862, John M. Irvin, a young man who worked on his family's farm in Charlotte, enlisted in his home town to serve three years in the Union Army and help put down the Southern rebellion. About a month later, on September 24, 1862, Irvin was mustered in as a private in Company F of the 154th New York Volunteer Infantry at Camp James M. Brown in Jamestown, where the recently-raised regiment was being organized. A few days later, he and approximately 950 other new soldiers of the 154th boarded a train at the Jamestown depot and steamed away to the war, heading to the greatest adventure of their lives.

Irvin was about two months past his twentieth birthday when he left for the front; he stood five feet, eight inches tall, and was described as having a light complexion, blue eyes, and light-colored hair. He was a native of Warrensville, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, born there on July 18, 1842. His Irish immigrant parents, John and Mary (Johnson) Irvin, had sailed from County Donegal with five older sons a year or two before John's birth. (One of the boys died soon after the family's arrival in America, and another son was born after John.) From Warrensville, where the elder Irvin worked as a brickmaker, the family moved to Chautauqua County, where they worked on the Kiantone farm of James Prendergast. After several years of saving, about 1850, the Irvins purchased a 125-acre farm in Charlotte. (Their property was situated on the south side of East Road about a half-mile east of the intersection with Cleland Road.) During his boyhood, young John helped on the farm and attended the No. 6 District School, and when his rudimentary schooling ended he worked full-time on the family farm, assisting his father and brothers to clear and develop their extensive acreage. Then came the Civil War, and as a 1921 biographical sketch stated, Irvin "could not be held back from offering his strong arm to his country."

He withstood the hardships of army life well, and was present with the 154th New York as it marched and maneuvered in northern Virginia for seven months after reaching the front. On New Year's Day, 1863, he was promoted to corporal, indicating Company F's officers considered him a good soldier. He survived the regiment's first battle on May 2, 1863, at Chancellorsville, Virginia, where 40% of the 154th was killed, wounded or cap-

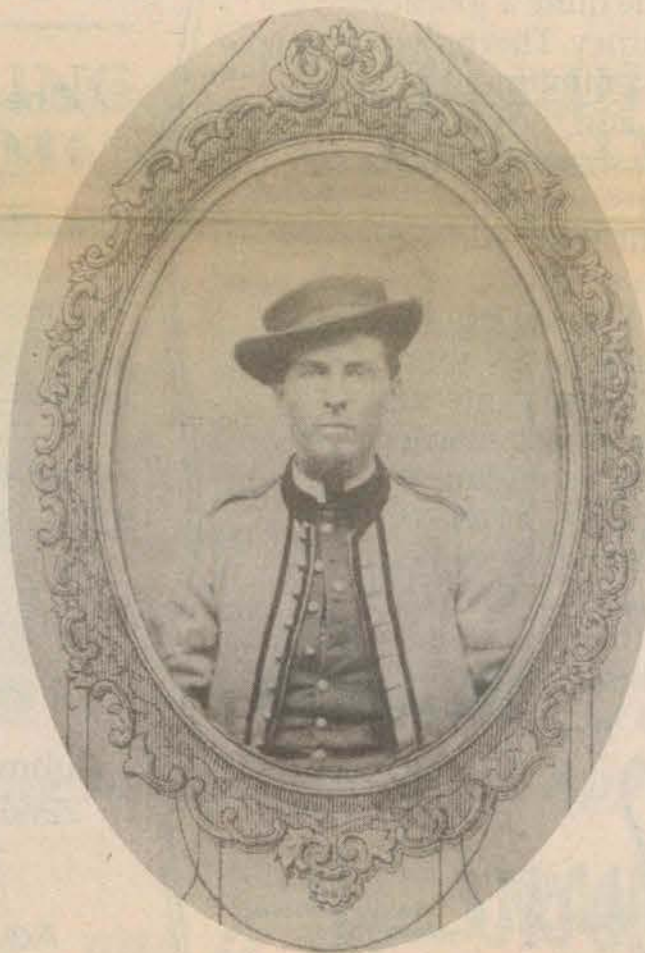


Photo courtesy of Mark H. Dunkelman

The family of Isabel Cross of Crystal River, Fla. has preserved this photo of Civil War soldier John M. Irvin.

tured. Two months later, the regiment was again drastically reduced in numbers when 78% of those engaged on July 1 at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, became casualties. (Most of them were captured, and one out of three of them were fated to die as prisoners of war.) Irvin was one of the lucky survivors. When the regiment left Gettysburg after the great Union victory, however, he was left behind, detached to help tend the wounded. In subse-

quent weeks he did duty at Camp Tyler in Baltimore, Maryland, and he finally rejoined the 154th New York after it had been transferred to the western theater of the war. Irvin was promoted to sergeant on November 1, 1863, and later that month took part in the battle that resulted in the defeat of the Confederates at Chattanooga, Tennessee, again escaping unharmed.

He spent the following winter in the regimental camp at Lookout Valley, outside of Chattanooga. Four days after General William T. Sherman opened his spring campaign in Georgia, on May 8, 1864, John Irvin's luck ran out. The 154th New York was ordered to attack Dug Gap, a road crossing atop Rocky Face Ridge. As its name implies, the brow of the steep ridge consisted of a rough jumble of boulders, and behind those natural defenses awaited the enemy. The Western New Yorkers ascended the mountain under a galling fire while dodging huge, tumbling rocks, dislodged from the peak by the Confederates. The Yankees halted under the outcropping for a moment to catch their breath, and then stormed the summit. They planted their national flag on the crest, but were quickly forced by the concentrated musketry of the enemy to retreat down the mountainside. During the assault, 55 members of the 154th were killed, wounded and captured. Among them was John Irvin. The regimental casualty list stated he was shot in the hip; his postwar biography said he suffered a dislocated knee and three fractured ribs (perhaps he was also struck by one of the rolling boulders). Whatever his exact wound or injury, he was sent to the rear to recuperate in Ward 15 of General Hospital No. 1 at Nashville, Tennessee.

**D**uring his stay at the Nashville hospital, Irvin had the sad task of writing to the father of Lewis L. Jones, a comrade of the 154th New York who was shot in the hip and wrist at Rocky Face Ridge, and succumbed to his wounds at 1 a.m. of June 3, 1864. Later that day, Irvin wrote to Mr. Jones: "I am sorry to inform you that your son Lewis is dead...The gangreen sot in his wound and that caused his death...I will Express his remains to eney place that you wish I will have his grave marked and when I write again I will give you the number he will be Berred in the Berrying ground near this Hospital I have taken off a lock of his hair and I will send it to you for I know that friends often desire sutch."

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A Dunkirk resident

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**Submissions...**  
Every month poetry and photography submissions are accepted as well as short stories and fiction submissions. For more information please contact Chautauqua Sampler Editor Jen Osborne at 1-800-836-0931.





# A few words from the editor...

1997

A new year that holds a lot in store for me. For a beginning to happen there must be an end. Not a very original thought, but it is true. As the final hours of 1996 ticked away on the VCR clock in my living room, I took a some time to think about the impending end and the new beginning.

Last year is almost a blur, even my thoughts dwell on the turned calendar pages that represented milestones in my life.

Probably the most significant event of my life last year (to most people reading this column) was the creation of the Chautauqua Sampler. This project fell on to my lap and it was an idea that I loved. The spring months of 1996 were spent trying to figure out what the heck this new thing would be. I would be embarrassed to tell you some of the names that were suggested for this publication and I promise never to reveal them in public. The Sampler made its debut six months ago and we have made quite a journey in that time. Yes, we have made quite a journey. This project would never have taken off without the commitment of a staff that wanted to see this thing happen and the commitment and devotion of people who want to share the stories of Chautauqua County and the stories of its people.

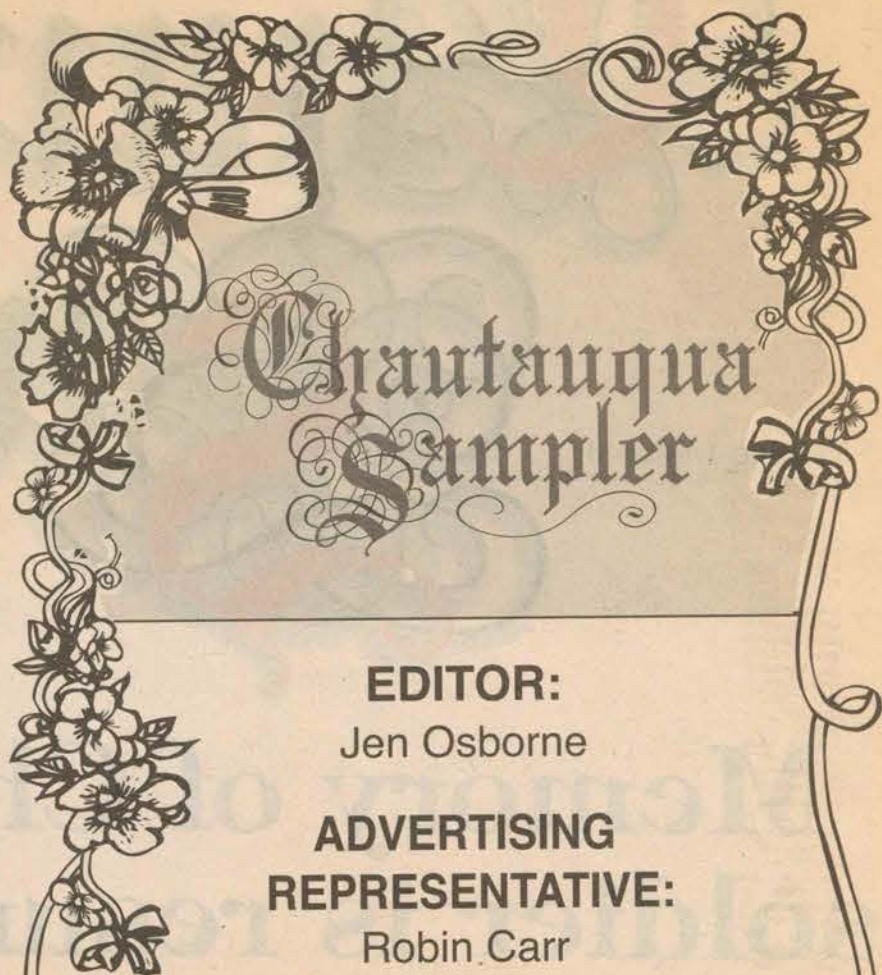
This year out of all my resolutions, the one that I will keep will be to make the most of it — regardless of what it is.

Looking down at my hands as I type (as I always do) I see a reminder of the commitment that I made to my future. This year in June (if I can arrange it so it doesn't interrupt the Sampler production schedule) I plan to get married. June 14, 1997 will be another celebration of an ending and a beginning for both myself and Doug. We have been together through some really tough times and we've been together through some really wonderful times. Now we are committing to just be together and make the most of it.

Thanks for the past six months — it's been a wonderful journey but we aren't done yet. We have a lot to work with and a lot to make the most of.

*Jen Osborne*  
Chautauqua Sampler  
Editor

Happy New Year and  
best wishes for 1997 from  
the staff of the  
Chautauqua Sampler.



## Chautauqua Sampler

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Jen Osborne

### ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:

Robin Carr

**Chautauqua Sampler** is published  
the first full week of each month.

**Chautauqua Sampler** accepts submitted  
stories, fiction, short stories, and  
photography on life in Chautauqua  
County. No guarantee of publication  
is made. Story suggestions are welcomed.

**Chautauqua Sampler** — for publication,  
submissions must be typed double spaced.

Address letters to

**Chautauqua Sampler, P.O. Box 391,**  
Dunkirk, N.Y. 14048

**Submissions:** Must be received by the  
22nd of each month. Manuscripts will  
not be returned.

**Advertising:** For more information  
about advertising contact  
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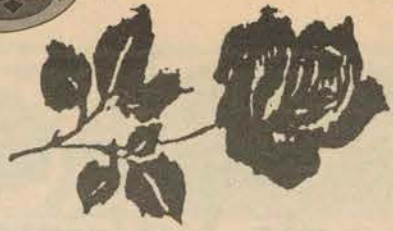
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Continued from Page 1

## Local Civil War soldiers remembered by descendants of 154th New York Volunteer Infantry

Irvin himself recovered sufficiently to visit home on a furlough (he had to repay the government \$7.40 for his transportation to Charlotte and back), but he was not in good enough condition to rejoin the 154th New York on campaign. Instead, he was transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps, an organization for soldiers recovering from wounds, injuries and sickness who were unable to do duty at the front but capable of working behind the lines performing any number of tasks. As a member of the 154th Company, 2nd Battalion, V.R.C., Irvin served until the end of the war, and was discharged on June 30, 1865.

His father had died in 1864 during his absence in the army, and Irvin now returned to Charlotte and took over the family farm. During more than two decades after the war he made major improvements to the property, built a house, barn and outbuildings, and developed the place into a prosperous dairy farm. Retiring from farming in 1889, he moved to Sinclairville and began business as a merchant, selling shingles, other building supplies and artificial fertilizers. In 1905 he retired from the store. During the postwar period he was widely active in civic affairs, serving at various times as Chautauqua County coroner and deputy sheriff, Sinclairville village president, highway commissioner and tax collector, and superintendent of Evergreen Cemetery. Like many of his veteran comrades, he was a staunch Republican.

Irvin married a Charlotte girl, Nancy Allen, daughter of John and Margaret (Harper) Allen, and the couple had three children: Hattie May (later Mrs. A.L. Staples of Jamestown); Arthur C. (in 1920 a resident of Silver Creek); and Ernest C. (in 1920 cashier of State Bank at Sinclairville). The Civil War veteran lived to eighty years of age. John M. Irvin died in Sinclairville on December 29, 1922, and was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery. He was described in his biographical sketch as a leading resident of Sinclairville and "one of the worthy men of Chautauqua county." As that account put it, "his war service would in any event have brought him honor, but it is gratifying to realize that his civilian activities have also been worthy of his army record."

### Descendants gather

Almost three-quarters of a century later, the memory of John Irvin's Civil War service was resurrected in a most unusual manner. The occasion was the 11th Annual Reunion of Descendants of the 154th New York Volunteers, which was held at the Fenton Historical Society in Jamestown on August 17, 1996. At these yearly gatherings, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—and generations beyond—of members of the 154th New York meet to represent and remember their ancestors, and learn a bit about what they endured during the war. The author, who organizes the reunions, generally makes a presentation on some aspect of the regiment's history. My partner, Michael J. Winey of the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, is usually on hand with his camera to photograph portraits and relics of members of the regiment brought to the gathering by descendants. (Mike and I are co-authors of *The Hard-*

tack Regiment, the history of the 154th published in 1981.)

Every year, we mail reunion invitations to about 500 descendants and collateral relatives of members of the 154th. John M. Irvin is currently unrepresented on the list. It certainly seems possible that he has descendants living in Chautauqua County, but if that is indeed the case, we have not made contact with them (although we certainly would like to do so). Consequently there were no Irvin descendants in Jamestown on that Saturday this past August—but John Irvin's presence was strongly felt nevertheless.

Before the program began, while folks were registering, receiving their name tags, pinning on their souvenir ribbons, looking at displays and visiting, a woman named Isabel Cross of Crystal River, Florida, introduced herself to me. Mrs. Cross explained that she was related to a pair of Cattaraugus County brothers of the 154th (Ephriam and Arthur Hotchkiss of Olean), and then showed me several photographs of Civil War soldiers that her family had preserved. On the top of the stack was a portrait of a soldier wearing a flat-crowned hat at a jaunty angle and the jacket of the Veteran Reserve Corps. The reverse of the photo was inscribed "Sergt. J.M. Irvin, 154th N.Y. Vols."

Needless to say, Mike Winey and I were delighted to see the photograph—the first (and only) wartime portrait of Irvin that we've located. But the day's surprises weren't over.

About ten minutes later a young man introduced himself to me as Jeffrey Olson of Rochester, New York. He handed me a dime minted sometime between 1856 and 1860. On side of it had been filed smooth and engraved to make it into an identification disc. The inscription read, "J.M. Irvin Co. F 154 N.Y.V. 1862," with a few curlicues for decoration.

The coincidence of a wartime portrait of John Irvin and his dime identification tag both showing up on the same occasion, but in the hands of two separate people—who were not related to Irvin or to each other, and lived more than a thousand miles apart—was astonishing enough. But the story Jeff Olson told me about how he came to possess the dime was absolutely amazing.

In 1977 Jeff was serving in the Air Force, and he and a friend went to visit the friend's family in northern Virginia. While there, Jeff was walking through a park when he spotted the dime laying in loose soil. An avid coin collector, he picked it up. It was dirty and badly tarnished, and after he cleaned it up a bit he noticed that one side had been (as he thought) mutilated. Disappointed, he tossed the dime into a jar full of silver coins and forgot about it for many years.

Jeff's interest in the Civil War was stirred when he watched the popular documentary series by Ken Burns of PBS. Remembering the dime, he began to do some research, hoping to discover who Irvin was and what he had experienced as a member of the 154th New York.

He discovered that Irvin was a Charlotte boy, which surprised him, because Jeff Olson is originally from the Jamestown area—and his brother had just purchased property in Charlotte! Before long, Jeff visited Irvin's grave at Evergreen Cemetery in Sinclairville, and took a snapshot of the dime resting on the veteran's headstone. Jeff was also surprised to realize that his



Photo Courtesy of Mark H. Dunkelman

A coin that once belonged to Civil War soldier John Irvin was recovered and brought to the 11th Annual Reunion of Descendants of the 154th New York Volunteers by Jeffrey Olson of Rochester.

youngest brother lives near Dalton, Georgia—the town nearest to Rocky Face Ridge, where John Irvin was wounded in 1864! To complete the string of strange coincidences, Jeff attended our reunion and consequently was able—thanks to Isabel Cross sharing the photograph with us—to link a face to the name on the dime he had found on the ground in Virginia two decades before.

The incident was one of the more unusual Mike Winey and I have experienced in more than twenty years of studying and gathering information on the 154th New York. But we are certain we have more surprises in store for us. We know that there are many descendants of members of the 154th that we have not yet connected with, both in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties—where the regiment was raised—and across the country. We know too that among those descendants are families that have preserved the legacy of their ancestors' Civil War service—a bundle of letters sent home from the front, a tintype or two of a stiffly posed soldier, a battered canteen or a rust-flecked bayonet.

We encourage anyone related to a member of the 154th New York to please contact me: Mark Dunkelman, 7 Arnold Street, Providence, RI, 02906. We would very much like to add you to our roll of descendants and invite you to our future reunions, to share with you information we have regarding your ancestor, and to learn of any relics of the regiment that are preserved in attics and albums in Chautauqua and beyond.

And if any descendants of John Irvin happen to read this, please let us hear from you!

### About the Author:

Mark H. Dunkelman is a resident of Providence, R.I. He studies the Civil War focusing on the activities of a single regiment, the 154th New York Volunteer Infantry.

His interest in the 154th began during his childhood while listening to family stories about his great-grandfather, Corporal John Langhans of Company H, a veteran of the regiment. Mr. Dunkelman states, "I discovered the 154th New York's legacy was neglected—a situation I was determined to change." Since he began, he has been able to contact more than 500 descendants of members of the 154th that have given him access to more than 1,200 wartime letters, more than a score of diaries and accounts, and portraits of more than 175 members of the regiment.

Since 1986, Mr. Dunkelman says, "we descendants of the 154th New York have been gathering to represent and remember our ancestors at annual reunions I have organized in Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties, New York, where the regiment was raised." He says his goal is "to tell their stories. In my work, I am trying to make a once-forgotten regiment one of the best-documented units of the Civil War."

Mr. Dunkelman is the co-author with Michael J. Winey of "Publications on the 154th New York" and the author of the book "The Hardtack Regiment: An Illustrated History of the 154th Regiment, New York State Infantry Volunteers," East Brunswick, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981. He has also authored several newspaper/newletter articles, and magazine/journal articles.



## Poetry and Pictures

### Morning Coffee

I just can't wait,  
I must get up,  
No longer can I stay in bed.

Something is calling me,  
You sleepyhead.  
Don't you know  
I've got what you want...  
It's waiting for you.

I'm addicted I know,  
Do you know to what?  
My gosh darn "coffee pot."  
—Marian Tietz Anderson  
is a resident of Fredonia

### Crows

What do they say to each other—  
these squawking crows?  
Their strident caws repeated from afar  
as if in answer to some hurled abuse.  
Soon their raucous conversation includes  
their whole contentious family.

Sometimes there is silence  
when they perch, high on spiny limb,  
black forboding silhouettes  
against grey October sky.  
They sit in rows like  
judges deliberating on disputatious kin.

Silence is short-lived as, one by one  
they swoop, circle, then land  
to peck at tit-bits on the grass.  
They gather in groups-noisily aggressive,  
like hungry widows  
circling round coveted scraps of food.  
—Pat McQuiston is a resident  
of Fredonia

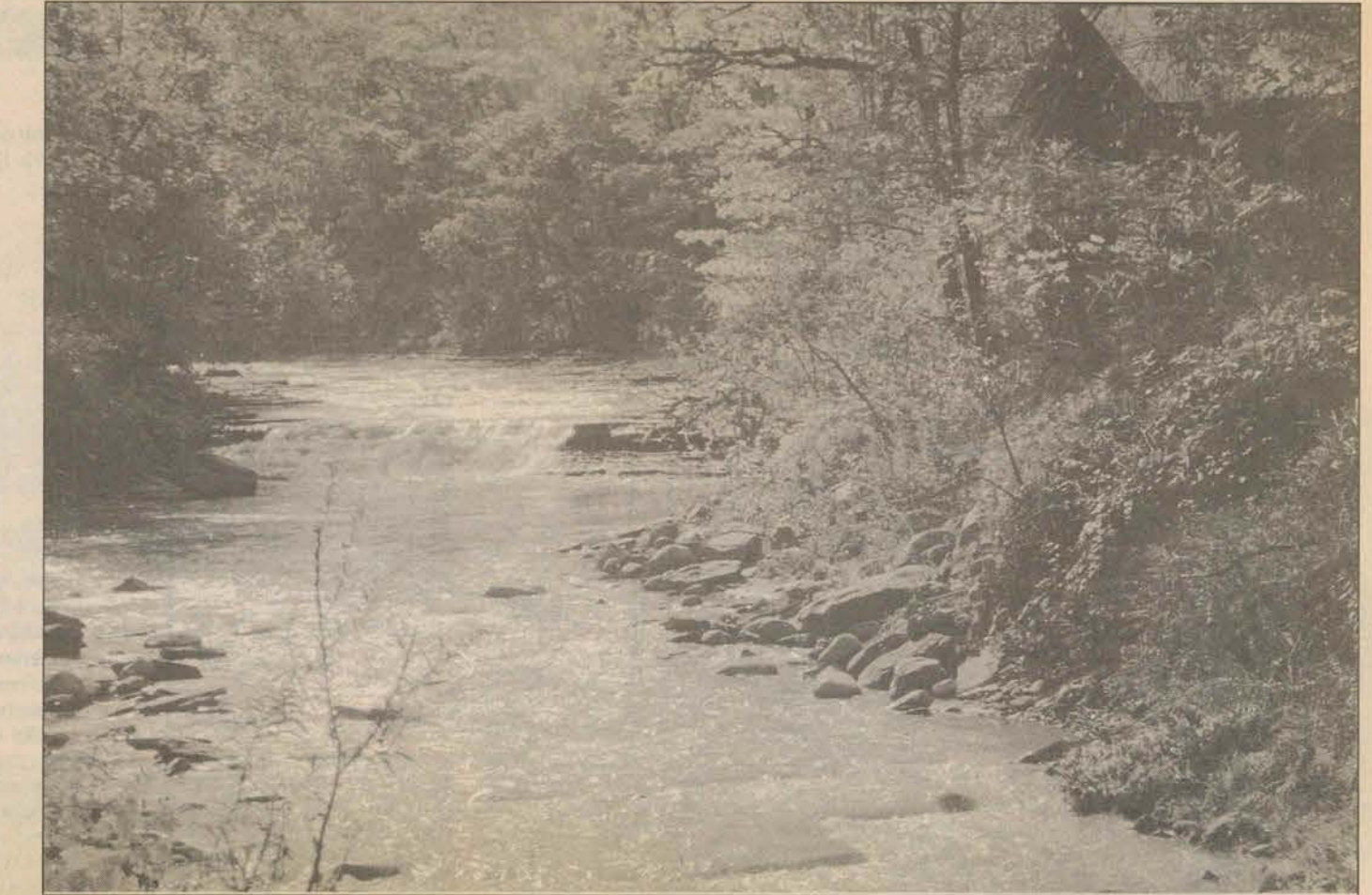


Photo Courtesy of Patti Wells

Fredonia resident Patti Wells captured this fall shot on Route 60 in the Town of Pomfret.

### Alabaster Triolet

Yesterday it snowed,  
Though the weather had been getting better, Dear.  
It seems spring has been slowed.  
Yesterday it snowed  
And I had to bear its heavy load,  
When without you near  
Yesterday it snowed...  
Though the weather had been getting better, Dear.  
Justin Maxwell is a resident of Fredonia

### The Beach

I walked on a windswept beach one day.  
The sand crumbled beneath my feet.  
The seagulls soared 'round and then came to rest  
Where the sand and the water meet.

The wind had an ominous sound that day.  
The waves washed high on the beach.  
The clouds hung low, almost touching the sea.  
They seemed within easy reach.

But I kept on walking along my path  
In spite of the stormy sky.  
I really had no place special to go  
There was just the sea and the sand and I.

As the hour grew late, the clouds disappeared.  
The sun dipped low in the west.  
The birds became quiet and settled down  
As if at the end of their quest.

As I came to the place where I left the shore  
I gave one backward look.  
All seemed serene at the end of the day,  
Just like the end of a book.

Of all the places I've ever been  
I remember the sea shore the best.  
There's something about the wind and the waves  
That outdoes all of the rest.

—Mary Ellen Porter Dole is a resident of Fredonia

### A Northern Town

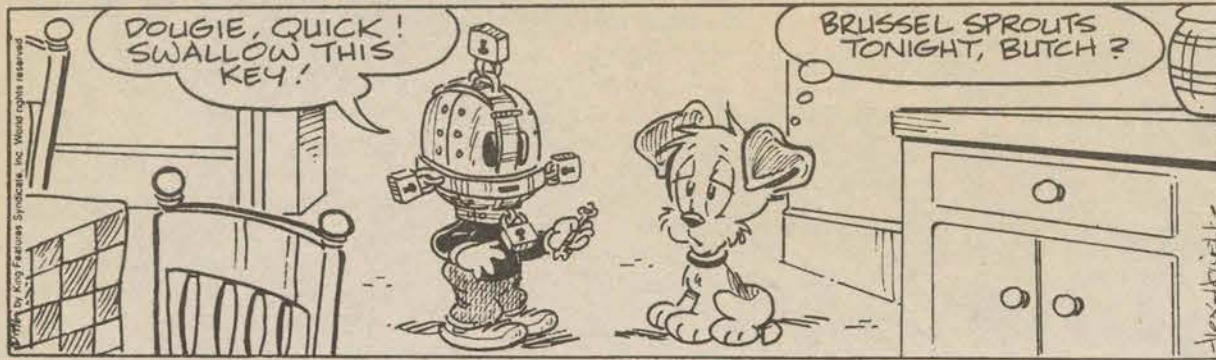
Under a celtic crescent moon  
I sit  
in a northern lake erie town  
trembling  
like a snowflake against a glazed window pane.  
Melting with the morning sun  
in a wasteland of festive bows,  
I seek solstice  
from the winter in a northern lake erie town,  
and bad television.  
This frigid perdition  
stays  
not forays or expeditions of  
food stuff stores and video provisions.  
This winter of our discontent  
is not spoken of as crime and punishment.  
But, a time of slippers and robes,  
and heating implements.  
In my winters tomb  
a wooden cavern with painted rooms,  
I marvel at the snow laced skies  
scattering their ice crystals across  
a northern lake erie town  
sock top high.

—Joel Maslakowski is a  
resident of Dunkirk

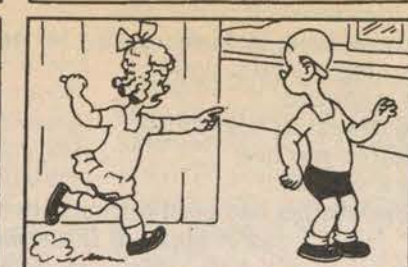
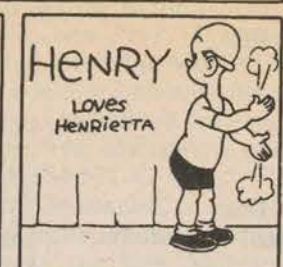
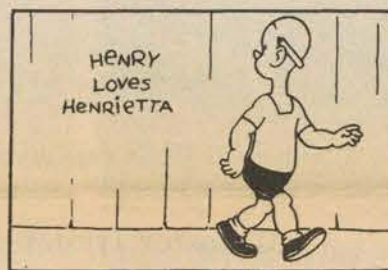
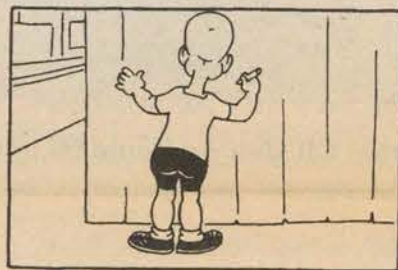


# Shots n' giggles

## BUTCH AND DOUGIE by ALEX HOWELL



## GEORGE by MARK SZORADY



## BANTER ABOUT BRIDGE

### THE DELICATE ART OF DEFENSE

North dealer.  
North-South vulnerable.

NORTH		EAST	
♠ J 4 3	♥ A J 9	♠ 8 7 6	♥ 7 5
♦ 10 8	♣ A K J 7 6	♦ Q 5 4 3 2	♣ 9 4 2
WEST		SOUTH	
♠ A Q 9 5	♥ 6 4 2	♠ K 10 2	♥ K Q 10 8 3
♦ A K J 7	♣ 10 5	♦ 9 6	♣ Q 8 3

The bidding:  
North East South West  
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♥ Dble  
2 ♥ Pass 3 ♥ Pass  
4 ♥

Opening lead — king of diamonds.

The defenders often signal each other during the play in an effort to find the best method of defense. Without signals, and without the use of other standard procedural agreements designed to overcome the natural difficulties of defense, it would be next to impossible for the defenders to function effectively.

Take this case where South is in four hearts and West leads the king of diamonds, on which East plays the five. What should West do next?

If he continues with a low diamond, East wins with the queen, returns a spade, and the contract goes down one. But if West cashes the ace of diamonds at trick two, or does anything else, the defense collapses because there is then no way for West to score more than one spade trick.

How can West possibly realize that his best play at trick two is a low diamond? Admittedly, it is an unusual play, but it is not simply a shot in the dark.

For West, who is searching for a clue to the most effective defense, it should not really be difficult to figure out that East signaled possession of the queen of diamonds by playing the five on the king. It is true that a five, a fairly low card, would not usually be construed as a signal to show the queen.

But when West studies the first trick, he notes that the 4-3-2 are missing. It is certainly reasonable for him to assume that East has one or more of these low diamonds and hence is signaling that he has the queen. Since West urgently needs a spade lead from East, he underleads the ace and so defeats the contract.

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

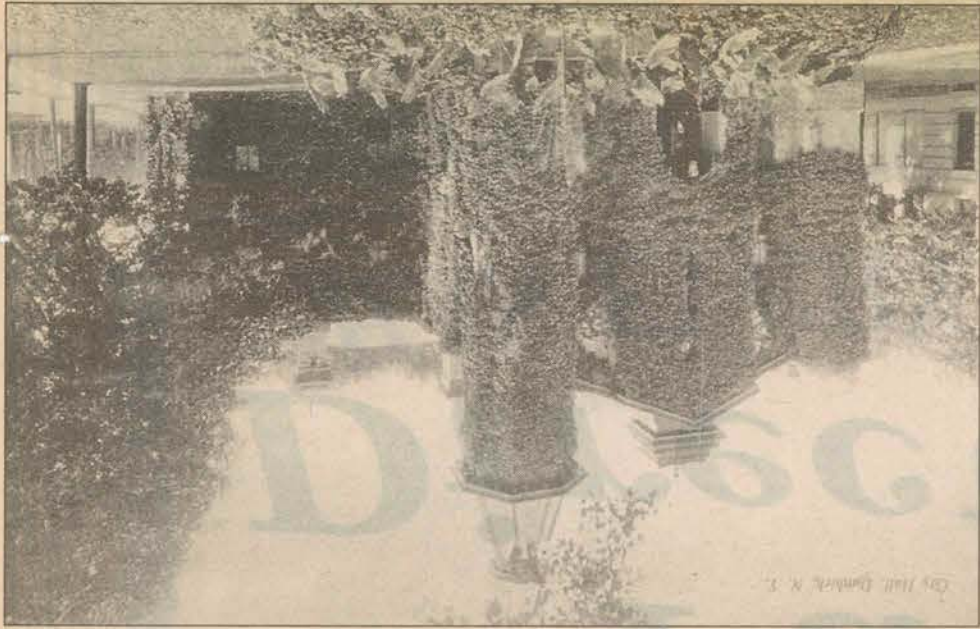




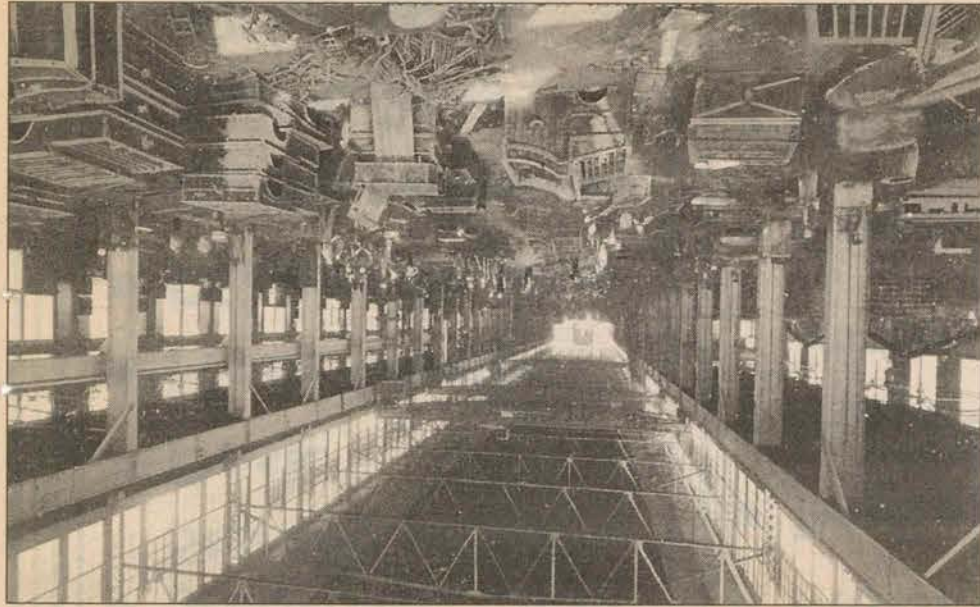


*Vintage views*

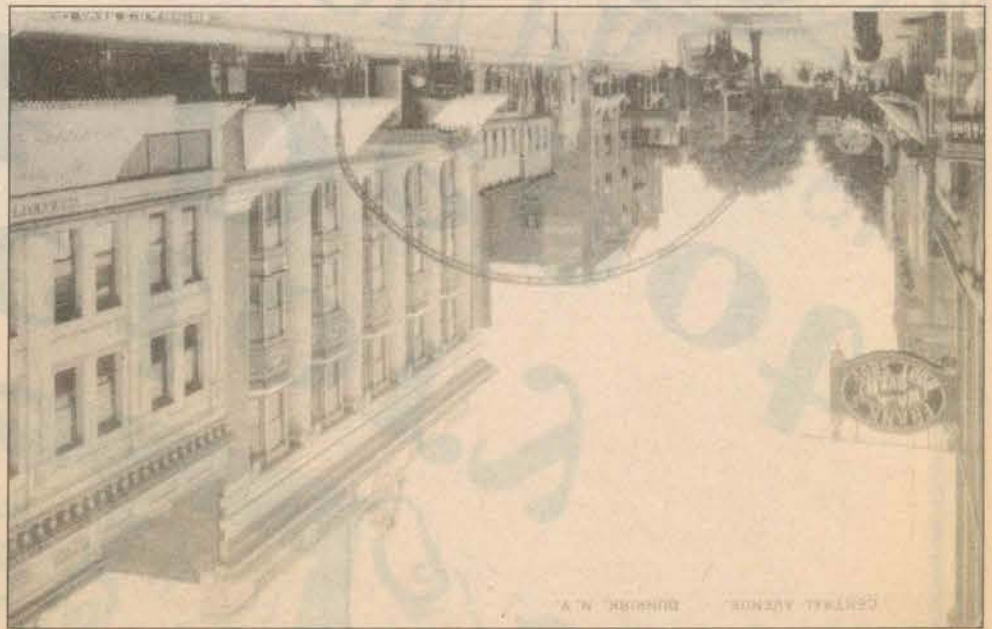
These vintage postcards are courtesy of Mrs. Del Woloszyn of Dunkirk. She and her husband collected these postcards and ran the former Woloszyn Print Shop that was located on 77 East Doughty Street in Dunkirk.



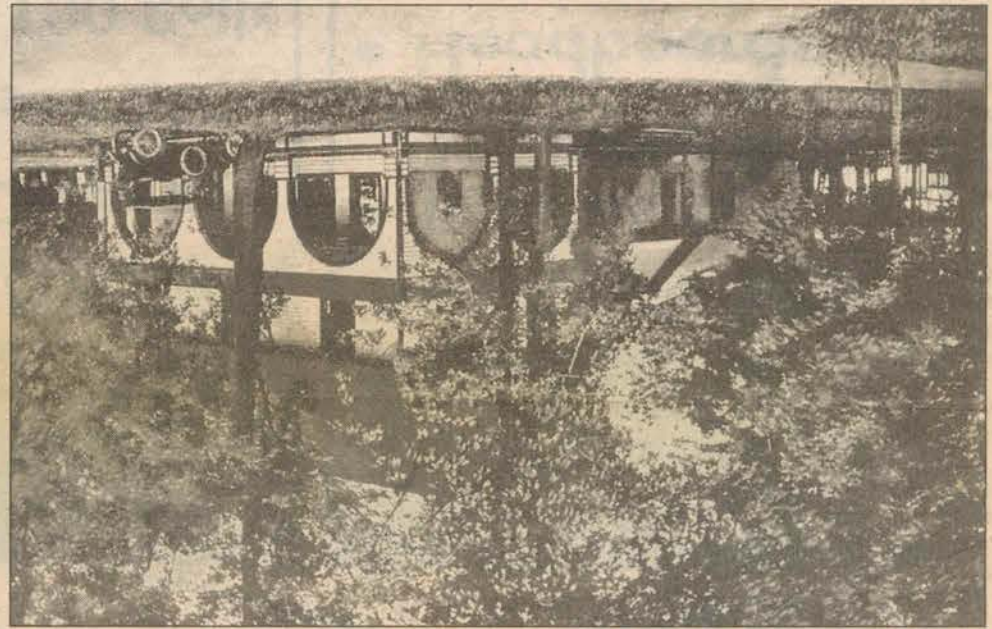
The former Dunkirk City Hall.



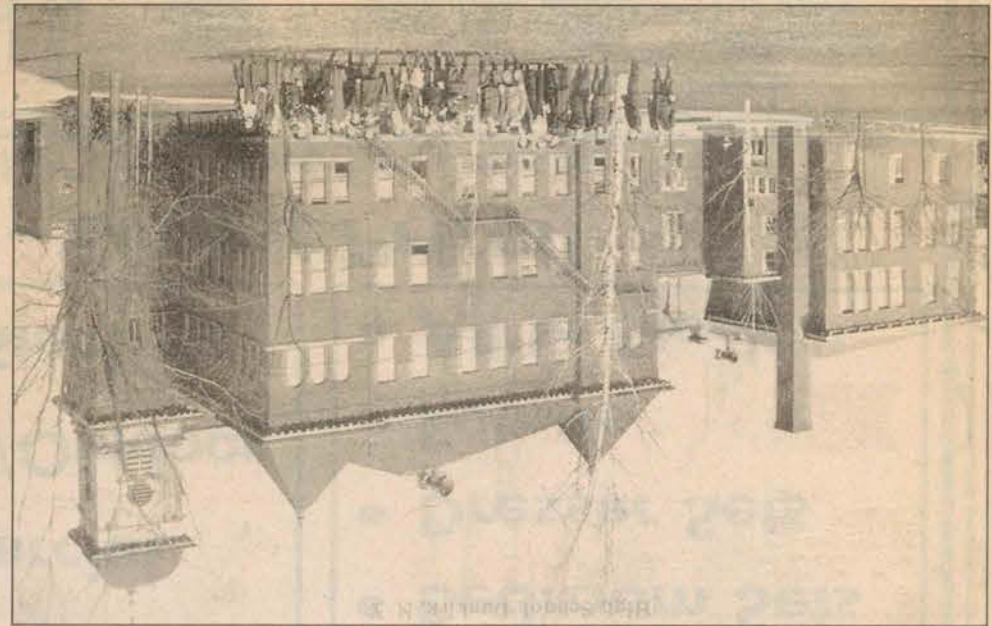
The interior foundry of American Locomotive Company that was located in Dunkirk.



Back when one cent would mail a postcard, this is how Central Avenue in Dunkirk looked.



The Dance Hall that was located in Van Buren Point.



A group of students stand in front of the old Dunkirk High School.

If you have vintage postcards that show scenes of Chautauqua County and would like to have them published please contact Chautauqua Sampler Editor Jen Osborne at 1-800-836-0931. The postcards will be not be damaged during the printing process.





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Last year is almost a blur, even my thoughts dwell on the turned calendar pages that represented milestones in my life.

Probably the most significant event of my life last year (to most people reading this column) was the creation of the Chautauqua Sampler. This project fell on to my lap and it was an idea that I loved. The spring months of 1996 were spent trying to figure out what the heck this new thing would be. I would be embarrassed to tell you some of the names that were suggested for this publication and I promise never to reveal them in public. The Sampler made its debut six months ago and we have made quite a journey in that time. Yes, we have made quite a journey. This project would never have taken off without the commitment of a staff that wanted to see this thing happen and the commitment and devotion of people who want to share the stories of Chautauqua County and the stories of its people.

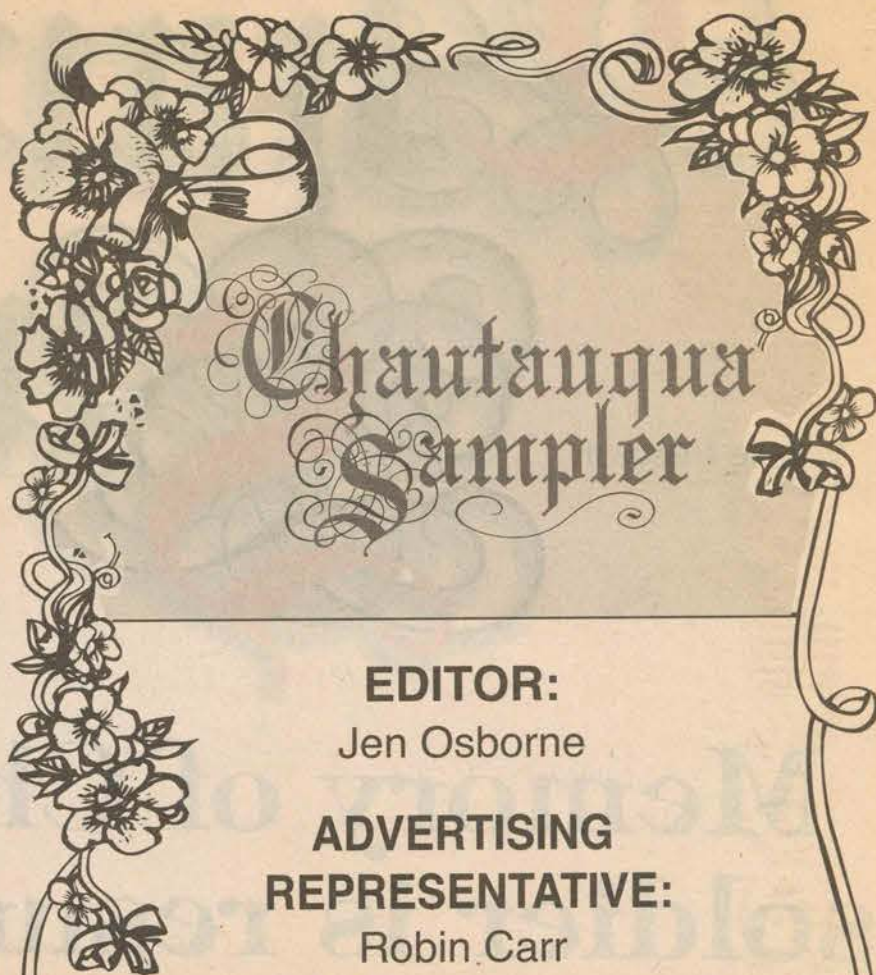
This year out of all my resolutions, the one that I will keep will be to make the most of it — regardless of what it is.

Looking down at my hands as I type (as I always do) I see a reminder of the commitment that I made to my future. This year in June (if I can arrange it so it doesn't interrupt the Sampler production schedule) I plan to get married. June 14, 1997 will be another celebration of an ending and a beginning for both myself and Doug. We have been together through some really tough times and we've been together through some really wonderful times. Now we are committing to just be together and make the most of it.

Thanks for the past six months — it's been a wonderful journey but we aren't done yet. We have a lot to work with and a lot to make the most of.

*Jen Osborne*  
Chautauqua Sampler  
Editor

Happy New Year and  
best wishes for 1997 from  
the staff of the  
Chautauqua Sampler.



## Chautauqua Sampler

**EDITOR:**  
Jen Osborne

**ADVERTISING  
REPRESENTATIVE:**  
Robin Carr

**Chautauqua Sampler** is published  
the first full week of each month.

**Chautauqua Sampler** accepts submitted  
stories, fiction, short stories, and  
photography on life in Chautauqua  
County. No guarantee of publication  
is made. Story suggestions are welcomed.

**Chautauqua Sampler** — for publication,  
submissions must be typed double spaced.

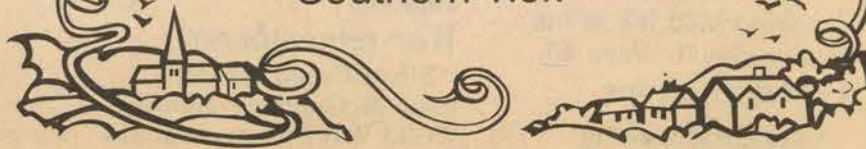
Address letters to  
**Chautauqua Sampler, P.O. Box 391,**  
Dunkirk, N.Y. 14048

**Submissions:** Must be received by the  
22nd of each month. Manuscripts will  
not be returned.

**Advertising:** For more information  
about advertising contact  
Robin Carr, 716-366-3000 Ext. 118  
or 1-800-836-0931.

**World Wide Web:**  
[www.oweb.com/chautauqua/sampler](http://www.oweb.com/chautauqua/sampler)

**Chautauqua Sampler** is distributed  
at advertisers' locations and other  
locations throughout the  
Southern Tier.





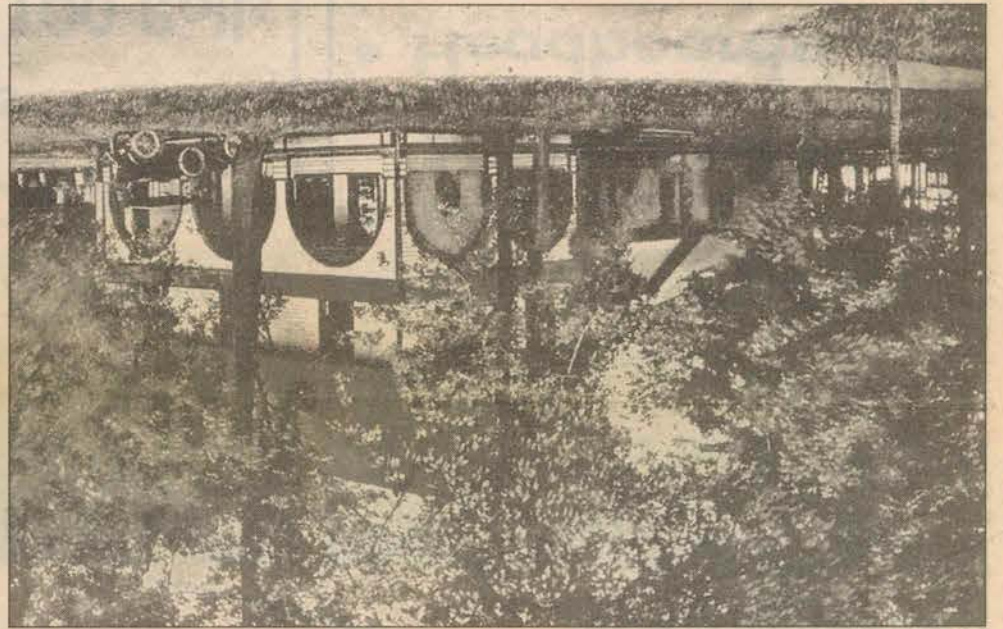


# Vintage views

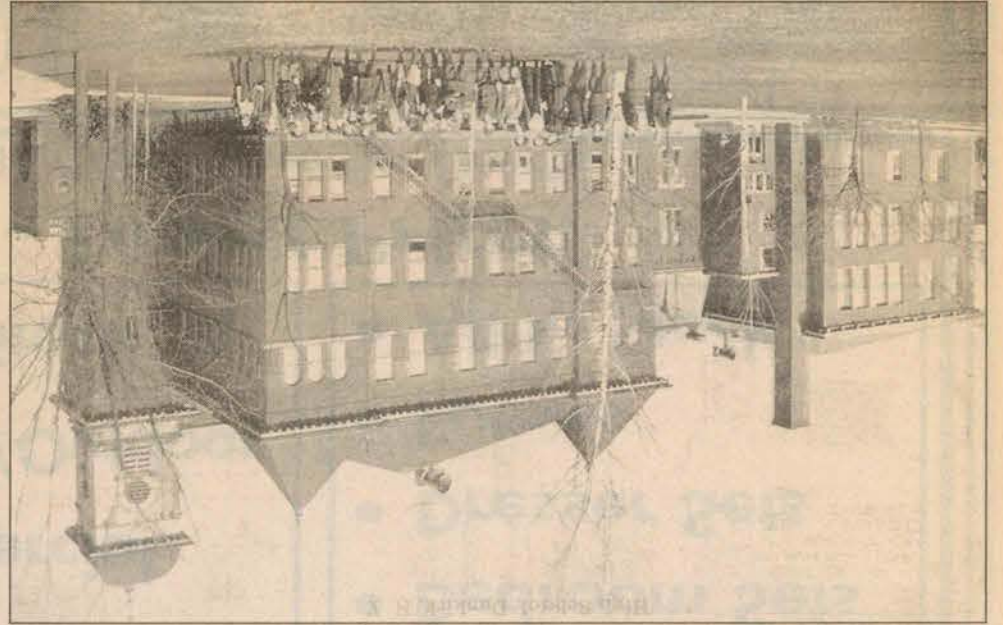
These vintage postcards are courtesy of Mrs. Del Woloszyn of Dunkirk. She and her husband collected these postcards and ran the former Woloszyn Print Shop that was located on 77 East Doughty Street in Dunkirk.



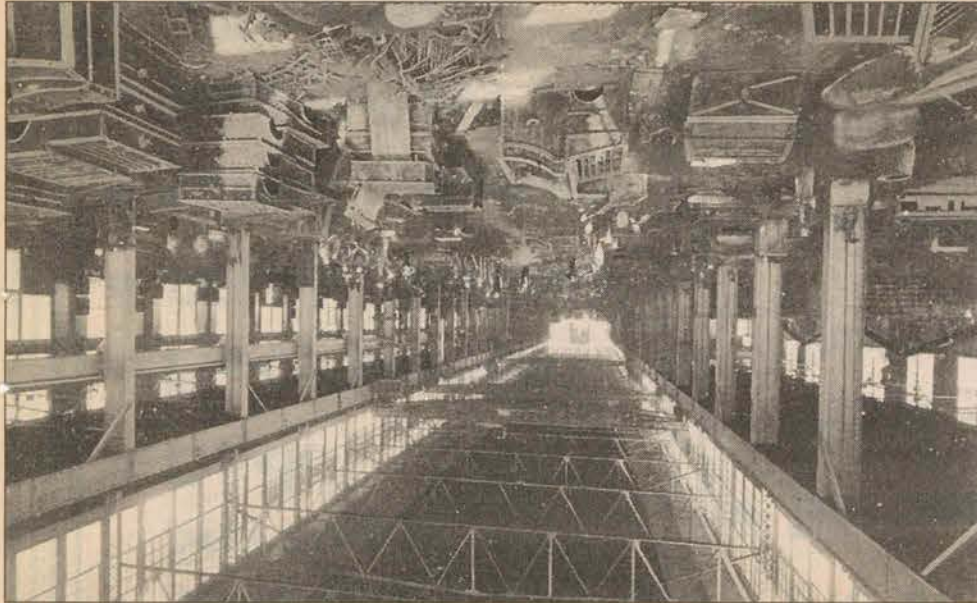
Back when one cent would mail a postcard, this is how Central Avenue in Dunkirk looked.



The former Dunkirk City Hall.



A group of students stand in front of the old Dunkirk High School.



The interior foundry of American Locomotive Company that was located in Dunkirk.

If you have vintage postcards that show scenes of Chautauqua County and would like to have them published please contact Chautauqua Sampler Editor Jen Osborne at 1-800-836-0931. The postcards will be not be damaged during the printing process.



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