

England came principally from the counties of Suffolk, Northampton, Kent and Lincolnshire.”

But this was only the beginning of the process. First under the initiative of individual ratepayers and then under the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which set up a whole new framework of poor relief, including support for emigration, the trickle of poor emigrants became a deluge. And it is not to be supposed that all those who according to official statistics emigrated on their own resources were finding the money themselves. The MP for Kent, T L Hodges, told a House of Lords Committee on the State of the Poor Laws in 1831 that in about 1825 there were between 30 and 80 persons out of work in his parish of Benenden and that he had advanced money at 4% interest to allow 149 people out of a population of 1,746 to emigrate to North America in the course of two years. “As soon as we had settled among ourselves the mode in which the money should be advanced and repaid ... nearly the whole population [*of those who went?*] volunteered instantly”. He added that no help was received from the British Government.⁵

As mentioned above, Northamptonshire was one of the four counties which featured prominently in the Quebec statistics for immigration in 1831. Some evidence of this can be found in local Northamptonshire records. In Croughton’s Vestry Book in the Northamptonshire Record Office is a reference as follows: “1831 February 20 at a vestry held this day it was ordered that the sum of £100 be borrowed for the purpose of sending some Paupers to America to be paid off in four years from next Lady Day”.

The Long Buckby Vestry Book has a somewhat longer entry for 1830, recording that at a vestry held in the parish church and adjourned to the Horseshoe Inn in February and March 1830 for the purpose of adopting a plan to convey paupers to America it was agreed that certain parishioners should have their passage paid and an allowance towards the expenses of emigrating. The emigrants were Thomas Dickens, his wife and 3 children; William Dunkley, his wife and 2 children; Thomas Frost, his wife and 3 children; Thomas Fennell, his wife and 1 child; John George, his wife and 1 child; Thomas Russell, his wife and 5 children; and Richard Groom, his wife and 6 children. The money to be found for them amounted in total to £204, made up of contributions to the cost of

⁵ Parliamentary Papers vol VIII 1831, pp 246-9.