

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

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NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Our program on November 1st may be too late to be timely for the Gothic tales associated with Halloween, but we will still have an opportunity to hear about such activities that are planned to take place at the Henry Graves mansion in AuSable Forks the previous weekend. On hand at CCHA's November meeting will be Tom Campbell, curator of the Graves house, who has been greatly involved in developing the house as a major historical attraction. Mr. Campbell tells us that the house attracted hundreds of visitors during the summer, many of whom intend to pay a return visit.

Built in the 1870s, the Graves home is an almost unequalled local example of a structure which has retained its architectural integrity. Visitors marvel at the interior appointments including eight fireplaces, marble mantelpieces and hand-carved walnut detailing. While we may shudder at the thought of trying to heat rooms with 12-foot ceilings, the grandeur of the Graves house makes it a true landmark in the North Country.

The huge Victorian home is a natural for the Halloween events Mr. Campbell intends to present, but the mansion will host many other events next summer as well as regular tours by the curator. Don't miss this intriguing program at the Clinton County Government Center meeting room on Monday, Nov. 1 at 7:30 p.m. The program is free and open to the public.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

We have lots of good things in the Museum Shop for early Christmas shoppers. Books, prints, collectibles, coffee mugs, note cards. Especially popular is a print entitled 'The Defense Of Plattsburgh, Sept. 6-11, 1814', made from an original painting by local artist Lee Hunt. Come see the selection and support the museum at the same time! Shop hours are 9:30 to 4:00 Tuesday through Friday, and 1:00 to 4:00 on Saturday. Call us at 561-0340 if you require a special appointment.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Thanks to donor Frank Morrison, the museum now owns a charming portable table top desk which has a long history in Plattsburgh. Owned by John W. Bailey, son of Judge William Bailey, the desk passed to Martin Morrison, great-great-grandfather of CCHA member Frank. Made of mahogany, the little desk has a rolltop which slides back when the lower drawer is opened. It also contains a double writing surface, pen tray and document storage compartment. Mr. Morrison says that he has long tried to discover another desk like it but with no success.

A relationship exists between the desk and another treasured object in the museum. A 1796 watercolor depicts Captain Nathaniel Platt's house, painted 'on the spot' by Richbill N. Smith. That house, destroyed by fire in 1822, was replaced by a stone house, built by William Bailey, father of John W. Bailey. Located at 176 Cornelia Street, the stone house was known subsequently as the McMartin house. But the property around it, long before Grace and Morrison Avenues were built, comprised the orchard and nursery gardens of John W. Bailey for whom Martin Morrison worked as a professional gardener.

According to the late author Marjorie Lansing Porter, timbers for Nathaniel Platt's original frame house were prepared in Poughkeepsie and brought to the settlement by bateau. When the house burned in 1822, several doors were saved and incorporated into the stone house of William Bailey who had married Nathaniel's daughter Phebe.

What we don't know for certain is the original ownership of the little mahogany desk, but as Frank Morrison says, "The desk has been in our family for five generations and no telling how long it was owned by the Bailey family. It was my father's most treasured possession."

Mr. Morrison's gift to the museum does not end there. He has also donated a fine 1868 Currier and Ives print, large folio size, entitled 'The Old Barn Floor'. We read in 'Currier & Ives, Printmakers to the American People' by Harry T. Peters, 1942, that distribution of the firm's prints was "by no means limited to retail sale in the store.... a number of pushcart salesmen would appear every morning at the store (152 Nassau Street, New York City) and each would select prints that he thought would suit the potential customers in his particular area. Distribution was astonishingly wide. Dealers and collectors have found prints in every section of the country, giving evidence that Currier & Ives agents must have been many and active".

They were certainly active in Plattsburgh, New York, for 'The Old Barn Floor' was sold to the Morrison family for only a dollar or two.