

**Poor Relief problems in a West Sussex parish lead to a radical solution:
38 local people paid to emigrate to America in 1832**

Suggested age groups: KS3, Lifelong learners

Subject areas: History, Literacy, Numeracy, Drama, Art

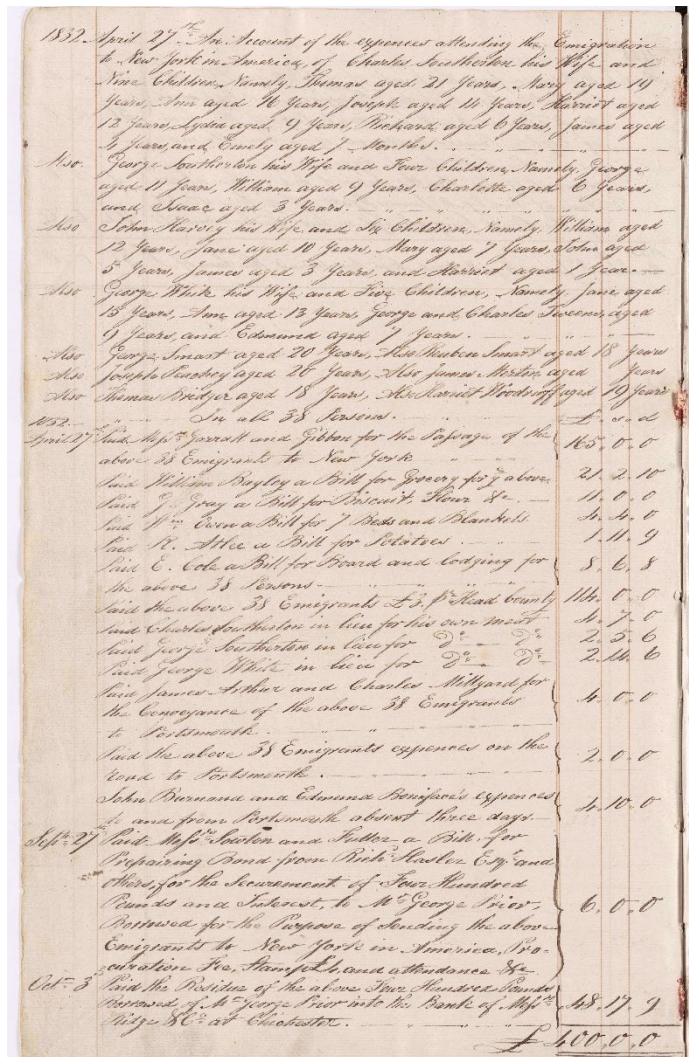
CONTEXT

Below is a summary from [West Sussex Record Office's *Sussex Poor Law Records* printed catalogue \(ref. Lib 5616\)](#):

- Laws passed during the 16th and 17th centuries made the parish responsible for looking after the poor. Each parish (the area served by the parish church) had to appoint an Overseer of the Poor. It was the job of the Overseer to collect money from residents, called the Poor Rate. The resulting money, Poor Relief, was given to local people who needed it.
- In **1601 the Poor Relief Act** was passed and remained in place for over 200 years.
- Each year an Overseer of the Poor was elected. It was this person's responsibility:
 - to set the children and able-bodied poor to work,
 - raise a tax on the parishioners to buy stock and tools for this purpose
 - help those poor paupers unable to work
- Poor children were apprenticed.
- Poor houses for the aged and infirm were built on parish waste ground.
- In the **18th century** various amendments to the laws were passed to address issues caused by growing numbers of poor people and increasing amounts needed to fund their relief.
- The parish rate was paid for by the middle and upper classes raised locally. These classes had growing suspicions that they were paying the poor to be lazy and avoid work.
- On 27th April 1832, the Aldingbourne Parish Rate Book and Vestry Minute Book recorded "An Account of the expenses attending the Emigration to New York in America"

- **Aldingbourne** is a parish 5 miles east of Chichester and just north of of South Bersted. Westergate, Lidsey and Norton were hamlets within Aldingbourne parish.
- In 1801 Aldingbourne had a population of 725 and by 1831 this had grown to 833.
- In 1826 Aldingbourne paid out £305 13s and 6d in Poor Relief. By 1832 this had grown to £386 0s and 0d.
- In the 1830s parishes tried to reduce the burden of rural poverty by assisting poor parishioners to emigrate. Aldingbourne was one such parish.

Aldingbourne Parish Rate Book and Vestry Minute Book folio 220v 1832
 (ref. Par/1/30/1 f220v) all three sources are extracts taken from this single page



Source B :

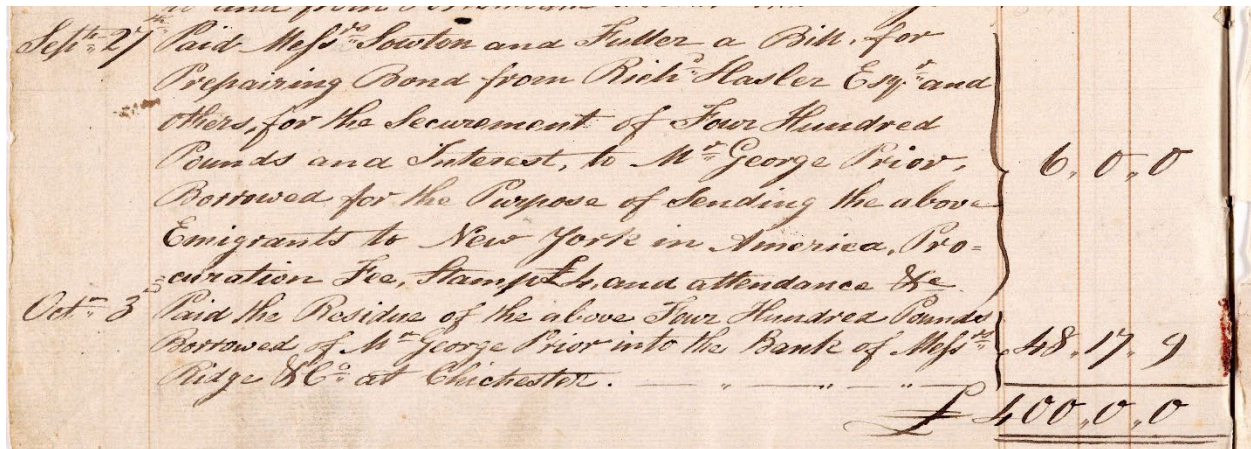
[Click here for a hi-res pdf and transcript.](#)

Date	Description	Amount
1832.	In all 38 persons.	£ 0 0
April 27	Paid M ^r J. Jarrett and Gibbon for the Passage of the above 38 Emigrants to New York	165 0 0
	Paid William Bayley a Bill for Groceries for the above	21 2 10
	Paid J. Gray a Bill for Biscuit, Flour &c.	11 0 0
	Paid W ^m Owen a Bill for 7 Beds and Blankets	4 4 0
	Paid R. Atlee a Bill for Potatoes	1 11 9
	Paid E. Cole a Bill for Board and Lodging for the above 38 persons	8 6 8
	Paid the above 38 Emigrants £3. p ^r Head bounty	114 0 0
	Paid Charles Southerton in lieu for his own meat	4 7 0
	Paid George Southerton in lieu for 2 ^d 2 ^d	2 5 6
	Paid George White in lieu for 2 ^d 2 ^d	2 11 6
	Paid James Arthur and Charles Millyard for the Conveyance of the above 38 Emigrants to Portsmouth	4 0 0
	Paid the above 38 Emigrants expenses on the Road to Portsmouth	2 0 0
	John Burnard and Edmund Boniface's expenses to and from Portsmouth about three days	4 10 0

- With a partner read Source B
- Now check what you have managed to read against the transcript.
- How much money was spent sending these 38 people to the USA?
- List all the things paid for by the parish. What do you notice?
- What does Charles Southerton bring for the journey? How much was he paid for it?
- There were unknown expenses paid on the road to Portsmouth. Can you list what you think they paid for?
- How much did the passage to New York cost for 38 people?
- How much was paid to R. Atlee for potatoes?
- How much did the 7 beds and blankets cost?

Source C :

[Click here for a hi-res pdf and transcript.](#)



- How much in total was spent in total by the parish sending 38 emigrants to the USA in 1831?
- Who paid?

INVESTIGATE

- Who do you think had to pay the Poor Rate?
- Who do you think received Poor Relief?
- Research the units of currency used in Victorian times and explain it to a partner.
- Compare the amount spent in Poor Relief in 1826 with that in 1832? How much had it increased by?

NB Remember the money used then was pounds (£), shillings, (s) and pennies (d).

There were 12 pennies in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound.

- How do you think the money might have been spent? On what sort of things?
- Can you think of at least 3 reasons why the amount spent might have increased in the 6 years?
- In 1832 the population of Aldingbourne was 833 including women and children. If every person was able to pay the poor rate estimate how much per person, using the pound figure only would they have to pay each?
- If only half the population (416) people could contribute to the poor rate how much would they each have to pay?

- Having seen these figures why do you think some parishes funded emigration for some of its parishioners to the USA?

DO:

- Work out how much £400 in 1832 would be worth today using the National Archives website (link below).
- Create a glossary for words you are not familiar with starting with

Emigration-

Bounty –

Grocery –

Biscuits-

Conveyance-

Lieu-

- Research some of the other reasons why parishes like Aldingbourne in the early 19th century thought encouraging emigration to the USA was a good idea. Make a list of what they thought the positive aspects were.
- Research some of the negative aspects of emigration and make a list of them.
- As Charles Southerton, write a letter to your mum and dad explaining why you are emigrating to New York with your wife and family. Remember you need to be positive about the opportunities being offered
OR in threes hold a dialogue with one of you as Charles Southerton and one his dad and one his Mum telling them why you are leaving for USA. Remember his mum and dad probably had lots of reasons why he shouldn't go. Include some of these in your dialogue.
- Design a poster for a meeting to be held at Aldingbourne Parish Hall to debate the idea of the parish rate funding the emigration of 38 people to the USA in 1832.
- Hold the debate with different people expressing their views on funding emigration. Take a vote at the end to see who supports the idea.

- Research what happens to families today who are unable to support themselves financially and what help is given to them. Do you think any consider emigration as an option? How do you think they might fund emigration today?
- Would you have emigrated to the USA if you were a poor agricultural worker with no job and a large family to support?
- Write a short paragraph summarising what you have found out.

Resources

<http://projectbritain.com/moneyold.htm>

<http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>

[West Sussex Record Office's *Sussex Poor Law Records* printed catalogue \(ref. Lib 5616\)](#)

[Aldingbourne Par 1-30-1 f220v image and transcript WHOLE PAGE](#)

[Sussex Data by Alan Stephens \(University of Sussex, 1988\) Lib 10041 \(populations of Sussex towns and parishes 1801-1981\)](#)