

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

No. 308 PRESIDENT: Mark A. McCullough EDITOR: Helen W. Allan April 1994

APRIL PROGRAM

Collecting can be the spice of life for those interested in antiquities. It can also be the source of confusion and doubt when lack of knowledge hinders the acquisition of objects.



CCHA's next program in its winter/spring series features a speaker who will share his expertise in collecting. Chris Beaudin, a well known local antiques dealer, plans to use objects from his own collection to enlarge our understanding of the subject. He also wants members and friends to bring along objects from their own collections for discussion. One Board member says she plans to display a piece of 19th century oriental export china. Another regular participant in our programs says he has a piece of silver that has always puzzled him. This program will offer everyone a chance to learn more about the subject of antiques, so don't be shy - bring along a treasure for everyone to enjoy. The meeting will be held in the Clinton Co. Government Center, first floor, on Monday, April 4 at 7:30 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

CCHA'S SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER

It's true, spring is just around the corner! Bernieta Schumacher and her fundraising committee members have been meeting regularly to plan the details of the Association's first Antiques Show/Vintage Car Meet at Community College on July 9 & 10. Craig Koste will manage the antiques show which is expected to attract more than 40 dealers. Randy Beach is spearheading arrangements for the car meet, an event that will be attended by car collectors throughout the northeast and Canada. There will be a silent auction of items donated by members and friends, an automobile-related flea market, demonstrations and outdoor theatrical performances. Mark McCullough, coordinator on the site, says many volunteers are needed to staff the various activities, so please give us a call and tell us you are willing to donate a couple of hours or more on either day. In an era of diminishing government funding, it is vital for not-for-profit organizations to raise funds from other sources. Members of the Historical Association and supporters of the museum have a great opportunity to present a unique event in the wonderful setting of the former Hotel Champlain. Join the crowd and lend a hand. This is the Association's major fundraiser and we must make it a smash hit!

THE LAND OF GOSHEN, PART II (Continued from March Notes)

"It was also the day of the wide open fire-place, the tin baker or more substantial Dutch oven, the pot-hooks and trammels, and the crane which swung the pots over the fire. Tallow candles were dipped and were the only lights, while matches were unknown. Coals were covered up with ashes at night and much care taken to keep the fire, for if by chance the coals blackened and the fire went out some one must hasten early to a neighbor's house to 'borrow fire', or resort to the tedious process of striking sparks from flint and steel upon punk and so getting a light.

"The methods of farming were primitive in the extreme as compared with those of today. Ox teams did much of the work of clearing the land of stumps and ploughing the soil, then rich in all elements required for the growth of crops. When the land was prepared the grain was sown, cut, raked and threshed by hand. Hay was cut with a scythe and gathered by means of hand rakes. Milk was milked into unpainted wooden pails or piggins, strained into earthen milk pans, and the cream churned in a dash churn.

"If the farmers of that day could have had a view of the mowing, reaping and threshing machines, cream separators, gasolene engines, motor cars and dynamite ploughing of today it would have seemed like magic.

"The outdoor, primitive life made robust, vigorous health almost universal among the people, for whom the cold had little terror, those living in the log houses, as most of them did, often finding their beds covered with a sprinkling of snow on a winter morning. Patent medicines were unknown, germs had never been heard of, and one doctor making his rounds on horseback with saddle-bags holding his store of drugs was sufficient for the care of the community's health.

"About 1815 Arden Barker, a brother-in-law of John Keese, became a clerk in the store at Goshen, and spent the rest of his life in business there. We have no record of when the business passed from the Keeses to his hands or when he built the brick house in which he lived, but in 1840 a frame house was built directly across the highway from the store for his son, John Barker, and some time after a smaller house near the store and on the same side of the road with it for one of his clerks.

"These houses are now standing, with another frame house built and occupied by either a Mr. Story or a Mr. Jacobs. The massive timbers in the frames of these houses is proof of the abundance of timber when they were built, and if the lumber used in their construction was sawed in the mill on the spot excellent work was done there. It is said that the brick for the Arden Barker or Lapham house, as it was afterwards known, were made and burned on the adjacent lands now part of the farm connected with it.

"After the freset of 1856, ... the starch factory was built on the grist-mill site and was operated by John Barker until 1865, when he sold to his brother-in-law Nathan Lapham, who conducted it until his death. Two starch factories have been burned down on that site and the third one built on the same site dismantled and torn down. For some time before the starch business was abandoned the river did not furnish sufficient power to operate the machinery and a steam engine was installed.

"Thanks to the wasteful methods of lumbering that have prevailed in the forests at the headwaters of all our rivers the flow is less every year, and perhaps the amount of water in the Little Ausable every summer is now no greater than ran in any brooks that fed it seventy-five or one hundred years ago. We have come to expect every year a long and terrible drought, drying up the meadows and pastures, and it is apparent that the new methods of farming must be found to meet this condition.

"If the policy of conservation of waters and reforestation can be successfully carried out will it be possible that fifty years hence the rainfall will equal that of fifty years ago? In the event mayhap the mill wheels may turn again at Goshen."

"Or, before that day will the whole Champlain Valley have been occupied by summer homes of those who are busiest elsewhere, as the shores of Lake Champlain are now being rapidly taken up?"

"The township of Peru, well named for its rugged mountains and towering hills, cannot be excelled for natural beauty of lake, river, mountain, rolling country-side and smiling plains, and in our town, Goshen, with its view on one side of the Ausable Valley, old Whiteface, the higher Adirondack peaks and on the other, the far summits of the Green Mountains is indeed a pleasant land in which to dwell."

"The Land of Goshen" by Sarah B. Hewitt
"Reminiscences and Early History of Old Peru" compiled by Seward Arnold, 1913

PLATTSBURGH THEATRE

Who could possibly have wanted to stay home on Feb. 15, 1904 when the Plattsburgh Theatre was presenting "the great play 'Sherlock Holmes'" by Sir A. Conan Doyle and William Gillette. The program synopsis explained that the place was "London, nine years ago". Act I took place in the drawing room at Larrabee's; Act II, Scene 1 at Moriarty's Underground Office; Scene 2 at Holmes's Rooms in Baker Street; Act III at the Stepney Gas Chamber, and Act IV in Dr. Watson's Consulting Room, Kensington. The printing firm of J.W. Tuttle put out a broadside that day which included the theatre's house rules stating that "the patrons of the house are requested to report to the Manager any incivilities on the part of any attache; Ladies' toilet and waiting rooms will be found on the right of foyer; Gents' toilet and smoking rooms will be found on the left of foyer"; any article found in the Theatre should be handed to the Manager, or in at the Box Office; whistling, stamping and soiling the floor is strictly prohibited, and the ushers and police are requested to enforce this rule."

Advertisers in the broadside included Shedden & Booth (the City Pharmacy, corner of Margaret and Clinton); Jacob Ochsner (Monroe Brewing Co., 6 River Street); M.P. Myers (a full line of horse blankets, 4 Bridge St.); Eli Sweenor (Ingleside shoe shining parlor, 57 Margaret St.), and Stackpole's Shoe Store where the 'faultless-fitting Dorothy Dodd shoes' cost \$3.00 per pair. The Plattsburgh Daily Press and the Evening News welcomed subscribers at a cost of 25 cents a month, while the Plattsburgh Republican's offering could be obtained each Saturday morning for \$1.00 per year, if paid in advance.

The era of live theatre in Plattsburgh was perhaps never quite the same after the huge theatre built by Smith Weed in 1893 at the corner of Court and Marion Streets was destroyed by fire in 1928. All types of entertainment were offered in the auditorium that seated 1,000. Another poster in CCHA's collections advertising a 3-ring circus in the theatre shows no fewer than three women, two men and a dog riding bareback on one horse. They stand very close together and the dog does seem to take the lion's share of the space. But no doubt it was an unusually large horse?

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Clinton County Historical Association
48 Court Street
Plattsburgh, NY, 12901

U.S. POSTAGE
Non-Profit Org.
PAID
Plattsburgh NY
PERMIT NO. 185

NEW YORK STATE NEWSPAPER PROJECT

A recent State Library survey of the museum's holdings documented CCHA's collection of newspapers. Some of the early county titles are as follows:

- The American Monitor, Plattsburgh, June 2, 1810
- The Northern Intelligencer, Plattsburgh, June 4, 1822
- The Plattsburgh Republican, Jan. 17, 1818
- The Christian Intelligencer, Plattsburgh, April 8, 1823
- The Keeseville Argus, Jan. 21, 1835
- The Whig, Plattsburgh, Jan. 17, 1835
- The Cottage Gazette, June 25, 1851
- The Plattsburgh Sentinel, April 15, 1865

Other titles include the Albany Argus, Sept. 7, 1813 (superscribed with the name of Gen. Benjamin Mooers), the Weekly Messenger, Boston, Oct. 7, 1814, and the Sun, New York, Sept. 3, 1833. The 'out-of-town' examples were saved for items that had North Country relevance such as a piece on the Battle of Plattsburgh in the Weekly Messenger.

Due to the use of wood pulp in the manufacture of paper, most of these newspapers are in fragile condition and are inappropriate for use in research until they have been encapsulated. However, in many cases it is remarkable that they have survived at all.

In *Briefly Told, 1984*, Allan Everest mentions local luminaries in journalism. Azariah C. Flagg, an editor of the *Republican*, went into state government and helped to found the Democratic party in New York state. George F. Bixby, another editor of the *Republican*, was a public-minded citizen, and A.W. Lansing, as editor of the *Sentinel*, promoted the cause of the Republican party in the North Country. Through the years Plattsburgh was abundantly supplied with newspapers, both daily and weekly. In 1942 it became a one-newspaper town with the merging of the *Press* and the *Republican*.

911 - ADDRESS CHANGES

Please note: 3rd class mail (*North Country Notes*, *The Antiquarian*) will not be forwarded by the post office. If your address has been affected by 911, please notify us of the change.