

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 29

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Sept., 1966

The Next Meetings

of the Association will be held in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library at 8 o'clock on the following dates. The public is cordially invited to all meetings.

September 12—*Work night.* Come prepared to index some county historical materials, as planned by the program chairman, David Martin. All can participate, the work will be interesting and the results very useful. Refreshments will be served.

October 3—"Beaumont Evening." This will be a joint meeting with the County Medical Society. Dr. Frederick Swizler of St. Albans will talk on Dr. William Beaumont, and Dr. A. Bradley Soule of the UVM College of Medicine will exhibit Beaumont materials.

November (date to be determined)—Children from the St. Regis Indian Reservation will perform authentic Indian dances which they are learning from older members of the tribe. The dances will be explained.

Riddle of the Month

What was the most populous settlement under the French in the Champlain Valley? Or if you do not know that one, what part of Clinton County was occupied by the British for thirteen years after the Revolution?

Personals

Did you know that one member (C.W.M.) had some of his private treasures raided by his wife for exhibits at the Members' Night in June? Or that another (D.M.) lost two (or more) layers of skin on the bottom of his foot while playing touch football with his family? Or that two of our members (E.A.M. and E.A.S.) have nursed injuries, presumably innocently acquired, to their wrists? Or that another (H.E.H.) is trying to market the Association's publications in Montreal bookstores?

Wool on The Battle of Plattsburgh

John E. Wool (1784-1869) was a major in the regular army at the battle of Plattsburgh. His later military career included the position of Inspector General and service in both the Mexican and early Civil Wars. He was retired as a major general in 1862. He wrote the following letter to Philip B. Roberts of Beekmantown. His eyewitness account challenges some of the local traditions about the battle.

Troy, January 6th, 1859.

Sir,

Your communication of the 1st instant, relating to the "Battle of Beekmantown", which occurred on the morning of the 6th of September 1814, was received on the 3rd.

In reply to your request I would remark that on the evening of the 5th of September, 1814, Major John E. Wool, having volunteered his services, was ordered by Major General A. Macomb with 250 regular infantry and Captain Leonard with two pieces of Artillery, to march early next morning, the 6th of September, on the Beekmantown road "to support the Militia and set them an example of firmness" by resisting the advance on Plattsburgh of the British column on that road commonly reported to be 4000 strong. The United States Militia under Major General Mooers, 700 strong, were encamped on that road about four or five miles from Plattsburgh.

Agreeably to the orders of Major General Macomb, Major Wool with 250 regular infantry afterwards joined by 30 Volunteer Militia, left Plattsburgh about twelve o'clock at night—Captain Leonard refused to accompany him, not having been as he said ordered to do so by General Macomb—and marched about seven miles when he met the advance of the British column under the command of Lieut. Colonel Wellington of the 3rd Buffs. From this point the command of Major Wool disputed every foot of ground until it arrived on the right bank of the Saranac in the village of Plattsburgh. On his reaching Culiver's Hill the Major made a stand and compelled the British troops to fall back—when Lieut. Colonel Wellington and a Lieutenant of the 3rd Buffs were killed—but the troops soon rallied and compelled the Major to retreat. On his arrival at the brook, some half a mile or more from Culivers Hill, he made a short stand and tore up the bridge erected over the brook. From this position disputing every inch of ground, he again made a stand at Halseys Corner, a half of a mile or more from Plattsburgh, where he was joined by Captain Leonard with two pieces of Artillery, which were well served and did great execution. Being driven from this position he again made a stand in front of Judge Bayly's House, and again at Gallows Hill in the village of Plattsburgh. From this position he crossed and formed his troops on the right bank of the Saranac. The Major ordered Captain Rochester with his company to tear up the bridge, which he promptly executed under a severe fire from the enemy. The British troops took possession of the stores and houses on the opposite bank, from which they were driven by Major Wool's Infantry and the well directed fire of four pieces of Artillery under Captain Leonard, and from the fire of two block-houses near by. The enemy retired in rear of the village, where the whole British force, 11,000 strong, concentrated, and where they remained until the 11th September, 1814. The result of that day is too well known to be here repeated.

From the British returns it would appear that their loss in the affair of the morning, the 6th of September, was nearly 200 killed and wounded. Major Wool had a number of his command killed and wounded, but how many is not now recollected. Near Culliver's Hill the Major had his horse shot under him. It may not however be improper to remark that Major Wool received no support or assistance from the Militia under the command of General Mooers, excepting about 30 men who volunteered and continued with his command, doing gallant service,

from the time he met the enemy in Beekmantown until his arrival on the banks of the Saranac.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

John E. Wool

(Ed. Note—Wool first made contact with the British at John Howe's, the present Hindes residence. The British used as hospitals that house, Culver's, now Crosby's, and Isaac Platt's, now Redmond Holland's. Bailey's home stood where the McMartin home does now on Cornelia Street. Gallows Hill was on the present site of MAI.)

Notes on Summer Events

On June 19, Whitehall dedicated its naval museum to the memory of the late Captain Edward Farmer of Orwell, Vermont, who gave the museum large models of the shipyards at Skenesborough (Whitehall) and Vergennes. Following a barbecue the program included talks by Paul Bilhuber of Basin Harbor and New York City, Charles Muller, author of **The Proudest Day**, and your president. The museum, housed in a former canal building, is well worth a visit.

Chazy celebrated its tercentenary rousingly on July 16 and 17. In 1666 the Sieur de Chazy was killed by Indians on the Little Chazy River, and the town fittingly remembered the man whose name today denotes the town. Thousands witnessed the parade, listened to many addresses, attended an auction, a buffalo barbecue and a street dance. The historic meaning of the event was recalled by exhibits at the Public Library and at Grey Gables.

The Quaker Union Society held a large meeting on July 30 at the home of Mrs. Eleanor Spaulding in Ausable. The guest of the day was Dr. Georgia Harkness, who talked about her early associations with the town and about the doctrines of the early Quakers. Mrs. Spaulding showed slides of the old homes of Ausable.

On August 6, thirty eight members and guests of the Association made a tour of the old homes of the county. During a picnic lunch at Fort Montgomery, Mayor Letourneau of Rouses Point greeted the group and John Ross talked about the history of the fort. With the aid of a loudspeaker on the bus, Allan Everest pointed out the homes along the route that were built before 1820. The tour included parts of the town of Plattsburgh, of Chazy, Rouses Point, West Chazy, Beekmantown and West Plattsburgh. Trips were made through the Neverett home in Chazy and the Crosby restoration of the Culver home in Beekmantown. Owing to a lack of time, the tour of the southern part of the county was left for a future trip.

Although Plattsburgh has not yet obtained title to Fort Brown, the delay results from the need to convince the federal government of the sincerity of the city's plans for its care and development. The Beautification Commission has budgeted funds for this purpose beginning in 1969. Meanwhile, a new interest has been aroused in Rouses Point in the preservation of Fort Montgomery. The village's service clubs are currently studying the means for achieving this worthy goal.

From the Journal of Dr. David Kellogg - 1886

Jan. 13—Pension day. One would-be pensioner in his "subjective symptoms" said he had typhoid fever while in the army which resulted in the loss of his "smellage". He also further said that he "felt something fluttering in his stomach like a fish's tail & after that he had the blind staggers."

There is a new toboggan slide on Rugar Street near Geo. Hartwell's, which was first used last Saturday, I believe. The youths & maidens in homely so-called "toboggan suits" gather in the evening & think they enjoy themselves sliding.

My attention has been called to the *Sentinel's* account of the funeral of Mrs. Weed. It says, "The large funeral procession was formed & moved to the grave in Riverside Cemetery, there to rest until the resurrection morn."

Sept. 7—This evening I spent an hour with Dr. Cleveland of the Poughkeepsie Insane Asylum. He with three or four other men are a committee appointed by the Governor of New York to examine different sites for a new Insane Asylum to report to the next legislature. We hope the new asylum will come here, but are uncertain about it as yet. Ogdensburgh also wants the asylum. Dr. Cleveland is a pleasant gentleman of about 60 years, I should estimate. These commissioners were at the Fouquet House. Yesterday they were taken around by citizens & shown the various sites in this vicinity. They seemed to be quite favorably impressed.

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