

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

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CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 18

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

May 1964

The Next Meeting

will be held on Monday evening, May 4, 1964, at 8:00 o'clock, in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker of the evening will be MR. FRANK COOPER, who will talk on the history of the State University College in Plattsburgh. Mr. Cooper teaches at the College; he is also currently at work on a college history for publication as a partial commemoration of the institution's 75th anniversary.

He hopes to get help at the meeting in identifying photographs of students of the early Normal School years.

The Meeting of June 1st

will consist of our Annual Members' Exhibit Night. All members are urged to ~~plan on attending~~, bringing their souvenirs of local or family history. Details will be sent out at a later date.

The President in Plattsburgh

President Harrison halted in Plattsburgh last Saturday, on his way back to Loon Lake, and was greeted by a large number of citizens. He arrived on the 12.30 train and was met by Hon. Smith M. Weed; our village president, E. C. Baker, Judge S. A. Kellogg, and Congressman Wever, and escorted to the balcony of the Fouquet House, where he was introduced to the assemblage in front by Mr. Baker.

The President made a brief address, and alluded to the historic ground of the Champlain Valley, and also to the precautions which are being taken to ward off the cholera, and counseling vigilance in this work rather than the alarm that begets terror and panic. The President was presented to many citizens, shaking hands with them, before his departure.

Plattsburgh Republican, Sept. 10, 1892

Relics of 1812!

25 SKELETONS

As men were at work grading on the Government Reservation Friday morning they turned up a skull, and in the vicinity twenty-five skulls were unearthed—each lying face downward—together with large quantities of human bones. The spot was about 100 feet from the southeast corner of Fort Moreau.

The discovery was at once reported to Captain Foote, Commander at the Garrison, who has removed the remains to the Garrison, and will have them properly interred in the cemetery there, near the monument marking the burial place of Unknown Dead. Capt. Foote thinks that they were gathered from various portions of the grounds at some late period, and buried here together in a trench.

Plattsburgh Republican, Sept. 24, 1892

An Historic Plattsburgh Hostelry

The story of the famous Fouquet House begins in 1784 when John Louis Fouquet came to the United States with General Lafayette, who was making his third visit. At first Fouquet established a hotel in Albany. In 1793 he moved to Plattsburgh, and purchased some property on Bridge Street opposite the present railroad station. There he and his wife operated a boarding house.

Fouquet seems to have been a natural-born innkeeper. When his house was burned during the battle of Plattsburgh, he collected \$2,200 from the government, a large sum at the time. In 1815 he built a tavern on the same site. It was a white frame building with a swinging sign over the door showing a picture of his friend Macdonough on one side and a ship on the other side. Naturally the inn was called the "Macdonough House."

From the beginning the inn was a popular stopping point for visitors to Plattsburgh. Its popularity was enhanced in 1817 when the steamboat landing was moved from Cumberland Head to the Bridge Street basin. It benefited not only from summer travelers on the lake, but also in winter from those who crossed the ice from Burlington. They stopped at the House to thaw out and to enjoy the good food.

John Louis Fouquet was succeeded by his son Douglas, who became one of the most famous hotel keepers in the country. Down to the Civil War the Macdonough House was visited by many of the celebrities of the day, including army officials. As a result, Mr. Fouquet was given many souvenirs, including the original key to Fort Ticonderoga. The House was sometimes referred to as a museum of "relics."

On June 6, 1864, a fire totally destroyed the House and its relics. But it was rebuilt as the Fouquet House under the management of Louis M. Fouquet. The opening in February 1865 was a brilliant Washington's birthday celebration. ~~Guests danced to the music of the U. S. Artillery band stationed at Plattsburgh and were served an illustrated supper; instead of a bill of fare, pictures next to the huge serving dishes showed what each contained.~~

The hotel had accommodations for 150 guests, brick stables valued at \$6,000, and a livery and a barber shop. The high-beamed ceilings made the golden-oak rooms appear more massive than they actually were. Spool beds, lavish fireplaces, thick carpeting and winding staircases added to its appeal. It was also favored by the location of the railroad station just across the street. Stonewall Jackson, and Presidents Grant, Cleveland and Harrison enjoyed the hotel's hospitality. An added attraction was its large flower garden, reported to be the most beautiful north of Albany.

In the 1890's ownership was transferred from the Fouquet family to Paul Smith, one of the famous innkeepers of the Adirondacks. Thereafter it changed hands several times. Until the mid-1920's the Fouquet House continued as the fashionable place to stop. H. C. Ricketson was the last proprietor to operate it. The building was sold but remained vacant for several years. Today it is used as the office of the M. P. Myers Company. The building still resembles the old House, but the porches and the top floor have been removed.

The Fouquet House was a victim of a changing world. It was once at the center of most of the incoming traffic of Plattsburgh. It was on the steamboat landing, opposite the railroad station and on the trolley line. At one time it was also the terminal of a stagecoach line from Paul Smith's. With the advent of the automobile and the growth of the city, it was "off the beaten track" and was supplanted by the newer hotels. But the Fouquet House is a glamorous part of Plattsburgh's past.

Gayle Carman '64 and Brenda Blahut '65
SUC, Plattsburgh

The Near Armistice of 1814

Early in 1814, Pliny Moore of Champlain was the unwitting starting point of a serious attempt at an armistice in the war between the British and Americans. The village of Champlain during the winter had been the site of negotiations between the two sides for an exchange of prisoners. The intermediary was the American Brigadier General William H. Winder, a prisoner of war paroled by the British for the purpose.

In the course of the negotiations, the Adjutant General of the British army, Edward Baynes, visited Champlain and paid a call on Judge Moore. Exactly what he said is not recorded, but the Judge described the meeting to his friend, J. G. Freligh of Plattsburgh, who on Jan. 29th wrote his Congressman, Elisha J. Winter: "Judge Moore informs me he had considerable conversation with Adjutant General Baynes on the subject of an armistice, and had the satisfaction to learn from that gentleman that the Governor in Canada stood ready to enter into one at any time the Government of the United States should think proper to make the proposition."

Winter communicated this letter to Secretary of State Monroe who on March 1st wrote General Winder, back in Montreal after his parole, to learn if Baynes spoke with authority and to ascertain Governor General Prevost's views. To Winder's query, Prevost replied that Baynes' talk was of a private nature and so unauthorized by him. But Prevost chose to interpret Monroe's letter as a definite offer of an armistice, which he was glad to accept. Baynes would be his deputy, with full powers of negotiation at Champlain or any other meeting place.

The experienced Winder, who was about to be exchanged by the British, was Monroe's intended negotiator. But he left Montreal before receiving the appointment, and Monroe had to name another, Colonel N. Pinkney, who was not conversant with the circumstances and whose instructions were incomplete. Consequently, ~~the talks between Baynes and Pinkney at Champlain on May 1st were postponed~~ pending clarification from Washington, and were never resumed because of the new British determination to launch offensive operations in the summer.

While he was in Champlain, Baynes again visited Judge Moore to try to find out how his earlier remarks could have been interpreted as an offer of an armistice. "The Judge assured me," wrote Baynes to Prevost, "that no communication from him could have sanctioned such an assertion, that he had mentioned in a letter the conciliating spirit with which an exchange had been proposed by Your Excellency of prisoners of war, and added that from the liberal sentiments which appeared to influence your conduct, and the general tenor of my conversation, he had no doubt that you would feel inclined to renew the armistice which had been so wantonly and imprudently rejected by the President, but that it could not be expected that any overture of that nature would again originate with Your Excellency."

Thus a casual conversation in Champlain led to an armistice meeting, while the slow mails kept a competent American negotiator from being present — four months before the battle of Plattsburgh!

Clinton County Inventors

According to the *Scientific American* for 1849, residents of Clinton County were busy patenting their inventions.

On August 14th a patent was issued to Ira Carter of Plattsburgh for an improvement in a self-acting cheese press.

On the same day Horace Boardman, also of Plattsburgh, received a patent for an improved arrangement of a steam boiler and its furnace.

And a patent was issued on April 24th to Abiathar Pollard and Simeon Minkler of Clinton County for improvement in obstetrical supporters.

The Sunbeam Band

An earnest group of young people of the West Plattsburgh church organized an association called the Sunbeam Band in 1897. According to their Constitution, their object "shall be to learn of and cultivate a love for missions." Any boy or girl was eligible for membership by paying one cent a month. The roster included the names of thirty-five youngsters who belonged at one time or another during the life of the society, between 1897 and 1906.

The record of the meeting in May 1898 tells us that "44 blocks were basted and 3 dish cloths were finished. Miss Hobart gave each one of the boys a small sack of popcorn which they are agoing to plant and then sell it and give the money to the Mission Band. The number present 8, collection 9 cents."

In May 1899 we read: "Lesson on Japan. Arthur & Frank Russell brought \$1.00 for popcorn & \$.35 for pen wipers. Mildred Reed \$.10 for pen wipers, \$.12 from Arthur Ladd for fees."

At the meeting in November 1899, a substitute secretary had trouble expressing himself: "24 Phasm. Prare for Miss Mead. Miss Hobert talked on Afarca. Basted 10 handkerchiefs and 24 blocks. Members presant 11, collecton \$.24." These busy youngsters raised surprising amounts of money from their handiwork, their special collections and their mite boxes.

*From the archives of the
State University College Library*

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