

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 21

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Jan. 1965

The Next Meeting

will be held on Monday evening, Jan. 4, 1965, at 8 o'clock, in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. This is the annual meeting and election of officers. Mr. Edwin Berry, the Director of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System, will deliver a talk on "THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES IN CLINTON COUNTY."

The public is cordially invited.

The Sheriff's Accounts

As the election of 1839 approached, the *Plattsburgh Republican*, the Democratic paper, published the following items from the accounts of Sheriff Gilson, who was a Whig, and exhorted its readers to turn the rascals out:

"Furnishing Bedding for Prisoners (for use of blankets, etc.)	\$ 18.00
Making Hovel for Cow	7.50
353 weeks Washing bed blankets, etc., for jail	44.13
343 weeks board at \$3.50 per week	1200.50
Extra attendance	16.58
Attending courts of Common Pleas, (not allowed by Statute)	24.00
Taking prisoners from jail to court and recommitting (do)	120.00
Cleaning Court house, Jail and Candlesticks	105.75
Watching prisoners in jail 22 nights, at \$1.50 per night	33.00

"The following overcharges in the Sheriff's account were noted and furnished us by two of the most experienced former members of the board of Supervisors:

"Overcharges on small items	\$ 68.00
Attending Court (not warranted by statute)	24.00
Taking from jail to court (do)	120.00
Extra attendance (do)	16.58
Hovel	7.50
Temporary Kitchen	9.40
Overcharged on board, at \$2.00 per week	514.00
Extra for cleaning Jail and House	70.00
Extra Bedding and Washing	30.00
Total amount of overcharges	\$859.48

"To the Tax Payers of Clinton County, we say, read with candor, look carefully over the foregoing items of the Sheriff's accounts; investigate coolly, decide according to the dictates of justice and enlightened reason. All who are groaning under the burthen of Taxation cannot but repudiate the gouging course pursued by Sheriff Gilson and the Whigs in oppressing a county already oppressed past endurance."

Early Settlers in Beekmantown

The following is an excerpt from a paper by Professor Philip White of the University of Chicago, who is the editor of the papers of the prominent old Beekman family of New York City, and a frequent visitor to Clinton County. Professor White made a study of the settlement and development of Beekmantown and delivered the paper at the meeting of the American Historical Association at Washington in December 1964. After explaining the original patent of 30,000 acres to the Beekmans in 1769, he goes on to describe one phase of settlement within the tract.

From the 1760's onward squatters had been taking timber from the grant at will. Nor were they all petty in their scale of operations. The greatest was Moses Hazen, a Revolutionary general who had conducted a timber business in the Champlain valley from St. Johns, Quebec prior to the Revolution. After the Revolution, with his wartime adjutant, Benjamin Mooers, as his deputy, Hazen continued this work. Mooers arrived in Beekmantown in 1783 with ten companions, most of them apparently French Canadian loggers. The limited correspondence between the proprietors and these interlopers makes no reference to payment for the privileges assumed, nor do the records show that any was made. In fact by 1789 Hazen was self-righteously proclaiming that he had spent £3,000 in "improving" their land, presumably by cutting roads, clearing land, and erecting buildings, all of these incident to his securing timber. He received no such compensation, it appears, but neither did the proprietors seem to expect payment for what he took.

Exploitation of the timber resources remained for many years the principal inducement to settlement in Beekmantown. Those who made application to the proprietors to lease or to buy seem usually to have done so only after living for some years on the land and presumably making what they could from it. There is every indication that utilization of timber resources by such settlers was not always limited to the lands covered by their agreements. Furthermore, it was quite common for such "lessees" or "purchasers" to "run off" after a few years, having made only nominal payments or none at all. The peak period of trespassing came between 1805 and 1810, when the exigencies of the Napoleonic Wars created in Britain a great demand for timber, especially white oak for naval construction. The largest scale operative of this period was a Mr. Shefflen, who brazenly claimed ownership of Beekmantown and then "licensed" his agents to "take away any quantity of Timber for Canada's Market." The implicit support of community mores for such activities is suggested not only in that the proprietors made little effort to stop them, but also in that a leading trespasser, James Farnsworth, was able to produce character testimonials from several leading citizens of the area when he belatedly sought to purchase some of the land which he had devastated.

Education in a Democracy

The prevalent notions as to the proper objects of education are altogether too limited, confining its application, its power, and benefits to some pecuniary or other profitable object. It is undertaken with an eye to some pecuniary advantage. The spirit that animates our free and equal population is a *money making spirit*. Every nation on the globe is distinguished for some peculiar, national spirit, which characterizes its progress as a people, and furnishes the key to its national policy. The national spirit of Americans is unquestionably a money making spirit—a principle tending both to the concentration and circulation of wealth. Now all this is not stated as a reproach, but merely as a fact for the purpose of pointing out the real difficulties in the way of education. When these difficulties are ascertained, they can either be removed, if evils

in themselves; or if only blessings in disguise, can be accommodated to our systems of education. . . .

We hear, accordingly, from all parts of this wide commonwealth, a louder and louder call for *Reform*,—Reform in the ends and objects of education, and Reform in the instruments and agents employed in its management. The University of London and the University at New York are the first fruits of this Reform, enlarging the privileges of philosophical education to the growing wants and demands of the people. . . .

These remarks were not made in the 1960's, but are taken from an address delivered November 28, 1832, by George A. Simmons before the Plattsburgh Lyceum. They suggest that the problems of education for a democratic society were already receiving earnest attention. (From a pamphlet owned by Dr. Hans Hirsch.)

Teaching in the Plattsburgh Academy

Extracted from the reminiscences of Mrs. Susan F. Fillmore, formerly Susan F. Cook. They were written when she was nearing ninety years of age and published in the PLATTSBURGH REPUBLICAN on November 17, 1888. She taught school in the Plattsburgh Academy in the year 1817, but did not visit Plattsburgh again during her long life.

The famed Lucretia Davidson was one of my youngest scholars when I taught in the Academy. I think she was about seven years old and the only troublesome one I had. She sat in a seat with three other girls all somewhat older than she. She would not study nor let them, but whispered incessantly. She would rise up in her seat and reach over to the farthest girl and whisper to each one, and no persuasion or decisive measures could prevent it. She was troublesome at home. I thought Anna Eliza much the best character. But genius must not be judged by the rules that others are.

I assisted Mrs. D. in deciphering her first poetry in printing letters: "An Elegy on the Death of a Robin." I think she was then less than six years old. Once when I was there she had repeatedly disobeyed her father, and after he had decidedly told her he should punish her if she did so again. The offence was soon repeated. As he took a rod in his hand Mrs. Davidson hastened to me saying, "Oh! Miss Cook, do go and beg her off." I said, "Mrs. D., I cannot. It would be an insult to the Dr." "Oh, no it would not, do, do go," but I would not do such an injury to the child, and my own sense of propriety. I am not an advocate of Solomon's mode of government for children and never adopted it in any school nor in my family; still it would be an injury to a child to interfere with parental discipline unless it was in a case of unmerciful severity.

Advertising in the Local Press

PUMP! PUMP! PUMP!

Father! I wish you would get one of those new Pumps of Fred D. Miller! And then it won't take me half of the time to draw water for mother; for I could pump a barrell of water in four minutes just as E-A-S-Y! No mistake father! Just call and see how nice they are, and I know you will buy one; and then I shall not be tired when I go to school.

"THE BOY IS RIGHT"

Plattsburgh, N. Y. June 24, 1843

F. T. MILLER



Corrections

Several members of the Association have questioned statements in the *Recollections of Clinton County and the Battle of Plattsburgh*. In publishing their comments, we invite others to report errors that they may detect.

Mrs. Benjamin Allen of Plattsburgh points out that the footnote on page 49 incorrectly locates Ransom's Tavern, which was actually located *south* of the dock on Cumberland Head.

She also mentions that her great-grandfather was the proprietor of Nichol's Tavern at Salmon River, which was located, not as in the footnote on page 66, but directly on the river bank, on the west side of the road. It burned many years ago, but its foundations can still be detected.

Mrs. Julia Simmons of Saranac, a descendant of Francis Culver, an early settler of Beekmantown, maintains that Col. Wellington was buried in back of the unfinished Culver home at the top of Culver Hill, not as located on page 52 in the recollections of the elderly Nathaniel Chittenden Culver. This Culver stone house still stands on the east side of the road on Culver Hill.

Dr. Georgia Harkness of Berkeley, California, raises a question about names; her father was J. Warren Harkness, a public-spirited and historically-minded resident of Hallock Hill in the town of Harkness:

"At the bottom of your page 55, Mr. Smith speaks of Jemima Keese from Dutchess County as a prominent Quaker minister. My father's book, pp. 57-58, speaks of Catherine Robinson Keese from Poughkeepsie, who married Samuel Keese, as being a very able Quaker preacher, and also of Elizabeth Keese Irish, daughter of Richard Keese and born on the Keese farm near the Union, as being a Quaker preacher for fifty years. No mention of a Jemima, but this may be another name for Catherine."

21 JAN '65

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CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

David K. Martin, Secretary
West Chazy, New York