

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE  
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 17

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Mar. 1964

## *The Next Meeting*

will be held on Monday evening, Mar. 2, 1964, at 8:00 o'clock, in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker will be MR. JOHN P. ROSS, Rouses Point historian and frequent speaker before the Association, who will talk on "175 YEARS OF THE UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE IN THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY."

The public is cordially invited.

## ASSOCIATION OFFICERS for 1964

Mr. Robert T. Booth, *President*

Dr. Allan S. Everest, *Vice President*

Mr. David K. Martin, *Secretary*

Mr. J. Bernard Stratton, *Treasurer*

Miss Emily McMasters, *Curator*

## *About This Issue*

A major portion of this issue is devoted to the stay in Plattsburgh in the summer of 1890 of W. D. Howells. It might be well for the benefit of our younger members to summarize briefly his place in the American scene.

William Dean Howells was born in 1837 and died in 1920. Few men have contributed more to the American literary picture. As author, poet and editor, for more than half a century his works were to be found in almost every home. They include over a hundred titles.

His fifteen years in the editor's chair of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and many more with *Harpers*, *The Nation*, and other publications, did much to influence the country's choice of reading.

*Life in Letters of William Dean Howells* (1928) reveals many facets of his genius.

## *An Epitaph*

James Thompson

Born

May 5, 1819

Died

Feb. 21, 1861.

A native of Newry Ireland he perished in a snowstorm in N. Y. State.

Mourn not for me my wife and  
Children dear I am not dead but  
Sleeping here my body you found  
My grave you see therefore prepare  
to follow me.

(*Beggs Graveyard, Peru, N. Y.*)

## *The Editors*

welcome material for inclusion in these North Country Notes, as well as your comments and criticisms. Look through your scrapbooks and family papers for a few interesting items.

## *The Journals of Dr. Kellogg*

*The following material is excerpted from the Journals kept between 1885 and 1909 by Dr. David S. Kellogg, a leading citizen and physician of Plattsburgh. The original manuscript is in the possession of Dr. Kellogg's greatnephew, Mr. Theodore Chase, of Boston, who is planning to deposit a typescript copy of the Journals in Plattsburgh.*

*Monday, Aug. 4, 1890.* Yesterday afternoon I had the pleasure of spending the time from two until five with William D. Howells, the author. He with his wife and daughter are spending a few days at the Witherill House. Mr. J. H. Myers introduced me to them. We went down to the Hotel and sent up our cards. A pleasant-faced, short, somewhat thick-set, bright-eyed man with grayish hair and mustache came down and greeted us very cordially. After sitting a moment in the waiting room below he asked us to come upstairs and see Mrs. Howells and their daughter Mildred. Mrs. Howells was quite thin and spare and dressed in a black silk. The daughter Mildred apparently about 16 had a beautiful mouth and teeth and was very pleasant. Mr. J. H. Booth was with them, calling. Mr. Myers sat near Mrs. Howells, Mr. Booth near the daughter and my good fortune was to be near Mr. Howells.

I spoke to him about the historic and prehistoric matters of interest here and after a few minutes conversation, asked him if he would like to see my collections and also take a little ride around town. He seemed glad of the opportunity and heartily wanted to go. Nello [Dr. Kellogg's son] had been holding the horse below. A little boy got between the wheel and waggon. I called out "Nello, don't let the little boy stay there." Mrs. Howells at once spoke of the name Nello and said it was in George Elliott's *Romola*. I told her I was afraid it came from there, although it was a nickname for Nelson. Mr. Howells had on a light short coat and vest of the same material. He put on a Havelock hat and we started. I drove at once to the house. It began to rain a little. I had previously introduced him to Nello. I now introduced him to Lispeth and Bessie with whom he shook hands and spoke very cordially. We went in to the hall and he was much interested in the guns, swords, bayonets and other relics of the war of 1812. Then he went in to the little room with me where the cases of Indian relics he seemed to enjoy much. He thought the owl's head on the owl pipe might be a parrot. He stood up in a chair to see the two jars of pottery from the creek which are on the top shelf. He pulled out from among others a modern red stone pipe and asked if that were not modern. I showed him the reference in Radisson's voyages to the occupation at the Creek and on the Richelieu in 1651-52.

Then we started out for a drive. We drove up to Dr. Smith's—the old Bailey-Platt homestead—then around up the Miller Road. He remarked that he thought Kinglake gave the best description of a battle that he knew of. I told him I thought we should except Tolstoi in *War and Peace*. "Yes" he said, "we must always except Tolstoi. I think him the greatest, by far the greatest novelist that I know of." He asked me, if in my experience with death, I did not find that Tolstoi's descriptions were accurate. Such as for instance Andre's thoughts while facing the swath behind the battery and his men. I told him that my actual experience of death was comparatively small, that I well remembered holding a man's pulse while life was going out. The pulse stopped, surprised, began again, stopped again as if surprised, began again then finally gave it up and went out.

I drove down past the Boynton place and showed him the well where Mr. Lowell is said to have hidden the British gold, at the time of the invasion in 1814. He was interested in the story, but was more interested in the old Boynton House itself. He looked back at it, turning around in the buggy, saying "What beautiful elms, what a beautiful place. How I should like to live there." We drove around the Point and to my office. I picked out a pretty arrow point and gave him. Then we went around and saw the old earthworks on the government ground—Forts Scott, Moreau, Brown.

*Wednesday, Aug. 6.* Yesterday forenoon I met Mrs. Howells on the street near the Postoffice. She recognized me before I did her. She wanted to know about the grave of Lucretia Maria Davidson. They had been all through the cemetery the previous day but could not find it. I took her in the buggy with Nello, David and myself, and went up to the cemetery. She was much pleased to find it. She read the inscription on the north side of it, but thought it was not good and could hardly believe it was from Bryant. I drove on and around the point and showed her the house where Lucretia lived and died.

After she went back to the hotel Bess called on her and asked her and hers up to the house to tea that evening, which was accepted. At 6:15 Nello drove down with the horse and brought up Mrs. Howells while Mr. Howells and daughter walked. Mrs. Royal Corbin was asked to tea, as also was her husband, but he was out of town. At the table I let Mrs. Howells eat off the Battle of Plattsburgh plate, a thing not done before. We had a delightful evening. There were at the table Mr. Howells, wife and daughter Mildred, Mrs. Royal Corbin, myself and wife, Helen, Theo and Francis Kyle [nieces and nephew whom he educated]. All talked. Often I could not make Bessie hear me across the table because so many were talking. After tea I showed them the manuscript book of L. M. D.'s poems, transcribed mostly by her mother, but some by Lucretia herself. I also showed them several advertisements in the old newspapers of Oliver Davidson, Lucretia's father.

I remarked to [Mr. Howells] that I disliked the word "class" as applied to people. He said he did too, very much. He could not bear the expressions "upper class" and "lower class" as often used. Another word he disliked much was servant. He said "they are not our servants, they are our helpers."

*Thursday, Aug. 7, 1890.* This morning at 10 I took Mr. Howells out for a drive to Fredenburgh Falls and Treadwell's Mills. He was surprised at the pot holes in the rocks at the Falls. He had never seen nor heard of them before.

His father and brother live on a farm or in a farming region in southern Ohio. He thought it strange that so little money passed among farmers. His brother had told him that among some farmers hardly fifty dollars were circulated during a year.

He asked me what year I was born in; I told him in 1847. He said he was ten years older than that. He said his mustache had turned grey first, but that his hair was quite dark when his mustache was grey. He said that my mustache was dark, but my hair grey.

While coming down Rugar Street I called his attention to the Green Mountains and to the Adirondacks. He said "Do you know this level plain really attracts me more than the mountains. It is more like the land where I was born and spent my childhood. One makes his comparisons in life by the conditions of his childhood."

At Fredenburgh Falls I tried to start a log over the Falls, but did not succeed. I did not think specially about it but I saw him at once try to push it off at the expense of getting his feet wet. I immediately took off my shoes and stockings, waded in and got the log off. He watched it go down through the rapids until it was out of sight. He told me that his father was fond of everything that was wood. He once, after he was sixty years of age and very stout, climbed a very high tree in order to get some wild grapes. He got caught between two limbs and it took 15 minutes to get him loose again.

Mrs. Howells told me that her husband only went to school two years in his life, but he now could speak fluently five languages.

*Friday, Aug. 8, 1890.* Mr. Howells called at the office in the forenoon but I was not in. He left two books which he gave me. About 5 P.M. he called at the house. I was at the office, but LISPETH drove down for me. He was just as cordial and friendly and agreeable as ever. He told Bess that he could not leave town without coming to see me again.

## *A Clinton County Murder -- Dr. Kellogg's Journal*

Jan. 31, 1889. On Monday evening about 4.30 Mr. I. E. Tabor was murdered on the highway a little east of his home on the Miller road, three miles from Plattsburgh. A neighbor Joseph Chapleau killed him with a sled stake, most cruelly. If he had shot him or poisoned him or even stabbed him the affair would not have been so merciless. But to run after a man, wholly unarmed and unaware and pound him in the face until he is dead is more like the action of a beast than of a human being.

Mr. Tabor was a very honorable and honest man. I have known him for nine years and have been his family physician for much of that time. In all my dealings with him he has been just and upright.

His body lay in the snow for two hours and then was carried up to his house on a wood sled. 'Twas horrible to see his blood on the door casing of his own house, from which he had gone out a few hours before, well, strong and happy.

His wife, an invalid, bore up bravely. His two daughters and one baby were not at home.

The body was brought to Plattsburgh that same night for a thorough post mortem examination. The inquest was concluded today and Chapleau is held for murder. The man who carried his body from where it lay up to the house also afterwards brought the body down to town. He remarked, in my hearing, that "he had brought the body up to the house, and he ought to have the privilege of carrying it to town."

Feb. 1, 1890. Joseph Chapleau received his death sentence on Wednesday. He was to be taken to Dannemora, kept in solitary confinement until March 3, 1890, then during the week following that date he is to be executed by having a current of electricity passed through his body until he is dead. I believe he is the first person to be executed by electricity under the new state law. This is a doubtful honor.

#17 MAR '64

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*David K. Martin, Secretary*  
*West Chazy, New York*