

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

No. 328 PRESIDENT: David C. Stortz EDITOR: Helen W. Allan February 1996

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

This month's program on the history of the Champlain and Erie Canals comes to us courtesy of Garry Douglas, executive director of the Plattsburgh and Clinton County Chamber of Commerce. Entitled Wildflowers in the Clay, a recently published book by Mr. Douglas is set in a fictional Erie Canal milltown. To quote the author, it is an epic tale of history, romance, intrigue, murder, treason and triumph. References to the novel will no doubt enliven Mr. Douglas's serious look at canal history in New York State. The book will be available at the meeting (\$10.00), and the author has graciously offered to contribute to the Association a portion of the proceeds of books sold that evening.

The meeting is scheduled on Monday, February 5, 1996 at 7:30 p.m. in the first floor meeting room of the Clinton County Government Center. It is free and open to the public.

DOLLHOUSE WINNER

We are happy to announce that Mrs. Cora Gillette was the lucky winner of CCHA's 1995 dollhouse. Mrs. Gillette's mother, Mrs. Cora Grenier, was one of the our first docents when the museum was located in City Hall. Many thanks to all our members and friends who contributed to the dollhouse drawing, thereby raising \$1,900.00 for the museum's benefit.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's great to be in Clinton County serving as Director/Curator of your Historical Association and Museum. Even though the weather has been cold, the friendliness and generosity of the people I've met has warmed me. When you are in downtown Plattsburgh, please stop by the Museum so that I may get to know you. I am excited about the possibilities for presenting Clinton County's history to our community and look forward to meeting and working with you.

Jane E. Rupp, Director/Curator

AN EXCERPT FROM THE JOURNAL OF WILLIAM GILLILAND

(Editor's note: Thanks to the field work of longtime CCHA member Fuller Allen, we are printing the following excerpt from the Gilliland journal. This section describes a trip by the early settler to Ausable Chasm. All of the editorial comments in parenthesis are by Mr. Allen.)

“Monday 6 October went in a Batteau to visit my Tract of Land at Cumberland Bay in company with John Chick, Eliakim Ayres, John Wattson & James Stoker - on our passage went on Shore on the two most Western of the 4 Islands (The Four Brothers) found the most Eastward of those 2 being ye Largest of the 4 to contain 4 or 5 Acres of Choice Land & the Westward one is Rich but all covered with Brush, it may be about a Acre then pass'd close by Schylers Island or Isle Chapou (the French word ‘chapon’ means capon, a castrated male chicken) which looks at a distance but dry stoney light ground, little worth. About six in the Evening arrived at the high Sandy Clifts (Port Kent) and Encamped there between those is a Grass Swamp (Wickham Marsh) Containing I think about 150 Acres without any Trees but is Deep Covered with Watter.

“Seventh this morning moved from our Encampment to the above mentioned River which I call the Callen Watter (calla is a marsh plant) & there found it alive with Ducks & Geese it is about a Mile to the Northward of the south side of the most Northerly Sandy Clifts (known locally as Ausable Heights) and on the south side of it is a Grass swamp (Ausable Marsh) of about 70 Acres. Put on our Poles at the (south) mouth of this River which is about 60 yards Wide, and proceeded up it in order to discover its falls and their distance from the Lake.

“First station from the Lake up the River is South 88 degrees West about 15 Chains, South 70 Degrees West 8 Chains North 50 Degrees West 16 Chains to a Grass swamp of 50 Acres and a Dead Creek being North 65 Degrees West then North 60 Degrees West 6 Chains North 20 Degrees West 10 Chains North 50 Degrees East 15 Chains to a Branch North 80 West 9 Chains - when we found the left hand Branch to be Occasioned by a small Island then south. 60 West 3 Chains to rapids that are passable for Batteaus then to one Corse (*sic*) 28 Chains smooth good Watter the River Twice as large as Boquet and more - then an Island main Channell on Right Hand going up, then from the near point of the Island West about 4 Chains to Rapids Then south 10 Chains - then south 60 Degrees West 35 Chains - then south 10 Degrees East 20 Ch.

“Then from South East to South West about 120 Chains to the falls which we judge to be about 12 feet - in this place the River form'd into a most Curious Cannal this is a

prodigious Rock - It is a most admirable sight appearing on Each side like a regular Built Wall somewhat Ruinated and one would think that this prodigious Clift was occasioned by an Earth Quake, their hight on Each side is from 40 to 100 feet in the different places we seen about half a Mile of it and by its appearance where we stoped it may Continue very many miles farther. Returned to the Mouth of the River thru the North Branch to our Encamping place where we stay'd this night, and found the Island that it is Enclosed between those Two Branches to be mostly an unprofitable Drown'd Swamp [Ausable Marsh again - Ed.].

"Eighth set out this morning from River Ausable Northerly & about a Mile to the Northward thereof, being on the North side of a long point [Ausable Point - Ed.] - We penetrated it and found that it is made by an overflow of the Lake with a large Grass swamp which was well covered with good wild Grass fit for Hay [and known locally as march hay. Poking up through the ice near Dead Creek, it kept Jabez Allen's oxen alive through their first winter in 1788 - Ed.]."

"The Ninth, about 300 Acres [referring to the swamp - Ed.] I travelld up the Creek untill loss'd it which was about a Mile, here I walked on dry Land round it's most Westerly End and came to the Lake on the North Side of it, having gone from the lake up the south side."

NO RIOTS IN PLATTSBURGH NOW!

"CITY'S NEW POLICE CAR NOW IN USE - Dodge Touring Car Replaces Old Patrol Wagon - Chief Voices Approval - New Car is Reported Better Suited for Use by Local Police."

"Plattsburgh now takes its place in line with numerous larger cities in the matter of being equipped with a powerful touring car for use in police work,

"No sooner had Mayor William E. Cross been empowered by the Common Council to purchase a car for the use of the police department than the chief executive, ever on the initiative to aid in the city's improvement, purchased a used dodge touring car from a local auto sales agency for \$400.

"The car was delivered early Saturday afternoon, and the Mayor, with Alderman Henry Coste, a very efficient driver, at the wheel, tried out the new police car, stamping it highly suitable for the use of the department.

"Chief Eli Senecal of the police force then voiced his approval of the new car, stating it will be more advantageous to his department in case of a hurry call or in the event of a riot.

"The words 'Plattsburgh Police Department' will be painted on the side of the car, Mayor Cross stated yesterday, while beneath will be emblazoned the phrase 'For Official Use Only'."

This item appeared in the Plattsburgh Daily Republican, on an unverified date in the 1920s.

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

DATE ANNOUNCED FOR SUMMER EVENT

There's lots of exciting news about CCHA's third annual antiques show and vintage car meet. First of all, please mark your calendars on Saturday, July 6 and Sunday, July 7, 1996 for the Association's important summer fundraiser. Next, we're happy to announce that the shows will take place at the Plattsburgh Air Force Base, formerly known as the Military Barracks. The antiques show and car meet are expected to be among the first community events scheduled to take place on the Old Base, thanks to the enthusiastic cooperation of the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corporation. We are grateful to David Holmes, Executive Director of PARC, and his staff for the willing assistance they have given the Historical Association.

Working closely with PARC, we expect the weekend of July 6 and 7 to be a real crowd pleaser with lots to do and see. The antiques show will be held in the gymnasium on the Old Base, a fine, light-filled building overlooking the lake which will provide a pleasant atmosphere for the show. The car meet will be located on the Oval immediately adjacent to the gymnasium. This location will give us plenty of space for an increased number of vintage vehicles. Also, there will be unlimited space for visitor parking.

Many volunteers will be needed to coordinate the two-day event. If you can spare a few hours on either day and would like to be part of the team, please call our office and sign up now. Watch for more news about the event in future issues of North Country Notes.