

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 11

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Nov. 1962

The Next Meeting

will be held on Monday evening, Nov. 5, 1962, at 8:00 o'clock, in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. The program will be devoted to "THE DAVIDSON SISTERS OF PLATTSBURGH" by Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. McLellan of Champlain. The poetical genius of Lucretia and Margaret Davidson was acclaimed on two continents during the first part of the last century, their writings going into many editions. Although today all but forgotten, they brought a fame to Plattsburgh never surpassed.

The public is cordially invited.

The High Cost of Public Welfare - 1818

(Apparently the cost of poor relief has always plagued the county. Thus in 1818, a committee consisting of Lewis Ransom, Levi Platt and M. Smith presented to the Plattsburgh town meeting a proposal for reducing costs by acquiring a town poor house.)

The House and one acre of Land including furniture and Stores is estimated at	\$1500.00
The Support of the poor will then cost the town per annum :	
1st Interest on \$1500 at 7 perct.	\$ 105.00
2d Pay of Superintendent & board	150.00
3d Abundance of Sick Medicine & Doctr	100.00
4th The board of the paupers averaged at 10 thro'ut the year at 4/ pr week which is believed will be sufficient	260.00
Fire wood & Clothing	155.00
	<hr/>
	\$ 770.00
The poor supported by private charity & the Ladie's Society amounts to	150.00
The amount expended by the poor masters the last year about	1000.00
	<hr/>
	\$1150.00
Deduct from the above amount the support of 10 persons for every day in the year on an average as above	770.00
	<hr/>
Making a saving to the town pr annum	380 Dollars

Marriage of Margaret Miller and Oliver Davidson

The sisters Lucretia and Margaret Davidson, both born in Plattsburgh, attained international reputations for the excellence of their poetical writings. The poems and the life of Lucretia were published by Samuel F. B. Morse, while Washington Irving presented Margaret's works to the world. The poet Southey said of Lucretia: "In our own language, we can call to mind no instance of so early, so ardent, and so fatal a pursuit of intellectual advancement." Lucretia died in 1825, not yet seventeen years old; Margaret was a year younger at the time of her death in 1838.

Yet when the marriage of their parents occurred, in 1804, the consensus of opinion in Plattsburgh was that the union was unfortunate, for Dr. Oliver Davidson, it was agreed, was a man without a future and destined to be a failure.

This attitude is reflected in the following letter from Nathaniel Z. Platt to the new bride's brother, Morris Miller. This letter was recently discovered by Mr. Herman Herst, Jr., of Shrub Oak, N. Y., and is here printed for the first time.

Decr 17, 1804

My Dear Sir

In consequence of a recent transaction in which you are deeply interested, I address you as a friend merely to State to you facts as far as has come to my knowledge of the very unexpected Marriage of your Sister Margaret. You have undoubtedly been informed before this time by your friends Doct. John and Eleazer Miller that this thing was in Contemplation, but I presume you had no reason to expect its taking place so soon. It is but a few days since I was made acquainted with any Circumstances relative to an intention of this Connection. Although I was not intimately acquainted with your Sister yet I was induced from the acquaintance I have had with you and the respectability of her name to feel an interest in her Welfare which arose from pure Motives I assure you —

Your friends here under whose care your Sister considered herself opposed the Match with warmth and I think with rather too much Zeal yet I sincerely believe they acted from a principal of true regard for the happiness of your Sister. We find by experience that where an opposition of this kind is supported with too much rigor that the parties generally do not let propriety dictate them —

Mr Davidson the young Gentleman whom your Sister has chosen came to this town last May, since which time I have been in the habits of intimacy with him. I have ever had the highest opinion of his integrity and talents in his profession and he has by his Industry and attention to business acquired the friendship of many of the most respectable people in this Country and I believe universally esteemed for his goodness of disposition and love of Virtue. He has friends in this town who have known him many years. They say they have never known him to bear any other Character but the one I have described. He began his Study with a Physician. Poor he came to this place immediately after he finished his Study and is still Poor. His business the season past has been very considerable that together with what daily offers I conceive will afford him a respectable living. When we cast back among our acquaintance we find Several under the same Circumstances who have succeeded those who fell heir to plenty —

The second day after Dr Davidson and your Sister were married I had the pleasure of their Company. They spent the day with us. I felt a Sympathy for her because I thought she was grieved that she had taken this important step without the knowledge or consent of her friends and more particularly that of yours to whom she looks up as a kind, tender and affectionate Brother. I look upon it as almost an unpardonable transaction, yet since the Dye is cast pity the error if it is one and let your conduct

toward her continue with that tenderness and compassion which has always been attached to your Character.

Pardon me for entering into your family concerns but friendship alone dictates me to it. Consider me a mere by-stander. I assure you I had no agency in it. I neither advised one way or the other nor did I know till the evening of the Marriage whether there was any truth in it or not.

I remain with Sentiments of true Regard Your friend

Nathl Z. Platt

Morris Miller Esqr

Local Boy Goes West: Henry Everett

When Henry G. Everett of Peru set out in 1890 to make his way in the world, he tried Valentine's School of Telegraphy in Janesville, Wisconsin. His letters home express his discouragement, his homesickness and his yen to go farther west: "The school was not just as I expected. They advertise too much, or make the boys think they can make an operator of them in from 4 to 6 months. Well any one ought to know better at once. It cuts me to the quick to give it up. It sometimes seems as if there was no place on this earth for me but I suppose I will find it some time if I faint not by the wayside. I am very anxious to go west, way west and get to work."

By the spring of 1891, after a winter in Washington, Henry had arrived in Lebanon, Oregon. Here he knew he had found his place. His ecstatic letters praised the climate, the people and the opportunities. He tried to persuade his father to rent or sell the farm in Peru and join him. "Once out here and I will guarantee you will never want to go back to the rugged and rough old hills. This country is right on the eve of a great advance. Come join it at the tidal wave and be carried on to fortune in spite of yourself." He urged his brother Will to hurry out so they could take up a homestead before the good government land was gone. "I am enthusiastic. My ambition is strong to get *rich*. This is the country where people do that little trick. Please write often and let me know if I am getting you excited."

Meanwhile he became interested in the furniture and hardware business. If he had the money, he thought he could "buy out Barber's interest and I almost wish his widow went in the bargain. She is just splendid. I almost fell in love with her but she is going back to Canada soon."

Henry besieged his parents for \$1,100 to buy a partnership. He was assured of part of the amount from his mother. He urged his father to loan the rest for five years, for which he would "give up my right and title to the old home. Now Father, I ask this even if you have to mortgage the farm. But I don't think you will; you can get it on a note. Or if necessary, mortgage the pasture lot. I am going to make my calculations just the same as though you had written that I could have the money. I leave it to you. If you refuse me the money I shall not be offended and try to think it is for the best."

But the money was forthcoming, and within a few months Henry's letters were written under the letterhead of "Dagleish & Everett, Dealers in Furniture and Hardware." The business prospered and Henry was happy, except at times "scared 3000 long miles from home." In time his partner married and Henry commented that "it seems lonesome enough for me now sleeping in the store all alone. The long evenings how slow they drag by." But he looked forward to his own marriage before another winter (1895). His Lulu Westfall was the "sweetest, dearest girl you ever saw. She thinks everything of me and I tell you I do of her. Mr. Westfall hates to give her up but said he rather I would have her than any one he knew."

(Based on letters in the library of the State College in Plattsburgh.)

Ode to Fancy

Fancy, sweet and truant sprite,
Steals on wings, as feathers light,
Draws a veil o'er Reason's eye,
And bids the guardian senses fly.

Soft she whispers to the mind,
Come, and trouble leave behind:
She banishes the fiend Despair,
And shuts the eyes of waking Care.

Then, o'er precipices dark,
Where never reached the wing of lark,
Fearing no harm, she dauntless flies,
Where rocks on rocks dread frowning
rise.

When Autumn shakes his hoary head,
And scatters leaves at every tread;
Fancy stands with list'ning ear,
Nor starts, when shrieks affrighted Fear.

There's music in the rattling leaf,
But 'tis not for the ear of Grief;
There's music in the wind's hoarse moan,
But 'tis for Fancy's ear alone.

LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON
written in her thirteenth year

To Mamma

Farewell, dear mother, for awhile
I must resign thy plaintive smile;
May angels watch thy couch of woe,
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

May the almighty Father spread
His sheltering wings above thy head.
It is not long that we must part,
Then cheer thy downcast drooping heart.

Remember, oh remember me,
Unceasing is my love for thee!
When earth shall sever earthly ties,
When thy lovely form all senseless lies.

Oh that my soul with thine could flee,
And roam through wide eternity;
Could tread with thee the courts of
heaven,
And count the brilliant stars of even.

Farewell, dear mother, for awhile
I must resign thy plaintive smile;
May angels watch thy couch of woe,
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

MARGARET MILLER DAVIDSON
written in her thirteenth year

11 NOV. '62

☆ NORTH COUNTRY NOTES ☆

ISSUED BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

David W. Fuller, Secretary
46 Oliveti Place, Plattsburgh, New York