



Clinton County Historical Association and Museum

North Country Notes

Fall 2004
Number 394

The Museum Needs Your Help

The Clinton County Historical Association has completed its move from 48 Court Street to the Saily Warren House at 3 Cumberland Avenue. Work to make our new facility handicapped accessible was finished in time to allow us to open our doors to the public on September 11, 2004, to coincide with the Battle of Plattsburgh celebration.

At this time, we are asking for gifts above and beyond membership dues to help sustain the operations of the museum. Revenue from member dues, admissions, shop sales, and the appropriation we receive from the Clinton County legislature currently supports less than 50% of our operating costs. We need to bridge a \$45,000 gap to sustain our current operations. This figure represents approximately \$75 per member.

We need your support to keep Clinton County history alive. By making a gift to the 2004 annual appeal you will help to support the maintenance of facilities and collections, exhibit development, educational programs, and the cost of utilities that includes heat, lights, water, and security. Your gifts to CCHA are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. You may also want to consider giving stocks and securities as they may provide the greatest tax advantage.

Please consider sending the largest unrestricted gift for operations that you can. Your generous support will enable CCHA to continue preserving and sharing the rich heritage of Clinton County.



*October Program: John Krueger
William McKinley's "Splendid Little War"
with Spain, 1898*

Monday, October 4, 2004

First Floor Meeting Room
Clinton County Government Center
137 Margaret Street

Refreshments 7:00 p.m., Program 7:30 p.m.

Hotel Champlain served as the summer White House in 1897 and 1899. In 1898, President McKinley and his wife Ida had to spend their summer in Washington because of the "splendid little war" with Spain. Please join us Monday, October 4, at the Clinton County Government Center when John Krueger will discuss the conflict that launched a new American empire.

Clinton County Historical Association

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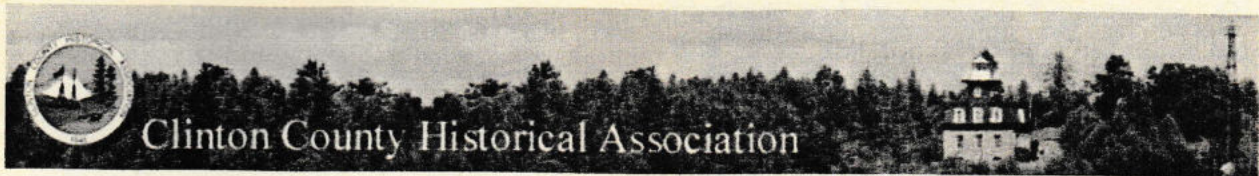
Noel Stewart, President
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Staff:

John Krueger, Director
Kenneth Wray, Docent



The Saily Warren House, 3 Cumberland Avenue, Plattsburgh
Home of the Clinton County Historical Museum



*The Museum Needs Your Time as Well as Your Treasure
Be a Volunteer!*



Lindsey LaMarche hard at work at the Bluff Point Lighthouse.

The Clinton County Historical Association is looking for enthusiastic people to support our programs and activities. You can make a difference in the ability of the CCHA to carry out its mission. Now is the time to step forward and support our organization.

Opportunities exist to serve on committees and to provide support in those areas in which you have a special interest or expertise.

Opportunities include:

- Help to organize the regular monthly and special programs and help to organize the annual meeting and dinner.
- Assist the Treasurer in preparing the annual budget and quarterly reports and advise the Board and Director on financial matters.
- Help to maintain the membership database, send renewal notifications, organize membership campaigns, and develop brochures and promotional materials.
- Assist the Director in developing museum programs and exhibits and maintaining the museum management software.
- Be a docent and provide tours to individuals and groups of all ages.
- Work in the museum shop by assisting customers, operating the cash register, organizing displays, and stocking merchandise.
- Help develop educational materials and programs to enhance appreciation of local history.
- Organize or assist in fundraising activities of all types. Provide assistance in identifying and preparing grant applications.
- Help with the publication of North Country Notes and The Antiquarian.

- Serve on the nominating committee. Help to identify and nominate candidates to the Board of Trustees.
- Perform specialized professional skills such as construction, technology, public relations, human resources, web-site design/maintenance, accounting, or legal counsel.
- Volunteer for special events like the Battle of Plattsburgh Celebration and the Fourth of July.
- Assist with mailings, data entry, and general office support.
- Be a docent at the Bluff Point Lighthouse. Help to maintain and restore the lighthouse and assist with the development of exhibits.
- Help maintain the building and grounds at the Saily Warren House.

If you are interested in volunteering in some capacity, please contact the Museum at 561-0340. Thank you!

The Battle of Valcour Island *October 11-13, 1776*

The great question to be settled in the summer of 1776 was who was to control the waters of Lake Champlain. The British force poised on the northern border could not advance southward until the lake was made safe for its passage.



Benedict Arnold

General Benedict Arnold, in charge of the American shipyard at Skenesborough (today's Whitehall), was determined that Champlain would remain an American lake. He called in ships' carpenters from the coast, recruited blacksmiths from the regiments at Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and drafted some 300 soldiers to man the vessels - half of them to serve as seamen and the other half as marines.

Arnold decided that the best chance for success lay in taking a defensive position and forcing the British to attack. He sailed his fleet to Valcour Island and took up position between the island and the New York shore, believing that the British would pass by before discovering the American vessels. The enemy would then be forced to beat their way back upwind in order to attack.

On the morning of October 11, the British fleet cleared Cumberland Head and sailed south of Valcour Island before discovering the fifteen American fighting vessels anchored in its lee. Once the leading British ships saw Arnold's line of battle, they turned

and beat upwind. The battle of Valcour was underway.

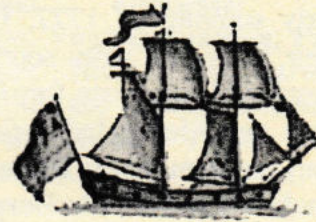


The American fleet consisted of eight gunboats, three row galleys, two schooners, one sloop, one cutter, and bateaux. Not only were the vessels in the British fleet larger with better sailing characteristics, but they were also crewed by professional sailors under the command of skilled naval officers.



After an intense five-hour battle with heavy casualties on both sides, darkness finally ended the conflict. By evening, the Americans had lost both *Royal Savage* and *Philadelphia*, three other vessels were heavily damaged, and they had used up three-quarters of their ammunition.

Arnold and his officers executed a daring night-time escape to slip past the British blockade and flee toward Ticonderoga. All that night and the following morning the battered fleet struggled southward, pausing at Schuyler Island, some eight miles south of Valcour, where two damaged vessels were sunk and many leaks were repaired.



The *Royal Savage*, Benedict Arnold's flagship at the Battle of Valcour Island.

On the morning of October 13, the rising sun highlighted the sails of the advancing British fleet. A second, running battle ensued. Outgunned and surrounded, Arnold intentionally destroyed five of his own vessels in Arnold's Bay and escaped on foot to Fort Ticonderoga.



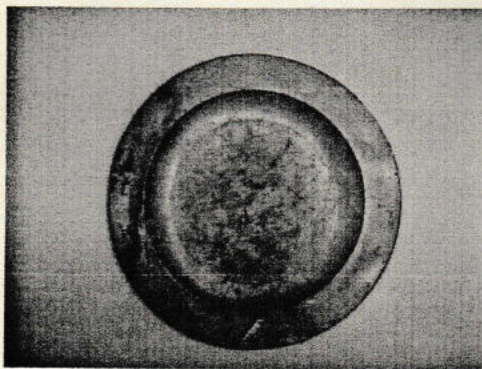
Only four of Arnold's vessels survived the three-day affair, and at its conclusion control of the strategically important Lake

Champlain invasion corridor belonged to the British. Although control of the lake was now theirs, Champlain's wind and weather were against the British.

General Sir Guy Carleton, Governor General of Canada, content with achieving control of the lake, broke off the attack and returned to Canada for the winter.

In the early summer of 1777, the British moved their army and navy south past the hastily abandoned American fortifications at Ticonderoga and Mount Independence and launched an invasion of the Hudson Valley. That fall, when General John Burgoyne was forced to surrender his army at Saratoga, the tide of the American Revolution turned.

Although Arnold's squadron had been swept from the lake in October, 1776, as the eminent naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote more than a century later: "The little navy on Lake Champlain was wiped out, but never had any force, large or small, lived to better purpose or died more gloriously. That the Americans were strong enough to impose a capitulation of the British Army at Saratoga was due to the invaluable year of delay secured by their little navy on Lake Champlain."

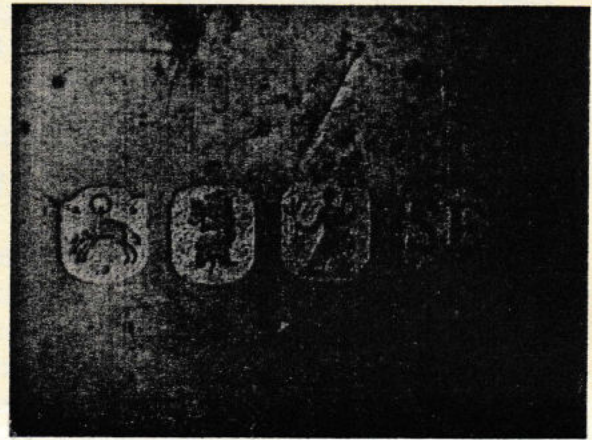


Pewter plate from the *Royal Savage*

During the twentieth century many individuals searched the underwater

battlefield for the tangible remains of the Battle of Valcour Island. The most notable, Colonel Lorenzo F. Hagglund, raised the American flagship *Royal Savage* and the gunboat *Philadelphia* in 1934 and 1935, respectively.

In 2003, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Benjamin, former owners of the Royal Savage Inn, generously gifted a number of artifacts associated with the *Royal Savage* to the Museum. The most exciting of the artifacts was a pewter plate from the *Savage* salvaged by Lorenzo Hagglund himself.



Reverse of plate



Did Benedict Arnold eat his breakfast from this plate on the morning of October 11, 1776? It is entirely possible.

New Members

Advanced Women's Healthcare; Scott Aley; Todd Aley; Ron Archer; Jim, Mary, and Ryan Barcomb; Jim Caron; Champlain National Bank; Champlain Valley Pulmonary Associates; Dale and Kristine Changelo; Darlene Chisholm; Joe Colucci; William Conway; CVPH Medical Center; Susan Dake; Randy and Jennifer Dame; Katherine Felty; Claire Forest and Bernard Richard; Gastroenterology Associates of Plattsburgh; Claude Gravel; Richard Harris; Ed and Alix Heuston; Eric and Nicole Hewson; Dennis and Karen Hulbert; Patricia Ives; James Kennedy; John and Tammy Kennedy; Pat Kennedy; Chris Krueger; William Krueger and Suzy Johnson; Ruth Kuhfahl; Art and

Rosemary LaMarche; Dave Larsen; Bruce Lawson; Doug Marshall; Alvio Marin; Ed and Ricki Marin; Peter Martin; Bill McBride; Dick McDonough; Terry Meron; The Monople, Inc.; Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corporation; Plattsburgh Professional Firefighter Benevolent Association; Virginia Reardon; Pat Schmidt; Nate Sears; Thomas and Caroline Sears; Brian Siplo and Maria Lombardo; Jane Smalley and Richard Dodds; Annette and Tyler Smith; John Thatcher; Town of Beekmantown; WAL-MART; Lorri Wetzel; Peggy Whipple; Eric Wolke; and Frank Woodward.

Renewed Members

Fuller Allen; Ron and Carol Allen; John and Dorothy Barton; Marie Beemer; Jack and Donna Bell; Ed Bortnick; James Bougill; Brian Burns; Warder and Julia Cadbury; Jim Ciborski; George Clark; Ken and Mary Coleman; Marvin Connor; Linda Coryer; Bill and Pat Crosby; Ronald and Linda Everleth; Carlton and Eleanor Gilroy; Terrance Gilroy; Dave Glenn; Morris Glenn; Richard Gregoire; Francesca Hartnett; Jim and Ellie Hayes; Heritage Printing Center; John Homburger; Ralph and Jane Hubbell; Jason Huckeba; Don Kinneston and Peggy Donegan;

Charles Kaczor; Debra Kimok; Harold and Carole Klein; John Krueger; Clara LaRose; Bill Laundry; Joseph Laundry, Jr.; Kenneth Laundry; Elizabeth Little; Sonia Long; Mary Mason; Beverly Maynard; Nick Muller; The Northway Motel; Jim and Linda Reh; Tim Saint-Maxens; Lorene Saunders; Pat Schwartz; Addie Shields; Charles Smith; Noel and Debbie Stewart; Constance Wheeler; and Ann and Lynn Wilke.



View of Plattsburgh, 1842

**Annual Meeting
Save the Date
Saturday, November 13, 2004**



Clinton County Historical Association
3 Cumberland Avenue
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
518-561-0340

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