

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 42

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Feb. 1968

The February Meeting

of the Historical Association will be held on February 5th in the Auditorium of the Public Library in Plattsburgh. The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Stuart D. Ludlum of the Museum Resources and Educational Center in Elizabethtown. His agency, which serves Clinton, Essex, Franklin and Hamilton Counties, seeks to make museum and other local historical resources, including publications, available to the schools of this area. With the use of slides, he will talk on "Wind, Weather, Women and a Good Share of Luck, or A North Country Pilot Project in Supplementary Education."

Association Officers For 1968

Elected at the January meeting was the following slate of officers:

President—Paul Allen, Peru
Vice President—Eugene Link, Pattsburgh
Secretary—David Martin, West Chazy
Treasurer—J. Bernard Stratton, Plattsburgh
Curator—Miss Emily McMasters, Plattsburgh

One Kind Of Smuggling

Before the turn of the century a troublesome kind of smuggling appeared along the border with Canada. An early manifestation of it was the arrest, in 1891, of two Chinese on a train at the Plattsburgh station. A quantity of opium was found under their seat cushion. Their trial was held in Rochester and they were fined \$500 and \$250 respectively. This relatively light penalty is not surprising in a day when opium could still be bought at the general store.

Quantitatively, the larger problem was the smuggling of Chinese contrary to the immigration laws. As early as 1892, twelve men were in the Plattsburgh jail at one time. By 1901 as many as 177 were incarcerated locally at one time. They were sent downstate for deportation proceedings. The law was clear and reasonably well enforced, and it is doubtful if many illegal entries succeeded.

Riddle of the Month

The answer to the October riddle: Dannemora, because of its early iron mining, was named for the iron area of Sweden. Ellenburg was named for the daughter of John R. Murray of New York, one of the proprietors of Township Number 5.

New riddle, submitted by Mr. Maurice Turner of Keeseville: What historic site on Lake Champlain was called by the Dutch "Kruyn-Punt" (Scalp Point) and by the French in 1757 as "Pointe a la Chevelure"?

Rand Hill

Anyone with an eye for beauty would appreciate the panoramic view from the top of Rand Hill. This spot, situated in the northern foothills of the Adirondacks, is one of the best vantage points from which to view the beautiful Champlain Valley. Surveying historic country as it does, the Hill has a colorful history of its own.

In 1800 the first settler came to Rand Hill from Warner, New Hampshire. He was Israel Rand. The Sanger families who now live on the Hill are direct descendants of this first settler. The early arrivals built their houses by springs, so a source of water was near by. They produced most of their food, clothing and household supplies. For example, corn and buckwheat were ground into flour for making johnny cake and pancakes. The women made butter and lard, dried many fruits and vegetables for winter use, spun yarn and wove cloth to make clothing, made soap and candles for household use. The men, when not engaged in raising crops for food, cut down trees to be shipped to England for shipbuilding. Much timber was also burned into ashes to make potash. When the best timber was exhausted, the rest was cut for use in making charcoal. Remains of charcoal ovens may be seen today a short distance from Rand Hill on the road to Jericho.

Legend and fact are mingled in the story of Rand Hill. The story is told of a settler who came from Vermont with his ailing wife to a cabin in a clearing because he thought the air would cure her. It did! She raised eleven children.

Hunting has always been rewarding to residents of the Hill. Deer and bear, as well as small game, have been and still are quite plentiful. Deer used to be so numerous that families were seldom without venison. When the supply was running out, one farmer who used to live near the top of the Hill had only to watch out of an open window for his game. He would shoot a deer in the morning before he put his pants on. Of course, the secret was that he had a salt lick nearby.

Six miles away is Clinton Prison at Dannemora, from which occasionally convicts escape. They have often been traced to the Rand Hill area. Years ago, when times were hard, the farmers used to go out and hunt them because of the fifty-dollar reward. It was the custom of one of these farmers to wear a derby hat. One of the escapees who was returned to the prison told of hiding in the bushes on top of Rand Hill where he could almost reach out and touch a man with a derby hat. Think how close this man was to the reward.

During the years of prohibition the bootleggers went over Rand Hill, smuggling liquor from Canada to the United States. Many bootleggers stopped at the homes for food and warmth from the cold, or merely to hide from suspicious passers-by. The smugglers seemed to come in hordes so that one inhabitant asked another, "Did you see the funeral procession go by today?" The other replied, "Hell, no, that was just some of them bootleggers."

Rand Hill has had its share of tragedies. A short distance from the top there is a large spring in which a little girl was drowned. One of the Sanger boys was accidentally shot by a friend when he was mistaken for a deer. During the influenza epidemic in 1918 many families were decimated. Sliding down hill was about the only sport the children had in wintertime, but it caused the death of a little boy who was run over by a wood sled. There have been murders, too, on the Hill. In one house a man was shot and killed by his brother because of jealousy over the wife of one of them.

In 1939 Rand Hill was one of the places where the soldiers practiced maneuvers as a part of their military training. They got permission from farmers to use the land to set up guns and cannon for practice. The inhabitants got an idea of what war might be like with cannon roaring, signals flashing, tanks and jeeps running through the fields and men making simulated attacks. It was so noisy that many windows were broken from the vibrations. These maneuvers took place during a milk strike when the farmers were either dumping their milk or making butter. The soldiers were frequent visitors at the back doors of the farmhouses, where they were given all the milk they could drink. They had been forbidden the use of this unpasteurized milk, but they were thirsty.

On the eastern slope of Rand Hill is a little settlement called Beartown, no doubt because of the abundance of bears in the early days. Just beyond, a number of Negroes used to live in what was once called North Africa. Now Beartown is a growing ski center for the people of the vicinity.

Although one can escape the hot city breezes in summertime, the weather in winter is not always ideal. Before modern snowplows were invented and people

travelled with horses, many people were caught in bad blizzards. The story is told of one family of six on their way to Mooers who were compelled to stay for a week at a farmhouse, sleeping on the floor and making the best of conditions. The Sanger and other Rand Hill babies were delivered by Dr. Kellogg of Plattsburgh, who sometimes had to battle high drifts to reach his destination. Until very recently roads might be blocked for a week at a time. The temperature has been known to be as low as 55 degrees below zero.

A few years ago a fire-control tower was built on the top of the Hill, from which messages are relayed to all fire departments under the mutual aid system. It was found to be the only point in the county from which these messages could be satisfactorily relayed. It is also the site of a radio-telephone station which makes possible the contacting of state troopers in their cars, no matter where they are.

Farm buildings dot the hillside. Potatoes used to be the most important crop. Those not used or sold for food were drawn to starch factories in Saranac or Schuyler Falls. Later they were taken to Cadyville, where they were loaded on the train for shipment to the cities. Now the farmers are principally engaged in dairying because transportation facilities allow them to market their milk at distant points.

The future of Rand Hill? Perhaps a thickly populated area, or a tourist center, or a game refuge, or a health resort. Or perhaps a combination of two or more of these developments await the area.

Mary Sanger

Further Adventures Of Thomas Price

(From a letter to Henry Delord in the Kent-Delord Papers)

Montreal, June 21st, 1808

My Dear Sir,

I arrived here on the 18th instant after a tedious and fatiguing journey of nearly three days from Champlain, which I will here give you in detail.

The Mail Carrier and myself arrived at Champlain about noon on Thursday last, and soon after my arrival I waited upon Mr. Hubbell but found to my great regret he had set out the day before for Canada. However, I am much obliged by the attention shown me by Mrs. Hubbell and the brother of Mr. Silas Hubbell.

My first effort was to procure a horse from Mr. Hicks', where I stayed, and after some length of time I was offered a horse to carry me to Lacadie for 3 dollars, and I to run the expense, risk and trouble of returning the horse. Such a proposal I could not with safety accede to, being a perfect stranger in the country, and the inevitable risk I must run in trusting a horse to a stranger. Finding Mrs. Hicks would not recede from her extravagant proposal, I determined to remain there that night, Friday, and to begin to march it through the woods early in the morning.

The only thing that I did not like was the carrying of my portmanteau and great coat, which you know was tolerably heavy. However, I had the good fortune to meet with a poor Canadian who was going near Montreal and who was glad to accompany me. Through the delay of the Canadian, we did not start until 7 o'clock in the morning, Friday, when it began to grow warm. After traversing immense woods, deep morasses, and pretty well fatigued and mosquito-bit, arrived at the church of Lacadie, 7 o'clock P.M., which is called 10 good leagues from Champlain. (I had forgot to mention, another Canadian met us on our route, going to the same place as the first Canadian.)

We were all glad to get to this Auberge. I had found out by this time that my saddle bags weighed very heavy. After we had eaten our supper, we each of us thought of retiring to bed and resting our weary limbs. When the landlady said we must all sleep together in one bed or she must charge 20 sous apiece, the Canadians swore they would sooner sleep on the floor than give 20 sous each. After considerable debate, we were all pacified. The two Canadians slept together and I slept by myself and we each were to pay 10 sous.

Finding myself scarcely able to carry my baggage and myself much further, I asked the landlord, a Canadian, how much he would charge for carrying me and mine in his calash to Laprairie. Two dollars and a half was the reply, and the distance was only 3 leagues. Sooner than close with such a demand, I deter-

mined to walk next morning to the next Auberge, two leagues distant, when, unfortunately, it stormed and rained the next day, so that the roads were very disagreeable to travel. However, my hardy companions would not remain any longer in this rascally Auberge, where I engaged a light charette to take me to Laprairie, from whence I took the stage to Longueuil and crossed over and arrived in Montreal about 1 o'clock on Saturday afternoon last.

I was fortunate to arrive about that time as the next day was appointed a Fete de Dieu in commemoration of the entry of our Saviour into Jerusalem. The procession was large and flowers were strewed before the High Priest, who walked through the principal streets of the city under a richly worked and embroidered canopy borne up by four gentlemen, followed by a large retinue belonging to the churches in this city and preceded by a number of the black and grey nuns telling their beads, dressed in their respective habits. After them followed a large number of the French Catholic school boys dressed in white, and others dressed in blue trimmed with white ridges. After them followed the band belonging to the 49th Regiment, playing divine and martial music. They were followed by a dozen young men holding silver urns with a silver chain each; and at a certain sign they put incense into these silver vessels and burst it and discharged the fume, or effluvia arising from the incense, before the High Priest who followed them immediately under the rich canopy, superbly clothed and surrounded by his Priests and large silver candlesticks with still larger tapers in them. The whole was a beautiful and novel sight to me. The streets the procession went through were all lined with branches of trees; it had a very pretty effect.

I intend to stay a week longer here; from thence I expect to go to Niagara. I have given up my Quebec expedition.

With great consideration and gratitude to you and Mrs. Delord,

I am yours truly,

Thos. Price

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David K. Martin, Secretary
West Chazy, New York