

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED MONTHLY EXCEPT SUMMER BY THE
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 79

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

November, 1971

The November Meeting

of the Association will be held at 8 o'clock on the evening of Monday, November 1st, in the auditorium of the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker will be Francis ("Bud") Miller of Albany, who will speak on "The Plattsburgh Traction Company." Mr. Miller's father was the last Superintendent on the trolley line, which served the city for many years beginning in 1896, and Francis also worked on the line. An enlarged, tinted photograph of an early trolley, recently acquired by the Association, will be exhibited at the meeting.

A large and enthusiastic audience attended the annual banquet of the Association on October 8th, and heard a moving talk on Lincoln by Dr. Myron Luke of Long Island.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

Old riddle: The county's longest plank road was the Saranac River Plank Road between Plattsburgh and Clayburg, much used at the height of the iron industry. It was turned over to the towns in the early 1890's following court cases over refusals to pay the tolls because of the poor condition of the road.

New riddle: Which Clinton County town was originally a patent to a physician who never visited his lands?

1892

This was an unusually exciting political year locally and statewide. The national election, which was fought over the issues of tariff and free silver, aroused great interest in this politically-conscious community. Amid the usual recriminations and court challenges, the Democratic state legislature reapportioned the legislative and Congressional districts in accordance with the census of 1890 and the party's hopes of winning future elections.

Some of the problems which occupied public attention in 1892 still concern those who work toward the Great Society today. Locally an editorial campaign was waged against waste paper in the streets, which caused horses to run away and created unsightly litter. The state legislature tried unsuccessfully to abolish the death penalty and to lower the legal interest rate. However, a new game code went into effect in the interests of fishing which forbade the pollution of streams by a long list of industrial products. Today's conditions could hardly exist if the law had been enforced.

From all sides evidence indicated a revival of "bunco"—the use of confidence games, gold bricks and hypnotising in order to commit robbery. Plattsburgh had these troubles as well as a cholera scare and worries over the continued smuggling of Chinese from Canada. Twelve of them were in the Plattsburgh jail at one time.

Postmaster General Wanamaker ordered the dropping of the final "h" of towns like Plattsburgh, an order that applied postally for about sixty years. The village twice celebrated the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America—according to both the Old-Style and New-Style calendars. To the extent that construction is an index of prosperity, 1892 was a good year for Plattsburgh: extensive additions to the Barracks, a new opera house, and a new shirt factory.

A Moore-side View of the Battle of Plattsburgh

(In boldface are some 1814 entries from the Journal of Judge Pliny Moore of Champlain. The first letter was written to him by his daughter. He wrote the second letter to British General Brisbane in Canada on August 29th. The third letter he wrote to his wife who for safety had been moved to the Union in Peru.)

- June 14—Genl. Izard & 1500 men arrived
- 28—Lt. Colo. Forsyth killed in a Skirmish with Indians
- July 25—A man shot for desertion
- 28—9 prisoners taken by Capt. Nelson
- Aug. 1—Skirmish this morning 3 wounded
- 18—Removed my family
- 20—To Peru & returned
- 27—at Champlain Our Army marched South
- 28—British Indian force & Genl Brisbane came into Champlain & returned to Odelltown.

Peru, August 28th 1814

Dear Papa

We were not a little disappointed to see Macy with the Cows Friday evening; from the accounts we had from the Northard we were sanguine in the hope that the times would permit us to return & save you the trouble of encumbering us with them . . .

We heard last evening that one of the brigades from Champlain had fell back as far as Plattsburgh & that the others were going to Sacketts Harbour.

May we place dependence on the report of another Victory at the Westward? of the enemy's attacking the fort, on the seventh attempt succeeding in gaining a redoubt, of the commander setting fire to the Magazine and blowing up three hundred of them with himself &c &c? . . .

Your affectionate daughter

Sophia

Aug. 29—All peaceful except one Drunken Indian

Sir

Having been permitted by you to state any irregularities committed by members of your army on the persons or property of Citizens on this side the line & fully believing it is your intention to prevent it I avail my self of the privilege of letting you know that an Indian of your Army has been among us yesterday much intoxicated & very menacing in his language & Gestures demanding in the most insolent manner liquor Money & whatever he wanted with threats. he first came to me & demanded Money & rum & afterward went into the village & attempted to put his hand in the pocket of Mr. Hubbell. he at length went off with a Suttler in a Waggon to the south & I learned that he pitched out of the Waggon & was much bruised & lay very drunk in the road. in the evening he returned to the Village & was again drinking. I have not heard of him this morning but think it probable he continued his rout south or Returnd. should he appear again safety requires we should confine him. he had no arms when he came here but his conduct was very Alarming to the women & children & I hope measures may be taken to prevent straglers of this description coming among us. One of your Indians was lured off by a Huckster on sunday & taken by the Riflemen.

I am Most Respectfully

Sir Your Him'ble serv't

Pliny Moore

Aug. 30 I went to Peru

Sept. 2 To Champlian Met (a) Genl. of the British Army about 1000 men & Indians

3 Governor Provost & Suit called on me

Sept. 4 British Army about 14,000 passed on to Chazy 16 pieces Cannon

Sept. 6 Battle at Batesmantown Colo. Wellington Killed

11 Battle of the Fleets McDona took the Ship the Brigg & 2 Sloops

12 British Army returned to Chazy

13 British Army passed except one Brigad at Chamn

Champlain 14th Sept'r 1814

. . . I am not surprised at your anxiety when such interesting events are pending.

The British yet keep possession of Champlain & how long they intend it is not known to me.

We have suffered very considerably. all our Apples much of our Hay & fences are destroyed & our fields mostly laid common — all our Cows & three Heifers

taken off with the Contractors drove with the Marino Ram which followed them. Harden went to Odell town has found one Cow only, is gone again to look further. I fear they will not be found.

General Brisbin called yesterday to inform me we should be paid for every thing. I hope so.

our Garden & house has not been much pillaged since I returned — many Grapes remain but not ripe some Melons the same.

Phillis does the best she can no pickles saved till today many of the Tomatoes ripe & plenty of small ones for pickles we have saved five or six Bus'ls Onions.

You had better remain where you are untill we see what course the british army will take. the Indians are here & are continually committing depredations even as far as Esq'r Kings in the Bay & out to Dudleys & they steal more or less every day in the Village they placed a Centinel in the back yard 'till yesterday I have thoughts of asking one of the Gen'l again to day untill they leave this. do not stir from where you are untill I send for you the Roads are now exceedingly bad. should our fleet remove down it will be better whenever it is safe to come by water.

None of the Officers have quartered at our House except a Commissary who occupies the Stone House as a Store — several officers have put their beds in the House & lodged for a night all of whom have treated me civilly found themselves except Hay which they have some times thanked me for.

A Glorious day for McDunna & the fleet as well as for McComb & the Army & Garrison.

I much lament the losses of many friends in Plattsburgh whose Houses are destroyed & others plundered. Those who have houses I understand are returning to them.

. . . my opinion is that they (the British) will remain here no longer than untill they can remove all their stores to LaCole most of which are gone already. . . . I hope the Indians will leave today but do not know . . .

Your Affectionate Husband

Pliny Moore

Sept. 19 Mrs. Moore came home

Notes:

(Letter from Sophia Moore) The Fort Erie episode occurred on Aug. 14th.

(Letter PM to his wife)

"Harden" was an employee of PM

"Phillis" had been a slave girl bought my PM in 1793 for 14 pounds York currency when she was about five years old. When she became free, she remained as a servant with the family until at least after PM's death in 1822. No information beyond that date.

The two letters, one from Sophia and the other from PM to his wife, indicate that SOME of PM's cows were taken to Peru for safekeeping.

(Notes by C. W. McLellan. From the McLellan Collections)

FROM A MEMBER

Concerning the china pin tray showing the Keeseville arch bridge, recently given to the Association by Professor Thomas Le Duc of Oberlin College, Mr. Maurice Turner of Keeseville writes:

"This china was sold in Andrew Fletcher's store (Methodist Church School today) on Front Street, Keeseville in the early 1900's. Many pieces of tableware were made—cream pitchers, sugar bowls, plates, etc. I have seen such in past years and I believe it was made in Germany for Fletcher as an elderly citizen, now deceased, had said this."

HAVE YOU VISITED THESE BANKS TO SEE—

—The collection of old blue china depicting the battle of Plattsburgh, and exhibited in the National Commercial Bank?

—At the Skyway branch of the same bank, the painting of the naval battle of Plattsburgh, executed by Julian O. Davidson, grandson of Plattsburgh's early physician, Dr. Oliver Davidson, for Smith M. Weed in 1882-83?

—How the Keeseville National Bank has incorporated the old stone building at the corner of route 3 and the Military Turnpike into an attractive new branch?

THE CHINA TRADE IN 1849

(Mrs. Elizabeth Swetland, the former Mrs. Henri Delord, writes her granddaughter in Connecticut, Frances Webb, the future Mrs. Frances Hall of Plattsburgh. A part of the letter only is quoted; it is to be found in the Kent-Delord Collection at the Feinberg Library.)

Plattsburgh, April 9, 1849

My beloved child

Tell your aunt Eliza I will do anything for her with pleasure, I think she had better send to me as soon as she can the money she wishes to expend for the Shawl, and discription of the Colour etc as we expect Mr. Ketchum to come on the last of this month with his family. I will give him the money to buy a draft on Canton, and I will write to Mrs. Williams what kind of Shawl your aunt wants, and he will send the draft and letter by the earliest express on the overland mail or give it in care to A. Merwin Tract Society House New York. Mr. Ketchum will see that it goes safe. Your aunt can best say how high she wishes to go. Mrs. Williams says for twenty five dollars she can get one of those large embroidered shawls which sell in New York for seventy I sent twelve dollars to get me a plain dect one. Mrs. Goshens (?) white one with a deep fringe and beading cost in China eight dollars. I forwarded last week twenty dollars to Mr. Ketchum, ten for Kate Walworth and ten for Mrs. Amasa Moore, for Shawls. Kates is to be cherry colour, I don't know as to Mrs. Moores. They wish Mr. Ketchum to buy them a draft, and bring it on with him, and they will send it on, in a letter by the overland mail they have to send it to a Missionary House, either in Boston or New York. I think a better way is to give it to Mr. Ketchum and he will see it sent. the duties will be in proportion to the price. Mrs. Williams describes elegant colored china dinner sets, and gilt figures, like those hands on china jars one sees in N. Y.—135 pieces for 125 dollars. Which would be at least in New York \$300—a breakfast and tea set to match for \$25.

E.S.

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