

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

48 Court St., Plattsburgh NY 12901, 518-561-0340

No. 297 PRESIDENT: David C. Stortz EDITOR: Helen W. Allan April 1993

APRIL PROGRAM: "SALUTE TO NEW YORK'S MILITARY"

The recently opened New York State Military History Museum in Albany will be the subject of CCHA's next monthly meeting, scheduled for Monday, April 5, at 7:30 p.m. in the public meeting room of the County Government Center in Plattsburgh. G. William Glidden of Plattsburgh, a member of the Military History Museum's board of advisors, will present a slide lecture featuring the current exhibition, "Salute to New York's Military". Drawn from the state's extensive military history, the exhibition includes artifacts and uniforms spanning nearly three centuries, starting with a late-17th-century Dutch breastplate and helmet and concluding with battle gear worn in the Vietnam War. The meeting is free and open to the public.

NEW CONSIGNMENTS IN THE SHOP

The museum shop has just acquired a treasure trove of publications which should delight those interested in area history. Among the material is an assortment from the Moorsfield Press, which was operated by Hugh and Charles W. McLellan in Champlain from 1919 until the 1970s.

Moorsfield Press publications are outstanding examples of the printer's art, with type set by hand and printed on high-quality rag bond paper. Many of the titles in this lot are hand-numbered limited editions, some initialed by the printer and enclosed in a protective jacket. Among the books are "British Objectives at the Battle of Plattsburgh", 1960, by Allan S. Everest, "Military Activities in the Champlain Valley after 1777" by Oscar E. Bredenburg, "A Sketch of the History of the Town of Essex, New York", 1940, by Henry Harmon Noble, and Pliny Moore's "Journal of Drink" plus many others. This collection includes an assortment of attractive blotters, designed and printed by the McLellans.

Also available are other hard-to-find publications: "Recollections of Clinton County and the Battle of Plattsburgh" (Memoirs of early residents from the notebooks of Dr. D.S. Kellogg), edited by Allan S. Everest, 1964, "Plattsburgh Centennial Celebration Official Program", 1914, "Lake Champlain Tercentenary" book, 1909, and two copies of Prof. Allan S. Everest's first book, *Morgenthau, the New Deal and Silver*, published in 1950 and autographed by the author.

The shop has a new assortment of local memorabilia: a poster for the Presbyterian Church of Altona's 1901 Sunday School excursion, a "Welcome to Dannemora" booklet from the 1950s, a Hotel Champlain room key, a Hotel Ausable Chasm wooden cigar box, a Champlain Tercentenary (1909) pamphlet, a pair of trading stamp booklets, and Maitland DeSormo's book about Adirondack conservationist John Bird Burnham.

THE OLD TAVERN SIGN: A MASONIC MYSTERY

During the run of our Peru Bicentennial exhibition, visitors to the museum have been able to view a tavern sign that has a long history in Clinton County. There is a story behind it that involves Champlain, too.

On September 20, 1928 Hugh McLellan of Champlain wrote the following letter to a fellow Freemason in New York City:

"I wonder whether you could help me to get a line on a curious Masonic relic I found the other day. I was driving through the village of Peru, N.Y. when I saw a quantity of furniture on a lawn, in preparation for an auction. Of course, I investigated and discovered an old sign board, at the top of which was painted the square and compasses on a dark background and underneath in two lines, "S. COCHRAN'S INN". The board is 28"x43", very heavy, painted on both sides—doubtless as swinging sign. The letters are old-fashioned Caslon caps, in black on a white background. The square is white, the compasses yellow, on a green and black background in the form of a square—appears to represent an apron.

"In local history I find that 'Silas Cochran was the first hotel-keeper in Peru village. His stables were superior, and his house in keeping with the early prestige of the village.' Also, 'The first saw and grist-mill was built at Peru village by John Cochran, from whom it passed to John Hackstaff, and thence to the Heyworth family....' It was in the old Heyworth house that the auction was to be held, and the sign was discovered in the shed of this house. John Cochran died Dec. 10, 1814. John Cochran, Jr. was the moderator of the first town meeting, Dec. 26, 1792. Also, I read 'John Cochran has the honor of being the founder of the village of Peru, about the year 1795'.

"Although I know that there was a Masonic Lodge at Peru (none there now) some years ago, I have no data or dates on it. I am wondering whether you might be interested in seeing if there are any records of Masonic activity in Peru, also if there are any records of a Silas Cochran as a Mason. From the appearance of the sign I take it to be certainly before 1825. Of course I will go down to Peru and see what I can find further—also if I can find Silas Cochran's grave."

For many years the sign hung in the printing shop of the Moorsfield Press in Champlain which was run by Hugh McLellan and his son Woody. A snapshot in the museum's collections shows Hugh in the shop with the sign in the background. Many years later when the museum expressed interest in the sign, Woody agreed to donate it, as he did with many other objects, including the Adirondack twig chair which graces one of our galleries.

In 1982 the tavern sign was loaned to the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute's Museum of Art, Utica, NY for an exhibition entitled 'Found In New York's North Country: The Folk Art of a Region'.

Thanks to a number of generous loans, the Peru Bicentennial exhibition was a very special event at the museum. We wish to thank Virginia Burdick, Connie Carpenter, Hilda Curtis, Thelma Lyon, Roger Forrence, Philip and Mary Angela Mason, Richard and Muriel Stafford and Richard Ward for their willingness to part with family treasures for a time. Some of the objects in the exhibition are on permanent loan from Ann Keese Chien.

A HERO'S RETURN FROM CUBA

(The following article is a condensed excerpt from Reminiscences of the Spanish American War in Cuba and the Philippines by Charles F. Gauvreau, published in St. Albans, Vermont in 1912. and donated to the museum by Craig Koste. Gauvreau was a private in Company G, 21st Infantry. This account begins after the author returned to the U.S. from Cuba.)

I was taken down with [malarial] fever and sent to the hospital. While there, I had the pleasure of seeing the late President McKinley, who came to the camp to visit the heroes of the war, and as he passed through the wards of the hospital and shook hands with many of the sick, you could notice upon his kindly face the imprint of his noble character, which told in unspeakable words, his heartfelt sympathy for the boys who went to the front; and also the sorrow that the war had caused him.

After a few days spent in the hospital, I was able to be out again; and in September we received orders to return home to Plattsburg, where the 21st Infantry had been stationed before the war.

The grateful news of our return to Plattsburg was received with cheers, and in the afternoon of the 14th of September, we took the train to the boat which took us to New London, Conn., a two-hours' ride on the water. Arriving there towards evening, we received a rousing welcome, and as we had a little time before we left again, some of us took advantage of it and took in the sights of the city. At last we were called by the bugle to return to the depot, where we took the Central Vermont train to Rouses Point and then to Plattsburg, the train being in two sections, and it did seem good to feel we were nearing home.

At ten o'clock the next day, we reached St. Albans and the reception we received at that city was certainly nice. Our stay there was very short, remaining there just long enough to change engines. It was not long before we came in sight of dear old Lake Champlain, where we crossed the Rutland and Central Vermont Railroad bridge, and where I had a good view of Rouses Point, my home town, from the windows of the train.

On our arriving at the station, I was met by my father, mother, sisters and brothers, to say nothing of all my dear old friends, who had come to welcome me; and I was presented with beautiful flowers by one of the leading ladies of the town. Our stay at Rouses Point was short and our train was soon shifted to the Delaware & Hudson tracks, and we were soon on our way to Plattsburg, a distance of twenty-four miles, arriving there at about 12 o'clock noon, on the 15th day of September, 1898.

On arriving at Plattsburg, we were met at the station by crowds of people from all the surrounding towns and cities, who had come to welcome us, and the excitement was intense; whistles were blowing, bells were rung, bands were playing and everyone seemed to be taking a holiday to celebrate the occasion. It was a day mingled with joy and sorrow, mothers, wives and sweethearts coming to meet the boys, while others came to inquire of the dear ones who were left behind, never to return. The hospital train had arrived ahead of us and they were not such a cheerful lot, as many were still quite sick, others convalescent and many of them died shortly after their arrival.

After leaving the train, we formed into our own companies under the command of Captain Ebstein and started on our march towards the barracks, headed by General McKibbin, Captain

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Ebstein, and Lieutenant Morrow, aide of General McKibbin; these officers were mounted. Then came the Rouses Point cornet band and then the officers and enlisted men, numbering two hundred and forty-nine out of the five hundred and sixty-five who went to the front; then came the 21st Infantry band who had done good service in Cuba, having lost quite a number of their players; however, we were all cheerful and enjoyed the reception we were receiving. The city was beautifully decorated, the American and Cuban flags being prominent in the displays.

Those killed in the 21st Infantry at Santiago were the following: William Davis, Company A; Fred Weishart, Company A; Edward Plaude, Company E; Robert McClatchey, Company C; Benjamin Boling, Company F; and Albert Tomkinson, Company H.

On the 22nd day of February, 1899, a marble slab, which was presented to the regiment by the Plattsburg Institute, was inlaid on the side of the administration building at the Plattsburg Barracks, on which was inscribed the names of those who fell at Santiago de Cuba who were in the Twenty-First Infantry. The ceremonies of the unveiling of the memorial were very impressive and were largely attended by many of the citizens of Plattsburg as well as the regiment.

(To be continued in the next issue of North Country Notes.)

MAILING ADDRESS CHANGE FOR CCHA

Now that the County Historical Museum and the CCHA offices are thoroughly settled in their new home, it's time for their mailing address to reflect this move. So from now on, any correspondence should be addressed to 48 Court Street, Plattsburgh, NY 12901 and not to the P.O. box number that had previously been used. The telephone number remains the same, 561-0340.

VALCOUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, August 21, 1993 (storm date Sunday, Aug. 22).

Watch for more information about the lighthouse in forthcoming issues.