

2015-K1036

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the Bicentennial of Oswego County, New York, on March 10, 2016

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to honor and recognize the distinguished histories of communities across this great Empire State, and to celebrate the people and places that make these communities strong; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the Bicentennial of Oswego County; and

WHEREAS, This auspicious occasion will be celebrated by the county and the community with a ceremony at the regular meeting of the Oswego County Legislature on March 10, 2016, in the Legislative Chambers at the Oswego County Building and in July at a community picnic held at historic Fort Ontario on July 3, 2016, following the annual 4th of July parade; and

WHEREAS, In March of 1816, Oswego County was formed out of Onondaga County and Oneida County, through an act of the New York State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, Oswego County occupies 968 square miles of land on the southeastern shore of Lake Ontario; rich in natural beauty, the county offers excellent business, educational, and recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Currently, Oswego County is comprised of the cities of Oswego and Fulton, the villages of Central Square, Cleveland, Hannibal, Lacona, Mexico, Parish, Phoenix, Pulaski and Sandy Creek and the towns of Albion, Amboy, Boylston, Constantia, Granby, Hannibal, Hastings, Mexico, Minetto, New Haven, Orwell, Oswego, Palermo, Parish, Redfield, Richland, Sandy Creek, Schroepfel, Scriba, Volney, West Monroe and Williamstown; and

WHEREAS, Oswego County made its unique mark in the history of New York State and America due to its strategic location on Lake Ontario; it has been a destination since the days of the Native American tribes who once used the land and waterways in everyday life; and

WHEREAS, The first European explorers arrived in the 16th Century and discovered the wealth of natural resources the area had to offer in the infancy of the new world; development first began in the early 18th Century when the location known as Oswego served as a military and trading post on the American border; and

WHEREAS, Before the Revolutionary War, the British Empire selected Oswego for its strategic location on Lake Ontario and built forts seeking to maintain control of this important waterway; most notably, Fort Ontario, was originally built by the British in 1755; today, Fort Ontario is the only fort in the United States that has played a role in every American conflict and remains standing today as an important monument and historical place dedicated to the military legacy of this region; and

WHEREAS, Oswego County also played an important role in the War of 1812 due to its waterfront attributes and inland waterways serving as transportation lines for troops, war materials, goods and supplies; and

WHEREAS, Aside from the militaristic benefits of Oswego County's waterways, the early settlers found the access to be advantageous to shipping, commerce and trade; the economy of the area was built upon these waters and gradually Oswego began to form as a prosperous place along the mouth of Lake Ontario and the Oswego River; and

WHEREAS, As industries sprouted and the need for water and power grew, more settlers arrived to establish and develop communities along Lake

Ontario and the Oswego River valley which stretches 24 miles; in the rural areas, agriculture and lumber became main sources of revenue; and

WHEREAS, The construction of the Oswego Canal in 1828, and its connection to the Erie Canal opened the gateway to trade with Canada and

beyond; prosperity brought settlers of all backgrounds and ethnicities in pursuit of greater opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 19th Century, civic leaders and businessmen worked to create commercial and industrial ventures which would eventually flourish with the transportation opportunities connected with shipping and the advent of railroads; and

WHEREAS, In the 20th Century, manufacturing and power production revolutionized the way of life; today, the rivers and lakes continue to play a crucial role in the economy by providing vitally needed water; and

WHEREAS, The residents of Oswego County have demonstrated to be truly compassionate and welcoming citizens of the State of New York; Oswego County citizens played an important role in the anti-slavery abolitionist movement in the north during the mid-1800's and provided assistance to African Americans seeking refuge; Oswego County has 35 Underground Railroad sites with 11 of them being placed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, Oswego County was the home to the only refugee shelter for Holocaust survivors in the United States; created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter housed 982 men, women and children from war-torn Europe from August 1944 until February 1946; and

WHEREAS, Oswego County has many notable residents throughout its history, including Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, a surgeon and abolitionist cared for wounded soldiers during the Civil War and the only woman to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor; Gerrit Smith, Social Reformer, Abolitionist and patron of the Oswego Public Library; and Ned Sherman, elected in 1878 in the village of Cleveland, Mayor Sherman is possibly the first African-American Mayor in New York State history; and

WHEREAS, After 200 years, Oswego County continues to be a destination in many ways, including fishing, outdoor recreation, local history, educational opportunities, seasonal attractions, a power industry and

much more; and

WHEREAS, The prominent role the county has played in history is documented through the legacies of the Native Americans, the pioneer settlers, the first leaders and builders who left behind a trove of recollections to remind us of this important past; and

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WHEREAS, As evidenced over two centuries of history, it is clear that Oswego County is a place of continuous evolution and a destination for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, Oswego County has continued its steadfast commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all of its residents, ensuring a safe, peaceful and educational climate for individuals and families to thrive; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the Bicentennial of Oswego County to be celebrated on March 10, 2016, in order to recognize the significant role the county plays in the life of the community of the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Kevin L. Gardner, Chairman of the Oswego County Legislature, and to Justin White, Oswego County Historian.