

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

48 Court Street, Plattsburgh NY 12901, 518-561-0340

No. 301 PRESIDENT: David C. Stortz EDITOR: Helen W. Allan September 1993

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM - WAR OF 1812

The first program of our new season will be given by Dennis Lewis, well-known local historian and independent researcher. Recent research by Mr. Lewis produced his new presentation entitled "British Naval Activity On Lake Champlain During The War Of 1812." This slide lecture is the precursor of a new publication written by Mr. Lewis that CCHA hopes to bring out in the near future. Celebrations of the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1989 included a program by Dennis Lewis dealing with the land conflict.

The meeting will be held in the Clinton County Government Center at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, September 13. It is open to the public free of charge.

MUSEUM AWARDED NYSCA GRANT

CCHA has been informed that it will receive \$3,994 in general operating support from the New York State Council on the Arts. Funding from NYSCA since 1975 has helped the Historical Association to operate the County Museum, present exhibitions, catalogue its collections, provide conservation treatment for paintings and publish educational materials. We are delighted that the New York State Legislature has seen fit to increase its 1993/94 appropriation to NYSCA for the benefit of arts and cultural affairs.

NEW IN THE MUSEUM SHOP

The Battle of Plattsburgh is the subject of a new piece of artwork in the Shop. Local artist Lee Hunt has produced an exquisite bird's eye view of the event entitled "The Defence of Plattsburgh, N.Y., Sept. 6th through 11th, 1814." With advice from Dr. Allan Everest and Dennis Lewis, both noted for their War of 1812 research, Mr. Hunt has painted a wonderfully evocative and accurate depiction of the siege. Unframed 24"x36" full-color prints are available for \$40.00. CCHA members will receive a 10% discount. If you wish to order by mail, please add \$4.00 for shipping.

For those who collect coffee mugs, we've got a new one for you! It's white, 11 oz., and it has a drawing of our 48 Court Street home on it. Business offices can scoop up these mugs and help to support the museum at the same time. The mugs cost \$5.00 each or \$27.50 for six. We also have a supply of note cards with the same drawing of the museum building - \$5.00 for a pack of ten with envelopes.

AIKEN'S RIFLES

Local historians find interest in the subject of mid-19th century migration from Clinton County to the Midwest. A number of families traveled to Green Bay, Wisconsin, possibly as a result of a connection with William Beaumont who had been stationed there as an Army surgeon. The following excerpt from the Appleton, Wis. *Daily Post* led to a letter to the *Post* from Henry K. Averill inquiring about the writer of the memoir. It indicates that communication was maintained between the Midwest and Northeast. Perhaps Mr. Averill was sent a copy of the *Post* feature by a friend or relative.

The *Post* then printed the following remarks:

"On September 11 (1885), the *Post* contained an item concerning the battle of Plattsburgh. Mention was made of 'Squire' Bateman in the article as an eye-witness of the struggle. The item attracted some attention at Plattsburgh, New York, the scene of the battle, the result of which was a letter to the *Post*, by Mr. H.K. Averill, Jr., of that place, in which particular inquiry was made concerning our venerable townsman who is one of the few survivors who were present at that battle. 'Squire' Bateman has replied to Mr. Averill's inquiry and by request of the *Post*, he has permitted us to publish it. It is remarkable how clear the Squire's memory is concerning the particulars of a battle which happened nearly three-quarters of a century ago. The following is the letter, just as it was written, and we are sure that it will be read with interest by our citizens."

"Mr. H.K. Averill, Jr.
Appleton, Wis.

October 14, 1885

Dear Sir,

I noticed in the *Appleton Post* a communication from you, in which mention is made of the battle of Plattsburgh, and of Squire Bateman. I suppose I am the individual the *Post* refers to. I had not the honor of being a member of your father's company, but an older brother of mine whose full name was Aaron Smith Bateman, but who in Plattsburgh was known as Smith Bateman, belonged to a Rifle company raised in Plattsburgh. A number of that company, of which my brother was one, and your father another, volunteered to fight in the battle. I knew your father, but not intimately. My brother received a rifle from the government which now, I suppose, is in the possession of a younger brother in Michigan. My brother, Smith Bateman, has been dead nearly 30 years. Although I was not a member of your father's company, I was present at the commencement of the battle, which was fought some five or six miles north of Plattsburgh.

My father lived about five miles north of the town near Levi Marshall's old place in Beekmantown. At that time I was between 15 and 16 years of age, and did not take any part in the battle, but many of the incidents and transactions of that week are very vivid in my memory.

After leaving Chazy village, a portion of the British Army, perhaps 3,000 strong, took the West road, on the night of 5th and 6th of September, I think, while the main part of the Army, with the baggage train, took what was called the State road. That portion of the Army on the West road, encamped one or one and a half miles north of Beekmantown Corners. The militia from the counties of Essex and Clinton were called out. They were under the command of Major Wadhams, of Essex county. A portion of them were quartered in my father's shop. In the night the Major thought he would reconnoiter a little, fearing the British Dragoons would pounce upon him and gobble up his militia boys. So he took my father as a pilot and set out; about half a mile north of the Corners, they fell in with a squad of British Dragoons; some shots having been exchanged, both parties retreated.

In the meantime, Gen. McComb sent Major Wool, afterwards Gen. Wool, with about 300 regulars, to the help of the militia. He passed my father's (house) quite early on the morning of the 6th, I think, and took his position behind a stone wall about half a mile south of Beekmantown Corners. He was fired upon and returning the fire, fell back to the road that ran west about 20 rods south of my father's. Here he formed his men. This brought my father's house between two fires. A number of balls hit the house on both sides, but all but one higher than a man's head. There was one British and one of Wool's men killed and quite a number wounded.

A British Lieutenant was quartered at Ira Howe's. Mr. Howe asked him how far they were going south. 'Till Albany,' he said. 'You will find it full of Yankees,' replied Mr. Howe.

No more were killed until the Army reached Culver's Hill, where a British Colonel named Wellington, and a Lieutenant were shot. Our troops fought on the retreat all the way to Plattsburgh. At Halsey's corners they had a field piece or two which did a good deal of execution.

There was no general engagement between the land forces, but I believe they said a few red coats crossed the Saranac, above the village, but were glad to get back again. The battle on the lake was on Sunday, a fine, beautiful day. It lasted two or three hours, I should think. After the defeat of the fleet, Sir George Prevost ordered a retreat and left himself, going past our house that night with a small guard.

In regard to my wanderings after this, I lived with my father in 1816 when he moved to Champlain, where I lived until I was married, when I moved to Beekmantown, where I carried on the carding and cloth business. I lived there a number of years and from there moved to Moores (sic) Forks, and lived there until 1846, when I came West. I spent one winter in Illinois. From there I moved to Green Bay and remained there about two years. Was engaged there in the grocery and hardware trade in connection with D.W. Bromley, formerly of Plattsburgh. In 1849 I came to Appleton, on the lower Fox river, where Lawrence University is located, a city of 11,000 inhabitants, and situated upon as fine a water power as there is in the United States.

Please excuse my poor writing and composition as I am carrying the weight of 87 years.

Respectfully yours,
Robert R. Bateman."

(Editor's note: The previous material was copied by Hugh McLellan of Champlain.)

Aaron Smith Bateman was one of the 17 young men who joined the militia as the siege of Plattsburgh grew imminent. In 1826 Congress authorized the delivery to each boy of a rifle promised to them by Gen. Alexander Macomb. On display in the museum is the rifle presented to Martin J. Aiken, the leader of the group, loaned by Mr. & Mrs. John D. Barton. The museum owns a silver plate and shield from the rifle of Ira A. Wood, donated in 1989 by Nancy Barbour. The rifles, each adorned with an inscribed plate and shield, were presented to the group by Gen. Benjamin Mooers in 1827. Mooers was the militia commander in 1814.

'Squire' Bateman's reference in his memoir to his occupation in the carding and cloth business in Beekmantown reminds us that the museum textile collection contains a cape and coat given by Mrs. Helen Bateman Heath. The handspun brown and grey wool used in the making of these two garments came from a family farm, possibly located near Perry's Mills. We would be grateful for information on this farm.

CCHA member, Phyllis Wells, has recently updated her list of church fires in Clinton County. Copies of her research are available at the museum and at Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.

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FLEA MARKET DRAWING WINNERS

The following persons were the winners in the drawing held at CCHA's annual flea market on Saturday, July 10th:

<u>Prize</u>	<u>Winner</u>
Keeseville Water Bond Certificate	Nancy Smith, Plattsburgh
Windows on the Bay Gift Certificate	Daniel Foote, Plattsburgh
Hand-etched glass candle lantern	Ira Rowson, Plattsburgh
Painting - "The Old Mill"	Ronald Fuller, Plattsburgh
D & H Restaurant Gift Certificate	Billy Hubbell, Chazy
Champlain Outlets Gift Certificate	Martin & Sons Auction
Royal Savage Gift Certificate	Lawrence Myre, Plattsburgh
Northern Car Wash Coupons	Irene Rowe, Ellenburg Depot
Champlain Centres Gift Certificate	Beth Brush, Plattsburgh
Hecht Antiques Gift Certificate	Lynn Woythaler, Peru
Butcher Block Gift Certificate	Roger Heintz, Plattsburgh
Harborside Restaurant Brunch	Dorothy Scott, Plattsburgh
Valour Lodge Gift Certificate	Emily Castine, Chazy
Gregory Supply Gift Certificate	Helen Blow, Ellenburg Center
Year's Membership, CCHA	Ralph Hunkins, Plattsburgh
Tote Bag/ "Briefly Told."	A. Meschinelli, Plattsburgh

So many members and friends of the Association helped to organize and staff the flea market that we cannot acknowledge each one separately. However, their contributions of time and effort are deeply appreciated. We could not present the event without their help. Many thanks, everyone.