

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

P.O. Box 332, Plattsburgh NY 12901, 518-561-0340

No. 292 PRESIDENT: David C. Stortz EDITOR: Helen W. Allan December 1992

DECEMBER PROGRAM: "FREE LOVE ON VALCOUR ISLAND"

The utopian community which settled on Valcour Island in the 1870s will be the topic of the next CCHA meeting, scheduled for Monday, December 7, at 7:30 p.m. in the public meeting room of the County Government Center in Plattsburgh. Professor Altina Waller, chair of the history department at SUNY Plattsburgh, will present the program about the utopians, known as the "Dawn Valcour Community".

Although free love was probably the most sensational of the tenets adopted by this group, its members actually adhered to a set of beliefs that could be considered quite modern, including equal rights for women and economic justice and equality for all persons. Much of Dr. Waller's material about this group is based on contemporary accounts which appeared in local newspapers. It should be a lively and entertaining evening. The meeting is free and open to the public.

NYSICA TO FUND PATCHIN PORTRAIT RESTORATION

The Historical Association is pleased to announce that it has been awarded public funds by the New York State Council on the Arts. The grants consist of \$3,504 for general operating support and \$4,000 for an archival/conservation project. In the latter category, the funds will be used for treatment of the portrait of Abigail Hillyard Patchin by the Vermont-born 19th-century artist Asahel Lynde Powers. In 1840, during his sojourn in Clinton County, Powers painted several county residents, including Dr. Isaac Patchin of Peru and his wife, Elisha and Mary Griffith Arnold of Peru, and Abel and Maria Southwick Knapp of Mooers. The portraits of the Arnolds were given to the museum by Mrs. Harley Stafford II, those of the Knapps by Gerald Knapp, and the Patchins by Dr. and Mrs. William Ladue.

SLATE NAMED FOR CCHA BOARD

C. Randall Beach, chairman of CCHA's nominating committee, announces the following slate of nominees for three-year terms on the Board of Directors of the Historical Association:

Diane M. Turner
J. William Woythaler
David C. Stortz
Mark A. McCullough
Bradley G. Knapp

The election will take place prior to the December 7 program. Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

PROMINENT CITIZENS OF PERU

Martha Hoag Bosworth (1879-1960)

Martha Hoag Bosworth, a skilled painter of local landscapes, was born in Peru on December 17, 1879. She married Fred Bosworth, and sometime after their marriage, the couple moved to a bungalow on Pleasant Street in Peru. They had two sons, Carlton and Isham.

A friend, the late Ruth Clark, recalled riding with Martha up the Patent Road in West Peru. Martha would park beside the road, take out her pad and pencil, and sketch the view that overlooks the Champlain Valley. One of her favorite landscapes was a painting of Huckleberry Mountain west of Peru. Martha gave painting lessons to her friend, Charlotte Stackpole Mason. Their landscapes hang in the Peru Free Library.

Martha had a beautiful voice and sang in the Congregational Church choir. For the church's centennial celebration in 1925, she wrote a poem about the "little church of stone". During a service at the church, she sang a hymn with the words she had composed.

About 1945 the Bosworths moved to Bristol, Vermont to be near their son Carlton and his family. Fred Bosworth died in 1954. Martha died in 1960. They are buried in the old cemetery in Peru.

(This account is based on a biography of Martha Hoag Bosworth by Virginia M. Burdick.)

DOLL EXHIBIT PLANNED FOR CHRISTMAS

In the September issue of *Notes* we reported that the Plattsburgh Public Library has placed its doll collection in the County Historical Museum. The dolls have not been on view for some time, therefore it will be a double first when they go on display in the museum at its new location on December 11. Snow White, Sonja Henie, Shirley Temple and many other fine dolls will be joined by toys from the museum's collection and by items loaned by members. Bring your children or **their** children to see the doll exhibit celebrating our first Christmas in our new home! (The exhibit will remain on view through January and February.)

SUPPORT THE DOLL HOUSE RAFFLE

Ticket sales are continuing for CCHA's doll house raffle. Although much enthusiasm for the doll house itself has been generated by this event, we remind our members that the main purpose of the drawing is to generate much-needed funds for CCHA and the museum in their new home. Most of the folks who have been buying tickets would be very happy to win the grand prize. However, even if your home doesn't have the space for a doll house or if you just don't have the interest in a miniature gingerbread-trimmed structure filled with tiny Victorian-style furniture, don't let that stop you from investing in raffle tickets. You will be making a valuable contribution to CCHA, and if you win, you can use the prize to brighten the life of a deserving child, either someone you know or someone reached by one of our local charitable organizations. Call CCHA at 561-0340 about the tickets, which are \$1 each, six for \$5. The drawing will take place at 4 p.m. on December 18 at Gregory's Building Supply Center in Plattsburgh.

WILSON FAMILY VISITS CCHA

On Nov. 9 we welcomed several new members into the CCHA fold. Mr. & Mrs. Joseph G. Wilson, Bruce and Susanne Wilson, and Baine W. and Bonnie R. Holding, all of Maine, joined when they were in Plattsburgh to attend the funeral of Joseph Wilson's stepmother, Katherine Lobdell Wilson, the donor of several of our significant museum acquisitions. The family was eager to see the portraits of Levi and Eliza Platt, given in 1972 by Mrs. Wilson. The large portraits, attributed to A.G.D. Tuthill, c. 1820, are currently on view in the museum.

Mrs. Wilson's donations to our collections also included three Hitchcock-style painted chairs, and clothing and accessories which belonged to Mrs. Peter Platt. Over the years the museum has displayed several items from Mrs. Wilson's donations, including the 1906 wedding dress of her mother, Mabel Platt Lobdell, and some of the jet jewelry worn by Eliza Platt in her portrait.

Daughter of Ross Platt Lobdell and Mabel Ebbetts Lobdell, Katherine Wilson was a graduate of Wellesley College and Columbia School of Social Work. She joined the WAVES in 1943 and made her mark during WWII by becoming the only female commanding officer in the United States. In peacetime she had a successful career with the YWCA. According to her family, she was a talented and unusual woman.

In 1988 Mrs. Wilson was an honored guest when New York State observed the 200th celebration of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. As the great-great-great-granddaughter of Zephaniah Platt, she was the only living direct descendant of a signer of the ratification document.

NEW ARRIVALS IN THE MUSEUM SHOP

The inventory of the museum shop has just been augmented by additional copies of books by Allan S. Everest, professor emeritus of history at SUNY Plattsburgh and a member of CCHA. One of the new arrivals is the remaining stock of *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley*. This book, published by Syracuse University Press, is a major source of information about the war and its impact on this area. It is both scholarly and detailed as well as lively, thanks to anecdotes and quotations from contemporary documents. The price of this hardcover book is \$29.95. Once the shop's limited supply is gone, this book will be unavailable.

The shop also now has a few hardcover copies of Dr. Everest's *Rum Across the Border*, a colorful account of the smuggling of alcohol from Canada to the U.S. during Prohibition. *Rum* was recently reissued in paperback, but now the shop is able to offer these out-of-print hardcover copies to those who prefer a more durable edition in their libraries. The price is \$12.95.

Please let us know if you are interested in either of these books. The shop is open weekdays from 9-4 and on weekends from 1-4. Or you may call 561-0340 to arrange a mail order.

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A NEW BOOK FOR CHRISTMAS

During the summer of 1992 the Historical Association was approached by Eugene J. Zurlo with a proposal to fund a study of the history of Point au Fer. Mr. Zurlo offered to underwrite publication of the resulting manuscript. The Association, a frequent publisher of local history books, immediately contacted Dr. Allan S. Everest, well-known author of many books on regional history. Dr. Everest agreed to undertake the project and within days he was hard at work researching the history of Point au Fer. He was aided significantly by John H. Zurlo of Champlain who gave generously of his time to introduce Dr. Everest to the geography and people of the area.

C.C.H.A. expects to publish *POINT AU FER on Lake Champlain* before Christmas. The handsome softcover book will be generously illustrated with maps and reproductions of paintings and prints, selected from the museum's collections and made available by the Public Archives of Canada and the New-York Historical Society.

POINT AU FER introduces the reader to a place on Lake Champlain which has long been populated peacefully by year-round and summer residents. Its early history was very different, however. Occupied by the British from 1776 to 1796, Point au Fer appears on early maps as a military stronghold of strategic importance. In his new book, Dr Everest vividly recounts the 200-year chain of events that makes Point au Fer a significant place in Clinton County.

A limited edition of the book will be available at a pre-publication price of \$7.95 until Jan. 1, 1993. After that date the price will be \$8.95. (The 10% CCHA member discount will apply only to the regular price.) When ordering by mail, please be sure to include \$.56 NYS sales tax per book until Jan. 1 and \$.63 per book after that date. Also please include a \$2 shipping charge for each order. We will be happy to include a card in mail orders if the book is to be sent as a Christmas gift.

The Historical Association wishes to thank everyone who made this publication possible. In particular, we send heartfelt thanks to Eugene Zurlo for his generosity to the organization, and to Allan Everest for his willingness once again to donate his time and effort to benefit the Association and the County Museum.