

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

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CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 34

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

March, 1967

The Next Meeting

of the Association will be held on Monday evening, March 6, at 8 p.m. in the Association rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker will be Mr. Carroll Lonergan, author and owner of Fort Mount Hope in Ticonderoga, who will talk on "The Restoration at Fort Mount Hope and the Defense System of the Ticonderoga Area." He will also bring some of his artifacts. The public is cordially invited.

What No Zip Code

Can you spell "Chazy" ten different ways? Or twenty? Would you believe forty-seven?

Among the several hundred letters addressed to Pliny Moore at his new settlement at Champlain are found many varieties of addresses. Between the years 1788 and 1796, before the establishment of a regular post office, the settlement was usually identified as being "on the River Chazy", with the following variations of spelling:

Chazy, Chazie, Chazey, Chazee, Chazzy, Chasie, Chassy, Chaszy, Chausee, Chaussee, Chezy, Casy, Charzy, Charzie, Charzey, Charsze, Chaersy, Charze, Chareze, Cherzy, Cherze, Shase, Shazy, Sharse, Sharze, Sharsee, Sharsea, Sharzea, Sharza, Sharsie, Sharzie, Sharge, Sherzy, Sherze, Shersey, Sherzey, Sharsye, Sherse, Shersea, Shersee, Sheazee, Shrsie, Jerzey, Jashie, Zasee, Zaszie, aShaze.

The letter with the "aShaze" address is interesting because of its phonetic spelling:

"River a Lacole may 17 1792
Mr Plinie Mor Esqur
River aShaze
Sir Ples to Sand the Number of the
Deferant Qualitys of plank & Bords &
Lath and the Deferant prises of the hole
What Ever the Deferantcy Shold Be in
the pay I Will make you Sadsifaxon as
Sun as posible your humble Sarv'r
Peter McAllam"

For exactness of address, a letter from New Jersey in 1792 left little doubt as to its destination:

"Mr Pliny Moor lives at or near the
first falls on the Great River Chazy,
at or near Lake Champlain, in the
State of New York."

Among the several thousand letters in the Pliny Moore collection is found no indication that any letters were lost or unduly delayed, due to faulty addresses!

C.W.M.

Courtship From A Mining Town

The beautiful and cultivated May Collins attracted a host of male admirers. She lived with her family in the Addoms-Collins homestead off the Turnpike in West Plattsburgh. She was the daughter of Alonzo Collins and great-granddaughter of John Addoms, pioneer settler. At about 25 years of age met for a few times Fred Johnson from Hemmingford, Quebec. She last saw him in February 1891 before he started west. For the next 13 years, without again meeting, they carried on a regular and eventually romantic correspondence.

Johnson looked for gold in British Columbia, Colorado and the Klondike. Nowhere was he successful, so that by the time he left the Yukon for Vancouver in 1903 he was ready to work at almost anything, although still dreaming of sudden wealth if not from a gold strike then from a timber deal or inside information about the terminus of the Grand Trunk Railroad.

For several years Fred's letters were addressed to "My dear Miss Collins". They were friendly, impersonal and descriptive documents. In 1896 he ventured to write "My dear Miss May". In 1898 it was "My dear May" and the following year there was an occasional "Dear May". Late in 1899 he began to proclaim his love from Dawson City. Whether he had loved her from the start, as he declared, or whether distance and loneliness had created an illusion, it is impossible to say. However, between 1899 and 1904 Fred wooed May fervently. To her protestations that if she joined him she would be a burden, Fred asserted that he could not ask her to share his present way of life. To his offers of marriage and a little cabin after he had struck it rich, she expressed doubts about the depth of her affection for him. Always promising that next season he would come for her, Fred never found the time to interrupt his unsuccessful ventures.

His letters are especially informative concerning his Klondike experiences. He went to the Yukon in 1898 when the trail in from Skagway was crowded with people and animals of all kinds. He was surprised to see so many wives along, "some with short skirts and long rubber boots, others with bloomers and others with full suits of men's clothes, but all of them were working very hard". Dawson City was the filthiest mining camp he had ever seen. During his first winter there, typhoid and scurvy were rampant. He was scandalized by the high prices, with sugar at 25 cents a pound and eggs at \$1.50 a dozen. In 1900 he dropped and broke his teeth, and a new set cost him \$100. On January 12, 1901 the temperature dropped to -62° and he said it had been to -72°. It was a rough life from which he earned little except when he hired out to others. Nevertheless, gold was found by the lucky ones and Fred lingered until 1903, always expecting that he too would make a fortune, after which he could go for his "dear May".

Fred descriptions of Klondike gold-mining are permanently valuable:

"We find a place supposed to contain gold and it may be at a depth of 15 or 20 feet from the surface, as the gold, being heavy, works down through the gravel to bed rock. After finding a likely place, we sink a hole, usually 4 feet by 6, and on top there is likely 6 or 8 feet of muck, sometimes much more, that we pick out until we come to the gravel. Then we have to thaw the ground by building fires in the hole and then work down to bed rock, where we may find only a few inches of dirt that will pay, or may find 5 or 6 feet, and of course if the latter it is a big pay streak; and with that amount of gravel, if it did not average more than 15 cents to the pan it would pay well as when the shaft is sunk we begin to drift or work all around the shaft, and can get out a lot of dirt and the ground being frozen, we can work a large piece of ground out without danger of its caving in.

"We pile all that will pay out on the surface until spring when we have plenty of water to wash it out, which is done by sluicing—that means putting in boxes, say 16 inches wide and a foot deep with pieces laid across at short distances in the bottom to hold the gold, and through these boxes you turn a stream of water which washes away the dirt and stones while the gold is caught on the slats in the bottom of the boxes. After shoveling in for say a day, you turn the water off and clean up your boxes—that is, take out the gold, which will have more or less black sand or magnetic iron mixed with it. You then put it in the pan and work off all the sand you can and then after drying it take a magnet and pass it over the gold, which extracts the rest of it, leaving your gold clean. There are some places where you can work in summer where it is not too deep to bed rock, and you can strip off the surface down to the pay gravel, and then it is nice work as the sun thaws the ground and the dirt does not have to be

handled so much."

Courtship of Fred's kind is unlikely to be successful while a continent separates him from his beloved, especially since he was only one of her swains. One wonders how much during all those years either Fred or May really wanted to meet again. So far as is known, they never did, and May died unmarried many years later in Florida.

ASE, from letters owned by
George Chasolen of Plattsburgh

The Union Mutual Improvement Society

The Union Mutual Improvement Society was the optimistic name of an organization of the young people of Ausable and Peru in 1862. It held bi-weekly meetings at the Union schoolhouse in Peru, devoted to "the unlimited and unconfined benefits in the composition of essays and papers, the practice of elocution, and declamations, with occasional debates or discussions". There were Arnolds, Greens, Smiths, Browns, Harknesses, Keeses, Heyworths, Hallocks, Bentleys, Arthurs and many others in attendance, sometimes as many as 65.

Readings were volunteered by about ten members at each meeting, and came from a wide range of patriotic, historic or inspirational sources. In addition, one person was appointed to prepare an original address each time. In their addresses these earnest young people sought to outdo each other in the fervor of their idealism and exhortations for improvement.

On the Civil War, then raging: "This war, now apparently the greatest curse on the land, may prove the greatest boon you could have desired. How will the magnanimous souls of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson and John Quincy Adams rejoice over the developing strength and stability of the Republic they rocked in the cradle—when slavery, war and intemperance are boldly banished from the land."

On Southern claims of racial superiority over the North: "I point you to the grand ethnological fact that the Northern man is smarter in every way than the indolent southerner. Compare any of the southern nations, as Mexico, Spain, Italy and Turkey with the United States, England, France and Germany. Where do science, literature and all the improvements of the age flourish? Then which are the most capable of governing, the slow but sure Northerners or the hasty, fiery Southerners?" On the Southern aristocracy: "It remains for us to say whether we will let it regain its sway once more and draw us back to the dark ages for an indefinite time to come."

On individual goodness: there were repeated appeals for more enlightened minds and spirits, and for model personal lives. "The influence of Voltaire, Tom Paine, Mahomet and this civil war will injuriously influence many millions. While that of Martin Luther, George Fox, John Wesley and the Apostles will be felt on the side of right and truth through all ages."

On the destiny of the United States: when we have purged ourselves of party spirit, sectarian life and satanic demons, including slavery, "we shall no longer be mocked by other nations and may then claim that ours is truly an asylum for the oppressed and downtrodden of all countries." (This was many years before the general recognition of America as a place of refuge.) From another on this subject: "I beseech you to contemplate with firm resolutions the destiny of your country—to act up to the glorious part assigned to you, and determine that nothing shall be wanting on your side to prevent the accomplishment of the full development of Christian principles and government portrayed and to be perfected in the Anglo-Saxon race, revived and extended over the Western world". (This idea of racial superiority and mission is also years ahead of its full development.)

(Archives, SUC Library, Plattsburgh)

Riddle of the Month

The February riddle was most nearly answered by Miss Betty Collins of Plattsburgh in all its parts. She recognized that all the listed men were doctors. She also identified the home towns of nearly all of them: Silas Goodrich of Peru; Benjamin J. Mooers of Plattsburgh; Nathan Carver of Chazy; Ralph P. Allen of the Union in Ausable; and Oliver Davidson of Plattsburgh.

New riddle: How many slaves were there in Clinton County by the census of 1800, and what was the last date they could legally be held as slaves there?

CORRECTIONS IN "PIONEER HOMES OF CLINTON COUNTY"

Discerning readers of our publication, "Pioneer Homes of Clinton County", have discovered some errors of fact which the editors of the "Notes" wish to present to its readers.

Mrs. Benjamin Allen points out in the listing on page 5 of the homes still in the hands of descendants of the original owner, and in the description of the Fuller house, number 136 on page 77, that this home is still in the hands of descendants. Mrs. George Bragg was Doris Fuller. In connection with the Durand homestead (number 25, page 21), Mrs. Allen says that about 1850, Theron Chamberlain bought the farm, the house having stood empty for some time. This was known as the "Chamberlain Farm" for years. Theron's daughter Josie married Luther Hagar, and it has been occupied by the Hagar family since that time.

Mr. Leclair Smith, curator of the Kent-Delord House, suggests several changes in the text for house number 1 on page 9. This house is chartered as the "Kent-Delord House", and the property is owned by the Kent-Delord House through a trust fund administered by the Miner Foundation. President Monroe, NOT President Madison, was a guest there in 1817. The author of the book, by designating the building as the Bailey-Delord House, sought to show that James Kent has been given too much credit for the few months that his wife owned the house by inheritance. The Baileys built and occupied it until Mr. Delord bought it in 1810.

Mrs. Eleanor Spaulding of Ausable points out that the wrong house is pictured in number 164, page 90, as the Stephen Taylor house. The real Taylor house stands nearby, is owned by William Davey, but first appears on the assessment rolls of 1796 instead of 1799, as indicated.

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Miss Saily Warren, Secretary
3 Cumberland Avenue
Plattsburgh, New York