

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

No. 307 PRESIDENT: Mark A. McCullough EDITOR: Helen W. Allan March 1994

MARCH PROGRAM

The life of a well known historical figure in the North Country is the theme of CCHA's monthly meeting. Dr Altina Waller of the history department at SUNY Plattsburgh will present a program entitled "The Perils of Capitalism: Smith Weed and Entrepreneurship in the North Country". Dr. Waller is a Distinguished Teaching Professor at SUNY Plattsburgh and is currently chair of the History Department. She teaches the history of New York and the North Country, the early United States, the American family, and cultural and social history. The program will take place at the Clinton County Government Center, Plattsburgh on Monday, March 7 at 7:30 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

GRANTS FROM NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

CCHA has been awarded a \$2,500 grant for conservation of the 1840 portrait of Dr. Isaac Hutinac Patchin by Asahel Lynde Powers. This support is made possible with public funds from the NYS Council on the Arts. The museum will match the grant from funds collected through donations and fundraising. Conservation of the painting is evidence of the Association's total commitment to the proper care and management of its collections. The Association has also received \$3,504 in general operating support from the New York State Council on the Arts.

RECENT ACQUISITION

CCHA has purchased for the museum collections a trio of important posters dating from the era of WW1, thanks to gifts from Harold and Stella Boire, Diane Turner, Randy Beach, and Arlene Penfield, plus an anonymous donation. Designed as recruiting tools and produced by the Military Training Camps Association, the posters bear these words: "The Minute Men Are going To Plattsburg"; "Are You Trained To Defend Your Country? (Plattsburg)", and "Are You Trained To Do Your Share? (Plattsburg)". As the closure of Plattsburgh Air Force Base approaches, it becomes even more imperative for our community to preserve the history of the Military Barracks. Many thanks to the members and friends who made it possible for the museum to afford this important acquisition.

THE LAND OF GOSHEN

In 1913 Seward Arnold, lecturer of Peru Grange, compiled a collection of memories entitled "Reminiscences and Early History of Old Peru". The first half of a chapter written by Sarah B. Hewitt appears below. A second installment will appear in the April issue of *North Country Notes*.

"Biblical history refers to the land of Goshen in Egypt, where the Israelites dwelt for the whole period of their sojourn in that country, as a pleasant land in which to dwell, a pasture land, well suited for the feeding of their flocks and herds.

"Of the pleasantness of the Goshen we are asked to describe, there can be no question, either of its excellence as a pasture land (when it rains).

"Through the courtesy of Mr. J.W. Harkness, who examined and copied many of the old town records of Peru, we learn that the first settlement of Goshen, which is situated on the Little Ausable River a mile west of Peru village, was made in the year 1800, one hundred and twelve years ago.

"At that time a sawmill was built on the north or northwesterly side of the river, for neither the river nor the road run in a straight line nor with the cardinal points of the compass at Goshen.

"This mill was built by John Keese, son of Stephen Keese, who had settled in that part of Peru called the Union, at one time a thriving village with many inhabitants. The mill was operated by the father and son in company. James Rogers, also a resident of the (Quaker) Union, joined the firm and business was conducted under the name of Keese, Rogers & Keese. In 1800 or 1801 a house was built for John Keese, for in a record of a road laid out in 1801 it is described as running from Jackson bridge past Benjamin Sherman's and John Keese's to the west part of the town.

"There are no means of learning the exact location of this house, but it was probably either near the bank of the river just north of the sawmill where the outlines of a cellar are still visible, or upon the hill above, where there is a well which was directly in front of a fair sized frame house standing in 1865, which was in that year taken down, removed to West Peru, rebuilt there and is now occupied as a dwelling. The house by the river was torn down the year following, being in a much more ruinous condition than the one just mentioned, and hence probably older.

"In or previous to 1805 a gristmill was built on the southerly side of the river. The history of Clinton County records that Stephen and John went to Dutchess County in the winter with a team and sleighs and brought back with them to Goshen the grinding stones for the mill. One at least of those mill-stones, a massive single stone hewn into circular form and shape, can be seen to this day where it is built into the abutment wall of the bridge which formerly spanned the river below the present dam.

"A forge was built at Goshen after iron ore was found and mined at Arnold ore bed, near the present railroad station of Ferrona, or Arnold, on the Delaware & Hudson branch running to Ausable Forks. About 1801 a store was built and opened by the Company. This building is still standing in good condition, though not on the original site. Probably from 1800 to 1840, and possibly later, a flourishing business was done there by these mills, more indeed as tradition has it than was done at Peru village. It is said by old inhabitants that the forge was swept away in the great freshet of 1856; when the grist-mill went we do not know.

"How much of the surrounding country was cleared and under cultivation in those early days we do not know, but the sites of several old houses, marked by a few gnarled apple trees, and here and there a few foundation stones and traces of primitive cellars, or of the old well that was the unfailing adjunct of them are all visible today. On the river road farms were occupied by the Sherman, Hallock and Nichols families. An old

house, still standing on the abandoned road formerly leading from the Union to Goshen was in existence before 1814, for my grandmother has told me that she spent the night before the Battle of Plattsburgh in that house, how she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs from time to time through the night on the bridge a short distance away across the river on the north and south road, formerly the thoroughfare to the north, as the farmers hurried to the scene of the approaching battle, and in the calm of the early Sabbath morning heard the cannonading as the British troops advanced. Many a stirring tale of those days will soon be lost, resting now in hearsay and the handed down stories of the sturdy settlers who helped to turn back the tide of invasion and win the Second War of Independence.

"There were several farms in the immediate vicinity of the Union along the road crossing the little river below the old West's and the present McIntyre's corners. My father, who was born in 1811, when a small boy was often sent on horseback with a bag of grain to the old grist-mill at Goshen, and the dry goods purchased at the yellow store were considered the best obtainable anywhere.

"A school house stood on the hill above the grist-mill on the westerly side of the road leading to the Union, and as early as 1864 and 1865 was moved away across the fields to the east, the writer well remembering seeing it moved away, dragged by many ox teams, but where it went is not known. Many of the early settlers were Quakers and their friendly ways and plain speech must have exerted an influence for better things upon those with whom they came in contact.

"As a child I remember hearing all the elderly people of the Quaker faith referred to as Uncle or Aunt - certainly a respectful and kindly form of address. The simple life was much more in evidence than now. Farmers supplied most of the needs of their families from their own lands. Wheat was grown and ground into flour and more nutritious if not as white bread as is now eaten was made. All the meat a family required was raised and fattened on the farm. Wool and flax were spun, woven into cloth, dyed, and made up into garments at home. Even the shoes were made by a shoemaker or cobbler who went from house to house, often using home-tanned hides for his products. Each member of the family was provided with one pair of shoes or boots a year, a limit universally accepted as all sufficient, as we are told."

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

"A fish story usually passes through several stages of development before it is released for home consumption, but a well known local fisherman, John Healey, tells this one. He and a party of friends were angling for ice fish opposite Healey's fishing shack at St. Armand's Bay. They cut a hole in the ice and were making further preparations when fish suddenly began jumping up through the hole landing on the floor of the shack. A good sized catch was reported."

Plattsburgh Press-Republican, March 12, 1948

(Editor's note: Now that Lake Champlain is dotted with ice fishermen, a timely gift from the Museum Shop (for someone who isn't dreaming of sun and sand) might be a copy of "You Hear The Ice Talking". The softcover book is a compendium of stories about lake ice and its traditions, written by I. Sheldon Posen to accompany the museum's 1986 exhibition. The price is \$5.00 [10% members' discount].)

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Clinton County Historical Association
48 Court Street
Plattsburgh, NY, 12901

U.S. POSTAGE
Non-Profit Org.
PAID
Plattsburgh NY
PERMIT NO. 185

CCHA COMMITTEES IN 1994

At the January Board of Directors' meeting President Mark McCullough appointed the following committee chairpersons:

Membership: Bill Laundry & David Stortz

Education & Programs: Keith Herkalo & Jack Myers

Facilities: Randy Beach

Shop: Diane Turner and Rose Matthews

Collections: Fred Smith

Lighthouse: Brad Knapp

Finance: Martha Lockwood

Fundraising: Bernieta Schumacher

Publications: Celine Racine-Paquette & Ann Hasting

THE SCOURGE OF CHOLERA

"Dear Sir

Enclosed I send you the report of our Board of Health, among the number of deaths is Mrs Joseph (*illegible*) who was attacked last Saturday at 3 o'clock in the morning and dyed and was in her grave by 8 o'clock in the evening. You have undoubtedly heard of the death of Mr. J. Bailey of the firm of Bailey & Holm, he dyed at his brother's in this village but not of the colera, old Mr Snay is one of the dead.

"Since this report came out Thomas Hazens has been taken violently and dyed about 7 o'clock last evening. Abram Roberts was taken last evening about 7. (*illegible*) I have not heard from him this morning. George Ransom is now very low & was last evening little better, this morning much worse, very doubtful case. I have heard of no new cases this morning.

"At Champlain I have not heard particularly but am of the opinion that it is not raging violently, now they have had several cases and 3 deaths among the citizens.

Plattsburgh August 9th 1832

(Many thanks to Mrs. Margaret M. Byrne for access to this item.)

Yours truly
Moss Kent Platt"