

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

No. 320 PRESIDENT: Mark A. McCullough EDITOR: Helen W. Allan May 1995

MAY PROGRAM

A field trip has been planned for CCHA's May presentation. In place of our usual Monday evening program, we invite members to join Dr. Gordon Pollard, Dr. John Moravek and Mr. Levi White in an examination of the Clintonville iron mining site, the location of the Peru Iron Company which was established in 1824. The event is scheduled for May 6.

The purpose of the field trip is to see the area where Dr. Pollard and a team of SUNY undergraduates began excavation of the Clintonville site during the summer of 1994. Currently, Dr. Pollard is analyzing artifacts and data uncovered during the excavation. Some of the artifacts revealed in the excavation include fragments from the forge's fire box, brick fragments from forge stacks, miscellaneous iron pieces and the original anchor pins used for holding down the forge's triphammer. Members will recall that Dr. Pollard and his students presented a slide program on this subject to the Historical Association in November, 1994.

The program will begin at the site at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 6. Members wishing to car pool or request directions should call the museum (561-0340) no later than 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 4. We have arranged for one van to be available to transport approximately ten members to the site. The rendezvous location is the County Government Center parking area and we have permission from the County Legislature to leave cars in the parking lot. The van will leave Plattsburgh promptly at 10:00 a.m.

Members driving their own vehicles should take Exit 34 on the Northway and continue west on Rt. 9, heading for Ausable Forks. A paved road on the left just north of Clintonville leads to the lower road. Continue to the bridge where a scout will give directions.

Sturdy shoes, socks and long pants are recommended for the half mile walk to the site. (By scheduling the trip in early May we expect to beat the poison ivy season.) Our rain date is Sunday, May 21. A last minute weather check on Saturday, May 6 can be made by calling 561-2915 no later than 9:00 a.m.

The Historical Association wishes to thank Mrs. Marion Arthur for permission to use her property.

A CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER

In 1911, the State of New York published a report on the Champlain Tercentenary of 1909. Describing the evolution of the project, the report commented on the human desire to mark anniversaries of historic events with appropriate celebrations. Thus, "the people of the Champlain valley, desirous of suitably observing the 300th anniversary of its discovery, early conceived the idea of an historical celebration, which should combine historical or symbolic pageantry with appropriate religious and literary features". Both New York and Vermont had been impressed by the earlier Champlain Tercentenary celebration in the Province of Quebec.

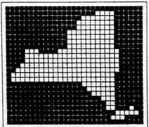
The report conceded that Vermont was the first to take official action in the Champlain Valley. In November, 1906 Governor Proctor read a joint resolution appointing a commission for the 300th anniversary of the discovery of the lake. (*Ed.: The resolution might have inserted "by a white man", since Native Americans had inhabited the valley for thousands of years.*) New York followed up quickly by appointing a commission in April, 1907 which included Alonson T. Dominy of Beekmantown and John H. Booth of Plattsburgh.

Events began to move at a regular pace. At a joint meeting held at Hotel Champlain in early September, 1907, Gov. Hughes of New York, Gov. Proctor of Vermont and most of the New York Commission were in attendance. "A tour of inspection (*of possible celebration sites*) on Lake Champlain having been determined upon, members of the two Commissions left Hotel Champlain on the morning of September 7, 1907, on two yachts." An interesting interlude apparently occurred at Windmill Point when a number of French gentlemen from Quebec arrived, seeking confirmation of the rights in seignories granted to them before the conquest of Canada and later found to extend south of the Canadian boundary line.

By early December a proposed plan for celebrations and commemorations was presented at a joint meeting with the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C. New York and Vermont confirmed that both states would make suitable appropriations to meet the costs of the celebrations. Invitations would be extended to the governments of France, Britain and Canada to be present as guests of the U.S. Government. Just before Christmas, 1907 a joint meeting in Albany determined that "the tercentenary of the discovery of Lake Champlain and the historic events following during the Colonial and Revolutionary periods, and also of the War of 1812, be celebrated in an appropriate and fitting manner in July 1909, in the valley of Lake Champlain, with appropriate exercises to be determined upon by the Commission having that matter in charge".

During the next two years federal and state appropriations were worked out and legislation was conceived. On April 22, 1908 an Act was passed in the New York State Senate and Assembly appointing a Commission of eleven members "to plan and conduct a public celebration of the tercentenary". The members would serve without pay, but they would be reimbursed for expenses incurred during the performance of their official duties. Members from Clinton County included: Alonson T. Dominy, Beekmantown (*who died later that year without having served on the Commission*); Louis C. LaFontaine, Champlain; H. Wallace Knapp, Mooers, and John H. Booth and John B. Riley of Plattsburgh. The final formal New York State Tercentenary Commission included local citizens Knapp, chairman; Booth and Riley, and William R. Weaver of Peru.

State of the Arts



NYSCA

(To be continued in the June issue)

New York State Council on the Arts supports the museum's programs. Let's make sure that our state legislature continues to support NYSCA.

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

Now that the road repair season is here, we may reflect on the way it was in Clinton County in 1838. The Highway Commissioners required a half yearly report from the overseers of the project. The official form read thus:

THE COMMISSIONERS OF HIGHWAYS for the town of xxxx request that every overseer of the roads will observe strictly the following warrant:

- 1st. You must repair and keep in order the highways in your district.
- 2nd. You must assess all persons removing into your district, and all whose names have been omitted in this assessment, in proportion to their real and personal property.
- 3rd. Should the present assessment not be sufficient for repairing and keeping in order the roads and bridges in your district you are hereby required to make out an assessment in the same proportion as nearly as may be, of one third in addition to this assessment.
- 4th. You will cause every person who comes to work on the highways, to work at least eight hours a day; and see that all substitutes are able bodied men.
- 5th. Once in every month, until the first of December next you will cause all loose stones lying in the beaten track of the road to be removed. You will also cause the noxious weeds on each side of the road to be cut down or destroyed once before the first day of July, and again before the first day of September, and cause the monuments erected as the boundaries of the highways to be kept and renewed, so that the extent of the roads may be known.
- 6th. All roads which have not been worked for six years last past you will not work upon.
- 7th. You are particularly cautioned in no case to make a causeway of logs, if it is practicable, with the work assessed, to make it, by ditching deep on each side of the road, and throwing the dirt into the middle of the road.
- 8th. On the second Tuesday next preceding the annual town meeting you must render an account in writing to one of us, verified by your oath, and containing: 1st. The names of all persons assessed in your district. 2nd. The names of those who have actually worked on the highways, with the number of days they have worked. 3rd. The names of all those who have been fined and the sums in which they have been fined. 4th. The names of all those who have commuted, and the manner in which the monies arising from fines and commutations have been expended by you; and the balance remaining in your hands you will then pay over to us.

The Clinton County Highway Commissioners on the 10th day of April, 1838 were Elisha Allen, Calvin Durand and Isaac Lyon. Listed in the town of Peru with the respective number of days they worked were: Job Sherman (7); Asa Fuller (2); Peter Hallock (5); Benjamin Sherman (15); John Banker (2); Eleazer Nichols (16); Daniel Nichols (6); Arden Banker (37), and Amas(a) Jacobs (5).

Several such reports and other documents were received recently. These manuscript materials will be transferred on long-term deposit to Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh where they will be made available to bona fide researchers.

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IMPORTANT ACQUISITION OF DOCUMENTS

An important reception was held April 7 at Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh. CCHA Board members and friends were on hand to applaud the Historical Association's important acquisition of Platt family documents and related materials, given by Margaret Myers Byrne (Mrs. Wayne H.) and her family. Accompanying his parents was Timothy Byrne who traveled from Scarborough, Maine to attend the ceremony. In keeping with the Association's policy of placing its manuscript collections on long-term deposit at Special Collections, the papers were recently transferred to the SUNY archive. They have been cataloged and will be accessible to scholars and researchers of local history.

Consisting of eleven boxes plus ephemera, the Byrne collection includes materials relating to Zephaniah, Nathaniel, Jonas, William Pitt and Hannah Platt, and their families; materials relating to Moss Kent Platt; to Margaret Ann Freligh (step-great-grandmother of Mrs. Byrne), Margaret S. Freligh and Elizabeth Freligh Platt; to Michael Peter Myers; John L. Stetson, and numerous other early residents of Clinton County. Of particular interest is a lifelong correspondence between Margaret Ann Freligh of Plattsburgh and Elizabeth Smith Martin who settled in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Joe Swinyer, head of Special Collections, has been working with the Brown County Historical Society to acquire copies of the letters in its collections, thus completing a fascinating correspondence between two 19th-century women.

Materials from the Byrne gift may be loaned for display with permission of the Historical Association's curator or the librarian in charge of Special Collections. Photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission for publication must be obtained in writing from CCHA's Board of directors. The Byrne family may also arrange additional publication review, in cooperation with the Historical Association.