

given stipulated that the destiny must be a colony whereas the intended destination was evidently the United States. The Brackley Union chased Kings Sutton for two years to find out whether they were going ahead with their plans and were eventually told that no money had been borrowed.¹³ Robert and Mary Butler from Marston St Lawrence and their five children were among families supported for emigration by their parish and on the application for funds from the Poor Law Commissioners it was noted that they “wish to go to New York if their companions go thither, but that if that is altogether prohibited on account of its not being a British colony they are willing to sail for Quebec”. Their intended destination was Ohio in the United States but in May 1844 they sailed to Montreal (via Quebec).¹⁴ The Brackley Union correspondence also records a statement in 1844 that Finmere agreed to send three poor families to New York to join their relations and to pay them cash on landing there. In spite of assurances to the contrary from the shipping agents, the families were taken to Quebec and thence to Montreal. They had to find their own way, without any money, 400 miles overland to New York, and it took them 15 days.¹⁵

A similar issue was raised in a letter from the Banbury Board of Guardians to the Poor Law Commissioners in March 1836.¹⁶ About 18 months before, John Bennett and William Tasker, both shoemakers of Banbury “absconded and went to New York”, leaving their wives and children behind unprovided for. So Banbury parish had had to look after them. The men were now understood to be doing well in business in New York and had written asking their wives and children to join them. The Board of Guardians wondered whether the British colony rule could be relaxed in those circumstances. No reply is recorded, but it is unlikely that the shoemakers’ families were lucky.

Another limitation on emigration imposed by the Poor Law Commissioners affected women. The Brackley Union Minutes record a request from Eydon parish in March 1849 for permission to pay for Ann Willoughby and her children to join her husband in Canada, and the Poor Law Commissioners’ refusal on the grounds that “it was contrary to their Regulations to sanction any expenditure from the poor rates to

¹³ MH 12 8673, 28 March 1845, February 1846 and October 1847.

¹⁴ MH 12/ 8673 Brackley Union Correspondence 1843-46, February 1844.

¹⁵ MH 12 8673, Brackley Union Correspondence 1843-46, July 1844.

¹⁶ MH 12 9577.