

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

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## DECEMBER PROGRAM

Christmas decorations and seasonal music are the ingredients of CCHA's last program this year. Members of the Kent-Delord House Garden Club will demonstrate the art of making Christmas decorations from the bounty of Nature, including roping and pyramids. The Garden Club is justly famous for its decorations in the Kent-Delord House Museum during the festive season. The 1810 period is this year's theme at the KDH museum.

The other ingredient in this lovely program is Stan Ransom, the "Connecticut Peddler", who will provide seasonal music from "North Country Christmas", his new release with Marne O'Shae. We can look forward to an evening of pure pleasure at the Clinton County Government Center on Monday, December 5 at 7:30 p.m. The program is free and open to the public.

## SLATE NAMED FOR BOARD

David Stortz, chairman of CCHA's nominating committee, has announced the following slate of nominees for a three year term on the Board of Directors:

David Martin	Jaimie Trautman	William Laundry
Jane Ellis	Ralph Martin	

The election will take place at the December 5th program and nominations will be accepted from the floor. Directors are eligible to serve for two consecutive terms of three years. Robert Perkins has been appointed to fill an unexpired term, ending in 1995.

## GRATEFUL THANKS

As the year ends, so do the Board of Director terms of Jack Myers, Martha Lockwood and Randy Beach. Serving as Treasurer, Martha has donated many hours as CCHA's volunteer bookkeeper. Both Jack and Randy served for many years before term limitations came into effect, and both are past presidents of the Association. We will also miss Bernieta Schumacher, Diane Turner and Ann Hasting who are stepping down. Thanks to all of these hardworking folks for their contributions to our organization.

## CLINTONVILLE IRON INDUSTRY

Dr. Gordon Pollard and his SUNY students played to a capacity audience on Nov. 7 when they presented a program on the Clintonville Iron Works to the Historical Association. Narrated by the students, the slide program showed their extensive excavations at the Clintonville site this summer, including the development of test pits and the uncovering of a fine stone arch. Stone and masonry lay hidden under a century's accumulation of earth and brush. The discovery of pins associated with a triphammer was an important find in the project, and the actual pins were displayed for the audience's benefit.

With Dr. Pollard's permission, we offer a chronology of the Iron Works, researched by his student team. Next spring, watch for details of a proposed CCHA field trip to the Clintonville Iron Works.

**1810** George Griswold erected a dam on the Ausable River and built a two fire forge.

**1811-12** Samuel Bullen came to Clintonville from New Hampshire. The first buildings erected were a store and a house for the bloomers.

**1824** The Peru Iron Company was organized on Nov. 11, with an initial capital of \$200,000. The Palmer Hill ore bed was discovered and mining began the next year.

**1825** The first cold-blast furnace was put into operation on April 25. Clintonville was incorporated.

**1826** Peru Iron Company president was Francis Saltus of New York City. The forges at that time stood on the east bank of the Ausable River. Ore seemed to have derived from the Arnold Hill and Winter ore beds. Miners' wages were \$12 per month, and charcoal was brought for \$.05 bushel. An engine house with a stone foundation was planned for the Arnold ore bed that year. A second cold-blast furnace was put into operation on October 5; the furnaces stood between the rolling mill and the foundry.

**1827** Use of the blast furnaces was discontinued. Neither furnace had operated continuously for more than 6 months.

**1828** The iron works, factories, mills, etc. of the Peru Iron Company were destroyed by fire on October 7. Sometime during this year, construction of a cable factory was ordered. A forge for making ship anchors had already been in operation.

**1828-29** Land on Palmer Hill was sold or mortgaged to Peru Iron Company, the ore to be processed at Clintonville.

**1829** The nail factory was erected at Clintonville.

**1830** A spring freshet swept away the forges on the east side of the river. The lower dam was built, along with the 1/2 mile long canal on the northwest side of the river, producing a fall of about fifteen feet at the lower end. New forges were built at the end of the canal.

**1833** There were sixteen forge fires at the Peru Iron Company; 14 for making bar iron, and two for making anchors. The forge structure was wooden. The nail factory had 15 nail making machines, turning out 600 tons of nails annually; the steel cutters on the machines had to be sharpened after about 3 hours of operation. Nails from Clintonville and Keeseville were sent through the lake and canal to Troy and New York City.

**1835** The company started separating ore by the water process about this year, using the brook running off Palmer Hill.

**1836** The forge burned to the ground on July 31. A new forge was built that same year. Dimensions of the structures were as follows: forge 236'x52', bellows house 37'x53', separating house 34'x56', nail factory 20'6"x28'6". Peru Iron Company installed a magnetic separator at the Palmer Hill mines, sending the ore to the Clintonville forges.

**1837** The ore separator (and ore roasting kilns) were located at Clintonville on the canal half way between the lower dam and the forge.

**1842** Clintonville contained 750 inhabitants, 100 dwelling houses, a Presbyterian and a Methodist church, a tavern, and 8 stores and groceries. The iron works consisted of a forge of 18 fires where they manufactured 1600 tons of iron annually; a rolling mill in which about 1800 tons market iron and nail plate were rolled annually; a nail factory in which 1200 tons of nails were manufactured per year; a chain cable factory, a pocket furnace, a machine shop, a grist mill and saw mill, which gave employment to about 150 mechanics and laborers.

**1856** A freshet in late September swept away the upper and lower dams, the saw mill, part of the nail factory, a stove mill, part of the rolling mill, and a great deal of other property.

**1860** Clintonville's population was now 855. The forge building contained 20 forge fires which produced 7500 tons annually. Only about 15 forges were run after the Civil War and until the forges closed in 1885.

**1865** Peru Iron Company became the Peru Steel & Iron Company on April 5, with an initial capital of \$800,000 (8000 shares @ \$100). The works had 16 fires, 8 water wheels, and 7 hammers at the lower forge, 4 fires, two water wheels, and one hammer at the upper forge. It also owned 15,000 acres of surrounding woodland, using 300 bushels of charcoal per gross ton of iron produced.

**1875** The forges used about 500 bushels of charcoal per day when in full operation. They required about 2 1/4 cords of wood for 100 bu. of charcoal, thus consuming over 112 cords of wood per day. On June 5, the saw mill, old nail factory, and grist mill burned down.

**1884** As of early November, the forge had been idle for about 3 months due to a bloomers' strike. Bloomers resumed work that month, but the depressed condition of the iron industry in general prompted closure of the company's mines by late November.

**1885** The Peru Steel & Iron Company folded. Its equipment and holdings were sold at auction.

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### DECEMBER IS DOLLHOUSE MONTH

If you have visited the museum or the Shop just recently, you've had a glimpse of a pretty Victorian doll house that is waiting for a small owner this Christmas. The third annual doll house drawing on December 17 is CCHA's last fundraiser of 1994, and we hope you will support the museum and the Association's many programs by participating in the event. Previous winners of the doll houses were the Bob Hammerslag family of Whallonsburg, NY, and Roger and Betty Hubbell of Washington, DC.

As CCHA president Mark McCullough says in his letter to the membership, "Don't worry about winning the doll house if you do not have an appropriate recipient in your family. There are so many deserving children in Clinton County that we would have no trouble in helping you find a home for the doll house."

Thanks are due to all our members and sponsors for their generosity. It plays such an important role in our mission of preserving the local history of Clinton County.

### PICTORIAL BOOK AVAILABLE

Thanks to a gift from Milo V. Stewart, curator of photographs for the New York State Historical Association, we are offering a limited number of copies of Historic Courthouses Of New York State, (\$15.00). Subtitled "18th & 19th Century Halls Of Justice Across the Empire State", the 1977 book is a wonderful compendium of essays and photographs. It includes a section on the old Clinton County Courthouse, completed in 1890, which served as the courthouse until it was replaced in 1976 by the Clinton County Government Center.

Available in mint condition is a copy of Three Centuries In Champlain Valley by Mrs. Tuttle, published in 1909 by the Saranac Chapter, D.A.R. (\$50.00). And a perfect gift for someone interested the Revolutionary War period is The American Journals of Lt. John Enys, 1976 (\$20).

## A NEW BOOK FOR CHRISTMAS

The Historical Association is pleased to announce that it will soon publish a new book jointly with the Essex County Historical Society. *British Naval Activity On Lake Champlain During The War Of 1812* by Dennis Lewis describes the events leading up to the Battle of Plattsburgh, the action in 1814 and the aftermath of the War. Thanks to this first-time partnership with ECHS, we will be able to bring out the book in time for Christmas. It will be just the thing for the person on your list who collects local history books or is especially interested in the naval and military history of Lake Champlain.

The pre-publication price is \$9.95 until January 1. After that date the softcover book will cost \$11.95. CCHA members' discount of 10% does not apply for the pre-publication order. The Lewis manuscript contains a number of little known or previously unpublished materials. Included in the book is a letter in the collections of the County Museum which illustrates the state of affairs in Plattsburgh during the early months of 1814. On April 6 Peter Sailyly wrote a letter to Thomas Macdonough, commander of the American fleet at Vergennes, VT, expressing the fears of village residents. ".....We are apprehensive that (the British) will pay us a visit in a few days and send us some of their heavy balls unless they choose to go first to the mouth of the Otter Creek to block you up." Macdonough added a note to the letter: "It will do no good to growl, but I observe that we are going to be in a desperate situation on the shores of this lake as long as the British can navigate it, stop all communication & plunder our shores."

From our late 20th century viewpoint it may be difficult to imagine the anxiety of a populace faced with imminent invasion by a foreign power. Yet it is not so long ago that the role of Plattsburgh Air Force Base as a strategic air control placed the city and county as major targets for intercontinental ballistic missiles. The end of the Cold War and the closure of PAFB challenges us to interpret those eras just as meaningfully as do the War of 1812 and the Battle of Plattsburgh.

CCHA is very pleased to have the cooperation of its sister institution in publishing this book. Author Dennis Lewis will be at our museum on Saturday, December 10 between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. to sign books. Books will also be available at the Essex County Historical Society. Call 873-6466 for museum store hours.

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**YES**, I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ copy(ies) of *British Naval Activity On Lake Champlain During The War of 1812* at the pre-publication price of \$9.95 each. Please include \$2.50 shipping/handling each and 7% NYS tax (New York residents only).

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to:  
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