

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 30

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Oct. 1966

The Next Meeting

of the Association will be held in the Association Rooms over the Public Library at 8 o'clock on October 3. It will be a "Beaumont Evening" shared with the Clinton County Medical Society. Dr. Frederick Swisler of St. Albans will talk on "Dr. William Beaumont's Place in History" and Dr. A. Bradley Soule of the UVM College of Medicine will exhibit Beaumont materials. The public is cordially invited.

During and after the War of 1812, Dr. Beaumont was a Plattsburgh surgeon who subsequently acquired great fame for his pioneering studies of the digestive process in the stomach.

Riddle of the Month

Answers to last month's questions: The French settlement at Fort St. Frederick (Crown Point) was probably the largest French village in the Champlain Valley. Point au Fer was occupied by the British until 1796, thirteen years after the end of the Revolution.

New question: who was the first settler in what is now Ausable, and what was the year?

CHAMPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH RECORDS

Apr. 17, 1808. Sister Maria Woodward confessed voluntarily that she had been guilty of improper & wicked conduct and wished the church to forgive her, promising that by the assistance of divine grace she would be more circum-spect for the future. She alluded to what took place 3rd April last, when she consented to marry in a jesting manner. Brother Hicks who was present & pretended at that time to be willing to solemnize the sham marriage, likewise confessed his criminality.

Apr. 29, 1808. Judge Hicks confessed that he had done wrong in that he had been angry and called Capt. Smith a liar.

Apr. 7, 1809. Church Conference. Voted that it is unsuitable for church members to bet or lay wagers.

Sept. 8, 1808. Bro. Ashmun brought charges against Bro. Hicks—that he had offered to bet & solicited a compliance with his offer. To these charges Bro. Hicks plead that he did not expect to bet, but made the offer merely to make it appear that the man to whom it was made had asserted a thing which he knew was false.

Oct. 20, 1809. Bro. Hicks confessed that . . . he did wrong to offer to bet. The church voted that they were satisfied.

The Old Military Turnpike

The road from Plattsburgh to Ellenburg Corners is commonly known as the Old Military Turnpike; however, this name really applies to the entire route from Plattsburgh to Chateaugay, Malone and Hopkinton.

Late in the 18th century, as more and more people settled around Lake Champlain, some felt the need to move westward where they would have more room. In 1799 a settlement was made at Chateaugay, known as "Chategee Woods". There was no road from Plattsburgh, but only a roughly-cut surveyor's trail. The pioneers often found it necessary to travel to Plattsburgh for food and supplies. As more and more trips were made, the route became more exact but could hardly be classified as a road. As the route slowly improved, traveling time decreased and the westward movement increased. Malone was settled, and in 1802 six days were needed to travel from Malone to Plattsburgh on "steer back."

In 1811 the state recognized the road from Plattsburgh to the east line of Franklin County by proposing to raise \$5,000 for its improvement. A lottery in New York was to raise this amount. However, the lottery was never held. A second act followed in 1812. The state treasurer was to advance the \$5,000. Franklin and Clinton Counties each were to pay \$150 interest on the sum, and the supervisors of each county were authorized to raise \$750 for two years for the work. Although the work stopped at its eastern border, Franklin County was still required to pay its share.

In 1813 General Hampton's troops improved the road east from Chateaugay. One of his soldiers reported that they had made "a perfect turnpike", but it remained good for only a short time. President Monroe visited the North Country in 1817 and found the road so bad that he ordered the soldiers in the garrison at Plattsburgh to begin work on the road immediately. On August 29, 1817, two hundred soldiers of the 6th Regiment marched three miles west of Plattsburgh to their new job. They were to have completed 16 miles by November 1st. Each man was allowed a gill of whiskey and 15 cents per day in addition to his regular pay. But the soldiers detested road-making. They worked at it intermittently until 1822 and by this time they had completed 24 miles.

A state law of 1822 directed the supervisors of the two counties to raise \$3,500 for the completion of the 14 miles to the east line of Franklin County. The state would contribute an equal amount. Two toll gates were established in 1823 to help maintain and extend the road. One stood near the crossing of the Big Chazy River and another near the intersection with modern route 11. In 1829 Franklin County supervisors were authorized to collect \$2,000 in Malone and Chateaugay for repairing the road in Chateaugay and improving the covered bridge over the Chateaugay River.

In spite of the improvements, during much of the year there were mud and deep ruts, and in the dry season the dust was blinding. The June trips westward in 1820 were made with yokes of oxen and sleds because the road was too bad for wheels. Yet the Turnpike had an advantage over many local roads in being fairly level. The hardest hills were planked. But the road was not the only difficulty. Along the way pioneers encountered panthers, bears, and the problem of fording streams. Help was not always nearby since some of the houses were six miles apart, but there was usually a tavern every two or three miles.

The taverns were community centers, second only in importance to the churches in this respect. Inns varied from crude farm houses to a commodious red structure like the "Half-Way House", so named because it was midway between Plattsburgh and Ogdensburg. At least three of the old taverns survive on the Clinton County section of this road: Storrs' on the lower Turnpike; Robinson's in Altona and Ransom's near the junction with modern route 11. Some of the large inns such as Ransom's had dances to which young and old came from miles around. At the inns whiskey was 40 cents a gallon and often a pail was kept on the counter where customers could help themselves to a cupful for two cents when they wished. Meals and lodging cost 25 cents and stabling the horses cost the same. Without these inns neither the westward haul nor the stage coach run would have been possible.

After the War of 1812 a stage route was established with regular mail service from Plattsburgh to Ogdensburg. In 1823 Jonathan Thompson's stage left Plattsburgh on Tuesday morning and arrived at Ogdensburg on Thursday night. By 1837 a stage left Plattsburgh at 5 a.m. daily except Sunday. The Old Line of Mail Stages was run by Thompson and Fouquet and was well advertised and patronized. The coaches had thoroughbraces for spring and were drawn by four horses. These animals were changed every 10 or 12 miles. The coaches arrived at the inns on the run and with the horn sounding. This was a big event in the life of the locality. Newspapers were almost unknown and postal rates were high, so the stage was the main source of news.

Many roads throughout eastern United States were called turnpikes. They derived their name from the form of gate across the road. The name of the local one probably comes from the fact that the road crosses the Old Military Tract and also that some of it was built with military help.

In 1925 the people of the North Country wanted the state to rebuild the Turnpike as a memorial to the historic journey of President Monroe, and to name it Monroe Memorial Highway. This was not done, so the road retains the name of the Old Military Turnpike.

Joyce Jones, SUC

Jacques Rouse

Much mystery still surrounds the life of Jacques Rouse, for whom the village of Rouses Point is named. The exact date and place of his birth are unknown; neither is it known where or when he died, or where he is buried. However, continuing research is slowly uncovering bits of his life. The following documents have been unearthed by Mrs. John Arneson of Syracuse, who is making an extensive study of the "~~Canadian and Nova Scotia Refugees~~". ~~She has also definitely established that Rouse was living in this area as early as August 1787.~~

Apr. 13, 1818

State of New York)
) ss
County of Clinton)

Jacque Rows of Champlain Sixty five years of age Being Duly sworn Deposeth & saith that he now resides & for many years past has resided in the Town of Champlain County & State aforesaid. That he joined the American Army in Canada late in the fall of the year 1775 as a Volunteer. That he entered the City of Quebec with General Montgomery when he fell that he retreated with the American Army from Canada in the year 1776 was in the battle at three Rivers with General Sullivan when he was made a prisoner. That he was at the Battle of Bennington with General Starks & was also at the Capture of Burgoyne. That in the year 1778 he was with Quarter Master Genl Morgan Louis in the Batteaux Service on the Mohawk River. That in the fall of that year he joined General Hazen at Peekskill with whom he continued to the end of the war. That he was frequently mustered & did his duty in the Regiment in different capacities as he was required but never was enlisted. That he received his pay & depreciation in final Settlement Notes amounting to about Three Hundred & Sixteen Dollars. That the Regiment of General Hazen was not to his knowledge attached to the line of any State but were denominated The Congress Regiment. That by reason of Reduced circumstances in life he is in need of assistance from his Country for support. That he is a Citizen of the United States & has resided in the State of New York ever since the Revolutionary war & sustained a Captain Commission in the Militia of the said State. That no pension has been allowed him & that he hereby Relinquishes all claim to pension by any law of the United States other than the law of 18th March last on which he now applies.

jaque rous

Sworn before me at Champlain)
the 13th day of April 1818)

State of New York)
County of Clinton) ss

I Certify that Jaque Rows the above applicant is in Indigent Circumstances & needs the assistance of his Country for his support. Given under my hand at Champlain the 25th November 1818

Pliny Moore
First Judge of Clinton Com Pleas
At a Court of Common Pleas holden at the
court house in Plattsburgh in and for the
County of Clinton and State of New York
on the third day of October 1820
Present Elisha Arnold, Caleb Nichols,
Nathan Carver and Allen R. Moore
Esquires Judges of the said court.

Clinton County ss: on this third day of October 1820 personally appeared in open court, Michael Rouse of lawful age residing in the town of Champlain in the County of Clinton who being first duly sworn according to law—doth on his oath say that he has the care of Jacques Rows a pensioner under the act of Congress of the 18th March 1818, that the said Jacques Rows is laboring under a stroke of the palsy & is unable to speak inteligably and totaly incapable of going before the court at Plattsburgh & taking the oath prescribed by the act of Congress of the first of May 1820.

That his original declaration to obtain a pension under the act of Congress of the 18th was made the thirteenth day of April one thousand eight hundred & eighteen, that he has received a Pension Certificate Numbered 5159 and dated the first day of January one thousand eight hundred & nineteen.

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