



Clinton County Historical Association and Museum

North Country Notes

New Director Comes On-Board

The Board of Trustees of the Clinton County Historical Association is pleased to announce that Dr. John Krueger has accepted the position of Director/Curator of CCHA.

Dr. Krueger has held key administrative positions in historical and educational institutions including The University of Vermont, The Salzburg Seminar in Middlebury, and Fort Ticonderoga. Dr. Krueger earned a Ph.D. in History at the State University of New York at Albany where his

dissertation topic was "Troop Life at the Champlain Valley Forts during the American Revolution." He has been a board member of the Ethan Allen Homestead (1981-1989) and editor of *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum* (1980-1990).

We look forward to a productive and lasting collaboration with our new director as the Association and Museum moves into an exciting future for the development of Champlain Valley historical resources.

Clinton County History Presented to the World!

Jim Millard doesn't know how to keep a secret. Especially about what he loves!

And what is it that he loves?

Lake Champlain is definitely near the top of his list. And history, of course.

Now how would you expect that the Senior Instructional Support Specialist at St. Michael's College would decide to share his love of Lake Champlain history? Shouting from the rooftops? No. That audience would be much too limited. They can't hear you in Wyoming and Moldavia if you do that!

Since 1997, Jim has been sharing his love of Lake Champlain and Lake George with the whole world, via his web site: www.historiclakes.org. Two of the recent additions to it include extensive information about Crab Is-

land and Fort Montgomery accompanied by wonderful photography.

Join us on **Monday, June 2** when Jim tells us about his journey in creating the website, America's Historic Lakes, and shares portions of the vast amount of information contained in it.

Sit back and be dazzled.

Jim will bring his laptop computer with him and will project on a large screen portions of what he has made available to the whole world about the history and beauty of Lake Champlain and Lake George.

We look forward to this program on **Monday, June 2 in the Clinton Government Center at 7:30 pm** with great anticipation. (Light refreshments at 7 pm)

May, June, July 2003
No. 391

Inside this issue:

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

*Words from the President
Of the Board, Noel Stewart*

Roots & Queries

*A column by
Richard Ducharme*

History Mystery #3

*1816: Year Without
A Summer?*

E.S. Martin

Mystery Solved
By Mary Anne Ducharme

New Director Praised

Lighthouse Updates

Points of Interest

• *5 entries received for
McMasters
Competition*

• *McMasters Prize
raised to \$500 by
members of the
Publications
Committee*

A Few Words from the CCHA Board President,
Noel Stewart

Opportunities and Challenges

- We have many opportunities and challenges ahead of us this year.
- We have recruited a new Director who will help to move our organization forward with the support of the Board, Association members, and the community.
- We have opportunities for acquiring a facility on the Old Base and are faced with the challenge of the expiration of our lease at our 48 Court Street facility on June 30, 2004.
- We are challenged to make decisions that will position our organization for a move to a future home, but provide a temporary solution until we can make this happen.
- We are challenged to seek opportunities that will provide the funds necessary to sustain our operations and provide for capital development.
- We are also challenged to improve and evaluate our practices, procedures, policies, constitution and by-laws.
- The biggest opportunity that we have is the engagement and empowerment of our members.
- I strongly urge you to become involved, participate on committees, and volunteer your time.

McMasters Prize Work

The McMasters Committee is currently engaged in their work to select a winner for the McMasters Prize for the year 2003. Five fine entries have been received. We expect that a winner will be announced in the very near future. A special McMasters Reception is being planned to celebrate the 2003 winner as well as to note the long, multi-century tradition in Clinton County of research and writing about our rich local history.

Please check the newspaper for details or leave a message for Susan Ledges at 518-563-7037.

Help us recognize fine writing as well as the legacy of Emily McMasters who made such lasting contributions to CCHA.



Clinton County Historical Association

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Editor of *North Country Notes*:
Susan Ledges

Roots and Queries

By Richard Ducharme

The following query of Joan Forrence is "the perfect query" for this column because it links genealogical information with historical context.

Query: Miss Forrence's school for young ladies

- **Joan Forrence would like to know the identity of "Miss Forrence" who ran a school for young ladies in Plattsburgh. Is she the sister of William Forrence who appears on the 1807 Peru assessment roll?**

After reading a reference to a Miss Forrence and a school for young ladies in the February 1998 edition of *North Country Notes*, Joan has been unable to discover any further information. The context of the NCN article was the Old Military Turnpike and an elaborate Plattsburgh welcome for President Monroe in 1817.

In Mrs. George Fuller Tuttle's, *Three Centuries in Champlain Valley*, are details about this visit in entries for July 26, 27, and 28 of 1817.

"At twelve o'clock, President

Monroe arrived at Cumberland Head on the steamboat *Phoenix* and was conveyed to the wharf in the village in Col. Atkinson's barge. From the wharf he was escorted to Israel Green's Inn, by a company of the U.S. Infantry, under Capt. Newman Clark, Capt. Sperry's company of horse, and the Plattsburgh Rifles. At the hotel, Reuben H. Walworth, on behalf of the corporation, delivered an address of welcome. As the President passed the house, the young ladies from Miss Cook's and Miss Forrence's schools strewed flowers in his path. In the evening, the President attended a party at the home of Capt. Sidney Smith of the Navy."

For the 27th, the following day, Tuttle adds: "President Monroe attended services in the Presbyterian Church and took tea at Judge Delord's. On the invitation of the President, Col. Melancton Smith dined with him at Israel Green's Inn."

For the 28th, Tuttle records that "President Monroe started for Sackett's Harbor, under escort of Capt. Sperry's Company. At two o'clock at a point in the road leading through primeval forest, thirteen miles distant

was reached, where a bower had been erected and a repast provided for his party. The money used had been intended for the purchase of a fire-engine, but a President does not visit Plattsburgh every day."

Related Queries

1. **Who can elaborate on this visit of President Monroe? What was the occasion?**
2. **Who was "Miss Cook?" Who has details about these schools for young ladies?**
3. **The Forrence family is both interesting and important in the history of Peru and Clinton County. Who would share anecdotal material about the early Forrence families in the North Country?**

Send your queries and responses to Richard Ducharme, *Roots and Queries, North Country Notes*, P.O.B. 3021, Champlain, New York, 12919. Home phone: 450-247-3193. Or send your queries and responses to m.a.ducharme@rocler.qc.ca

Another Successful Work Day At the Saily House

By Maurica Gilbert

Trustees and volunteers worked together on April 23 to rearrange the PAFB Museum Collection stored at 3 Cumberland Ave. Our new shelving, ob-

tained at the Plattsburgh Public Library auction, was assembled and the collection was moved upstairs to its new storage site. This frees up valuable exhibit

space in the east wing. Many thanks to volunteer Philippe Colin of Montreal for his assistance in cataloging and moving these items.

History Mystery # 3

By Mary Anne Ducharme

In *The Vermont Weather Book* by David M. Ludlum (1996) is a reference to 1816 as the "year without a summer." There was snow and frost every month of

that year and "no crops were produced." In June there was a severe winter-like storm with snowfall of 18 to 20 inches. I have found few details about

this in local sources. Does anyone have anecdotal or other information about how this weather affected people in our region of New York State?

E.S. Martin Mystery Solved

By Mary Anne Ducharme

Don Papson of Saranac, and Richard Gregoire of Cadyville both contributed information confirming the identity of "E.S. Martin," and the location of the Plattsburgh house she described in an 1876 magazine article. (See the last issue of *North Country Notes*, No. 390, History Mystery #1). Web sources and several local publications also yielded details suggesting that further exploration of this family history would prove a fascinating study.

She is Elizabeth Smith Martin (1817- after 1902) daughter of Colonel Melancton Smith (1780-1818) and his second wife Anna Greene who died in 1879 in a typhus epidemic in Plattsburgh. Anna was the daughter of innkeeper Israel Greene and his wife Sarah.

Col. Smith was the commander of 29th Regiment at Fort Moreau, the principal garrison at Plattsburgh during the battle in 1814. He was also the first editor of the newspaper Republican.

Elizabeth married Morgan

Lewis Martin, an army major, and they had six children in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Several of her published articles, and letters to Margaret Ann Freligh Pratt were full of nostalgic memories of Plattsburgh. She is described in a Greene genealogy website as being gifted with "rich intellectuality" with a "charm of manner and power of expression." She was the namesake of her aunt Elizabeth, Col. Smith's sister -- from whom Elizabeth Street derives its name.

This Smith family is a prominent one, all three Melancton Smiths achieving fame in the military or politics, beginning with Judge Melancton Smith, Elizabeth's paternal grandfather. He was an original proprietor of the Plattsburgh Old Patent, and one of Plattsburgh's founders with title in 1784 to 1,120 acres. The name of his wife was bestowed to Margaret Street.

Col. Smith's first wife apparently died in childbirth in 1810 when their son Melancton (III) was born, their fourth

child. She was Cornelia Haring of New York City, and for her Cornelia Street was named. Their youngest son was to become a Civil War naval hero, and it is worth noting that Elizabeth and her half-brother "were brought up in the closest bonds of affection," which lasted until his death at her home in Green Bay in 1893.

Marjorie Lansing Porter mentions E.S. Martin frequently in *Plattsburgh Barracks*, and *Old Plattsburgh*, and Porter describes the house built by Col. Smith as a handsome brick mansion of three and one-half storeys, constructed with hand-wrought nails. [Built probably in 1809 or 1810]. In the September 1972 issue of *North Country Notes*, it was described as on the south corner of Brinkerhoff and Margaret Streets, a lot later known as "Customs House Square." The house "pierced by bullets and balls fired from the American works in 1814 which remained embedded as praiseworthy scars; and thus occupied by British officers during the siege, thus presenting a fair target for

that joined a passageway between the parlor and dining room, as he was enjoying an afternoon lunch."

In August of 1818, when Elizabeth was still an infant, her father died of malaria at the age of 38. Col. Smith's funeral, at the Presbyterian church, was with full military and Masonic honors, attended by the 29th regiment. The soldiers honored their former commander by firing volleys. In the 1876 article, E.S. Martin says that these soldiers were called from duty in building a new road. Richard Gregoire speculates that this was likely the Military Turnpike constructed between 1817 and 1822 by soldiers from the Plattsburgh Barracks.

After his death, the house was occupied by the large family of Judge Levi Platt, who was joint land owner with Col. Smith and partner in the creation of mills. He later became a postmaster. Heman Cady next owned the house until 1844 when it was acquired by Robert Platt. After Robert's death in 1858, the building was sold to the government, and was de-

molished to make way for a Customs House and Post Office. [Dates from various sources are given from 1858 to 1860]. Porter says that the building was so well constructed that when it was torn down "not a timber has a spot of decay, nor was a board warped by age." Portions of this building were used to improve homes outside Plattsburgh.

In an April 1887 article in the *Plattsburgh Republican* there is mention that General Prevost had taken up his headquarters in the new residence of Colonel Melancton Smith, on the site of the Post Office. Prevost also apparently had a base at the Edward Allen farmhouse west of the village, and various officers occupied houses in several parts of the town.

In her 1876 article, E.S. Martin referred to basement quarters in the house for slaves, a safe haven for the British officers from gun and cannon fire. According to Don Papson, one of these slaves was Maria Haynes, first owned by Judge Melancton Smith, and then inherited by his son. When

Col. Smith died in 1818, "Black Maria" was freed. Four months after the Battle of Plattsburgh, a son was born to Maria, and she named him "Sir George Prevost." Don Papson was always puzzled why Maria named her son after the commander-in-chief of invading British forces. But they had obviously met at the Smith home, and Maria had been inspired by him. Papson speculates that because the senior Judge Melancton was prominent in the American Revolution, and because Sir George was military commander in Nova Scotia (1808-1811), that she became familiar with the Black Loyalists who settled in that province. Even though she named her son for the enemy, Maria was assisted by the Smith family in her adjustment to a free life. She was allowed to continue living in the basement until she found other accommodations. In *Old Plattsburgh* are the details that a daughter of Maria died in 1830, and that the funeral procession formed at the "humble Haynes home on Bridge Street." Mr. Haynes was a barber, and man and wife were both "highly esteemed."

New CCHA Director Lauded by Archaeologist, Dr. David Starbuck

Crossing the path of a former friend or colleague, one you haven't seen for years, and one for whom you have great respect, is a wonderful experience.

What a delight it was for CCHA members and the general public to be part of such an unexpected reunion between two friends: Dr. John

Krueger, the new CCHA Director; and Dr. David Starbuck, the guest speaker at the CCHA "Great Warpath Lecture Series," in early May.

Each individual made it very clear that the other was held in great esteem for his high caliber research, writing and commitment to the history of the Lake Champlain and Lake

George Valleys.

How proud we in the audience felt to learn from Dr. Starbuck that the research of the new CCHA Director is cited several times in the Starbuck book, *The Great Warpath: British Military Sites from Albany to Crown Point*.

Many of us left with specific plans for our summer reading!

Lighthouse Committee Prepares for Another Exciting and Productive Summer Season

Many thanks go to Barbara Gallagher, chair of the Lighthouse Committee, and to the whole committee for their wonderful work.

Their latest announcements include the following:

- The lighthouse will be open for the first time on May 25th, 1 pm until 3 pm.
- Starting on June 29, it will be open every Sunday through August 31st. Please let Barbara know if you are able to

man the lighthouse on any of those Sundays.

- The lighthouse is scheduled to be relighted during the beginning of August. Details will follow in the next issue of *North Country Notes*.
- John Gallagher will be writing up a new brochure using the information provided by Steve Englehart. Fred Finn has offered to print it. Hopefully it will be ready by June 29th.

• Unfortunately, the winter weather collapsed the shed. The DEC hopes to remove it this spring.

• Cleanup day was on May 17 and included much cleaning, scraping, and painting.

EFFORTS OF THIS COMMITTEE ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED. MANY THANKS TO ALL INVOLVED IN THE WORK ON THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT. Call Barbara at 561-0484 to join this exciting volunteer effort.

Join the Clinton County Historical Association. Invest today in the development of our rich history.

- ___ \$ 8 Junior (students only)
- ___ \$20 Regular
- ___ \$30 Sponsor
- ___ \$75 Patron
- ___ \$100 Benefactor
- ___ \$250 Life Member

Please make checks payable to the Clinton County Historical Association.

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

Total amount enclosed: _____

New Members

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Renewed School District

Peru Central School District

Renewed Members

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An Apology By Susan Ledges, editor of *North Country Notes*

Please accept our heartfelt apology.

In the last quarterly issue of *North Country Notes*, we tried to include the new or renewed memberships that were received during the last few months of 2002. However, there were some names that we inadvertently missed when we were working on our new membership database. We highly value each of our members and sincerely apologize for the errors that occurred in the new and renewed membership listing in our last issue of NCN.

We are definitely a work-in-progress and appreciate your patience as our volunteers steadfastly work on the various CCHA projects designed to preserve and celebrate the past of Clinton County for future generations. We do receive new and renewed memberships throughout the entire year, but it seems that many more come

in between September and December of each year. This is why the list in the last issue of NCN was long and appeared to be a complete listing of all members. It was just a list of the latest renewed and new memberships with some errors.

We certainly appreciate all of the individuals and businesses who support the activities of CCHA. Without you, CCHA would cease to exist.

This is a small part of what your dollars do for CCHA:

The basic memberships have allowed us to pay for part of our standard operating costs for two buildings (utilities, insurance, office equipment/supplies and salaries of a director and part-time secretary).

Memberships at the higher levels allow us to plan for a more prestigious presence in Clinton County in the next

few years; one that will share much more of our fascinating past in a larger, more appealing setting. One to make future generations proud!

Your continued support during the past year has energized our volunteers to make many improvements, including the following: 1) creation of a website, 2) publication of a children's periodical, *Drumbeats*, 3) elimination of fees for school groups visiting the museum, 4) promotion of interpreters in period clothing for school visits, 5) creation of a new (and still evolving!) version of *North Country Notes*, 6) planning for a special McMasters reception, and 7) the transfer of an old database of our collection to a new, usable form. And of course, hundreds of hours of volunteer time have allowed our various properties to shine a bit more. Thank you.

Clinton County Historical Association
"Preserving Our Past for the Future"

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