

HISTORY ON THE ROAD




A Driving Guide to History Along the Chemung River

Welcome to our driving guide, which will help you explore the path of the Chemung River in Chemung County and learn about its historic significance. Maps and driving directions are provided to help you with your travels.

In addition, there are:

- **History Snapshots**, highlighting what you can learn at the various boat launches and other stops. Many of the boat launches include kiosks spotlighting local history for visitors.
- **On The Way** boxes, spotlighting historic river-related sites on your driving trail.

The guide marks each destination with a . To learn more about the river and launch sites and to view an interactive map, visit the website of the Friends of the Chemung River Watershed at www.chemungriverfriends.org.

The driving tour will take about two hours under normal conditions. A word of caution: The narrow access roads to most of the boat launches are crushed stone or dirt, so conditions can be rough at times. Parking is also limited at some launches.



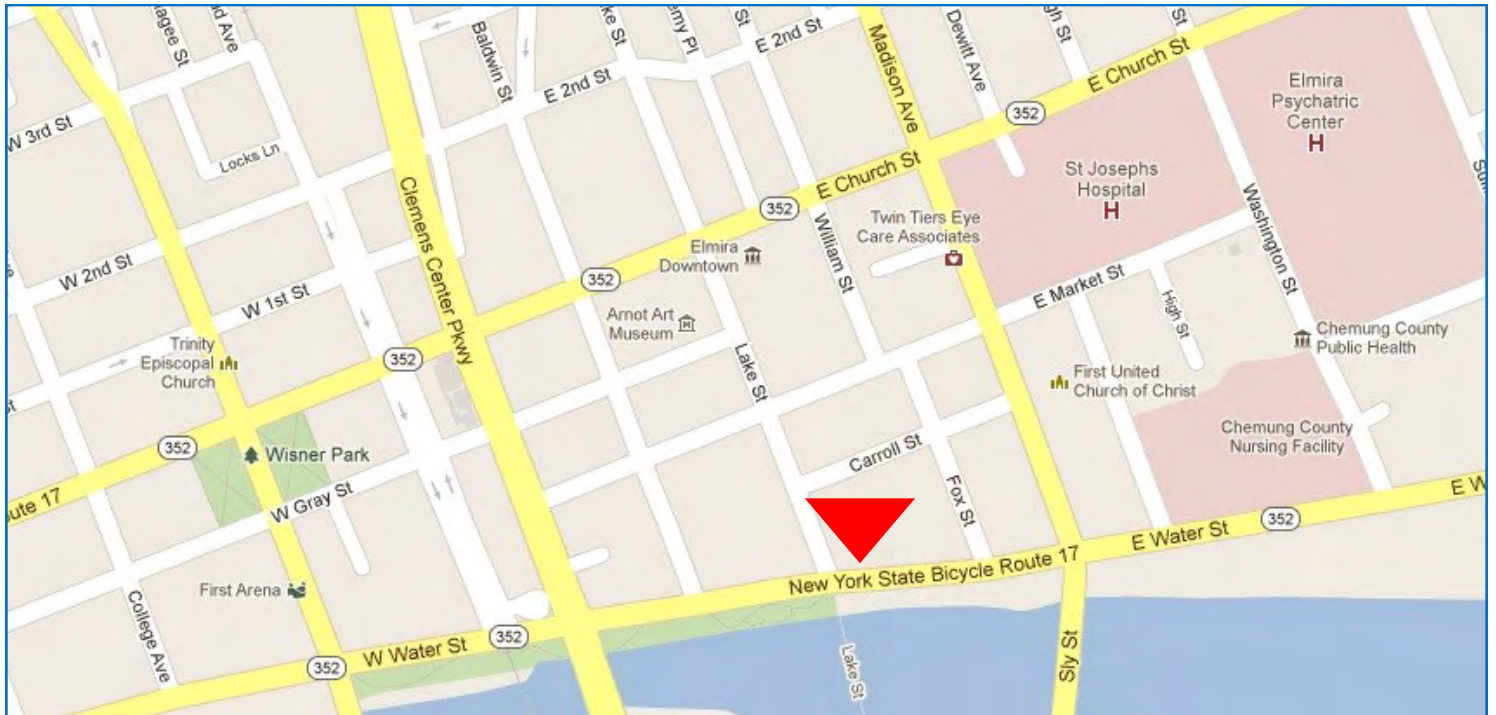
Starting Point

Chemung Valley History Museum

City of Elmira

GPS Coordinates: 42.088764, -76.800548

The museum and its gift shop are at 415 E. Water St.



History Snapshot

When the Chemung Canal opened in 1833, it linked the Chemung River to the Erie Canal. Anticipating economic growth in Elmira, a group of investors chartered the county's first bank in April 1833 and chose to name it after the new canal that brought so much promise to the community.

Constructed during 1833 and 1834, the original Chemung Canal Bank building (photo) is now home to the Chemung Valley History Museum.



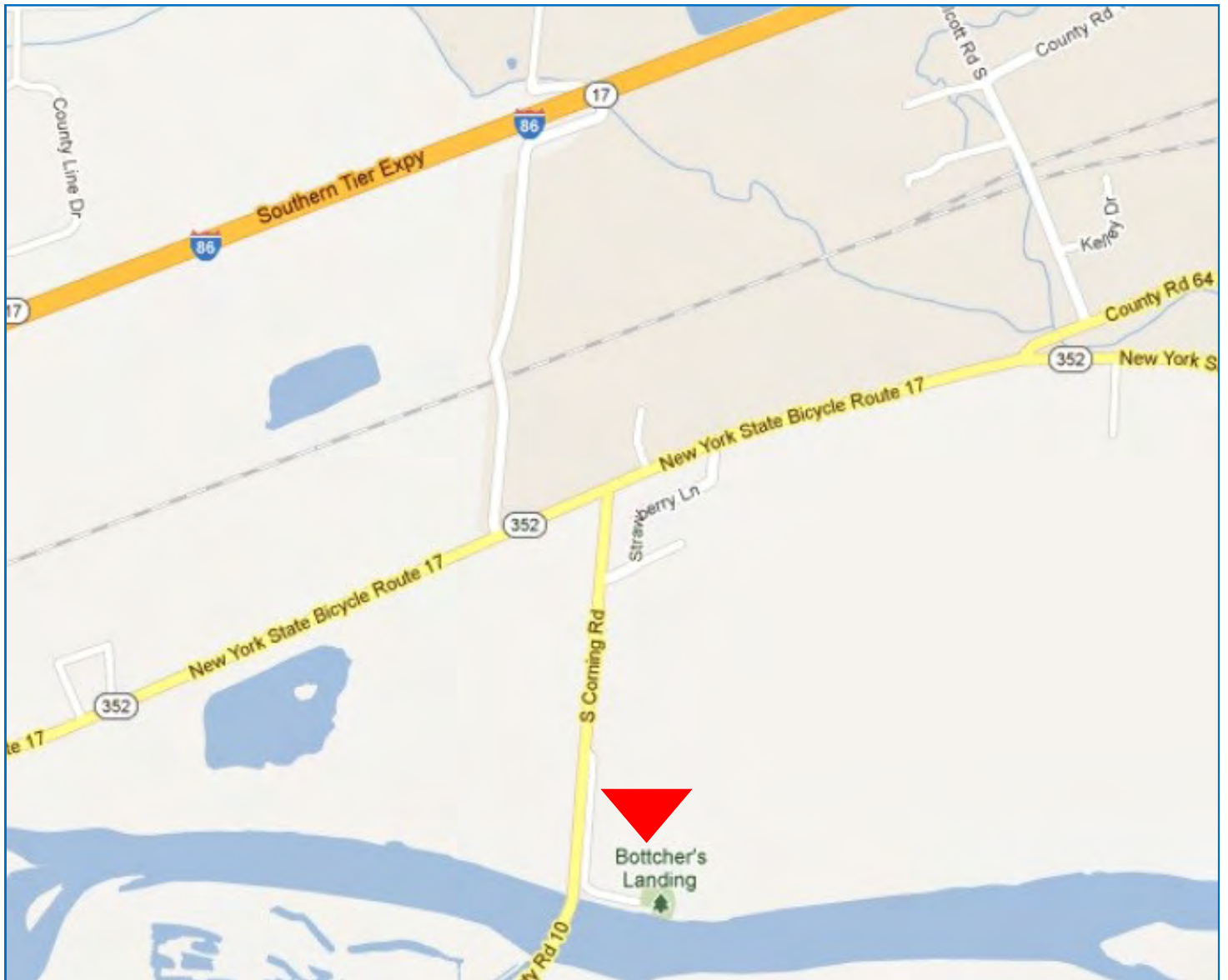
Courtesy of Chemung County Historical Society

Bottcher's Landing Boat Launch

Town of Big Flats

GPS Coordinates: 42.124397, -76.951545

From the museum, take East Water Street to Lake Street, then proceed west on East Church Street (state Route 352) for 9.9 miles. Turn left onto South Corning Road, then drive .2 miles to Bottcher's Landing entrance, which is on the left, just before the bridge. There is a concrete boat ramp, a pavilion and an informational kiosk.



History Snapshot

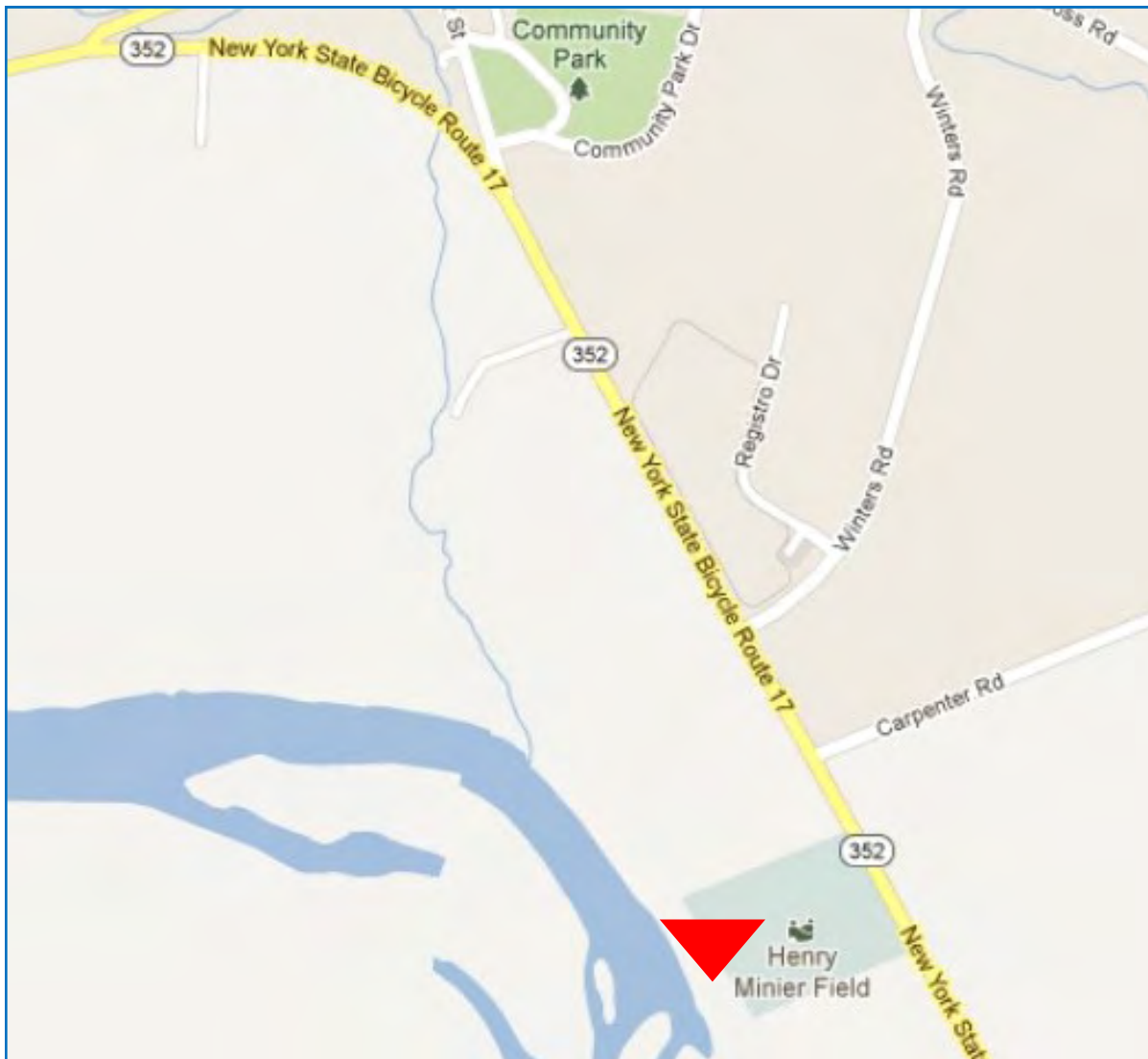
Visit the kiosk to learn how cigar tobacco was once king in Big Flats.

Senator William T. Smith II Boat Launch

Town of Big Flats

GPS Coordinates: 42.121145, -76.932557

From Bottcher's Landing, turn right onto South Corning Road, then right onto Route 352. Head east for 1.6 miles to Henry Minier Athletic Field, which is on the right side of the highway. At the east end of the parking lot is a road that leads to the launch.



Smith was a former New York state senator who lived near the park. He died in 2010 at age 94.

History Snapshot

The kiosk features the story of the first family of Big Flats, the Miniers.

Fitch's Bridge Boat Launch

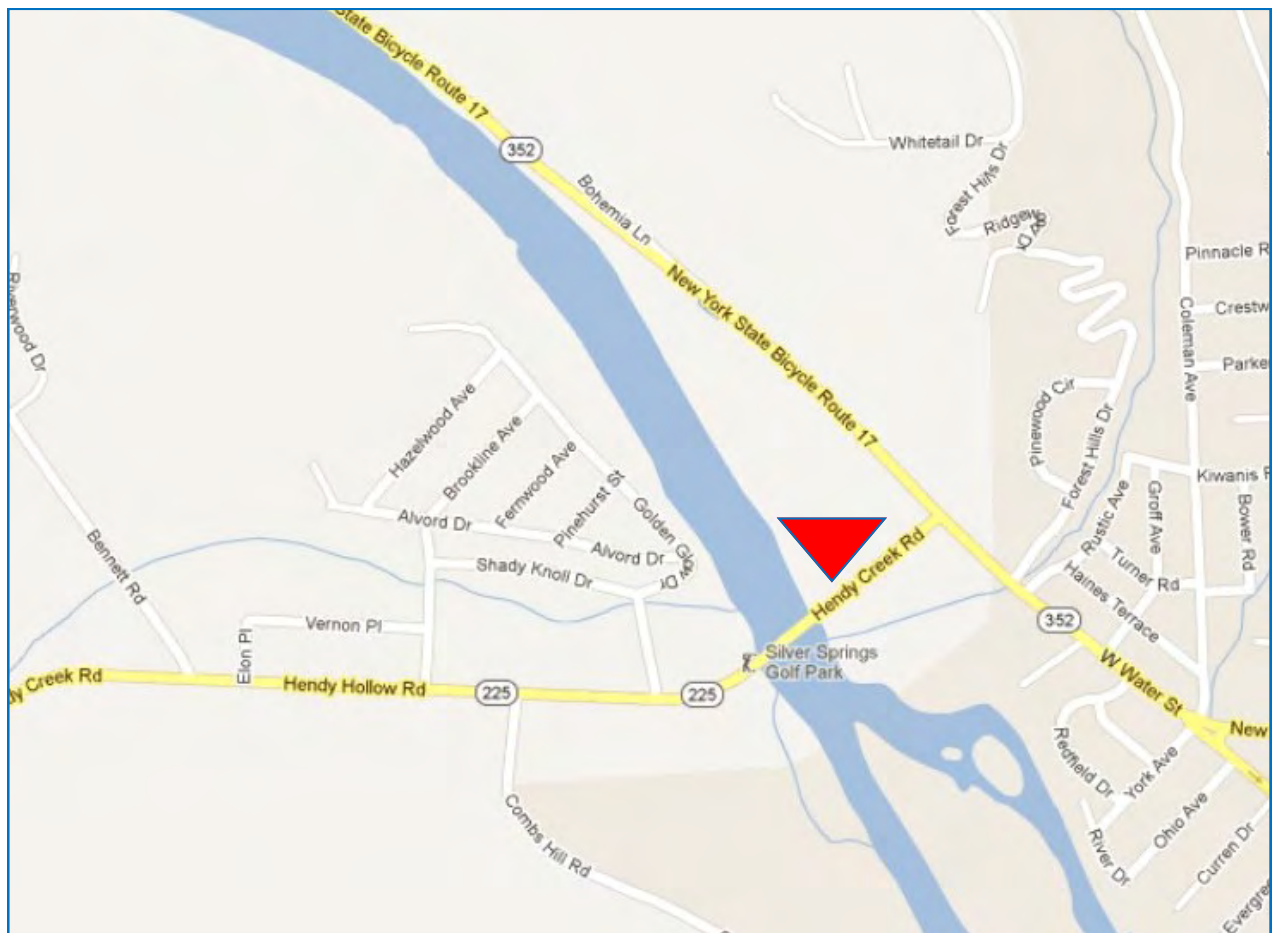
Town of Big Flats

GPS Coordinates: 42.082524, -76.86555

On the Way

About 2.7 miles east of Minier Athletic Field on the south side of state Route 352 is a marker at the site of the first home built in Big Flats. Christian Myneer (Minier) built a log cabin near the river there in 1787.

From Minier Athletic Field, turn right and head east on Route 352. Drive 4.7 miles, then turn right onto Route 225 (Hendy Creek Road). The launch entrance is on the immediate left and it includes a concrete boat ramp.



History Snapshot

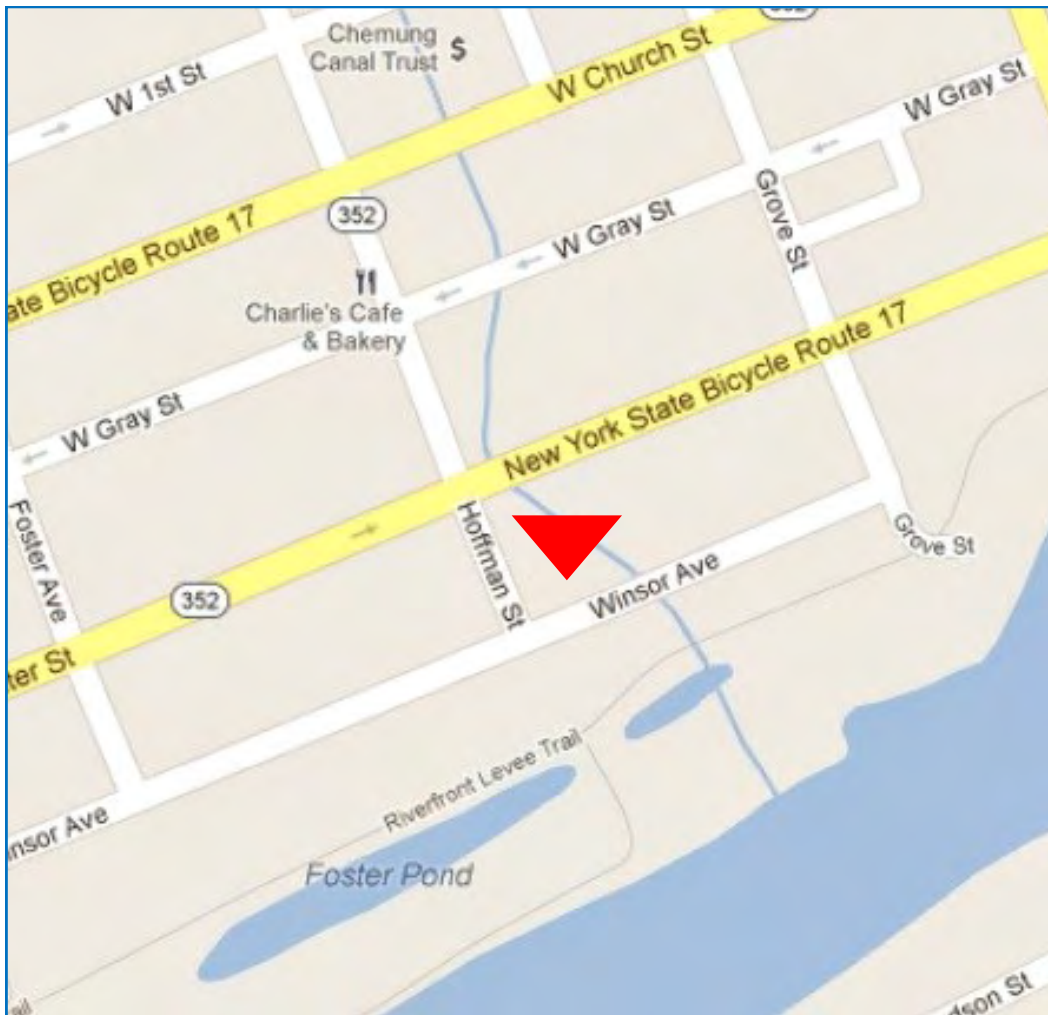
The kiosk recalls the famous water toboggans used in the early 1900s at the site, and the history of Fitch's Bridge.

Civil War Memorial

City of Elmira

GPS Coordinates: 42.082432, -76.821667

From Fitch's Bridge, drive east 1.5 miles on West Water Street and turn right onto Hoffman Street. Follow the street until it ends at Winsor Avenue. The memorial, marked by American, Union and City of Elmira flags, is to the right of the Elmira Water Board building.



On the Way

About .7 miles east of Fitch's Bridge, on the south side of West Water Street, is Rorick's Glen Parkway in West Elmira. A short dirt footpath leads to the site of Rorick's Glen.

Its golden age was 1901 to 1917, when thousands traveled by trolley to see vaudeville and opera performed in the 1,200-seat, open-air theater, according to "Chemung County: 1890-1975," published by the Chemung County Historical Society. Floods in 1946 and 1972 wiped out the bridge at the site; concrete bridge pillars remain.

History Snapshot

The memorial is on the site of the Elmira prison camp where 2,963 Confederate soldiers died. The monument includes maps, photos and a history of the camp. Also, learn about a bold tunnel escape and John W. Jones, the man who buried the Confederate soldiers in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Grove Street Boat Launch

City of Elmira

GPS Coordinates: 42.082952, -76.817109

From the Civil War Memorial, drive east on Winsor Avenue and turn right where it ends at Grove Street to access the boat launch.

The site has a picnic pavilion, a solar-powered weather station, a concrete boat ramp, extensive parking, good fishing and scenic views. The site also hosts several community events.



History Snapshot

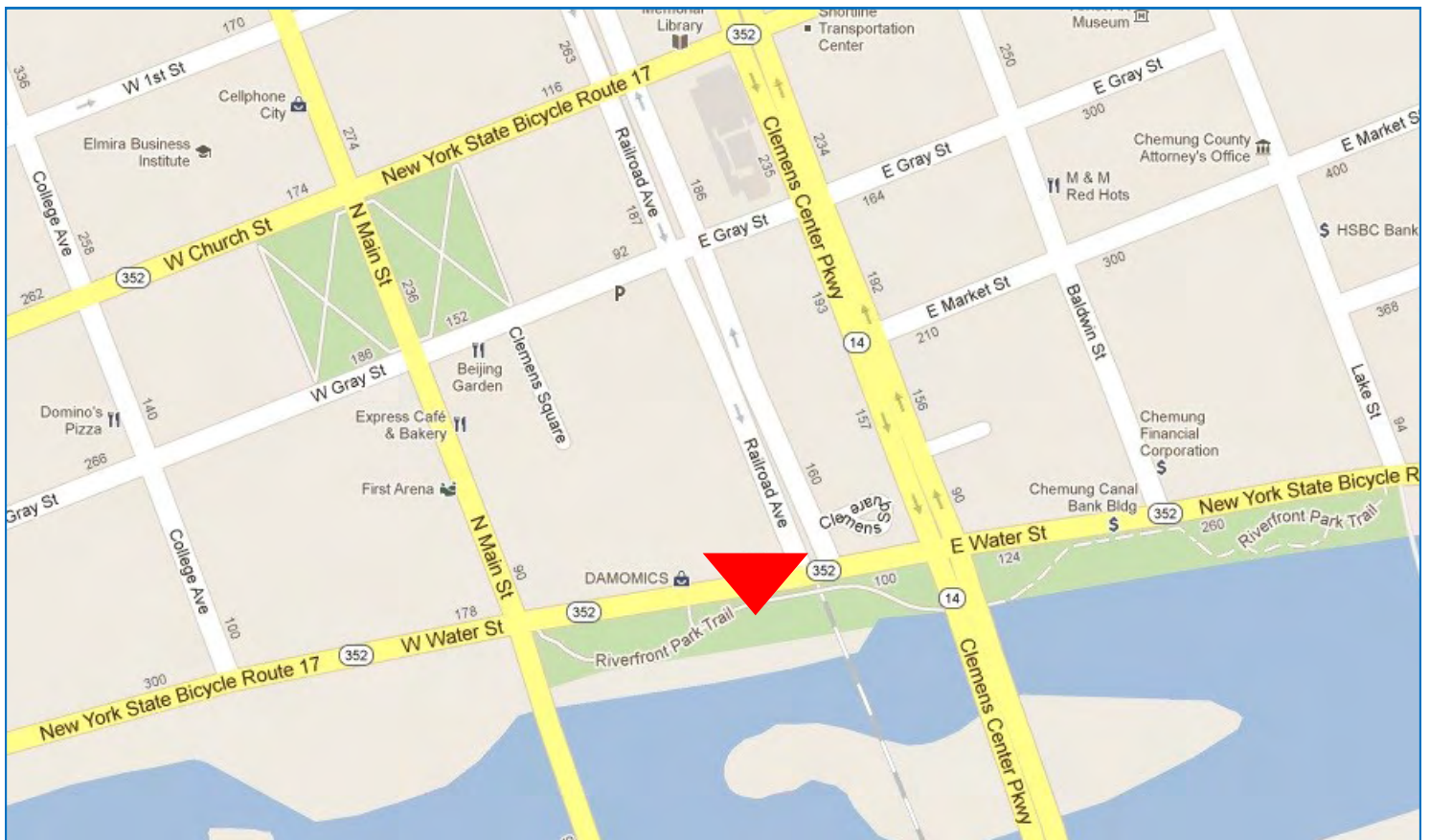
The kiosk recalls the impact of the prison camp on the river.

Mark Twain Riverfront Park

City of Elmira

GPS Coordinates: 42.087815, -76.803823

From the Grove Street Boat Launch, return to West Water Street. Turn right and drive .7 miles to the Mark Twain Riverfront Park. On the right, just before the railroad bridge, is a wooden observation deck that offers a view of the river and gull island, where seagulls flock and nest.



History Snapshot

The park is named for one of America's favorite writers, who married an Elmira woman, Olivia Langdon, in 1870. Mark Twain, who is buried in Elmira's Woodlawn Cemetery, penned some of his greatest novels during his many summer stays with his in-laws on East Hill overlooking the river.

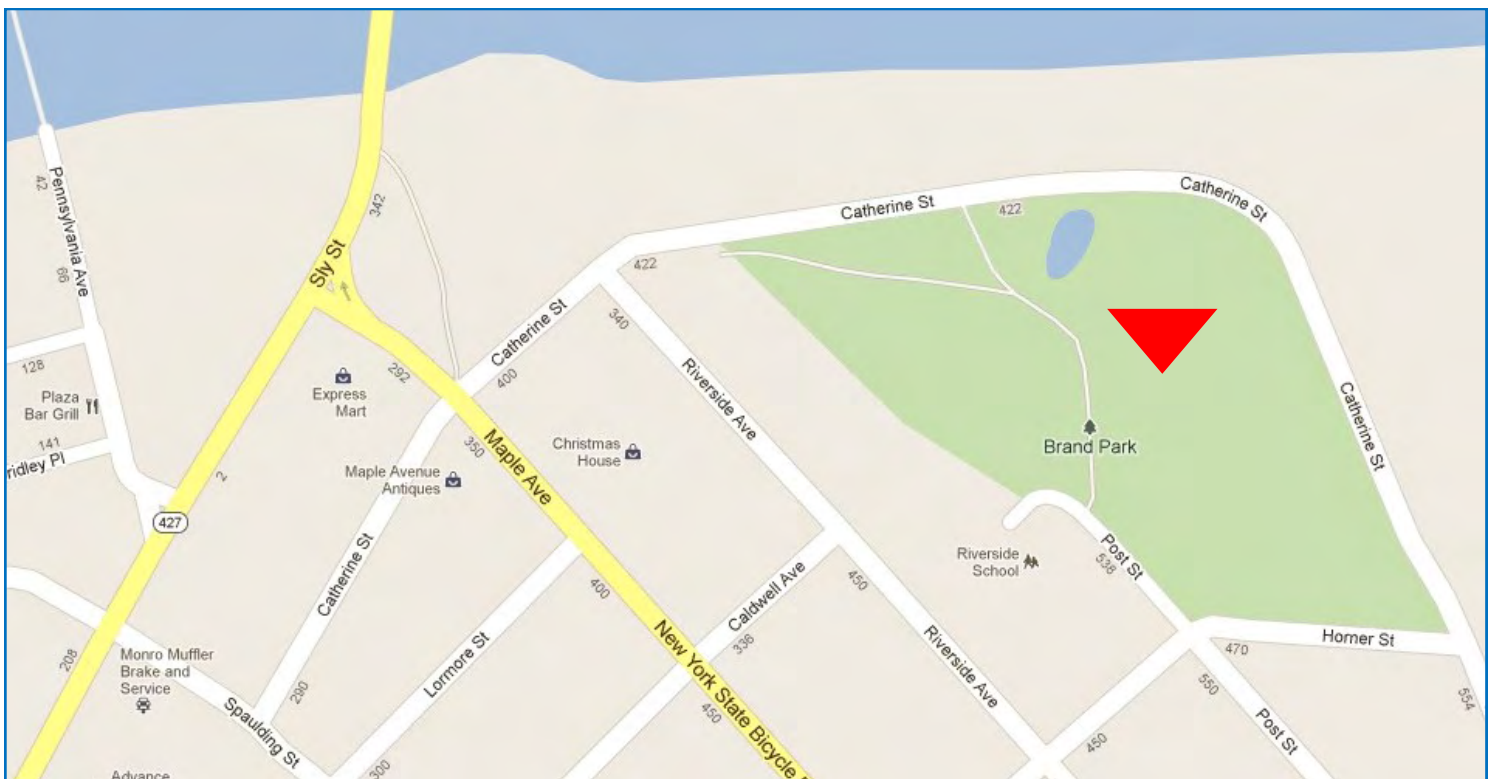
Brand Park

City of Elmira

GPS Coordinates: 42.086319, -76.797070

From Mark Twain Riverfront Park, drive east on East Water Street — past the Chemung Valley History Museum — for about .4 miles, then turn right onto the Madison Avenue Bridge. On the Southside of the bridge, turn left on Maple Avenue and make an immediate left onto Catherine Street.

The park has a bandstand, picnic tables and benches, and hosts summer concerts and other events. A historic marker at the northwest corner of the park recalls a ferry that operated near the park from about 1800 to 1824 and preceded the first bridge.



History Snapshot

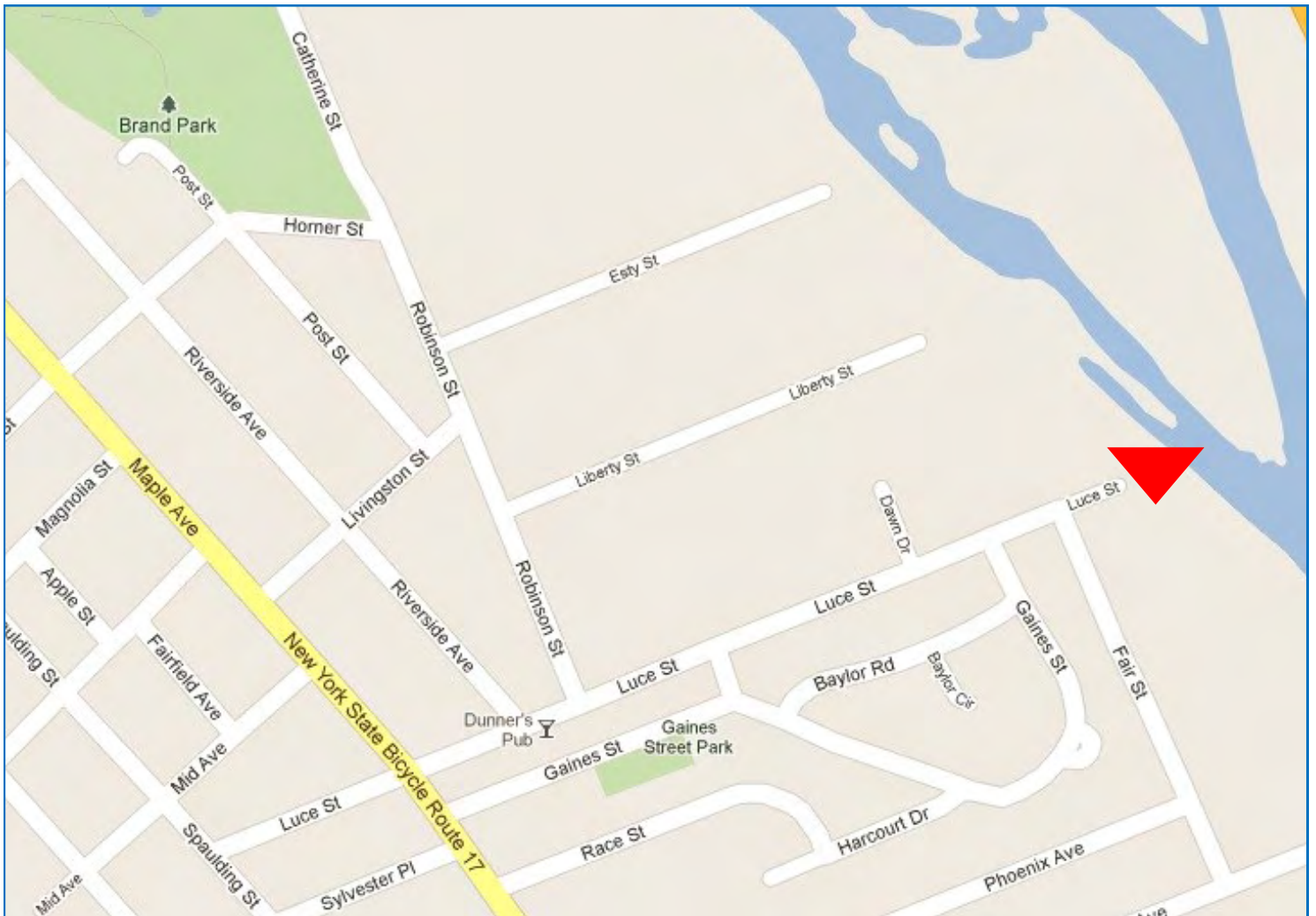
Brand Park is named for the Brand family, one of the first families in the 19th century to build homes on Maple Avenue. John Brand Sr. started growing tobacco on land between Maple Avenue and the Chemung River in 1859.

Dunn Field Boat Launch

City of Elmira

GPS Coordinates: 42.081184, -76.779655

From Brand Park, take Catherine Street back to Maple Avenue and turn left. Drive about .5 miles and turn left onto Luce Street. The boat launch is at the end of the street, past the entrance to the Dunn Field baseball stadium. The site has a concrete boat ramp and a handicapped-accessible fishing platform.



History Snapshot

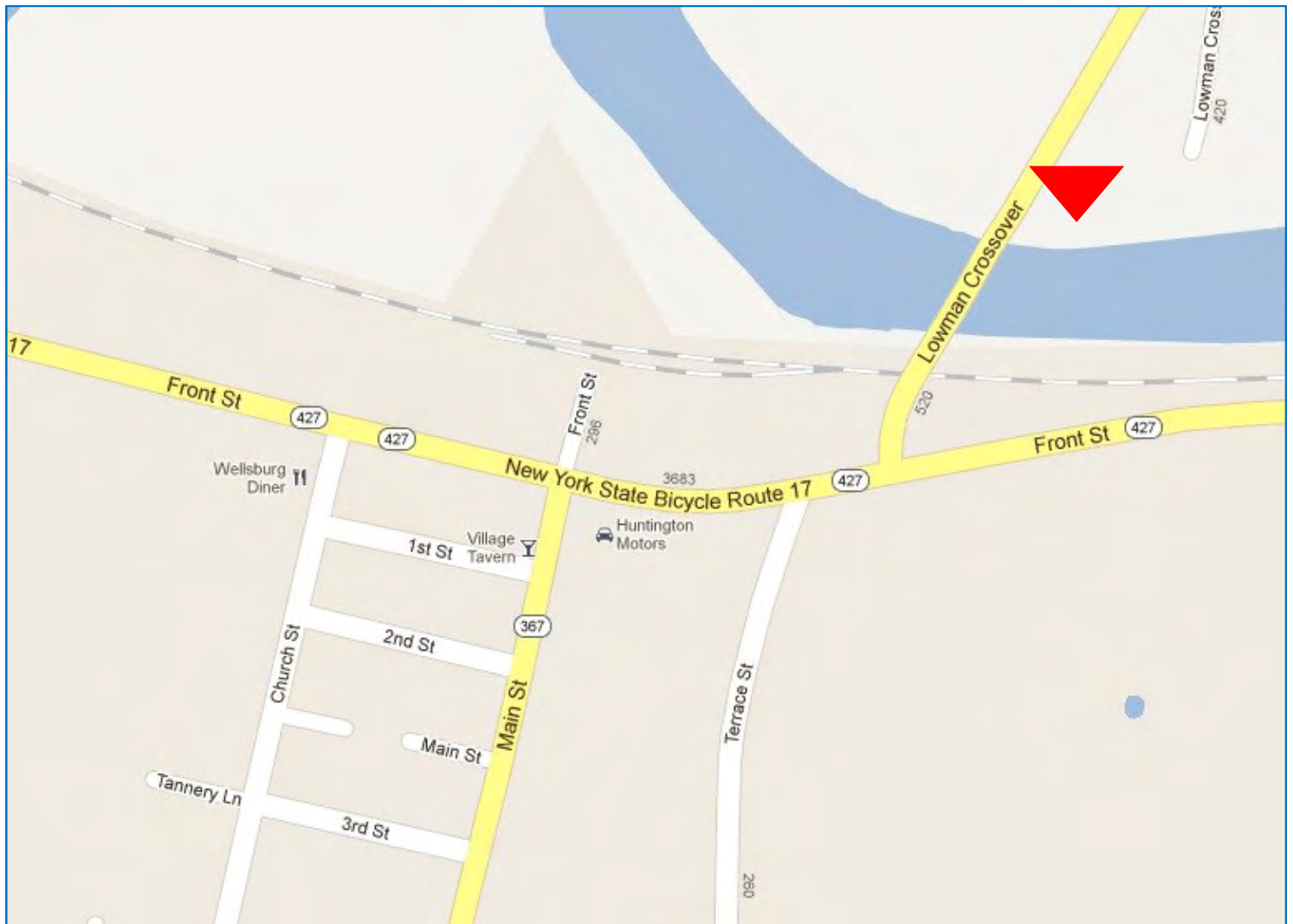
The kiosk recalls the history of Dunn Field, which was first named Interstate Fairgrounds in 1889. The city-owned park has a long history as a minor league baseball stadium.

Toll Bridge Park Boat Launch

Town of Ashland

GPS Coordinates: 42.017632, -76.723098

From Dunn Field, take Luce Street back to Maple Avenue and turn left. Maple Avenue becomes Route 427. Drive almost 5 miles to the Wellsburg village line, then another mile to the junction with county Route 8 (Lowman Crossover). Turn left onto Route 8, then take the first right into the park. The site includes a concrete boat ramp, picnic tables, grills, a pavilion and portable toilets.



History Snapshot

The kiosk recalls the role the Chemung and Susquehanna rivers played as a supply line for Native Americans and Colonial settlements in the mid-1700s and its role in the 1779 Sullivan Campaign during the Revolutionary War.

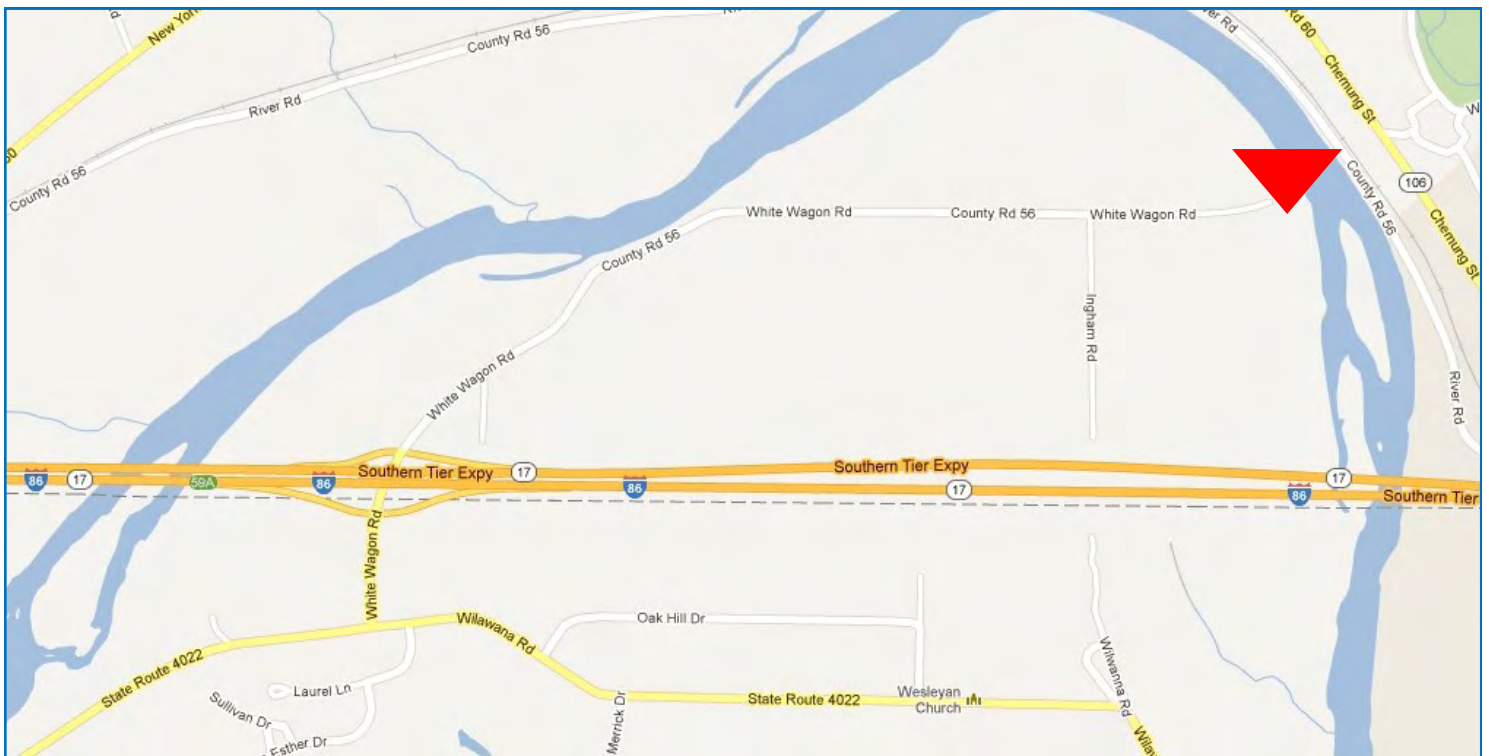
White Wagon Road Boat Launch

Town of Chemung

GPS Coordinates: 42.007126, -76.577134

Exit Toll Bridge Park, turn left, then left again onto Route 427 (also known as Wilawana Road). The road dips into Pennsylvania but returns to New York state. Drive east just over 8 miles to White Wagon Road and turn left.

Cross over state Route 17/Interstate 86, go past the CVS Distribution Center entrance and continue .8 miles. The boat launch is on the left and features a concrete boat ramp, bench, pavilion and grills. O'Brien's Inn, on the hillside to the east, offers a spectacular view of the valley.



To return to Elmira ...

From the boat launch, turn right onto White Wagon Road, then take the state Route 17/ Interstate 86 West ramp toward Elmira. It is about 15 miles to the Elmira exit and about a half-mile from the exit ramp to the Chemung Valley History Museum on East Water Street, where you can learn more about the river.

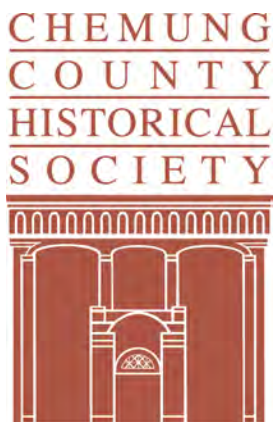
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Writers: Brian Pappalardo, Gary Packard and Amy Wilson

Editors: Brian Pappalardo, Bob Jamieson and Jim Pfiffer

Designer: Ruth Harper

Photography: Steve Brinthaupt and Jim Pfiffer



Chemung Valley History Museum Chemung County Historical Society

The historical society operates the museum six days a week at 415 E. Water St., Elmira, NY 14901. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The museum is closed Sundays.

To contact us, call the museum at (607) 734-4167 or email cchs@chemungvalleymuseum.org.

To donate or become a member, go to www.chemungvalleymuseum.org and click the donation or membership buttons on the top of the page.

Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

You can help the Friends of the Chemung River Watershed continue its public education about river history and our efforts to protect and promote our waterways by making a tax-free donation to our organization.

You can send us a check by mail to:

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Elmira, NY 14901

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