

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

48 Court Street, Plattsburgh NY 12901, 518-561-0340

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## FEBRUARY PROGRAM

The research of a SUNY Plattsburgh honors student will be the topic of CCHA's next meeting on Monday, February 7. Patricia Cosgrove will present a program entitled "A Glimpse Of Plattsburgh's Female Consciousness, 1874-1909". The County Government Center meeting room on the first floor is the location and the program will begin at 7:30 p.m.. It is free and open to the public.

## CCHA'S SUPER SUMMER EVENT

It's time for a brand new approach to fundraising and here's what we are planning this year. On Saturday, July 9 and Sunday, July 10 the Association, in cooperation with Clinton Community College, will present the first Bluff Point Antique Show and Vintage Car Meet. The antique show will be held in the new physical education building on the college campus and the vintage car meet will be located at the oval in front of the main building (former Hotel Champlain). There will also be demonstrations of caning, oriental rug repair and stained glass repair, plus a model railroad display, theatrical performances, and an automobile-related flea market. Food and refreshments will be available on the college grounds. Admission will be charged on entry to the campus.

You'll be hearing much more about this very special event in the North Country, but meanwhile, mark your calendar for July 9 and 10, CCHA's traditional weekend for outdoor fun. If you have house guests that weekend, here's a ready-made schedule of events for their enjoyment. Plans are going along smoothly, thanks to the enthusiasm and cooperation of President Jay Fennell and his staff at Community College. CCHA Board member Bernieta Schumacher heads a planning committee whose members include Mark McCullough, Diane Turner, Randy Beach, Craig Koste and Helen Allan. Lots of volunteers will be required to staff the event and the committee hopes that CCHA members and friends will jump on the bandwagon. If you can volunteer some time on July 9 or 10, please call the office at 561-0340. We'll be happy to hear from you!

## JOURNEY TO THE NORTH

In 1806, Dr. Michael Freligh (1770-1853) wrote a description of his journey through the Champlain Valley. This segment of his diary begins at Shelburne, Vt..

"...the land in this neighborhood (Shelborn) is good & the situation on the lake uncommonly pleasant - the view of the west shore exhibits a range of mountains which in some place approach near the lake & in others recedes further back affording a romantic prospect. Willsboro is directly opposite in view. My landlord I find quite an intelligent man, fond of information & communicative - his residence is beautiful. He has a large thriving orchard from which he made the last season near 100 barrels of cyder. Some of the best plumbs, peaches, cherries, etc.. His house is a decent brick building, his barn & shed very extensive, the land rich & productive, not subject to late frosts. His name is (*illegible*).

"Thursday morning 21st. Started on the ferry at 10 minutes before 6 o'clock a.m.. I arrived at Willsboro at the mouth of Gillilands creek at 1/2 after nine.

"Pursued my journey thro Willsboro mountain which is 12 miles across to Bosworths Tavern situated at the foot. This rout presents one of the most rocky barren mountainous inhospitable tracts with which I am acquainted - & yet notwithstanding, it is interspersed with settlements, stamped however with poverty & solitary gloom - from the foot of the mountain which lies is the town of Chesterfield. I proceed on my rout to Plattsburgh. The county interspersed with immense tracts of white yellow & pitch pine forests, the land sandy & light. Next to Chesterfield lies the town of Peru inhabited by peoples generally from Dutchess county. In the center of the town is a beautiful settlement of the Society of Friends or Quakers. Before you come to this settlement you pass the great river Sable over which is an extension bridge. The lands in the vicinity of the Friends settlement which is known by the name of "The Union" are generally rich & productive, the timber beach, maple, birch, oak & here & there a ridge of white pine.

"The soil however appears less favorable for vegetation than the lands on the east side of the lake. There is too much mixture of gravel & sand. There is a meeting house for friends pleasantly situated, a store, tavern & several mechanics shops. From this settlement you pass into one of the most beautiful & luxuriant tracts of land in this northern country. The soil is composed of black loam covered with the most lofty forests of beach maple birch oak, etc.. This is perhaps three miles over & ends in an extensive tract of pine plain which continues til you arrive in Plattsburgh which is 19 1/2 miles on the military road from the foot of Willsboro mountain. In this rout you pass the little Sauble or Salmon creek or river, the latter of which derives its name from the immense quantities of salmon which appear in this creek.

"Plattsburgh lies on Cumberland Bay at the entrance of the river Saranac into this lake. It consists of about 30 or 40 houses divided into three divisions in consequence of the inequality of the ground & the course of the river. It has a very handsome court house, a grist mill, an iron works, a cording machine for wool, a nailery which cuts & heads the nails entirely by machinery, several stores & commands a beautiful prospect of the lake. It is a place of considerable trade & is inhabited by a set of hospitable people. There is also here an established minister of the Presbyterian order, who preaches in the court house.

"Friday morning 22nd, left Plattsburgh taking my course around the bottom of Cumberland Bay over to the ferry on the Head a distance of six miles being near the seat of General Woollsey. This is one of the most delightful places in the world perhaps. From Cumberland Head crossed the ferry about 2 miles over, to the Grand Isle, which is comprised of two islands seperated by what the inhabitants call the Gut, being a narrow sound..."

"These islands, in the neighborhood of which are several others, may be considered as the garden & vineyard of the northern world. Surrounded by water their vegetation is never the subject of frost either late or early - cucumber vines die of old age in October & the blossom of the earliest fruit is exempt from the ravages of cold & destructive blasts..."

*(Courtesy of Special Collection, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh)*

## **CONSERVATION NEWS**

In 1992 Arthur B. Hillegas gave the museum a map that is thought to be one of the earliest in Clinton County. Dated 1796, it was drawn by Henry Dominy, a surveyor and teacher of navigation who migrated to the North Country from Long Island and established the Dominy name in Beekmantown, along with his brother Nathaniel. Soon after his arrival in Clinton County, Henry drew the map that is now in the museum's collections. Showing the ownership of property lots in the Township of Plattsburgh in 1796, it is a wonderful resource for researchers.

After nearly two centuries, the map required conservation and it has just arrived back at the museum after treatment at the Northeast Document Conservation Center. It has been cleaned, repaired and encapsulated so that it may be used for research purposes. The Historical Association wishes to thank Mr. Hillegas and his family for this most valuable gift to the people of Clinton County.

## **VALCOUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE**

CCHA is pleased to announce that the lighthouse has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The listing, which occurred last fall, completes two years of research and preparation carried out by Julie Robinson on behalf of the Association. Constructed between 1871 and 1874, the lighthouse is now eligible for federal and state funding. Full color prints of the structure were made from the original painting by local artist Rennie Fenwick and they are still available in the Museum Shop. Donations to the lighthouse endowment fund are tax-deductible.

Members who love lighthouse lore will enjoy a newly published book entitled "Women Who Kept The Lights" by Mary Louise Clifford and J. Candace Clifford. Mentioned in the book are Emma Dominy Taberarah, who became keeper of the Cumberland Head light after her husband's death, and Mary Herwerth, who kept the Valcour Island light in similar circumstances. The book is published by Cypress Communications of Williamsburg, VA. The authors acknowledge assistance from CCHA members Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Church and Arthur Hillegas for their chapter on Emma Tabberah.

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### EMILY MCMASTERS WRITING PRIZE

The deadline of March 1 is fast approaching for submission of entries in the 1994 competition. Compositions on North Country historical themes are sought, not to exceed 3,000 words in length. Manuscripts must be completed and may be historical fiction if the author so indicates. A cover letter should include the author's name, address and telephone number, while the manuscript should not divulge his or her identity. All manuscripts become the property of the Historical Association which reserves the right of first publication either in whole or in part. Submissions may be postmarked March 1 or delivered on or before that date to the Association's office at 48 Court Street, Plattsburgh.

Members of the McMasters Committee are Allan Everest, Margaret Engelhart, James Dynko and David Martin. This year's competition marks the nineteenth since its inauguration. It was made possible thanks to a bequest from Miss Emily McMasters, a former curator.

### VOLUNTEER

The museum is fortunate in having a new docent in the person of Joan Duquette. A lifelong resident of Clinton County and a former teacher in the Beekmantown school district, Joan helps to staff the museum on Saturday afternoons. Mother of seven and grandmother of fourteen, Joan personifies so many retired people who give their time generously to not-for-profit organizations. It's nice to have her aboard.

### WEATHER

Feb. 1, 1898: A tremendous storm, threatening to rival the blizzard of 1888. The wind blew hard all night and a heavy snow was falling all the time. The tracks filled in at once as soon as opened. The trolley cars gave up the contest at 11 a.m. The last night's sleeper from New York, due here at 4.40 a.m., reached Plattsburgh at 5 p.m. No train has come through from Montreal today, though it is expected the usual one at 9.30 this evening will get here.

*(Doctor At All Hours, the journal of Dr. David Kellogg, edited by Allan S. Everest)*