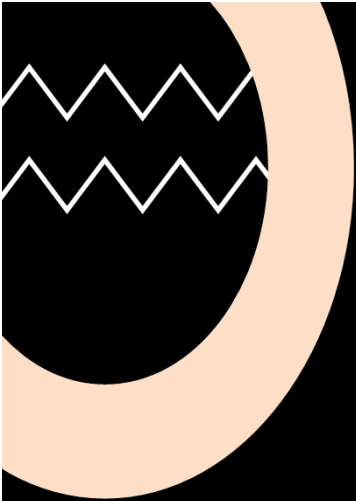




Tina Sansone

**Past & Present Pathways
TN Genealogical Society**

WELCOME!



The Orphan Train



The trains, and their destinations, were a mystery to the orphans on board.



"I had the whole future ahead of me, and I didn't know what to expect."

-- Elliot Bobo

Eighty years ago, Elliot Bobo was taken from his alcoholic father's home, given a small cardboard suitcase, and put on board an "orphan train" bound for Arkansas. Bobo never saw his father again. He was one of tens of thousands of neglected and orphaned children who over a 75-year period were uprooted from the city and sent by train to farming communities to start new lives with new families. Elliot Bobo's remarkable story is part of *The Orphan Trains*.

“The use of the term "orphan train" didn't come into use until the 1960s.

According to Charles Loring Brace, most of the children were American born of immigrant parents.”

Orphan Trains

From about 1850 through the early twentieth century, thousands of children were transferred from the overcrowded orphanages and homes in the large cities in the northeastern United States, to live with families on farms throughout the middle West.

The name orphan train originates with the railroad trains that transported the children to their new homes. While some of the children were orphans, many of them had one or even two living parents. In those cases, the child's parents were unable or unwilling to care for them. Other parents believed their children would have a better life if sent to a caring family in the farmlands of the west. Many of the parents and children were immigrants who found life in America harder than they anticipated.

Orphan Trains continued

The goal of the orphan trains was to provide the children with a better life - many had fended for themselves on the streets of New York. Many were not babies, but were in their teens when sent West. The results were mixed. In some cases, as adults, the orphan train riders were very positive about their adoptive family, felt they were treated well, loved, and given a better chance in life. However, in many cases, the children were taken into a new home only for the work they were expected to do. Some were mistreated. In many cases, siblings were separated from each other and consequently, from the only family they knew.

Illinois became the new home of many of the children who rode the Orphan Trains. Although Orphan Trains originated in other eastern cities, this list of references focuses on three of the biggest agencies from New York City

New York Juvenile Asylum

Children's Aid Society of New York

New York Foundling Hospital (Roman Catholic)

- Living conditions in these neighborhoods provided the perfect environment for pestilence & disease.
- Children lost one or both parents to typhoid, dysentery, and small pox.
- Dangers of work
 - factory & dock workers - injuries
 - Frequent layoffs
- No programs like unemployment or workmen's compensation
 - You don't work, You don't get paid!!!

- By 1853, NYC filled with homeless kids
 - 20,000-30,000 roamed the streets
 - Orphaned
 - Abandoned by parent(s)
 - Ran away from abusive parents/guardians

Survival Skills

- Sold Newspapers, Coal & Rags
 - Pick Pockets
 - Begging
 - Singing on street corners
 - Prostitution
-
- These kids had to fend for themselves!
 - Some were only 4 or 5, maybe younger with a teen caring for them.

Reverend Charles Loring Brace

- Well educated
- Ordained as clergyman
- Worked with charities of New York
- 26 years old felt called to another calling
 - Noticed the kids on the street with no homes
 - Wanted to make a difference
 - Solicited the prominent members of community for financial support

Cont....

- Told them without proper guidance, would end up turning to life of crime & depravity
- Their support would make the neighborhood's safer in the long run
- Children's Aid Society of New York (CAS) 1853

Children's Aid Society of NY

- Neighborhood Lodging
 - Food, Shelter & Clothes
 - Bible
 - Learn a skill – industrial schools
 - Girls – Housekeepers/Maids
-
- The above was a good start, but too many kids and they needed a home...

- Why not place these children who needed homes & guidance with rural families who needed help with the farm chores?
- Take advantage of the Railroad
- First company of kids went to Dowagiac, Michigan in September 1854.
- 46 kids & 2 agents

Who were these children?

- Parents who turned their kids over hoping they would get a better life
- Children from overcrowded orphanages
- Prisons
- Volunteers from the streets
- NYC Child Welfare Dept turned over some of their kids
- Some parents changed their minds, but no good record keeping on the kids, some had their names changed, no record of where they were even sent in some cases.

Emigration Dept of the Childrens Aid Society

- Agents organized a route
- Advertize thru newspapers & banners
- Organize prominent people to approve families wishing to take in a child
- These families could speak and “inspect” these kids before taking them in
- Kids had a “say” if they wanted to go...
 - No food or lodging
 - Abusive homes
 - Some may even have been kidnapped?

Homes For Children WANTED

A Company of Homeless Children from the East Will
Arrive at

McPherson, Friday, September 15.

These children are of various ages and of both sexes, having been thrown friendless upon the world. They come under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society, of New York. They are well disciplined, having come from various orphanages. The citizens of this community are asked to assist the agent in finding good homes for them. Persons taking these children must be recommended by the local committee. They must treat the children in every way as members of the family, sending them to school, church, Sabbath school and properly clothe them until they are 18 years old. Protestant children placed in Protestant homes and Catholic children in Catholic homes. The following well known citizens have agreed to act as a local committee to aid the agents in securing homes:

Dr. Heaston	H. A. Rowland	C. W. Bachelor
F. A. Vaniman	W. J. Krehbiel	K. Sorensen

Applications must be made to and endorsed by the local committee.

An address will be given by the agents. Come and see the children and hear the address. Distribution will take place at

Opera House, Friday, September 15

at 10:00 a. m. and 2:00 p. m.

Notices like this were handed out to announce the arrival of an Orphan Train.

Reads as follows: These children are of various ages and of both sexes, having been thrown friendless upon the world. They come under the auspices of the CAS of New York. They are well disciplined, having come from various orphanages. The citizens of this community are asked to assist the agent in finding good homes for them. Persons taking these children must be recommended by the local committee. They must treat the children in every way as members of the family, sending them to school, church, Sabbath school and properly clothe them until they are 18 years old. Protestant children placed in Protestant homes and Catholic children in Catholic homes. The following well known citizens have agreed to act as local committee to aid the agents in securing homes:

Cont....

- Families had to provide food, clothing, an education and nurture the kids until they became “of age”
- Write the CAS periodically to tell about the child’s progress
- At least once a year CAS would visit the homes
- When a boy reached full age, he would receive \$100 and a horse to start his adulthood.

- Last official train left for Sulphur Springs, Texas in 1929
- A child in almost every state of the Union
- Between 1854 and 1929 an estimated 250,000 orphaned, abandoned, homeless children and poor families were placed in homes
- Most states passes laws banning transport of children across state lines for adoption or foster placement
- CAS continues today to better the lives of under-privilege kids & families in NYC

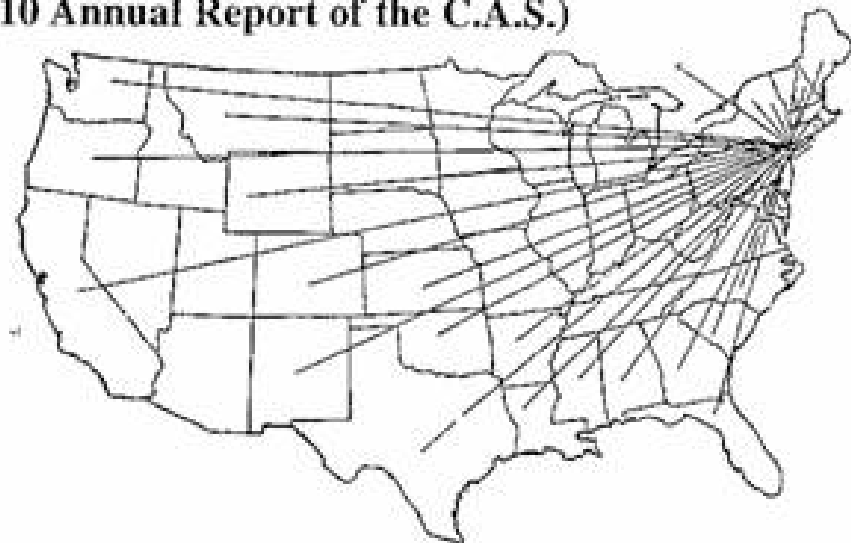
Distribution of Children

Numbers of children and poor families placed out from 1854 until 1910 by the Children's Aid Society (Taken from 1910 Annual Report of the C.A.S.)

From 1854 until 1910, the New York Children's Aid Society had taken 106,245 children and poor families scattered among the states listed. The "Free Home Placing Out" continued for 19 more years, ending in the early 1930's. During these last years many thousands more were sent out. This chart does not reflect children placed by:

- New York Foundling Hospital
- New England Home For Little Wanderers
- New York Juvenile Asylum
- Chicago Home Society
- Minnesota Home Society
- Salvation Army

and many other placing agencies. The total may be as high as 200,000 placed, giving us an estimated number of 2,000,000 descendants of Orphan Train Riders living today.



Alabama	39	Idaho	52	Massachusetts	375	New Mexico	1	South Dakota	43
Arkansas	136	Illinois	9,172	Michigan	5,326	New Hampshire	136	Tennessee	233
California	168	Indian Territory	59	Minnesota	3,258	North Carolina	144	Texas	1,327
Canada	566	Indiana	3,955	Mississippi	240	North Dakota	975	Utah	31
Colorado	1,563	Iowa	6,675	Missouri	6,088	Ohio	7,272	Vermont	262
Connecticut	1,588	Kansas	4,150	Montana	83	Oklahoma	95	Virginia	1,634
Delaware	833	Kentucky	212	Nebraska	3,442	Oregon	90	Washington	231
Dist. Of Columbia	172	Louisiana	79	Nevada	59	Pennsylvania	2,679	West Virginia	149
Florida	400	Maine	43	New Jersey	4,977	Rhode Island	340	Wisconsin	2,750
Georgia	317	Maryland	563	New York	33,053	South Carolina	191	Wyoming	19

NEW YORK CITY

New York Foundling Home

the Foundling

- Est. 1869 by Sister Irene Fitzgibbon of the Sisters of Charity
- Mission: to rescue infants from abandonment & death
- Safe place to drop off infants with anonymity and not leave in an alley or throw in the river
- Stayed until they were 2 years old, then placed with Catholic families

Cont.

- Parents could make requests to hair color, eye color, sex, etc.
- Tag placed on toddler with their name, birth date, a number and name of family they were being sent to.
- Other programs
 - New York Juvenile Asylum
 - Boston Home for Little Wanderers

These organization had one thing in common...

They used the rail system as its mode of transportation!



The Children

- Each had their unique story, but many refuse to talk about their previous life
- Many were discouraged by the families they were placed with in discussing their past
- Being an orphan held a stigma in some places
- Even as adults they did not talk about where they came from, if they even remembered

Mary Ellen Johnson

Springdale, Arkansas

- 75 years of the Orphan Train slowly fading away with their stories not being told!
- Mary Ellen was helping research for a County history book when she came across the newspaper story about kids dropped off in their area
- She wanted to try to reunite some of these kids and arranged the first reunion
 - Arkansas Orphan Train Riders' Reunion
 - Expected 25, but more than 100 arrived!

Orphan Train Heritage Society of America

- Thru Mary's efforts, the Orphan Train Heritage Society of America (OTHSA) was incorporated in 1987
- Under her leadership, 5 Volumes of individual stories were published
- An Archive containing data of more than 6,000 children collected

- OTHSA moved headquarters to Concordia, Kansas in 2004 (right before Mary's retirement)
- 2007 opened a museum using a renovated Union Pacific Depot and housed at the Morgan/Dowell Research Center
- Preservation of these children's stories will continue

Outcome....

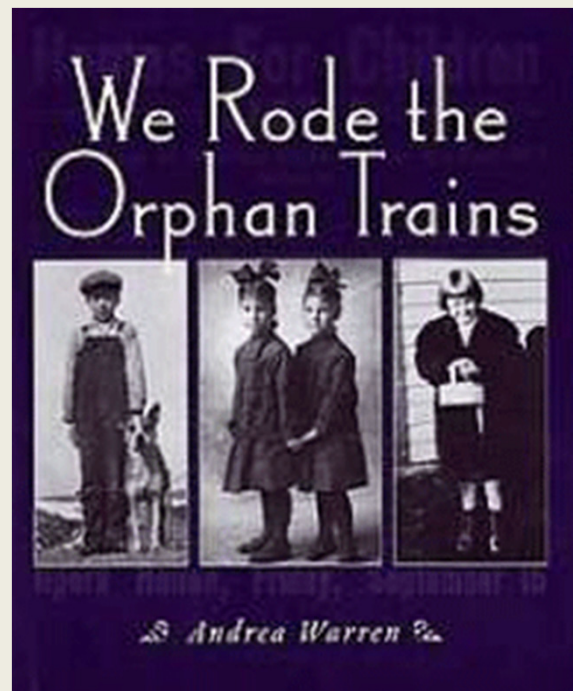
- Some placements successful
- Some disastrous
- Some abused & mistreated
- Some received and loved by their families

Most that were interviewed are grateful for having been sent “out west” because they believe that the circumstances into which they were placed were better than those from which they came.

What became of kids?

- Governors
- Judges
- Journalists
- Merchants
- Farmers
- Outstanding citizens
- Loving parents & spouses, kind neighbors

“They came by train and helped settle America. They deserve to be remembered!”



Children's Aid Society
(Placing –Out Department)

East 22nd Street, New York

United Charities Building

*I, the undersigned _____
hereby agree to provide for _____
now of the age of _____ years, until the said boy shall reach the age of 18
years, according to the following terms and conditions, and with the full understanding that the Society
reserves the right to remove the child previous to legal adoption if at any time the circumstances of the
home become such as in the judgment of the agent are injurious to the physical, mental or moral well-being
of the child.*

*The terms and conditions for the retention of the boy in my family being as follows: To care for him in
sickness and health, to send him to school during the entire free school year until he reaches the age of 14
years, and thereafter during the winter months at least, until he reaches the age of 16 years; also to have
him attend Church and Sunday School when convenient, and to retain him as a member of my family until
he reaches the age of 17 years, and thereafter for the final year, until he is 18 years old, to pay the boy
monthly wages in addition to his maintenance, the amount thereof to be previously determined after
consultation with the Society's local agent and his approval. In case he proves unsatisfactory, I agree to
notify the society and pending his removal, to keep him a reasonable length of time after such notice has
been given. I agree, moreover, to use my best endeavor then and at all times, to detain him, should he try to
leave me, until the Society can take steps for his removal. I agree to keep him at all times as well supplied
with clothing as he was when I received him.*

I agree to write to the Society at least once a year, and should I change my address I will notify the Society.

Witness, _____

Date, _____

HAVE THIS NOTICE AND RECEIPT IN YOUR HAND WHEN TRAIN ARRIVES

Common Primary Sources

- Diary Entries
- Magazine or Newspaper Articles
- Photographs
- Audio and Video Recordings
- Memoirs
- Speeches
- Interviews

Secondary Sources

- A source written after the event occurred
- Combines research of many primary sources
- Often a published work

Common Secondary Sources

- Classroom textbook
- Essays
- Biographies
- Documentaries
- Any books written about a period or event in history

Analyzing Secondary Sources

- Benefit of secondary sources
 - Author can combine several points of view
- Disadvantage of secondary sources
 - The author is not an eyewitness

Prime Time

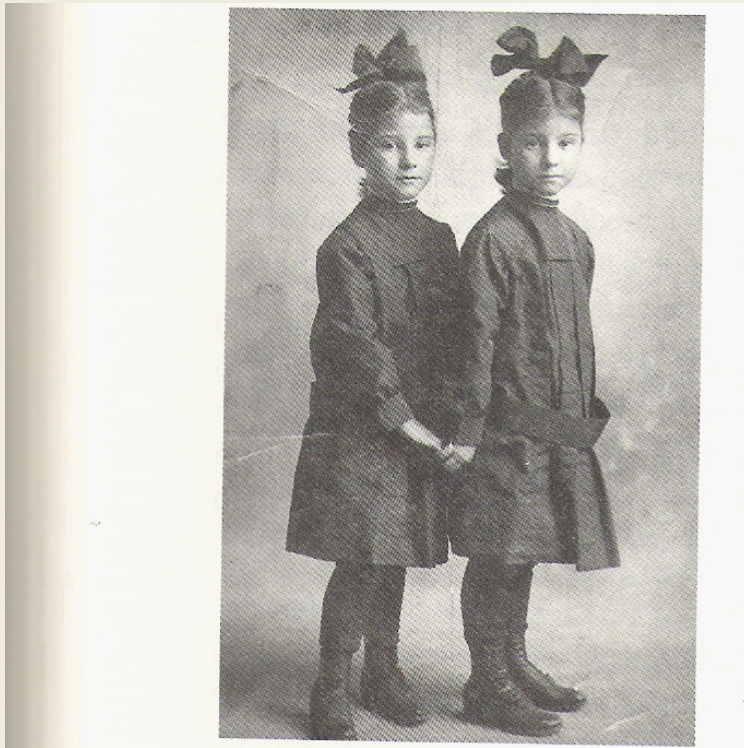
- Here are two primary resource photos from the Library of Congress online “American Memory” collection entitled, “Immigrants on Atlantic Liner” and “Mulberry Street, New York City” from around 1900.

Do you have an Orphan Train
Ancestor?

[Research Registry](#)

Two Orphan's Story

- Nellie S. and Nettie M. Crook



Nettie Crook

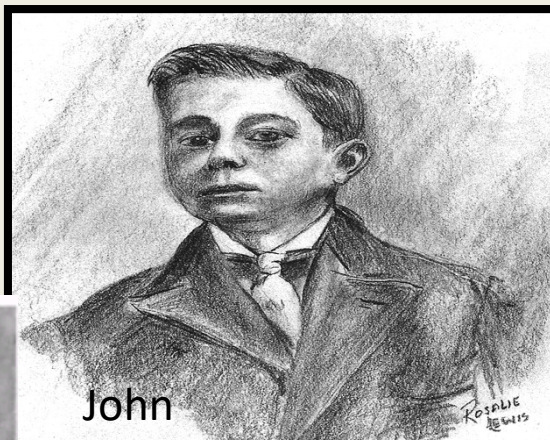
- **Nettie on left and Nellie on right. Taken in McPherson in January 1913 when they were age seven.**
- **Their father was a farmer and heavy equipment operator. He worked on the Erie Canal and other places in New York and was gone from home.**
- **Their mother married at 16, and was home sick a lot for her family. She would leave the children to go home to Burlington, Vermont.**
- **They were identical twins, but were also “mirror imaging”. Nettie is right-handed, Nellie is left. Nettie’s curls go clockwise and Nellie are counterclockwise swirls. Many times when they were separated and longing for each other, they would look in the mirror and see the other girl.**
- **In 1910 they were living in NY. Nellie remembered the day when her, her sister, and their brother were taken away. She said, “Mother had Nettie on one knee and me on the other. I said ‘Mama why are you crying?’ ‘I’m not crying,’ she said and she was trying to smile. But just then the man came with the dray wagon to take us to the orphanage”.**
- **They were placed in the Kingston Orphan’s Home. They were told to break all ties with the past and given new birth dates. Later, they tried to find their records at the Orphanage, but were told they burned in a fire.**
- **They left on Sept. 11, 1911. Leon was left behind.**
- **In Kansas City, they were put on a bench to sing “Jesus Loves Me This I Know” to draw a crowd. They were escorted by Anna Hill.**
- **In McPherson, most of the children were taken, but the girls didn’t want to be separated, so Hill took them to Canton KS.**
- **Chapin family. Mrs. Chapin was not nice. After 16 months, Hill came to get them. Darrah family.**



Marguerite & Teddy



Jean



John



Mary Jane after arriving
in Nybracki in 1912, age 2 years, 2 months



Irma Craig



Sources

- National Genealogy Society Magazine, July-September 2007, “They came by train: Orphan train riders”, Becky Higgins
- Becky is from Illinois and a genealogist
- In 2007, was President of Orphan Train Heritage Society of America, APG and Speakers Guild.
- She lectured about the Orphan Train
- Had a great-grandfather, William Sydney Emay, that was an early orphan rider at the age of 8 in 1862. He went from New York to Rush County, Indiana.

Resources cont...

- Brace, Charles Loring. The Dangerous Classes of New York & Twenty Years' Work Among Them. 1872.
- Burrows, Edwin G. & Mike Wallace. Gotham, A History of New York City to 1898.
- [Orphan Train of Kansas](#)

Resources cont...

- Trammell, Rebecca S. “Orphan Train Myths and Legal Reality.” *The Modern American*, Spring 2009, 3-13.
- Rebecca Trammell
 - Dolly & Homer Hand Law Library Director, Director of Electronic Education, and Professor of Law
 - Advanced Legal Research in Elder Law, Advanced Legal Research, Cyber Law Seminar, Research and Writing II

Genealogy

- [Cyndi's List - Orphan Trains](#)
- [IA Gen Web Orphan Train Project](#)
- [Orphan Train of Nebraska](#)
 - Has obits...

Websites

[Orphan Train Heritage Society of America, Inc.](#)

[National Orphan Train Complex](#)

[Orphan Train Riders History \(by Howard Hurd\)](#)

[Reverend H.D. Clarke \(Children's Aid Society Agent\)](#)

[Transcript of "The American Experience" PBS documentary](#)

[Orphan Trains of Kansas](#)

[Children's Aid Society](#)

[Orphan Trains to Wisconsin](#)

[Orphan Train Riders Blog](#)

WANTED

Homes for Children

A company of homeless children from the East will arrive at
TROY, MO., ON FRIDAY, FEB. 25th, 1910

These children are of various ages and of both sexes, having been thrown friendless upon the world. They come under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society of New York. They are well educated, having come from the various orphanages. The citizens of this community are asked to assist the agent in finding good homes for them. Persons taking these children must be recommended by the local committee. They must treat the children in every way as members of the family, sending them to school, church, Sabbath school and properly clothe them until they are 17 years old. The following well-known citizens have agreed to act as a local committee to aid the agents in securing homes:

O. H. Avery E. B. Woolfolk H. F. Childers
Wm. Young G. W. Colbert

Applications must be made to, and endorsed by, the local committee.

An address will be made by the agent. Come and see the children and hear the address. Distribution will take place at the

Opera House Friday, Feb. 25, at 1:30 p. m.

B. W. TICE and MISS A. L. HILL, Agents, 105 E. 22nd St., New York City.
REV. J. W. SWAN, University Place, Nebraska, Western Agent.



It's Depot Days in Concordia!

June 7, 8 & 9, 2013

**Here are some of the things
we hope to offer when you attend:**

-
- ⤷ Cream Can Dinner
 - ⤷ Ice Cream Social
 - ⤷ Free Band Concert at the
Orphan Train Depot
Museum
 - ⤷ Model Train Display
 - ⤷ Historical Reenactments
 - ⤷ Games & Activities for
Children
 - ⤷ Genealogy Presentations
 - ⤷ Craft & Food Booths
 - ⤷ Quilt Show
 - ⤷ Depot Dash Fun Run
 - ⤷ Historic Homes Tour
 - ⤷ Tea Time & Suitcase
Presentations
 - ⤷ Car Show
 - ⤷ Poker Run
 - ⤷ Entertainment
by "Scenic Roots"

All Aboard!



Homeless Children.

THE CHILDRENS' HOME SOCIETY

HAS PROVIDED

2990 Children With Homes, in Families.

All children received under the care of this Association are of **SPECIAL PROMISE** in intelligence and health, and are in age from one month to twelve years, and are sent **FREE** to those receiving them, on ninety days trial, **UNLESS** a special contract is otherwise made.

Homes are wanted for the following children:

8 BOYS Ages, 10, 6 and 4. Brothers, all fine, healthy, good looks. Of good parentage. Brothers 6 and 4 years; English parents, blondes. Very promising, 2 years old, blonde, fine looking, healthy, American; has had his foot straightened. Walks now O. K. Six years old, dark hair and eyes, good looking and intelligent, American.

10 BABES Boys and girls from one month to three months. One boy baby, has fine head and face, black eyes and hair, fat and pretty; three months old. Send two stamps.

REV. M. B. V. VAN ARSDALE,
General Superintendent.

Room 48, 280 La Salle Street, CHICAGO.



HOMES WANTED

—FOR—
CHILDREN

—A—
Company of Orphan Children

of different ages in charge of an agent will arrive at your town on date herein mentioned. The object of the coming of these children is to find homes in your midst, especially among farmers, where they may enjoy a happy and wholesome family life, where kind care, good example and moral training will fit them for a life of self-support and usefulness. They come under the auspices of the New York Children's Aid Society. They have been tested and found to be well-meaning boys and girls anxious for homes.

The conditions are that these children shall be properly clothed, treated as members of the family, given proper school advantages and remain in the family until they are eighteen years of age. At the expiration of the time specified it is hoped that arrangements can be made whereby they may be able to remain in the family, or definitely. The society retains the right to remove a child at any time for just cause and agrees to remove any found unsatisfactory after being notified. Remember the time and place. All are invited. Come out and hear the address. Applications may be made to any one of the following well-known citizens, who have agreed to act as local committee to aid the agent in securing homes.

N. W. ROWELL, H. F. SPURGEON, DR. J. W. LAUDER, L. W. McLENNAN,
B. T. NIX, C. F. SANDER, G. L. GARNUM, A. T. HURROWS.

The Distribution Will Take Place

At the Opera House, Afton, Iowa, on
Thursday, April 5, 1906,

At 11:30 p. m.

Office, 101 E. 10th Street,
New York City.

B. W. TICE and H. D. CLARKE, Agents

DNA

- [Family Tree DNA - Orphan Train](#)
- [Orphan Train DNA Project](#)
- [Orphan Train the movie 1979](#)

Thank you for coming!

Tina Sansone

TN Genealogical Society

www.tngs.org

tinahsansone@gmail.com