



# North Country Notes

Issue #410

Fall 2012

## Caretakers of Our Photographic Past By Roger Black

The journey has taken more than a century and included many stopovers. But the most important aspect of the journey of the photographic prints and negatives that now reside in the archives of the Clinton County Historical Association has been the many caretakers who understood the value these treasures would provide to historians and local residents for years to come.



Clinton Street, c.1930's - Plattsburgh, NY

Now, these photos are slowly emerging from their dusty sleeves and revealing themselves to the public through exhibitions, distribution to local museums, publications and speaking engagements with visual slide shows. Some are being offered for sale to the general public as reprints.

About seventeen thousand of these negatives came into the CCHA Collection from the Brush Studios of Plattsburgh. They are formal portraits, mainly of individuals but occasionally of family groups. One can only imagine the importance of

these portraits to family members when they were first captured and prints created many years ago. Another large group of glass and celluloid negatives, numbering several hundred, were donated to CCHA by an extraordinary caretaker of our local history, George Brewer. We are currently researching the life of George Brewer, but we do know a few things about him.

George Emerson Brewer was born in Keeseville, July 8, 1920, son of George Brewer and Catherine Willard Brewer. He was an active independent insurance agent beginning with T. Heffernan & Sons. He then merged with Traynor Marcus and later retired from Rose & Kiernan Insurance in 1985. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II. He was a member of Knights of Columbus, B.P.O.E. and past president of Plattsburgh Rotary.



Macdonough Monument, dedicated 1926 - Plattsburgh, NY

Before moving to Florida, he lived in Cliff Haven and collected historic information and memorabilia

## Caretakers of Our Photographic Past, continued

about Cliff Haven Estates and its predecessor, the Catholic Summer School of America. Mr. Brewer married Eileen Whalen in 1946 who survives him, along with a son, Robert; and a daughter, Suzanne Gerlach; as well as at least two grandchildren. George Brewer died at his home in St. Augustine, Fla., on December 21, 2005.

The early journey of many of these photos probably began as the work of several commercial photographers in Clinton County. We have surmised that often the glass and celluloid negatives of one photographic studio would be turned over to another commercial studio when the business was purchased or otherwise acquired.

Since being acquired by CCHA, most of the Brewer Collection as well as many other glass plate negatives have been re-sleeved in acid-free envelopes, separated into properly sized acid-free



Normal School Fire, January 26, 1929 -Plattsburgh, NY

cardboard boxes and stored in a humidity controlled room in the basement of the museum. As a result of this significant investment in effort and money, historians and Clinton County residents should be able to access these images for many years to come. Today, the slow process identifying, categorizing and digitizing these images is underway. But while the process is slow, it is well worth the time. And it is exciting as well.



Left: Cumberland Hotel, Right: Old Courthouse, c. late 1800's -Plattsburgh, NY

Creating digital reproductions begins with a scanning process using a special scanner that incorporates a light box to shine light through the negative and software that interprets and stores the image as a digital file. Since many of glass and celluloid negatives are quite large, often eight inches by ten inches in size, the scanner we use has to have a large scanning bed.

We currently use a very old scanner for this process, but its age has not been a hindrance in terms of the quality of the digital reproduction. Where its age has become an issue is the fact that it will not work with newer software, so we have had to perform the work with older computers that are somewhat limited in their capabilities. Some very exciting news learned recently by CCHA is that IBM has awarded the museum a grant to upgrade to a newer scanner and computer which should greatly improve our digital reproduction capabilities.

After the initial scanned image is captured, it must undergo multiple steps in a restoration process using specialized software. This is the most time consuming part of the process. The image that emerges from the scanner often appears as little more than shadows and blurs but the restoration process, part

## Caretakers, continued

## Recent Acquisition

art and part craft, seizes upon whatever images are uncovered and enhances them until a vastly improved reproduction is created.

One of the most remarkable aspects of these glass negatives is that despite their age, many are 100 years or more in age, and despite the harsh storage conditions they endured until recently, the images that are reproduced in the scanning and restoration process are often incredibly sharp and detailed.

These are the images CCHA will be offering the public for years to come. It is hard to view many of these photos without immediately being transported back in time to a place we recognize but never actually experienced — until now.

It's a journey that started a long time ago with a photographer's eye and the click of an ancient camera which produced an image that was preserved on glass, stored for many years, handed from one individual to the next, reproduced with modern technology and, when finally revealed, takes the viewer back to that instant when the photographer's finger snapped the photo. It's a remarkable journey indeed.

**Editor's Note:** As Roger mentions in his article, CCHA just received a grant from IBM for \$3,000 as a result of one of our most dedicated members, David Patrick's many hours spent volunteering at the Museum. With that money CCHA has purchased a new tabloid sized scanner to be used to scan the photographs and other documents in CCHA's collection. CCHA is looking for volunteers to work closely with Roger Black to research these photos. At the Annual Meeting of CCHA's Membership, Roger Black presented *Early Photographs of Plattsburgh, NY* which highlighted early scenes in Plattsburgh's history. Individuals with glass plate negatives may contact the museum to learn more about getting them digitized with the new scanner.

### New Acquisition—R.P. Mallory Cumberland Head Lighthouse Drawing

CCHA recently acquired an original drawing by R.P. Mallory of the Cumberland Head Lighthouse dated August 10, 1882 from Mrs. Donna Hopper of Lake George, NY. This piece is especially significant because not only is it a drawing of the Cumberland Lighthouse, which is still standing today (owned by Matthew and Amy Spiegel) but also because the artist, Richard Parrott Mallory was born in Plattsburgh, NY.

Recollections of Richard Parrott Mallory's life in Clinton County can be found in the Clinton County Historical Association's publication, *Recollections of Clinton County*, edited by Allan S. Everest. The following content was taken from this publication in addition to data found on ancestry.com.

Richard Parrott Mallory was born in Plattsburgh, NY in 1813 to John Mallory of Coeymans, NY and Betsy Elizabeth Parrott of Morristown, NJ. Richard's father, John Mallory was a corporal in the United States Army and belonged to the cavalry during the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1814. Richard attended school at the Plattsburgh Academy from 1819 (aged 6) to 1830 (age 17). He worked as a clerk for Judge J.D. Woodward studying to be a lawyer but as he puts it in *Recollections*, "the artistic instinct in me was so strong I had to give that up."

Richard left Plattsburgh in 1831 and moved to Albany, never to return to Plattsburgh. He worked as an engraver in Lancaster, Massachusetts. He was a prominent artist, engraving many depictions of American imagery and historical events such as *Destruction of Tea in Boston Harbor in 1773*. Richard was also a partner in several engraving firms throughout his life, the last being Kilborn & Mallory. He died in 1890 at the age of 70 in Massachusetts.

# Commemorating the Civil War at CCHA

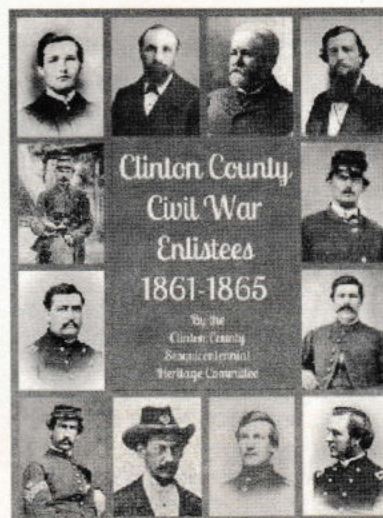
By Bob St. John and Geri Favreau

**Robert St. John, Member of Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration Committee on CCHA's upcoming book *Clinton County Civil War Record 1861-1865*"**

The Clinton County Historical Association wanted to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil War. One of the many things they are doing is compiling the names and data of the over 3,000 enlistees, from all the townships in Clinton County. New York State sent the largest contingent of men of any state in the union to fight for the north. I volunteered to compile the names and data for the Historical Association and used the data from the New York State Adjutant General Office. This data was published as a set of 43 volumes between 1893 and 1905.

The data will include the following information on enlistees as found: name, regiment enlisted in, where enlisted, how long a term to serve, rank at muster in, what company they were assigned to, any promotions in rank, muster out date and place. Data will also include if captured, paroled, killed in action, wounded, died of disease, and deserted. The names and data will be published in a book to be distributed to the municipal historians for their use. Copies will be available for purchase by the general public.

My research has not been limited to New York State but has included other states as well, but not as extensively as NY. I found the following on [www.vermontcivilwar.org](http://www.vermontcivilwar.org): John Tague, age 22, credited to Rouses Point, NY. He enlisted August 29, 1861, mustered in as private, Company A. 5<sup>th</sup> Vermont Infantry. Deserted January 11, 1862, returned November 1, 1863. He was shot December 18, 1863 by sentence of General Court Martial, executed by firing squad for desertion. John was born about 1839. It is unknown where he was born and where he was buried. Buried. Unfortunately this



was an occurrence that took place during the Civil War and it needs to be recorded.

I have been interested in the history of the Civil War for quite some time, and this project has helped me recognize some of the names and Civil War experience of our local men who answered the call to fight for the Union. It has also led me to the names of Civil War Veterans buried in our many cemeteries here in Clinton County, not only from Clinton County but also from other counties of NY and other states, as well.

**Geri Favreau – Chair of the Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration Committee**

This past summer to commemorate the Civil War, CCHA sponsored and participated in an encampment held at the Beekmantown Recreation Park in West Chazy. This exciting project was coordinated by Vickie Evans and Matt Hewson. An estimated eighty re-enactors came from near and far to participate in this two day event. It was very interesting to see a replica of an actual Civil War camp and watch the battles.

On July 10-13<sup>th</sup> and July 17-20<sup>th</sup> the third annual

## Commemorating the Civil War at CCHA, continued

Civil War Camp was held at CCHA for the youth of our county. This project was put together by Matt Hewson and was very well attended. It is a great opportunity for the young men and women to experience what it was like to live and fight during the Civil War.

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, CCHA and the Northern New York American-Canadian Genealogical Society hosted Civil War Day at the Museum. A number of groups (the DAR, Imaginarium, Dave Bosley with his collection of antique tools, N. C. Underground Railroad Historical Association, and Clinton County Historians) came out to greet and talk with visitors. A stamp cancellation commemorated the 118<sup>th</sup> NY Infantry Regiment "The Adirondack Regiment" who mustered in Plattsburgh from August 18<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> in 1862 was available and is still available at the Museum for only \$3



Civil War Day 2012 Stamp Cancellation

each. Bob St. John was available to research information on soldiers that served, Vickie Evans, Bill Glidden, CCHA Board members and staff were available to answer questions and take any information that visitors offered.

CCHA has a Civil War Exhibit in the South Gallery on the second floor of the museum. This ex-

hibit includes papers, pictures, uniforms and other memorabilia. Please stop by and check it out.

As part of our researching those who served from Clinton County, we are also doing cemetery research. We are attempting (with the help of Municipal Historians and Town Officials) to locate and mark the graves of those who are buried in the many cemeteries located in Clinton County. At the present time, we have two Eagle Scout applicants (John Pelkey and Matthew Orr) who will be locating some of the cemeteries and graves (when possible) and affixing a small unobtrusive sticker which reads "Civil War Veteran" to the headstone. We are looking for other people to help with this project - can be anyone who is interested in history, the Civil War, cemetery research, etc. Please call the Museum (561-0340) or Geri Favreau (569-8984) for more information.

A book will be published, hopefully sometime in the near future, that will compile the information Bob is gathering on those who enlisted in Clinton County, the information on those who are buried in our cemeteries, some pictures and other information we gather as we put the book together. Our book will be available both in soft and hard cover for the general public to purchase. Copies will be donated to all the Municipal Historians, the Clinton County Historian, the Genealogical Society and of course, be available at CCHA.

We welcome anyone who would like to share stories, pictures, artifacts (i.e. medals, clothing, guns) and any information you might have about your Civil War ancestors. Please contact the Museum and someone will be glad to speak with you.

### CALL TO OUR AUDIENCE:

The Clinton County Historical Association is always looking for new stories about Clinton County history to publish in North Country Notes. If you are interested in submitting an article please contact Melissa Peck at 518-561-0340.

## Other News and Upcoming Events

### CCHA Hires New Director

Melissa A. Peck from Rouses Point, NY was hired as CCHA's New Director/Curator. Melissa trained under past Director, Tricia Davies as an intern and then volunteered while attending SUNY Plattsburgh. She was then hired at Plattsburgh State and worked with the Rockwell Kent Collection under Collection Specialist, Charline Faller and Director/Curator, Cecilia Esposito.

### NEW EXHIBIT: "Peru's Busy Past" Guest Curators: Ron and Carol Allen, Town of Peru Co-Historians

Ron and Carol Allen have been working with Julie Dowd, CCHA Board Member, to create an exhibit that will highlight the history of Peru, NY. Topics covered include the lumber industry, churches, schools, first settlers and much more. Opening is Dec. 8, 12-3pm at CCHA. Refreshments will be served.

### Memberships, Donations and Other Support Received April 1 though October 31, 2012

Adirondack Architectural Heritage, Janet Alexander, Algonquin Chap. Of ADK, Alice T. Miner Museum, Ausable Chasm Co., John Barton, Battle of Plattsburgh Assoc., Thomas C. Beach, Barb Benkwitt, Rod and Christine Bigelow, Ken and Ada Bills, Roger and Bonnie Black, Bob and Helen Booth, Brown Funeral Home, Ken and Trudy Burger, Butcher Block, Bruce Butterfield, James Carroll, Caterpillar Foundation, David and Kathy Champagne, Chapel Hill Foundation, Urith V. Chase, Lori Cherland-McCune, Alice Church, Jim Ciborski, Ralph Clark, Clinton County American Legion, Shirley Coffey, Linda Coryer, Herbert and Irene Cottrell, John and Barbara Crotty, CVPH, Richard Daly, Robert and Jean Davis, Jim and Caroline Dawson, Conrad and Vreni deBeaufort, Janet Deeb, Suzanne DeForge, Heidi Dennis and Roger Columbus, Rev. Msgr. Lawrence Deno, Mark and Alita Desso, Bob and Mary Donlan, Julie Dowd, John Drown, Ellen Watson Eager, Glenn Estus, Everett Orchards, Geri Favreau, Ellen Fleming, Peter and Cornelia Forrence, Friends of Lyon Mountain, Maurice and Gina Gilbert, Maurica Gilbert and Noel Sowley, William Glidden and Martha Bachman, Eleanor and Irving Goldman, Linda Harwood, Bob Heins, Matt Hewson, Vera Hirsch Estate, Frank and Carol Hochrieter, Pete Hubbell, IBM, Arnold and Theresa Jensen, Marceline Kavanagh, Caroline Kehne, Kent Delord House, Debra Kimok, Timothy and Jeanette Kononan, William Krueger and Suzy Johnson, Lisa Lafountain, Rosemary and Arthur LaMarche, William Laundry, Chantal LeFebvre, Garrett Lemza, Eva Martin, Mark and Deena McCullough, Linda McGuire, Virginia McLoughlin, Miles and Kelly Moody, Henry Morlock, Mountain Riders, Ruth Mowry, James and Janet Murnane, Patrick and Sheila Murnane, Thomas and Katherine Murnane, William and Barbara Murray, North Country Underground Railroad Historical Assoc., Alexander Nerska, Helen Nerska, Chris and Sandra Neuzil, Norman Lavigne, Sam Northshield, Jack and Joanne Orr, Celine Racine Paquette, David Patrick, Charles and Shelley Payson, Peru Central School, Peru Pharmacy, Pfizer Foundation, Plattsburgh and N.C. Chamber of Commerce, Plattsburgh Professional Firefighters, Point au Roche Lodge, Gordon and Sandra Pollard, Stan and Chris Ransom, Colleen Prescott, Rodney and Renee Ralston. Sharon Ratner, Geri Rickert, Jim Rochester, Rulfs Orchards, Edward Schiffler, Richard and Margaret Schwartz, Frederick Smith, Curt and Michele Snyder, S. Burlington School District, Merritt and Joan Spear, Ed Stansbury, Noel and Debbie Stewart, Russell Stone, Marty Strack, Barbara Straw, David and Roberta Sullivan, SUNY Art Museum, Jack Swan, Titus Mountain Family Ski Center, Town of Peru, Jaimie Trautman, Lee Turner, United Way of the Adirondacks, Lynn Valenti, Marlene and Irv Waite, Alan and Jackie Walker, Wal-Mart, Wal-Mart Foundation, Alan Weil, Lorri Wetzell, Peggy Whipple, Lynn Wilke, Dale and Ruth Wolfe, Wooden Ski and Wheel, John Zurlo, Lake Champlain Basin Program and Clinton County. *These donors include donors to the Adirondack Coast Cultural Alliance for which CCHA acts as a financial administrator.*

## Photos from Recent Events



*Troop 4109 visits CCHA to participate in children's mock archaeological dig. Kids get a chance to learn how archeologists remove and record their findings.*



*This year CCHA held it's first every Volunteer Appreciation Party. Above, Helen Nerska, CCHA President and William Laundry, CCHA Vice President*



*A few years ago members of the lighthouse committee discovered and excavated the original location of the Bluff Point Lighthouse flagpole on Valcour Island. This summer the NYSDEC employees and volunteers from Walmart have been working on a new flagpole for the lighthouse. On August 2, 2012 the flagpole was transported to the Island and erected by NYSDEC employees Tony Tyrell and Dan Levy.*



*Father and son, Marty and Sawyer Lynch at CCHA's Halloween Weekend free Pumpkin Painting program. This years Halloween Weekend was sponsored by Everett Orchards and Rulfs Orchards.*

## Winter Programs 2012/2013

**12/1/12 - Museum Campus Holiday Shopping Day, 10-6pm at Champlain Centre Mall  
\*Reduced prices on CCHA's local history books\***

**12/3/12 - Introduction of North Country Community Archeology Network with Dr. Chris Wolff, 7pm at CCHA**

**12/08/12 - "Peru's Busy Past" Exhibit Opening, 12-3pm at CCHA**

**2/4/13 - African Americans and the War of 1812 with Don Papson, 7pm at CCHA**

**3/4/13 - Women Making a Difference During the Civil War by Vickie Evans, 7pm at CCHA**

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
98 Ohio Avenue  
Plattsburgh, NY 12903  
Phone: 518-561-0340  
www.clintoncountyhistorical.org

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## New in the Gift Shop

**Rouses Point 1877-1977 Centennial Year by Peg Barcomb. \$15.99**

Second Edition, sponsored by the Rouses Point-Champlain Historical Society. Includes additional information on veterans from Rouses Point who served in all wars up to 1977. -Geri Favreau

**Images of America: Plattsburgh by Kelly Julian. \$21.99**

Kelly M. Julian is the local history librarian at the Plattsburgh Public Library. She has chosen images from the Clinton County Historical Association's Brewer Collection and from Plattsburgh Public Library's Cole Collection to illustrate the history of this fascinating micropolitan city. -Kelly Julian

**Civil War Women: They Made a Difference by Cynthia Vogel. \$24.95**

This book explores 78 women who played a critical role in the anti-slavery movement, the underground railroad, education, medicine, nursing and various roles in the military and on the battle fields. They were black and white, rich and poor, but their beliefs and commitment made a difference. At no other time in American history were women's lives so dramatically changed as during the Civil War. -Cynthia Vogel

**Civil War Women: They Made a Difference, Book II by Cynthia Vogel. \$27.95**

This book further reveals how women played an enormous part in the social changes during the Civil War. With the men leaving their homes to volunteer for the cause, the women were left behind to carry out the men's duties on the home front. -Cynthia Vogel

**Crossing the Line: A History of the Border at Rouses Point and Champlain by Mark L. Barie & Christine A. Racine. \$19.95**

"Crossing the Line" is jam packed with dozens of riveting stories about the history of the border at Rouses Point and Champlain. You will be fascinated by the many photographs contained in the book and learn how the border communities of Rouses Point and Champlain played a critical role in history.