

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NO. 356

Shirley Koester, Editor

Sept/Oct 1998

The Next Meeting

will be held on Monday, October 5, 1998, at 7:30 PM in the first floor meetingroom of the Clinton County Government Center, 137 Margaret Street, Plattsburgh. The topic will be **How to Write a Genealogy - A Soliloquy**; Fuller Allen and friends. This will be a panel discussion to help you get started.

Confiance Anchor

Clinton County residents may visit the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum **free of charge** from 10 AM to 5 PM Sunday October 4. This will provide an opportunity to view the recently recovered anchor from the HMS Confiance. This frigate was captured during the Battle of Plattsburgh, September 11, 1814. The Maritime Museum is located Basin Harbor, near Vergennes, Vermont. For further information call (802) 475-2022.

The Clinton County Historical Association is the lead agency in this endeavor. We will continue to monitor the conservation and eventual return of this important artifact to Plattsburgh. It is anticipated that this project will take two years at a cost of \$53,000. We encourage your ownership of this piece of history through donations to the Anchor Fund, c/o CCHA.

Annual Dinner Meeting will

take place November 14, 1998, at the Angell College Center, SUNY Plattsburgh; Cocktails at 6:00 PM, dinner at 7:30 PM. Price: \$25. The menu will be "Montcalm's table". A repast to delight and tempt fickle appetites, rounded off with a sumptuous dessert, created for the Director by Frances Blanchard of the Chateau Ramezay, "La Belle Americaine", being a parfait of marinated black cherries, topped with cream, blueberries....and more cream. Please make your reservations soon. Our dinner speaker, Sid Couchey, purports to be a close friend of "Champy", and will present "Up Close and Personal with 'Champ' and Sid". Sid, was formerly an artist for Harvey Comics creating such characters as: Richie Rich, Little Dot and Little Lotta.

A letter from Plattsburgh, September 16, 1814, written by Surgeon J. Claude, who later fought a duel with General Scott at New Orleans. In 1895 the original letter was owned by Dr. Gordon Claude. A copy sent to Michael Peter Myers has found its way into the CCHA collections.

Dear Brother

At length the fate of Plattsburgh, the Campaign, and I believe our Country is decided: Plattsburgh is safe, the war past, and the action on the lake our all rested—and the fleet fallen, our Army, I'm afraid could not have resisted the force which would have been brought against us: And if so, the Country would have been ravaged to Albany, perhaps to York; nay, I seriously believe from intelligence from the South that we should have been again reduced to Provincials.

The strength of the British Army from the best information we have been able to collect was from fifteen to twenty thousand and judging from the Deserters I have seen, as fine troops as ever were brought to the field. The strength of our Army say two thousand, (morning report 1700) independent of militia—our fortifications were as strong, as the time for preparation allowed, and the nature of the soil would admit, —within them hearts as brave as ever filled bosom. But alas! alas! two to thirty is fearful odds; had our fleet fallen we should have died within our intrenchments, and left as have the Sons of Switzerland, our ruins for our monument: Heaven decreed otherwise — our forts are standing, and their defenders still upon the land of the living.

The assault upon Plattsburgh commenced on the 6th and ended on the 11th, both days inclusive. The first five were passed in constant skirmishings — a small creek separating the parties. We lost some few brave fellows — the enemy I am convinced many more. To this kind of warfare we were becoming familiar — it was sport for our gallant young heroes, many of whom could not be prevented from occasionally crossing the Bridge and bringing off articles from the shore in possession of the British Army, really in the very face of death. The conduct was rash, yet still I could scarcely censure it seriously. A soldier without courage is a foe. On the morning of the 11th, betwixt the hours of 8 and 9 the Imperial flag of our Artillery began — and about ten the fleets (ours at anchor) were almost yard arm and yard arm — their heavy ship laying alongside our sweet little Brig. By heavens her Commander should be a commodore. When I look at the difference of size, I trembled for the little Jewel, but she was true American, and damme she poured it in right twixt wind and water, till the coillossus vomited again. They lay thus pouring in broadside for broadside for about an hour and a half, when I saw the little lightning bug hauling off—Not knowing positively the situation of the Ship, I felt a sort of cold thrill run through me — but I was soon warmed again, for in a few minutes, the Ships flag walked

down. The Brig did it damme — then huzza for the Brig and her Commander and her gallant crew. This settled the business for the British Brig was so preciously peppered she couldn't get off. So says I to myself all's just as slick as sea. The fleets ours and the Army is dish'd and so it was; though they kept sauting our batteries with Bombs, Rockets, &c, until about two o'clock, when all was still as the silence which reigns through nature after a violent Summer's storm: not even the rain is heard to patter on the peasants cot. The 13th gave the remains of their Commodore and some of his brace compatriots to the grave — peace to their ashes, and if their deaths should purchase the world's peace, they have indeed fallen gloriously eaven grant it may be so — but you know my failing, a little old womanish or so, a stickler for the truth of dreams. But even under their impression, and they have left a dark shadow o're the crown of Britain (Boney's diadem is down). I venture to hope the world's storm is past — if so, its millnium must shortly begin.

A word or two of our patriotic militia. They are men and have done their duty, have done wonders. They met the dark hour like Heroes and made our woods rattle again. The British troops will not shortly forget Vermont or rather Vermont militiamen or mob men as they term them. Damn bush fighting say they and bless it says I when our peasantry in their present state have to war — it is their element, whilst they move in they are at home, and sure of Victory. Nothing they say can out hunt them or out shoot 'em, and they've made their words good, for they did pepper the Veterans of Spain and France, till the shady groves event became too hot for 'em. Much having been said of the barbarity of British Warfare, I hold it justice to state that they have left monuments of mercy in that portion of Plattsburgh, which was in their possession which can never be forgotten. Private property as far as possible has been respected, and the Village returned into the hands of its owners in as fair a state as they left it, save a few houses which imperious necessity demanded the levelling of. An officer betrayed by the villainy or cowardice of his waiter became their prisoner & he was treated like a soldier and immediately paroled. In short their conduct has been truly noble and has impressed me more fully with the belief that they are as a people dreadfully slandered. Would to Heaven a Union could take place: so generous an Enemy must prove an invaluable friend. In the return of killed and wounded you wil meet with the name of Lieut. Rusk, he lived and died a soldier. Would he had fallen in a general conflict. Fate decreed otherwise. he was, like self, on guard at the Village, and fell by a random shot form the opposite re. To see a soldier dying produces feeling which cannot be expressed — Our Country seems to take possession of our bosom and whilst she drops the tears of separation feels a pulse of joy, which says with such sons my freedom is invulnerable, her dying hero no sweet response sighs dulce est pro patria more.

You will doubtless think me extravagant whilst expressing a fear

of our Country being again reduced to provincials, or thinking it possible that an Army of twenty or thirty thousand men could force a passage from Canada to York. Could you witness as I have the state of our blessed regularly disciplined Troops. though the State of York is invaded, I have not seen or heard of a force coming to her relief. When facts are thus, what have we not to fear? Our Regular Army is but a shadow for the defense of our Country, and our Militia in an open country weak indeed — then my dear D. think not my expressions wild, they are the result of experience. The Current has been turned by the loss of their Fleet and notwithstanding Southern discomfitures, I have the most sanguine hopes of a happy and honorable termination of the war.

With respects to all friends, believe me
Yours affectionately

J.C.

CCA Trustees appointed

Shirley Koester Director/Curator of the Clinton County Historical Association at their July 16, 1998 board meeting. Shirley, a former trustee, has been serving as interim director for the past eight months. She comes from a museum background which includes The Friends Guild of Herkimer Home Historic Site of New York. Through this involvement she received extensive instruction creating costumes, interpreting history, and curating artifacts.

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