



North Country Notes

Issue #407

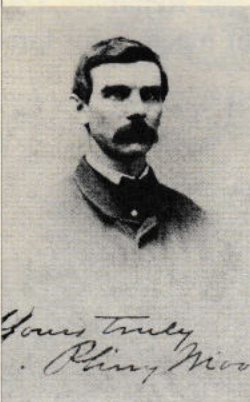
Spring 2011

Clinton County Civil War Sesquicentennial 2011-2015 by Carol Blakeslee-Collin

The Clinton County Historical Association will be commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the American Civil War from 2011 to 2015. While much of the nation will celebrate places like Antietam, Bull Run, and Gettysburg, our county has its own special history to commemorate, especially given the disproportionately high number of Clinton County men who served in the War of Rebellion CCHA has formed a Civil War Sesquicentennial committee that will to be planning and organizing a number of special events, lectures, and exhibits over the next five years. Their first major project is to create a book from each town in Clinton County of the men who served in the war, their regiment, and what happened to them during the course of the war. If you would like to assist with this and other Sesquicentennial projects, please email CCHA at director@clintoncountyhistorical.org.

When Lincoln was elected in November of 1860, there were thirty-three states in the Union and

Kansas was about to become the thirty-fourth. By the time of Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, there were twenty-seven states and from the White House rebel flags could be seen across the Potomac River. Lincoln's inaugural address made clear his opinion of the southern states' secession, "Plainly, the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy. A majority, held in restraint by constitu-



Pliny Moore courtesy of David Patrick

tional checks and limitations...is the only true sovereign of a free people."

After the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12th and Lincoln's call for troops to put down the rebellion, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee seceded bringing the number of states in the Confederacy to eleven. On April 16th, New York Governor Edwin D. Morgan signed a bill calling for 30,000 to enlist for a two year term. Each regiment would have a roster of 780 with ten companies per regiment. That same afternoon in Plattsburgh, Pliny



Franklin Palmer

Moore, grandson of the pioneer settlers Pliny Moore and General Benjamin Mooers, and Franklin Palmer began to raise a company of volunteers. Palmer owned a general store bought from his father William who was a successful merchant with woolen and cotton mills near Bridge Street. Moore and Palmer had the following circular printed and distributed in Plattsburgh and surrounding towns.

Citizens Take Notice

The citizens of Plattsburgh are requested to meet at the Court House, Wednesday evening, the 17th, to take into consideration the matter of immediate action in sustaining the Constitution and the laws of our country.

Clinton County Civil War continued

Also for the purpose of forming a volunteer company in this town, to be attached to a regiment organized in the county. A general attendance is requested.

At the meeting, Palmer was the first to sign his name followed by 34 others. They then proceeded to elect Palmer captain, Royal Corbin first lieutenant, and Pliny Moore second lieutenant. Later the company (Company C, 16th Regiment) increased to its full complement of noncommissioned officers, musicians, and sixty-four privates. A second company was quickly raised led by John L. Stetson, Ransom M. Pierce first lieutenant, and Charles H. Bentley second lieutenant. The local soldiers selection of their military leaders, all of whom came from wealthy families and held respectable occupations, reflected the community's enthusiasm at the start of the war and also their somewhat antiquated, romantic vision of warfare. The 96th N.Y. Regiment was organized in Plattsburgh and mustered into service in March 1862 and the 118th Regiment in August of '62. It was a similar story in every town in Clinton County.



Thomas Moore

Thomas Moore of Ellenburg Depot was sixteen and his brother Walter was seventeen when they enlisted in Company K, the 96th New York Regiment for the a three year term. During their trip from Plattsburgh to Washington, D.C. they marched down Broadway in New York City to martial music and patriotic fireworks and enjoyed a fine dinner from the ladies of Philadelphia. According

to a letter from Thomas, their arrival in Washington was not so pleasant.

We got there in the night, mud, mud everywhere. We were marched into a long shed, a good deal like our western cattle sheds, boarded up and down with board roof...and mud about six inches deep for a floor. We had the privilege of lying down, sitting up or standing up. If I remember right, most



Walter Moore

of us stood up. Next morning we were marched into another long shed with a table about two feet wide running through the center, the whole length for breakfast. We were forced inward, and in front of every man was a piece of bread and a piece of salt horse, and a tin cup filled with coffee made in the kettle the salt horse was boiled in. Well, we didn't eat much breakfast, but almost every man became homesick.

As part of the Grand Army of the Republic, Thomas and Walter went on to fight together for three



Thomas & Sarah Moore Home in Ellenburg Depot

Clinton County Civil War continued

hard years in heavy and costly engagements including Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks (twice), Blackwater, Kinston, Whitehall, Goldsboro, Cold Harbor, Fort Harrison, Drury's Bluff, Petersburg, and the fall of Richmond.

Meanwhile when the 16th Regiment's term of enlistment expired in 1863, the regiment disbanded. Some re-enlisted and some returned to Clinton County. On the home front, people had expected a quick Union victory and few casualties. The news from the front, the growing list of dead, and the return after two years of the pride of Plattsburgh limping and wounded had left people bewildered. But the machinery of war demanded more men. The draft and the worst was still to come.

According to letters from the Moore brothers, Thomas endured typhoid fever, Walter was wounded, and Lincoln reviewed their regiment. In September, 1862, Colonel Fairman who had organized their regiment was court-martialed and relieved of command for "unceasing and tyrannical abuse," only to have their new commander Charles O. Gray killed in action some months later. Thomas describes seeing their fellow soldiers on picket captured and sent to Confederate prisons. They witnessed lines of surgeons amputating limbs followed by mass burials of the dead.

They dug a trench about four hundred feet long, six feet deep, and six feet wide...They laid them...til they were three deep, then dug another trench. There were three brothers; two belonged to our Regiment and one to the 118th New York. Two of these three brothers were killed and Joseph saw them lay in the trench, like so many cattle, with out a blanket or anything but the dirt for a covering. It very near broke poor Joseph's heart.

In the fall of 1864, joined by the 118th NY Regiment at the second battle of Fair Oaks, they saw half the



Courtesy of The Franklin County Historical and Museum Society

men around them fall, including their colonel, Stephen Moffit, who lost his leg helping a wounded private from the field.

Finally after three and half years, the Moore brothers were mustered out and returned home to Ellenburg. Like many young veterans who had gotten a chance to see the world beyond the North Country, Thomas Moore moved west with his wife Sarah (Robena Gibson) Moore and settled in Nebraska in the 1870's.

The four years of Civil War glimpsed above involved the entire nation. Throughout the nation units like the 16th, 96th, and 118th Regiments returned home wounded and a fraction of their original muster. Over 600,000 soldiers died during the long war, a number equivalent to losing six million soldiers today.

Note: This article could not have been done without the previous research of Vickie Evans, Bill Glidden, and Darren Phaneuf. More recently Ellenburg Depot resident Richard Moore saw the CCHA request for Civil War information in the Press Republican and loaned us Thomas Moore's account of the Civil War, the letters of Thomas and Walter, and their photos. Richard Moore is Thomas and Walter Moore's great nephew.

Lincoln & the Plattsburgh Republican by Carol Blakeslee-Collin

A look at what local newspapers thought of Abraham Lincoln as a candidate reveals much about the partisanship and mindset of Clinton County's establishment newspaper at the time. But first some background about the political situation and "campaigning" in 1860. First there were only two ways to reach voters, by voice in debates or lectures or through the press. Over the years, Lincoln became an excellent manipulator of the press and public perception but when he was elected in 1860, he was viewed as an accidental president, everyone's second choice at the Republican convention in Chicago. Up against the frontrunner, New York Senator William Seward, Lincoln was chosen because he was a moderate from the moderate center of the middle-western state of Illinois which the party needed to win. Once nominated, Lincoln pledged that the spread of slavery must be halted in the territories but he also believed that the Constitution forbid presidential action against slavery where it existed in the states. Still the Republican platform was viewed as so extreme that South Carolina warned that it would secede if Lincoln was elected.

After Lincoln was nominated by the Republican Party, the Democratic Party split between northern and southern factions. After breaking up into contesting conventions, Stephen Douglas was the nominee of the northern wing and Senator John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky was nominated by the southern wing of the party. The remnants of the Whig party nominated John Bell of Tennessee. The split in the Democratic Party opened the door for the new Republican Party and allowed Lincoln to capture the White House with a mere 40 percent of the popular vote.

Newspapers in Lincoln's day would make our partisan political language look tame, mostly because the papers were affiliated with political parties and their mouthpieces. Newspaper mastheads with words such as "Republican," "Democrat," and "Whig" pointed toward those affiliations. Because of such partisanship, many small towns frequently

had two or more newspapers. In Clinton County in 1860, the most influential paper was the *Plattsburgh Republican*. Founded in 1811, the paper first espoused the views of Jefferson and Madison's Democratic-Republican Party or the Republican Party. A faction of that party evolved into the Democratic Party when Andrew Jackson came onto the national scene. One of the results in Clinton County was that the fifty-year old *Plattsburgh Republican* published decidedly Democratic views.

Newspapers at the time were also utilizing the new telegraph technology to provide their readers with accounts of events across the country. An example is an October 6, 1860 article about Lincoln in the *Plattsburgh Republican*, from Iowa's *Dubuque Herald*. The story led with a recount of a speech from William T. Seward who was viewed as the "real head of the Republican Party."

Mr. Seward neither intimated or claimed that Mr. Lincoln possessed any qualities, capabilities, or experience, which fitted him to wield the administration of this great Republic. He had not a word to say in his favor during the entire two hours which he occupied in delivering his address. And Mr. Seward's example in this respect is followed by all the big and little guns of their party—and by their presses also. In vain have they been called upon to present the claims of Mr. Lincoln to the suffrages of the people. But one and all, they are as dumb upon the subject as "stocks and stones."

To bring the matter nearer home, we have called upon the local Tory organ to inform the people: What has Abraham Lincoln done? What public services has he performed? What important act did he do while he was in Congress? What important act did he do when he was a member of the Illinois Legislature? What evidence has he given that he is capable of fulfilling the office of the President of the United States? And we have repeated these questions but have failed to get a response.

Lincoln & the Plattsburgh Republican

We have stated some of the services of Abraham Lincoln in aiding and abetting the swindling operations of Illinois Wild Cat Banks and in resisting the efforts of the people of that state to compel them to resume specie payment which Abraham Lincoln carried to the extent of jumping out the window of the State House, when the doors were ordered to be closed to prevent members from leaving, and thus destroying a quorum to do business, which services ought to be good reasons why the people should refuse to support him for the Presidency.

Now is it not remarkable that no Republican can be found to say one word in favor of the candidate of his party, except that he is "honest old Abe." ... We have in vain tried to call out this information, and we confess that if hundreds of intelligent Republicans whom we have in mind, consent to vote for a candidate who has in no way shown himself capable of filling the station, and who is so barren of qualifications that the leaders who put him in nomination, dare not even speak of them, and when the same leaders refuse to tell how, and in what manner, they propose to carry out the Republican policy, if under these circumstances such men vote for Abraham Lincoln, we shall lose a portion of our faith in humanity.

On the other side of the political spectrum in Plattsburgh, the smaller *Plattsburgh Sentinel* represented the views of the Republican Party. Unfortunately the *Plattsburgh Sentinel* offices were burned in the Plattsburgh fire of 1867 and no record of their vigorous support of Abraham Lincoln seems to have survived. The other major industrial town, Keeseville, had two newspapers: the *Northern Standard* edited by Wendell Lansing a staunch abolitionist and Republican, and the *Essex County Republican* which also espoused the Republican cause. Again and most unfortunately, almost all the editions of the *Northern Standard* and the *Essex County Republican* were lost in a fire in Keeseville in 1877. *The Post* of Elizabethtown in their November 2,

1860 edition just prior to the Presidential election give us a sense of the influence and importance of the Keeseville newspapers.

Great Excitement and Alarm! An Avalanche of Speeches THE REPUBLICANS SCARED

The Keeseville papers announce a long string of speeches and speakers this week. All the speaking talent of the party, in the county and adjacent is sounding the alarm.

What is the matter friends? Do you hear the "moving of the waters?" Do you begin to fear that the people are awakening to the danger of electing a sectional president? Well, gentlemen, talking won't save you. You will tell the people nothing new. You have already flooded the county with bushels of false documents, one sided, unfair electioneering articles. You may gloss over these matters, burnish your pretensions; but we trust the people understand the truth, notwithstanding all your sophistry.

And so it went back and forth until Election day, November, 1860 when Lincoln won Clinton County with 52% of the vote to Douglas's 48%.

Editorial Note: This article could not have even been contemplated without the existence of the Northern New York Library Network and their collection of northern New York historical newspapers online. As you can imagine, it was disheartening to discover while researching this article that no copies appear to exist online, in print or on microfilm of the Republican newspapers in Clinton County or northern Essex County during the Civil War period. There was a Republican newspaper in Franklin County, *The Frontier Palladium* published in Malone in 1860 that can now be found online at www.nnyln.org.

Other News and Upcoming Events

Helen Allen Nerska Elected CCHA President

In January, The Clinton County Historical Association elected Helen Allen Nerska as its new President of the Board of Trustees following the retirement of Board President Roger Harwood. Harwood held the position for six years and oversaw the move of the CCHA Museum to its present location on the Old Base at 98 Ohio Road and the renovation and relighting of the Bluff Point Lighthouse on Valcour Island.

Helen Allen Nerska was born in Plattsburgh and raised in Peru on the family farm first settled by Jabez Allen in 1788. She now lives there and is part owner. Nerska says that she is privileged to be able to work with such a committed Board and dedicated Director to continue our Association's mission to collect and preserve materials related to Clinton County's long and significant history and to interpret and celebrate our County's rich heritage.

New Director/Curator Hired

This spring sees a passing of the baton at CCHA, with Carol Blakeslee-Collin, who led the museum for the past two years, moving on and the CCHA Board hiring Tricia Davies as the new Director/Curator at the end of April. Davies had been Assistant to the Director/Curator at the Alice T. Miner Museum for the past year. Before that, she was Educator & Public Relations Coordinator at the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia. She spent the previous seven years in the Visitor Services & Education Departments at Winterthur Museum.

Davies got her start in museums through an internship while getting her history degree at Millersville University, Pennsylvania. While serving as an intern at Wheatland, the historic house of President James Buchanan, in nearby Lancaster, she confirmed her love of working with museum objects, their stories and the museum visitors, young and old, who come in to experience them.

Memberships, Donations and Other Support Received From September 15, 2010 through March 31, 2011

Robert and Mary Adams, Jane Alexander, Alice T. Miner Museum, Allen Co. Library, Arnie's Restaurant, Ara Asadourian, Ausable Chasm Co., Jim and Anne Bailey, Cliff Barrette, John Barton, Gerald Bates, Thomas C. Beach, Sylvie Beaudreau, Linda Bedard, Jack and Donna Bell, Eleanor G. Berger, Roger and Christine Bigelow, Howard and Sara Black, Kit and Sally Booth, Alan and Jennifer Booth, Robert and Helen Booth, John Boule, Tom Braga, Eileen Brewer, Brown Funeral Home, Angela Brown and Kellum Smith, Worth and Dotte Buchanan, Carolyn Burakowski, Edgar and Emily Burde, Joseph and Joan Burke, Bruce Butterfield, Mark and Holley Christiansen, Alice Church, Jim Ciborski, City of Plattsburgh, John and Ruth Clackler, Jane Claffey, Joan Clark, Ralph Clark, Penny and John Clute, William Conway, Linda Lee Coryer, David and Jan Couture, Bill and Pat Crosby, Richard Daly, D.A.R. Library, Larry and Christine Davidson, Conrad and Vreni deBeaufort, Janet Deeb, Heidi Dennis and Roger Columbus, Msgr. Lawrence Deno, Mark and Alita Desso, Nelson Disco, Anne Doherty, Ruth and Gerald Dominy, Bob and Mary Donlan, Barb Dorrance, Jerome and Janet Downs, Nancy Duquette-Smith, Ellen and Bainbridge Eager, Ron and Linda Everleth, Geri Favreau, Laurie Feinberg, Dan and Donna Ferguson, John and Andree Fisher, Joan and Mason Forrence, Peter and Cornelia Forrence, John and Barb Gallagher, Robert Garrow, Maurica Gilbert and Noel Sowley, Roderic and Dodie Giltz, David and Lynne Glenn, Morris Glenn, William Glidden and Martha Bachman, Jim Godfrey, Alfreda Guay, Robert Haley, Frank and Jane Hamilton, Anne Handley, Stephen Harstedt, Linda Harwood, Roger Harwood, Rebecca Hayes, Judith Heintz, June Heming, Heritage Printing, Patricia Higgins, Frank and Carol Hochreiter, Bart and Maryanna Holm, Claudia Hornby, John Huru, Helen Ianelli, Janelle Jaeger, Arnold and Theresa Jensen, Lola and Ray Johnson, Euclid and Susanne Jones, Charles Kaczor, Marcelline Kavanaugh, Bob and Lori Keever, Richard and Susan Kelley, Jane and Bill Kelting, Key Foundation, Debra Kimok, Frank and Yolanda Kinelly, Craig King, Don Kinneston and Peg Donegan, Harold and Carole Klein, Daniel Ladue, Connie Lalonde, Bill Laundry, William and Beverly Legee, Brinley and Dorothy Lewis, James Lindgren, Roland and Martha Lockwood, Howard Lowe, Dennis and Marie Lyriotakis, Beverly Maynard, Marshall and Ann Maynard, Patricia Maynard, William and Ginny McBride, Mark and Deena McCullough, John and Nancy McGaulley, Linda McGuire, Meadowbrook Healthcare, Ron and Ann Merkley, Howard and Myrna Miller, Charles and Joan Mitchell, Miles and Kelly Moody, Henry Morlock, Marilyn Morton, Ruth Mowry, Leigh and Stephens Mundy, Patrick and Sheila Murnane, Brian Murphy, David and Elizabeth Murray, Nancy Myers, Anna Nardelli, Merrie Nautel, Alexander Nerska, Helen Nerska, Chris and Sandra Neuzil, Mary Nicknish, John Nordhouse, Northern Insuring, New York State Library, Nancy Olsen, Don Papon, Celine Racine Paquette, Pat Parker, David Patrick, John Patterson, Victor Pawlewicz, Peru Central School, Pfizer Foundation, Photo Pub, Plattsburgh Professional Firefighters Assoc., Sandra Poutre, Pearl Rabin, James Racette, Village of Rouses Point, Stan and Christina Ransom, Marianne Rector, William and Bunny Rowe, Ellen Ryan, John and Jean Ryan, Kevin and Mary Ryan, Herbert Sanders, Kathy and Stan Schumacher, Frederick Smith, John Southwick, Jeff and Janet Stephens, Stewart's Foundation, Dave and Sandra Stortz, Martha Strack, Barbara Strack, Jack Swan, John and Louise Tanner, Town of Schuyler Falls, Jamie Trautman, True Insurance, Lee Turner, Ultra Wave, Inc., Wade Valla, Gary and Billie VanCour, Stuart and Linda Voss, Irv and Marlene Waite, Wal-Mart, Alan and Jackie Walker, Steve and Sue Welch, Kay Wellman, Phyllis Wells, Lorri Wetzel, Robert and Shari Williams, William and Lucy Wilson, Josh Wingler and Kristina Parker-Wingler, Richard and Bonita Wingler, Andrew and Darlene Winterkorn, Dale Wolfe, George Wurster, John Zurlo and Clinton County.

Other News and Upcoming Events

Civil War Camp Returns

When: Tues-Friday, July 12-15, 9am to 3pm

Where: Clinton County Historical Museum
98 Ohio Avenue

Who: 24 boys and girls from 8 to 13 years-old
with Camp Director Matt Hewson

The camp will again be a hands-on immersion into the daily lives of Civil War soldiers. Campers will



Matt Hewson and Recruits, 2010

experience the process of becoming a soldier by enlisting in the Union Army and filling out the appropriate paperwork. After receiving their uniforms and training rifles, they will learn how to drill according to the basic manual of arms, undergo in-



2010 Campers Drilling in Uniform with
Replica Weapons at CCHA

spections, train, parade, and eat period food and rations of the Union forces. Campers also will learn the historical background of the soldiers' lives they are experiencing. The goal of the camp is to give the participants an appreciation of the Civil War and the men who fought and died in it.

The CCHA Civil War Camp is funded by the Chapel Hill Foundation and Stewart's Holiday Match program.

The camp is free and open to the first twenty four 8 to 13 year-olds who apply. Call 561-0340 or email director@clintoncountyhistorical.org.

Programs Summer 2011

Monday June 6:

A Visual Tour of the Catholic Summer School of America at Cliff Haven with Roger Black

A photographic history of what is now Cliff Haven

7 pm at the Museum, refreshments follow

Monday July 11:

Professional Baseball in Plattsburgh at the Turn of the Century with Richard Leyden

Clinton Park and the First Northern League
1901-1906.

7 pm at the Museum, refreshments follow

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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Bluff Point Lighthouse Summer Sundays-2011

The Lighthouse on historic Valcour Island will again be open for free tours this summer. Tours will be hosted by Association volunteers on the following dates from 1 to 3 pm: May 29th, every Sunday in July and August and September 4th. Visitors must provide their own transportation over to the island.

New in the Gift Shop

History of Churubusco and the Town of Clinton, Clinton County, NY by Larry P. Gooley. \$24.00

The history of this tiny village and the agrarian town of Clinton is truly remarkable. One citizen became lieutenant governor of New York, served for years as a top state politician, and at one time was FDR's closest advisor. Another was one of the founders of the city of Seattle and the state of Washington, and is highly honored there. And there were the famed "monks of Churubusco," who actually have their own pope on the international stage. Many other very surprising details led me to the realization that the town's amazing history should be recorded. -Larry Gooley

Upcoming Museum Day June 4th, 10am to 4pm

Join us for a fun-filled day of history during the 4th annual Press Republican Museum Day. Children 10 and up will have the chance to solve "History's Mysteries," an informational scavenger hunt that explores the museum's galleries. And kids of all ages will enjoy the "archaeology lab" where they can simulate a dig, discovering objects in an indoor sand tray. Each participant can decorate and take home a small wooden treasure box. Free (sessions at 10:00, 12:00 and 2:00)