

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 22

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Mar. 1965

The Next Meeting

will be held on Monday evening, March 1, 1965, at 8 o'clock, in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. Mr. LaMar Moss will present a paper on "THE HISTORY OF THE NORTH COUNTRY CUSTOMS SERVICE" based on the research of Mrs. Benjamin Sullivan of Chazy. The public is cordially invited to attend.

Coming

At our April meeting, a Double Feature:

"ELIZABETH BLACKWELL, FIRST WOMAN DOCTOR"

by Dr. Eugene Link

and

"A PLATTSBURGH DOCTOR OF THE 1880's"

by Dr. Allan Everest

Execution in Malone

On September 23, 1854, the Malone newspaper, *The Jeffersonian*, carried a full account of the confession and execution of a youthful murderer. The confession, made to his pastor, is that of a drab crime whose motive was robbery. The account of the execution follows:

"On Friday, the 22d of September, 1854, the sentence of the law was executed upon James M. Bickford, for the murder of John B. Secor. He was executed at about one o'clock in the afternoon, in the yard of the jail of Franklin County.

"He was entirely reconciled and composed, as he had been for many days previous, and professing a desire to have the time for his execution arrive. After passing into the jail yard, he knelt in prayer with his spiritual adviser Mr. Treadway, which being closed, the arrangements for concluding the solemn and awful ceremonies of the law were proceeded with.

"He was asked if he had anything to say, but he replied that all that he had to say was in the hands of the Rev. Mr. Treadway, when, without his making any remarks, or further speaking to any one, the rope was adjusted, his arms pinioned, and at his expressing his readiness, the Sheriff cut the fatal rope. The spinal cord was not broken; and he died of simple strangulation, after struggling 6 or 8 minutes.

"We understand after remaining suspended some five minutes, his pulse was nearly as strong though not quite as quick as usual, but that after eight minutes it had wholly ceased."

Detroit in the North Country

In 1900 an industry came to Plattsburgh that grew phenomenally until the beginning of World War I. The Lozier Motor Company purchased property for the manufacture of marine and other type motors and parts, which developed into the making of automotive motors for the Lozier car.

The original plant covered ten acres at the northern outskirts of Plattsburgh on the shores of Cumberland Bay. The first building still stands, as do some of the later additions. They are currently occupied by the Georgia-Pacific Paper Company. At the beginning, the plant employed about fifty men.

In 1904 the company perfected an automobile that was hailed as the finest type of American car, ranking with the best foreign makes. At the time, the motors were made in Plattsburgh and sent for assembly to Stamford, Connecticut.

In 1904 the capital was \$500,000. In 1905 a special stockholders' meeting held at Plattsburgh approved an increase to \$1,100,000. In 1906 the facilities in Plattsburgh were enlarged and the entire automobile production and assembly commenced in this city. The number of men employed rose to 300. The general offices were in New York City, and agents were in every principal city of the country. In 1908, further extensive additions were made in an effort to keep pace with the growing popularity of the car. Employment now rose to more than 400 men.

It was conjectured after the 1909 stockholders' meeting and the increasing of the capital stock to \$2,000,000 that the plant would become the largest in the country, employing perhaps 1,000 men. At this time the Ford Motor Company of Michigan was also advertising a capital of \$2,000,000. Thus were the two companies similar, at that time. The output of the Lozier Company was about ten cars a week; it was, however, behind on its orders at all times.

In September 1910, fifty-six people owned cars in Plattsburgh. Only four of them owned Loziers—perhaps understandable since Loziers cost from \$5,000 to \$7,000, while the Cadillac of the day sold for about \$700, and the Ford for even less.

A Detroit factory of the Lozier Motor Company was started, to enlarge the output of the company. All its cars heretofore had been turned out in the Plattsburgh plant; now it would make only the motor parts and axles. The Detroit assembly was expected to complete 1,000 cars that season.

Business prospered both in Plattsburgh and in Detroit. Capital stock was increased to \$5,000,000 early in 1913 in view of the popularity of the "Light-Six" and in preparation for increased sales in 1914. 33 Loziers were sold at the Auto Show in New York in January 1914. In April, Lozier stock took a jump from 15 to 32, from the advance sale of the new medium-priced "four."

The Lozier was popular in Europe and the company depended a great deal on its sales there. This explains the impact of the unfolding events in Europe. The World War was the beginning of the end of the Lozier era. The Plattsburgh plant closed in August 1914. It was stated at the time that the reopening of the plant depended largely on European conditions of the near future.

Although the company claimed assets in excess of its liabilities, the creditors asked for a "receiver." As defendants in a United States court action, the company was declared bankrupt and a decision was made to sell the property. The plant in Plattsburgh, consisting of 145,000 square feet of modern floor space, was sold on February 5, 1915, for \$200,000. The plant in Detroit brought \$640,000.

Thus the meteoric rise of the Lozier Motor Company was followed by as meteoric a fall. Although its decline was blamed on the European War, it probably also was due to the competition from lower priced cars. There was little joy in Plattsburgh when the hopes of citizens and employees were shattered on February 5, 1915.

The Rebellious Militiamen

In the fall of 1813 several hundred Vermont militia were stationed alongside regular troops in Plattsburgh to guard the northern frontier. But the newly elected Federalist governor of Vermont, Martin Chittenden, represented the party with many misgivings about the War of 1812. Governor Chittenden, like other New England governors, believed that the militia could not be sent outside the state, and could not serve under federal officers. Consequently, he ordered the Vermont militia back to Vermont, and sent his militia general, Jacob Davis, to bring them.

When Davis' errand became known, he was arrested and held at Plattsburgh. He was released only after giving security of \$5,000 for his appearance in U. S. district court in New York City.

Meanwhile 22 Vermont militia officers wrote the governor a vigorous refusal to leave Plattsburgh. They considered his authority over them suspended and his order they regarded "with mingled emotions of pity and contempt for its author, and as a striking monument to his folly." They felt it was "an unwarrantable stretch of executive authority, issued from the worst of motives, to effect the basest purposes. It is in our opinion, a renewed instance of that spirit of disorganization and anarchy which is carried on by a faction, to overwhelm our country with ruin and disgrace."

Even at the battle of Plattsburgh nearly a year later, Chittenden refused to order Vermont militia to help, but he did issue a call for *volunteers*, who responded in large numbers and helped to save the day on September 11, 1814.

Warren Harkness at Oswego Normal School

(At a very serious 18 years of age, J. Warren Harkness of Harkness, New York, started keeping a diary while he attended the Normal School at Oswego. In his later life he became a well-known farmer, businessman and local historian. The following excerpts have been made available by his daughter, Dr. Georgia Harkness, of Berkeley, California.)

May 25, 1867. There are many things which I hear and see every day that I desire to remember for the reason that each little straw that I can glean from the great field of knowledge is well worth preserving for it helps to make the bundle which I hope to collect as my share of the great harvest. But the grainery of my mind is not as safe as it should be for there are many things which leak out and are lost forever. . . . I have tried to learn something of myself and I found out that which others have always known, that I am a very ignorant boy.

(After the close of school in the summer, he came home via the St. Lawrence and Montreal.)

July 11. We bought through tickets to Montreal, price \$7.50. Our teachers were all at the wharf to bid us "good-bye." We started at eleven o'clock on board the *Bay State*. There were about twenty Normals in our company. There was a heavy swell and several of the company began to be sick as soon as we started & retired to their staterooms. Soon the others began "to heave up Jonah" and also went below.

July 13. In Montreal carried our trunks to the depot and started for Plattsburg at three. Had a pleasant ride up to Lachine, crossed the St. Lawrence on a boat to Caughnawaga, reached Plattsburg at seven, hired a horse of Witherell to take me to Peru, found Filmore Hickock who came to Peru with me and took the horse back. Left my trunk at Stafford's and walked home where I arrived at midnight, having been absent just twenty weeks.

Mon. Sept. 16. I bid adieu to friends and home and start for Oswego.

Dec. 11. Arose at four o'clock which is early for me and went to work. Took a run around a couple of squares with Boyd before breakfast. Had my lessons pretty well, and feel much better than I have lately.

Beware of City Ways!

Alfred McGregor (1836-1919) was a farmer who once lived on the Lake Shore Road between Chazy and Rouses Point on the farm now owned by Antonio Bechard. Mr. Bechard recently discovered a letter from which excerpts follow. Alfred had asked his brother Chandler in New York City to get him some cotton and kerosene. Chandler's answer, dated April 5, 1870, reveals a country man's wariness about the ways of New Yorkers:

About cotton, Chandler wrote: "It is not an easy matter to get correct information about wholesale business when one is not "posted" in it. You know this is a large city, about 13 miles long and 3 miles wide, and there are perhaps a thousand kinds of business here that I don't know so much about as I do about *Alaska*."

About kerosene: "It would not be a safe thing for me to undertake to buy a barrel of kerosene; for, not being acquainted with anyone in the business, if I were to go to a wholesale dealer to buy one barrel, he, knowing that he has nothing to fear from my influence, would sell me just such an article as he had a mind to. You see we cannot trust anyone except we know them, or know that they are afraid to deceive us. It seems to me that you had better not keep as much as a barrel of kerosene. Where would you put it? Your buildings are so close together that in case of any accident with it, they would all be in great danger. Perhaps I realize more keenly than you do the danger of kerosene, for there are scores of people here either killed or maimed every day by accidents with kerosene."

Probably Alfred never got his New York goods.

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West Chazy, New York*