



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE ONONDAGA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Guests at Walter Listman's picnic at Three Rivers outside of the Three Rivers Hotel, c. 1900.

# It's Summer – Let's Go To Three Rivers!

| BY THOMAS HUNTER

Three Rivers — a hamlet in the town of Clay at the Oneida, Seneca and Oswego rivers — has been a gathering place for representatives of the Haudenosaunee, French and British nations, as well as countless Onondaga County residents. Patrick McGee, who saw the area as a British POW during the American Revolution, built a log cabin there after the war. Mary Eno, one of Three Rivers' first businesswomen, opened a store and hotel in 1815. Fred H. Barnum opened Barnum's Hotel, a popular summer resort, in 1889. It drew crowds for its banquets and parties and for its shore dinners that highlighted fried frogs legs, Oneida Lake pike, Long Island duck, clam chowder and a pleth-

ora of desserts. Patrons were often seen hoofing it late into the night on the hotel's dance floor. In the 20th century, guests danced to the Pennsylvanians or Cab Calloway, jammed with trumpeter Louis Armstrong, or sang along with Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Paul Anka and Ray Charles. But since a fire destroyed the iconic Three Rivers Inn in 1973, little activity has occurred. Since 2010, the town of Clay has had a plan to revitalize the economic and environmental situation of Three Rivers so that it might thrive once again.

THOMAS HUNTER IS CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS FOR THE ONONDAGA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM.



Thinking about exploring New York and its history this summer? The OHA Gift Gallery has books about the state's natural wonders and historical places that will inspire your summertime activities. And, if you're an armchair traveler looking for a good book about local history, you are certain to find something as well. The Gift Gallery is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. For more information, call 315-428-1864, extension 321, or go to [cnyhistory.org](http://cnyhistory.org).

