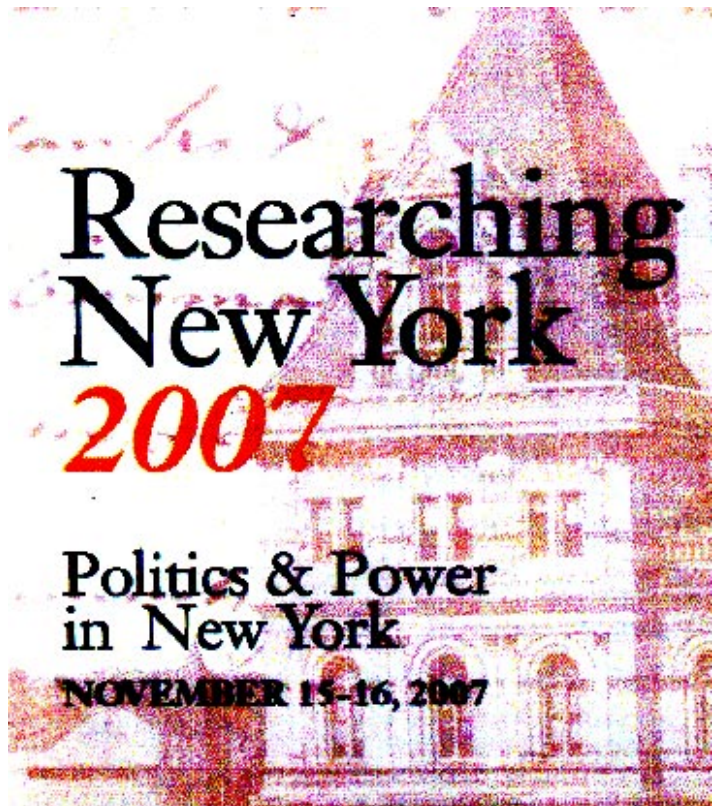
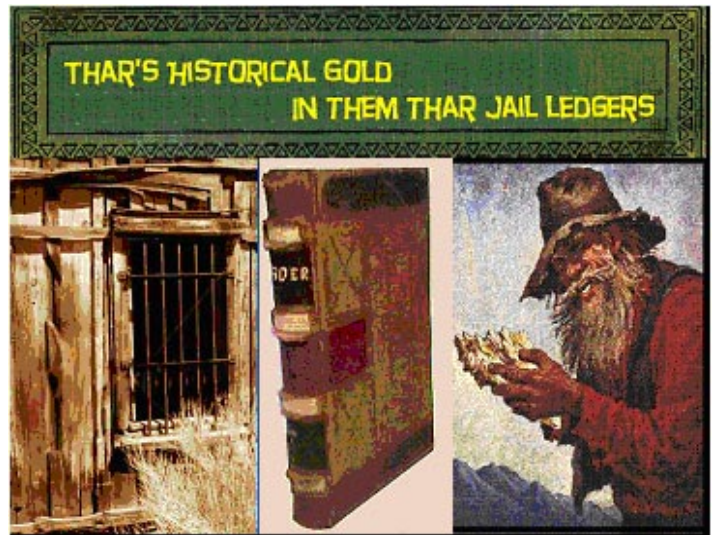


The text on next 13 pages constituted the slide show “script” off which the webmaster of the NY Correction History Society worked in giving one of the presentations at the Researching NY 2007 conference “Looking at Old Records Anew” Session Nov. 15 in the Science Library Digital Workshop #4 at SUNY Albany.



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2007

SESSION I 1:30 – 3:15 PM

Looking at Old Records Anew

Science Library, 1st floor, Digital Workshop 4

There's Historical Gold in Them Thar Jail Ledgers:
Examining Essex County's Old Behind-Bars
Record Books

Thomas McCarthy, New York Correction
History Society

Rochester Research Resources – Online!

Lawrence Naukam, Central Library of Rochester
and Monroe County, NY

Comment: Andrew Arpey, New York State Archives

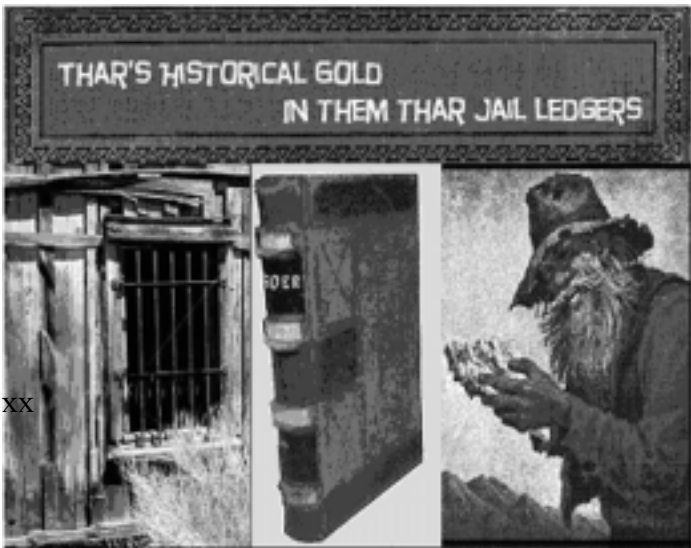
Anyone here, besides me, remember matinee movie Westerns? Remember the grizzled old prospector who would proclaim, *Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hills?*

Well, for today's matinee show, I'm the grizzled old prospector proclaiming there's historical gold to be found in old jailhouse (or prison) ledgers.

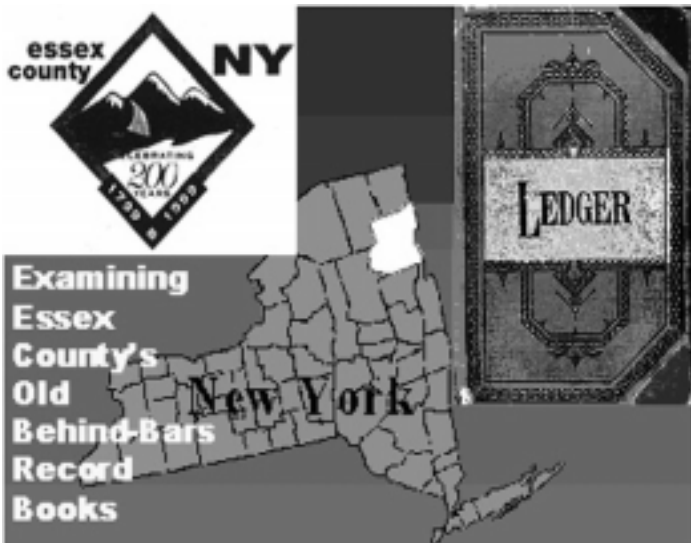
The 3 ledgers I cite to back up this claim also came from "them thar hills:" the Adirondacks. To be precise, from an old jail in Essex County that is on Lake Champlain.

Its Elizabethtown lock-up, first built in 1868 but virtually rebuilt as a new jail circa 1915. The 3-story brick jail structure was one of the smallest in NYS – only a few dozen cells. As Essex prepared to open its new jail in Lewis and "decommission" the old jail, these record books came my way for historical research:

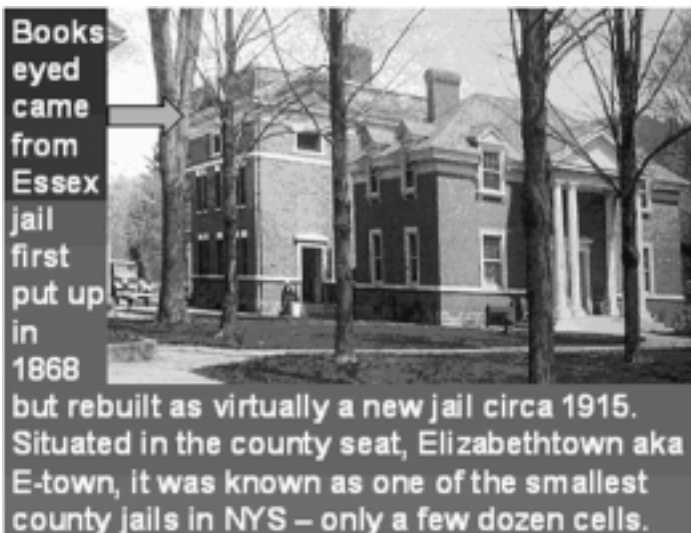
- 1 — "Cash Book — Inmate Accounts (1952 - 1958)"
- 2 — "Operating Expenses Audit Book — (1904 - 1931)"
- 3 — "Record of Inmate Commitments — (1879 - 1924)"



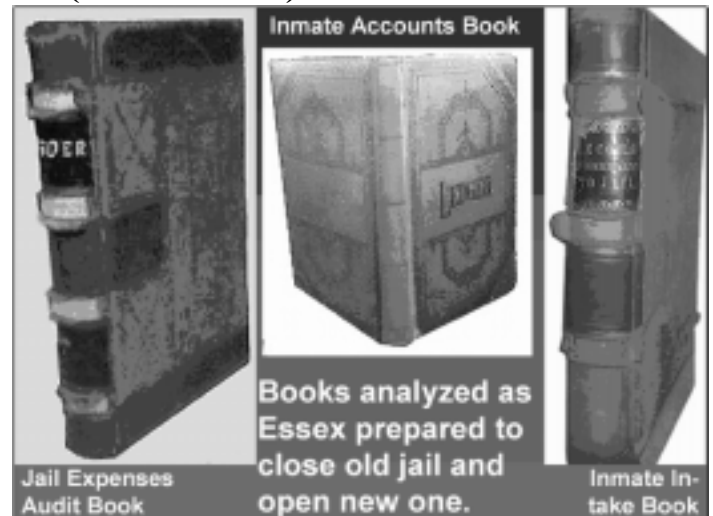
Slide 1



Slide 2



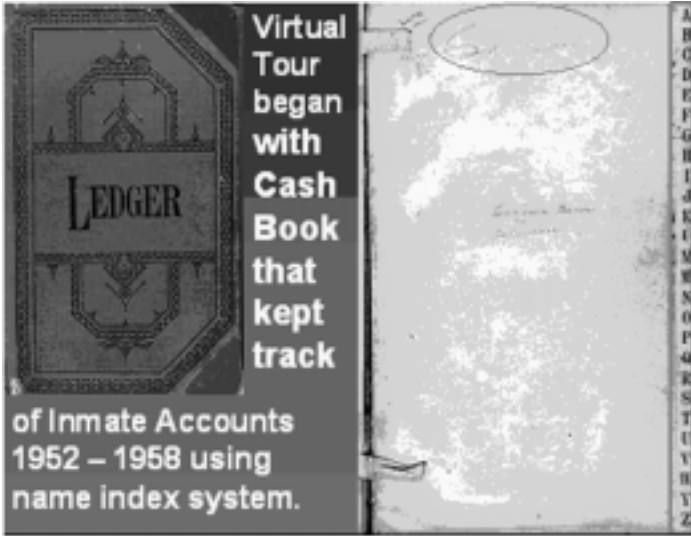
Slide 3



Slide 4

We begin our virtual tour of pre-computer era jail record-keeping with the Cash Book. It tracked inmates' personal purchase accounts of 1952 – 1958.

Up front are 30 index pages, with lettered tabs, for entering an inmate name

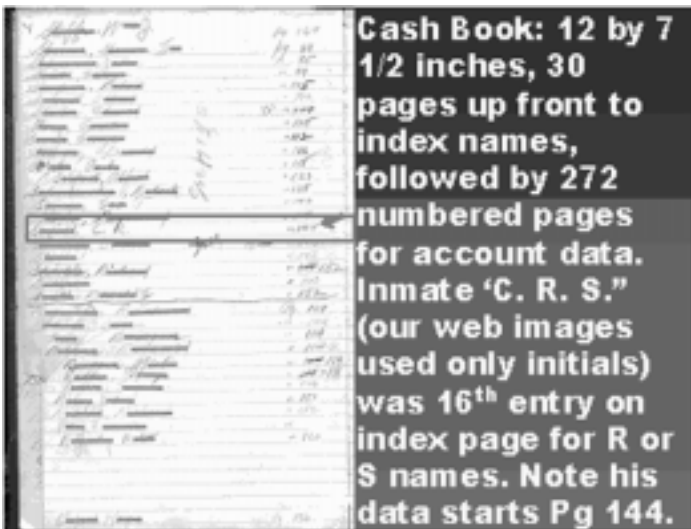


according to last name's first letter. Each index name entry made included a numbered page reference to find where that inmate's account began.

Following the tabbed index pages are 272 numbered pages for data entries.

An example: the 16th entry on the index page reserved for "R" or "S" inmate lists inmate "C. R. S" and notes his account begins on Page 144.

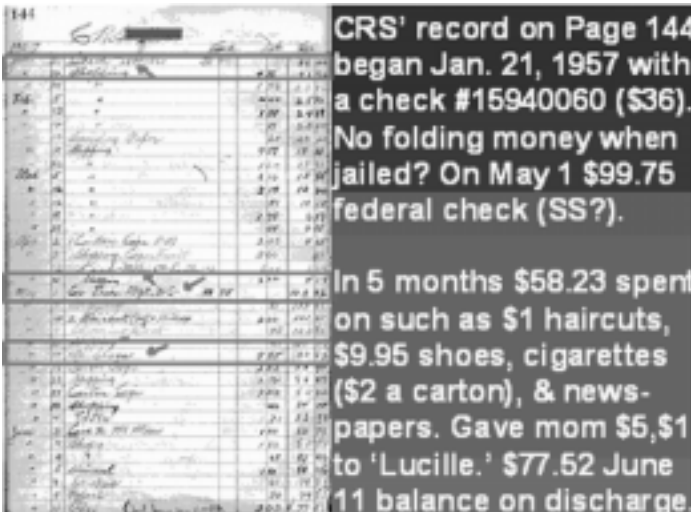
Slide 5



I use only initials because I don't know who was convicted and who acquitted. Blotting-outs, arrows, underlines, boxes, and circles were all done digitally, only on the images.

C. R. S. may not have had folding money on him when jailed. His account on Page 144 begins Jan. 21, 1957 with a check cashed for \$36. On May 1 a federal check (Social Security? Disability?) was cashed for \$99.75.

Slide 6



In 5 months, he spent \$58.23 on such items as on a \$9.95 pair of shoes, \$1 haircuts, on \$2 cigarette cartons, and on newspapers. He gave his mom \$5 and a "Lucille" \$1.

On June 11 C.R. S. walked out of jail, presumably in his new shoes, with the \$77.52 balance.

Slide 7

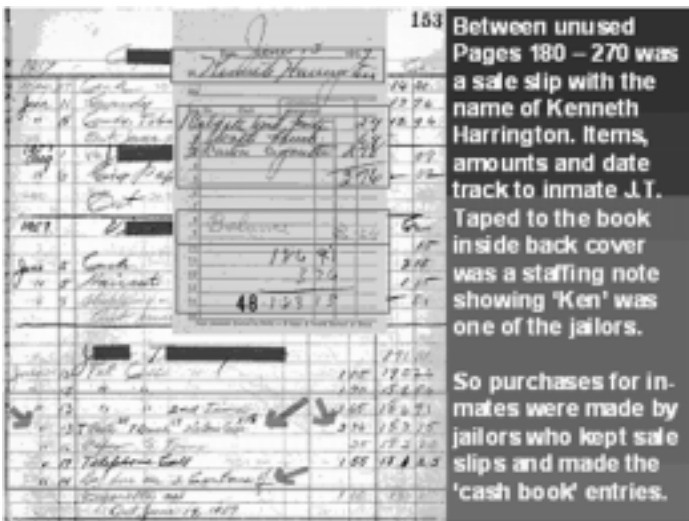
Between unused Pages 180 – 270 I found the first of what I call “nuggets,” historical gold pieces.

I distinguish them from the “gold dust” of ledger layouts, column headings, etc.

This nugget was a sales slip with the name of “Kenneth Harrington.” Items, amounts and date on it track to inmate “J.T.” on Page 153.

Taped to the book inside back cover was another nugget, a staffing note showing “Ken” was one of the jailors.

So, purchases for inmates apparently were made locally by jailors who kept sale slips and made the ‘cash book’ entries.



Slide 8

Cash Book review observations:

— Cigarettes, banned in many jails today, were a major purchase items back then.

— Phone calls, candy, toiletries constituted major inmate expenditures then as now.

— Newspapers were major purchase item then; today they are available free in day rooms.

— Handwritten records of inmate purchases, a combination of sales slips and ledger entries, sufficed in the era before bar codes and PCs.

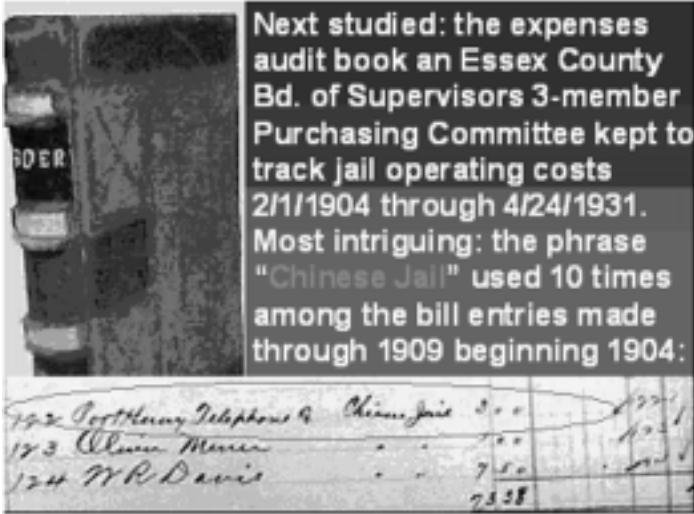
— Whereas a major city jail would have its own commissary, the tiny rural jail apparently bought items locally for inmate as requested.

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Slide 9

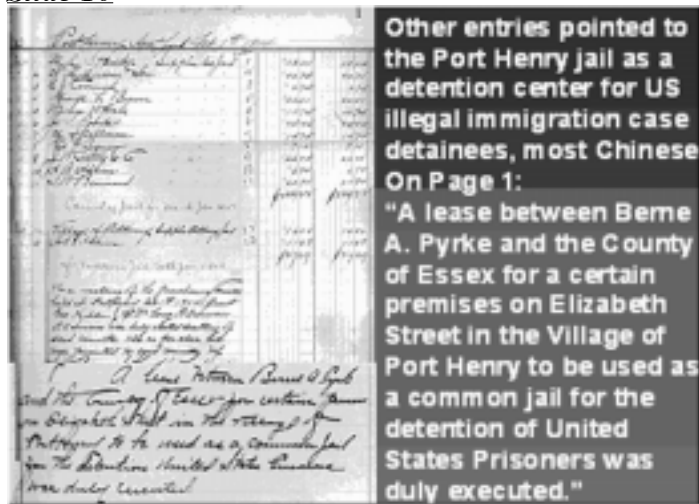
Next studied was the County Board's Purchasing Committee's audit book recording jail operating costs from Feb.1, 1904 through April 24, 1931. There I found my third gold nugget – an intriguing term, “Chinese Jail,” used 10 times among 1904 -1909 entries.

Example: a \$3 bill from the Port Henry Telephone Co. Other entries pointed to a county leased jail in Port Henry as a detention center for illegal immigration case detainees, mostly Chinese. On bottom of Page 1 appears a note:



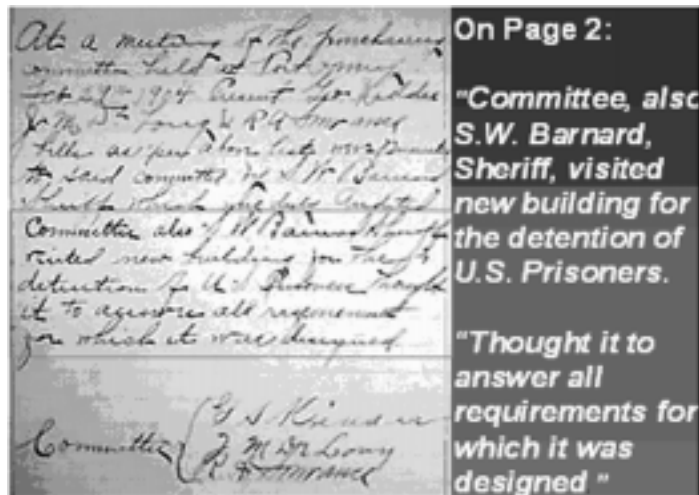
Slide 10

“A lease between Berne A. Pyrke and the County of Essex for a certain premises on Elizabeth Street in the Village of Port Henry to be used as a common jail for the detention of United States Prisoners was duly executed.”



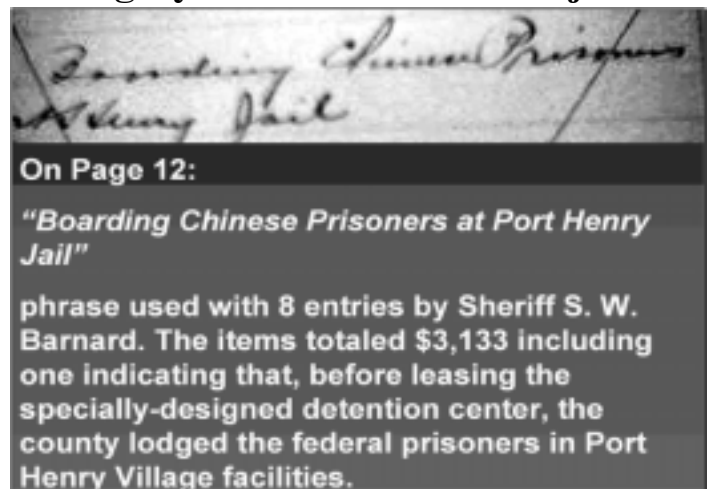
Slide 11

A Page 2 note: “Committee, also S.W. Barnard, Sheriff, visited new building for the detention of U.S. Prisoners. Thought it to answer all requirements for which it was designed.”



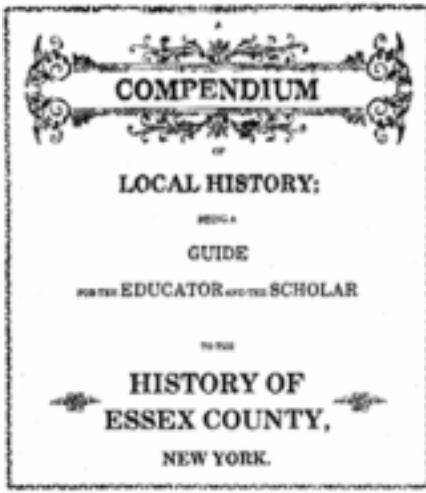
Slide 12

On Page 12: “Boarding Chinese Prisoners at Port Henry Jail” meant Essex had initially lodged U.S. prisoners in Port Henry Village facilities before leasing Pyrke’s made-to-order jail.



Slide 13

The Essex County Historical Society sent copy of a page from its own *“Compendium of Local History.”* It confirmed *“Chinese Jail”* was the colloquial name for the immigration lock-up. It quoted a 1935 *“History of Port Henry”* that *“when a large number of Chinese attempted unlawful entry into the U.S. [from] Canada, they were brought to Port Henry for detention... first they were quartered in the village hall jail. [Later] a lot was secured on Elizabeth St ... The Chinese Jail was erected ... When no longer needed, it was converted to a tenement ... F. W. Dudley acted as Commissioner of Immigration.”*



A page from Essex Historical Society's own Compendium confirmed that **'Chinese Jail'** was local name for the lock-up where county housed U.S. immigration case prisoners awaiting federal processing.

... first they were quartered in the village hall jail. [Later] a lot was secured on Elizabeth St ... The Chinese Jail was erected ... When no longer needed, it was converted to a tenement ... F. W. Dudley acted as Commissioner of Immigration.”

The page featured the image above and quoted Chinese Jail references in 1901 issues of a local paper. Some quotes referred *Chinamen* and *celestials*, and made them the butt of rather heavy-handed humor, comments perhaps consistent with the nation's general support for Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and its renewals right into the 1940s.

Slide 14

The 1986 Compendium page stated *“when a large number of Chinese attempted unlawful entry into the U.S. by way of Canada, they were brought to Port Henry for detention... At first they were quartered in the village hall jail.*



“[Later] a lot was secured on Elizabeth St... The Chinese Jail was erected... When no longer needed, it was converted into a tenement ... F. W. Dudley acted as Commissioner of Immigration.” The page featured the image above.

Slide 15

The Elizabethtown Post.

The page quoted references to **Chinese Jail** in 1901 issues of the weekly newspaper. The quotes included useful historical data, yet were worded with obvious disdain for the detainees, termed them *Chinamen* and *celestials*, made them butt of rather heavy-handed humor about rice and macaroni.

That was perhaps consistent with the public's support for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and subsequent renewals right into the 1940s.

Slide 16

Research in on-line historical newspaper archives turned up that Dudley, named area Immigration Commissioner in 1901, became Pyrke's law partner 3 years later. The next year Essex leases Pyrke's building to hold illegal aliens. Spoils of local politics?

Northern New York Library Network

NORTHERN NEW YORK
HISTORICAL NEWSPAPERS

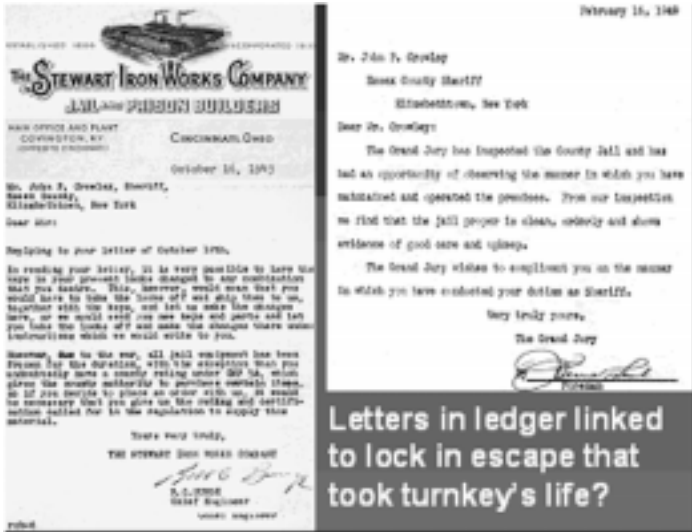


Looking for more E-town Post stories led to finding the wonderful research resource named above. Using its on-line archives led to putting together an intriguing timeline. In 1901 Dudley becomes regional Immigration Commissioner. 3 years later he becomes Pyrke's law partner. 1 year after that Essex ends use of the village hall jail and rents Pyrke's building to hold Immigration case detainees. ?????

Slide 17


I found 7 letters tucked together between ledger Pages 254 & 255. 4 letters were from a iron works company proclaiming itself “Jail and Prison Builders.” 3 were from Grand Juries foremen reporting on Elizabethtown jail inspections.

I consider them another historical gold nugget. That’s because they link, I believe, to the Nov. 15, 1948 breakout in which the 2 escapees killed Jailer Earl Torrence. Separately from the ledgers project, I had been working on a web page about successful efforts by great nephew, NY State C.O. Joe Stickney – getting Earl’s name added a Washington D.C. memorial wall for law enforcement officers.




Slide 18

The 'find' of the 7 letters tucked between Pages 254 & 255 was unexpected. Also unexpected was their very possible link to a separate E-town jail history project underway at the time:



Earl Torrence

A web memorial for Essex Jailer Earl Torrence killed 11/15/48 in a breakout by 2 inmates. The planned web page was to tell about his grand nephew's success getting Earl's name added a D.C. memorial wall.



Grand nephew CO Joe Stickney at the D.C. wall.

As the captured escapees' court case proceeded in 1948/49, local newspapers repeatedly cited how the breakout had involved opening the jail “bullpen” door locking mechanism by jiggling it with bent wire.

The jail builders company letters were responses to Sheriff Crowley’s asking about changing jail lock keys and tumblers in 1943-44 but WWII restrictions apparently put off making the change.

Slide 19


The Essex County Republican.

On 12/3/48 the above paper reported a faulty bullpen locking mechanism was a factor in the deadly breakout. Other papers reported the same information.

The sheriff also testified that when he questioned Moody his story was “about the same.” Moody told him that he had nothing against either Torrence or the sheriff. Moody explained that he had discovered the loosened bar when he was jailed at Elizabethtown back in 1936 and that he, Moody, also knew that by properly manipulating a piece of wire he could open the bull pen door at will. The ten inch bar did not allow space for escape.

The sheriff testified that Hart admitted having struck Torrence with the piece of iron bar five times and that he also demonstrated to the sheriff how he used the wire to open the bullpen door.

The 4 letters from the 'jail builders' company were its responses to an inquiry by Sheriff John P. Crowley in 1943-44 about changing the key and tumbler set-ups of the jail's then existing locks.



Sheriff Crowley

WWII restrictions seems to have postponed changing the jail locks, something Crowley prudently wanted to explore early in his tenure.

He served as sheriff from 1942 through 1957.

Slide 21

Slide 20

The other three letters, all dated in 1949 reported to Sheriff Crowley about inspections of the Elizabeth town jail by the "current grand jury." They lauded the jail's appearance and operation. I believe some question about the bullpen locking mechanism posed during the jail inspections, but left unsaid in the jury

letters, perhaps triggered lock-related research into past records.

The other three letters, all dated in 1949 -- Feb. 15, May 17, and Oct. 6 -- reported to Sheriff Crowley about inspections of the E-town jail by the "current grand jury." Each, signed by a different foreman, lauded the jail's appearance and its operation.



With the jury letters in hand, the researcher retrieved the 1943-44 jail builders letters and was checking the 1904-31 ledger for any past lock-related outlays when interrupted by more pressing business. The letters were tucked in the book as a place-marker but the research was never resumed and the letters forgotten.

Slide 22

Some point raised in the jail inspections maybe triggered research into records related to locking devices. With the g. j. letters in hand, the researcher retrieved the 1943-44 letters and was proceeding through the 1904-31 ledger but was interrupted by more pressing business.



This theory doesn't claim the deadly 1948 break would have been averted had keys and tumblers been changed in 1944. The door device fault *might* have been missed in a anyway.

Found on-line in 1949 newspaper was text that Earl's widow wrote the DA not to seek the death penalty. Deeply religious, she also was a close friend of escapee Wm Moody's mother.

Slide 23

The letters were in the book to mark where the search had been interrupted. The pages there had no entries relevant to the search. But the search never resumed, the letters forgotten, the volume put away. This theory doesn't claim that the deadly break would have been averted had the locks been changed. The door device fault *might* have been missed anyway.



March 9, 1949

Mr. Daniel Manning
Essex County District Attorney
Au Sabie Forks, New York
Dear Mr. Manning:

Now that the case involving my husband's death is coming to trial I would like to let you know my feelings. No matter what happens at the trial, my husband will never be back and, while I hope these men are punished, I do not desire the death of these men, Hart and Moody.

I feel very sorry for their parents. I wouldn't want them to die because of their crime, but I believe they should be sent to prison so that they can never do such a thing again.

Very truly yours,
Kathleen Torrence
Bloomingdale, N. Y.

Kathleen & Earl

Found archived on-line was text the widow wrote DA not to seek death against Earl's killers. Deeply religious, she also was a close friend of the mother of one of the killers, Wm Moody.

Slide 24Slide 23

Slide 25

The 3rd virtual tour book is the 1880-1924 in-take ledger. The other 2 books were generic off-the-shelf ledgers. This volume clearly had been custom printed. The spine leather label reads: “Record of Commitments to Essex County Jail.” So does the wording across the top of each two facing pages.



The 3rd book in the virtual tour of Essex County jail record-keeping is the 1880-1924 in-take ledger.

The other 2 books were generic off-the-shelf ledgers; this volume clearly had been custom printed.

Entries begin on Page 2 & end on Page 258. An entry begins on an even-numbered left page line and continues along the same line onto the facing odd-numbered right page, spreadsheet like.

Entries begin on Page 2 and end on Page 258. An entry begins on an even-numbered left page line that continues onto the facing odd-numbered right page, spreadsheet like. There are 27 entry lines each “spreadsheet” page.

Because of the ledger’s fragile condition, only the first two pages were scanned. Thereafter all other images of entries were taken using a digital camera in one hand and holding the book only half open with the other.

Slide 26

On even numbered pages the heading of 1 column was printed as “County” but that was repeatedly corrected with an “r” insert to read “Country” through 1883.

Thereafter it continued to be understood as “Country” even without the penned “r” correction. Entries were mostly “U.S.”

Slide 27

But by March of 1895 (Page 58), the column heading came to be understood as printed — County — with “Essex” entries dominating.

On even numbered pages the heading of one column was printed as “County” but that was repeatedly corrected with an “r” insert to read “Country” through 1883. Thereafter it was still understood as “Country” even without the penned “r.” Entries were mostly “U.S.” But by March of 1895 (Page 58), the column heading came to be understood as printed -- County -- with “Essex” entries dominating. Did closeness to Canada factor into that “r” insert?

Did closeness to Canada factor into that “r” insert?

Did it reflect a wariness of “foreigners”?

Slide 28

Color	Social Relations	Parents	Some column heads are unusual by today's standards, at least their wording is. 'Color' instead of race, 'Parents' instead of next-of-kin, 'Social Relations' instead of marital status. 'Habits of Life' seemed focused on destructive life style issues, principally alcohol abuse. Most were put down as 'bad' or 'intemperate,' many as 'good,' only a few as 'fair.' The book had no addresses for inmates or parents. Such contact data must have been in arrest records.

Some column head wordings are unusual by today's standards:

“Color” instead of race.

“Parents” instead of next-of-kin,

“Social Relations,” not marital status.

“Habits of Life” focused on destructive life style issues, principally alcohol abuse. Most “bad” or “intemperate,” many as “good,” only a few as “fair.”

Slide 29

Cannot Read	Read Only	Read and Write	Well Educated	Classically Educated	Column heads on inmate's literacy or lack of, are interestingly worded, especially the one 'Classically Educated,' which perhaps refers to college grads. Interest in inmate literacy reflects the emerging reformatory movement that had its origins in efforts by pre-reformatory chaplains and other reformers to teach reading and writing for Bible studies. That may be why the next column is 'Religious Instruction,' not 'Affiliation.' (Ignore ironic misprint.)

The book had no addresses for inmates or parents. Such contact data must have been in arrest records. There were NO inmate ID numbers. With so few inmates at any one time — rarely more than 2 dozen, often fewer than a dozen — ID numbers were not viewed as necessary.

Column heads on inmate's literacy or lack of, are interestingly worded. Did “Classically Educated,” refer to college graduates.

Slide 30

Interest in inmate literacy reflects the emerging reformatory movement. It originated in efforts by pre-reformatory era chaplains and other reformers to teach inmates reading and writing as part of Bible study programs.

That may be why the next column is “Religious Instruction,” not “Religious Affiliation.” (Ignore ironic misprint.)

The connection between penal correction and inmate education goes back at least to the 18th century. A motto on a wall of San Michele reformatory, founded at Rome in 1704 by Pope Clement:

It is of little use to restrain criminals by punishment, unless you reform them by education.

The 10th inmate on the book's 1st entries page was Frank Boardman, committed to the jail Jan. 30, 1880, for petit larceny and sentenced to 30 days.

A mere 13 years old but already his 'Habits of Life' are listed as "bad." He is listed as able to both read and write. The 13-year-old was committed to the jail by Justice Cutting, a distant 19th Century kin of the current county jail administrator Major Cutting who made the jail ledgers available to NYCHS.

Name of Prisoner	When Committed	Offense	Term of Sentence	Place	Age
Frank Boardman	Jan 30 1880	petit larceny	30 d		13

The 10th inmate on the book's 1st entries page: Frank Boardman, committed to the jail Jan. 30, 1880, for petit larceny, sentenced to 30 days. A mere 13 years old but already his 'Habits of Life' are listed as 'bad.' He both reads & writes.

County	Color	Social Relations	Parents	Habits of Life	Cannot Read	Read Only	Read and Write
U. S.		Single		bad			

Slide 31


Religious Instruction	How Committed	By whom Committed	State of Health when Committed
P	"	Cutting	"

The 13-year-old was committed to the jail by Justice Cutting, distant 19th Century kin of the current county jail administrator Mjr. Cutting. Listed for the teen under 'trade' was 'farmer.' 'Value of Article Stolen' entry was \$1. How did a 30-day sentence on Jan. 30 for a \$1 theft result in an April 15th discharge 75 days later?

How Discharged	Trade or Occupation	Whether so occupied when com.	No. of Previous Com's	Value of Article Stolen	When Discharged
order of Court	Farmer			\$1	April 15/80

Slide 32

Did unruliness as an inmate result in his doing more time? Unlikely. His discharge by 'order of court' suggests he was court monitored. Alternate theory: He was unruly on the farm, a winter stay behind bars might have been aimed at making him mend his ways in time for spring planting.



1911 Pa. boy miners photo by National Child Labor Committee evolved in 1904 from a NY group begun in 1902.

Slide 33

Listed for the teenager under "trade or occupation" was "farmer."

"Value of Article Stolen" entry was \$1. How did a 30-day sentence on Jan. 30 for a \$1 theft result in an April 15th discharge 75 days later?

His discharge by "order of court" suggests his stay was court monitored and that, in turn, raises the possibility of special arrangements: He may have been unruly on the farm, perhaps the family's farm. Could the both the family and the court have considered an indeterminate winter stay behind bars might make him mend his ways and still get him out in time for spring planting?

Consider that in 1888, Fred Stone, 14, a Canadian whose occupation was listed as a "miner" (not minor), served just 10 days for petit larceny.

The above 1911 Pa. boy miners photo was taken by National Child Labor Committee that evolved in 1904 from a NY group begun in 1902.

The farmer 13 and the miner 14 were among 45 juveniles – under 16 – whose entries were found among the more than 3,500 inmates named in the in-take book. 6 were girls. 1 was a witness in an adultery case. 1 was a “disorderly person.” 1 was a servant girl, Harriet Stone, 13, who was tried for murder & acquitted after 10 minutes of jury deliberation in 1881. It’s a case worthy of deeper research.

Harriet Stone 23 *13*

45 juveniles – ages from 10 to 15 inclusive -- were among more than 3,500 inmates named in the in-take book. 6 were girls. 1 was a witness in an adultery case. 1 was a 'disorderly person.' 1 (servant girl, 13), tried for murder, acquitted after 10 minutes of jury deliberation in 1881.

THE TRIAL OF HARRIET STONE.
The trial of Harriet Stone, a girl 13 years old, for the murder of an infant child of James and Matilda Frechette, near Pardon Lake, Saratoga, Essex county, was held at Elizabethtown, last week, before Judge Dozier, who kindly condescended to preside at said court in the place of Judge Landow. District Attorney Kellogg and Hon. M. D. Grover appeared for the people, and A. K. Dudley and James B. Row for the defendant.

The fact that the infant died from the administration of Paris green seems to have been undisputed by either side. The mother related minutely the circumstances which led her to believe the poison was administered by the girl. The girl fully corroborated the woman's testimony, and swore that a few days previous she had been violently and criminally assaulted by Frechette and a neighbor named Le Gola. The theory of the defense was that to get the girl out of the way so that the man would not be complained of and punished, the woman poisoned her own infant in order to make out a case of murder against the girl.

The jury, after retiring for about ten minutes, returned a verdict of not guilty.

Slide 34

3 were held as 'incorrigibles' or as 'vagrants,' era legalese that let courts address reputed waywardness, sometimes sentencing the girls to Houses of Refuge (reformatories). Of 39 boys in the book, 1 pled to Murder 2, sent by Pyrke to the Protectory (Parkchester) until 21).

Boy Murderer 1913

John Hanson, the fifteen-year-old boy who, last summer, caused the death of Patrick Cushing of Wilton, by mixing Paris green with drinking water, pleaded guilty to manslaughter, and was sentenced by County Judge Pyrke, in special session at Elizabethtown, last week to the New York Catholic Protectory until he reaches the age of twenty-one years.

Young Hanson was brought from that institution to Wilton a few years ago and placed in the Cushing home. The boy's principal delinquencies were in caring for Mr. Cushing, who was in his dotage. During his spring Mr. Cushing's son was at the farm, and during his stay warned the

John Hanson July 13 Murder 15

Slide 35

1910 version of law for females under 16 to be sent to state training school

§ 304. Commitments; papers furnished by committing magistrates. 1. Whenever any female not over the age of sixteen years shall be brought before any court or committing magistrate, and it shall appear to the satisfaction of such court or magistrate by the confession of such female, or by competent testimony, that such female frequents reputed houses of prostitution or assignation, or frequents the company of thieves or prostitutes, or is found associating with vicious and dissolute persons, or is wilfully disobedient to parent or guardian, and is in danger of becoming morally depraved; or is of intemperate habits, or is a vagrant or is guilty of any criminal offense, and who is not insane, nor mentally or physically incapable of being substantially benefited by the training and discipline of such institution, she may be sentenced and committed to the New York state training school for girls, or placed in charge of the board of managers thereof, to be there confined under the provisions of law

1 intended to show 4 slides listing 32 boys' entry details but to save time I will show just one slide of boys' entries

Slide 36

3 of the 6 girls were held as “vagrants” or “incorrigibles” era legalese allowing courts to address reputed waywardness, sometimes sentencing the girls to Houses of Refuge (reformatories).

Of the 39 boys, 1 was charged with Murder 1: John Hanson, 15, who pled to Murder 2, and whom Judge Berne A. Pyrke (the former Chinese Jail landlord) sentenced to return to the Protectory and remain there until 21.

The Catholic Protectory (1862) was a pioneer reformatory whose land more than 3/4 of a century later became Parkchester houses. Both teen murder cases involved poisoned persons in their hired care: a baby in the girl’s case, an old man on the boy’s case.

Above from a local legal notice is some text from the 1910 version of a law allowing courts to send females under 16 to a state training school for girls if found, among other described behavior patterns, “wilfully disobedient to parent or guardian,” “in danger of becoming morally depraved” or “is a vagrant.” The latter could be read as being a “runaway.”

I had intended to devote the next four slides to listing 32 of the 39 boys jailed. Due to time constrains I will show only one slide with data for 10 boys. Persons to whom entries refer take on a kind of in-your-face reality beyond detached objective intellectual awareness that the data denotes actual people albeit long dead and forgotten.

1884 -- 13, laborer, read, not write, larceny, 15 days.
 1887 -- 2 boys, 14 & 13, both laborers, 14 could read & write, 13 read only, burglary, sent to state facility.
 1889 -- 13, laborer, read & write, jailed June 9 on burglary, released Dec. 17, Christmas commutation.
 1893 -- 14, laborer, not read, burglary, sent to Rochester Industrial School
 1893 -- 13, sentenced to 8 days for "Intoxication."
 1895 -- 14, laborer, read & write, \$40 or 40 days.
 1896 -- 13, briefly when 10, 2d case: \$5.50 larceny. 5 months. book 1st entry of "school" under "trade."


Ernest Stanton	Sept 8 th	Bundy	80	10
Ernest Stanton	Dec 1 st	James	10	13

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The researcher begins to "see" them in the mind's eye, an empathetic connection bridging time and geography.

When this researcher encounters an Ernest Stanton, jailed briefly at age 10, being jailed again at age 13, the first for whom "school" is entered as his "occupation," the boy is no longer just an entry in a book.

In-take book includes 3 of 4 Essex murderers executed. Name of 2d hanged was 1st entered in ledger for 1882 killing of his wife, a stout widow whose farm he wanted deeded over to him. Self style soldier of fortune & house painter, 46, native of Portugal, was defended by A. K. Dudley, father of 'Chinese Jail' Commissioner F. W. Dudley



THE GALLOWS IN ESSEX COUNTY.
 Second Execution in its History.

HENRY DEBOSNYS.

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The name of the 2nd of Essex's 4murderers executed was entered in the in-take ledger after his 1882 arrest for killing his wife, a stout widow whose farm he wanted deeded over to him.

A house painter who styled himself during jailhouse interviews as soldier of fortune, Henry Debosnys, 46, was a native of Portugal. He was defended by A. K. Dudley, the father of 'Chinese Jail' Commissioner F. W. Dudley.

Premeditated Murder at Mineville. Names of the 3^d & 4th Murderers in Essex County Jail Here. 'accomplices/witnesses' were entered after their arrests within a few hours of attempted robbery killing of mine foreman in Mineville in 1916. That is, variations of their names. Depending on where & when names of the 'foreigners' were used, name spellings changed.

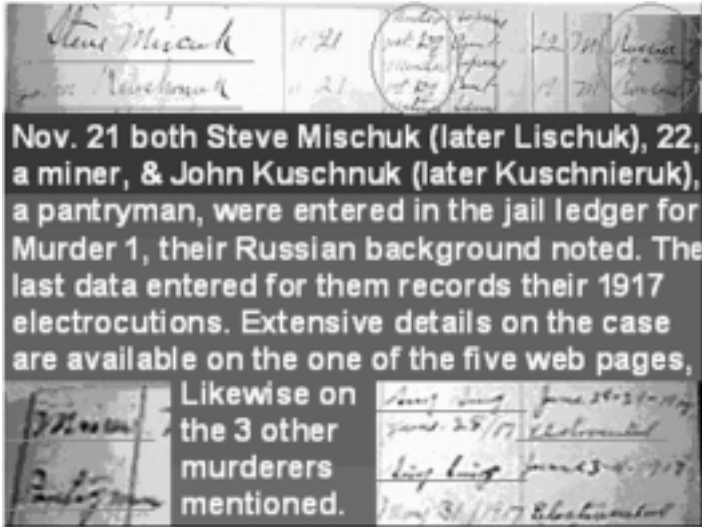
Four foreigners, Russians and Poles, who had recently arrived at Mineville, shot and killed Bladon Comiskey, mine foreman, as he lay in bed and wounded his wife beside him Saturday night. The foreigners were served up with liquor for the premeditated crime. Their motive was robbery. They demanded money which they knew Comiskey had and when he did not give it to them they began firing, killing him instantly. His wife was hit twice but will recover.

Sheriff Pool and a number of armed men captured the murderers and brought them to the Essex County jail in the village to await for trial of the grand jury.

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Names of the 3rd & 4th murderers executed and two "witnesses" were entered in the in-take ledger after arrests within a few hours of the attempted robbery killing of a mine foreman in Mineville in 1916. That is, variations of their names were entered. Depending on where and when names of the "foreigners" were used, name spellings changed.

On Nov. 21, 1916, both Steve Mischuk (later Lischuk), 22, a miner, & John Kuschnuk (later Kuschnieruk), a pantryman, were entered in the jail ledger for Murder 1, their Russian background noted. The last data entered for them records their 1917 electrocutions. Extensive details on the case are available on



the web presentation page entitled “Entries of 3 Inmates Convicted of Murder & Executed.” Likewise on that web page are details regarding the 3 other murderers mentioned.

The web presentation includes more details and sources than given here. Even so it can only point out avenues for more study. But that is precisely the message: Old jail/prison records hold a wealth of information to be mined. They can open up new or connect to on-going historical inquiries. Here are a few that occur to my mind:

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Even the detailed 23-page web presentation that this slide show samples can only raise avenues for yet deeper and wider study.

Any monitoring done on jailors' purchases for inmates? What role politics in local administration of the Chinese Exclusion Act? Did local attitudes toward the illegal immigrants go beyond snide newspaper remarks? Did adding 'r' to 'county' in the ledger column head reflect suspicion of 'foreigners'? Did local judges manipulate system to get the kind of results that later child offender laws codified? Why 'only' 4 murder executions?

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www.correctionhistory.org

The web resource for NY correction history

7,000+ files of text & images totaling 70+ megabytes.

THE LEDGERS OF NY'S ESSEX COUNTY JAIL:
Looking Back at the 1868 Elizabethtown Lockup

What monitoring was done on jailors' purchases for inmates?

What role did local politics play in administration of the Chinese Exclusion Act? Did local attitudes toward the illegal immigrants go beyond snide newspaper remarks? Did adding “r” to “county” in the ledger column head reflect suspicion of “foreigners?”

Did local judges manipulate the system to get the kind of juvenile monitoring results that later child offender laws codified?

Why “only” 4 murder executions in 150+ years? Was this rural county's seeming reluctance to execute typical or atypical in NY's North Country?

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