

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 19

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Sept. 1964

Battle of Plattsburgh Day

As 1964 is the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Plattsburgh, the Clinton County Historical Association is joining with the Battle of Plattsburgh Commission in commemorating this historic event. A Dinner is to be held at the Witherill Hotel on Friday evening, September 11th, with a program following. All members of the Association are urged to attend.

Complete details will be given later through the local newspapers.

This Celebration Dinner will take the place of our usual September meeting.

Coming Programs

October 5 — "An Inquiry into the Medical History of the Battle of Plattsburgh" by Dr. Edwin Jameson.

November 2 — "Revolutionary Navies on Lake Champlain" by Mr. Oscar E. Bredenberg.

Our New Publication

The Clinton County Historical Association is pleased to send to all its members a copy of its newest publication, *Recollections of Clinton County and the Battle of Plattsburgh, 1800-1840*. Edited by Allan Everest, this book presents for the first time in print the recollections of early citizens of the county, as recorded by Dr. David S. Kellogg in the 1880's. Additional copies may be obtained at Beemer's, The Corner Bookstore and the College Bookstore in Plattsburgh, or through the Association, at \$2.25 a copy.

In the News

Dec. 1884. Clinton Powder Company erected its first factory above Maine Mill. First explosion, Feb. 24, 1886. Second explosion, Jan. 11, 1887. Works removed soon afterwards.

July 9, 1887. Plattsburgh stone crusher put into operation, marking the beginning of a better system of street improvement, using crushed stone.

Aug. 20, 1913. In a pitcher's battle, Rouses Point defeated Champlain, three to two. Ryan, for the Point, struck out 17 men, and Champlain's Malcolm fanned 23.

A British Deserter

The following is a portion of a letter written by Captain Charles Hunter at Pike's Cantonment, the original military garrison at Plattsburgh, to General Joseph Bloomfield, commander of the northern army with headquarters at Burlington.

Cantonment, Saranak, Jan'y 18, 1813

Dear Sir,

Nothing of importance has transpired on the lines or at this Post since my last. An uncommon circumstance took place last week which for want of more interesting matter, I will detail to you.

A British Deserter arrived here in a dashing state with a pair of grey ponies which he drove tandem to an elegant cariole in which he brought a beautiful young Canadian female with large trunks of clothing, buffelow skins and everything complete. His appearance not comporting with his story, Colonel Pike had him apprehended, and making a pretext of the event, dispatched Major Smith with a letter to Colonel Hamilton of the 100th Regiment, the commandant at the Isle aux Noix, to ascertain his real character.

Two days after the Colonel received a dispatch from Colonel Hamilton enclosing several letters sent to him by the officers of the battalion to which the deserter belonged, who represent him as one of the deepest, most consummate villains they ever met with. It appears that the man from a uniform series of good conduct for a number of years as sergeant of a company, had obtained the entire confidence of his Captain, and the good wishes and favor of the officers of the battalion, and that upon their arrival at Chamblee from Quebec last summer he was appointed messman to the battalion. He was thereby permitted to suttle and retail to the soldiers, and obtained a standing pass to ride about the country to procure supplies for his table.

His Captain became his surety with several merchants of Montreal from whom he purchased his stores. They state that on the day he last set out for Montreal according to his usual custom he gave the officers notice, who immediately crowded him with commissions. One sent for his gold watch repairing in town, another for clothing, lace, etc. A major gave him a fifty pound bill to get changed in gold and silver. A subaltern commanding a company sent a draft on the pay master for 60, being the subsistence of his company for one month; all of which he took care of, ran in debt to the amount of 5 or 600, and returning at night pushed on and got safely over the lines. He was taken up by Capt. Muhlenbergh at Champlain and sent down here.

Colonel Pike yesterday searched his trunks; he took the watch and the money he had stolen from the major and sent it by an officer immediately to Canada; after which he gave the gentleman a passport and suffered him to proceed with his establishment southward.

The British officers appear highly gratified with the attention paid them by Colonel Pike in this instance and no doubt will (if they ever have it in their power) reciprocate this act of generosity and of justice.

With sincere esteem

Chas W. Hunter

Accidents in the 1890's

When one reads about the accidental deaths of the 1960's, he is usually alarmed at the high figures. But when the statistics of the 1890's are reviewed, the reader has a surprise in store.

This writer has compiled a list of all the fatal accidents that occurred in Clinton County in 1892 and 1893, as reported in the *Plattsburgh Republican*. The list may

not be complete because all fatalities may not have been reported. In the following tables the number and type of accidents for the two years are shown :

ACCIDENTS IN 1892		ACCIDENTS IN 1893	
Type	Killed	Type	Killed
Drowning.....	17	Drowning.....	19
Suicide.....	15	Suicide.....	14
Run over by train.....	8	Train accidents.....	11
Fire.....	7	Falls.....	5
Caught between cars in freight yard..	4	Abandoned infants.....	3
Gored by a bull.....	3	Smothered.....	3
Lightning.....	3	Falling trees.....	3
Rock slide.....	2	Bursting emery wheels.....	2
Fall.....	2	Hunting.....	2
Smothered.....	2	Electrocution.....	2
Mine-shaft fall.....	1	Fire.....	1
Burst boiler.....	1	Buggy collision.....	1
Hunting.....	1	Lightning.....	1
Swallowing a fish bone.....	1	Hot liquids.....	1
Eating too many blueberries.....	1	Poisoning.....	1
Blast.....	1	Leaking gas.....	1
Piledriver.....	1	Pitchfork wounds.....	1
Snowplow.....	1		
	Total 71		Total 71

In almost all cases the accounts of these accidents are treated quite matter-of-factly to the point of indifference. None of the gory details is omitted. These excerpts from the *Plattsburgh Republican* illustrate the tendency: "Man attempts to blow up a stump, succeeds in blowing up himself." "Mr. William Hurley was run over by a train and was killed; he was crossing the railroad bridge ahead of the train when he slipped and fell between the ties, and the top of his head was cut off." "Daniel F. Allen, a painter, fell ninety feet from a scaffolding and was instantly killed, his brains being scattered over the brick pavement."

This study suggests that human life in the 1890's was not held in as high a regard as it is today. It reveals a surprising suicide rate. And it can give safety experts some satisfaction with the safeguards of our own era.

George M. O'Connor
State University College, Plattsburgh

A Citizen Complains

James W. Wood of Champlain wrote to the Secretary of War on April 6, 1814, to vent his disgust over General Wilkinson's brief and disastrous invasion of Canada on March 30th.

Sir,

You may possibly think it presuming in a citizen who may attempt to meddle with the affairs of the army; and I am well aware of the delicacy of the subject upon which I am about to address you; but the regard I have for the welfare of our country, and the suffering and losses I have sustained by the enemy, who hath but very lately suffered me to return from a six months' imprisonment, and who firstly captured me at my own home, and in my own country; from those considerations and my friendly attachment to my government, I have always been anxious for a successful prosecution of the war; and fearing that you would not become acquainted with the disgraceful expedition commanded by General Wilkinson in person against the advanced post of

the enemy; I have attempted to give you a concise and true history of the affair from the knowledge I have of it.

On the 29th of March our army passed from Champlain into Odeltown (in Canada) and attacked the enemy's advanced corps of about one hundred, who retreated to a gristmill on Lacole river, where the enemy had concentrated about five hundred of his troops, who were covered with the stone walls of the mill and one wood block-house.

The American army surrounded them in such a manner that not one could have escaped. The artillery commenced a fire upon the mill with one twelve and two fives and found them insufficient to beat down the walls.

What appears very extraordinary is that there was not energy enough to have got there with an eighteen pounder, which was within three or four miles, and which was amply sufficient to have thrown the walls about their ears in a few moments. We had a surplusage of artillery in Champlain only eight miles from the mill.

After all the advantages we possessed, the enemy completely beaten, their ammunition nearly exhausted, and no probability of improvements, and they expecting to be compelled to surrender every moment; General Wilkinson ordered a retreat after besieging the place a part of one half day, and with a loss of between one and two hundred killed and wounded.

The transaction reflects disgrace and dishonor on the American army, and both officers and soldiers when on their return were mortified in the extreme to reflect that after having their enemy so completely within their power and without any visible cause to voluntarily abandon them, who were their inferior in the proportion of one to eight.

I have the honor to be your most obt. humble servt

James W. Wood

19

SEP '64

☆ NORTH COUNTRY NOTES ☆

ISSUED BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

David K. Martin, Secretary
West Chazy, New York